Leadership: Underrepresentation of Women

in Higher Education

Dissertation Manuscript

Submitted to Northcentral University

School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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San Diego, California

January 2017

ProQuest Number: 10259477

ProQuest 10259477

Approval Page


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**Abstract**

In 2014, statisticians at the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that women constitute 45% of the workforce. Women's participation in high-level organizational leadership roles remains low. In higher education, women's representation in top-ranking leadership roles is less than one-third at colleges and universities. The conceptual framework for this study was the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. The specific problem is how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. This was a qualitative study using a multiple-case study methodology. The study was organized by research questions that reflected on the underrepresentation of women leadership roles in higher education. Members of Arizona Women in Higher Education were invited to participate in interviews regarding their experiences as a woman in leadership. The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions that explored the definitions of leadership, leadership styles, how these definitions influenced their workplace behavior, and the experiences of these women in their leadership roles. The findings of this study did not fully support that the lack of women in leadership positions in higher education is due to a bias toward their role as a female when serving in the position of a traditionally defined masculine role of leadership. The conclusion is that stereotypical views of female behavior had little impact on the successful careers of the participants. The participants gave little significance to experiences with social role expectations or to the definitions society have given to the definition and characteristics of leadership. The

participants' perception of their success was due to merit; the recognition by others as having the qualities and skills to lead in a variety of positions. Further qualitative research with male leaders as participants would provide a comparison between male and female gender roles and how those roles are influenced by society's expectations. Additional research using a mixed methodology may provide a broader range of understanding of women's experiences with the stereotyping of female behavior through the combining of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, as the qualitative data can enhance the interpretation of the quantitative data collected.

## Acknowledgements

One cannot accomplish the completion of a dissertation alone. An intricate support system is required. I want to acknowledge my support system; from my academic advisor, faculty, chair, and committee members for the timely and relevant feedback I received during the process. I want to acknowledge my fellow students and work colleagues; Ramon, Barbara, and Dara for their unwavering encouragement. I cannot place a value on the support and encouragement I received from Dr. Jeannette Lovern. Thank you, Jeanette for being my guide and inspiration. However, there is one person who has given me unlimited support throughout this journey and that person is my beloved husband of 46 years. Thank you Paul, always and forever, for being my sounding board, my confessor, my therapist, and my best friend. The ring has been cast into the fire; it is done.

Table of Contents

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Women have made advances toward equality in both the social environment and in the workplace since the 1960s. According to statisticians at the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, women constitute 45% of the workforce, and yet their participation in high-level organizational leadership roles remains low (BLS, 2015; Cook & Glass, 2014; Eagly, 2007; Madden, 2011). In higher education, women's representation in top-ranking leadership roles is less than one-third at colleges and universities (Cook, 2011; Gallant, 2014). The low representation of women in high-level leadership roles has led to an inference that there may be a hidden prejudice toward women seeking positions of leadership.

Researchers indicated that even though women attending college and obtaining a majority of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees, they (women) remain underrepresented in the top leadership positions in higher education institutions (DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Reed, & Wheatly, 2014; Gallant, 2014; Longman & Anderson, 2011). Since 1986, statisticians at the American Council on Education (ACE) have collected data on American college presidents. The researchers reported that women in the office of presidency in higher education stand at 26.4% and has slowed down from the 50% growth rate experienced in the 1990s (Cook, 2011). The ACE data offers no explanation for the slower growth rate. Cook's (2011) research indicated that women appear to follow a traditional career path toward top academic positions. They become well-known as faculty and scholars within higher education. Men who rise to top positions are likely to come from other businesses, politics, or military, or even a non-academic position on campus. Cook suggested there is a sexist strategy at work; men are

hired for their potential and women are hired based on their achievements.

**Background**

Researchers reported that in practice leadership characteristics of women and men are virtually indistinguishable (Kosicek, Soni, Sandbothe, & Slack, 2012). Although, women exhibited characteristics leading to effective performance more often than men did; the stereotypical view of women in the workforce puts focus on feminine attributes or gender roles rather than leadership style (Braun, Peus, & Frey, 2012). A comparative study investigated leadership styles of administrators in community colleges. The researchers reported stereotypical viewpoints of male and female leadership with male leadership being directive and autocratic, while female leadership being merit-based and participatory (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). According to Madden (2011) male or female stereotyping has a pervasive effect on not just how others view women in leadership roles, but how women view themselves in situations where leadership is required, influencing all aspects of men and women's behavior.

Women in higher education remain underrepresented consistently at the executive levels of leadership in the positions of dean, provost, and president (Gallant, 2014). There are a number of reasons identified by researchers for the persistence of the underrepresentation of women in the top ranks of leadership. Women frequently listed gender role stereotypes, lack of female role models, and childcare or domestic duties as obstacles they faced when seeking top roles as leaders (Cook & Glass, 2014; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Gallant, 2011). However, organizational policies, practices, and processes continually perpetuate inequality and prejudice leading to the *glass ceiling effect, the ivory basement, and velvet ghetto* situations preventing women from obtaining executive

leadership roles (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). DeFrank-Cole et al. (2014) reported these metaphors are used to describe the invisible ceiling women hit when pursuing leadership positons at the senior-most levels even though they have succeeded through their careers. These images describe the practices and policies in both the corporate world and higher education institutions that relate specifically to the obstacles women face as they aspire to leadership positions.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is a gender gap in leadership roles in institutions of higher education (Chin, 2011, Cook, 2012; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). There is no doubt that women have made advancements toward gender equality in the workplace where they constitute 46% of the labor force (Chin, 2011; Pfaff, Boatwright, Potthoff, Finan, Ulrey, & Huber, 2013; BLS, 2015). However, women have not made the same advancements in corporate leadership roles (Cook & Glass, 2014, Madden, 2011). Furthermore, in higher education women are consistently underrepresented in the top ranks of leadership even though they earn more bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees than men (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Diehl, 2015; Gallant, 2014; Lennon, Spotts, & Mitchell, 2013). The data collected on American college presidents by ACE indicated women achieving the role of presidency in higher education institutions nearly doubled from 9.5% in 1986 to 19.3% 1998 (as cited in Cook, 2012). However, between the years 2006 and 2011 the number of women who have achieved the presidency at a higher education institution has slowed to a 15% growth rate. If the growth continued at the 1998 rate, women representing college presidents would be approaching 50% instead of the 26.4% reported in 2011 (Cook, 2012). The reason for the slowing of the rate of women obtaining the position of the

presidency is unknown (Chin, 2011; Cook, 2012; Cook & Glass, 2014). A review of the

literature on the lack of women representation in high-level leadership positions revealed

that the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders introduced by Eagly and

Karau (2002) might provide one possible explanation for the phenomenon of the

underrepresentation of women in leadership in higher education. There is a conflict

between leadership roles and prescriptive expectations for women's behavior. This

conflict leads to prejudicial judgments and actions. This bias toward female leadership

averts the promotion of women leadership positions (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). The

common theme in leadership studies that good leadership is inconsistent with female

behavior presents the opportunity to perform further research on bias toward female

behavior in leadership in the field of higher education (Chin, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014;

Madden, 2011). The specific problem is how do stereotypical views of female behavior

affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multi-case qualitative study was to explore how stereotypical

views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in

higher education. Gaining new knowledge about women's experiences with gender bias

and role stereotyping may benefit future generations of women aspiring to organizational

leadership roles. The focus of the study was to examine individual experiences of women

who currently perform or have performed in these roles at colleges and universities in the

State of Arizona. I explored the problem by using a semi structured interview approach

that allowed me to use prepared questions. Researchers, such as Cohen & Crabtree

(2006) and Yin (2014) suggested this approach allows for a conversational nature to

interviews and provides the participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

The story-telling aspect of women's experiences in obtaining leadership roles and the interpretation by the interviewer endorsed the narrative analysis as a relevant method for exploring the difficulties women face along their career path in higher education (Sands, as cited in Padgett, 2004). Looking for the complexities in the viewpoints of women who are currently performing or have performed leadership roles at colleges and universities in the United States in the state of in Arizona, I invited members of Arizona Women in Higher Education (AWHE) to participate with me in interviews. I wanted to learn more about their experiences with stereotypical views of female behavior as they aspired to leadership roles in higher education.

Open-ended questions allowed the participants to describe their experiences through any changes in how they viewed themselves as women and as leaders and what, if any significance they gave to experiences with stereotyping of their behavior as they sought leadership positions. Additionally, recounting their experiences with stereotyping included stories on any change in behavior they made to avoid future experiences with stereotyping. A comparison of the data collected from the individual case studies provided ample context for triangulation and data saturation as patterns were found in the consistent similarities of the stories told. This research adds to the body of knowledge regarding stereotypical views of female behavior and its effect on women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education.

**Conceptual Framework**

The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders proposed by Eagly and Karau (2002) states that if a woman, as a leader, exhibits masculinity, she will be seen less favorably as a leader because the behavior is inconsistent with the female gender as assigned by society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). I used the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders to provide perspective on the persistence of gender role stereotyping of women in leadership roles in the field of higher education. Eagly and Karau (2002) proffered that bias in favor of masculine leadership styles makes it difficult for women to be selected for leadership roles; and once they do, their behavior as leaders is regularly assessed in a less than positive view. According to Eagly & Karau (2002), the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders holds there is a contradiction between leadership roles and prescriptive expectations for women's behavior that leads to prejudicial judgments and actions. DeFrank-Cole et al. (2014) asserted this bias makes it difficult for women to be selected for leadership roles and to achieve success in their performance as leaders once they do.

Researchers of organization leadership noted that strong leadership is associated with a masculine gender role of assertiveness, confidence, and control (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie & Reichard, 2008). Madden (2011) explained that most leadership definitions describe the characteristics of leadership in agentic or masculine terms. Agentic characteristics are assertiveness, controlling behaviors, ambition, and aggressiveness. Definitions of leadership began to merge around the 19th century idea of the great man theory and its effect on how society views leadership traits (Heifetz, 1994 as cited in Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). Madden further described communal characteristics as

opposites to agentic ones. Furthermore, Madden associated communal traits with feminine roles because the traits are described as nurturing, warm, friendly, and sensitive.

Johnson et al. (2008) further asserted that people, as individuals have expectations for how men and women should behave. Individuals take these behavioral expectations into their work life and their beliefs in how leaders should behave. Therefore, when the person in charge behaves consistently with an expectation of what leadership is, then that person is perceived as an effective leader (Johnson et al., 2008). Researchers of leadership definitions and gender stereotyping in higher education, such as Eddy & VanDerLinden (2006), Gallant, (2014), and Madden (2011) reported that when subordinates define leadership as masculine and a woman displays an agentic trait; her behavior is incompatible with her female gender role of being warm and nurturing. This incongruity in behavior makes it difficult for people to perceive or even accept a woman in a leadership role

There are theories worthy of consideration when contemplating the reasons why women do not have a greater presence in high-level leadership positions. Concepts such as social role theory (Eagly, 1987), Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leader, and leadership theory (McCleskey, 2014) proposed that the definition of leadership presents a bias in favor of men as leaders and unfavorably toward women as leaders (Eagly, 2002; McCleskey, 2014; Miller, 2013). From these theories it can be gleaned that stereotyping and bias toward the female gender even subliminal may be one reason for the low representation of women in executive leadership positions across all industries.

Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders is an expansion of Eagly's 1987 research on role theory in sociologic terms (as cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002). In the mid-twentieth century sociologists and psychologists studied role-play as a method of providing patients with insight into their daily lives (Miller, 2013). A role is a broad pattern of behavior and attitude that is linked to a socially identified status, such as gender, age, or position in society (Turner, 2000). Basic roles, like those attached to gender and age identities, are the most inclusive, affecting what is expected of an individual in a wide variety of situations (Yodanis, 2003). Culturally defined norms or standards for behavior shape one's position in society and other statuses such as gender and influences a person's behavior (Yodanis, 2003). The theory became the foundation for researchers in the 1980s to explore social interaction through the roles of gender and social status (Miller, 2013). Researchers, such as Koenig and Eagly (2014) and Miller (2013) investigated role theory in terms of expected social roles and discovered a fixed set of expectations by society that cause men and women to behave in a predictable way.

In organizational leadership, role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders magnifies the disproportion of women in organizational leadership roles by placing the lens of prejudice on the behavior of women who aspire or have obtained executive level leadership roles as a possible reason for the disparity. In higher education, women are underrepresented in the senior leadership ranks at only 24.6% in 2011 (Cook, 2012; Gardner, 2013). Scholars have linked the cause for this lack of representation to a number of reasons including gender role stereotypes and the number of women available to fill leadership roles (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). However, to address of the lack of women available to fill leadership roles, Lennon et al. (2013) reported that more women

in the U.S are attending college and obtaining advanced degrees than men. Yet, the higher number of women qualified for leadership roles do not translate into a higher representation of women in leadership roles. In higher education, women who do hold executive leadership positions are pointedly lagging behind men in both status and salary (Lennon et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study, using role congruity theory of prejudice toward women in leadership roles provided a conceptual framework as a lens through which the underrepresentation of women in higher education leadership roles was explored.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions explored women's individual challenges with stereotypical views of female behavior as they aspired to executive leadership roles at colleges and universities. In an effort to discover if parallels in women's experiences with bias or prejudice as they aspired to executive leadership roles, the answers may lead to a possible reason for the underrepresentation of women leadership roles in higher education.

**Q1**. How do women describe the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought leadership positions in higher education?

**Q2**. How do women define the difference between their feminine gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on in order to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education?

**Nature of the Study**

This was a qualitative multi-case study with a narrative inquiry approach. The study addressed the crucial issue of how stereotypical views of female behavior affect

women who have achieved high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. The trustworthiness of qualitative research relies on interpreting the meanings research participants give to their experiences. Yin (2014) suggested qualitative case studies for sociological phenomenon phenomena and behavioral events. Landrum and Garza (2015) concurred that affirming the exploratory nature of qualitative studies allowed researchers to attribute meaning to an individual's experiences with a particular phenomenon.

Selecting a narrative analysis design with semi-structured interview questions allowed for the collection of data using the story-telling aspect of women's experiences with bias toward their female behavior in leadership roles. For the purposes of this study, a qualitative study method using anecdotal stories was more powerful than quantitative findings and is one reason the qualitative method was selected. The stories captured themes in the experiences of women who have faced the stereotyping of female behavior. The story-telling aspect of a semi-structured interview was a relevant method for exploring the difficulties women face along their career path in higher education. In qualitative data analysis processes, Chenail (2012) suggested the researcher seeks to make an evidenced based assertion of the knowledge gained from the conversation with the participants.

While capturing language used during the interviews, an interpretive method of data analysis focused on the narrative value of the research participants' stories. Chenail (2012) described qualitative data analysis as a story-telling metamorphic process. People like to tell stories and when they do, they shape their reality, both in thought and feeling, but also in their observable actions (Padgett, 2004). In narrative analysis, there is an allowance for observations of language usage as interviewees describe how events during

their career are perceived and understood. As such, using semi-structured interview questions with a rhetorical approach to narrative analysis allows for the unspoken, implied understandings that lie beneath the stories the participants tell during their interviews (Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, & Homer, 2004). Qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) isolated and then cross-referenced the stories using open coding of words and phrases and axial coding that sorted the words and phrases into themes.

