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Breaking the Glass Ceiling? Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

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Gender, work, and organizations scholarship that focuses on women in relationship to leadership roles focuses on gendered experiences including sexual harassment (Chamberlain, Tope, Crowley, and Hodson 2008; McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2012; Zippel 2006), glass ceilings (Williams 1992; 1995), mentoring and collegial work relationships (Britton 2000; Chalmers 2001; DeHart-Davis 2009; Kantola 2008; Lorber 1994; Martin 2003; Ridgeway 1997; Wallace 2014) and the work and family balance (Acker 1990; 1992; Cha 2013; Damaske 2011; Gerson 2010; Hochschild 1997; Kelly, Ammons, Chemack and Moen 2010; Macdonald 2010; Williams 2010). While gender research shows that women face exceptional disadvantages in the workplace, it does not specifically focus on redefining leadership roles so as to uncover a degendered vision of leadership. In this dissertation, inspired by feminist degendering movement literature (Lorber 2000; 2005), I consider the possibility of a degendered leadership that does not pose gendered limitations. My research questions are: 1) What role does gender play in the narratives of women and men leaders? 2) How might leaders’ gendering of leadership reproduce gender stereotypes? 3) What strategies might leaders and institutions of higher education use to degender leadership? and 4) What might degendered leadership look like?

Through 34 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women and men serving as deans, provosts, and presidents at colleges and universities throughout the United States, I examine degendered definitions of leadership that are rooted in expectations of the prototypical academic leader. Respondents indicated that effective academic leadership is evident through a leader’s prestige through credentials and publications, active engagement with institutional stakeholders
(including students, faculty, staff members, alumni, the board of trustees, the community, and corporate and governmental partners) and ability to lead strategic institutional initiatives that are in line with the institutional culture. While past scholarship has emphasized the negative effects associated with gendering leadership and an individual’s behavioral capacity to lead, there is a need for more scholarship that focuses on degendering leadership through labeling and discourse. Through the narratives of my respondents, I fill this gap in the literature.
Breaking the Glass Ceiling? Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

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A Dissertation
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Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Breaking the Glass Ceiling? Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

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When I entered graduate school at the University of Connecticut in August 2008, I was eager to embark on an intellectual journey. I was not entirely certain of what I would focus on for my Master’s Thesis or Doctoral Dissertation, yet I was certain that I would meet and interact with world-renowned scholars at the University of Connecticut who would help me to fill in these gaps. Professors in the Department of Sociology, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, and Human Rights Institute guided me as I developed my own scholarly voice.

Davita Silfen Glasberg, my advisor throughout graduate school who also served as my dissertation advisor, has supported me through every step throughout these past six years of graduate school. She taught me how to manage my time to prioritize urgent tasks and she was always available for meetings to assess my progress. Davita mentored me via our cherished discussions and punctual emails. Her strong work ethic and commitment to graduate students truly benefited me. I sent her chapter after chapter for feedback and I would often receive feedback from her within a week’s time. I understand that having a responsive dissertation advisor is incredibly valuable for a doctoral student. I am astonished that Davita finds time to manage so many academic and administrative tasks. Davita also helped me to understand the importance of establishing a work and family balance throughout graduate school. She helped me to realize that I would not be a productive scholar if there were missing pieces in my personal life. At the beginning of graduate school, I felt like I was so overwhelmed with academic responsibilities that there was barely any time for family or friends. Throughout graduate school, I learned to take some deep breaths and truly enjoy life. I got married in 2011 and just recently gave birth to twin boys in April 2014. Davita helped me to keep my perspective throughout these life-changing events. In spite of the challenges associated with planning for a wedding and preparing to give birth to twin boys, I maintained my focus on completing my dissertation because of my strong bond with Davita.

I am also deeply grateful to the other members of my dissertation committee including Manisha Desai, Kim Price-Glynn, and Bandana Purkayastha. Substantively, through coursework and outside class discussions with each of these three scholars, I solidified my interest in studying gender and leadership in higher education. Manisha worked with me through an independent study course that helped me to establish a theoretical framework for my dissertation. This experience could not have come at a better time for me as it helped me to work through my proposal. A seminar course with Kim gave me the opportunity to explore this interest in gender and leadership in higher education. In her Gender & Society seminar I first asserted my interest in gender and leadership and decided that this would be my dissertation focus. Bandana introduced me to key gender texts early on in graduate school through her Gender & Society seminar and encouraged me to attend Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) meetings beginning my first year of graduate school. I recall thinking that it was an entirely implausible endeavor to go to my first SWS meeting in Atlanta, Georgia in 2009 given all the coursework that I had to complete at that time. However, I am so pleased that I took Bandana advice and plunged into this invaluable network of scholars. Throughout the years, Bandana has introduced me to key scholars who encouraged me and supported me from afar. At the biannual meetings, I presented my scholarship and talked to others about my ideas. I always came back from the meetings feeling refreshed and rejuvenated to champion on with my research and writing.
I could write pages and pages on how each one of my dissertation committee members has contributed to my graduate school experience and how they have helped me to accomplish this task of completing my dissertation. Mentorship is a theme that I touch upon in my dissertation. I am convinced that without the mentorship that I received from Davita, Manisha, Kim, and Bandana, I would not be in the position I am in today. The Department of Sociology at the University of Connecticut is fortunate to have such an outstanding group of faculty who truly take the time to mentor graduate students. Other faculty members at the University of Connecticut who have provided exceptional support to me throughout graduate school include: Laura Bunyan, Gaye Tuchman, Elizabeth Holzer, Mary Bernstein, Nancy Naples, and Heather Turcotte. I have learned how to mentor my students from my interactions with you all.

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I would not be where I am today without my family including my mother, Joann Brandt, father, Elliot Katuna, and sister, Cara Wagner. First, I would like to thank my mom, Joann Brandt, for believing in me and for guiding me to achieve my dreams. She has always encouraged me even when I did not fully understand where I was heading. My mom is one of the strongest people I know and I am thankful that I have had her strength to rely on in life. My father, Elliot Katuna, has guided me in spirit throughout my graduate school journey. I initially worked at his barrister’s desk during the first part of graduate school and found solace in using this space as a creative environment for me. He died too young to see me graduate from middle school, high school, college, and graduate school. However, I know that he – just like my mom – would be incredibly proud that his youngest daughter is now Dr. Barret Katuna. He only got to see me reach the age of 6 years old – but I know that he would be beaming with pride if he could be here today.

My husband, Benjamin Kehl, has provided me with a sense of levity and comic relief throughout graduate school. He has helped me “not to sweat the small stuff” and encouraged me to travel and rejuvenate so that I would not become overwhelmed with research-related matters. I am thankful that he has supported me and cheered for me throughout all the ups and downs of graduate school. Now, we can begin the next chapter of our life together …

I was pregnant with my two precious twin sons, Hans and Henry, throughout the majority of my dissertation writing. Hans and Henry, you are just over a month old now, but you have helped your mom to sit down and write this dissertation. Knowing that Hans and Henry were coming in Spring 2014 made me more focused since I knew that I would not want to be changing diapers, waking up in the middle of the night for feedings – and writing this dissertation. I am grateful for two healthy baby boys who were born on the day of my dissertation defense. I will never ever forget April 1, 2014. It’s the day that I became a doctor and a mom. I have waited
quite some time for these celebrations and I am overjoyed that these two life-changing events took place on the same day.

I would also like to thank the 34 study participants who were willing to take time out of their busy and unpredictable schedules to take part in an interview. I am greatly inspired by their experiences. I am thankful that they shared some exceptionally personal stories that add to the richness of my data. I look forward to hearing from you all after you review my findings. Thank you for believing in my project.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Why Study Gender and Leadership?

Women’s upward workforce mobility has led to cracks in the glass ceiling placing women in key, formal leadership roles. However, women still lag behind men in terms of leadership positions in the United States. In the corporate sphere, women represent 4.6 percent of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst 2014). In governmental leadership in the 113th Congress (2013-2015), women account for only 18.3 percent of all congressional leadership positions within the United States House and Senate (Rutgers University, Center for American Women in Politics 2013). Higher educational leadership offers a more promising statistical landscape. Three out of eight of the Ivy League college presidents are women. In addition, we have seen a 13 percent increase in the total number of women presidents, from 10 percent to 23 percent, between 1986 and 2009 (Santovec 2010). A 2011 American Council on Education (ACE) study revealed that as of 2011, women’s representation as college presidents had increased to 26 percent. Furthermore, woman philanthropists are increasingly joining boards of universities and colleges that select presidents (Brown 2009). But women have not broken the glass ceiling in academia and there are still institutional barriers that women face as they work toward tenure and promotions (Agathangelou and Ling 2002; Alexander 2005; Pierce 2003). Women’s marked advancements suggest that the higher educational research site offers a compelling opportunity to study the intersection of gender and leadership. These promising statistics indicate that women are gradually making headway in establishing an executive presence in corporate, governmental, and higher educational contexts. These statistics beg the question: if women can effectively do the same work that men do, why is women’s leadership often socially constructed as different from men’s leadership in scholarship and discourse?
My interest in studying gender and leadership first evolved from my exposure to the overwhelming popularity of gender-essentialist, self-help trade books that are rooted in biological differences between women and men. For example, Gail Evans’ (2001) *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman: What Men Know About Success that Women Need to Learn* implies that women must accept that leadership is gendered. The essentialist overtone of this text is that women’s leadership is fundamentally different from men’s leadership. As a gender scholar who witnessed two historical inaugurations of first woman university presidents, I saw this depiction as problematic to gender equality campaigns with regard to women’s leadership prospects at all levels and in all social contexts. Evans instructs that “men and women are wired differently, and we are brought up differently” (Evans 2001: 21). Furthermore, given this assertion, women must develop strategies to facilitate their competition with men. This text suggests that in order for a woman to succeed in a man’s world, she must “know the prevailing rules that men play by” (Evans 2001: 14). For example, she states that women are more relationship focused than men are and that women have a tendency to form friendships. She adds, “Personalizing causes trouble. A guy running down the field with a football knows he has to make it to the goal line, and he’ll run over anyone to get there. Just because the fullback is his friend doesn’t mean he won’t stick his cleats in the guy’s leg – if he has to” (Evans 2001: 30). Such socially construed messages regarding women’s timid demeanor and lack of aggressiveness in the workplace have become engrained into the fabric of our society. Overall, Evans’ words of advice can prompt doubt and a lack of self-confidence among women leaders as they may question their workplace responses. As such, Evans’ message is that women, who may have been socialized, to be passive, collaborative, timid, and feminine need to modify their personas to be more aggressive, controlling, outgoing, and masculine if they seek to advance on the professional ladder. Since the
publication of Evans’ book, we have seen changes in popular approaches to leadership in bestselling texts such as Sheryl Sandberg’s (2013) *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*.

Sandberg, the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, drew mass media attention because of her book that encourages an acknowledgment of gender differences without implying that women develop stereotypically masculine strategies for fitting into a “man’s world” of work and leadership. Sandberg (2013:145) wrote, “in business we are taught to fit in, but … I was starting to think this might not be the right approach.” While women and men have differential workplace experiences, she underscores a need for women: “to be able to talk about gender without people thinking we were crying for help, asking for special treatment, or about to sue” (Sandberg 2013: 145). Sandberg’s message depicts the ongoing relevance of the gendered leadership experience and contradicts Evans’ claim that women downplay their femininity. For example, women’s leadership trajectories must not entail downplaying their gendered identities that may be associated with childbirth and breastfeeding.

Insights from Evans and Sandberg demonstrate the relevance of the social construction of leadership as a gendered phenomenon (Brescoll 2011; Brescoll and Uhlmann 2008; Eagly and Carli 2007; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari 2011) that has become a basis for numerous studies spanning the fields of sociology, gender studies, management, administrative science, and psychology. Gender scholarship that recognizes the fluidity and malleability of gender (Butler 2004; Lorber 1994; 2000; 2005), and the problems associated with gendered attributes that are fixed and prescriptive for how one ought to act in a role that has been previously and historically occupied by an individual of the other gender\(^1\) provides a framework for my dissertation that clarifies degendered leadership. The need to problematize and dismantle the labeling of masculine leadership and feminine leadership inspired this line of research. By

\(^1\) All 34 of my interview participants identified with the categories of man or woman.
dismantling rigid categories that frame how individuals ought to lead, we can envision a society with leaders who come from diverse backgrounds. They can express their views and lead how they want to lead, not how society mandates that they lead based on their gender, race, class, sexuality, or age.

I conducted 34 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women and men who are senior college and university administrators, including deans, provosts, and presidents, in a variety of educational settings. These interviews facilitated the development of a degendered conceptualization of leadership. This conceptualization clarifies the qualities that befit the quintessential academic leader relying solely on educational background, research productivity, and demeanor without resorting to archetypal understandings of masculine versus feminine leadership that impose limitations mandating the transformation to a masculine standard or ideal male worker norm (Acker 1990). Through my respondents’ narratives, I explore their pathways, including their academic backgrounds in addition to active mentoring, leadership training, and keen observations of others in public leadership roles that have inspired their leadership styles. These women and men reflect on their definitions of leadership given how they have learned to approach their daily workplace challenges and how they instruct their direct reports to carry out their responsibilities.

GENDER AS A DEFINING PRINCIPLE

This research is primarily grounded in Lorber’s (1994; 2000; 2005) “feminist degendering movement” literature that has influenced subsequent scholarship (Connell 2010; Deutsch 2007; Risman 2009); and on Butler’s (2004) notion of “undoing gender” as a call to reduce the power of gender as an organizing principle, a concept that has also framed ensuing
This earlier scholarship necessitates a focus on what I refer to as “trait gendering,” that is evident in advocating socially constructed terminology such as masculine leadership and feminine leadership styles. This language implies that there is a hierarchy that delineates whether women or men best exemplify a given trait. We can subsequently dismantle trait gendering through a process of “trait degendering” which breaks down the association of gender with traits. As such, nurturing is not a feminine trait and leading is not a masculine trait. This terminology evolves from Kimmel’s (2008) prediction of future conversations on the degendering of traits, instead of on the degendering of people. With the foundational understanding that gender is a social institution, Lorber (1994; 2000; 2005) introduced strategies for how we can practice degendering in our everyday lives. She traces the embedded ways that gendering is rooted in interactions that are made visible by examining our language, workplace and parenting expectations along with interactions in a variety of other social spheres. By refraining from stereotypically placing women and men into fixed, socially constructed categories through our speech, interactions, and expectations, we can move in the direction of a world that is not constrained by these harmful characterizations that reproduce gender inequality and undermine the goal of degendering. In other words, how might institutions move past “boys will be boys” and “girls will be girls” discourse that comes to embody the binary, gendered experience?

Establishing a Theoretical Basis for Degendering Leadership

Lorber’s (1994; 2000; 2005) initiation of a feminist degendering movement that aims to reduce gender inequality by eliminating separate categories such as “feminine leadership” and
“masculine leadership” frames this endeavor. Central to this movement is Lorber’s (1994) identification of a “paradox of gender” that refers to the continual drawing of social distinctions between women and men and their actions and experiences. With regard to leadership, gender differentiation that entails referring to feminine or masculine leadership styles demonstrates this paradox. Some of the relative paradoxes of gender that Lorber focuses on include: the significant number of women in the workforce and the minimal number of women serving in leadership and management roles and the way in which women are often defined through social understandings of how men view women, not by how women see themselves. Acknowledging gender paradoxes means recognizing the contradictory social labels and gendered expectations for women and men within the context of all social institutions (Acker 1990; 1992; Connell 1987). Lorber identified and clarified the relevance of this socially constructed paradoxical society and offered a means by which to remove these conflicting markers.

By refraining from stereotypically placing women and men into fixed, socially constructed categories through our speech, interactions, and expectations, we can move in the direction of a world that is not constrained by these harmful characterizations that reproduce gender inequality. She summarizes what she calls, “two thought experiments that render gender irrelevant” (Lorber 2000:81). First, she suggests a society where two genders exist with the caveat that men and women are to be treated with absolute equality. In the public sphere, there is an even employment split with women holding half of all jobs and men holding half of all jobs. Furthermore, with regard to the division of labor in the domestic sphere, we also see an even balance. She continued by noting that in this fictional society there are, “equal numbers of women and men in the officer corps and ranks of armed forces, on sports teams, in cultural productions and so on throughout society” (Lorber 2000: 81). In this first imaginary society,
gender parity leads to gender insignificance. The second imaginary society operates differently; “all work is equally valued and recompensed, regardless of who does it, and families and work groups are structured for equality of control of resources and decisions” (Lorber 2000: 81). If all work were valued equally, the gender of the person performing a particular work task would be rendered insignificant.

How do these imaginary societies inform the task of degendering leadership? In the first imaginary society, women and men would both equally hold leadership posts. As such, women leaders would not be placed in a “token” category when they happened to occupy leadership posts (Kanter 1977; 1993). Unlike in the first imaginary society, Kanter found that because women were not often represented in certain occupational roles such as that of corporate manager, they came to represent all women. Such gendered expectations imply women’s justification for their placement in a particular leadership role by comparing their organizational or oversight duties to traditional gender roles for women including housekeeping or child rearing. If women and men equally occupied leadership roles and correspondingly took responsibility for household affairs, we could diminish the social construction of leadership as a traditionally masculine phenomenon that warrants labeling women’s leadership as somehow different from men’s leadership. In the second imaginary society, a woman’s decision to use military force by virtue of her political authority and a man’s decision to use military force by virtue of his political authority would be equally judged and valued. For example, a woman would not earn the moniker of “iron lady” for being strong-willed and alternatively, a man would not be referred to as a “girlie man” for backing down or showing a lack of confidence with regard to professional matters. If all work were valued equally, critics would still be in a position to question a leader’s decision. However, the judgment of a leader’s decision would be based on
her or his insights as to the best outcome for her or his constituent audience. Furthermore, women would not find themselves in “glass cliff” sorts of situations in which they are given especially risky leadership assignments that would likely result in failure (Ryan and Haslam 2007). Overall, in a degendered society, gender would not factor into a leader’s implementation of her or his responsibilities.

Lorber’s illustrative presentation of degendering has inspired further theorizing on the concept and application of the concept in sociological research. Degendering relates to Deutsch’s (2007) discussion of “undoing gender,” a concept that Butler (2004) initially theorized. In her discussion, Deutsch references the importance of West and Zimmerman’s (1987) path breaking article, “Doing Gender,” that underscores how gender is visible through social interactions and how we are socialized to “do gender” in accordance with social norms. Key to her article is her call for further research to “shift our inquiry about ongoing social interactions to focus on change” (Deutsch 2007: 114). In other words, Deutsch finds it relevant to acknowledge when and how gender inequalities are apparent; however, research must aim to see “interaction as the site of change” (Deutsch 2007: 114). As such, interactions between leaders, their counterparts, subordinates, and constituencies inform the action of undoing gender. Relative to my discussion of leadership, degendering leadership fulfills Deutsch’s mission. Furthermore, Risman (2009) builds off of Deutsch’s reasoning and additionally supports the possibility of undoing gender through interaction. She states that given that girls and women are engaging in the same competitive sorts of roles that men have historically occupied, “we need to be able to discuss the new world they inhabit and how they are making their lives within it rather than inventing a label for a kind of femininity that includes the traits and behaviors previously restricted to boys and men” (Risman 2009: 82). Risman’s point signifies that these new roles and the traits that go
along with these roles need to be degendered. Furthermore, Connell’s (2010) illustration of “redoing gender” relates to undoing gender because, through her study that incorporated transgender respondents, she reimagines how masculinity and femininity are a part of an individual’s workplace interactions. In reference to a 29-year-old white transman’s experience, Connell (2010: 44) writes, “Kyle conscientiously created a hybrid gender identity, one that combined attributes commonly labeled feminine and masculine, thus resisting the pressure he felt to shed the emotional and embodied legacies that he associated with his past as a woman.” Connell notes how Kyle’s experience denotes an example of undoing gender and redoing gender given that Kyle’s interactions fragment the feminine versus masculine dichotomy and reimagine masculinity. Collectively, contributions from Deutsch (2007), Risman (2009), and Connell (2010) realize the prospect of degendering.

Degendered leadership can be realized either through the equal distribution of leadership positions to women and men or through the equal valuing of all work regardless of who is performing the leadership task. While it is certainly worth celebrating new contributions from women as leaders, labeling their manners of leading as feminine is an injustice to the prospect of degendering because it reinforces a gendered hierarchy (Billing 2011). In other words, the binary construction implies that men lead how leadership was meant to be given that men have historically occupied all leadership roles and that women leaders are attempting to alter the course of leadership through an unfamiliar and less socially valued form of leadership. Degendering leadership is a revolutionary concept that some scholars argue must be achieved outside of standard, existing institutional frameworks.

Poststructuralist feminist scholars (Butler 2004; Weedon 1997) have argued that in order to move beyond gender as a defining principle to experience social change, we must do so
without working through the mechanisms of pre-established institutions that uphold these gender norms. As such, in order to move beyond gender as a defining explanatory factor for how we view traits, we must deconstruct leadership outside of its institutional basis. We must develop a lens through which we can observe leadership in its pure form. By interviewing women and men at co-educational institutions of higher education that had representation from women and men in key leadership roles, I was capable of achieving such an unadulterated lens. Coming from backgrounds that valued women and men’s leadership meant that my respondents did not see leadership as a traditionally feminine or masculine phenomenon. Given that within the respondents’ host institutions, women and men served side by side in executive leadership positions, these respondents were less likely to be institutionally socialized to expect a different type of leadership that was based on gender. As such, their visions of leadership were purer than would have been the case if I had looked at military institutions and religious institutions that have a long legacy of men’s leadership, or women’s colleges, many of which, have traditionally relied on women’s headships. To deconstruct leadership for its gendered attributes, it is first necessary to look closely at gender, as it is a defining principle that has explanatory power within all institutions.

Butler defines gender by acknowledging societal expectations that an individual will have one gender and that one’s gender will predict one’s sexuality with the assumption that individuals will be heterosexual. It is through gender and by performing appropriate gender acts, often visible through the body, that an individual humanizes her or himself. Butler deconstructs gender by focusing on how norms reify gender and how it is through altering our consciousness of these norms (accepting queer interpretations, for example) that we can destabilize the system. It is most straightforward to deconstruct leadership by defining the leader’s expected role. In a
democratic context, for example, leaders are expected to act in the interest of the “common
good,” to use force when necessary, and to be consistent and fair in how they apply
bureaucratically defined standards of action. If it is through the body that gender is visible, it is
through the exercise of latent and manifest power that leadership is visible. Butler (1990: 180)
argues that, “gender reality is created through sustained social performances.” If we can disrupt
defining social performativity through the lens of gender, and instead define it through the lens
of other characteristics that would not result in reproducing gender inequality, we can work
toward this undoing of gender. For example, we would not explain a leadership decision as
derivative of an individual’s gender, but perhaps as resultant of the leader’s gender-neutral
training, education, or expertise. With these foundational ideas in mind, how can we realize a
context in which women are not victimized as a result of gender inequality?