**Significance of the Study**

The disparity between the high number of women who obtain a college degree and the underrepresentation of women in the executive leadership roles is problematic. The discrepancy is that women are welcome to receive a higher education yet they are not welcome to undertake leadership responsibilities in colleges and universities (Lennon et al., 2013). The significance of this study is the addition of women's voices to explain the reason behind the lack of representation in leadership at higher education institutions. The study contributed to the field of organizational leadership through the appraisal of the persistent presence of bias and stereotyping of the female gender role. The study contributed to research on a potential reason for the disparity between highly educated women and the lack of women in leadership positions in the field of higher education.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Agentic leadership characteristics**. Agentic leadership characteristics are assertive, aggressive, ambitious, control and dominance. These behaviors are assigned as masculine characteristics in leadership (Eagly, 2002; Madden, 2011).

**Bias.** Bias is the collective subconscious influence an individual's perception of race, ethnicity, gender, or age, can have on understanding, actions, and decision-making (Staats, 2015).

**Communal leadership characteristics**. Communal leadership characteristics are helpful, sensitive, nurturer and are assigned to female characteristics in leadership (Eagly, 2002: Madden, 2011).

**Executive leadership role**. In higher education, executive leadership roles refer to Presidency, Chancellor, or Chief Academic Officer (Lennon, Spotts, & Mitchell, 2013).

**Gender roles**. Socially constructed beliefs about the behaviors of men and women, gender roles are perceptions of what men and women actually do and expectations for what men and women should do as agreed upon by society (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

**Non-gendered leadership characteristics**. These leadership characteristics include dimensions of individual leader's dedication, intelligence, charisma, and attractiveness as viewed by subordinates. These characteristics are assigned equally to both male and female leaders (Johnson, 2008)

**Summary**

Women have made great strides toward gender equality in the workplace. They comprise approximately 45% of the workforce (BLS, 2015). Yet, they remain underrepresented in high-level leadership positions. In higher education, females hold only 26.4% of college and university executive leadership roles (Cook, 2011). The reason for the lack of representation may be explained in part, by role theory in the sociological

sense and the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders when considering the behavioral definitions of leadership by organizational leadership theory. The purpose of this study was to explore how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who perform in high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Using a qualitative multi-case study, the central research question how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education was explored.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this multi-case qualitative study was to explore how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. A common theme in leadership literature is that good leadership is inconsistent with female behavior. The subject of female behavior and leadership presents the opportunity to perform further research on bias toward female behavior in leadership in the field of higher education (Alex-Assensoh, 2012; Chin, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014; Madden, 2011; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Parker, 2015; White, 2012). This study provided an interpretive analysis of stories told by women serving in higher education institutions in the state of Arizona on how they met with bias and stereotyping as they aspired to and attained a top-level leadership position at their institutions.

This literature review is organized by a dominant theory in gender bias, the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Beginning with a review of the seminal literature on this theory, the literature review is organized by themes relating the key word searches and a critical analysis of leadership theory, gender and leadership, women in the workforce, gender bias in the workforce, and women in higher education.

**Documentation**

The strategy for the literature review included a comprehensive search using online approaches. Scholarly texts, including peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, e-books, and traditional books were collected using EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Sage databases offered through the Northcentral University library. Google Scholar provided valuable leads for current research sources, as well as historical information on several topics. The major key words used to organize the search were role congruity theory,

leadership, bias and stereotyping of women in the workforce, and women in higher education. The key words and phrases became themes within the literature review. Refworks, a web-based bibliographic management tool was used to sort and categorize resources for easy organization. The literature review reinforced the theoretical, conceptual, and contextual frameworks for this study.

**Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice towards Female Leaders**

Role congruity theory of Prejudice towards Female Leaders is an expansion of Eagly's 1987 research on role theory in sociologic terms (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Social role theory suggests that people's beliefs about social groups in their society come from their associating certain group members with particular behaviors in their normal social roles (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). In 2002, Eagly and Karau suggested evaluating role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders to determine if prejudice is one of the leading causes of the lack of women in major leadership roles.

**Social role theory.** Koenig and Eagly (2014) provided strong support in their research for the social role theory of stereotyping in relation to women in leadership roles. Eagly, an influential researcher in social role theory, argued in 1996 that the theory is a non-biological concept of human adaptation. Social role theory, according to Eagly is a sex-differentiated behavior that came about because of pre-historical sex-differentiated behaviors adapted by humans during times of need when society required certain productive activities. For example, early humans are often portrayed with the male in society representing the hunter and the female represented as the gather.

As early human society observed that more females were in a nurturing and communal group, and the male was observed as being involved with hunting, social roles

became a gender construct (Eagly, 1996). Eagly (1996) postulates this observation by members of early societies brought about the sex-differentiated behavior in early division of labor between male and female gender.

In the mid-twentieth century sociologists and psychologists studied social role-play as a method providing patients with insight into their daily lives (Miller, 2013). Linking attitude and actions to an identified status, such as gender, age, or position, a role is a broad pattern of socially expected behavior for men and women (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Turner, 2000). The basic roles attached to gender and age identities are wide-ranging and expected behavioral roles of gender and age are projected on individuals in a variety of situations (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Yodanis, 2003). Yodanis (2003) believed that culturally defined norms or standards for behavior shape one's position in society and other statuses such as gender and influences a person's behavior.

Stereotypes are created by social roles based on prior assumption and generalization about the behavior of a group or individual (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). For example, when women are observed in paid and unpaid roles that involve caring for children, more often than men do, the observers assume that women possess sensitivity, warmth, and nurturing characteristics. These traits are thought to enable the behaviors required for caring for children. Koenig & Eagly (2014) claim group stereotypes are born from the generalization that all members of a certain group behave in a similar manner and these behaviors become associated with that particular group.

**Role congruity theory.** In the year 2000, role congruity theory was proposed by Eagly, Wood, and Diekman when they posited that groups are viewed in a positive manner when members of the group behavior is in congruence with characteristics that

are aligned with the group's typical social roles. The theory was extended by Eagly and Karau (2002) to include prejudice toward female leaders because of the inconsistencies existing between the characteristics associated with female behavior were incongruity with characteristics associated with organizational leadership.

In modern society, men have occupied positions of power and positions of influence have traditionally been occupied by men. Women, who now occupy nearly 50% of the workforce, hold lower status positions (BLS, 2014; Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). Hoyt & Burnette (2013) conclude the division of labor gives rise to socially shared beliefs gender roles and congruous behavior in those roles.

**Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders.** Although known that women have proven to be effective leaders there remains a stereotypical view of women that puts focus on the role congruity theory of prejudice toward women leaders (Gallant, 2014; Eagly, 2007). The theoretical construct suggests that prejudice toward women as leaders occurs because of the existence of inconsistencies between the characteristics associated with leadership and the characteristics of female gender stereotype. For example, assigning masculine characteristics to the definition of leadership styles creates an inconsistency with that role and feminine characteristics society places on the female gender (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Female characteristics are incompatible with the masculine characteristics defining leadership roles; therefore, there is an incongruity between accepting or perceiving women in a leadership role over men.

Research has continued to produce similar results over the past decades. Lennon (2013) reported when taking all evidence from research into consideration, the lack of women in high-level executive leadership roles is principally due to an innate bias against

women as leaders. Sindell and Shamberger (2016) reviewed a 2015 Pew Research study found that 40% of those polled believe there is a double standard for women seeking executive positions in business. The research on role congruity theory places leadership gender bias within a perspective that theorizes bias as developing when stereotypical beliefs about specific social group behaviors are viewed as being incongruent with their gender role (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2012).

Lopez and Ensari (2014) found a connection between, gender, leadership style and organizational success. Lopez and Ensari's 2014 research provides supporting evidence of the role incongruity theory of prejudice toward women noting that women who behaved in an autocratic leadership style were viewed unfavorably if the organization failed.

The incongruence between female behavior and masculine characteristics associated with leadership creates a prejudice against female leaders (Eagly, 2004). Pervasive gender stereotypes that women are nurturing and men are aggressive contribute to the bias toward women in leadership (Heilman, 2012; Madden, 2011). Women are associated with communal characteristics that highlight a concern for others, whereas men are viewed as possessing agentic characteristics that emphasize confidence, self-reliance, and dominance (Johnson et al, 2008; Madden, 2011).

According to Heilman (2012), men have the same agentic qualities used to describe effective leadership. Therefore, the male gender possesses the same traits that align with the role of leadership. People have preconceived ideas about how men and women should or should not behave.

Heilman (2012) calls these descriptive gender stereotypes and prescriptive gender stereotypes. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders is a prescriptive stereotype where there is a greater perceived mismatch between agentic leadership characteristics and female gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to Heilman (2012), descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes are a precursor prejudice toward female leaders and negative attitudes toward women in positions of power. Furthermore, Lanaj & Hollenbeck (2015) found it credible evidence that women who exhibit agentic leadership behaviors may experience social repercussion and be less liked among their subordinates.

However, according to Madden (2011) most studies inflate differences between male and female roles and do not concede that within-gender differences are greater than differences between genders. Madden, citing Hyde (2005) explains that the differences between female and female or male and male are generally greater than the differences between genders. Thus, Madden (2011) argues the differences debated in role congruity theory studies are overgeneralizations.

Even though Eagly and Karau's (2002) meta-analysis summarized several studies of leadership effectiveness found reliable results for role congruity theory, Madden (2011) suggests the environment in which role congruity created bias were highly masculinized, such as would be found in military organizations. For example, women leaders were seen as less effective when the proportion of male subordinates was larger. Masculinized environments may heighten the pressure to adapt gendered leadership stereotypes and by doing so, according to Madden, make gender roles more noticeable to

both subordinates and the leaders themselves. An example of this is the masculine

tendency to associate warmth and friendliness with weakness (Madden, 2011).

However, Madden (2011)  points out that women were perceived as slightly more

effective in education, government, and social services than men, as in other

organizations. Interestingly, Madden suggests the career where women can make the

most progress in leadership is in higher education and higher education may be a place

where women can make inroads into leadership positions.

There is evidence that educational efforts to counteract the expected male

(agentic) or female roles (communal) in leadership aid in changing attitudes of bias in

gender roles and stereotyping (Tiell, Dixon, & Lin, 2012). Further, prominent role

congruity theorists, such as Eagly and Karau (2002), Gallant (2014), Heilman (2012),

Madden (2011), and others suggest that societal assessment of gender roles can change

through the presence of more people in counter-stereotypical roles, more female

executives for example (Tiell et al., 2012). Additionally, theorists advocate for more

education regarding the abilities of both genders in multiple roles, specific professional

development and mentoring by opposite gender (Tiell et al., 2012)

**Generational theory**. Generational theory has an impact on role congruity theory

of prejudice toward female leaders because it offers a conceptual rationale that can

explain why some researchers are finding women are being recognized for having

superior leadership styles and outstanding effectiveness in contradiction to the continued

underrepresentation of females in leadership positions (Eagly, 2007; Murray & Chou,

2013). Generational theory may explain why gender role distinctions are found less

among the Gen X generation because they were raised during 1960's and 1970's Cultural

Revolution (Murray & Chou, 2013). Further Murray and Chou (2013) argue that Gen X have a balanced view of gender because they were raised to not view gender roles stereotypically.

However, even when generational differences are taken into account there remains a disadvantage to women in contemporary culture. The fact that while praised for their leadership worthy skills, they remain behind men in attaining leadership positions is a real issue (Eagly, 2007). Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb (2013) surmise it is second-generation bias that can help explain why women fail to achieve equality with men in terms of leadership roles. Second-generation bias is embedded in organizational practices based on stereotypical views of female behavior not being appropriate for leadership. Additionally, Eagly (2007) and Heilman (2012 point out even when women are promoted to top-level positions, role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders remains for women once they attain these roles because their performance is evaluated at a higher standard.

**Leadership Theory**

In 1869, Galson proposed one of the earliest ideas of leadership known as the great man theory (McCleskey, 2014). The great man theory postulated that only a man could have the characteristics of a great leader. The theory assumed the traits of leadership were intrinsic in men even though there was no scientific certainty that a specific human characteristic or the combination of human characteristics were essential in identifying great leaders. The skills and characteristics of leadership were not learned, but rather inherent to one's character (Maloş, 2012).

In the decades following Galson's determination that leadership belonged to extraordinary individuals, the theory of leadership continues to undergo scrutiny and redefinition (McCleskey). Researchers cannot come up with a convincing definition of leadership (McCleskey, 2014). Furthermore, McCleskey (2014) noted that there are hundreds of definitions and conceptions of leadership. Moreover, the research is inconclusive that leadership is a skill learned rather than a selective genetic trait (Northouse, 2013).

The trait theory of leadership advocated in the 1930s and 1940s proposed good leaders have established traits or characteristics in common. Individuals who displayed these qualities tended to excel in leadership roles (Maloş, 2012). Trait theory research on leadership identifies and measures individual personality characteristics found in great leaders (Maloş, 2012). Trait theory proponents focused on the quality of character in a leader, much like the great man theory. Moral human aspects of qualities like ambition, focus, and aggression defined leadership traits (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano, and Dennison, 2003).

From 1940 to 1950, behavioral theories were proposed in opposition to the trait leadership theory. Behaviorist theories went beyond moral qualities towards the behavior of the individual leader (Bolden et al, 2003). Behavioral theorists focused on the leader's actions. Through observing the actions of leaders, they categorized the behavior using the term *styles* of leadership behaviors. Behavioral theorists measured the cause and effect relationship of specific human behaviors by leaders leading to the suggestion that leaders are not born, rather they are made (Maloş, 2012).

In modern times, leadership theory has shifted away from definitions using general characteristics and behaviors of leadership and focused on the explicit behaviors of those in leadership. Transformational and transactional theories of leadership are the result of those studies. By examining the situations that leaders find themselves contemporary researchers now theorize and study the situational or contingency theories (Bolden et al., 2003). According to Bolden et al., 2003, situational theory and contingency theory emphasize the type of behavior the leader should display under any given situation. The researchers further suggest that situational theory is refined by the contingency theory. Contingency theory identifies the situational variables and predicts the most effective leadership style for a situation (Bolden et al., 2003).

Organization leadership theory focuses on the impact of a leader's behavioral characteristics on organizational performance, employee job satisfaction, and commitment to the leader's vision for the future (Boykins, Campbell, Moore, & Nayyar, 2013). This research shaped today's definitions of leadership and form the basis for theoretical constructs in contemporary research (Boykins et al., 2013). Today, researchers seek to compare and contrast three of the most influential behavioral leadership theories known. These theories are (a) transformational leadership theory, (b) transactional leadership theory, and (c) situational/contingency leadership theory (McCleskey, 2014). Hypothetical questions were formed using trait and behavioral theories as a base. The research questions focused on the impact of a leader's behavioral characteristics on organizational performance, employee job satisfaction, and commitment to the leader's vision for the future.

These three theories are umbrellas under which other styles and characteristics fall, for example, servant leadership, authoritarian leadership, democratic leadership, participatory leadership, and others (Boykins, Campbell, Moore, & Nayyar, 2013). Theoretical constructs in organizational leadership research are based on hypothetical questions about a leader's characteristics and styles. Definitions are formed by the impact of leadership characteristics on organizational performance, employee job satisfaction, and commitment to the leader's vision for the future (Boykins et al., 2013). Furthermore, Northouse (2013) suggested that leadership requires the ability to switch between leadership styles depending on the situation.