Weedon (1997) introduced discursive and subjective strategies for creating institutional
contexts for women that do not privilege patriarchal social organization. Individuals possess the
subjectivity to realize their oppression and to undo the discursive constructions that contribute to
their struggles. As such, Weedon calls us to consider how we may reproduce patriarchy through
our language. Furthermore, how can we change language in such a way that we can endeavor
more fluid meanings for concepts such as leadership? As such, statements on women’s
masculine leadership styles that include labels such as, “iron lady,” reproduce an understanding
that leadership is a masculine trait. Broadly accepted gender roles prescribe that women will
behave in a demure, weak-willed state. As such, the moniker of “iron lady” implies a gendered
contradiction; an “iron lady” is strong-willed and bold in her demeanor. Such characteristics do

2 Margaret Thatcher, the first and only woman to hold the office of British Prime Minister, is known for a leadership
style that was astute, undemocratic, and merciless (Genovese 1993). Indira Gandhi, the first and only woman to hold
the office of Prime Minister of India, sought not to be viewed as a woman, but as a leader (Everett 1993). Both
Thatcher and Gandhi, steadfast in their respective political views, were not afraid to go against the advice of their
not traditionally befit a lady. Disparaging consequences exist for decisively strong-willed women of power. Furthermore, the social construction of leadership implies that men will be fierce and intrepid in their leadership styles. For example, men who are in positions of authority and who exhibit trepidation may earn the title of “girlie man.” While this declaration is noteworthy for its denigrating connotation that women and girls are cowards, it demonstrates how men are also impacted by the social construal of gendering leadership as masculine and feminine. Poststructural feminist theory problematizes such fixed understandings. This theoretical framework emphasizes the fluidity and instability of gender. In other words, poststructural feminist theory resists singular gendered identities. As such, this theory problematizes a universal characterization that labels all women or all men with a certain classification. As such, poststructural feminist theory helps us to degender traits. Subsequently, traits are not feminine or masculine. Pilgeram’s (2007) scholarship demonstrates the utility of this framework.

Pilgeram (2007) used Butler’s “undoing gender” frame to study agricultural work that is often seen as masculinized terrain given assumptions that commonly accompany manual labor such as farming. The prevalence of women laborers whose actions undermined gendered understandings of women’s fragility when it comes to such physical labor prompted Pilgeram to utilize this framework to study how women “do gender” in the traditionally male occupation. Women’s performance of masculinity as a way of fitting into this male-dominated sphere, advisors and cabinet members. Today, they are infamous for their controversial military interventions. Thatcher and Gandhi were tough, intrepid leaders whose leadership style earned them both the moniker of “iron lady.” Yet, it is important to note that Kanter (1977) cited the relationship between a woman’s success in climbing to positions of authority and her identification with traits associated with masculinity.

4 In 2004, at the United States Republican National Convention, former Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, spoke about the need to believe in the strength of the United States economy and he warned, “Don’t be economic girlie men!” (Schwarzenegger 2004). This statement, that Schwarzenegger borrowed from a Saturday Night Live sketch (Broder 2004) and also used in his reference to Democratic legislators in California who were blocking his budget proposal, initiated a round of applause from the audience as women and men stood and cheered in response to this comment.
Pilgeram (2007: 574) argues, is not completely constructive because, “the women’s performance might actually enforce the idea that all good farmers are men and that the only way to succeed in agriculture is to conform to the requisite standards of hegemonic masculinity.” This line of thought underscores the relationship between gender and performativity that is not rooted in natural or essentialist constructs (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Together, Butler (1990; 2004) and Weedon’s (1997) poststructural feminist insights on “undoing gender” paired with Lorber’s concept of degendering offer instructive tools that frame the endeavor of trait degendering that is of prime focus in this dissertation. It is imperative that we understand and investigate how gender has come to explain leadership styles to work through this socially constructed terrain that disproportionately impacts women. Women who endeavor to lead in institutional settings that have historically patriarchal foundations confront these socially constructed obstacles. With this in mind, each of the substantive chapters of my dissertation turns to the explanatory power of leadership in order to degender leadership. Focusing on the multiple meanings and manifestations of leadership through the lens of leadership literature and the narratives of my 34 respondents facilitates this goal of degendering leadership. I answer the following questions in this dissertation:

1) What role does gender play in the narratives of women and men leaders? How does gender figure into women and men’s descriptions of their workplace interactions? How does being a woman or a man influence the work that these leaders engage in on a daily basis? What are the obstacles that women and men leaders confront in their dealings with the multiple stakeholders\(^5\) of a higher educational setting?

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\(^5\) Stakeholders are individuals who have close ties to an institution and who are impacted by an institution’s governance. I broadly define the stakeholders of an academic institution as the students, faculty, staff members, alumni, the board of trustees, the community, and corporate and governmental partners.
2) How might leaders’ gendering of leadership reproduce gender stereotypes? How do women and men introduce gendered definitions of leadership to characterize leadership styles (including how others might perceive their leadership)? How might the work and family balance be built into this gendering of leadership?

3) What strategies might leaders and institutions of higher education use to degender leadership? How does gender matter in terms of how the stakeholders of an institution view the leader?

4) What might degendered leadership look like? What characteristics must all leaders possess? How are the failings and successes of leaders attributable to flaws in leadership style and not in relationship to an individual’s gender?

To frame this discussion of gender and leadership, I highlight and engage in conversation with the leadership literature that explores the concept of gendered leadership. I begin by underscoring the contextualization of feminine and masculine leadership characteristics and the privileging of masculine leadership styles as the norm to which woman leaders are commonly instructed they should aspire. I next connect this social construction of masculine and feminine leadership to “trait gendering” that presents advantages for men when women are ascending to roles that had been historically occupied by men. I end the introduction chapter by outlining my chapters and findings.

Social Representations of Feminine Leadership and Masculine Leadership

Gender stereotypes associated with the social construction of feminine and masculine leadership impact how women leaders are judged differently across a variety of leadership contexts (Brescoll 2011; Brescoll and Uhlmann 2008; Dasgupta and Asgari 2004; Davies,
Spencer, and Steele 2005; Eagly and Karau 2002; Heilman 2001; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins 2004; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Nauts 2012). In Sweden, a successful state feminist regime has contributed to a rise in women’s leadership positions given open “windows of opportunity” (Gustafsson and Kolam 2008: 28). Broadly, Gustafsson and Kolam argue that women’s leadership is necessary because only women can make the social changes that benefit them; men are incapable of responding to women’s needs. It is in this context that leadership is contextualized as masculine or feminine. They stress how women leaders will use a feminine leadership style to initiate policies that benefit women and that men are not capable of initiating such policies. Women can acknowledge the abilities of both women and men to contribute in the private and public spheres. Similarly, Thomas’ (2011) account of Michelle Bachelet’s first candidacy for president of Chile in 2005 incorporates a binary understanding of feminine vs. masculine leadership.

Bachelet succeeded in winning the presidency by relying on a political platform that emphasized what she referred to as “liderazgo feminino’ (feminine leadership)” (Thomas 2011: 65). She invoked rhetoric that acknowledged her difference in leadership style that was more inclusive of popular interests and that was an alternative to the sexism and masculine leadership styles that had historically pervaded Chilean politics. Bachelet’s strategy developed as a result of the ways in which her two male opponents framed their leadership styles in opposition to her style. Thomas (2011: 65) points out that Bachelet’s opponents “emphasized a type of political leadership that depended on specific understandings of men, masculinity and politics to simultaneously present their qualifications and to critique Bachelet’s.” As such, the presidential campaign became a battle between a masculine leadership style and a feminine leadership style. Thomas writes, “She [Bachelet] further claimed that while strength, honesty and conviction do
not have a gender, her experiences as a woman meant that she brought a different perspective into politics, a perspective that had been excluded” (Thomas 2011: 76). While it is certainly noteworthy that Bachelet deflected masculine understandings of leadership (that have traditionally limited women’s access to positions of leadership) by replacing them with feminine leadership, this approach is problematic as a long-term strategy for women’s leadership advancement. The feminine leadership approach will not appeal to all women who are running for political office. Some scholarship (Book 2000; Dunlap and Schmuck 1995; Helgesen 1990; Rosenthal 1998) finds that pointing out women’s differential leadership approaches is uniquely feminist and subsequently positions an argument for women’s exceptional capacity to lead. My dissertation does not support this frame because this line of thought implies gender essentialisms. Polarizing women’s leadership from men’s leadership is also visible in analyzing women and men’s individual approaches to leadership once in office.

Studies indicate that women and men leaders may demonstrate leadership approaches that are different from men’s leadership styles. Yet, it is not gender essentialist to report these findings because they explain why women may have developed these tactics. Fueled by gender stereotypes and societal pressures, women have learned to cope within contexts that were not traditionally open to them. The fault in the gendering of leadership lies in the prescriptions and definitive assertions, that are evident in the examples above, regarding a woman or man’s leadership that are exclusively rooted in gender.

Research on women in leadership roles underscores how the social construction of leadership and stereotypes surrounding the male leadership norm disadvantage women in the workplace. Related scholarship focuses on gendered experiences such as sexual harassment (Zippel 2006), glass ceilings (Williams 1992; 1995), mentoring and collegial work relationships
Gender scholarship recognizes the prevalence of the social construction of leadership that, as shown above, privileges men with regard to their leadership potential. As Billing and Alvesson (2000: 144-145) noted, “the predominant values and ideas in our society, embraced not just by many men but also by many women (in particular those occupying or who are candidates for managerial positions), need to be thought through in a deeper way than is encouraged by what may be referred to as a ‘narrow’ gender vocabulary.” Bowring (2004) confirms these insights in her study of two representations of Captain Kathryn Janeway of Star Trek: Voyager. She examines how Janeway’s media portrayal in television differs from her queered textual portrayal. Bowring (2004: 402-403) calls for doing away with the assumption “that there are only two types of leaders, two gender identities, male and female, and that one male or one female speaks for all males or females respectively.”

Gendering leadership, with the implication that men and women are somehow wired to lead differently, reproduces a hierarchy and may affect leadership opportunities. The labeling of women’s leadership as feminine and men’s leadership as masculine is problematic because it implies that there will be clear advantages or disadvantages to one style of leadership given a particular context, and it narrowly defines how women and men will ultimately lead based on gender. Recognizing the fluidity of gender and the need to re-imagine the role that gender plays in
our society, men’s feminine leadership and women’s masculine leadership styles are entirely plausible matters that subsequently undermine this categorization.

**Trait Gendering**

Trait gendering that is evident in advocating socially constructed terminology such as feminine leadership and masculine leadership styles implies that there is a hierarchy that delineates whether women or men best exemplify a given trait. This terminology evolves from Kimmel’s (2008) prediction of future conversations on the degendering of traits, instead of on the degendering of people. Examples of trait gendered statements include: ‘a man is more suitable than a woman to lead in times of imminent danger and conflict because of his headstrong demeanor’ and ‘a woman will comfort a child with a playground injury better than a man would because of her innate nurturing capabilities.’ As such, the gendered norms associated with a trait such as the ability to lead, or the ability to nurture, privilege the lens through which we view how well individuals succeed at exhibiting that trait through their behaviors and interactions. Trait gendering suggests that individuals of one gender perform the functions and behaviors associated with that trait better than individuals of another gender.

Traits are not always gendered to advantage men (Lorber 1994; Martin 1997). For example, nurturing as a trait is most often gendered to be a feminine trait; gendering the function of nurturing implies the false essentialism that men cannot contribute to the upbringing of a child while women can (Ruddick 1989), and that women are better equipped to serve in care work roles (Acker 1990; Chalmers 2001; Husso and Hirvonen 2012). Furthermore, men who wish to take on care work may face gendered assumptions if they wish to work in non-leadership or non-
managerial roles. Yet, as I mentioned above men often ride a glass escalator in fields that are traditionally dominated by women such as nursing (Simpson 2004; Williams 1992; 1995).

Contributions from gender, work and organizations scholars demonstrate how trait gendering with regard to leadership can significantly affect women’s workplace advancement to executive roles (Billing and Alvesson 2000; Billing 2011; Muhr 2011). Women who are not nurturing enough and women who are too aggressive or competitive when they are in leadership roles are often criticized as harsh and ineffective leaders (Brescoll 2011; Brescoll and Uhlmann 2008; Eagly and Carly 2007; Heilman and Okimoto 2007; Muhr 2011), although similar traits are highly valued and lauded in male leaders (Isaac 2007; Jamieson 1995; Oakley 2000). Women are also often chastised for being too emotional or collaborative, “feminine” characteristics that are not associated with a formal leader such as a head of state or chief executive officer (Chalmers 2001; Eagly 2007; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Lorber 1994; 2000; 2005).

By heeding Lorber (1994; 2000; 2005) and Butler’s (1990; 2004) advice, we can learn to equally celebrate women and men’s leadership and to refrain from employing gendered language when we judge a woman’s leadership decision. Consider the following two statements about a woman leader’s actions: 1) “In a crisis situation, she effectively made a decision that would impact the future of the institution.” 2) As opposed to, “Her motherly instincts kicked in and she made an effective decision in the midst of a crisis.” While both statements are clearly positive and show respect toward the woman leader’s actions, the second statement implies that the woman’s gender had something to do with the efficacy of her decision-making skills. By questioning and avoiding statements that speak of an individual’s traits that relate to her or his capacity to carry out a task such as leading, parenting, working, teaching, or nurturing, we can move in the direction of realizing a degendered vision. The feminist goal is not to show that women are better
leaders than men are. The aim is to get to a point where gender equality renders the gender of the leader inconsequential and where women and men’s work is equally valued. The research questions that will help get to this point include: 1) What role does gender play in the narratives of women and men leaders? How does gender figure into women and men’s descriptions of their workplace interactions? 2) How might leaders’ gendering of leadership reproduce gender stereotypes? 3) What strategies might leaders and institutions of higher education use to degender leadership? and 4) What might degendered leadership look like?

DISSERTATION DESIGN: CHAPTER OUTLINE

In Chapter 2, I present the methodological decisions of my dissertation. I explain the rationale for choosing a qualitative, interview-based research method. I describe the sample, data collection process, reflexivity, coding and analysis, as well as the study limitations.

In Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6, I discuss my findings noting their specificity to academic settings. Current academic leadership scholarship looks at women’s experiences as leaders in higher educational contexts and highlights the gendered problems that they might attribute to behavioral difficulties associated with mentoring, confrontations with discrimination, and the work and family balance (Dean, Bracken, and Allen 2009; Wolverton, Bower, and Hyle 2008). However, no studies to my knowledge look at the experiences of both women and men who are presently serving as deans, provosts, and presidents of institutions of higher education to develop a degendering of leadership.

In Chapter 3, I define leadership taking note of its gender-neutral characterization. I present multidimensional representations of leadership noting the literature on leadership style variation. For example, women are observed and expected to represent a more communal and
democratic approach to their management while men are perceived and assumed to be more agentic and autocratic. I demonstrate how my findings both challenge and reinforce these perspectives.

In Chapter 4, I clarify the meaning of effective academic leadership. Respondents clearly presented many instances throughout the interviews that demonstrated challenges that they faced among diverse institutional stakeholders who hold divergent views regarding an institution’s best interest. Yet, here, I focus on what respondents perceived that the decision-making bodies, including the boards of trustees and search committees, focused on in their selection processes. Effective leaders have had exceptional academic careers in their own right, are transparent, creative, respect their position and what it means to the institution, can distance themselves from the job to be able to handle difficult personnel issues, care first about the institution and its mission above their own grandiose positioning as figureheads, seek out opportunities for others to do their jobs well, and do not need to take all the credit for university transformations regardless of the role that they played in bringing them to fruition. Key to this discussion is the understanding that an intentional administrative career path is often frowned upon in academia, particularly when professors are at an early stage of their careers. In addition, “career academics,” (Tuchman 2009: 70) that jump from one institution to another to build their credentials are also perceived as detrimental to an institution’s ability to fulfill its mission.

In Chapter 5, I build on this definition of effective leadership and conceptualize how one learns this leadership skillset and the process by which one becomes an admired academic with prospects for a career as an academic leader. In this chapter, I discuss how mentoring relationships, learning from the mistakes of others, and solid communication that is marked by listening to the multiple stakeholders of the institution and training seminars contribute to an
individual’s mastery of her or his administrative role. Some respondents spoke fondly of formalized academic leadership training that they may have either personally sought out, or that they were encouraged and sponsored to attend. Yet, others indicated that there was simply no time or resources for such standardized training seminars; they learned on the job, by taking some personal risks, and by making mistakes. I conclude this chapter by presenting respondents’ perceptions on women’s leadership trainings whether or not they have firsthand experience in attending such gender-specific trainings. While some respondents found gender-specific trainings to be helpful, others found them to be unnecessary and limiting for women who seek to advance their professional networks by meeting both women and men through such professional workshops.

In Chapter 6, I focus on gender and leadership by noting respondents’ reactions to the dichotomous masculine versus feminine leadership framework as well as instances in which respondents felt that gender and leadership mattered or did not matter with regard to how they or others carried out work tasks. Some respondents noted the relevance and disruption of traditional gender roles in the workplace. In addition, respondents indicated that gender was a salient variable in defining leadership with regard to the work and family balance and what that meant for women administrators who may have chosen to delay a leadership position because of a family-related matter, or whose family responsibilities may be perceived as their reasons for being late to a meeting, for example. Furthermore, some respondents indicated that gender and leadership matter with regard to power dynamics. Yet, it is apparent that both women and men reported bearing the brunt of a questioning of power or excessive displays of power. Some respondents also indicated that women might benefit as a result of institutional priorities to place more women in leadership roles.
In my conclusion, I summarize my findings that indicate that while gender is certainly relevant to an academic leader’s career path and her or his experiences in navigating the leadership hierarchy, it is possible to define academic leadership without relying on gendered definitions that assume that women lead in one way and that men lead in another way. Through the narratives of my respondents, I clarify the degendering of effective academic leadership. Recent scholarship in education identifies a corporatist university context and the backdrop of academic capitalist values that exist at United States colleges and universities (Kirp 2003; Newfield 2008; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Tuchman 2009). As such, my findings from within the university context may shed light on what is happening in other arenas. Forthcoming studies might follow the same study protocol with a comparative analysis of women and men in leadership roles in corporations and in government.
Chapter 2
Methodological Considerations

How do you study gender and leadership? I primarily identified the academic sphere as a prime location for this study given that we have seen marked increases in women’s participation in high-level leadership positions over the past few decades. Since the late 1980s, women have made broadly modest gains in advancing to leadership posts at colleges and universities in the United States. Today, women and men are working side by side to oversee our nation’s colleges and universities. No longer is it a foreign concept to see a woman at the helm of a college or university or in another key administrative position in the United States. As some co-educational institutions are celebrating their first women presidents, others are not new to having woman presidents. Currently, three out of eight of the Ivy League college presidents are women; women serve as presidents at the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, and Brown University. Gender parity among the leadership of the United States’ most elite institutions indicates that university leadership is pathbreaking in this regard. Moreover, the recent increase in women philanthropists who are joining university boards of trustees and women’s increasing entrance into the collegiate professoriate, to the extent that the number of women who are earning doctorates has grown from 14 percent of the population of doctoral degree earners in 1971 to almost half in 2010 (England 2010), indicates that we are positioned to see further advancements for women in the higher educational realm in the coming years. With more women earning doctorates, there is a larger pool of women who can potentially serve as university leaders. Furthermore, it is increasingly likely that men who are in these higher educational administration posts have encountered gendered experiences with regard to leadership given these gendered changes.
The university leadership setting is useful for studying gender and leadership because promotions in academia are based on a combination of factors including productivity and impact in terms of research, capacity for introducing new funding to a university via grants and donations, service within a disciplinary department, managerial skills, and a commitment to a university’s mission and values. Thus, similar to what happens in corporate or governmental sectors, a leader proves her or his capacity to govern by working for the overall benefit of a constituency that is directly related to resource augmentation and/or improving the public image of the host institution. Education scholars (Kirp 2003; Newfield 2008; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Tuchman 2009) recognize this corporatist trend in academia that parallels “one dollar, one vote” political discourse by underscoring the relationship between capital and politics (Massey 2009; Piven and Cloward 2000).

University leaders follow a clearly structured career path that is different from common pathways to corporate or governmental leadership roles. It is impossible to rise to a deanship or university presidency without first earning the respect from one’s disciplinary peers. In the corporate world, it is possible to rise to the status of a CEO of a self-started business, as in the case of Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg, or to be appointed as an executive or board member due to familial ties, celebrity status, or other sources of social capital. Furthermore, political leaders may ride the coattails of their predecessors by benefiting from familial name recognition, or may be able to buy their positions via well-funded and crafted political campaigns. University leadership may exhibit some advantages that are based on social capital and familial legacy within a discipline; however, there is a more fixed pathway with fewer shortcuts than may exist for corporate or governmental leaders. The more narrowly defined career trajectory for
university leaders makes university leadership a compelling case for the study of gender and leadership.

In order to explore this issue I developed a qualitative study design. In this chapter, I describe the sample that incorporated women and men from both public and private colleges and universities in the United States and underscore the role that reflexivity played throughout the data collection process. In my discussion of the data collection process, I note how I obtained access to some of the nation’s most highly respected deans, provosts, and presidents who keep extraordinarily demanding schedules. I next turn to the decisions involved in the coding and analysis phase of the research as well as the study limitations. I conclude this chapter with my personal methodological reflection.

STUDY DESIGN

Influenced by a feminist standpoint epistemological framework (DeVault 1990; 1999a; 1999b; Harding 1986; Naples 2003a, 2003b; Pascale 2007; Smith 1987; Sprague 2005), I chose to conduct life history/oral narrative interviews. This framework is ideal for studying leadership experiences within work organizations because it, unlike a positivist frame that assumes a common worldview, works from the standpoints or personal accounts of the research participants to make sense of their relationship to the power structure.

Overall, my choice to employ a feminist interview strategy reflects my interest in applying a semi-structured schedule to address participants’ power structure negotiations that they may or may not perceive to be ongoing strategies. Mechanisms for climbing an organizational ladder that they may have adopted at much earlier stages in their careers (Chase
1995) may not become evident via a fixed schedule that does not allow for flexibility and the establishment of rapport in the interview relationship (Sprague 2005).

The life history/oral narrative interview strategy (Billing 2011; Chase 1995; DeVault 1999a, 1999b; Naples 2003a, 2003b; Smith 1987) involves learning about the “relations of ruling” (Smith 1987) that have structured my participants’ life courses. I was specifically interested in the research participants’ relative informal and formal relationships that became apparent by prompting the participants to begin with a story of how they first became interested in a leadership role and their history that facilitated this leadership experience. Through this approach, I was able to make sense of the underlying pathways that may have determined the participants’ consciousness of their career goals. This line of questioning was useful because it helped to reveal participants’ relationships with mentors that may have promoted leadership advancement and how this relationship may or may not have been reinforced by a gendered, raced, or classed structure. This data helped me to establish a conceptualization of the participants’ positions in relationship to socially constructed understandings of what makes an effective leader and the personal compromises that she or he may have been willing to make in the context of a gendered, raced, and classed work structure that led to her or his present role. Overall, life story/oral narrative interviews made it possible for me to establish a rapport with these highly respected leaders and to make them feel comfortable to share their stories.

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6 See the Appendix for the interview schedule.
I had a fairly even distribution of women and men for my study. I interviewed 18 women and 16 men for a total of 34 interviews, each lasting between 30 minutes to 2 hours. I interviewed 11 deans, 12 presidents, and 11 provosts. Two of the men are from historically marginalized racial and ethnic populations in the United States. Of these two men, one came to the United States for graduate school and did not return back to his home country because of that country’s political instability. Three of the women I interviewed were women of color and one of the women that I interviewed was white and from a Western European country. One of the women that I interviewed was a white, openly out lesbian. None of the men that I interviewed identified as gay. The lack of diversity with regard to race and sexuality is reflective of the lack of diversity in the power elite within the United States. Yet, the power elite, that was once reserved for white men of privilege (Mills 1956), is more diverse today than it was when Mills first wrote about it in 1956. Zwiegenhaft and Domhoff (2006) argue that people of color and people from other marginalized social locations, both men and women, are taking on leadership roles in political, corporate, and academic spheres through election, nomination, and appointment. While this may be the case, underlying vestiges of racism, sexism, and homophobia from within the academy create boundaries for many academics who do not fit the white male paradigm that has historically marked the academy (Alexander 2005; Davis 2005; Pierce 2003; Williams 1991).

Overall, my interviews were with leaders from a total of seventeen different institutions. Seventeen of the interviews were with academic leaders from private institutions, including five deans, eight presidents, and four provosts. An additional seventeen of the interviews were with

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7 All 34 of my interview participants identified with the categories of man or woman.
academic leaders from public institutions, including six deans, seven provosts, and four presidents. I did not interview any academic leaders who were presently presiding at religiously affiliated institutions. This is because patriarchy is often an underlying feature of the organization of religious institutions, producing far fewer women in positions of authority (Chong 2006; Howland 1997; Stopler 2005). I also chose not to interview any academic leaders from military institutions or any leaders from all women’s institutions. Patriarchal origins of the United States military mean a significantly lower likelihood that women would hold positions of authority there (Archer 2013; Stachowitsch 2013). Finally, I did not interview leaders from all-women’s institutions because such colleges are often settings where women are disproportionately advantaged in terms of their leadership advancement opportunities (Langdon 2001). By eliminating these variables from my sample, I was able to hone in on leadership absent these unique circumstances. This specificity also contributes to the generalizability of my research to other settings.

Since I was most interested in seeing responses to a diminishing system of patriarchy, I chose to focus on universities and colleges that have a commitment to diversity among their recruitment of faculty, administrators, and students. Studying leadership in an environment in which leadership is not restricted to individuals of one gender enabled me to discern how women and men responded to the gendered structure and the institutional framing of leadership. I determined an institution’s commitment to gender diversity through its level of support for women in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The host institutions of

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8 Comments from Christopher, one president who had previously held an administrative role at a Jesuit institution confirmed this connection between patriarchy and religion. When I asked about gender inequality in academia, the only example this white male president of a private university could come up with applied to his previous role at a Jesuit institution. He stated, “I don’t want to be disparaging to the Jesuits. But, it’s an all male order […] and they don’t spend as much time dealing with female professionals as the rest of us do. And, you know it was reflected in a university cabinet. If you will, you know senior staff of a dozen people had one female.”
the men and women that I interviewed had some sort of STEM-based program or a history of 
STEM-related programming on their campus. Some of the institutions either had or had applied 
for an ADVANCE grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) that is for the purposes of 
increasing the participation and advancement of women in academic and science and engineering 
careers.

With regard to the geographical breakdown, I had representation from states in the Mid-
Atlantic, New England, Midwest, and on the West Coast. The Mid-Atlantic representation 
included five presidents, two provosts, and one dean. One president was from a Midwestern 
university and one dean was from a university on the West Coast. The remaining university 
leaders were from New England, including 9 deans, 6 presidents, and 9 provosts. Since I did not 
have funding for travel, I drove my personal vehicle to the majority of my interviews. Thus, my 
recruitment outreach required that subjects be within reasonable driving distances that were no 
more than 400 miles round trip. Furthermore, due to my lack of funding for travel-related 
expenses, I had to be creative with my time and resources. At times, I was able to conduct 
interviews in conjunction with my travel for academic conferences. I also relied on five video 
calls, via Skype, and one traditional phone call without video for my data collection.

Of the 34 respondents, 28 had terminal degrees\(^9\) in a discipline that is often housed within 
a university’s College of Arts and Science. Of the remaining 6 respondents, one had a doctorate 
of education, two had doctorates in business, and three had doctorates in engineering. Since I 
relied on snowball sampling and worked through the various networks in which I am a member 
to gain access, I was not able to ensure disciplinary diversity. Disciplinary homes were often 
more relevant to respondents’ stories of their pathways to leadership. For example, since women

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\(^9\) Only two of all of my interview participants did not have a doctorate. Those participants had terminal degrees 
within their areas of study.
are more commonly professors within Colleges of Arts and Science than in Colleges of Engineering (Bird 2011; Fox 2010), differential gendered dynamics mark these experiences. For this reason, I do consider the disciplinary home of the leaders in my analysis. However, to protect the identity of the interview participants, I do not specifically mention the participants’ exact disciplinary focus. I use the four categories of: Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, and Engineering.

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Interviewing techniques always raise issues and concerns about interviewer bias and strategies for addressing these. I adopted a reflective practice to identify the hidden biases and preconceptions that I may have brought to the interviews. While my questions served to guide the course of the interview, I inevitably became the instrument for analyzing these interviews. As such, I mitigated my power as the interviewer/data analyst (Harding 1986; Hsiung 2008; Martin 2001; Naples 2003a, 2003b; Taber 2010). By considering the way in which my own life history prompted me to explore gender and leadership, I was able to better assess my relationship to the project. For example, the personal revelation that my purpose is related to identifying binary, socially constructed assumptions that place women and men in fixed categories of acceptable

Note: A&S = Arts and Science, Eng = Engineering, NE= New England, WC= West Coast, MidAt=Mid-Atlantic

Reflexivity
leadership styles positioned me to be exceptionally attuned to probing for life history accounts that are driven by essentialist gender categorization. Being aware of my distaste for the practice of citing womanly qualities or manly qualities as evidence that individuals will make exceptional leaders was also important for me to acknowledge. I understood that essentialist references may have been research participants’ coping strategies for navigating a diverse academic environment.

Data Collection: “Studying Up” and Access

“Studying up” which encompassed my recruitment of study participants from the higher echelon and privileged population of university governance required my careful attention to detail in my outreach efforts to build rapport and secure interviews. Studies show that elites\textsuperscript{10} may opt out of participating in studies based on their busy schedules (Conti and O’Neil 2007; Ortner 2010; Undheim 2003), confidentiality concerns (Aldred 2008; Lofland and Lofland 1995; Ostrander 1993), doubtfulness of research intentions (Conti and O’Neil 2007; Ortner 2010; Ostrander 1993; Pierce 1995; Undheim 2003; Wax 1980), lack of respect toward the researcher (Conti and O’Neil 2007; Galliher 1980; Ostrander 1993; Pierce 1995; Williams 1989), and higher orders to avoid participation (Conti and O’Neil 2007; Taber 2010; Undheim 2003). Given these obstacles, I employed strategies that would facilitate a smooth and prompt recruitment process. The timeframe for my study was reasonably short; I conducted all of the interviews between February 2013 and August 2013. I believe that my careful attention to these potential challenges of studying up factored into the ease that I experienced in obtaining access to these 34 academic leaders.

\textsuperscript{10} I define elite as someone, at or near the top of an institutional social structure, who possesses the power to deny access to an interview based on a position of authority and concerns that an interview may undermine her or his authority (Conti and O’Neil 2007; Ostrander 1993).
Most often, when I reached out to a new research participant, I first placed a phone call to the administrative office (to either the assistant or the receptionist) to inquire about the email address I should use for the forthcoming email. I always mentioned my background as a Ph.D. Candidate, my interest in studying gender and leadership, and my request for a meeting with the university leader. Sometimes, the front line communicators directed me to send the emails directly to them, or to personal assistants or chiefs of staff. Other times, the front line communicators would mention that the leader was exceptionally responsive to her or his personal emails and that I should go ahead and email that university leader directly. Prior to sending an email, I studied the university leader’s academic background including her or his degree granting institutions, past institutions of employment, and discipline. If I had any sort of connection to the leader, I would be sure to place those connections in the first paragraph of my recruitment email.

Lofland and Lofland (1995) and Undheim (2003) note how building rapport and establishing relationships based on connections and politeness can assist the researcher in gaining entry based on this demonstration of legitimacy. With this in mind, I carefully crafted each recruitment email and included key information such as a synopsis of my research project, the types of questions that I would be asking, and a statement on confidentiality. I also included the contact information and title of the Private Investigator (PI)/my dissertation advisor.\footnote{My dissertation advisor, Dr. Davita Silfen Glasberg, is a highly respected academic leader and scholar. She is an Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Connecticut. I believe that her positive reputation and national visibility aided my smooth recruitment process.} This established my credibility and gave the potential respondent the opportunity to ask follow up questions. I also checked my schedule carefully before sending an email and provided up to 8 timeframes including both dates and times for meetings. Giving the leaders options for meeting times proved to be helpful because it maximized the chances that at least one of the suggested
times would work. Other times, it was necessary for me to work with the scheduler with multiple email exchanges and/or phone calls to secure meeting times. While there were certainly times when the respondents would need to cancel due to pressing campus needs or a change in their travel plans, there were very few instances when I needed to modify my schedule to suit a meeting postponement. By working through the appropriate channels to set up the meeting and by confirming the meeting a day or so in advance, I protected my time and ensured that the respondents and their administrative teams were well aware of their upcoming meetings. When necessary, I also worked with the administrative support staff members to explain Skype instructions for the five video calls.

I used a convenience sample that relied on snowball sampling. At the end of each interview, I would ask the interview participants if they could recommend current and former colleagues at institutions that fit my criteria (non-religiously affiliated, co-educational, and supportive of gender-related diversity). Early on in my data collection and recruitment, I found that I relied heavily on these suggestions. However, as I neared the end of my data collection, I often refrained from asking for other interview contacts given that I was nearing a level of saturation in my research. At times, it was necessary for me to exercise a level of persistence in going after an interview when schedules seemed to be impenetrable (Conti and O’Neil 2007; Undheim 2003). On three occasions, I relied on the influence and persuasive tactics of two of my prior interview participants to secure interviews with sought-after interview respondents.

Exercising respect for the interview participants and establishing credibility in my recruitment carried over into my exchanges during the interviews. By portraying my confidence in my dissertation, blending into the environment by dressing appropriately,12 (Galliher 1980) and familiarizing myself with the institutional culture and jargon (Ostrander 1993; Undheim

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12 I dressed in a business casual/business formal style for the interviews.
2003; Wax 1980), I mitigated any questions or hesitations that the interview participants might have had going into the interview. For example, my personal background in university fundraising made me aware of some of the common public relations matters university leaders often confront when it is crucial for them to be attentive to the interests of the institutions’ multiple stakeholders. Overall, I believe that I earned respect from my interview participants given that many interviews ended with the interview participants requesting an executive summary or a copy of my dissertation in its final format.

Coding and Analysis

Once I completed the interviews I employed a standpoint epistemological approach to my research, given that my methodology warrants an exploration or discovery process. A standpoint methodological approach, or “a sociology for people” (Smith 2005: 10) allows women and men’s lived experiences to guide ethnomethodological knowledge discovery (DeVault 1990; 1999a, 1999b; Naples 2003a, 2003b, Pascale 2007; Smith 1987; 2005; Sprague 2005). This approach was particularly useful given the differential backgrounds and experiences that produced situated knowledge (Sprague 2005). It underscores how a standpoint methodological approach is characterized by situated knowledge. Knowledge production can never be complete given variant social experiences based on social differences including race, class, gender, and sexuality (Naples 2003a, 2003b; Pascale 2007).

This approach comes out of a feminist tradition that has viewed discourse as constraining to those of historically oppressed populations. DeVault (1999b: 59) addresses the way in which “language itself reflects male experiences, and that its categories are often incongruent with women’s lives.” By giving agency to my interview respondents to develop their own narrated accounts of their experiences, I gave them the opportunity to create an accurate account of their
relationship to the institution. Instead of insisting that gender matters, I explored the role that gender plays given subjects’ responses. While I did ask one pointed question regarding gender-related experiences of an academic leader, I allowed the themes relative to gender and leadership to emerge without insisting on this connection. Since I was interested in seeing how themes emerged from interview respondents’ experiences I used a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to guide my identification and analysis of themes.

I considered using coding software to facilitate the coding process; however, I chose not to given my familiarity with my data and the fact that I had already developed analytical memos from each interview that pulled out the key themes from each interview. Moreover, the total number of interviews was a reasonable size to analyze through my coding in Microsoft Word (Ryan and Bernard 2003). While I transcribed each of the interviews, I inserted comments and highlighted noteworthy quotes that signified potential key themes. After transcribing all of the interviews, I went back through each interview again to identify more key themes. I created lists that included background informational comments. For example, I coded for instances when a leader indicated that she or he had been mentored only by men, or that she or he had never attended a leadership training seminar. In addition, I kept detailed notes in a Microsoft Excel file that documented the contact process of my recruitment. I documented the dates and nature of my interactions with office staff members and follow up dates. Having this detailed list helped me to refer back to specific interviews to identify the origin of interview data as well as background information such as type of institution, title, and gender.

After I coded the interviews, I employed discourse analysis that recognizes that narratives cannot only be taken at face value (Chase 1995; Naples 2003a, 2003b). Gendered, raced, and classed realizations of oppression may not always be visible to individuals who are not
accustomed to this language and who might have been socialized not to see or focus on their oppression (DeVault 1999a; 1999b; Goodman 2010). Since discursive meaning is external and representative of power (Smith 2005 citing Foucault 1972), I was attentive to how power may have limited a respondent’s account. Hidden power dimensions are a key feature of any organizational context (Acker 2006; Britton 1997; 2000); therefore, I accounted for the latent meanings that may have been present in my respondents’ narratives. By listening to not only what respondents said, but also how they said it, I facilitated the incorporation of unstated meanings into my data. For example, how a leader spoke about a man who might have mentored her (with a tone of admiration and respect) and about a woman who might have mentored her (with a tone reminiscent of collaborative friendship) are data that I was able to discern through discourse analysis.

Limitations and Considerations

While a feminist standpoint epistemological approach acknowledges that interviewer standpoints and research participants’ standpoints must be considered in the knowledge production process, it is a misreading of standpoint to assume that this perspective gives complete agency to the research participants and that “insider” status with the research participant guarantees a more accurate account of the power relations (Sprague 2005). With this in mind, the feminist standpoint epistemological guiding lens for inquiry is not completely absent of potential bias that I may bring to the interviews and their interpretations. I mitigated this subjectivity by journaling my pre- and post-interview impressions and emotions (Naples 2003a; 2003b; Sprague 2005). Before each interview, I would prepare by reviewing the available background information on the respondent and would account for any prior assumptions that
may have influenced the data. As Naples (2003a; 2003b) points out, while reflective practice throughout the research process has the potential to diminish biases, reflective practice does not diminish personal ideologies. I believe that I have diminished the role of personal ideologies and biases through both consistent exchanges with my dissertation advisor in addition to the knowledge that many of my interview participants expressed an interest in reading an executive summary and/or my entire dissertation upon its completion. By sharing my interpretations with my advisor and through my understanding that the respondents would likely read my findings, I was especially cognizant of the need to remain true to respondents’ intentions. I respect the views of my respondents and want to ensure that they are satisfied with their own portrayal in my reported findings. For these reasons, I believe that I have maintained objectivity in the reporting of my findings.

**Personal Reflection on the Study**

This dissertation began as a response to mainstream media’s gendering of leadership and self-help books for women such as Gail Evans’ (2001) *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman: What Men Know About Success that Women Need to Learn*. We live in a society where college women and women at all stages of their career are often faced with the message that if they wish to break through the glass ceiling, they must learn how to “play like men.” As a former student of political science, women in leadership roles, whether behind the scenes as first ladies or first mothers of presidents or women in political office, have always interested me. Reading about the socially constructed, gender-based challenges and barriers that these women have historically confronted has always been a source of inspiration for me. With this in mind, I was exceptionally sensitive and reactive to my exposure to insights that women ought to modify their gender
performativity to be more like men (whatever that means) if they ever expected to advance within a leadership hierarchy.

This dissertation evolved from the understanding that studies on gender and leadership need to talk about men, women, and leadership. Leadership studies that focus on defining leadership should not bracket women’s leadership into separate discussions. For example, Nannerl Keohane (2010), a political scientist who is the former president of Duke University and Wellesley College, in her book, *Thinking about Leadership*, includes a chapter on gender that she titles, “Does Gender Make a Difference?” After reading this chapter that was sandwiched into the text and appeared as the third chapter from the end, I was left feeling unsatisfied. This chapter did not deal with the issue of gender from a foundation that finds fault in drawing a distinction between a woman’s style of leadership and a man’s style of leadership and reproduced these social constructions. For example, Keohane (2010) described how Judith Rodin, the former president of the University of Pennsylvania, cited her interest in revitalizing the surrounding Philadelphia neighborhood as possibly due to her status as a woman and mother. Keohane follows this explanation with, “Some women may emphasize their stereotypically feminine qualities to make their colleagues, superiors, and subordinates feel more comfortable with their leadership” (Keohane 2010:132). Keohane is not arguing that women will necessarily always lead differently from men by underscoring their feminine attributes; however, she is presenting it as a possibility in some circumstances. Furthermore, with regard to her own personal experiences, Keohane writes:

But even though my leadership of Wellesley or Duke may have had a slightly more inclusive flavor than is typical of such offices, I soon learned that the necessities of getting things done, dealing with varied interests, personalities, and perspectives, and making tough decisions and moving on brought me to lead in ways that were generally quite
similar to how male leaders of such institutions perform (Keohane 2010: 153).

Reading these passages emboldened my interest in investigating this relationship between gender and leadership that limits women’s advancement. Men have historically occupied leadership roles at colleges and universities in the United States. As such, Keohane’s observations and mimicking of the style of leadership that she had witnessed from her male peers did not necessarily make it masculine leadership; perhaps it was simply leadership. Had women historically occupied these roles at our nation’s colleges and universities, might these same leadership styles that individuals commonly refer to as “male leadership styles” have emerged among women as well?

I do, however, recognize that some literature has placed discussions of women and leadership as separate from men’s leadership given women’s differential life experiences that are gender-based. For example, there is certainly substantial merit in understanding that women confront obstacles associated with the work and family balance (Acker 1990; 1992; Cha 2013; Damaske 2011; Gerson 2010; Hochschild 1997; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack and Moen 2010; Macdonald 2010; Williams 2010). Yet, what I offer in this dissertation is the opportunity to disentangle the understanding that leadership needs to be defined through the scope of a man’s experience. For this reason, I maintained a fairly even distribution of women and men as my interview respondents.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the 34 women and men for taking the time to talk to me about their personal histories as academic administrators and their leadership experiences. Each and every interview has had personal meaning for me and has helped me to develop my understanding of gender, leadership and higher educational administration. Furthermore, I am
grateful to have had access to these leaders given that their insights have profoundly intensified my respect for the academy and academic leadership that is often described as a 24/7 job. I feel privileged and honored to have had the opportunity to establish these connections and to have had the chance to pose some very personal questions to these academic leaders whom I hold in extremely high regard. Their candidness and thoughtfulness are apparent in the four substantive chapters of my dissertation.
Chapter 3
Leadership Styles and Gender

Globally, leaders in all institutions, including government, corporations, and schools confront socially constructed gender stereotypes in their management approaches. There is substantial evidence suggesting that women and men often vary in how they approach their leadership duties. While women and men may offer different gender-specific leadership styles and strategies, these distinctions are often translated into essentialized expectations for how a woman or a man must execute her or his responsibilities. These classifications thus reinforce the social construction of leadership as a gendered phenomenon.

Since the goal of my dissertation is to envision a degendered leadership, this exploration of leadership and gender must first begin with a conceptualization of leadership. I begin with Rost’s (1991: 180) definition, garnered from an interdisciplinary literature review: “Leadership is great men and women with certain preferred traits influencing followers to do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals that reflect excellence defined as some kind of higher-level effectiveness.” Leaders demonstrate qualities that set them apart from others due to their intelligence, charisma, and past achievements. They strive to work with others to create conditions by which entire constituencies can enjoy the most beneficial group outcome. This definition is not gendered and underscores that women and men leaders have the same tasks to accomplish. Yet, I emphasize again that we live in a society in which we are highly familiar with a gendered, social construction of leadership (Brescoll 2011; Eagly and Carli 2007; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari 2011). As such, there are differences in how colleagues and the general public respond to women’s leadership styles that are fundamentally different from
responses to men’s leadership styles. These leadership styles are rooted in gender roles that are embedded in all institutions of society.

Gender as an organizing principle patterns our interactions in organizational contexts in much the same way as it operates in other domains of society. Ridgeway (2001: 644) asserts that in workplace and organizational settings, gender offers an “implicit, background identity” that frames women and men’s responses when they are in command. In what circumstances is gender visible in organizations? Butler (1990: 180) points to the process by which gender operates in organizational contexts, noting that, “gender reality is created through sustained social performances.” As such, women, who have historically been relegated to private sphere, non-hierarchical positions that require taking orders instead of giving orders, may shape their leadership styles in such a way that they are communal, democratic, transformational, and transactional with regard to acknowledging and rewarding exceptional practices among subordinates.

One theoretical explanation of differential gendered leadership styles is social role theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Eagly and Johnson 1990; Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000). From this perspective, “leaders occupy roles defined by their specific position in a hierarchy and simultaneously function under the constraints of their gender roles” (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003:572). For example, Keohane (2010) underscored how Judith Rodin, former president of the University of Pennsylvania, justified her interest in revitalizing the surrounding Philadelphia neighborhood as rooted in her status as a woman and

13 Eagly and Karau (2002) introduce role congruity theory of prejudice that evolves from and extends social role theory and establishes a framework for future studies of prejudice.
mother. Keohane (2010:132) explains this style: “Some women may emphasize their stereotypically feminine qualities to make their colleagues, superiors, and subordinates feel more comfortable with their leadership.” I found just the opposite situation to be true. Women leaders did not commonly underscore their feminine qualities with their peers or their roles as mothers in their discourse. While these matters were certainly not absent from their experiences, they were simply not a focal point that women leaders chose to emphasize.14

GENDER ROLES AND LEADERSHIP

In interviews, women leaders were only quick to bring up gender role-related responsibilities relevant to parenting in exceptionally inconvenient situations involving the work and family balance. Sabrina, a woman of color who is the president of a public university, indicated that there was a time early on in her presidency, when she felt that downplaying her role, as a mother would have provided her with a more favorable job performance outcome. Her daughter’s medical school graduation happened to be the same weekend as the first graduation ceremony that she would preside at from her own institution. The problem was that the location and timing made it physically impossible for her to be in both places at the same time. She was unsuccessful in her request for a date change from her host institution’s graduation. As such, after her careful consideration and full understanding of the possible backlash that she might face as a new president who chose not to attend her first graduation, she sent an email to the campus community that she summarized:

I sat down at my computer and I constructed the e-mail […] the subject line was – Probability – and I said to everyone, to the community.

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14 This does not mean that women hid or chose not to celebrate their femininity in order to blend in with men. For example, Caroline, the president of a public university drew attention to a sports-themed Barbie that sat on her book shelf and Rachel, the provost at a public university mentioned that her cell phone cover is pink. They did not subscribe to the understanding that they must wipe all non-masculine items from their professional lives.
What’s the probability that my daughter’s commencement from medical school would be the same date as our commencement [here]? And, I said it doesn’t matter, I’m going to my daughter’s commencement and I wrote a couple other lines and I pushed send. And, I immediately got e-mail back from the Math faculty telling me what the probability was and I said, “I don’t give a shit about the probability.”