Transformational leadership style is at the top of the definition list because it is highly effective using constructive mediating effects on change management (Keskes, 2014; Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013). Transformational leadership style appears to have a positive impact on organizational commitment. However, Boykins, Campbell, Moore, and Nayyar's (2013) research findings on project managers and leadership styles revealed the participant's position and the industry the leader worked in had an effect on leadership styles. Both team members and project managers changed their opinions of leadership style depending on the circumstances of the project, for example. The researchers were not able to find one leadership style to fit all industries or situations, nor was there one leadership style better suited for women (Boykins et al., 2013; Kosicek et al., 2012).

Given the abundance of research and literature on leadership theories, one would have reason to believe that there must be an agreement on one leadership style or group of characteristics that is most effective in all situations. Northouse (2013) suggests that

leadership requires the ability to switch between leadership styles depending on the circumstances. While several recent studies have concluded the transformational leadership style does have a positive impact on organizational commitment and mediating effects on change management (Keskes, 2014; Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013), much of the research has failed to exemplify one style or theory.

Boykins et al. (2013) found project managers and leadership styles revealed that both team members and project managers changed their opinions of leadership style depending on the circumstances of the project, for example. The researchers were not able to find one leadership style to fit all industries or situations (Boykins et al., 2013). A study of leadership styles, industry fit, and quality focus among different types of organizations found there is no difference in the leadership style displayed for achieving quality (Kosicek et al., 2012).

**Gender, Leadership, and Bias**

The literature on leadership theory gives some foresight into the literature on gender and leadership roles. Just as definitions of leadership continue to evolve, where gender fits into leadership styles and characteristics accounts for much of the research on gender and leadership (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Madden, 2011, Singh, Nadim, & Ezzedeen, 2012). Because leadership definitions are shaped by cultural beliefs about leaders and what it means to be a leader, contemporary researchers are looking at leadership characteristics as assigned to gender-roles and society's perceptions of gender in leadership roles (Johnson et al., 2008; Madden, 2011).

Noting that strong leadership is associated with masculine gender role traits such as assertiveness, confidence, and control, Johnson et al. (2008) states that people, as

individuals have behavioral expectations for how men and women should behave socially.  Hoyt and Murphy (2016) contend one of the many explanations being offered for the lack of women in top leadership positions is the stereotypical belief that women do not fit the preconceived notions of a leader. The lack of fit falls between female characteristics, skills, and aspirations and the characteristics and skills thought to be necessary by society for effective leadership (Hoyt & Murphy 2016).

These expectations remain steadfast in their views of how a male or female should behave in leadership roles. Therefore, a likely cause of gender discrimination is the conflict that arises from leadership traits being described as communal, agentic, or non-gendered traits (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). Johnson et al. ( 2008) defined communal qualities such as helpfulness, friendliness, and compassion as being associated with women. Non-gendered traits, such as intelligence or attractiveness were associated equally between men and women. Men are associated with agentic qualities such as aggressiveness, dominance, and assertiveness.

Madden (2011) suggests people link these agentic traits with effective leadership. Women leaders find themselves in roles that lead to negative attitudes toward them. Researchers have found that women are viewed as less effective when performing in the more masculine role of leadership (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). An example of this is when women exhibit autocratic characteristics they are viewed as violating the social role of their female gender. According to Lopez and Ensari (2014), this violation elicits disapproval from their subordinates. This is particularly true if women work in an industry that is male dominated (Lopez & Ensari, 2014).

Many studies confirm that people associate different leadership traits between men and women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008; Singh, et al, 2012). According to Ely et al., 2011 the definition of leadership is described in masculine term like decisive, assertive, and strong. This is in contrast to female qualities like friendliness, caring, and communal (Ely et al., 2011). Further, Ely, et al. (2011) found that women are stereotypically defined as passive, lacking ambition, or overemotional.

Other researchers agree and have reported male leadership is described as directive and autocratic, while female leadership is described friendly and participatory, thus presenting stereotypical viewpoints of male and female leadership (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Johnson et al., 2008). These studies lead some researchers to conclude the stereotypical definitions of leadership allows people to view men as more similar leadership characteristics and this, in turn leads to prejudice against women as leaders (Wynen, op d Beeck, & Reubens, 2015). Ely, et al.( 2011) implied that the incongruity between qualities attributed to women and qualities thought necessary for leadership creates a double standard favoring men where women in leadership positions are thought of as being too aggressive or not aggressive enough, or too assertive or not assertive enough.

Researchers have investigated the factors that contribute to the failure of closing the gap in spite of legislation designed to prevent the inequity from occurring (Wynen et al. 2015). Many researchers believe in order to understand why pay inequity occurs, the factors contributing to gender stereotyping and the occupational segregation need to be investigated (Bolitzer & Godtland, 2012). Women who work in an industry that is male dominated, they are likely to earn less than their male counterparts are and less likely to

be promoted (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). Wynen et al. (2015) believes occupational segregation occurs in patterns, horizontally and vertically.

As previously discussed, leadership styles and characteristics are often defined in agentic, communal, or non-gendered (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). Occupational segregation can be defined similarly (Wynen et al., 2015). Occupational segregation occurs when some jobs are filled by men and job jobs are filled by women. For example, more women are employed as secretaries, nurses, and school teachers, whereas more men are employed in computer sciences, engineering, and business occupations (Bolitzer & Godtland, 2012). According to Jarmon, Blackburn, and Racko (2012) occupational segregation causes gender inequality in the workplace, including pay inequity.

In 2016 when Hillary Clinton was the Democratic Presidential nominee, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) ran a headline story with the question *Does gender bias explain why Hillary Clinton has fared so poorly with white male voters?* (www. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/hillary-clinton-poorly-white-male-voters/). The story presented the idea that ambivalent sexism accounted for the reason why Ms. Clinton does not appeal to white male voters. Ambivalent sexism is a term that applies to males who are unconsciously more supportive of women who conform to traditional gender roles (Glick, Wilkerson, & Cuffe, 2015; Kaiser & Wallace, 2016).

In their research, Kaiser and Wallace (2016) use the term unconscious bias to explain the frequently held prejudicial beliefs that women are not capable of being successful in agentic oriented leadership positions. Unconscious bias toward women is similar to descriptive stereotyping discussed earlier. Heilman (2012) argues that

descriptive stereotyping toward women creates negative expectations about a woman's lack of fit in leadership roles because of the incongruity between the societal roles assigned to women and the characteristics assigned to traditional male leadership roles.

Other literature on the topic of gender and leadership reviews gender and leadership from a performance aspect. Lennon (2013) reported that women outperform men in many sectors, but they are not being promoted to high-level positions. A recent study results show that when all leadership contexts are considered, men and women do not differ significantly in perceived leadership effectiveness (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker & Woehr, 2014). Interestingly an implication of studies on leadership performance indicate that in spite of women displaying excellent skills for leadership and in some cases outperform men in their effectiveness, many organizations leaders are afraid of taking the risk of hiring women in the high-level leadership roles (Coder & Spiller, 2013; Eagly, 2007).

Singh et al. (2012) conducted a study on workers' perception on good or bad leaders. Women who displayed masculine leadership styles were seen as the worst bosses (Singh et al., 2012). While, women were more likely to view men and women as equals in their leadership abilities, men significantly ranked men higher in all leadership behaviors, including the perception that their worst bosses were women and the best were men (Pfaff et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2012).

Moving away from the direct causes of women's persistent underrepresentation in leadership positions, other research is focusing on supposed second-generation forms of gender bias (Ely et al., 2011). Second-generation forms of gender bias such as cultural beliefs about gender, to workplace structures, practices, and patterns that inadvertently

favor men, represent unseen obstacles to women's advancement to leadership roles (Ely et al., 2011).

Ibarra et al (2013) remarked on a unexpected phenomenon: Many women deny being victims of gender discrimination. Most women say they are unaware of having personally experienced gender discrimination even though they recognize that women generally experience bias or prejudice in the workplace. The researchers found that numerous women take gender out of the equation and believe their skills and talents are enough to receive recognition (Ibarra et al., 2013) Ibarra et al., (2013) believe it is the existence of gender bias in organizational policies and practices that cause women to believe they cannot determine their own success in leadership.

However, more recent reports indicate women are beginning to make progress in leadership roles. Sindell and Shamberger (2016) reviewed Gallup's 2015 *State of the American Manager Report* and found that male and female subordinates of women leaders were highly engaged with their work when compared to the male and female subordinates of men leaders. Sindell and Shamberger further stated that in the 2014 Pew research 31% of people felt that women leaders were more ethical and honest than men.

Additionally, another contemporary study on gender bias suggests there is some improvement in Western societies indicating a degree of social progress toward eliminating gender bias in the workforce (Kaiser & Wallace, 2016). However, the researchers acknowledge that the effort of the last 30 years to reduce bias has reached its limit in helping more women to the desired top leadership roles. Kaiser and Wallace (2016) support efforts to provide professional development to women in strategic

organization leadership skills as a way to encourage further progress against gender bias in the workforce.

**Gender Stereotyping in the Workplace**

Stereotyping is, in part, generalizing behavioral characteristics of groups of people and then applying the generalization to individuals who are members of the group. Researchers recently investigated gender stereotyping by dividing the generalizations into two properties, descriptive and prescriptive. Heilman (2012) focused on the significances of each of those properties. Descriptive stereotyping describes what women and men are like and prescriptive stereotyping defines defining what men and women should be like.

For example, descriptive stereotyping toward women creates negative expectations about a woman's performance as a leader because there is a lack of fit between the societal roles assigned to women and the characteristics assigned to traditional male leadership roles. Prescriptive stereotypes or ascribing behaviors to what women should be like and the agentic characteristics of leadership create an incongruity with expected female behavior (Ely et al., 2011; Madden, 2011, Wynen et al., 2015). Heilman further argues that whether gender stereotyping is descriptive or prescriptive the practice impedes the progress of women into leadership roles.

One cannot approach gender bias and stereotyping of female behavior in the workplace without looking at pay inequity. The reason for this is that researchers often look at inequality between the salaries of men and women (Wynen et al. 2015). Bolitzer and Godtland (2012) found that the pay gap is narrowing, but it still exists. Lennon (2013) reports that in higher education, particularly at four-year institutions, a woman earns 20% less than their male colleagues do. The ACE statisticians in a 2016 report

(http://www.acenet.edu) confirms that at higher education institutions earn less than their male counter parts and occupy few tenured positions.

Bolitzer and Godtland (2012) shared results of their research into the pay gap and discovered that the difference in pay had declined between 1988 and 2007. One reason for the drop may be due to men and women have become more alike in their work experience and level of education. Lennon (2013) reported that women are outperforming men but that their salaries do not reflect their high performance. However, a gap remains, Bolitzer, and Godtland expressed that if education and job experience can no longer be attributed as a reason for the gap, then perhaps pay inequity is due to the unequal treatment of women in the workforce.

Gender stereotyping in the form of occupational segregation is one source for gender inequalities in the work force (Wynen et al., 2015). Occupational segregation occurs because there is a separation of men or women in certain occupations or employment sectors (Wynen et al., 2015). This gender separation is seen in occupations such as nursing or teaching or doctors and lawyers. Often nurses or teachers are portrayed as women and doctors and lawyers are portrayed as men. According to expert researchers in social role theory, such as Eagly (1997) and Franke, Crown, & Spake (1997) gender stereotyping in certain occupations is deeply ingrained in societal roles for male and female.

Although both men and women have been shown to exhibit biases toward women in leadership positions (Alex-Assensoh, 2012; Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, & Haslam, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ellemers, Rink, Derks, & Ryan, 2012; Hunt-Earle, 2012; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011), Ellemers et al. (2012) noted that most

people prefer to believe in a just world where gender discrimination is rare, and success is based on merit; therefore, in most instances, they will treat allegations of unequal treatment unfavorably. This in turn results in fewer reports for fear of negative repercussions; thus, inequity is often not noticed, challenged, or addressed (Ellemers et al., 2012). Furthermore, Ibarra et al (2013) believe when organizations advise women to seek leadership roles without addressing the subtle biases that exist in policies and practices, the organizations undermine the psychological development that must take place to become a leader.

**Women in the Workforce**

Ethel Puffer Howes (1872–1950) was one of the first women who, having completed graduate (PhD) work at Harvard, was conferred a Radcliffe College PhD. However, she lived in an era where married women were viewed as inappropriate candidates for teaching positions. Her marriage brought her career in psychology to a halt due to these academic hiring practices (Prieto, 2012; Phipps & Prieto, 2014). Researchers have discovered this basic prohibition to hire married women and to suppress women's desire to achieve a full-filling work career is still persistent today.

Many women believe they will have to give up a full personal life if they want to attain success in the workforce (Phipps & Prieto, 2014). As long as the culture continues to define careers as all consuming, and as long as women continue to be assigned the gender role with all the responsibility for the nurturing of children, there could be no solution to the dilemma, according to Phipps and Prieto (2014). The social assigning of gender roles is one of the pillars of Eagly & Karau's (2002) role congruity theory.

The role of women in the United States has shifted over time as their role within the family and the changing nature of employment has evolved. There is historical context that frames how women's roles have been perceived over time (Parker, 2015). Women have made advancement in both of the equal rights and civil rights movements over the past 70 years (www.bls.gov).

Women's participation in the workforce has grown consistently since World War 11 when less than one-third of females worked outside the home (www.bls.gov). Their contributions in the labor pool grew rapidly beginning in the 1960s. The rate of growth of women participating in the workforce began slowing in the 1990s reaching a historical high 60 % of the labor force in 1999. According to statisticians at the U.S. Bureau of Labor of Statistics the participation of females has declined in 2014 to 57 %.

Historically, early divisions in work roles created the woman's job versus man's job approach and it remains a part of perceived leadership effectiveness today (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2012, Parker, 2015; Pfaff et al., 2013, Schein & Mueller, 1992, Singh et al., 2012). The division of labor was determined by gender (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2012). For example, in 1870, there was an occupation group categorized as the professions (Parker, 2015). The professions were select occupations such as, law, judicial positions, medicine, science, dentistry architecture, ministry, and university teaching. According to Parker (2015), white males dominated these professions and it was a common occurrence to exclude women from this group of occupations.

Nonetheless, Parker (2015) reported that in 1870, 5% of all employed women were working in the occupational group categorized as the professions. In 1930, the percentage of women represented in the profession group grew to 14% (Parker, 2015). In

1960, women in the general workforce represented nearly one-third of workers. In the professions, though the percentage was far lower with women at 3.5% of lawyers, 6.8% of doctors, 4.2% of physicists, and 5.8% of clergy (Oppenheimer, 1970, as cited in Parker, 2015). Women received different academic training than men. Certain occupations, such as administrative or those occupations requiring relatedness and sharing were considered feminine occupations and while other occupations were masculine such as medicine or law and men occupied the more controlling positions or the leadership roles in the workforce (Lopez-Zafra et al., 2012; www.bls.gov).

In a 2009 report from the BLS, women held 40% of management positions in the United States, yet of the Fortune 500 companies, only 2% had CEOs who were women. Yet, in spite of women displaying excellent skills for leadership and in some cases outperform men in their effectiveness, many organizations leaders are afraid of taking the risk of hiring females in the high-level leadership roles (Coder & Spiller, 2013; Eagly, 2007). Additionally, Bosak & Sczesny (2011) discovered when all else is equal on a résumé, men will hire and promote men into leadership more frequently.

**Barriers to Female Leadership**

However, while it cannot be denied that there is an underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, there is research indicating that there may be other reasons for the disparity of women in leadership roles. For example, researchers have looked at factors such as career development, succession planning, and generational causes (Laud & Johnson, 2013; Murray & Chua, 2014; Virick & Greer, 2012). Teague (2015) implies that barriers are often a result from gender bias in recruitment, hiring decisions, and work assignments. Women find there is a lack of mentorship and development programs for

leadership. Teague points out that gender based preferences are not always intentional and many biases are unconscious. A continued investigation into the role these factors may play in the lack of women as top-level leaders is a worthwhile investigation.

Women who aspire to or have obtained leadership positions face innumerable barriers reaching top-level leadership roles and maintaining a presence in those roles. These barriers are caused by the incongruity between stereotypical gender and leader role expectations and their exhibited leadership behaviors (Chin, 2011; Christman & McClellan, 2012; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ely et al., 2011; Haveman & Beresford, 2012; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). These barriers are often described as the glass ceiling, the ivory basement, and velvet ghetto situations and they represent obstacles women face on their career paths in order to obtain and achieve success in executive leadership roles (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014).

Eagly and Carli (2009) suggested that the glass ceiling can be more accurately conceived of as a circuitous movement toward leadership or a labyrinth, where there is, no direct path and no insight toward the barriers that may be encountered. Additionally, Ely et al. (2011) refer to second-generation forms of gender bias such as cultural beliefs about gender, to workplace structures, practices, and patterns that inadvertently favor men, represent unseen obstacles to women's advancement to leadership roles.

Career development barriers have also found prominence in women in leadership studies. Researchers have investigated the differences in female and male career development and strategies in light of obstacles that women may face. Successful females in Laud and Johnson's (2013) study found that females were not overly burdened by gender stereotypes when they had a clear career path strategy. Instead, successful women

took advantage of networking and education opportunities when they perceived they might gain an edge in promotional opportunities. In contrast, men sought an edge through self-promotion. Laud and Johnson concluded when women exhibited the same tactics as men, such as intense interest in competition, perseverance and strong desires to excel, they were as successful in reaching top-level positions as men.

Succession planning within an organization provides the opportunity for women to take advantage of opportunities to be successful on their career path. Virick and Greer (2012) found that organizations with a diversity program in place helped to reduce bias through training, network opportunities, and mentoring to women. These programs provided women the opportunity to work on highly visible projects and obtain cross-functional experiences. Diversity and succession planning help to safeguard women against being overlooked when promotional opportunities into top-level positions were available.

However, there is evidence that women are often appointed to high ranking leadership positions during times of organizational crisis (Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Ryan, Rink, & Haslam, 2014; Cook & Glass, 2014, 2016). Cook and Glass (2016) named this barrier the glass cliff. Men are often selected for top level positions when few crises exist, nonetheless according to several studies women tend to be selected for leadership positions when companies begin to struggle financially or during some other organizational emergency is at hand (Cook & Glass, 2014, 2016; Hunt-Earle, 2012). One reason for this is because crisis management requires leadership characteristics often attributed to females such as collaborative traits and other interpersonal abilities (Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka, & Aritzeta, 2012). Ryan et al. (2011) and other researchers, such as

Bruckmüller et al. (2014) and Hunt-Earle (2012) argue that women leaders with poorly performing organizations weakens the leadership aspirations individually and collectively of women by reinforcing existing stereotypes.

However, Cook and Glass (2016) found in their recent study that women continue to be promoted to executive leadership roles that are very risky or at a time when the organization was struggling. The researchers report that every woman executive they interviewed had been asked on one time or another during their career to take on a high-risk assignment during a time of crisis. Further, Cook and Glass reported the women sought out high-risk positions to prove they were capable as a leader and gain a reputation as crisis managers or transformational leaders.

Some researchers have suggested that the lack of women in leadership positions is explained by a lack of diversity within an organization (Cook & Glass, 2014; Virick & Greer, 2012). Virick and Greer (2012) found that organizations with a diversity program in place helped to reduce bias through training, network opportunities, and mentoring to women. Diversity and succession planning help to safeguard women against being overlooked when promotional opportunities into top-level positions were available.

Cook and Glass (2014) used Fortune 500 company data from 1990 to 2011 to analyze how firm performance, board diversity, and performance after appointment influenced women's appointments to and tenure in CEO positions. The researchers determined that women's promotional possibilities increased when there was diversity among the decision makers within an organization. Cook, Glass, Virick, and Greer found that within the context of diversity, when the board of directors includes women and

other minorities, there were more appointees from minority groups into high levels positions.

The suggestion by Cook and Glass (2014) that increased diversity within an organization would automatically lead to additional women being appointed to top leadership positions failed to consider embedded gender conceptions and role expectations, which research has shown may significantly influence organizational practices (Acker, 2012; Bruckmüller et al., 2014; Ely et al., 2011; Hunt-Earle, 2012). Rather than exploring women's leadership development as a process reciprocal interaction occurring between environmental, personal, and behavioral factors, these studies focus entirely on outside forces, even when the developmental processes occurring within the women are purported to be central in the research.

Other barriers exist to women successfully obtaining leadership roles. According to Ely et al. (2011) women face issues directly related to external environmental and contextual factors. For example, the development of leader-identity in women is constructed from both individual and socially constructed definitions of leadership (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Ely et al., 2011). Leadership definitions are based on predominantly masculine characteristics. Individuals develop a leader-identity by acting accordingly and from feedback that positively or negatively reinforce or negate their actions (Ely et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2008; Madden.2011). Ely et al. notes that some women to succeed in spite of the barriers they face, but the question of why so few women succeed is not addressed.

The focus on internal identity appears to be based on an identity constructed solely as a result of outside influences. Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory is

brought to mind. Women are influenced by their socially defined roles both inside the workplace and outside. Ely et al. suggested that assisting women in dealing with stereotypes and socio-culturally constructed ideas of leadership that are contrary to ideas of being a woman is one way to combat environmental factors and socially constructed roles. However, not addressed in Ely's (2011) study is how those who do develop a leader-identity, or those who continue to seek leadership despite organizational structures that favor men and negative feedback on performance succeed and obtain top-level positions.

Finally, there is an obstacle to women's success in obtaining leadership roles and performing successfully once those roles are attained that is rarely mentioned; the motivation to lead. Researchers investigating motivation and leadership define motivation to lead as a paradigm affecting an individual's willingness to take on the roles and responsibilities that come with those duties (Murray & Chau, 2014; Guillen, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015). Guillén et al. (2015) argue that individuals need to be truly motivated to lead in order to persist in their leadership roles despite the challenges they face. For women, according to Murray and Chau (2014), role congruity theory may influence the motivation to lead. Murray and Chau infer that studies have shown that women who exhibited conflict between their professional roles and their societal roles had lower levels of motivation to lead or become a leader.

However, motivation or the lack of it implies an idea that women are able to make choices regarding their career and how far up the ladder they go. Haveman and Beresford (2012) argue that choices, such as education, what field to study, working outside the home, full-time work or part-time are often constrained by culture. Haile, Tsegai, and

Dzathor (2016) believe that cultural and social norms for women inhibit them from acquiring the education that will lead to career progress in society.

Haile et al. (2016) report that the stress of balancing work and family responsibilities is a major cause of the lack of women in senior leadership roles. Furthermore, the lack of flexibility in many organizations in order to accommodate women with family responsibilities is an issue that should be address. Again, we are taken back to Eagly's (1997) role congruity theory and the societal roles as an obstacle to a women's advancement.

There may be other reasons for the lower representation of women in the top professions. Parker (2015) suggests that women prefer the semi-professional occupations such as teaching, nursing, or social work. Parker cites data from a national census published by The American Association of University Women in 2003 in which statisticians reported teaching and nursing degrees were prevalent and accounted for the majority of women's college degrees obtained leading to the traditional careers chosen by this group.

There is evidence that women, themselves choose traditional female careers and often reject the idea that they were channeled into a particular occupation (Finstad-Million & Naschberger, 2014). Furthermore, Finstad-Million and Naschberger (2014) found career choices were made based on work-life balances and a sense of achievement and fulfillment. Finstad-Million and Naschberger found traditional and non-traditional career selection often appears to be a matter of choice for individuals and less of a female career or male career decision. There is also a question of whether the choices women make are really choices. Haveman and Beresford (2012) argue that choices, such as

education, what field to study, working outside the home, full-time work or part-time are often constrained by culture the women comes from.

However, of particular interest as to why women are underrepresented in certain occupations relates to the fact that many women leave high-powered positions and organizations to start their own business or because there are better opportunities elsewhere (Dunn-Jensen & Stroh, 2007). McBride (2015) reported survey results from women who are current or aspiring entrepreneurs. These women were from United States, China, France and Mexico. In China, nearly half of the women sought to control their own futures through entrepreneurship. In France and Mexico, nearly two-thirds of women surveyed said they wanted pride in themselves. McBride further reports women sought entrepreneurship as a path to wealth, but they also saw being self-employed as a way to escape the corporate world. A better work-life balance motivated 55% of women to leave high-powered jobs to become a small-business owner.

**Women in Higher Education**

A number of studies have addressed the experiences of women in academic leadership positions. The American Association of University Professors submitted a report in 1983 on the status of women in academic professions. Acknowledging that women in higher education were primarily part-time and in temporary positions, the authors of the report advocated for the implementation of effective affirmative-action plans, questioning whether discrimination toward women had really been eradicated (Parker, 2015; Wallace, Budden, Juban, Budden, 2014).

Research has primarily focused on: (a) shared experiences of women leaders, (b) perceived barriers, inequalities, and challenges faced by women leaders, (c) career paths

of successful women leaders, and (d) ways in which successful women leaders have overcome these challenges (Alex-Assensoh, 2012; Madden, 2011; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Parker, 2015; White, 2012). Cook (2012) looked closely at the American Council on Education (ACE) collected data on American college presidents. The ACE statisticians reported that 26% of women in higher education hold the office of presidency. This percentage has slowed down from the 50% growth rate experienced in the 1990s (Cook, 2012).

Researchers have found that community colleges have the largest female representation in leadership in higher education institutions (Parker, 2015; Wallace et al. 2014). McKenney and Cejda (2001) reported that 39% of faculty at post-secondary educational institutions were women in 2000. Evidence collected in 2011 by the American Council on Education (ACE) on American college presidents indicate a growth in the number of women who have achieved the presidency in a higher education institution by 15% between the years 2006 and 2011.

Cook's (2012) analysis of the ACE's report indicates that 15% growth is less than the near 50% increase of women in the presidency during the 1990s, indicating the number of women rising to top positions is increasing at a very slow rate. Recent findings suggest that women's progress in leadership has stopped altogether (Baltodano, Carlson, Jackson, & Mitchell, 2012; Lennon, 2013). The reason for the slow rate of increase remains unknown and the slow growth rate is an indication of a problematic issue of underrepresentation of women in higher education (Cook, 2012). One reported cause of the lack of women in leadership roles is there is a lack of qualified women applying for these positions (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014).

However, Lennon et al. (2013) reported that more women in the U.S are attending college and obtaining advanced degrees than men. In fact, according to a 2011 U.S. Census Bureau News report more women are expected to occupy a college professor's position, as they represent 58 percent of young adults between the ages of 25 to 29, many who hold advanced degrees (BlackChin, 2015). There is no shortage of qualified women and yet, the higher number of women qualified for leadership roles are not translating into a higher representation of women in leadership roles (Lennon et al., 2013; Teague, 2015). Furthermore, Lennon (2013) argues that in higher education, women who do hold executive leadership positions are pointedly lagging behind men in both status and salary.

Additionally, Gallant (2014) points out the under-representation of women and the absence of women in senior leadership globally in higher education remains a problem. In Gallant's (2014) study, women themselves provided inconsistent definitions of a leader and leadership characteristics, their own workplace interactions, and self-reflections. Furthermore, Gallant found the participants had a gendered view of leaders, attributing aggressive leadership skills with males and the softer, nurturing leadership skills with women. Attributing the hard skills with men and soft skills with women accounts for the gender role stereotyping that hinders women from being considered for and promoted to senior leader positions. Gallant (2014) concluded her research with the recommendation for leadership programs to place emphasis on reviewing gendered notions about leadership characteristics while stimulating awareness toward promoting qualified women into senior leadership roles.

There is research that points out that women have been perceived as modestly more effective in education, government, and social services as in other of organizations

(Madden, 2011). Interestingly, Madden (2011) suggests the career where women can make the most progress in leadership is in higher education. may be a place where women can make inroads into leadership positions. Some researchers seek to examine which leadership styles are better styles for women by re-defining some leadership styles roles typically associated with feminine characteristics. Reynolds (2013) called for a gender-holistic leadership model, proposed that women are better suited to the characteristics and traits assigned to servant or resonant leadership style roles than the more directive or transactional roles. Reynold's research sought to reduce the gender-equality issue through introducing the servant leadership style into organizational leadership as a gender-neutral leadership style.

In higher education there are reports that women are starting to make greater strides in reaching leadership roles. However, a 2016 report published by ACE (http://www.acenet.edu) found that women are moving ahead in the ranks of leadership in higher education and they are being prepared for leadership at a greater pace than men. As previously reported female students are earning more than half of all baccalaureate degrees and at least half of all doctoral degrees in the past 10 years. The report indicates women are being prepared for leadership positions and belies past reports that women are not qualified for leadership positions.

**Barriers Inside Higher Education**

The barriers to women's access to and success in leadership positions in the context of higher education are well documented (Alex-Assensoh, 2012; Madden, 2011; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; White, 2012). Maranto and Griffin (2011) used the term *chilly climate* to describe the exclusion women experience in seeking access to leadership

positions in higher education institutions. Women remain undervalued, marginalized and often excluded as they attempt to achieve and advance into leadership roles (Alex-Assensoh, 2012; Madden, 2011; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; White, 2012). White (2012) found that many women leaders describe their workplace environs as demanding and hostile. Many researchers have noted that although women in academia have made some progress with respect to obtaining leadership positions, women still lag behind their male colleagues (Gallant, 2014; Lennon, 2013; Parker, 2015).

Recent research has documented the persistence of barriers and has noted that some higher education institutions appear to be slow to embrace women in leadership positions (Morley, 2013; White, 2012). Cook's (2012) research indicates that women appear to follow a traditional career path toward top academic positions. For example, women become well known as faculty and scholars within higher education. Men who rise to top positions are likely to come from other businesses, politics, or military, or even a non-academic position on campus. Cook suggests there is a sexist strategy at work where men are hired for their potential and women are hired based on their achievements.

There is a distinct difference between a woman's career path to president and a man's path. One difference is women presidents are more likely to hold a doctorate in education than male presidents (Ballenger, 2010; Cook, 2012). A further look at how women presidents have taken different career paths is indicated that they have more years teaching than men who take on the role of presidency (Cook, 2012). Cook (2012) reports that 75% of women have experience in the classroom, compared to 66% of men. Additionally, Ballenger (2010) more women served as provosts prior to being appointed president.