Downplaying her role as a caring mother and attending her institution’s graduation was the decision that Sabrina’s overseeing institutional stakeholders had hoped she would make. Yet, here, by underscoring her role as an involved and supportive mother, while it may not have been ideal for the graduation committee, she shows an alternative to what others have deemed to befit a woman with authority.

Similarly, Joanne, a woman provost at a private liberal arts college talked about her experience being asked to temporarily move from her faculty role into the provost position when it became available. Joanne stated:

The president asked me if I would be willing to serve as provost for two years because the current provost was going to step down in about a month or so. Quite frankly I said no at first. I [she and her husband] had a three-year-old daughter at home and I lived an hour away. I couldn’t imagine doing the job with all the other things that were happening in my life. And, so, but he’s very persuasive, he said it’s only for two years and so I said, I would at least think about it over the weekend.

Joanne stated that she spoke with her husband about the opportunity and he encouraged her to pursue the position. She then decided to go back to the president to address some of her issues with the position and asked for temporary housing for two years given that a two hour a day commute was just not going to work for her and her family. Here again, it is apparent that Joanne’s highlighting of her role as a mother only came out when she was tasked with a challenge that did not suit her family’s well being. As such, she only brought up her role as a
mother because it was important to the discussion; her role as a mother was not something that commonly came out in her professional affairs.

Sabrina and Joanne’s experiences illustrate that a woman leader’s reference to her role as a mother were not commonplace among the respondents that I interviewed. In Chapter 6, I will further address instances of the work and family balance and how women are disproportionately prone to mention this matter when discussing their experiences as leaders. In spite of these material factors that may differentially characterize a women’s involvement, when it comes to leadership styles, differences between women and men were difficult to distinguish.

LEADERSHIP STYLES: QUESTIONING GENDERED VARIATION

Leadership scholars have synthesized style classifications that cover a variety of leadership manifestations; this terminology appears in studies that examine women’s experiences as leaders and societal responses to their headship. For example, Lewin and Lippitt (1938) introduced the polar opposites of democratic and autocratic leadership styles that other leadership scholars (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Eagly and Johnson 1990; Vroom & Yetton 1973) have built upon in their efforts to characterize leadership variation among women and men. Notably, Eagly and Johnson (1990) do not find differences in how women and men approach the social and instrumental factors associated with leading. However, they find that women are more open to collaborative, democratic styles of leading. Women avoid an autocratic leadership style since operating in such a way can lead to intense scrutiny and personal repercussions. Therefore, social role theory explains why women develop this democratic leadership style: stereotypes regarding a woman’s role in society prevent her from acting in an autocratic fashion. Openness and transparency in
women’s decision-making as leaders is therefore attributable to gender roles. Women are not biologically wired differently to be collaborative; social norms oblige this leadership style. My research confirms that women avoid an overly autocratic leadership style. Yet, my research challenges this understanding given that men also avoid such a domineering presence in their approaches.

**Shared Governance and Collaboration**

Women and men leaders at both public and private institutions emphasized the importance of the collaborative involvement of faculty and other pertinent shareholders of the institution, whenever possible, in the decision-making process. A shared governance model, characterized by transparency, democratic engagement, and equal opportunities for individuals at all levels to weigh in on prospects for institutional change, lies at the forefront of the leaders’ management methods. While the leaders demonstrated that there clearly are times, not including instances in which emergency decisions are warranted, in which they must make the final decision, these decisions come about after open deliberation.

Sabrina and the public university where she is president are committed to a shared governance model. She emphasizes how shared governance requires an onerous process of numerous meetings. However, the culture of higher education warrants this framework. She stated:

Here, it’s always about process. What process am I going to use? How are the different constituencies, the students, the staff, and the faculty going to weigh in? How long do those processes take? Do they take a semester? Two semesters? Two years? And then at the end when I have recommendations, what do I do with those recommendations? Do I think implement them directly or do I have a committee implement them? You know, it just goes on and on and on and sometimes it wears you down.
because you do know that change is necessary and you want to make a change. You want to move faster, but you can’t.

Later on in the interview, when I asked Sabrina if her authority as president had ever been questioned, she indicated:

Yes, people question my authority all the time. Some people do it gently and some people do it more forcefully. And, sometimes I have to really – you know, make a decision. I mean, think it through, make a decision and stick to my guns. People believe sometimes that you shouldn’t be making a decision, that you should be sharing the decision-making. And, there are some cases where it’s not to be shared; it’s a presidential matter and a president decides. But, it’s hard to communicate that, gently.

Clearly, Sabrina realizes that in academia, transparent decision-making is key. Yet, there are times, when after open deliberations, she must make a single decision in the interest of the university. Furthermore, there are times, as in emergencies, in which a leader must act without the full endorsement of the relevant stakeholders.

Similarly, Denise, a woman who, at the time of the interview, was an incoming president at a private liberal arts college and who had held a previous provost role at another private liberal arts college, indicated the importance of the shared governance model in academia and the uniqueness of this framework to this setting:

Most people don’t think of themselves as being in a hierarchy, they don’t expect to be ordered around. And, so if you’re working at IBM and you’re the president and you come in and say – here’s our plan, let’s do it. And, everybody’s “great – okay, you pay my paycheck and I do your plan.” It doesn’t work that way in academia. As you know, faculty think of themselves as free actors more than they think of themselves as people in a hierarchy and so you really have to persuade people of a plan of action, you can’t simply walk in one day and say, our new strategic plan is X, Y, and Z and I want you all to start doing it tomorrow. So, the kind of shared governance model of academia I think is substantially different from what you see in government or business in that sense. And, I think it makes it challenging in a different way because you really can’t just implement your vision.
Insights from Paul, a man serving as president of a private liberal arts college further confirm the necessity of a shared governance model from a man’s perspective:

I often explain to people that my job is much more like being an elected political official than like being the CEO of a corporation because really almost no one will do what I tell them to do just because I told them to do it. It has to be a good idea, there has to be support for it. So, I think that’s an important factor as well.

In addition, Douglas, a man serving as president of a public university underscored the importance of working toward collective agreement on a policy matter given that if faculty, for example, do not agree with your decision, it is not going to work out well for the institution. He noted:

Leadership is really about getting people to be consistent with a vision, to believe in a vision for an organization, to be consistent in trying to achieve that.

On this same note, Ronald, a man serving as president at a public university, when I asked him to differentiate between what is different about higher education as opposed to private industry, indicated that buy-in, from faculty in this case, is key in order to move forward with a new initiative.

You tell a tenured, full professor – you do, x or y and z or you’re gone – you can’t do that. You got to find ways to get them to want to do that. You have to have a different approach to leadership. And, I don’t think it’s a bad thing

Notice that Ronald, similar to Sabrina, Denise, Paul, and Douglas does not say that leadership is about demanding a certain outcome from subordinates. Transparency in decision-making and having the buy-in from all stakeholders were qualities that all of my interview participants emphasized.

Communal Versus Agentic Leadership
Building on the dichotomy of democratic versus authoritarian leadership styles, researchers have identified the contrast of a communal style, emphasizing a sharing of power, and an agentic style that incorporates assertive independence (Bass 1990; Cann and Siegfried 1990). Communal leadership involves more than decision-making based matters, as is the case with democratic leadership, by incorporating a sense of oneness among the stakeholder community. Furthermore, agentic leadership differs from autocratic leadership given that leaders can be assertive and independent without necessarily wielding single-handed decisions. Scholars underscore societal expectations that women will exhibit a more communal, or collective/community-related leadership approach, while men are expected to have a more agentic approach that is marked by independence in decision-making (Eagly and Carli 2007; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari 2011; Newport 2001; Spence and Buckner 2000). Eagly and Carli (2007: 123) find that, “…[women] have to reconcile the communal qualities that people prefer in women with the agentic qualities that people think leaders need to exhibit to succeed.” Exhibiting too much communality or too much agency could damage a woman leader’s reputation. They conclude, “Finding an appropriate and effective leadership style is therefore a delicate task, and women know this” (Eagly and Carli 2007: 123).

Similarly, Heilman and Okimoto’s (2007) experiments find that women can overcome gender stereotypes by engaging in a more communal role. For example, as I note above, a woman may reveal or exhibit more communal traits such as drawing an emphasis to her role as a mother in order to counteract a breach of gender stereotypes. Heilman and Okimoto find that when a woman’s communality is not evident to observers, she will face negative responses. Heilman and Okimoto (2007: 91) conclude, “Because the negative reactions to successful women are alleviated with evidence that they are, in fact, communal, our data suggest that
women’s perceived violation of feminine “shoulds,” not their taking on of masculine “should nots,” underlies and fuels the penalties these women incur for their success.” This suggests why women may cite their motherly instincts, for example, in instances when they sense that their single-handed introduction of a new policy may be unfavorable.

As I indicated earlier, I did not encounter any women in my interviews that indicated that they had emphasized their motherly roles as a way of deflecting criticisms for being too tough as leaders. However, I did find examples from my research that demonstrate how both women and men learned to accentuate communal or personable and amicable qualities in challenging times.

Corrine, a provost at a private university spoke about how she deals with trying personnel issues when she must inform faculty that they have not been successful in achieving tenure and she asks them to leave the university:

I really try to spend a little bit of time kind of structuring the conversation, thinking through their eyes. Have the tissue box handy, you know, just time of day to have the conversation. What would they have to do after? Kind of make it the end of the day when they do not have to go to another function. And, I try to just make it go as best as I can. Be compassionate, but also be clear and to give them the opportunity then to come back at a later time to talk through any of their concerns. And, I let them know that I’ll support them through the transition. Those are horrible to do. And, they never get easier. Each one.

Corrine emphasizes her warmth and consideration under this unfavorable condition that intimately impacts an individual’s livelihood. Clearly, Corinne displays her respect for the faculty member. She knows that the faculty member’s life will considerably change as a result of the decision that she is communicating. As such, she attenuates the harshness of a job loss. Corinne’s response here confirms Eagly and Carli’s (2007) claim that women must learn how to balance the communal and agentic facets of their leadership style.
Similarly, as president of a public university, Douglas spoke of times in which he had to fire senior administrators. He also acknowledges his strategy, marked by a balance of communality and agency, in order to lessen the blow of a job loss:

But, there have been a couple of cases of senior administrators in my career that just, I had to say, you can’t be here anymore and your contract says you can stay for a year. But, if you stay for a year, it’s going to be really embarrassing and you’re not going to get any letters of reference. If you leave in three months, I’ll give you letters, we’ll make this look good and usually people get it. Sometimes, you have to do that when you’re coming to a new situation. I’ve done it three times here with senior people. And I’m a nice, friendly mid-Western guy, but I’m totally capable of doing the right thing if it has to be done and people have learned that I think.

In the midst of this negative circumstance for the senior administrators, there is an element of thoughtful reasoning in this presentation of a dismissal. Douglas demonstrates that his purpose is not to make his outgoing colleagues’ lives miserable. He clearly wants to do what is best and right for the university at that time and to make the problem disappear as quickly as possible, and with the fewest casualties as possible. He does not wish to damage an individual’s future career options based on this unsatisfactory job performance. Douglas’ experience challenges Eagly and Carli’s (2007) assertion that women understand the need for a fine balance between communality and agency. As leaders, men are also aware of a leadership style that is marked by courtesy for others in the midst of inflicting life-changing decisions.

The hiring and firing of personnel and general personnel-related controversies were most often cited as the most trying challenges of any higher education leadership position. Yet, many of the leaders, both women and men, reflected on the need to be communal in their daily affairs and in how their colleagues perceived them at all levels. Again, as above with the examples from Corinne and Douglas, these leaders became especially aware of the need to be engaged in “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1983) as a result of their failure to exhibit the feminine “shoulds”
(Heilman and Okimoto 2007) of communality. Yet, here, this understanding of how a woman ought to lead also applies to men’s leadership.

Insights from Caroline, a woman who is serving as president of a public university demonstrate how she is exceptionally aware of the need to administer communal responses to her staff members’ performance in the midst of her heavy workload. Caroline states:

I have a problem where I’m always trying to get stuff done and I have to tell myself all the time to tell people what a good job they’re doing. That’s a challenge; I’m getting better at it. But, I always assume cause academics are like this – we do good work and then it will get recognized. Like, when you’re working on your dissertation, you’re not having someone there every week saying – you did such a good job on that interview. We’re used to waiting a long time – doing big projects to get whatever reward. I mean, you publish a book and you won’t get reviews for a year and a half or two years. So, but I’m getting better at that and I just got to tell people – you know, it’s annoying. But, you know, people need that. I guess I don’t really need it. Although, my board chair is really great and he does it and he does it to me and to the chief of staff and so I mean I got to remember that he does that for me and so I have to do it for other people. So, yeah, it’s a work in progress.

Likewise, Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college addressed the need to find a balance with her agentic and communal attributes. She spoke of a time when she sought external support from an executive coach who helped her to address personnel issues that were making her job difficult.

I had a sort of insurrection from some people who report to me who were, who did not want to change. And, it was pretty ugly. So, how did I approach it? I got a coach. I told my boss, look here’s what we need to do and clearly what I’m trying to do which is to try to cheerlead people into being able to think about what we need to do differently is not working. So, I got a coach, did a huge amount of work. Did a huge amount of reading. Worked with her to develop strategies and just little things like make sure you always take your secretary to lunch once a month. That’s a great idea. So, yeah, it was kind of a if you come from being a faculty member into supervising people who had been staff all their lives. I think I didn’t really appreciate, not the differences, but how different that feels to people.
Caroline and Cynthia both address instances in which they needed to do an inventory of their leadership styles to address issues in which their reporting staff were not feeling validated and respected. As such, they recognized that they needed to formulate a balance between their agentic and communal attributes as leaders. These findings confirm Heilman and Okimoto’s (2007) conclusion regarding the need for women to visibly portray feminine “shoulds” that would entail rewarding exceptional work and acknowledging the needs of subordinates.

However, it was not just women leaders who emphasized the need to exhibit communality in their management approaches.

Bradford, as dean at a private university, indicated that he learned a lesson earlier on in his career regarding the need to be less agentic and more communal. He noted the difficulty that he faced when he made an unfavorable decision regarding scheduling matters without adequately listening to the interests of faculty members.

I walked into the department chairs and put this on their desk and said this is what we’re going to do. Crap storm like you would not believe and to the point where I went on fighting with them and drawing a line in the sand and then backing up and drawing an earlier one. I was in email wars with people for about two years and when I got done I think I might have consolidated a third of the gains that I thought I would […] There was lots of freedom in the system, but I started a war. It was on principle, you are trying to rub the faculty’s nose in early hours, in unpopular hours […] and in the end, I think I consolidated a third of the gains. I would never do it that way again. I would consult until they were tired and say which of these is acceptable? Which of these will work and let’s try them. You don’t put the draconian rule down in front of people and say shut up and do it. That’s what I learned and I learned it big time. And you wouldn’t think it would be huge, but it turns out that those things are kind of significant. But, that’s the signal experience in which I learned how to be a dean. And, again, at Proctor and Gamble, I probably could just – and everyone would have gone oh crap and they would have gone and done it.
Bradford learned where to draw the line in terms of how he could wield his authority. As such, the masculine “should” of being agentic (Heilman and Okimoto 2007) can be faced with disastrous consequences when not properly balanced with communality.

Ronald, as president, also faced a similar incident, during the early part of his career as president. His agentic work style landed him in a situation in which he was overstepping his bounds as president. He had previously served as a dean and so when he became president, he was used to a hands-on approach with regard to issues at the department chair level.

I say, oh – here’s a problem – I’m sorting through. Here’s something that needs attention – let me get on that and I call up two department chairs and then the provost and the dean come to me and go – is there a problem? Oh, no, what do you mean? Well, Doctor so and so and Doctor so and so said you had given them a call. Yeah, it was about such and such. They didn’t have to say it to me. It didn’t have to happen too many times for me to realize I’m doing their work. And that’s the worst thing I can do cause then they’ll think I don’t think they know how to do their work. And, so I often tell people now – I said, there’s only – in this university – there’s only – besides the staff here that’s in this office, the handful of us. There are only nine people that report to me. They’re the only people that I’m directly responsible for. They’re directly responsible for everything else.

Ronald learned that being president did not mean that he could wield his influence in any facet of the university that he chose. He realized that he needed to tone down his assertive independence as president in order to underscore a power share. While not all of the men that I spoke with pointed out discernible situations in which they came face to face with a need to tone down their agentic behavior, the men leaders also understood the importance of establishing camaraderie with their peers to facilitate a respectful working environment.

For example, Eugene, a man of color, serving as dean at a public university, indicated the importance of what he referred to as, “emotional intelligence.” He refrained from putting himself in situations in which he was constantly reminding his subordinates of his hierarchical
prominence over them. He even pointed out that at the conference table in his office, he never sat at the head of the table in order to diminish hierarchy. Eugene always kept his door open, unless he was on an important phone call or in a meeting, to faculty, staff and students who wished to express their ideas. While I was sitting and waiting for the interview to begin, I even witnessed a faculty member walk in with a paper in hand and then walk out. Eugene’s door was closed, Eugene mentioned during the interview that he had been on a phone call, and Eugene’s office assistant politely informed the faculty member that Eugene was on the phone. The faculty member seemed surprised by the closed door; therefore, I could sense that this was not a common occurrence. Empathy characterizes Eugene’s interpretation of his role as dean:

Here, I am trying to apply the principles of emotional intelligence – I put myself in your shoes – I try to see whatever you’re talking about or you’re doing from your point of view. And, I play an advocate for you in my mind.

Eugene also emphasizes the importance of respecting all of his colleagues at the university regardless of what role they might play.

But, I don’t want them [my colleagues] to feel that there is a hierarchy that everyone else is sitting there; they’re sitting there. I don’t like those formalities. And, part of leadership is also putting personal things aside – your ego out the door when you walk in. And, also treat people like people in addition to being professionals or workers. Custodians working here – you know, they walk into go and grab the basket out of my desk. You know, it’s a long walk [from the door to my desk where my garbage can is located]. I see that, I stand up, I grab the basket myself – I meet them halfway here. You know, it’s like – you’re a human being – you have a job, I have a job and I made this mess. I don’t expect them to come and just get it [the garbage can] […] that little touch, that treatment for me it comes from my heart. But, even if you pretend, it still makes a difference.

Eugene, who was heavily engaged in his duties as dean that involved a major accreditation undertaking, was never too busy to take his eyes off of his computer screen to greet and engage
in conversation with a fellow university employee. As such, Eugene visibly demonstrates his attentiveness toward others and the need to find balance between agency and communality.

Likewise, Paul understands the importance of recognizing the humanity and insights of subordinates. When he was an incoming president of a private liberal arts college, he confronted challenges in having to deal with a predecessor who had a big ego and who was not interested in engaging with the faculty.\(^\text{15}\) The predecessor was simply a “know it all” type of leader that Paul described as “insufferably arrogant” who did not value the insights from the faculty. Paul used this experience to underscore his difference as the current president.

When I was going through that transition with him I remember saying to him once - he wanted to know what else I was doing here. I said, well I’m going to meet with you until you’re done talking and then I’m going to go meet with a group of faculty. And, he said, “Why are you doing that?” And, I said because I think the faculty members are the center of the institution and I’m an academic leader and I believe in the faculty. And, he said, “That’s a waste of your time. They’re not going to tell you anything you need to know; you’re going down a path you don’t need to go down.” And I said, “I appreciate your point of view.” I didn’t say what I thought, but that was his reputation and again he had a big ego and not always a strong ego and that’s a problem.

Women and men, in spite of the difficult decisions that they must make, that are clearly not always favored by all involved parties, are both communal and agentic in how they approach the responsibilities of their positions. Both women and men are aware of the need to not come off as too domineering or as too much of a pushover. As such, it is not only women who can understand the need for this balance; men are just as capable of establishing a leadership style that emphasizes both communal and agentic attributes. Yet, as Caroline and Cynthia’s experiences demonstrate, they realized the need to embody more traditionally feminine traits involving a need to reward others for their acceptable work and to pay close attention to the inner

\(^{15}\) It was common for all of my interview participants to cite incredibly positive examples of leadership and extraordinarily negative examples of leadership based on individuals with whom they had come in contact.
workings of the staff members’ daily affairs. Furthermore, Bradford and Ronald also faced wake up calls that alerted them to the need to be more communal and to downplay their agency. As such, women and men leaders learn the importance of exhibiting a balance of both agency and communality as they learn from their successes and from their failures.

*Laissez Faire Leadership*

Gendered democratic/authoritarian and communal/agentic leadership styles are in part related to the dichotomy of *laissez-faire* versus *hands-on* styles. Studies show that men were more likely than women to exhibit a laissez-faire style (Eagly, Johannessen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003) that is marked by a hands-off approach likely resulting in inept management (Bass 1990). Here again, it is evident how this leadership style is rooted in social role theory and understandings regarding gender roles. Women, whose entry into leadership is far less frequent than men’s more common experiences in leading in formal institutional settings, face pressure to perform. Accomplishments do not just happen; through careful leadership those in management roles help realize an institution’s full potential. Among the 34 interviews that I conducted, I did not come across one leader whose style mirrored a laissez-faire leadership style. Yet, one dean’s recollection of a predecessor’s failings is rooted in this hands-off approach. Based on the above discussion, it should not come as a surprise that this predecessor was a man.

Bradford, a man serving as a dean at a private university, indicated that there was a time when he witnessed the failings of a past dean who was so communally focused that he refrained from interjecting his opinion; he never said “no.” This former dean listened to his constituents, the faculty; however he was so committed to helping their endeavors that it became detrimental to the institution’s reputation. Bradford stated:
There was one dean who saw himself simply as the distributor of resources. He never made a decision to say no to anyone. I thought that he weakened the spine of the institution in certain ways. I thought that people got tenure that weren’t qualified. I thought money got given away but really nothing came of it.

Bradford’s recollections impart the importance of academic leaders’ need to be balanced in their mode of leading. Being too democratic and giving one’s constituents exactly what they want every time a request comes in, or being too heavy-handed are ineffective leadership styles for all leaders. Here, we can see how Bradford suggests his loss of respect for this previous dean based on his laissez-faire approach.

*Transactional Versus Transformational Leadership*

Other comparisons between women and men’s leadership are characterized in terms of transactional and transformational leadership. A transactional approach characterized by micromanaging with careful monitoring of worker responsibilities differs from transformational leadership that is more team-oriented and involves goal setting and mentoring from above (Bass 1998; Burns 1978). Eagly and Carli (2007) find that the transformational approach is the most effective leadership style and that women most commonly exhibit this leadership style: “at least one aspect of transformational leadership is culturally feminine – *individualized consideration*, which is consistent with the cultural norm that women be caring, supportive, and considerate” (Eagly and Carly 2007: 130). Examples from above indicate that women and men leaders report the importance of recognizing the need for “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1983) by acknowledging the views and sentiments of fellow stakeholders in both the best and worst of circumstances. My respondents commonly opined that it is shameful for leaders to dismiss others’ concerns without providing the proper means for deliberation. Here, I extend this finding
regarding the prevalence and utility of the transformational approach to apply to both women and men leaders. I underscore insights from men administrators who emphasized their transformational leadership style.

Jake, a provost at a private university, indicated the importance of considering the viewpoints of others:

My own style would be characterized as a maternal style because I am much less interested in issuing directives than in trying to get people to come together and come up with an answer.