However, ACE statisticians recently reported found that a fewer the number of female faculty members have tenure. The report indicates in 2014, male faculty members held a higher number of tenure positions across all types of institutions, but they did not hold the highest percentage of faculty positions overall (http://www.acenet.edu). Additionally, females earned 15% less pay that men across the board at higher education institutions .

Gender implications in presidential selection are seen in the hiring trends where men are more likely to come from politics, military or business sectors outside higher education (Cook, 2012). According to Cook (2012), more than one in ten of those selected to serve as president came from outside higher education. Search committees may be willing to take more risks with a man, according to Cook (2012). This idea of risk associated with male or female candidates is reported by other researchers arguing that in spite of women displaying excellent skills for leadership and in some cases outperform men in their effectiveness, organizational leaders are afraid of taking the risk of hiring women in the high-level leadership roles (Coder & Spiller, 2013; Eagly, 2007). Cook suggests that selection committees may look at women with a different criterion to prove their qualifications. Cook adds that men appear to be hired based on what they may do in the future, whereas women appear to be hired based on what they have done in the past.

There is an aging of those who hold presidency position currently. Nearly 60% of presidents are 61 or older and getting ready to retire (Cook, 2012). As current presidents begin to retire increasing opportunities will be created for women. Cook (2012) suggests institutions use search consultants in order to get balanced pool of qualified candidates reducing bias and stereotyping and increasing diversity. Cook concludes that women are

closing the gender gap, leadership development, mentoring and networking opportunities are needed to close the gap and increase the representation of women presidents.

White (2012) advocates for leadership development programs for women, particularly in the areas of professional development for women leaders at different stages of their careers. However, some institutions have reported that they have tried to recruit women at middle and upper ranks of faculty or higher education administration and found many women declined to take on the executive leadership positions causing researchers such as Guillén et al.(2015), Murray & Chau (2014), and White (2012) to conclude that while gender-based obstacles remained in place as women sought advancement to highest positions in higher education leadership, many women lack the motivation to lead when actively recruited for executive leadership positions. However, according to Lennon (2013) research refutes the idea that women are underrepresented in leadership roles because they choose their families or lifestyles over time-consuming or demanding positions. Closely aligned to motivation, Teague (2015) another obstacle women face is their own self-doubt. Teague believes that many women see themselves as less qualified for key leadership positions and often a woman will accept a more subservient role as the better position for themselves.

It cannot be denied that bias is extensive in higher education for a number of reasons. Institutional organization, customs, and cultures are regular obstacles to women's progress (Alex-Assensoh, 2012). Many female faculty members serve their institutions willing, giving of their time and talents only to have their efforts disregarded when leadership succession and other benefits are considered (Alex-Assensoh, 2012). Women

are more likely to be in lower-level leadership positions and to have limited influence (Alex-Assensoh, 2012; Gallant, 2014; Madden, 2011).

The trend in leadership theories promote transformational or collaborative leadership styles (Chin, 2011). However, the culture in institutions of higher education tends to practice top-down leadership and tolerant of stereotypical role expectations regarding gender and leadership (Chin, 2011). According to Chin (2011), these factors negatively affect women's entry into leadership positions, assessments of their effectiveness, and finally, their success in leadership positions.

Researchers have examined women's perception of the cultural and structural barriers to (Dominici, Fried, and Zeger, 2009; Ballenger, 2010). Themes that emerged from these studies included marginalization of women in informal intellectual leadership networks, obstructed or slower paths to leadership positions, and a lack of recognition and reward within institutions for the work being done by women (Dominici et al., 2009). Organizational policies, practices, and ideologies were listed as cultural barriers. These barriers included insufficient training or mentoring, the *good old boy network*, and gender inequities (Ballenger, 2010). Ballenger (2010) found that insufficient mentoring resulted from too few women in leadership positions available to mentor other women. Although many women had male supportive male mentors, men could not understand the challenges of meeting the demands of both career and family the women (Ballenger, 2010). Ballenger reported that women found the structure of higher education to be dominated by male, decision-making, hiring committees made up by a majority of males that did not welcome women or support women with family responsibilities. Just as gender inequities included a lack of diversity in hiring committees, Ballenger (2010),

Bolitzer and Godtland (2012, and Wynen et al. (2015) found pay inequity between men and women is a frequent barrier for women seeking executive positions in higher education institutions. As these studies have confirmed, women in higher education face barriers that limit their access to and success in leadership positions. These barriers have the added effects of discouraging women from pursuing leadership roles and restrict the recruiting of women for placement in these roles (Dominici et al., 2009).

**Summary**

A review of the literature on leadership theory reveals there is a common theme that good leadership is inconsistent with female behavior (Chin, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014; Eagly & Karau, 2002); Madden, 2011). This multi-case qualitative study will explore how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. The subject of female behavior and leadership presents the opportunity to perform further research on bias toward female behavior in leadership in the field of higher education by using the conceptual framework provided by the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders.

Leadership theory is constantly undergoing study and change. Researchers cannot come up with a conclusive definition of leadership (McCleskey, 2014). Moreover, McCleskey (2014) noted that there are hundreds of definitions and conceptions of leadership. Furthermore, the research is inconclusive that leadership is a skill learned rather than a selective genetic trait (Northouse, 2013). Much of current research into leadership theory, styles, and characteristics examines gender and leadership roles from a variety of perspectives. Seminal work from the early 1970s by Schein (as cited in Coder & Spiller, 2013) informs most of the research conducted since then. Women have made

advancement in the equal/civil rights movement for women. In 2011, the American Council on Education (ACE) on American college presidents indicated a growth in the number of women who have achieved the presidency in a higher education institution between the years 2006 and 2011. However, that growth rate has slowed and the cause for the slower growth is unknown. The role congruity theory of prejudice of women in leadership roles as put forth by Eagly and Karau (2002) may be a partial explanation for this slow down.

However, according to Madden (2011) most studies inflate differences between male and female roles. Madden further believes other researchers do not acknowledge that the differences between female and female or male and male are generally greater than the differences between genders. Madden argues that the differences debated in role congruity theory studies are overgeneralizations. (Madden, 2011).

Other barriers, such as lack of professional development programs, succession planning, and diversity programs are discussed as possible obstacles toward women's progress in leading leadership roles in higher education (Ballenger 2010; Bolitzer and Godtland, 2012; Cook, 2012; Wynen et al. (2015). Madden (2011) suggests the career where women can make the most progress in leadership is in higher education and may be a place where women can make inroads into leadership positions. Conversely, while Madden's suggestion may be well intended, the data presented by the statisticians at ACE and Cook's 2012 commentary indicate women in higher education remain underrepresented in higher education, thus supporting the need for continued research into the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders as a possible reason for such low representation.

**Chapter 3: Research Method**

The qualitative method and a multi-case study design was appropriate for exploring the problem of how do stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Researchers frequently use qualitative studies for examination of sociological phenomena and behavioral events (Yin, 2014). According to Landrum and Garza (2015), qualitative studies are exploratory in nature and allow researchers to look for the meaning in individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon.

There is a gender gap in leadership roles in the field of higher education (Chin, 2011, Cook, 2012; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). There is no doubt that women have made advancements toward gender equality in the workplace where they constitute 46% of the labor force (BLS, 2013; Chin, 2011; Pfaff, Boatwright, Potthoff, Finan, Ulrey, & Huber, 2013). However, women have not made the same advancements in corporate leadership roles (Cook & Glass, 2014, Madden, 2011). Furthermore, in higher education women are consistently underrepresented in the top ranks of leadership even though they earn more bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees than men (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Diehl, 2015; Gallant, 2014; Lennon, Spotts, & Mitchell, 2013). The data collected on American college presidents by ACE indicated women achieving the role of presidency in higher education institutions nearly doubled from 9.5% in 1986 to 19.3% in 1998 (as cited in Cook, 2012). However, between the years 2006 and 2011 the number of women who have achieved the presidency at a higher education institution has slowed to a 15% growth rate. If the growth continued at the 1998 rate, women representing college presidents would be approaching 50% instead of the 26.4% reported in 2011 (Cook,

2012). The reason for the slowing of the rate of women obtaining the position of the presidency is unknown (Chin, 2011; Cook, 2012; Cook & Glass, 2014). Upon reviewing the literature about the lack of women represented in high-level leadership positions, the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders presented by Eagly and Karau (2002) provided one possible explanation for the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in leadership in higher education. There is a conflict between leadership roles and prescriptive expectations for women's behavior. This conflict leads to prejudicial judgments and actions. This bias toward female leadership averts the promotion of women leadership positions (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). The common theme in leadership studies is that leadership quality is inconsistent with feminine behavior presents the opportunity to perform further research on bias toward women in leadership in the field of higher education (Chin, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014; Madden, 2011). The specific problem is how do stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education.

The purpose of this multi-case qualitative study was to explore how stereotypical views of female behavior affected women who aspired to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Gaining new knowledge about women's experiences with gender bias and role stereotyping may benefit future generations of women aspiring to organizational leadership roles. This study explored women's individual experiences that currently perform or have performed in these roles at colleges and universities. The problem was explored by using a semi-structured interview approach to allowing prepared questions. Researchers, such as Cohen and Crabtree (2006) and Yin (2014) suggested this approach

allows for a conversational nature to the interviews by providing the participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

The story-telling aspect of women's experiences in obtaining leadership roles and the interpretation by the interviewer endorsed the narrative analysis as a relevant method for discovering the difficulties women faced along their career path in higher education (Sands, as cited in Padgett, 2004). Looking for the complexities in the viewpoints of women who are currently performing or have performed leadership roles at colleges and universities in the United States in the state of in Arizona, members of Arizona Women in Higher Education (AWHE) were invited to participate in interviews concerning their experiences with stereotypical views of female behavior as they aspired to leadership roles in higher education.

Open-ended questions allowed the participants to describe their experiences through any changes in how they view themselves as women and as leaders, and what, if any significance they gave to experiences with stereotyping of their behavior as they sought or maintained their leadership positions. Additionally, recounting their experiences with stereotyping included stories on any change in behavior they made to avoid future experiences with stereotyping. This research adds to the body of knowledge regarding stereotypical views of female behavior and its affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education.

The following research questions explored women's individual challenges with stereotypical views of female behavior as they aspired to executive leadership roles at colleges and universities. In an effort to discover if parallels existed in women's experiences with bias or prejudice as they aspired to executive leadership roles, the

answers led to a possible reason for the underrepresentation of women leadership roles in higher education. This study addressed the following research questions:

**Q1**. How do women describe the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought leadership positions in higher education?

**Q2**. How do women define the difference between their feminine gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on in order to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education?

This chapter outlines the method and design used to conduct the research and analyze the participant's stories. The population is described including references support the proposed number of participants. Interview protocol is discussed, along with the procedure for data collection, processing, and subsequent analysis. Any researcher assumptions or limitations are discussed.

**Research Methods and Design(s)**

This was a qualitative study using a multiple-case study methodology. The study was organized by the central research questions that reflect on the underrepresentation of women leadership roles in higher education. Yin (2014) suggested qualitative studies for sociological phenomenon and behavioral events. The nature of qualitative studies is exploratory, allowing researchers to make meaning of individual experiences with particular phenomena (Landrum & Garza, 2015). According to Morse (2015), the application of the findings in qualitative studies to other situations occurs through the generalization of the evolving concepts and theory to other settings or population.

The qualitative method was selected because it allows the researcher to view the individual experiences through a constructivist lens. Power & Gendren (2015) suggested

the constructivist lens allows for the collection of emerging themes based on personal experiences of the participants as opposed to a quantitative method that promotes the more positivist viewpoint requiring scientific evidence using statistics and experiments to reveal how public, in general, operates. Quantitative data indicated there is an underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the higher educational systems. The slowing rate of growth from the late 1990s to 2012 is not explained by the data (Cook, 2012). Using a qualitative method of research, according to Yin (2014), the deeper textural descriptions produced through a narrative inquiry will illuminate the nuances of the lived experience by women who have reached the top-levels of leadership. Therefore, a qualitative method of inquiry was the better approach to answering the research questions on how women describe the significance of their experiences with bias and stereotyping.

There are several design approaches in qualitative research (Yin, 2014). All qualitative methodologies have two important elements in common. The first element is that the phenomenon occurs in a natural or real world setting. Secondly, the research involves capturing enough data to study the complexity of the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Furthermore, Gill (2014) divides phenomenological qualitative studies into separate categories: descriptive or interpretive. For the purpose of this qualitative study, a narrative analysis design was used.

Experts in qualitative research design recommend researchers focus on five elements when designing a qualitative case study (Yin, 2014; Zucker, 2009). These elements include (a) defining the research question, (b) determining the intent or purpose

of the research, (c) unit of analysis (d) connecting the data to the research question or purpose of the research, and (e) the benchmarks for interpretations of the findings.

In terms of defining the research questions, the first element of design, this study formed the questions in terms of journalistic questions of "who, what, where, how, and why" (http://blog.journalistics.com/2010/five-ws-one-h/). The most likely question for case study research is "how" or "why", according to Yin (2014). The purpose of this study was to address how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education.

The second component of the design is the intention of the study. This multiple-case study proposed that bias toward women and the stereotyping of female behavior is one reason for the lack of women's representation in high-level leadership roles in colleges and universities. The intention was to explore how women who have obtained top positions in post-secondary institutions described their experiences with bias and stereotyping.

The third component considered in the design of this study was to define the case. Yin (2014) refers to this component as the "unit of analysis" (p. 31). This is a multi-case study of women who have obtained high-level leadership positions at colleges or universities in the state of Arizona. The phenomena occurring in the real world is that women represent only 26% of the presidency in higher education institutes. In order to capture enough data to study why this is occurring, the population of women in higher education in Arizona was selected as a source that may provide a sufficient number of participants who have achieved top-level executive leadership roles at one of the colleges and universities in the state.

The fourth component of research design takes into consideration how to connect the data collected to the proposal. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to capture the perceptions of women in leadership positions. Personal interviews captured the language of women. The data needed to relate to the proposition inferred in the purpose of the study. According to Yin (2014) themes and explanations will reflect the proposition of the study. Common experiences will generate themes. Similar explanations by the women may reflect that the reason for low representation of women in leadership positions may be due to the stereotyping of female behavior.

The trustworthiness of qualitative research relies on interpreting the meanings research participants give to their experiences. The fifth element of qualitative research design was the criteria for interpreting the data. One interpretive method of data analysis is referred to as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Gill, 2014; Smith, 2004; Symeonides & Childs, 2015). IPA attempts to relate phenomena to significant personal experiences (Gill, 2014). In this study, the focus was on the narrative value of the individuals' career path stories. Gill (2014) citing van Manen (1984) explained, interpretive or hermeneutic methodology seeks to transform the lived experience into words. The literal interpretation of their experiences change from the number of times they may have experienced or even perceived gender bias or stereotyping to a contextual relationship as they tell their stories about the actual experiences (Chenail, 2012). As the researcher, I sought the how the participants made sense and meaning of their personal experiences as they aspired to their top-level leadership positions. The reliability of this qualitative research using an interpretative analysis relied on my role as the researcher to comprehend the meanings the women give to leadership in theory and practice. The

process was to transform the data into information that becomes an evidence-based assertion of the interviewer thinks they have learned from their observations and conversations (Chenail, 2012).

Using a multiple-case study approach, this qualitative study explored the experiences of women leading to their leadership role in higher education at senior level positions and executive level of President, Chancellor, or Chief Academic Officer. The story-telling aspect of women's experiences in obtaining leadership roles and the interpretation by the interviewer confirmed the IPA was a relevant method for exploring the difficulties women faced along their career paths in higher education. This research added to the body of knowledge on the challenges these women experienced in their female gendered role and their status as an organizational leader. By acknowledging the challenges women faced, this study provided needed information to enhance leadership and professional development programs and addressed the issues of gender role biases and stereotyping in the workforce, specifically at higher education institutions.

**Population**

Members of Arizona Women in Higher Education (AWHE) were invited to participate in interviews concerning their experiences as a woman in leadership in higher education. Dedicated to improving the professional environment for women in higher educational institutions, AWHE is a network with a membership of approximately 511 individuals. The organization is a member of the larger national networking system of the American Council on Education's Women's network. Guided by the principle that an unbiased and equitable environment offers quality higher education, AWHE' members value inclusive leadership, diversity, and association with other like-minded

organizations (http://www7.nau.edu/edsup/awhe/default.aspx). Given that the network is committed to improving the workplace environment in Arizona's colleges and university, the organization was an appropriate population to respond to questions of bias and stereotyping within Arizona's higher education systems. The organization's membership is inclusive of all women regardless of employment rank; women who are at the beginning of their higher education careers freely associate with experienced college presidents, faculty, and administrative staff.

**Sample**

Sampling and sample sizes in qualitative research is considered problematic for researchers because the experts in qualities research in design do not agree on what is an appropriate sample (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015; Gill, 2014; Yin, 2014). The inconsistencies and ambiguities leaves new researchers without a clear and coherent understanding of appropriate sample sizes (Gentles et cal., 2015).

Sample sizes in qualitative studies tend to be smaller in number when compared to quantitative studies. Mason (2010) suggested the reason is because qualitative research is about making meaning of the data, rather than making a generalization about the data collected. In quantitative studies sampling size logic or power analyses is used to determine the desired sample size. According to Yin (2014) it is not necessary to use the sample sampling size logic in qualitative studies because the researcher using a multi-case design is able to use their own discretion when determining the number of cases to be studied.

Researchers such as Gentles et al. (2015), Gill (2014), and Yin (2014) compared a variety of qualitative methodologies. Gentles et al. found the three major qualitative

research traditions of grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study do not agree on the size of the sample needed to conduct good research. For example, Gentles et al. cite several experts who suggested 25 interviews for grounded theory, but no less than six would be sufficient; phenomenology experts suggested between 10 and 30 participants; multiple case study proponents argued that four to ten cases would be sufficient. Data saturation was the defining measure of sample size. Data saturation is thought to occur when there is a redundancy found in the information being collected and nothing new is being added (Gentles et al., 2015).

For the purpose of this study, the employment ranking of the women selected from the membership rolls of AWHE controlled the number of case studies to be used. Selection criteria for each individual will require that (a) the participant identifies as a female, (b) the participant is currently employed or has been employed in a top-level leadership position within the past 10 years, and (c) a member of the AWHE organization. The sampling procedure was therefore a criterion-based or purposive sampling.

The current membership rolls indicated there several individuals who currently hold the position or have held the position of a senior level leader, college/university president, chancellor, or chief academic officer. The individuals will be invited to participant by a posting on the group's LinkedIn and Facebook pages. Personal emails with a request to participate were sent after a low response to the social media postings. After the participants agreed to join the study, a second contact was made by email to determine the dates and times to meet for the individual interviews. At the time of the second contact, discussion of the purpose of the research occurred to ensure the

participants have a clear understanding of the purpose of the study in order to make an informed consent to participate. A signed informed consent form was obtained.

**Materials/Instruments**

In this study, these interviews captured the language of women. The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions that explored the knowledge of leadership and experiences of these women in their leadership roles. Questions related to the participants' definitions of leadership, leadership styles, and how these definitions influenced their workplace behavior. The questions allowed for an exploration of any incongruence between their feminine roles and leadership roles. The questions were designed to allow the women to describe what significance any experiences with bias or stereotyping of their female behavior had on their obtaining their career goals.

The interview questions were adapted with permission from the interview protocol questions developed by Klotz (2014) in the dissertation *The Journey To The Top: Women's Paths to the University Presidency* (for more information on Klotz visit http://www.annmarieklotz.com/about/). Klotz (2014) developed questions based on the social constructivist point of view. In qualitative research, using the constructivist world-view allows for each participant to share their stories as they experienced it rather having to fit their experience into a single, only one correct answer perspective (Power & Gendren, 2015). Once adapted for this study, the interview questions were reviewed by an expert in the field of gender studies to ensure alignment with the research questions. The result of the review led to adjustments to the questions that ensured alignment with the research questions.

**Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis**

In my role as the researcher in the data collection process and analysis, I used investigative questions and listened carefully to the responses in order to discover nuances in the stories indicating bias or stereotyping of female behavior (Simon, 2011). In order to do this, I engaged with the participants in a formal interview using semi-structured interview techniques with a list of questions covered during the interview. By maintaining the semi-structured nature of the questions, I was able to allow for relevant trajectories that may have strayed from the guide as appropriate (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

As the researcher, I focused on the narrative value of participant's stories. The number of times they may have experienced or even perceived gender bias or stereotyping changes from a literal interpretation to a contextual relationship when viewed narratively, for example (Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown & Homer,2004; Smith, 2004). The trustworthiness of this qualitative research relies on the researcher deducing the meanings these participants give to bias and stereotyping of the female gender role as it relates to their experiences on their career path to leadership and their practice of leadership. In qualitative analysis the process is to transform the data into information that confirms what the researcher has learned from their observations and conversations (Chenail, 2012). Chenail (2012) and others, such as Feldman et al. (2004), have concluded the researcher's role is to look at the data from a metamorphic perspective that allows the unspoken, implied understandings that lie beneath the stories the women will tell during their interviews to give meaning to their experiences.

Gill (2014) recommended four key steps to use to organize the analyses of the narratives collected. The first was a careful reading of the transcripts for emerging themes. The second was connecting the themes through clustering. The third component brought the themes together from all the case studies, and fourth an analytical interpretation was conducted. In my role as the researcher, I used computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to isolate the stories and themes. Once isolating the stories and themes was completed, cross-referencing was done by using a coding method described in Saldana (2013).

Several steps were used to organize, code, and analyze the data collected as described above. A careful reading of the transcripts and notating the themes was an important first step. Another step used to organize the data was to triangulate the multiple perspectives for the purpose of locating consistency in the findings (Saldana, 2013). An examination of the data after it is categorized included notations of preliminary interpretations. The CAQDAS allowed for cross-referencing of the data to synthesize the information and locate patterns important to determining if bias and stereotyping of women leads to a possible explanation of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in higher education. CAQDAS selected was Dedoose. Dedoose allowed for analyzing qualitative research using text and audio. Text segments were marked and then coded to allow for easy retrieval. A list of assigned codes, including the frequency of use for each code was one advantage of using CAQDAS software (Padgett, 2004; Saldana, 2013).

**Assumptions**

Transforming data into an evidence-based assertion of what can be learned from observations and conversations is a metaphoric process of qualitative narrative analysis (Chenail, 2012). The assumption is the interviewer was able to spend enough time with each participant to collect ample data to provide a reliable and objective analysis (Morse, 2015). Another assumption is that allowing women to tell their stories provided an ample enough context to uncover patterns that explained the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the state's higher education institutions. In designing the study as a formal interview with semi-structured interview techniques, the assumption was that participants will be honest in their answers and subjective with their responses, while the researcher remains objective in the analysis.

Steps taken to ensure these assumptions were reasonable, included multiple contacts between the interviewer and participant prior to the actual interview. Initial contact requesting participation, secondary contact to discuss scope of the research allowed the participant and interviewer to develop a trustworthy and objective relationship. This step strengthened the assumption that the women told their stories in depth, allowing for the collection of rich data with enough context to allow for data saturation (Morris, 2015).

**Limitations**

The potential weaknesses in this study's design was the researcher's bias or tendency to see in the data that which is anticipated (Morris, 2015). According to Morris (2015), data that is tied closely to specific theory may be expected to have anticipated characteristics. The conceptual framework for this research is related to role congruity

theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Therefore, the researcher guarded against bias and protected the data from undue influence inherent in her own experience with gender bias.

Measures taken to mitigate this limitation included peer review of the interview questions and the subsequent review of the findings by a peer and committee members. Through the questioning of the data, this strategy strengthened the unbiased synthesizing of the data and assisted in locating patterns of bias thus diminishing threats to internal validity of the research design (Morris, 2015).

**Delimitations**

The research design is specifically limited to the population of women in higher education in the state of Arizona. This is a purposive sampling, interviewing only those who volunteered and held a particular position of interest, that being senior level leadership in the Arizona post-secondary institutions.

**Ethical Assurances**

Based on the guidelines of the Belmont Report (1979), the ethical principles of respect of persons, beneficence, and justice were honored throughout the research study Prior to any contact with participants, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Belmont Report, 1979). Written informed consent forms were sent to the participants. Prior to the interview, after the written consent from a participant was received, a telephone conversation was conducted to (a) explain the purpose of the study more fully, (b) schedule a time, and place for the interview. During the telephone conversations additional time was provided to allow the participants to ask additional questions. This protocol allowed participants to make an informed decision regarding

their participation in the study and confirm their clear understanding the purpose of the study, possible risks, and the terms of confidentiality. There was no physical risk to the participants during the interview as the interview was conducted in an environment of their choice. In order to minimize the possible emotional risk of sensitivity to an interview question asked, the participants were able to stop the interview at any time.

The interviews were audio recorded and handwritten notes were taken during the course of the interview. These notes and digital files are kept on a password-protected flash drive. The interview notes and audio recordings are stored in a locked cabinet accessible only by me, the researcher. To maintain participant anonymity, pseudonyms were used to exclude any links between participant and interview responses. A password-protected laptop was used and the researcher has sole access to the computer. The material will be kept for a minimum of seven years per the IRB application, page 9, item 10. Data Security.

**Summary**

This chapter outlined the methodology and design used in this study. Within the outline, the reasons for the selection of using a qualitative method with an IPA was given and why the method and design were appropriate for this research (Yin, 2014). The population and the sample size recommendations were discussed, including expert opinion on data saturation (Gentles et al., 2015; Gill, 2014). Data collection and analysis was performed using Dedoose, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis to organize the data into themes using codes. Assumptions, potential limitation in qualitative designs, including the delimitation of this study was presented and the measures taken to mitigate

these limitations were presented, including the ethical principles as described in the

Belmont Report (1979) in regards to respect of persons, beneficence, and justice.

**Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this multi-case qualitative study was to explore how bias and stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Gaining new knowledge about women's experiences with gender bias and role stereotyping may benefit future generations of women aspiring to organizational leadership roles. The individual experiences of women who currently perform in these roles at colleges and universities were examined. The issue of bias and stereotypical views of female behavior was explored by using a semi-structured interview approach to allow for prepared questions. Researchers, such as Cohen and Crabtree (2006) and Yin (2014) suggest this approach is conducive to a conversational nature to interviews providing the participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the trustworthiness of the data and is followed by the results and evaluation of the findings. During data collection, the researcher focused on the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do women describe the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought leadership positions in higher education?

RQ 2: How do women define the difference between their feminine gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on in order to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education?

**Trustworthiness of Data**

Data collection took place in December of 2016. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with participants by phone or SKYPE. Semi-structured and open-ended

questions were used with each participant. Interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. One participant declined to have the interview recorded. The interviewer took clarifying notes during the recorded interviews. The interviewer took thorough notes for the non-recorded interview, taking care to ask follow-up questions to insure accurate understanding of the participant's answers. Each interview was subsequently transcribed and entered into Dedoose qualitative analysis software using the interview questions as the formatting guide. The use of the interview questions as a formatting guide expedited the examination of individual responses to all interview questions. The interview questions served as a guide to locating themes and identify recurrent patterns across participant responses. Once entered into Dedoose, all data were coded, and codes assigned to the themes discussed. Narrative analysis was then used to confirm thematic elements and inform the interpretation of the texts.

The trustworthiness of this qualitative research relied on the researcher deducing the meanings these participants give to bias and stereotyping of the female gender role as it relates to their experiences in leadership roles Chenail, 2012; Yin, 2014). The trustworthiness of the data collected was protected by the selecting of a narrative analysis design with semi-structured interview questions to allow for story arcs and transform the data into information that confirms what the researcher has learned from their observations and conversations (Chenail, 2012).Semi-structured interview questions allow the collection of data using the story-telling aspect of women's responses with their experiences of bias toward their female behavior in leadership roles. The story-telling aspect of a semi-structured interview is a relevant method for exploring the difficulties women face along their career path in higher education. The stories captured themes in

the experiences of women who have faced the stereotyping of female behavior. In qualitative data analysis processes, Chenail (2012) and Saldana (2013) suggested focus on the narrative value of the respondents' stories would be provided through the capturing of the language used by the respondents during the interviews and the interpretive method of data analysis. Chenail (2012) described qualitative data analysis as a story-telling metamorphic process where the researcher seeks to make an evidenced based assertion of the knowledge gained from the conversation with the participants. In narrative analysis, there is an allowance for observations of language usage as interviewees describe how events during their career are perceived and understood (Padgett, 2004). As such, according to Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, and Homer (2004), a narrative analysis of the data allows for the unspoken or implied understandings that lie beneath the stories the participants tell during their interviews.

Comparing the multiple perspectives helped to establish the trustworthiness of the data. According to Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014), data source triangulation provided by multiple perspectives assists with validation of the data collected in qualitative studies. The assumption that allowing women to tell their stories would provide an ample enough context to uncover patterns was born out through the consist similarities in the stories told. These similarities held true even though the participants were dissimilar in their personal backgrounds. Triangulation of these multiple perspectives on bias and stereotyping provided validity in that participants' responses were honest and subjective.

**Results**

The employment ranking of the women selected from the membership rolls of AWHE controlled the number of case studies used. Selection criteria for each individual required that (a) the participant identified as a woman, (b) the participant was currently employed or had been employed in higher-level leadership positions ranging from program directors to college or university president, chancellor, or chief academic officer within the past 10 years, and (c) a member of the AWHE organization. The sampling procedure was a criterion-based or purposive sampling. No other demographic information was collected. The sampling size was determined by data saturation. There was a commonality found in the information collected from the beginning of data collection. Data saturation is thought to occur when there is a redundancy found in the information being collected and nothing new is being added (Gentles et al., 2015).

Respondents volunteered to participant in a one-hour interview in person or by phone or SKYPE. Employment rankings ranged from former college presidents, current vice presidents, associate deans, and program directors in the state of Arizona. The total number of years of experience in employment in higher education ranged from10 to more than 40 years.

The results were captured through the utilization of the two research questions, which were designed to produce story-telling responses from the participants. The researcher preformed all data analysis, including transcribing the interviews and the development of the emergent themes based on the interview questions. After careful review of the transcripts, the stories told produced common threads regarding the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought

leadership positions in higher education. A common theme emerged when the respondents defined the differences between their feminine gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education.

**Research question 1**: How do women describe the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought leadership positions in higher education?