Similarly, Bradford, a provost at a private university, stressed the importance of community building through camaraderie and spoke highly of his institution’s current president who happens to be a man. Bradford noted:

Our president is very community minded, very concerned about the happiness of employees, very eager to instill in students the sense that they are part of a community and they ought to behave that way.

Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college, underscored the value that he places on relationship building as leader and establishing a community-minded team-like environment.

But, the fact is if I do my job really well, I create a fertile bed for other people to do their jobs. And, I think that’s the most important thing I can do so I’ve got faculty who if I can change one little piece of their work situation so that instead of being frustrated, they love coming to the college. I’ve just made an infinitely good change for the college. So, that kind of service I think is really important. And I would say that’s for me one of the paramount pieces of being a leader and of leadership here. A second big piece I think is about relationships that I try to build and I have personally, personally I cultivate relationships with each individual from the person I meet coming up the stairs who I never met before. People who work here everyday on the staff, on the faculty, the students: I work really hard at cultivating relationships. I send a ton of notes.
Personalized touches such as sending notes, greeting all colleagues and visitors to the college, and making the work environment suitable for the faculty are responsibilities that Samuel personally considers as part of his job description.

Even in a much larger university setting, I encountered men who stressed the importance of a transformational sort of leadership that is marked by team building and caring for others’ viewpoints. Steven, a provost at a public university indicated the importance of engaging with stakeholders:

> And, being at a [large] university, there are going to be many different perspectives. We can’t, we don’t have the time to listen to all of them. But, giving individuals that opportunity whether through a written format, public forum, to help shape the decision I think is very important. So, as a leader I would like to be thought of as someone who is effective in decision-making. But, at the same time, one who listens to different perspectives before making the decision.

There is a trend toward more transformational leadership among all leaders in all contexts. Transformational leadership is a highly effective leadership style that creates advantages for women leaders who are working to push their agendas (Eagly and Carli 2007 and Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003). My findings confirm the efficacy of this leadership style and demonstrate that women and men are both exhibiting this leadership style in academia.

Scholars (Eagly and Carli 2007; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003) have found that men are more likely to exhibit a transactional approach. Yet, women leaders were more likely than men to reward their colleagues who reported to them, which is considered to be highly effective and a component of the transactional leadership model (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003). Key components of a transactional approach include rewarding exceptional performance in addition to active and passive management that can either entail acknowledging mistakes among subordinates and encouraging rule compliance or waiting until
problems escalate before a leader will intervene. As I mentioned earlier, Caroline, as president, had to learn to be more transactional in her leadership approach through reinforcing positive behavior among her colleagues. I found that women and men both portrayed characteristics of the transactional model of leadership with regard to mentoring others and rewarding exceptional performance. I did encounter one instance of a man, who as the outgoing president was too abrasive in his interest in managing the decisions of the incoming president who was also a man. My findings indicate that women and men consider the importance of incorporating a transactional leadership approach.

Paul who described his predecessor as “insufferably arrogant” had the following to say about the hands-on approach of micromanaging that his predecessor had hoped to have as the retired president.

I called him about a year into the job because he was badmouthing me to other people that I didn’t talk to him enough so I called him and I said, I understand that you’re disappointed that I haven’t been reaching out to you enough and I want you to know that I’m sorry about it. It’s not out of disrespect, it’s just that I’ve been in the job and doing what I’m doing. I’d be very happy to hear your thoughts and then he said well, he went into his drawer and he pulled out a list of all the things he was mad at me about. ….. And I remember thinking he really is a horse’s ass. Here I am, I’m the president, and he’s not the president. I’m trying to keep him connected and he still isn’t learning from the experience. So, I did my best with him but he pushed my limits beyond reason.

This sort of encounter was clearly an exception that shows an extreme instance of transactional leadership that undermined the authority of the standing president.

Other examples of transactional leadership style refer to management that is hands-on in the sense that leaders are positively encouraging and guiding others without overstepping their authority. Maria, a dean at a public university who openly identifies as a lesbian, indicated that
as a leader, she sees merit in noticing the skills of her junior colleagues and encouraging their advancement:

I think in some ways for me this is the most important aspect of the job. Oftentimes when one is in a leadership position, you have greater access to information, so you know about opportunities, you know about things that, resources that may come. And, you need to know the people that you work for well enough that you know who to bring those opportunities to the attention of. And that kind of matching of knowing your people and by that I mean certainly department chairs and all the faculty in your division and to the extent that you can, students and staff certainly. And, knowing what their interests and skills are and as you hear about opportunities or programs, or committees, or whatever – you pair the right people with the right circumstances and I think that’s a huge part of the job.

Candace, a woman of color who is a dean at a public university, mirrored Maria’s remarks with regard to the importance of acknowledging talent from within the institution.

And they [effective leaders] also notice the talents in various people that work for them and they encourage those people to use their talents and so that’s what a good leader does.

Louis, a provost at a public university, also indicated the importance of recognizing talents and shortcomings among reporting colleagues. He talks about his early career as a chief academic officer.

I was conferring tenure, I was making those decisions, I was hiring faculty. I was negotiating salaries. I was overseeing the budget. I had no experience in any of that stuff. So, I totally bootstrapped it for a couple of years and none of this is rocket science. Anybody can do it and the stuff you need to figure out is how to handle people. That’s where the rub is. Pick good people, keep good people, and get rid of not so good people. You have to have the courage to do that, to recognize it. It’s all about hiring and firing, I think.

Here, it is evident that Louis is acknowledging the importance of keeping oneself abreast of colleagues’ performance. This sort of approach is indicative of the transactional approach because it rewards achievements and negatively reinforces poor performance.
The transactional approach also involves encouraging rule compliance. Encouraging junior colleagues to succeed through monitoring their compliance with institutional benchmarks, for example, is one mechanism of this approach that I observed. Eugene, as dean, acknowledged his keen interest in mentoring tenure-track colleagues:

I sometimes invite them here as a group and I share with them my views about requirements of the job, how you can be successful and so on. Sometimes after annual evaluations, I have a meeting with them and I go over the evaluation, I explain to them — you know — what I mean by what I wrote down. And, I try to — see I am an advocate for my colleagues when they go for tenure and promotion. When they get there, at that point, if they have survived that far, that long — in my mind they are qualified. They deserve it and I become their best advocate. I fight for them — the tenure and promotion committee, the provost, the president — before that, I tell them — I have to evaluate you and a lot of developmental feedback, mentoring and initially some of them assume there is an agenda; I’m trying to do stuff to them that they won’t get. But, they realize that despite whatever goes on, there is a developmental, annual suggestion. When they address those, when they get to that point; they succeed and I become their strongest supporter.

Cynthia, dean at a private liberal arts college, also indicated that she had a great interest in mentoring others. She even began a campus-wide mentoring program for junior faculty in her previous deanship role.

Furthermore, an active management approach characterizes the transactional leadership model. I saw examples from women and men that confirm the universality of this approach. For example, Louis’ remarks with regard to knowing when to let people go, illustrate an active management approach. Lisa, a dean at a private university, indicated the swiftness of her leadership decisions as she took on her new role. She sensed that the operations of the department were stale and promptly brought about change.

So, I changed everything. And, my predecessor wasn’t changing anything. So, he didn’t recognize that that needed to be changed. He and I have a good relationship, but I wasn’t going to get advice from him. I was going to get knowledge and data about history. But, very quickly,
things needed to change and move differently. And, just because we had particular titles here didn’t mean we were going to continue to have those titles here. I had people come to me; two people came to me early on. They are no longer here, but they in my first few weeks, they had decided, they basically asked for promotions, decided on their titles and salary raises. And, that’s what it was about. It wasn’t about role, it wasn’t about here’s the function for the office; this is where we need to go. It wasn’t about, “let me show you; I’m going to help you figure out what you need.” And, it was just this hole and I had to break away from all of that. And, every title changed, every responsibility changed. People moved around.

Lisa did not hesitate to bring about the changes that were best for the institution. She was quick to identify past mistakes and to remedy them.

SUMMARY

Gendering leadership, with the implication that women and men are somehow wired to lead differently, reproduces a hierarchy with damaging repercussions for women’s leadership opportunities in all workplaces. The literature in this section highlights that women and men’s workplace experiences may differ by virtue of their gender. Yet, the use of gender to label or define the style in which a woman or man leads or must lead is counterproductive to effective organizational leadership. How, then, might change be possible?

In Chapter 4, I move beyond understandings that women and men may be more likely to adopt certain leadership styles by underscoring the meaning of effective leadership. By drawing from the experiences of the respondents in their own leadership and their personally witnessing positive and negative leadership from their predecessors and colleagues, I present the key ingredients for all academic leaders to exhibit, irrespective of gender.
Chapter 4

Effective Academic Leadership

A fail proof, universal definition for effective academic leadership simply does not exist. Academic leaders, much like corporate and governmental leaders, must be equipped to swiftly respond to changing circumstances that affect a university community. Leaders must be resilient and versatile. Just as leaders ought to be capable of envisioning innovative directions in research and instruction when it’s business as usual on campus, they must also be prepared to respond to a volatile market, campus-wide emergencies that threaten the health and safety of their populations, and publicly controversial situations involving personnel. In Chapter 3, I challenged the social construction of leadership as a gendered phenomenon by underscoring how women and men presidents, deans, and provosts reported similar outlooks in their leadership approaches. In this chapter, I move away from gendered constraints that may socially and culturally characterize how women and men ought to approach their administrative roles. Here, I focus on what makes an effective academic leader given an institution’s overall values.

Sternberg\(^\text{16}\) (2013) wrote about the need for academic administrators to emulate an adaptable leadership style. There are both benefits and disadvantages to relying more on oneself, the administration, or the faculty community given the types of circumstances that an administrator may experience. As such, the effective academic leader must not get too comfortable with any one system of governance. Sternberg (2013: 27) concludes: “The key to exercising leadership, in short, is to know thyself but be prepared to adopt another leadership persona if the situation demands it. That is how effective leaders get things done.” Effective leadership, as I noted in Chapter 3, incorporates communality, shared governance, teamwork,

\(^{16}\) Robert J. Sternberg, a psychology, education, and leadership scholar, is the President of the University of Wyoming.
and proper rewards and acknowledgements for exceptional work performance of subordinates. But, beyond these components of leadership style that offer a general frame for effective leadership, there are multiple other key ingredients that are essential for academic leaders that include: 1) exceptional academic credentials (Goodall 2009); 2) leading with a strong ego, not a big ego that incorporates sincere care for the institution including a) respect for the institution’s established culture, b) caring first about the institution and its long-term well-being (Budig 2002; Goens 2011; Shugart 1997), c) support for the work of others (Rowley 1997) that means valuing a diversity of opinions, and d) teamwork and credit sharing for collaborative work (Buller 2011; Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, and Ryland 2012); and 3) transparency in institutional procedures (Jaradat 2013; Mahoney 1998; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, and van Meurs 2009).

EXCEPTIONAL ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

In order to lead an institution of higher education, a leader requires certain academic credentials. In most cases, the academic administrator, serving in the role of president, provost, or dean, is expected to hold a terminal degree, usually a doctorate, in her or his specialty. Goodall (2009) argues that there is a relationship between the quality of an individual’s ability to lead a research university and her or his level of scholarship. As such, scholars who have published numerous peer-reviewed articles in top journals of their disciplines, who have earned grants from prestigious funding agencies, and who have written award-winning books that truly contribute to their disciplines are best suited to lead research universities. Tuchman’s (2009) research attests to the lack of respect that faculty at a research university have for what she terms “corporate administrators” who are incoming outside administrators with lackluster publication records. Tuchman (2009: 77-78), noting the recent phenomenon of the corporate administrator,
discovered that department heads paid close attention to the scholarly records of their superiors.

A department head said that the publications of one top administrator are “weak at best.” Of another, a different department head said, “When he wants to discuss research, he has to talk about his dissertation. He apparently hasn’t done any research since then.” Of a third: “I don’t know how many times I have heard him mention that he is a biologist […]” Put somewhat differently, and professors have put it this way, these administrators have not distinguished themselves in the very areas that faculty use to evaluate one another and that these administrators use to evaluate faculty. To paraphrase yet another former department head, if these administrators had been recruited by the academic departments in which they have been given tenure, almost none of them would have been considered for a senior position.

Effective leadership of a scholarly institution, where subordinate reporting parties respect leaders, necessitates a leader’s exceptional research track record. As such, when a leader is interviewing candidates for a position and conferring or not conferring tenure, the leader approaches decisions from a veteran perspective. When faculty members perceive that their accomplishments far outweigh those of their superiors who are telling them to “publish or perish,” it is no wonder that a weakening of respect, which Tuchman (2009) witnessed, may occur. I asked my respondents to consider advice that they might give to aspiring academic leaders. Much of this advice began with academic excellence in the classroom, through teaching, and in the discipline, through peer-reviewed publications. In some cases where a mention of a scholarly track record did not explicitly evolve from the respondents’ insights, the fact that they had established and sustained their reputations within their disciplines suggested that a respectable scholarly record is a presumed qualification for leadership. For example, current disciplinary-related research projects, for some of my respondents, were still in progress.

17 While Goodall (2009) and Tuchman’s (2009) research does not specifically address leaders of colleges and universities that are more teaching-focused than they are research-focused. This argument can extend to teaching-focused institutions. As such, the head of a small liberal arts college that focuses on teaching excellence in its mission ought to have a leader at its helm who has demonstrated a balanced of teaching and scholarship.
However, the 24/7 demands of an administrative position at a university often meant slow headway on these projects, publications based on past data collection, or collaborative efforts. The respondents who did speak of current research projects were not in their prime years of research productivity. It was likely that a combination of their productivity and visibility within their disciplines was a stepping-stone to their academic leadership posts.

Caroline, a president at a public university that emphasizes high research standards for its faculty echoed the sentiments of Goodall (2009) and Tuchman (2009).

People who say they want to be university president when they’re young, like when they’re assistant professor or professor, I think there’s something wrong with them [laughs]. You know, well they shouldn’t be research university presidents because you should have much more of a scholarly record because you can’t be the president of a research university unless you’ve walked the walk. You can’t tell people to be more productive and publish in better places unless you’ve done it. So, I think I’m pretty typical like that. But, for different types of institutions, like for example, small liberal arts colleges or non-research universities, sometimes people didn’t come from the tenured faculty. So they are different kinds of people for different reasons. And then, there are some really weird cases like the University of California system, which has always had a scholar. They made Janet Napolitano [a lawyer and the former United States Secretary of Homeland Secretary] their president. I don’t get that at all. I mean, I just don’t believe in that. But, so there are weird cases like that. Oh, let’s get someone from high up government or industry; that’s like me going to run American Airlines – not knowing anything about the business.

Similarly, Stanley, a dean at a public university that highly values faculty research offered the following advice to future administrators:

Do a lot of really good research and be willing to step forward and do tasks that need to be done. You demonstrate your ability by success and you can’t have success if you don’t do anything.

Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college, gave advice to potential administrators that paralleled Caroline and Stanley’s insights. She also spoke of the need to have established a pathway that entails spending time in the positions that one will eventually supervise.
Well, on the academic side, I would say, it’s important to be a great scholar. You know if you want those kinds of positions, you do need to have stood in the shoes of the people, particularly the faculty. So, finishing a dissertation and getting tenure and teaching classes, and it is hard to work with your department heads and the kinds of stuff they have to deal with.

While my respondents did not all agree that having an esteemed academic portfolio was a necessity for serving in academic leadership roles, most did agree that while there is not a clear pathway that a leader must always follow, a leader must clearly understand and empathize with the problems that their subordinates may be facing. As such, serving in these roles infers an established academic track record. Making the leap from department head to dean, for example, implies that the leader has a terminal degree in her or his field and has most likely demonstrated academic expertise in that field. Most often, deans have served as department heads, provosts have served as deans, and presidents have served in senior vice president, provost or deanship roles. Respect for the problems that personnel confront in all these roles is essential. Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college even stated:

> Being a department head is one of the hardest jobs on the planet. You can’t help them with that unless you kind of know what that feels like. So, there’s a certain amount of sort of moving up through the ranks.

Sabrina, the president at a public university that places a considerable emphasis on faculty teaching and research addressed the importance of not skipping around through the leadership hierarchy.

> Do the jobs that you will supervise. In other words, I was a faculty member, I was a dean, and I was an academic vice president because when you get to the top, you understand the complexity of those jobs. Don’t try to skip around and be president and take shortcuts because even though sometimes you say why do I have to do this job, that job, when you get to the top and you’re talking to people who are doing the job and you’ve done it you are very helpful to them. One: because you understand how hard it is and two: because you can give them insights about your own experience. So, I would say to someone, make sure you
do those jobs well as you go along and if it doesn’t go well, find out why it didn’t go well. But, make sure you’re systematic about the way you get to a presidency because in the long run, the people who are most successful are people that understand organizational structures.

Louis, the provost at a public university that emphasizes faculty teaching and research also agreed that a properly structured pathway that allows for growth in a variety of academic roles is essential.

Yeah, so you get a position as a tenure track faculty member, you get tenure six years later presumably, you can start looking at department administration positions which are always good training ground for academic administration from chair you could go to dean after that. You know those are the necessary steps along the way because a chair or even if you could look for a headship, which is different.

Isabella, a provost at a public research university emphasized the need for scholarship, aspiration, and experience through the ranks of learning other academic positions along the way to a chief leadership role.

You know if you have this kind of aspiration. I do think there’s a selection bias. You’ll find your way there because it’s attractive to you. But, having the credibility under your belt, being of good scholarship, having gone through that. I mean, sure we bring people in, I could have come into this job – what qualifies me for this job is really training that I’ve had in other parts of my career more than anything. But, I wouldn’t be credible in this job without having been every single rank and gone through the process and earned all of that because I was a faculty member for twelve years. And so, I get it. And, I was there. So, there’s something powerful just about having been there. As smart and talented as you might be and able to do the job, there is something to putting your time in and so it will give you a lot of credibility and job security. Which, it does give you a little bit of freedom to take risks. So, if you’ve got tenure, you can take some risks and try some stuff, which is much harder to do if you don’t have tenure.

My interview with Isabella then shifted to a discussion of credentials and the position. Isabella reasoned her hesitation at the phenomenon of non-Ph.Ds. taking on academic leadership roles.
It’s a little disconcerting and there is something troubling about academic leadership without really understanding what the core training for that is. So, sometimes I think we hold that in much too much esteem. Sometimes I think we should knock it off; it’s just elitist and arrogant. But, sometimes I think, to some extent, there’s a real genuine core of what scholarship is that you cannot understand unless you’ve pursued a Ph.D. And so, it’s worth putting the time in. These jobs are out there. They’re not going anywhere.

While it is important for academic leaders to have pursued a Ph.D. and to understand the dedication that is necessary as part of the publication process, some leaders also expressed the importance of understanding the faculty perspective through classroom scholarship. Administrators emphasized the importance of teaching as a way of staying close to the student and faculty experience.18 For example, if an administrator had not taught since the 1970s, she or he would have no firsthand experience using online learning systems and would not understand the challenges that faculty face when students can become distracted in class from their laptops and other devices that are not focused on course-related work. Ronald, the president of a public university, stated:

So, sometimes you wear your academic hat. If you choose to and I often – I say often – maybe, I haven’t done it for maybe a year or two but I used to at least once a year. And, I probably will again – teach a class – a class that I can teach one night a week. So, sometimes I get back into teaching.

Bradford, a dean at a private university, spoke of his decision to return to the classroom to get a sense of what the faculty are confronting in their daily encounters with students.

I taught last spring. I taught an Intro to Literature course with 18 kids in it. And I did that partly for “street creds,” cause the faculty would say to me – “you don’t know, you haven’t taught for X amount of years.” So, I said, “fine, I’ll teach.” And, I had a great experience. I know that if I want to, I can go back. The kids were delightful. They were goofy and they didn’t do their homework the way they should and I had to keep yelling at them about their telephones. And, they did not write as well as

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18 Not all of the administrators were capable of remuneration for teaching courses as a result of their union contracts. As such, it makes sense why some administrators would opt not to teach. They would not have been financially compensated for this extra non-essential work on top of all of their other required duties.
the students that I was used to. So, I had to suddenly do repeat assignments and get them in the office to tell them what they needed to fix. It was a lot of arm wrestling.

Demonstrating a commitment to understanding the work of the faculty through teaching is another way that a leader can earn and sustain faculty respect. Bradford demonstrates that he is not committed to remaining an administrator for the rest of his academic tenure. He is flexible to other opportunities as they may arise and has not solely pledged to wear an “administrator hat.”

While some of my respondents indicated the importance of remaining close to the faculty experience through teaching and research, others saw potential for changes in the pathway of the university leader. While she had her Ph.D. and had earned the respect of the faculty of her institution through her teaching, research, and service, Laura, the president of a private liberal arts college, was not convinced that, particularly in the coming years, a Ph.D. and academic credentials were supremely essential for academic administrators. When I asked her about advice for future college presidents, Laura stated:

Well, there would be a lot. If you want to be a college president, if that’s really a career goal and again I think that’s pretty unusual […] You have to have a passion for the academic side. We have way more presidents now who are coming into these roles after having been a chief development officer or a CFO and I think that’s fine. But, I think there is real danger in ascending to one of these roles, leading an institution of higher education if you don’t really have your heart in the academic experience. And so, developing that passion, however you’re able to do it, I think is critical.

Laura is responding to the ‘de-churching of higher education.’ According to Tuchman (2009: 41), “higher education is one of the last revered Western institutions to be “de-churched”; that is, it is one of the last to have its ideological justification recast in terms of corporatization and commodification and to become subject to serious state surveillance.” As such, we are seeing the diminution of a reverence for spirited intellectual growth on college campuses that
encourages freethinking and creativity, especially among students. The bottom line is often the
dollar, and this means that there are spaces for non-Ph.D. or nontraditional academic leaders to
ascend to academic leadership roles such as president, in particular. Presidents of universities,
while they oversee the operations of the university that encompass the student experience, are
also accountable for fundraising and corporate and governmental contracts. Traditional
presidents who focused their pre-administration careers on research outside of the domains of
business, education, government, or leadership, for example, then must learn on the job in order
to sustain the institution. Nadine, the president at a private liberal arts college also attested to the
changing dynamic of the ascendancy to president given that the presidency encompasses so
many skills that are not necessarily specific to rigorous academic training:

Right now, if one wanted to be a president, there are multiple career
paths that are open. And, so maybe 10 or 15 years ago you really would
need to stay a traditional academic route of kind of what I did and I don’t
think that advice is good anymore because I think there’s a greater
openness to diversity of paths and frankly diversity of people going into
the presidency.

Christopher, the president of a private university, also spoke of the changing landscape
for academic leaders. Yet, Christopher differed from my other interview participants because he
earned his Ph.D. later in life when he wanted to (in his words), “burnish [his] credentials to
become an administrator.” As an MBA graduate, he had an early career in business and served in
senior administrative roles at other universities. Christopher spoke about the increasing
unattractiveness of the position of the job of university presidents given this context of the “de-
churched university.”

Regarding higher education in particular, I think the demands of the job
of university president in the coming years are going to make it less and
less appealing to individuals. And, that’s not just my opinion; it’s the
opinion of most provosts, as you know; that was the traditional track to
the college presidency was to first serve as a chief academic officer and
then become a provost. All the data suggests that – an increasing number of provosts don’t want any part of the job of president because of all the external demands of the job in dealing with the donors and dealing with the government and dealing with all the different constituencies in the neighborhoods when you want to build a building and all those issues I think are a different skillset from those that traditionally have risen through the ranks of academia to become university presidents.