Participants defined their career journey in a linear fashion. The respondents did not plan on a career in higher education and one participant described her higher education career as her third career. All participants described a "falling into" their careers or being invited into the higher education environment. Several started their careers as they were obtaining their graduate degrees, usually because they held a second job on campus to help with their educational costs. A few mentioned they were considering business careers or were already on a business career path when called to work in education. Some started in K-12 education as teachers, others were asked or invited to apply for positions on the college campus. Once working in the field, the respondents indicated they were very happy with the choice they made. One told the story of climbing the career ladder by happenstance. She was not looking for promotion but was repeatedly asked to take on new positions with more responsibility and so she continued to find great satisfaction in her career in higher education, eventually serving as a college president.

There were two themes explored in relation to research question 1. The first theme was the experience with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice during their career and the

second theme was the significance given to the experience. All participants had experienced or witnessed bias, stereotyping, or prejudice at some point in their careers, however one responded stated she did not personally experience bias toward herself as a female.

Most found they experienced bias and stereotyping when they were up for a promotion or sought a position with a higher ranking and they failed to receive the desired promotion or failed to be selected for the higher ranked job. It was in those experiences where the participants questioned the motives of the selection committee and they placed the most significance with their experience of bias and stereotyping. One participant reported she experienced bias in the way she was treated after her promotion to a top-level position. Only Participant 1 (P1) believed her failure to be promoted had less to do with bias or prejudice and more about her qualifications for the job. She stated that she believes that larger universities may have an issue with female gender, but community colleges appear to espouse equality and it is the qualifications required for the top-level positions that carry more weight with the eventual promotion. Therefore, since the executive position she applied was at a community college, she gave more significance to her lack of qualifications than to her female gender and any bias toward her as a woman.

However, Participant 2 (P2) told her story of being called into the selection committee chair's office after interviewing for an executive position where she was told that while she gave the best interview of all the candidates, she was not getting the promotion and the job was being offered to a male colleague. P2 felt there was significant bias held against her since her qualifications held up during the interview, a male was

selected over her. Afterwards, as she thought about the whole selection process she believed that as a woman "she did not fit the mold," that "female voices don't matter," "a male equals pals in the male circle – old boy network," and "men hire those who are like them".

Participant 3 (P3) stated that she did experience and witness bias and prejudice, but did not consider the experience a "huge impediment" to her promotion. She gave the experience little significance because she felt her experience and qualifications for the position overrode any bias toward her as a female. P3 stated that she believed, overall that both men and women experienced bias not only professionally, but personally, due to lifestyle choices, sexual orientation, and racial issues. P3 did not plan to become a leader, but leadership came to her throughout her career. The levels of leadership experienced were helpful when she became a top-level leader.

Participant 4 (P4), also experienced and observed bias, stereotyping, and prejudice throughout her career. In particular, P4 observed stereotyping in how leaders, themselves approached leadership. Men tended to approach leadership as the "big man on campus," boisterous" and that men conveyed a "follow me" approach as opposed to women who approached leadership from a team building and collegial aspect. Additionally, P4 experienced bias in people's perception of leader and what a leader is expected to be and believed the significance of her experience lies in the culture of the institution and the community. The community saw women in roles other than leadership. P4 compared the societal metro/urban culture vs. rural culture stating "rural communities perceive men as what a leader should be, whereas the metro/urban community not so much."

**Research question 2**: How do women define the difference between their feminine gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on in order to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education?

Before the participants could define the difference between their feminine general roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on, the theme of leadership was first explored. When asked their perception of what leadership is, the participants described actions; "Leaders focus on the big picture," "leaders set the vision," "leaders step-up and do." Using one sentence to describe leadership, P3 stated leaders "have the ability to move people toward a goal."

Parallels in the responses contained phrases indicating those in leadership positions "count on other people." P2 stated, "leaders hire the best people and let them use their talents." "Leaders should be change agents and innovative, motivating others to do their best work." P4 commented that leadership is having "the ability to bring together a group of people to motivate and inspire them in a positive direction. The leader stands in front, behind, in the mix per the situation."

Leaders set the "vision, tone, and hire the best people to do the job," according to P1 and in agreement with P2's statement. P1 went on to state "leaders focus on the big picture to move things forward beneficially. They hire well and act as role models." Leaders act confidently, with lack of fear, 'step-up' and count on other people."

Closely tied to the respondents' perception of leadership was their own leadership style. A common thread in response to their own leadership style the respondents replied they were "collaborators, consensus builders, and encouraged teamwork." Describing where they thought their personal leadership style fitting, P1 was adamant that as a leader

her style was to act confident and make decisions with a lack of fear. However, letting people know she was "willing to step-up and work alongside others" was important. P1 felt this was how she communicated to others that she was counting on them to do their best job, too.

P2 stated she was "direct as a leader," but was a "fun" leader. She described a time when her subordinates found a photo of her "in her younger days" and she decided to come to work with a similar hairstyle and clothes as the photo. She believes this type of fun creates a collegial, cooperative atmosphere.

P3 described herself as being a strong communicator and collaborator creating a team environment. The team environment provided her with the ability to lead toward a common goal. She further explained that her upbringing in a military family that traveled and lived globally allowed her to "acculturate quickly to changing organizational cultures," leading her to success.

P4 felt collaboration was her strongest characteristic, believing that team leadership provided the opportunity for richer solutions. She also recognized that different situations require different leadership styles. P4 felt her style to view the situation allowed her to respond to the needs of her followers at the time. P4 stated "I quickly assess what is needed, how to go for it, and get it done."

Finally, the question regarding the difference in the way women lead compared to men found the participants in agreement that men are agentic in the way they lead and women are communal. P2 was adamant that men are rigid, prescriptive, authoritarian, and transactional. Women are listeners, take action and follow-up. P1 was reluctant to

describe the differences in leadership style, however eventually stated that she felt that "women are more empathic leaders and group oriented, whereas men are more direct."

P3 reported the primary difference between men's' and women's' leadership style is that "women spend more time collaborating, building consensus and allowing all to contribute compared to men who are generally more task oriented and less people oriented." P3 went on to describe women lead through nurturing, tending to develop people to be their best while "monitoring, setting parameters, women want the best for subordinates." P3 continued stating women leaders act as caregivers and are better at multi-tasking than men. P4 stated, "men are more authoritarian." For example, men take on the posture "I am the leader. You are the follower" toward their subordinates. P4 believes women are less so. Women are "collaborative" and promote teamwork with their subordinates.

Once leadership was defined by the respondents, including comments regarding the differences between men and women leadership styles, the participants were then asked to describe any changes in their leadership styles to be promoted. Respondents did not believe they were forced to change their leadership styles to be promoted. P2 adamantly stated she "did not change her leadership style." She attempted to remain her "authentic" self, stating, "You can't be someone you are not." However, P1 stated she "adapted her style to the subordinate's style." For example, one subordinate worked best with specific structure and tasks. She had adapted her style to be more authoritarian with that worker in order to get the job done, even though, she herself preferred to allow her team members to work autonomously. P3 was determined that she would not change if taking on a job meant she would have to do so. Still, she did say that she learned to be

more task-oriented to meet deadlines set upon her as a leader. P4 believed that with each promotion she received and the greater the leadership responsibility she was "required her to adapt" to succeed. For example, as a division chair she needed to use a consensus building leadership style, whereas, when she was a dean, she became "more of a disciplinarian or authoritarian." Each step on the career ladder required some sort of adaptation.

Research question two was concerned with the differences, if any between the participants' female gender and being a leader. P4 reported that some leadership roles required a more feminine approach (community, listener, collegial) and therefore as a woman she is more comfortable in the leadership style of being a consensus builder. Although when there were times she needed to become more agentic in her leadership style, meaning more disciplinary, task oriented, authoritarian, and directive. She was able to step into that role easily. P4 stated she learned to do this after an organization change that removed a layer of management. She was not able to delegate to others because those she would delegate to were gone. In many cases, the final decision became hers to make without the desired input from those who aided her decision-making process in the past. P4 also found teaching was more in tune to her feminine gender role. Teaching required her to nurture students and help them succeed. When she went into administration, she found she needed to use more masculine traits because linear thinking, analytical skills, and quick decisions were required to lead successfully in some situations. P4 stated that she recognized in herself when the "switch" would turn on and off between the leadership styles, meaning she could embrace her feminine role, but easily convert to more masculine traits when called upon.

P1 stated there were times during leadership meetings with other institutional leaders that she became most aware of her female gender. Often, she felt unacknowledged during these times. She felt she needed to be persistent in her views. Rather than disrupt a meeting trying to "be heard," she would make the rounds after the meeting and meet with other leaders on a one-to-one basis to "make her case."

P3 did not ascribe any differences to who she is as a female and a leader. Her leadership experience allows her to exhibit both female and male leadership characteristics without question. Similarly, P2 believes that as a woman and a leader she did not have to behave with traditional female behaviors. She was a risk taker, and while she was "not mean or nasty, she would not back down when advocating for her department. P2 stated she believes "women can take on a hard edge to balance leadership with their gender, education, and styles."

Both research questions elicited additional comments on the topic of female gender roles, leadership, and the lack of women college presidents. Straight away many comments were made about the number of women in Arizona who are college presidents. There are two women who are presidents of two of the major universities in the state. Several more women are currently serving as community college presidents. However, there was a consensus on the long hours of work required by these positons and managing family obligations. P2 said "it is hard" and women are often the primary caregivers in their home, so "work-life balance" is hard to find. P3 believes "there is more work to be done" and that women are making the choice not to apply for these positions because of family obligations. P1 was reluctant to comment on why there is a lack of women presidents and suggested more research be done on the number of women

who apply and are not selected. P4 related the underrepresentation to lack of women who aspire to being a college president or their own self-perception that they cannot do the job. P4 noted that more than one of the women presidents in Arizona moved here from other places, but not all women can be mobile due to family obligations. P4 also commented on the culture of the community and the institution may have an impact on the lack of women in leadership roles.

**Evaluation of Findings**

The conceptual framework of this research was based on the theories of role congruity theory of prejudice toward women in leadership roles, social role theory, and leadership theory. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders, which was an expansion of social role theory proposes that if a woman, as a leader, exhibits masculinity, she will be seen less favorably as a leader because the behavior is inconsistent with the gender assigned by society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The leadership theory suggests that the definition of leadership presents a bias in favor of men as leaders and unfavorably toward women as leaders (Eagly, 2002; McCleskey, 2014; Miller, 2013).

The literature on the topics of gender, social roles, role congruity, and leadership confirm the experiences the participants related during their interviews. The participants recognized that although they identified as female there would be times when taking on a masculine trait would be necessary to fulfil their responsibilities as a leader. The participants all experienced tremendous growth in their careers in leadership regardless of their gender and gave little significance to any bias, stereotyping, or prejudice toward them because of being a woman. Throughout their careers the participants met with

success because they were recognized by others as having the qualities and skills to lead in a variety of positions, even as a college president. Only one participant felt there was some cultural or social expectations in the way people perceived her as a woman in a leadership role.

The role of a leader is defined primarily in agentic terms. Leaders are described as assertive, aggressive, ambitious, control and dominance. These behaviors are assigned as masculine characteristics in leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Madden, 2011; Maloş, 2012). Almost as a secondary definition, the communal characteristics of being helpful, sensitive, nurturer are assigned to female characteristics in leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002: Madden, 2011; Maloş, 2012). The participants, having identified as female, also identified their primary leadership style and characteristics as communal. The respondents spoke about building consensus, teamwork, and being nurturing in their leadership.

The participants did not find it necessary to take on masculine characteristics to achieve the top roles in leadership. In fact, they were adamant that they did not change their leadership style. Yet, they did recognize that some skills were needed to fulfil the leadership roles and they took on a more analytical way of thinking or became more aggressive when it came to risk-taking. They did not find any contradiction between their female gender behavior and their behavior as a leader.

However, returning to the conceptual framework of social roles, role congruity, and leadership theories, when describing why there was a lack of women college presidents, the expected social roles for the female gender where in the forefront as possible reasons. The respondents felt that women must make the choice between top

leadership roles and family, with many women preferring subordinate positions in order to maintain a work-life balance. One of the pillars of Eagly & Karau's (2002) role congruity theory is that culture continues to define careers as all consuming in our lives. According to Phipps and Prieto (2014), as long as women continue to be assigned the gender role with all the responsibility for the nurturing of children, there can be no solution to the dilemma of the underrepresentation of women leaders in all sectors of the workforce, including higher education.

**Summary**

The purpose of this multi-case qualitative study was to explore how bias and stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. The study focused on gaining descriptions of each woman's leadership experiences and how she perceived bias, stereotyping, and prejudice as she progressed through a career in leadership in higher education. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Semi-structured and open-ended questions were used with each participant. Thematic and narrative analyses were conducted. Analysis of the collected data revealed the following: (a) the participants in the study witnessed or experienced bias, stereotyping, or prejudice and several gave significance to those experience and their success at becoming a leader; (b) participants described themselves as leaders in terms of communal leadership styles, although admitted to taking on more agentic leadership characteristics if needed to "get the job done"; (c) participants did not change their leadership styles to become a successful leader, yet they enhanced their styles with agentic characteristics if needed. Nor, did they find any major differences between their female gender role and the leadership style characteristics they exhibit.

Information presented in this chapter includes the individuality of the participants in the findings and the themes that emerged from the narratives, and provided an evaluation of the findings in relation to literature associated with the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study

**Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

Women constitute 46% of the labor force and have made advancements toward gender equality in the workplace (Chin, 2011; Pfaff et al., 2013; BLS, 2015). However, the advancements in corporate leadership roles have not been as prodigious (Cook & Glass, 2014, Madden, 2011). Furthermore, in higher education institutions there is a gender gap in leadership roles Chin, 2011, Cook, 2012; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). In higher education, women are consistently underrepresented in the top ranks of leadership (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Diehl, 2015; Gallant, 2014; Lennon et al., 2013) even though they earn more bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees than men.

There is a conflict between leadership roles and prescriptive expectations for women's behavior. This conflict leads to prejudicial judgments and actions. Bias toward female leadership forestalls the promotion of women leadership positions (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014). The common theme in leadership studies that good leadership is inconsistent with female behavior and presents the opportunity to perform further research on bias toward female behavior in leadership in the field of higher education (Chin, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014; Madden, 2011).

The purpose of this multi-case qualitative study was to explore how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Gaining new knowledge about women's experiences with gender bias and role stereotyping may benefit future generations of women aspiring to organizational leadership roles. The focus of the study was to examine individual experiences of women who currently perform in these roles at colleges and universities in Arizona.

The qualitative method and a multi-case study design was appropriate for exploring the problem of how do stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. Qualitative studies are often used for examination of sociological phenomena and behavioral events (Yin, 2014). According to Landrum and Garza (2015), the exploratory nature of qualitative studies allows researchers to look for the meaning in individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon.

The study was organized by the central research questions that reflect on the underrepresentation of women leadership roles in higher education. Using a qualitative method of research, the deeper textural descriptions produced through a narrative inquiry illuminate the nuances of the lived experience by women who have reached the top-levels of leadership (Yin, 214). Therefore, a qualitative method of inquiry was deemed to be the better approach to answering the research questions on how women describe the significance of their experiences with bias and stereotyping.

Transforming data into an evidence-based assertion of what was learned from the conversations is a metaphoric process of qualitative narrative analysis (Chenail, 2012). The assumption was that the interviewer was able to spend enough time with each participant to collect ample data to provide a reliable and objective analysis (Morse, 2015). The study was designed as a formal interview with semi-structured interview techniques, the assumption was that participants would be honest in their answers and subjective with their responses and the researcher would remain objective in the analysis.