Given this changing landscape, there is limited time for academic administrators who are deans of a college, provosts, or presidents to continue their own research.

Many of my respondents spoke about being comfortable with having their research take a back seat to their administrative careers when they were asked to take on lead roles as deans.

Therefore, Christopher’s above insights are incredibly insightful. Individuals generally become academics because of their passion and because they want to advance their disciplines, not because they have thoughts of ascending to a university presidency someday. Stella, the president of a private university spoke of the difficulty that she faced in making the decision to leave her stimulating research career behind for administrative work:

It was a hard decision because I had my research going at the highest level ever. I had the largest group of graduate students, the most grants. I was enjoying the work at [my past university], immensely. And, all those decisions – it always seems like it will be better in five years. Oh, five years from now, that will be a great thing to do. And, I thought, well, I’m sitting here today and that opportunity isn’t here five years from now. It’s here today. So, that was really the decision to go into administration. […] And, it took a lot of soul searching. I talked to some friends and colleagues of my husband and people I knew in leadership positions. And, I thought a lot about what I was getting gratification from doing all this work for [a project], not just my own research. And so, [a current university president at another institution who had ties to the hiring university] flew out to try to recruit me for the job, and he said, well, think of how many more PhD students you’ll have in your career and if you had half as many, but were able to do other things with other people and for other people, - how would you feel about that? And, so he got me to think about the roles in terms of being broader than just my own research and educational work. So, that was the slippery slope.
The choice to leave behind world-renowned research projects is clearly a difficult one that Stella confronted in the midst of her burgeoning scholarly career. Furthermore, given the changing demands of university leadership as a result of the de-churching of the university, it is likely that we are going to witness more change. Such changes may lead to fewer difficult decisions among faculty members to leave research projects behind if there is a wider acceptance for non-traditional university leaders who lack a Ph.D. and experience in transcending the academic hierarchy. Christopher stated:

So, I think it’s going to be interesting in the future. I think the profile of the individual college president is going to change. Maybe I’m an example of it because the board here at [my current university] saw in my mix of experiences I think the kind of experience that would be valuable to the challenges that we face in the future. I’d like to think that anyway. But, that doesn’t diminish the respect that the president needs to have for the academic side of the house. The recognition of what constitutes quality in an educational institution. You can’t not have that; it just I think is getting increasingly important or increasingly possible that you don’t have to demonstrate that simply by being a traditional Ph.D., serving as a faculty member, obtaining tenure, becoming a department chair, then a dean, then a provost, then a president. I think you can demonstrate that you appreciate and understand the importance of that academic quality without having done that. If you can do that and bring other skills to the table, now I think you’ve got a really interesting potential university president.

While change certainly is upon us, Sophia, a provost at a private university, expressed challenges that she senses as a result of her rising through the ranks of administration without first holding a faculty appointment. Sophia has her Ph.D. and has limited teaching experience. However, she was not certain that she wanted to continue her research when it was time for her to go on the job market. While she enjoyed her research, she felt that it moved at a very slow pace. She talked about her exposure to non-faculty university work while she was finishing her dissertation:
So, I was translating texts and I was doing research to figure out who had said what about what and then I would put together my argument and then I would rewrite my argument five times. And that would result in one polished paragraph. And it was just – So, then I would go to this job and I would contact presenters and I would contact other people and I would pull things together and I would get all this stuff done. And, I would talk to people, and it was tangible. And, I loved it. And, I thought – maybe this is more what I’m cut out to do cause I went into do a graduate program not really because I wanted to be a professor – but just because I loved the intellectual work.

While Sophia has risen through the administrative ranks despite her continuation of research and teaching post-Ph.D., she does recognize the benefits of a more systematic pathway to leadership in academe. One piece of advice that she offered was:

The path that I took was really happenstance. There weren’t faculty positions that were really open to me at the time and I wasn’t sure that that’s what I wanted to do. But, if you want to go into academic administration leadership starting on the tenure track is the way to have full citizenship. Because, not having the faculty side of it is taking a leg off the table.

Earning citizenship as a leader is key. Leaders can earn their citizenship through publishing path breaking research, through a firsthand understanding of the current student population, and through selflessly demonstrating a deep commitment and sincere care for the needs of the university.

LEADING WITH A STRONG EGO, NOT A BIG EGO

*Culture is Key*

By first listening to the multiple stakeholder audiences of a university that include the students, faculty, staff members, alumni, the board of trustees, the community, and corporate and governmental partners, a leader can get a sense of the issues that are of key importance to her or his agenda. That is not to say that a leader cannot bring in new, transformational ideas; however,
it is key for a university leader to understand the culture and university values, especially before making any brash decisions (Budig 2003; Goens 2011; Shugart 1997). As a leader steps onto a new college campus after going through an in-depth hiring process, that leader can easily agitate entire constituencies if she or he is not careful. Ideas and processes from previous institutions do not necessarily transfer well to new contexts. I asked the presidents, deans, and provosts to consider what types of qualities institutions look for in their leaders and a predominant theme that emerged was this cultural respect. Insights from Samuel, Rachel, Paul, Frederick and Laura encapsulate the importance of an overall respect for campus culture in all university-related matters.

Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college, underscored the importance of respecting an institution’s culture and not making attempts to change that culture.

Well, okay so one thing is we have a pretty clear sense of what the culture of this place is and people want a leader who is able to understand that culture, respect that culture, and not think that the culture needs to be changed completely. Everyone’s going to change things a little bit but the underlying culture of this place should stay the same. The campus is known to anyone who’s been on campus for more than a day as being an incredibly friendly place. That’s something that this place should never give up so it’s something that we’re looking for in a leader is the next president should not want to make this into a [makes a hand gesture] that’s it we’re done.

An unfriendly, change-hungry president with little regard for the feelings and commitments of long-standing stakeholders of an institution will not last very long at most colleges and universities.

Similarly, Rachel, the provost at a public university, acknowledged the significance of understanding and preempting faculty responses to change.

In order to be successful, one had to acquire an in-depth understanding of those cultural changes otherwise I think whatever any leader
attempted to do would not be very successful. That was really critical. Now, I knew that culture was important because I watched the dean who was very successful. But, I watched his successor go up in flames individually, the one with whom I had worked with as associate dean. And, that’s simply because he tried to make change, significant change without understanding how the faculty would respond and without understanding the actual culture where he worked. I think I had a conversation with him and I said to him, [name of dean], you know, I think you better pull back and try to talk to the faculty and understand how they perceive what you’re suggesting. I love transformation and am very much in support of meaningful change, but equally as importantly is understanding how one induces change. So, that was a pretty good lesson.

Understanding the proper channels for initiating change is key to the academic leader’s operation. Frederick, the president of a private university, talked about how, upon his arrival, he immediately began to understand the culture of his new university. Students, at his university, are particularly vocal with regard to multiple administrative matters. Frederick chose to approach this campus culture that values freedom of expression and democratic engagement through virtually opening up his office to students through social media. He noted how through popular social media mechanisms, including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, he could keep tabs on the campus climate. Frederick illustrated his respect for the campus culture, when he talked about one particular issue that involved religion, politics and campus organizations. In this instance, a religious group had indicated that individuals who are gay or individuals who were sexually active whether they identified as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual, could not run for leadership positions within that particular group. The group decided that support for lesbians and gays and sexual activity did not align with their doctrine. Citing how the policy went against the institution’s non-discrimination policy, Frederick noted how the committee for student life, comprised of students and faculty, addressed the matter finding that leaders should have to adhere to the religious group’s guidelines, but that members should be exempt from this
parameter. Frederick continued to express his thoughts and how he balanced his personal views with the culture of university deliberations on this incredibly polemic issue:

So, we thought that [the committee’s decision] was a thoughtful way through this problem but of course all the gay students on campus hated it. They formed a group that petitioned and then they started personally attacking me because I said that I thought that the student life committee had made a thoughtful and unanimous decision and I would support that. But, didn’t want to reveal my personal preference because my personal preference is we should adhere to the non-discrimination policy. So, there was a backlash about that and then I tried to get out in front of it by talking to them and saying to them, look, “I have my own personal views, but I think on something like this, we as a community have to decide what’s the best way forward for us.” Because, we have two polar views, we tried to come up with a compromise. If we feel as a community that compromise isn’t right, we need to have further discussions, further panel discussions and forums next semester and see if the committee on student life wants to reevaluate it now that they hear different opinions. So, that’s where we’re taking it now. But, you know, it’s upon that criticism making sure you get back out and explain your position and why you think you shouldn’t decide but the community needs to decide for itself because there’s too often this every time there’s a bad thing that happens, they expect me to make some great pronouncement against it. And, you also can’t do that for freedom of expression issues.

Frederick’s account of this situation demonstrates his respect for the culture of the university.

While he expressed to me that he profoundly disagrees with not allowing leadership from lesbian, gay, and openly sexually active students, in this particular religious group, he chose not to intervene further with his personal views at the risk of rendering the university process meaningless. Frederick’s deep respect for listening to student groups and respecting university culture has undoubtedly earned him extraordinary acclaim from the university’s multiple stakeholders. He is truly the “people’s president.”

While institutional culture is incredibly important for an academic leader to respect and keep in mind in her or his daily affairs and project implementation, it is also possible for leaders
to incite cultural changes. Yet, Stella, the president of a private university, cautions that cultural changes do take time and require broad acceptance from the stakeholder population.

While the respondents stressed that it is important to have a deep respect for the institution’s culture, they also acknowledged the need for leaders to have a vision for change. Yet, that vision or mission must not trump the overall institutional culture. Furthermore, that vision or mission does not need to be clearly articulated in a motto-like statement that encapsulates a leader’s tenure. Laura, the president at a private liberal arts college expressed her frustration when the board chair of the board of trustees asked her “what is your mission?”

He kept pushing me on what’s my legacy here at [this college] and […] it occurred to me […] it’s not about my legacy it’s about the legacy of our students. It’s about the impact that they’re going to have. It’s not about me. […] But, I think in terms of leadership style that you kind of, effective leaders are able to set aside their own need for ego strokes. To be able to put that aside and think about what’s best for the organization.

Laura further elaborated on the meaning of carrying out a university mission. Clearly, she did not have ulterior motives as president. Her goal was to do what was most in line with the time-honored traditions of the college.

Well, we have a mission. And, my legacy is to see that mission continue to be supported in a really strong way in a swirling environment. That’s the legacy, really. It’s thinking and of course you had to think a little differently about that mission today with distance education and all the cost value discussions. Of course it’s very expensive, a residential liberal arts education. But our mission is still so relevant and in terms of legacy I’m really just thinking about how do we propel that mission forward in a challenging environment. But, I don’t see that as a [she inserts her full name here] legacy. It’s not like we’re taking a brand new direction here.

A leader’s mission needs to be in the form of an enduring attention to the long-term institutional benefit, not in the form of what she or he intends to leave behind as a legacy statement. The leader is a vehicle for initiating institutional change; it is not the leader who will go down in
institutional history. Rather, the persistent value of what the leader originated will leave an indelible mark on the university.

*Caring for the Institution: Envisioning its Bright Future*

Effective academic leaders put the needs of the institution above their own personal needs. Perceptions that a leader is merely making a brief stop at this particular institution to gain a feather in one’s cap to make her or him more attractive to the next institution, that the leader does not respect the position and what it means to the entire university community, or that a leader cannot adequately deal with personnel matters are all manifestations of ineffective leadership. In each of these cases, the university leader portrays an image that she or he is not working in the best interest of the institution’s future.

While it is likely that academic leaders will move around from institution to institution, faculty, in particular, often disparage the “career academic” who sees the university position that she or he presently occupies as a stepping-stone to the next opportunity. Tuchman (2009: 70) writes about this phenomenon with regard to her ethnographic field site: “the possibility of satisfying ambition is not a sufficient reason to take a job at Wannabe University.” While professional development and movement for new challenges, greater opportunities, and increased pay are certainly lauded within corporate and governmental contexts, higher education administration operates a bit differently. Many of the higher educational leaders with whom I spoke cautioned against self-promotion, characterized by a dismissal of institutional values, at the cost of moving the institution in a direction that would gain them individual external prestige and attention from headhunters.

Matthew, the dean of a private university, spoke in-depth about his own lack of interest in
ever ascending to a leadership position. However, he found himself being recommended for department chair that subsequently led to his deanship. Matthew addressed his views toward careerism and the academic presidency:

So, I think that my sense is that in academic administration, generally there’s a lot of work around the last fifteen years where administrations try to find ways not to go through the main faculty organs because they don’t do what they want or they’re too slow. And I have some negative views of why that’s happening and it’s probably because of careerism among presidents so the people are thinking of a five year career impact and they can’t wait for us to percolate and then to say that we didn’t like it after all which is what we’ve been doing lately; mowing things down after people put in tons of work.

At Matthew’s university, he has personally witnessed the unconstructive consequences of having presidents in office whose missions do not match institutional values. As such, when those presidents leave office, those who are left behind end up modifying the careerist president’s unsympathetic decisions.

Laura, the president at a private liberal arts college, who rose through the ranks at this particular college first as a faculty member, expressed how her non-careerist ambitions as a college administrator might have led to her attractiveness for the position among the presidential search committee. Many perceived her unsuccessful predecessor who had a very short tenure as president, to be on a career track. Laura stated:

I think the reason that people wanted me in this role was a response to her leadership which was much less, certainly less passionate about the institution. I think there were perceptions that maybe she was kind of on a career track and didn’t really care so much about [name of the college] and really never quite understood it so well. And so, [I] began to shape what I saw was really important which was to return the focus to our mission and our students and what’s important.

Laura perceives that the search committee sought her out because of her non-careerist agenda. She was perfectly content as a faculty member and enjoyed teaching and publishing. She, much
like the majority of my respondents, was not particularly interested in leadership positions during the early part of their careers. Mentoring and support from others prompted Laura and others to consider leadership roles. Yet, that is not to say that careerist ambitions cannot form once a leader has a taste for the job of serving in a headship role. One observation that appears to hold true is that careerist agendas are more likely to be found among leaders who are external to an institution given that leaders may be moving around as new opportunities arise and they learn of them through headhunters’ recruitment efforts (Tuchman 2009). However, I do not wish to paint the picture that leaders with intentional leadership or careerist agendas are not capable of respecting and valuing what is best for the institution. Presidents and provosts, in particular, are often placed as a result of external searches and deeply care about the future of the institutions where they are leading. On the other hand, careerist agendas entail a lack of care for the institution in favor of a leader’s own professional gain. Being a career-minded university leader with prospects for moving to another institution does not necessarily mean one is an ineffective leader, but eschewing a careerist persona is an important asset.

_Hail to the position_

A deep respect for the institution where one is serving that is characterized by a deep regard for one’s predecessors and future successors, and insights from multiple stakeholders is essential to effective academic leadership. Successful leaders also demonstrate respect for their position and what it means to the institution. Denise, the president at a private liberal arts college, spoke about the importance of honoring institutional traditions. This concept parallels my earlier reference to a leader’s imperative understanding of institutional culture. Below, Denise, a president at a private liberal arts college, addresses how she observed the actions of
two presidents that she had served under in a previous institution. She compares each of these presidents’ relationship to their presidential roles:

And, in comparing them to each other, obviously I can’t hope to have the best of both, but I can see what I admired about each of them and I felt that the first president was a particularly good communicator and very good at understanding his role in the community, so he was a little bit, he might strike you when you saw him up close, working with him he was a little bit maybe pretentious in a sense like you felt that he was kind of full of the role. But, when you look at it from the outside, you see how important that is that he came across really wonderfully in all public occasions; he knew the right thing to say. [Name of other president], the president I worked with most recently, is much better to work with as a kind of person and in terms of how he listens. But, he wasn’t as good initially at kind of presenting himself because he just wasn’t that into the role. And, so he would tend to forget that if people come to hear the president, they kind of want to hear the president and he would be so not self-effacing, because he’s very strong. But, he just wouldn’t take the role as seriously. He was kind of impatient with the ceremony and so he would say people don’t really want me to talk here. Let’s just skip the remarks. And, that feels like a kind of humility, but then people would be disappointed. And so, one of the things that I really learned from that is that if you’re the president it’s not about you and your ego, it’s about the role and that in some sense, inhabiting the role properly means taking it seriously.

Depending on the size of a campus community, some members of the community may only have a handful of occasions when they may come into contact with the president, provosts, or deans. Furthermore, alumni from afar may return to campus, after years or decades of being away, expecting to hear the president give a ceremonial address. If a leader disparages the meaning of her or his official remarks, such a circumstance can be taken as disrespectful to the campus community. As Denise indicates, the leader must realize that a leadership role must not center on her or his ego; the effective leader must assume all of the components of the job with grace and veneration for the institutional history.

And, even in my time so far at [my present institution], I’ve had to really come to grips with that. That here, I’m treated as important. I’m almost a celebrity in town; people recognize me and they come up to me and they
introduce themselves and say, “oh, you’re the new president.” And, it’s hard at first not to feel like you want to resist that because it feels kind of self-inflating. But, when you recognize it’s not about you because they don’t even know you yet, it’s about the role and the fact that the president of [name of college] is an important person in this town and in this community. Then you have to learn to be more gracious about it and instead of feeling flustered or hesitant about it, sort of feel like that’s part of my job is to take seriously the idea that I’m important to these people and that they notice if I show up at something and if I stop and chat with someone in the grocery store, then later I hear; “oh, so and so was so pleased that you spoke to them.” It’s kind of funny at first, but when you take it seriously; you realize that it means that the ego part of it has to be about the role and not about you. And, I would say that that’s something that in looking at the two presidents I work with, one was much better at than the other. And, I think [name of president] became much better at it over time. But, it was never natural to him. I think he just didn’t like the ceremonial aspects of things. And, I actually – I like those things and I think that the trick will be to not get an inflated ego about it because you don’t want to feel like it’s about you. But, in some sense recognizing that part of what the institution wants is that kind of symbolic head where you coming to something and talking to people signifies it’s an important event and that means that you are in that context important. That’s something that I think it takes some getting used to. And, it doesn’t feel necessarily natural. But, once you’ve come to understand it as a role, then it becomes more comfortable.

Denise’s sentiments about the importance of respecting one’s role and placing one’s ego aside for the good of the institution denote the importance of the office. Paul, a president at a private liberal arts college, also spoke about ego-related issues pertaining to his presidential predecessor. Here, Paul focuses on the need for a leader to listen to the institution’s stakeholders and put her or his interests behind the needs of the school.

But, I think those people who are most successful in these jobs tend to have certain characteristics generally and they’re not found more widely in the public as I said they’re assiduous learners, they’re really interested in every time they sit down with someone in their meeting, they want to know what the issue is. They want to understand it; they’re fascinated by all of the things that go into creating these kinds of institutions. They’re good listeners, I talked about that before, they’re good communicators.
Being a good listener means intentional listening. An effective leader listens to understand and to facilitate options for the communicator who is expressing her or his thoughts. Paul then connected his thoughts on listening and caring for others’ insights to the concept of an egotistical leader who does not put the needs of others above her or his grandiose plans for the institution. Furthermore, the egotistical leader is self-absorbed to the extent that she or he becomes a poor steward of university interests. Paul continued:

But, beyond that, I think someone once said this to me and I think it’s really quite right. It’s very important to have a strong ego in this job but not so good to have a big ego and there’s a big difference. There are lots of people in these jobs who get caught up in being the president. They think they’re funnier than they are, they think they’re more entertaining than they are because everybody always laughs at them even though they – they lose sight of who they are. That’s a big mistake and these jobs can be humbling and they should be humbling. But to have a strong ego is to believe that you’re qualified to do this job, you have confidence in your own abilities. And, that your own capacity to help create change in a positive institution, while also being capable of as I said before of listening. That a strong ego does not mean that you’re not interested in but it means that I know that I believe that I belong in this job as opposed to how did this happen? We all know people like that and we wonder how did they get that job? So, I think it’s important to have a strong ego, but it’s important to not have a big ego because that gets in the way.

Paul’s encounter with his predecessor who was an extraordinarily poor listener with a big ego helped him to illustrate the downfalls of leadership. He went into great detail about the poor mentoring that he received from his predecessor. As such, Paul came to ignore this advice in the best interest of the future of the institution. In Chapter 3, I noted Paul’s animated account of his predecessor’s shortcomings.

Leaders with big egos are excessively proud of their accomplishments and have exorbitant self-esteem marked by their perception that they are somehow better than those who they are leading. On the other hand, leaders with strong egos know that they are the right person for the job and do not need to have their egos stroked by anyone. They get the facts by doing
their own research and by talking to relevant stakeholders. Leaders with strong egos respect their position and its vital importance to the institution. They are not looking for self-promotion; rather, they respect their position to such an extent that they understand their personal importance to the university community. Other leaders including Joanne, a provost at a private liberal arts college, Eugene, a dean at a public university, Douglas, a president at a public university addressed the importance of leaving one’s ego at the door and establishing a community-driven agenda instead of a personally driven agenda.

**Personnel issues**

Being able to separate personal matters from work-related matters plays a key role in a leader’s ability to handle personnel issues. Many of my respondents addressed the stressful circumstances of having to tell a faculty member that she or he would not be receiving tenure, asking a department chair to step down from a role given a hostile department situation, firing a faculty or staff member, or simply calming the waters in a controversial staff-related situation. Direct implementation of university procedures, no matter how trying the circumstances may be, characterizes a leader’s sincere care for the institution.

Eugene, a dean at a public university, noted the solid advice that he received from a mentor regarding how to deal with challenges of the job and individuals’ disagreements with leadership decisions. Eugene recalled that his mentor stated:

Eugene, there will be days that you want to either bang your head against the wall. There will be days that people may even insult you, that people may disagree with you and there will be days when people come and praise you. Do not take any of those two seriously, okay? Keep your eye on the ball and also have a very very weak short memory about bad experiences. I would say that if somebody comes in here and insulted me and did everything. The minute the person leaves this room; I try to forget about it. I’ve had situations where people hung up the phone at me
and that person expected me to react – you know, maybe not talk to the person or don’t acknowledge them when I see. I did exactly the opposite. The first chance I got to see this person, I walked in, I greeted the person, I shook hand and I said – how are you?

In Chapter 3, I remarked how open Eugene’s office was to all members of the university. As such, Eugene left himself open to both praise and criticism. His mentor’s words of wisdom surely helped Eugene to navigate arduous situations in which others challenged his position on particularly controversial situations.

Many of my respondents commented that personnel issues were the most difficult components of their leadership positions. Anna, a provost at a public university, talked about the sensitive and time-consuming nature of making personnel changes:

Last year though we integrated the entire [name of center] so I moved 78 people and they had tried to do it two other times before and we just did it. In the course of a year, we moved 78 positions from across the street over to here. We integrated two instructional design units. We integrated people into the Registrar’s, into the Bursar’s office. We integrated faculty so to move 78 people – to close down a unit and reinvent it here – extremely challenging and I had to meet with the union, I had to meet with HR multiple times. I had to meet with individuals. I had to sit across from people who were crying and telling me – they all kept their jobs but it was a unit that had not been very effective. It was running in the hole and we integrated all of that across the street. It’s done. Everybody’s fine. But, it took all year. Countless meetings – lots of time meeting with individuals with unions to do this integration and it’s like it never happened. So, it went well.

Regardless of the relationships that Anna might have formed with individuals who may have doubted the project that she was leading, Anna had to move forward with what was best for the institution.

On a more drastic note, Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college, spoke in-depth about a situation in which he had to fire a faculty member who had a positive, established working history at his institution:
I had been in this office for less than a year and I got an email from someone I had never met before. I don’t know the name, saying how can you have appointed so and so as chair of the department? She doesn’t even have a Bachelor’s degree. Okay, this is a woman who by the way – the faculty member in question was the senior most Asian woman on campus, had tenure from [her previous institution] where we hired her away, chair of the department for the last 13 years, she had been here for 14 years so it was 14 years that she was chair because we brought her in as chair. So, she was a really senior person. So, I considered this kind of a nuisance letter. So, I said to my assistant at the time, okay, I want to be able to – I don’t want to let this sit cause these are the kinds of things that can get really nasty. So, call [the university where she obtained her Bachelor’s degree], get ahold of the verifications desk, get a copy, have them send us a copy of her transcript and then I’ll write back and I can tell this person that everything’s okay and that’s why. So, I came back from lunch and my assistant’s hand was like shaking. And, I said, what’s the matter [name of assistant]? And, she said, well the letter is right. She doesn’t have even a Bachelor’s degree. So, this is a crisis around here.

Baffled by the situation, I said, “But she did have her Ph.D.?” I know some people bypass the Master’s degree and Samuel replied, “No, no degree at all.” I then remarked, “That’s pretty big.

So, someone didn’t check things at some point in time.” Samuel continued:

Well, they didn’t check 14 years ago. And, they didn’t check at [name of university] where she had been a tenured professor. So, that was a big challenge because we were just, I had just announced this major initiative around diversifying our faculty and I’m going to take our senior Asian woman and fire her. And, you’d be surprised that some of our faculty after this happened actually wrote to the local newspaper, decrying me for firing her. Rather than, I don’t know what, keeping her on?

Samuel continued this discussion by commenting on this process and his role in ensuring that this fraudulently tenured professor would not continue to be a part of his institution.

I’ve told that story before, but I would say something about it, which is that although it’s really hard at moments like that. It isn’t difficult to know what you’re supposed to do. It’s really hard to do it, to sit in this room – it was a different table at this time – but across the table from her and say it’s Friday, by Monday you can either resign or I’m going to terminate your tenure and in fact, I’m going to say you had tenure under
fraudulent; you don’t have tenure here. It’s hard to have that discussion but it isn’t hard at all to know what to do because there’s a, it helps to be right.

Carrying out an unpleasant task of having to tell someone that she or he is no longer welcome at one’s college or university is not difficult if a leader realizes that she or he is doing it in honor of the institution’s future. With tuition costs rising, parents and students who are funding educational costs need to be assured that the individuals who are instructing and administering grades have the necessary credentials to be doing so. Samuel was not conflicted about what the right action was to take in the above circumstance. He realized the meaning of firing an esteemed faculty member who happened to be from an historically marginalized population; however, he understood how the significance of this dismissal was not about race, it was about the future respect of the institution as an influential liberal arts college. Samuel and many of my respondents spoke about the need for leaders to value a diversity of opinions that among my participants, centered on matters pertaining to race, gender, or disciplinary origin.

Valuing Diversity of Opinions

Education and leadership scholars confirm the importance of administrators demonstrating a respect for diversity among the students, faculty, and community at large (Bowen and Bok 2000; Bruch, Jehangir, Lundell, Higbee and Miksch 2005; Hoerr 2007; Little 2004; Tuchman 2009). My respondents were exceptionally aware of the need for a university-wide respect for a diversity of opinions.

Frederick, a president at a private university, was exceptionally open to matters pertaining to diverse reviews regarding students’ sexual orientation and women’s experiences with rape. Above, I provided an account of Frederick’s experience dealing with a student group
that was not open to leadership from sexually active students or from lesbian or gay students.

Frederick, who I have labeled, “the people’s president” as a result of his hands-on approach to getting to know all facets of the university population, spoke about his experience in fielding concerns from young women students who had been raped. I asked Frederick if he held open office hours and he talked about this as a future possibility because of what it meant about obtaining a variety of views on key issues:

No, I don’t. It’s something I might want to do next year. My provost has done it and has had great success. I just have it, as any student who wants to invite me to lunch, wants to come see me, they can do that. But, maybe what I’ve noticed with [the provost’s name] and the way he’s having office hours. He gets a group dynamic going. So, they actually come because they have different issues, but then you get the perspective of the other people who are there who didn’t actually come to talk about that issue, and so the group dynamic is interesting. He’s been doing it all on the strategic plan, so I’m thinking maybe next year it might be something I add to the way of engagement with the community, especially, if you get students, and faculty, and staff in the group at the same time. I could do it once a week or something like that. But, students know that they can message me and I’m happy to see them. I mean I only might see them for half an hour. But, you know, I get some incredible stories that way.

Frederick then continued to talk about how students established rapport with him via Facebook and how that led to their openness and frankness during in-person meetings.

Women who have been raped, recently in the past month, I’ve had two women come see me about being raped or problems with alcohol. Things that – and it’s interesting how they used Facebook to build up the trust to come see me. It wasn’t “Hi President [Frederick’s last name], can I come see you about my personal matter? It was a series of communications by messaging that they built up the trust with me that they could then come and see me. And, you wouldn’t get that by email, it’s too formal.

This example demonstrates two facets of valuing a diversity of opinions. Frederick addressed how through open in-person dialogues, a diversity of ideas can be shared and discussed.

Furthermore, these dialogues allow individuals from unaffected constituencies to weigh in on
more global university matters. In addition, Frederick demonstrated how his openness through social media established a sense of trust between him and the students. College women victims, who had recently experienced rape, felt comfortable enough to come to Frederick to talk to him about matters that the university could institute to protect other students. I asked if the college women who were rape victims had suggestions for him and he stated:

Yes, and we have a 12 page document from a group who wanted us to – they realized that we have done a lot with our sexual assault policy, it’s much better than it was. We actually were ahead of the game before any of this happened; before all the stuff blew up at [another major university] we were well ahead with a better policy, with a better way to deal with it. They would like more and they have certain issues about certain things. So, it’s just improvements and we’ve agreed to have a working group that would include them and the staff and maybe a faculty member to get it better and we’re happy to do that. It’s going to require more resources, but I think they’re pleased that we’re engaging them in the process.

Frederick demonstrated his willingness to talk to diverse constituents whose interests and viewpoints were of key importance to him. He realized that establishing a framework for how to move forward with regard to dealing with rape on his university’s campus would require buy-in from the students, staff, and faculty members. Frederick’s eagerness to satisfy the diverse interests of the campus community was truly exceptional. Social media truly made this possible. In one instance, Frederick even reported receiving a grievance message on Twitter about the tattered condition of the university flag that he could see from his office window. Frederick recalled:

Occasionally, I’ll get students who write to me and tweet at me “what are you going to do about this issue” or a great one was someone said, “I just walked across campus and the [university name] flag is hanging by a thread from the flag pole.” I said, I looked out the window and said, “Yep, I can see it. I’ll get on to facilities.” And then, two hours later they fixed it and we just tweeted at each other – “it’s great it’s back up.”
Frederick’s use of social media is truly impressive. Before taking on the position as president at his university, he even made it a point of establishing contact with as many of the university professionals at his incoming university as possible as a way of introducing himself to the community. He did not live close to his incoming university and took advantage of LinkedIn’s services. He reported:

So, I had joined LinkedIn for professional reasons. And, right after I became president, named as president. And, then I realized it was a wonderful way for me to introduce myself to the community. So, I started ten a day connecting with [name of university] administrative staff, saying “Hi, I’m the new president, I’d like to connect with you.” Then, if they connected with me, I’d say, “tell me a little bit about what you do at the university and what you think I need to know as the new president.” And, I’d get success rates of connections, probably 90% because they were curious. And, by the time I had arrived here, I had about 1200 connections with [name of university] people each of which had written two or three paragraphs to me about what their job was, who they were, how long they’d been here, their warm wishes to me as the new president and what they thought I needed to know.

Firsthand meetings and social media connections launched a mechanism for Frederick to pay attention to the diverse demands and needs of the university. He invited all members of the university to engage him in dialogue. Paul, a president at a private liberal arts college, spoke of his respect for students’ disregard for a building on campus that had a distasteful plaque that was racially insensitive. A building on campus that was dedicated to the study of civil rights caused an outcry for change from the campus community. This particular building, that had earned national attention for its exorbitant cost and focus, did not acknowledge the extraordinary civil rights achievements of people of color. The only historical figures who were praised through the paintings and acknowledgements within this structure were white people. Paul described the

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19 Frederick’s dedication brings to light the intensive time demands of the job of a university leader; many of my respondents referred to their positions as 24/7 jobs. While they did not actually work 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, they were clearly always on call. Furthermore, most of them reported working from home before the official workday began, working on weekends, and after evening work obligations and/or dinner with their families.
nature of the controversy and how he resolved to modify this existing structure that had been a college landmark and that bore the name of a prominent funding family with strong ties to the college.

There was no reference whatsoever given in the building to civil rights, as we understand them. No Martin Luther King, no nothing. And, […] there was a plaque put on the wall inside the building that talked about the right of Anglo Saxons to own property and students and many people in the community saw the language of it all as being perhaps racist because it talked about civil rights in the eyes of the people who built this structure.

Paul was exceptionally driven to deal with this situation given that for years, Paul’s predecessors had not addressed this glaring issue.

When I arrived in [year], the building hadn’t changed one bit. And there was this very strong deeply held view that the building was out of touch with the community. And the people were very resentful about it. Students were resentful, faculty were resentful. They believed that nothing could be done about it because in part, my predecessor and others told them nothing could be done about it. The donors, who are still involved in the college, wouldn’t want that to be dealt with. Over the years, petitions have been raised about how this building is racist and its various protests were discussed about why the hell do we have a building on civil rights that has nothing to do with civil rights, as we understand it today.

Instead of making quick decisions to tear down the building, remove historical plaques that had insensitive language, or to do nothing in the face of demands from students and faculty, Paul chose to engage the community in an open dialogue about the fate of this building. What follows is Paul’s account of how this controversial, nasty situation, turned into a teachable moment for the campus community:

Who built this structure? What was civil rights supposed to be [so many decades ago]? How did people understand what it was and why is it that the building has never evolved? So, we went through a whole process and to make a long story a little shorter, that task force came up with a
series of recommendations. I engaged the family that were the donors for this and I told them respectfully what we were doing and I told them I’m sure you’re interested in this too that this is the issue. They were completely supportive. There was no issue for them. The students were making some demands that were unreasonable like to tear the plaque down and various things and instead I suggested why don’t we make a new plaque. The building was going to [celebrate an anniversary] … why don’t we celebrate the […] anniversary of the building by updating it? Let’s create a new plaque that explains civil rights today and that shows this was civil rights [then] and this is civil rights [now] We created an art exhibition on the history of civil rights at [name of college] and in the world that is in the lobby of that building so that now there are all kinds of faces, not just white men with historical contexts explaining the evolution of civil rights as an idea and then finally we had a dedication ceremony which had speaking at it and this I’m very proud of.

As a result of Paul’s commitment to dealing with this polemic structure, he was able to bring a variety of individuals including historical figures, the funding family, and the student and faculty community, into the same room to celebrate the building’s anniversary and the new meaning of civil rights today.

So, it was a really great lesson to the community that if we take an issue seriously and we study it thoughtfully instead of making empty demands and if we try to understand a context which is what we’re here to do in higher education, that’s what learning is – we’ll come to a good result and that building has now been completely updated and the issue is completely gone for the first time in 80 years. It’s not an issue anymore and it wasn’t very difficult to resolve by being transparent, listening to people and checking your ego at the door. So, I’m very proud of that.

Paul’s strong ego, not his big ego, guided his decisions in the above situation. He did what was best for the campus community by paying attention to diversity, in the sense of racial diversity and inclusion. In addition, he valued diversity with regard to whose opinions mattered to the college; he did not hesitate to enlist support from the wealthy donor family as his predecessor had.
Similarly, Ronald, the president of a public university, talked about the need for an effective leader to be able to take a wide variety of diverse views and find ways of channeling them into a new direction. Note that Paul’s experience above did exactly this. He brought the campus community together to create a new meaning for the civil rights building. Ronald summed up a key point about the role of an effective leader with regard to differences of opinion:

> Well, I think effective leadership in higher education is being able to take a wide variety of very diverse, divergent, not sometimes fairly acrimonious and strongly held positions and find reasons for all of these different, or the majority of these different groups and thoughts to find a place inside of a new direction.

Lastly, Bradford, a dean at a private university and Rachel, a provost at a public university addressed the importance of disciplinary diversity. They noted how leaders must be able to understand that academic leaders are each coming from a different discipline. As such, a chemist may approach a problem differently than a sociologist would as a result of her or his different training in problem solving. I asked Bradford to consider a quality that is important for an aspiring leader to embody. He addressed the importance of being able to address disciplinary diversity:

> Breadth of understanding and I’ve said this and by that I mean beyond your discipline. I have to understand, I don’t have to understand chemistry, but I have to understand chemists. Early on when I was an associate dean we had a committee meeting and we decided that the faculty would read Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography, now that’s a literary choice. And we all read it and we met at the beginning of school and had this great faculty meeting and lunch. And, one of the chemists said, all summer long he would do this to me. He would say, Bradford, today Benjamin Franklin went swimming. What’s the point? Today, he ate the bread and got laughed at, Bradford what’s the point? Bradford, I’m reading a story, why am I reading a story? And, I would say because Benjamin Franklin is a quintessential American and everything he does has been saturated into our culture and you can learn tons from him.
There’s a cholera epidemic, he fixes the streets by putting cobblestones. He can’t cure cholera so he helps Philadelphia get mud off their feet. Why? Because he’s doing the available good. And he would say, ok thank you. And, the next day he would come back and say, now he’s swimming again. He would not learn anything from me about what literature teaches us. And, you know, for him it wasn’t a really successful thing. However, chemists’ thinking can be incredibly useful to a college. They are smart; they handle enormous structures that my brain gives up on step B. They can run a curriculum committee; they are problem solvers. One of my associate deans is a chemist and I have to learn as a leader what contribution can this person bring? What is it that sociologists bring what is it that chemists bring, what is it that poets bring? Because as a leader, if you can get that; it’s almost like conducting an orchestra. If you can really get that discussion going, there’s just no better brain trust in the world than the liberal arts faculty. And so, the ability of listening really well and hearing what’s smart in something.

Bradford, with literary disciplinary origins, realizes that he approaches problems differently from his peers. Yet, he realizes that through valuing diversity in what each individual brings to the table, a university can function in harmony.

Rachel also acknowledges the importance of disciplinary diversity and discusses how it was crucial for her to come to understand the differences in individuals’ work styles as they were often rooted in their disciplines. Here, she talks about her experience working as an associate dean of arts and sciences at a much larger university than her present one:

For the first time, I worked very closely with the science faculty because it was the arts and the sciences which then required that I acquire an understanding of the differences in the disciplines as well as the appreciation of how one discipline either intersects with or complements the other. So, that was a really very important position for me and role because it pulled me out of the social science humanities areas and really in many ways forced me to acquire a more in-depth understanding of interdisciplinarity and then even more importantly, how to communicate across all disciplines. But, while in the role, the fact that I was a woman never played a part. It’s all about your skill sets.

In discussing effective leadership strategies, Rachel noted how the importance of understanding disciplinary differences trumped gender identity matters. In her new role, Rachel learned that
being able to speak across disciplines and to bring people together toward a common vision were of key importance.

Building diverse teams of individuals with respect to discipline and other matters such as race, class, and gender are also key matters in terms of valuing diversity. Martha, a dean at a public university and Stanley, a dean at a public university, each discussed the importance of diversity in teams. In particular, Stanley cautioned against the unintended consequences of tokenism (Kanter 1977; Williams 1989) that might end up disadvantaging historically underrepresented populations including women, openly gay or lesbian individuals, or people of color whose views have not been taken into account in earlier contexts. Stanley noted:

Right, they [women of color, in this context] get asked to do everything. It’s one of the challenges that leaders face. How do you protect the young faculty from being overused particularly when they have one of those distinctive characteristics, they’re the only woman, they’re the only minority, whatever it might be. On the one hand, you want diversity in these committees. On the other hand, if you ask them to do that, they never get their research done so they never become an associate or a full professor.

Stanley acknowledges some of the difficulties associated with teambuilding and committee work. Yet, the respondents were also especially cognizant of the need for establishing solid teams for both current and future work.

**Teamwork**

Collaborative and communal leadership styles are often the most effective leadership styles. In Chapter 3, I noted how women are often more receptive to a collaborative leadership styles that involves shared governance and a lack of singly defined decisions (Eagly and Johnson 1990). Furthermore, I discussed how women often confront a balancing act of managing their communality and their agentic qualities as leaders (Eagly and Carli 2007; Heilman and Okimoto
I mention this gendered distinction because scholars have identified a tendency among men to exhibit an agentic approach to leadership (Eagly and Carli 2007; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari 2011; Newport 2001; Spence and Buckner 2000). Yet, my research denotes just the opposite. Frederick’s extraordinary achievements working with rape victims and student groups, Bradford’s acknowledgement of disciplinary diversity in group dynamics, and Paul’s efforts to work with concerned students, faculty, and donors demonstrate how these men were able to work collaboratively to achieve results that were favorable to the stakeholders.

Teamwork and shared governance are not just tactics that women are accustomed to employing as academic leaders. Here, I focus on how caring about the institution means non-ego driven policies. Rather, caring about the institution means supporting the work of others to build a contingency of future leaders and sharing the credit. Since one person on a college campus rarely resolves major issues, teamwork is a key component to the effective leadership framework. Douglas, the president of a public university, talked about realizing that his role was about helping others, it was not about self-promotion:

I sound like I’m talking right out of a textbook. But, quite frankly, I’ve found that this is true. I think that the longer I’ve done this work, the more humble I get. And, I think understanding that you have to make others – you go across this if you have a career in academia, you go across this threshold from where you’re happy that I published this great article or I won this teaching award or something to – Boy! I helped Jason or Mary win that teaching award or they got this big grant and that’s great for us. It’s almost like having children. You kind of go across that and I don’t even mean in a paternalistic, you stop thinking about yourself. When I was talking to our graduating top business students I cited one of the last articles that Peter Drucker wrote in Harvard Business Review in 2004 when he talked about the importance of pronouns in management and leadership. When you have to think we and not I and that’s what successful organizations do. And, I think successful leaders do.

Douglas addressed the importance of having the right people on one’s team:
To use the words of Jim Collins in *Good to Great* in his works. Getting people on the bus, getting the right people on the bus and keeping them there. The other metaphor that I use for leadership and again I get more simplistic as I do it and teach it less, I’m an old jock, I was a college basketball player and that idea of the team and everyone playing a role and figuring out what that role is and helping that person to maximize his or her contribution to the effort is another way I look at leadership.

Leadership is about embodying a selfless understanding of the position. A university functions as a team. Realistically, if a university did not have students, a university would not function. As such, leaders need to value each and every constituency as part of a team-based structure.

Marcus, a provost at a public university, provided advice to aspiring leaders that mirrored much of what Douglas had to say:

I think I would tell that person [an aspiring leader] that if they want to be successful, they have to figure out how to be an integral part of a team and to be such an important contributor to that team that everybody else around you wants to follow what you’re doing and to always take the extra step or extra two steps beyond what’s expected of you so whoever you’re reporting to or your manager, if they say, I want you to do such and such area – take that plus an extra one or two things to show that you have that broader capability. And then, when people see that then they see you as someone who has broader potential from your current position. So, basically I guess to rephrase it – to behave as if you’re already at the next stage and people see that and then the growth evolves naturally.

Marcus addresses collaboration and rising to the occasion when teams could benefit from extraordinary measures of moving forward. Eugene, a dean at a public university, poignantly phrased teamwork and leadership when he noted:

Leaders have to be honest about the fact that leaders are not experts in every field and every area. Leadership requires being able to put a very effective team together and use the talents and the skills and the expertise of everybody at whatever level is needed the most effectively and also leadership requires leading by example.
In Chapter 3, I addressed how shared governance and communal leadership styles were an important component of leadership to Sabrina, Denise, Paul, Douglas, Ronald, Corrine, Caroline, Cynthia, and Bradford. I did not encounter one respondent who felt that she or he could do the job without the support of an effective team.

Teamwork, for some of the respondents, was visible through a sharing of credit and the mentoring and encouragement of future leaders. Joanne, a provost at a private liberal arts college, talked about the importance of nurturing future leaders:

I think you also have to think about how you foster the next leader. So whether it’s making sure you’re providing good professional development opportunities for your – the administrators that report to you. Or, to the faculty because I think a good leader cares about the institution after she steps down. So, to think about how you provide those opportunities and provide the structure for helping with leadership development; I think that’s important.

Similarly, Louis, a provost at a public university, spoke about the role that a leader plays in identifying future leaders from the ranks of the faculty and staff:

I think that’s part of what I try to do is to recognize the potential for leadership through these frequent interactions with colleagues in meetings. Who’s showing good judgment, who’s listening, who’s, it’s hard to say exactly what those qualities are. But, you can see them and […] I would say it’s fairly rare.

Maria, a dean at a public university, spoke about the importance of mentoring junior faculty who could then eventually move into leadership positions. Here, Maria talks about how her institution worked to facilitate a friendly working environment for junior women who were faculty of color:

You know that in many of our institutions – although, I think we’ve done much better at hiring in junior faculty of color – the senior leadership just isn’t there. The numbers are tiny. And, a group of our – then almost all – I guess they were all junior women faculty of color – formed a group […]. And, it was not about – you know – just supporting each other. It was about doing their work together. And, so they created a structure for sharing their scholarship. They came to me and to the person who was our Associate Vice Provost for Diversity and got money
to do a residential two weeks away at a facility that [the university] owns […] where it was all about writing, sharing their drafts, etcetera. They’ve done this once every year and it’s been a fantastic group. And, I’ve worked with some of them individually. But, I’ve also met with them occasionally as a group just to you know navigate the shoals of things. And they are all now – the original group is all now tenured. And, now we’ve begun to talk about the step from associate to full. And, that’s just one example. But, there are a lot of opportunities for informal mentoring and I try to do it whenever I can.

Maria sees her role as a dean as a team-based role. One way that she measures success in her job is by how well the faculty members are advancing.

In line with this understanding of teamwork, Gina, a dean at a public university, noted how she felt that her role was similar to what Maria described above. When I asked Gina to define effective leadership, she stated:

> How I define it for myself I suppose, is as a leader of a group of people, it’s my job to inspire people and to facilitate people to do what they’re good at and to accomplish their particular goals. So, I believe that I need to create the space, the proper environment, and the proper atmosphere where people can grow and develop and thrive in their own particular areas. So, that’s one aspect for me is making the work environment right for people and that’s not just the physical environment I think it’s more so facilitating people so that they can get along with each other that making it possible for them to do their work well rather than making it difficult and I think for people, that’s different things.

Gina felt that she was effectively carrying out her professional mission if she was providing an ideal working community for the faculty, her team members.