One limitation in qualitative study design, according to Morris (2015) is the researcher's bias or tendency to see in the data that which is anticipated. Data that are tied

closely to specific theory may be expected to have anticipated characteristics (Morris, 2015). The conceptual framework for this research is related to role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Therefore, the researcher guarded against bias and protected the data from undue influence inherent in her own experience with gender bias through an in-depth review of both the recorded interviews and the extensive notes taken during the interview.

Based on the guidelines of the Belmont Report (1979), the ethical principles of respect of persons, beneficence, and justice were followed throughout the research study. Prior to any contact with participants, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Belmont Report, 1979). Written informed consent forms were sent to the participants and returned before the formal interview took place.

The interviews were audio recorded and handwritten notes were taken during the course of the interview. These notes and digital files are kept on a password-protected flash drive. To maintain participant anonymity, the respondents were randomly assigned a number to exclude any links between participant and interview responses.

This chapter includes the implications of the findings by describing the results as they relate to the research questions. The findings have been reviewed in relationship to the study problem and the purpose of the study. The significance for women in leadership in the future is described, as are the relationship of the findings to existing literature. Additionally, recommendations are discussed in relationship to possible future research and applied application.

**Implications**

Inferences drawn by answering the research questions are based on the identified themes and the narrative analysis. The data and findings, although specific to the particular case studies did support the current literature on gender, leadership and bias toward females in leadership roles, but not entirely. The sample population was criterion-based and the data was therefore limited to the perceptions of the participants and their experiences; and not generalizable to the female population employed in higher education in Arizona. The research questions provided the framework for the discussion that follows.

**Q1**. How do women describe the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought leadership positions in higher education?

After a thorough review of the findings, a common theme emerged regarding the significance of their experiences with bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as they sought leadership positions in higher education. Consistently, the participants experienced or witnessed bias, stereotyping, or prejudice and yet, they did not give the experience much significance.

Perhaps the lack of significance in the experiences falls into the idea noted by Ellemers et al. (2012) that most people prefer to believe in a just world where gender discrimination is rare, and success is based on merit. Data gleaned from the parallel stories the participants told about their rise to top-level leadership roles was lacking any significant bias or stereotyping. Repeatedly, these women reported they were not looking for promotion but were invited into the role of leadership, starting at the lower levels of

management and rising into the higher levels. The women were often asked to take on new positions with more responsibility and continued to find great satisfaction in their careers in higher education.

The participants all experienced tremendous growth in their careers in leadership regardless of their gender. Throughout their careers the participants met with success because they were recognized by others as having the qualities and skills to lead in a variety of positions, even as a college president. These stories contradict the literature that indicate women who aspire to or have obtained leadership positions face innumerable barriers reaching top-level leadership roles and maintaining a presence in those roles. The barriers faced by women are called by different names; the glass ceiling, the ivory basement, and velvet ghetto situations. (Chin, 2011; Christman & McClellan, 2012; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014: Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ely et al., 2011; Haveman & Beresford, 2012; Rudman et al., 2012).

However, while the participants placed little significance on their experiences of bias and stereotyping, there was a subtle implication in the findings that noteworthy bias and stereotyping did occur in. As previously mentioned, the participants enjoyed and continue to enjoy successful careers in leadership, yet the researcher's analysis revealed several experiences of bias when the participants' were up for a promotion and the position went to a male. There was also reported incidents of prejudice due to cultural or social expectations in the way people perceived the women in their leadership role. The implication of these experiences is that merit may have helped them succeed early in their careers and now, at the pinnacle of their career, they are being held back and held to a different standard than that of the past. In one case, after being recognized as highly

qualified for the promotion, a male colleague was deliberately chosen over her. In another case, the perception of the community caused a participant to feel apprehension regarding her performance as a leader. After years of a successful careers in leadership some barriers are rising, perhaps through what Ely et al. (2011) call a second-generation form of gender bias such as unchanged cultural beliefs about gender, changing workplace structures, practices, and patterns that inadvertently favor men and represent unseen obstacles to women's advancement to leadership roles.

The stated problem and the purpose of this multi-case study was to explore how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. In that context, in relation to research question one is that while the participants experienced stereotypical views, they gave those experiences little thought or significance. Bias, stereotyping, and prejudice did not have a major effect on the participants as they progressed throughout their careers. These findings contribute to the literature on women in leadership, gender in leadership, and the impacts of bias, stereotyping, and prejudice toward women through real world experiences of women in these roles and the lack of significance they give to the experience.

**Q2**. How do women define the difference between their feminine gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on in order to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education?

Using their experiences in leadership, the participants defined their feminine gender roles in terms equivalent to what the literature on the topics of gender, social roles, role congruity, and leadership conveys (Eagly & Karau, 2002: Madden, 2011; Maloş, 2012; Phipps & Prieto, 2014). The participants recognized that although they

identified as female there would be times when taking on a masculine trait would be necessary to fulfil their responsibilities as a leader. The implication being that as females, they were very aware that some agentic trait of male leadership would be expected. However, they did not feel that taking on masculine traits was detrimental to their success and it may have led to their success in situations where an aggressive or assertive approach was needed to lead the organization forward,

The role of a leader is defined primarily in agentic terms by society, according to the literature. Leaders are described as assertive, aggressive, ambitious, control and dominance. These behaviors are assigned as masculine characteristics in leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Madden, 2011; Maloş, 2012). Almost as a secondary definition, the communal characteristics of being helpful, sensitive, nurturer are assigned to female characteristics in leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002: Madden, 2011; Maloş, 2012). Interestingly, the participants, having identified as female, also identified their primary leadership style and characteristics as communal in nature, preferring consensus building and cooperation as the primary characteristics of their leadership style.

The implication of these findings is that the participants did not find it necessary to take on masculine characteristics to achieve the top roles in leadership. They were adamant that they did not change their leadership style and stayed true to who they were as people. Yet, they did recognize that some skills were needed to fulfil the leadership roles and they willing took on a more analytical way of thinking or became more aggressive when it came to risk-taking. That women and men can and do take on both masculine and feminine characteristics when in leadership roles is confirmed in some of the literature. Madden (2011) argues the differences debated in role congruity theory

studies are overgeneralizations. In this study, the respondents did not find any incongruity between their behavior as a successful leader and their female gender role.

Finally, contributing to the literature on the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, the researcher was able to connect the findings regarding the cultural definition of the female role in society with the encompassing view that a career is all-time consuming leaving no room for the nurturing aspects of the female gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002: Madden, 2011; Maloş, 2012; Phipps & Prieto, 2014). When describing why there was a lack of women college presidents, there was the agreement among the participants that women must make the choice between top leadership roles and family, with many women preferring subordinate positions in order to maintain a work-life balance. There was a consensus among the participants on the long hours of work required by these positons and the difficulty managing family obligations at the same time. Women are often the primary caregivers in their home, so "work-life balance" is hard to find was a frequent comment. The participants had the perception that women today are consciously making the choice between top-level leadership and family obligations. The choice not to pursue executive careers was also linked to the self-perception of women who believe they cannot do the job.

Choice and self-perception coupled with organizational and social culture of the community were believed to have an impact on the lack of women in leadership roles. This implies that the literature is accurately portraying the underrepresentation of women in leadership as due to the stereotyping of female roles. The literature on the lack on women in leadership roles is often focused on the social role or role congruity theories on female behavior. Eagly (1987, as cited in Eagly & Karau, 2002), the contemporary

seminal author of these theories has concluded that women remain suppressed in their expected female roles and their attempts to take on leadership roles in the workforce leads to prejudice and bias.

Historically, a basic prohibition to hire married women and to suppress women's desire to achieve a full-filling work career is, according to Phipps and Prieto (2014), still persistent today. Many women believe if they want to attain success in the workforce they will have to give up a full personal life (Phipps & Prieto, 2014). Phipps and Prieto suggest that there could be no solution for this dilemma as long as society continues to define careers as all consuming, and women continue to be assigned the gender role with all the responsibility for the nurturing of the family.

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore the problem of how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. In context, research question two asked the participants to define the difference between their female gender roles and the leadership-style characteristics they took on in order to succeed on their career path to a leadership role in higher education. There were no differences between being a female and their leadership style. Furthermore, the participants deny they were forced to take on a more masculine style in order to achieve a promotion or find success in their leadership roles.

**Recommendations**

**Practical application.** This study focused on the underrepresentation of women in leadership in higher education. The researcher found the results of this study revealed that while women may experience or witness bias, stereotyping, or prejudice in their roles in leadership, the lack of women in these roles may be due to the lack of women aspiring

to these roles. A recommendation for practical application of the findings in this study is that higher education institutions provide the opportunity to extend work-life balance options. The participants gave little significance to experiences with social role expectations or to the definitions society has given to the definition and characteristics of leadership. Instead, after thoughtful review of the findings, the researcher found the cause of underrepresentation may be due to the lack of the ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance when taking on a top-level leadership role. The idea of healthy work-life balance as desirable aspect of a successful career is supported by the available literature (Ely et al., 2011; Finstad-Million & Naschberger, 2014).

Finstad-Million and Naschberger (2014) found women make career choices on the basis of work-life balance opportunity and a sense of achievement and fulfillment. Further, Finstad-Million and Naschberger found traditional and non-traditional career selection often appears to be a matter of choice for individuals and less of a female career or male career decision. Additionally, women may lack the motivation to lead due to a lack willingness to take on the roles and responsibilities that come with those duties (Murray & Chau, 2014; Guillen et al., 2015).

**Future research.** In this study, the researcher revealed a composite nature of a particular group of women in higher education leadership. Because this research was limited to women in higher education leadership positions in Arizona, it is recommended that future research duplicate this study with a comparable sample population in other geographic areas. A replication of this study in other areas would help to identify similarities and differences, particularly in the lack of significance the participants in this study gave to their experiences with bias, prejudice, and stereotyping.

Further qualitative research should be conducted with male participants using the same selection criteria. Research with male leaders as participants would provide a comparison between male and female gender roles and how those roles are influenced by society's expectations. A comparative study may reveal similarities and differences in the self-perceptions of leaders and their success as a leader. The recommendation to conduct a similar study with male participants is a result of the finding that everyone experiences bias or stereotyping throughout their careers regardless of gender.

However, one of the limitations of the study is that the participant selection criteria focused on a population of women who were already successful in their leadership careers, having between 10-40 or more years in their careers. Therefore, it is recommended a similar study using a mixed methodology to gather detailed demographic data and a changed selection criterion to include women who are just starting their careers and aspire to become an executive leader in a higher education institution. A study using a younger population may yield further findings on work-life balance issues as a reason for the lack of women in leadership roles.

**Conclusions**

The findings fulfilled the purpose of this research by revealing how stereotypical views of female behavior affect women who aspire to high-ranking leadership roles in higher education. The conclusion is that stereotypical views of female behavior had little impact on the successful careers of the participants. The reason for underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in higher education remains unknown.

Through their stories, the participants exposed the lack of significance in their experiences with bias or prejudice. All participants reported experiencing some form of

bias or stereotyping, but believed all people, male and female experience stereotyping and therefore found little importance in the experience itself. The participants' perception of their success was due to being recognized by others as having the qualities and skills to lead in a variety of positions, including the role of a college president. Therefore, bias or prejudice was not factor leading to their success or preventing their success as they aspired to greater leadership roles.

The participants' stories also revealed that they did not change their leadership style to conform to expected characteristics. Just as they all identified as female, they all described their leadership style as communal without apology. They nurtured their subordinates, created consensus, and supported teamwork. There were times when the women had to become assertive or aggressive in particular situations, but found no contradiction in the assertive behavior and their female gender.

Finally, the results do not fully support the idea that the lack of women in leadership roles in higher education is due to a bias toward their role as a female and taking on a traditionally defined masculine role of leadership. Instead, the results point to another possible and subtler reason for the underrepresentation of women in leadership. That reason may be the lack of women seeking these leadership positions because of a failure of these roles to provide an opportunity for work-life balance. The issue of work-life balance is a worthy topic of future research and may yield further findings that work-life balance may be a reason for the lack of women in leadership roles.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the professional journey in higher education that led you to a top-level leadership position?

2. Did you experience any bias, stereotyping, or prejudice as you sought leadership positions in higher education?

3. What significance do you give to this experience?

4. What is leadership in your view?

5. Where do you see your own leadership style fitting?

6. How would you describe the difference, if any in the way women lead compared to men?

7. Did you feel that you had to change your leadership style or approach in order to be promoted to a top-level leadership position?

8. Can you describe any difference between your female gender role and the leadership-style characteristics you took on?

9. Why do you believe that there is a lack of women college presidents?

10. Would you like to add any more comments on this topic that we have not discussed?

## Appendix B

## Informed Consent

My name is Susan Krause. I am a doctoral student at Northcentral University.

I am conducting a research study on the underrepresentation of women in leadership

roles in higher education.  I am completing this research as part of my doctorate

degree.

**Activities:**

If you join in this research, I will ask you to:

1. Participate in a telephone conversation to discuss the purpose of the study and determine eligibility. This activity will take 20 minutes.
2. Participate in an interview by telephone, SKYPE or in-person. This activity will take 60 minutes.

**Eligibility:**

You are eligible to participate in this research if you:

1. Serve or have served in a senior leadership role at a college or university in Arizona.
2. Identify as female.
3. You are 18 years or older.

You are not eligible to participate in this research if you:

1. Have not served in a senior leadership role a college or university in the state of Arizona.
2. You do not identify as female.
3. You are not 18 years or older.

I hope to include 10 people in this research.

**Risks:**

There are minimal risks in this study. There is a potential discomfort for

participants who may feel stress when describing any bias or stereotyping that they have

experienced. If you experience any discomfort you may skip the question. You may stop the interview at any time.

**Benefits:**

If you decide to participate, there are no direct benefits to you. The study will contribute to research on a potential reason for the disparity between highly educated women and the lack of women in leadership positions in the field of higher education.

**Audiotaping:**

I would like to record your responses. You can still contribute if you do not wish to be recorded.

Please sign here if I can record you: _____

**Confidentiality:**

The information you provide will be kept confidential as allowed by law. I will use a pseudonym or number to identify you to keep your information confidential.

I will be the only person with access to your information. The Institutional Review Board may also review my research and view your information.

I will secure your information with these steps: locking it in a filing cabinet or locking the computer file with a password and transporting it in a locked case.

I will keep your data for 7 years. I will delete electronic data and destroy paper data after that time.

**Contact Information:**

If you have questions for me, you can contact me at S.Krause2198@email.ncu.edu.

My dissertation chair's name is Dr. Jennifer Duffy. Dr. Duffy is supervising me on the research. She works at Northcentral University. You can contact her at: jduffy@ncu.edu

If you have questions about your rights in the research, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at: irb@ncu.edu or 1-888-327-2877 ext. 8014.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, or if you stop participation after you start, there will be no penalty to you. You will not lose any benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses to the questions characterize your personal experiences. Your responses do not represent the views of the institution where you are currently or have been employed.

**Signature:**

A signature indicates your understanding of this consent form. You will be given a copy of the form for your information.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Participant Signature | Printed Name | Date |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Researcher Signature | Printed Name | Date |