Fostering a community of teamwork also means working with staff members to ensure that their views are incorporated into the operations of the institution. Sophia, a provost at a private university, spoke about an instance in which she implemented ideas that three administrative assistants shared with her over lunch. They were frustrated that they did not get notifications of asbestos removal days since they would have likely taken vacation around those days to avoid being exposed to the asbestos. Sophia describes her response:
And, so what I did is I said, well let’s develop listservs so that there can be an automatic e-mail that the physical plant sends out in an office when work’s going to be done. Well, it turns out – the physical plant has wanted this for years. But they didn’t know how to get it and the administrative assistants have wanted it, but they don’t know how to get it. So, you know it’s connecting all of the pieces together because in my role, I can do that. So, after this was all developed, a person at the end of the office here took the leadership role of getting all of the technical parts in place and defining the background technology […] Anyway, the point is that once this was done and I sent an announcement out to campus, I thanked the three administrative assistants who had suggested it. And, they were so tickled – they felt like great – because they were given credit as if it was their idea and it was their idea. I didn’t need credit for it because I was the one sending the e-mail. I was automatically credited for it. I wanted them to feel like it’s a great idea to tell the associate provost or anybody in the administration that you have an idea and it might actually lead to something that everybody wants.

Sophia’s ability to make individuals at all levels of the university hierarchy feel as though their ideas mattered demonstrated her commitment to a team-based environment in which there was credit-sharing for new ideas.

Sharing the credit and fostering a sense of collaborative teamwork among a leader’s staff members and faculty facilitate successful examples of academic leadership. Placing the importance of the institution above all else and considering the culture, the historical values, the need for objectivity and directness in controversial personnel matters, considering a diversity of viewpoints in deliberations also demonstrate how a leader can lead with a strong ego, but not a big ego. Effective leaders listen and gather the data before implementing policies. Behind the scenes discussions that lack transparency do not factor into the profile of an effective academic leader.

TRANSPARENCY

In this chapter, a common thread that characterizes the accounts of what it means to be an effective leader is transparency. When leaders hold open forums, committee meetings,
workshops, and invite all the multiple community stakeholders to connect with them through social media, they demonstrate their willingness to expose themselves and their leadership responsibilities to critics.

Education scholars stress the importance of transparency in leadership that is distributive and open (Jaradat 2013; Mahoney 1998; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, and van Meurs 2009). Jaradat (2013) emphasizes the importance of striving for more transparency in leadership. Jaradat (2013: 74-75) indicates that “the power of transparency can be manifested through the following three pillars of good governance: transparency in decision-making, community participation and accountability.” My respondents’ accounts point in the direction of this increased reception for transparency. When institutional transparency exists, leaders are honest and forthright when it comes to their academic credentials and do not embellish them for personal gain, they are not wary of allowing others to weigh in on significant decisions that impact the future of the university, they care first about doing what is right for the institution before thinking about their grandiose positioning as figureheads, and they are not afraid to openly discuss the needs of the university and accept insights from affected parties. If leaders are too ego-driven, stakeholders can sense that and it can negatively detract from their popularity. Subsequently, an ego-driven leader may have a short and unsuccessful leadership term.

Gina, a dean at a public university, demonstrated her strong ego when she literally opened the budget to an individual who challenged her spending practices:

I have worked very hard here since I came to create a spirit of openness where people – I don’t hide things from people – I let people know what I’m thinking of and each step of the process and I think that’s very important because that develops more of a sense of security in people – like at least they’re not wondering or gossiping in the corridors but you know – what might or might not be going on. So, I think it’s very
important to be open. […] But, well, actually I can give you one example cause it didn’t happen here but a genuine one was where I was putting on a production and I put a budget to it and it was a pretty expensive budget because we were putting on a pretty heavy production and I was accused by one of the faculty members of misappropriation of funds basically. Who do you think you are what are you spending money like that on your just putting that money in your back pocket kind of thing. And my first instinct was what how can anybody think like that then, you do get angry and you’ve got to absolutely control that because no matter I mean I’ve had people come in to the office here and start shouting at me and I think what are they even talking about. […] And, then if it’s a case like where somebody actually accuses you of something you’ve got to justify yourself which is why I very much I mean I let anybody look at the books here because I’ve got nothing to hide and sometimes I find it helps them to understand. I mean, you’ve got to be careful about that too because you can’t have people traipsing in and out of the office all day saying I want to look at the books because otherwise you’d get nothing done. But, if somebody does like in that case when the person said what have you done with the money and I said, “here’s the budget and I can account for every single penny.”

Gina’s example vividly denotes the importance of leaders’ maintenance of transparency in their affairs. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, transparency and honesty are integral components that characterize the effective leadership model that I have constructed in this chapter.

Given what the literature and these interviews tell us about leadership qualities, how do leaders develop these skillsets? As some of my respondents’ accounts have indicated thus far, they learned how to lead from watching others succeed and watching others fail. Often, it appears that inadequate leaders left the most indelible impact on how leaders approached their future work. Since most academic leaders who are serving as presidents, provosts, and deans, generally enter these positions after careers as tenure-track faculty, most, especially those who are not coming from fields of business, management, sociology, and political science, do not have formal university training in leadership models. As such, how does a formally trained chemist, musician, linguist, or mathematician learn how to lead?
Chapter 5

Learning to Lead

Leaders learn how to lead; they are not born knowing how to lead. Socialization through education, (Giroux and Purpel 1983; Jackson 1990; Margolis and Romero 1998), peer groups (Haynie and Osgood 2005; McFarland and Thomas 2006; Tarrant 2002), religion (Gannon 1978; Smidt 1980), and familial experiences (Buchman and DiPrete 2006; Thomson and McLanahan 2012) can motivate an individual’s leadership pathway (Al-Lamky 2007; Suarez-Mccrink 2002). Furthermore, socioeconomic status and access to social capital (Mills 1956; Petev 2013) can foster leadership opportunities. How then are academic leaders socialized? What are the processes by which academics decide to pursue leadership positions? Furthermore, what mechanisms prepare leaders for the challenges that lie ahead?

EARLY PATHWAY TO ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND MENTORS

Disciplinary passion, devotion for the university experience, and knowledge production are integral components for the burgeoning academic leader (Birnbaum 1992; Goodall 2009) As it is often true of faculty members, not just those who pursue administrative roles, many of them, during their early undergraduate and graduate studies are so inspired by their joint research or projects with faculty members that it prompts their interest in pursuing a similar path by earning a terminal academic degree and working within the academy. Overall, reverence toward the academic experience is a quality that I observed in each of the 34 interviews. Academic leaders typically indicated a positive early university experience marked by solid relationships with peers and faculty members that inspired an academic career. Respondents often spoke about the
presence of a mentor who encouraged research collaboration and their subsequent graduate school matriculation.

There is an abundance of literature on the importance of mentoring. Research addresses its relationship to building campus communities with diverse leadership from historically underrepresented populations (Green and King 2001; Kezar, Eckel, Contreras-McGavin, and Quaye 2008), fostering student achievement (Martin and Dowson 2009; Plucker 1998), and career success (Scandura and Schriesheim 1994; Uk Chun, Sosik, and Yi Yun 2012). Through mentoring, those who are already in positions of influence as professors or administrators, for example, identify individuals who possess qualities that indicate a solid potential for professional growth. Furthermore, they may cultivate these individuals by encouraging them to challenge themselves both within their disciplines and in academic leadership roles. Mentoring occurs at all phases of an academic’s career. Graduate students often credit their college professors as an integral component to their choice to pursue graduate studies and begin the academic career.

Because mentoring works on a continuum, I first focus on mentorship as early as the undergraduate experience and conclude by noting the ongoing importance of mentoring once an administrator occupies a leadership post.

*Undergraduate and Graduate School Experience*

When I asked my respondents to talk about their path to their particular leadership role, some of them began by discussing their undergraduate experiences. Marcus, a provost at a public university, talked about the significance that mentors played in his early professional growth.

it’s so important to have that close [mentoring] relationship because I’m sure you’ve seen this yourself that even if it’s a contentious one and a lot of times it can be, because their job is to guide you and direct you in the most clear way and a lot of times that means pointing out mistakes. Even
if it’s contentious – it’s that one relationship that’s going to shape your future and I’ve been really blessed where I’ve had three or four mentors along the way that spent the time with me and I’ll just share with you briefly that part of the reason why I think I fit so well with this institution is that most of our students – are the first in their family to go to college and that includes me, that I was the first in my family. And, I remember that sort of awkward beginning phase where I had no clue of how to progress from an entry-level university student to graduate school and beyond. All of that was new territory, but I had mentors who – they didn’t care about any of that. All they saw was potential I had inside of myself and figured out a way to bring it out of me. It [mentoring] is a great gift.

Marcus’ relationship with his mentors formed a solid foundation for him to embark on an academic career. Given that Marcus was a first-generation college student, the fact that his college professors saw promise in his research potential was especially consequential for his career development.

Joanne, a provost at a private liberal arts college also talked about how a faculty mentor inspired her idea to pursue graduate studies.

This [being a professor] came as a result of doing research with a particular faculty member who really encouraged me and took me to scientific conferences. So, I started doing research when I was a sophomore in college. And, I would say that that was a very important experience that led me then to go to graduate school […] I didn’t have that as a career goal when I first started college. … and then in graduate school being able to do both teaching and research was something that I really valued. Like many graduate students there are those moments when you think – maybe I don’t want to stay in academia … but, I did again have some really good role models there that helped… to eventually lead me to do a post-doc and then … got a position here. And, found that it really suited me. I very much liked the value of doing both teaching and scholarship. And, I also found that college service was something I really valued.

On another note, Christopher, the president of a private university and the only respondent to have achieved his terminal degree while he was already serving in university administration,
talked about how his relationship with the president of his undergraduate institution sparked his interest in academic administration.

I have a unique path to this job. When I went to [name of university] as an undergrad, I got to know the university president at the time and it was a great privilege to know the university president as a student. And, he was the one who really first created the possibility that working in higher ed would be a really compelling and interesting career. In fact, I say that quite a bit; [name of president] … was the one who had suggested [academic leadership]. In fact, he said in particular that it could be a meaningful, even noble calling. He referred to it as such.

On the other hand, Caroline, the president of a public university talked about her career progression by emphasizing the importance of her graduate school experiences in fostering her decision to pursue an academic leadership position.

For graduate school, I had two [mentors]. I had one who was my academic mentor like you probably have and then I had a woman who was an associate dean in my school, in my department who was – she was a mentor to me – like a cheerleader and somebody who was a sounding board. She helped me pick out my wedding dress and she also was an academic person too. So… those two people were critical. And, then when I was an assistant professor at [name of university] and then I was an associate professor – there was a woman in central administration who’s still there – she’s secretary to the board – she’s almost like a chief of staff. Secretary to the board means you manage the board of trustees; it’s a big job – so, she was very high up. And, she was a good mentor to me. She really put me on the right committees and got me a lot of experience with central administration. So, I was lucky that way – fundraising. You know a lot of people don’t have somebody like that who’s that high up who took an interest in them. So… I keep in touch with her and every job change I’ve talked about – I mean I’ve considered, I talk to her. She didn’t always agree with me.

Regardless of the timing of the mentoring through undergraduate or graduate experiences, mentors’ identification of exceptional scholarship and leadership potential made an impression on respondents’ pathways. It was through this
socialization that respondents came to perceive their penchant for academic pursuits and subsequently leadership pursuits.

**Faculty/Administrator Experience**

Once a professor earns tenure, she or he is then a candidate for a whole host of opportunities for leadership within the university community. Assistant professors who are visible on campus, engaged in university governance matters, and who demonstrate openness to the campus community are frequently sought after for leadership positions, at a variety of levels of service, following their tenure and promotion to associate professor. Early on in their academic leadership careers, respondents spoke of being called to serve as department chair as well as service to the community through university-wide committees. Respondents did not necessarily talk about mentors who guided them toward leadership paths during their years as non-administrative faculty; however, they did focus to a great extent on the importance of mentoring once they took on their first leadership roles. Mentoring came from both within the institution and outside of the institution.

Sabrina, the president of a public university talked about the importance of a former college president who supported her early career progression when she was a recent Ph.D.

He was a college president from whom I worked as a fellow … while I was in that fellowship program, for that year. He was my mentor. He was very good. He was very supportive, very engaged in the work I was doing. He gave me good feedback. I always got good evaluations. He was constructive in helping me develop my skills.
Mentors are honest and give constructive insights as to how an individual can improve upon her or his skillset for the future.

Mentoring does not necessarily need to be on a hierarchical level with a mentor in the giving role and the mentee in the receiving role. Maria, a dean at a public university talked about how once she was in her faculty role, mentorship for her was more about collaborative work than it was about a formal mentoring role. She noted:

I was tenured [and] it was more a question of collaborators rather than mentors. The person I mentioned in the geography department – who, we’ve never been in a situation where she was actually superior to me in some ways but she certainly was someone who had more years at the university and had been there longer than I. And, I continue to use her as an advisor.

Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college talked about mentorship from her peers who she also considers to be her friends. Cynthia talked about the importance of having these friends as solid confidants. When I asked Cynthia to consider who had helped her shape her career as an academic leader, she stated:

[Name of woman senior administrator at a previous institution where Cynthia served on the faculty and administration] again I think as a leader, as a leader in higher ed has been an incredible mentor to me. I’ve had other people who have been more fleeting…so I think mentors can also be they’re not always ahead of you. There are several faculty members at [name of previous institution] who are very close friends of mine but I think we mentor one another. So, [name of woman] in the History Department, [name of woman] in Women and Gender Studies … those are all people that I admire …, I admire their smarts and I admire how they think about things. If I need to think through something, they’re the people that I go to. I can trust them and I just think they’re smart about how to you know, how not to lose your temper. How to be effective to get things done.
Cynthia’s mentors had never performed the exact job that she was currently credited with performing. Yet, she went to these individuals for support in challenging times.

Mentors play a crucial role in fostering early academic career interests that may transform into academic leadership interests following a solid record of scholarship, teaching, and service that are prerequisites for tenure. Yet, most of my respondents did not freely use this terminology in their presentation of who inspired them most to pursue academic leadership. Ronald, the president at a public university talked about how he did not have a formal mentoring plan. Ronald’s friends, who did not have experience in higher education, served as his mentors:

I really haven’t had any mentors and the reason is not so much because I think I know everything. The reason is more because I never – remember I said I never had any plan. Like to have a mentor, you’ve got to be trying to get somewhere. Like, well, she was my mentor because she helped me how to figure out how to get a job as a dean or how to do … well, I was never trying to go anywhere. […] I have people that I’ve learned things from. … probably most of them would be more like friends. But, friends that I have a great deal of respect for their opinion. And, I have a friend that I’ve had since fifth grade, it’s my closest friend in the world and – and he owned an executive recruiting firm and has never been, I mean, he graduated from college – but, he’s never had one thing to do with higher ed. But, I would listen to [name of friend] when it came time to issues of personnel before I’d listen to anybody, anywhere. And, I’d call him and ask him questions. I’d say – I’ve got this problem with such and such and so and so and he taught me a lot.

The majority of my respondents talked about the importance of “role models,” (Merton 1968). They often learned from the successes and failures of others in addition to “on the job” training.

LEARNING FROM SUCCESSES AND MISTAKES OF OTHERS AND SELF

We typically think of mentors as individuals who closely monitor and instruct individuals with rising potential in a particular field. The mentor has demonstrated her or his expertise or
exceptional skillset and the mentee subsequently values and respects that individual’s insights.

Yet, mentorship can also occur in a different manner. My respondents often spoke of role models instead of mentors (Jung 1986; Gibson 2004; Speizer 1981). In line with Gibson’s findings with regard to role model importance, role models may be positive or negative, global or specific, close or distant, or up or across/down. According to Gibson (2004), positive/negative role modeling refers to either valuing the beneficial outcomes of a role models work or devaluing the unsatisfactory achievements. Global-specific role modeling refers to valuing a collection of positive traits or just a few positive skills. Structurally, close/distant role modeling refers to personal relationships or role modeling from afar. Lastly, up and across/down role modeling refers to the hierarchical arrangement between the role model and the observer/follower.

Sometimes, respondents reported that their role models were more senior individuals under whom they had the opportunity of working at some point in their career. These role models did not necessarily have a personal relationship with the less senior administrators. At times, respondents reported that their role models were individuals that they had never met; respondents talked about how they admired the leadership of individuals whom they may have encountered or observed through social media, news reports, and other media.

What Would Jane or John Have Done?

Respondents often reported that they learned how to lead from close observations of their superiors during earlier parts of their careers. Through university committee involvement and firsthand monitoring of university, local, and national periodicals’ reporting of administrators’ job performance, respondents at early stages of their faculty careers spoke about witnessing exceptionally noteworthy examples of virtuous leadership. The respondents spoke about global matters relating
to how their role models approached their jobs through a variety of tactics in addition to more specific traits in especially trying circumstances (Gibson 2004).

For example, Bradford, a dean at a private university, credits a former professor as serving as his first role model who inspires his way of approaching his work:

He had tremendous integrity and spine and courage and he operated by his principles and he made it all look simple. In fact, any time I would see him compromise or do less than what he felt was right I would think oh, he compromised. In fact […] his portrait hangs in a stairway at the college and I have a colleague who still goes and sits by it sometimes. This guy had a melanoma when he was 28, came back and he died at 53. So, there’s a certain martyr thing in there too and he knew his whole life that he probably was going to die of cancer and as a result, he was the most focused human being I’ve ever seen.

On the other hand, Emily, a provost at a public university talked about how she did not have one particular role model or mentor. Instead, throughout her career as a teacher, scholar, and leader, she modeled the behavior of individuals for whom she had great admiration.

I wouldn’t say that there was anyone who I viewed really as a mentor as much as I just looked around and watched what people did and the people who I modeled – tried to model probably didn’t even know I existed. You know, I was just watching them and observing how they behaved, how they made decisions – at least what I could see about how they made decisions – how they treated people. So, I don’t think there was – I wouldn’t say there was a mentor related to leadership. I had mentors in terms of my role as an academic, as an economist, and as a teacher. But, in terms of the administrative side and playing a leadership role in administration, … it was more watching people and observing them. And, I always had a lot of support, you know certainly the president here has been wonderfully supportive and I watch very carefully what she does and try to learn as much as I can and the other administrators here, …. I’ve always thought they were very – when I was a faculty member, I thought they did a wonderful job in running the institution. I tried to watch them and learn as much as I could.
Sophia, an associate provost at a private university, was especially perceptive of and respectful of her current provost’s overall style.

For example my current provost has this style where he – it will look like he’s being completely waffling – but, what he’s really doing is he’s saying – well, let me hear you out. And, rather than reacting by saying no we can’t do that – he says, well tell me what it is that you’re asking about. And, it sounds like – he’s – “don’t you understand we have a policy against that?” And, he doesn’t take that approach – his approach is to be open and flexible and then he’ll come around and say – well, you know – this is the thing that I’m considering and I don’t – if I can do this for you – I need to figure out how I can do this for everybody. So, I really admire his way of not hitting people over the head with his authority. And, instead being sort of – he calls it the tai chi approach. And, I really admire that and I try to – and, you know I find that if I feel like I’m secure in my position, I can do that. It’s when I’m a little bit defensive that I get really rigid, which is fascinating.

Sophia also spoke of how she looks up to the current president as a role model given the way in which he engages the Board of Trustees who as is often the case, is a group of non-academics.

Our president has this amazing way of engaging the Board of Trustees. It’s like a clinic in leadership. And, interestingly it doesn’t – he’s not necessarily as comfortable with the faculty – it’s a different relationship and the faculty members are like openly hostile sometimes. I mean – faculty tend to do that, it’s not our faculty and whereas the board isn’t. And then – so, then he sort of emceed this discussion and what he’ll do and this is he always does it this way – he’ll call on people – and say well you know [name of woman] said this and I’m hearing you say that [name of man #1] and I think there’s some connection here. And, [name of man #2], I bet you’ve got something that – after [name of man #2] raised his hand – I bet you’ve got something that directly ties to both of those cause you have this experience in that. You know, he makes everybody feel like he’s engaged and listening and like what they have to say matters.

Likewise, Paul, the president of a private liberal arts college, had a similar experience to Sophia. He addressed the value in learning something from everyone he encounters. While he was at an earlier stage of his career, and even now, he relies on learning from others, particularly those who are serving or who have served as college presidents.
I would say when I was a faculty member at [a previous institution]; the president of [that institution] was very supportive. He thought I had a real career. He encouraged me; he provided opportunities for me. But, he also believed in me and that was huge for me. He was someone I really admired and he wanted to see me succeed. He was one. Another was [name of president of another institution]. He is a very close friend of mine. I’ve known him a long time. And, he has supported me all along in advising me. So, I have people like that, that I have met and whom I admire. And, it goes back a long way starting with not graduate school per say but when I began my faculty career that were helpful to me as well and believed in me and gave me advice and so forth. I try to learn from everyone. I don’t know where I learned this a long time ago. Someone said everybody you meet should teach you something no matter how unlikely that may seem. They all have something to teach you. And, if you pay close attention to everyone around you then you find lessons and value everywhere and along the way I’ve had lots of experiences that have been very helpful to me.

Paul also acknowledged that while some of his leadership skills evolved from solid role modeling from individuals who were more senior to him, he continues to learn from his peers:

These are lonely jobs and it’s often difficult to find on this campus people you can talk with about everything. It’s just the way it goes. So, I have over the years developed friends who do this job as well. They’re the ones that are probably most helpful because they know exactly what I’m talking about when I describe a budget challenge or a faculty challenge. And, it’s not a group but I have a series of individuals that I know and that I see and that I talk to on a fairly regular basis and that’s nice. They’re all either presidents or former presidents for the most part.

Similarly, Jake, the provost at a private university spoke about how he admired his faculty colleague’s demeanor in meetings;

There was a guy, a faculty member at the school where I was who was fantastic in meetings. And, it took me about a year to understand what it was that he did that made meetings work well. And, I don’t think that since then I’ve really changed very much. I mean – his style was to listen and listen and listen and out of the craziness of 8,000 people having different opinions to figure out so really there are really only just three major issues that we’re all talking about and I think that’s still what it is that I try to do in dealing with people. That is, to take the raw material of all the different ideas that people have and reduce them to a couple of questions that are actionable. Sometimes it seems the world is split
between people who understand that meetings are to actually generate action and people who think that meetings are just to talk and don’t figure out that everything must be translated into action.

Jake also addressed his respect for the current president of his institution given that this president had the foresight to care about the institution’s long-term prosperity:

His decision that we were going to scale back how much of the endowment we use per year. If he hadn’t done it, no one would have realized he hadn’t done it. It’s our problem for him. He’s going to be long gone as president if not dead by the time that it would have hurt the school, but it would wreck the school to keep on spending at that rate from the endowment, so yeah. It made his life harder as president, much harder because he had less money to spend each year. You know, it’s a lot easier to be president or provost if you could just tell people all the time – sure that’s cool, do that – here’s some money. So, to not do it because you are thinking of the health of the community 50 years from now, that’s brave, I think.

Stella, the president of a private university, specifically talked about one man who was in a senior leadership role that she often would think about when tackling challenges. Instead of contacting that person as she confronted perplexing tasks, she would reflect on what his response might be in the given situation. She would ask herself how that individual would address that problem and it helped her to pattern her actions.

[Name of man] was a great mentor and is still a great role model; he’s the president of [name of university]. And, he’s extremely good on the policy front in Washington – trying to develop sustainable dialogues on very contentious issues between the academy and the government. And, I still just admire the way he would navigate those really challenging issues and I do find myself thinking what would [name of man] do? […] Or, be proud of myself when I feel like I’ve done something that would be like the way [name of man] would do it. And, I say that now as my admiration for him continues.

Respondents also cited historical or literary figures as role models that did not have direct ties to university leadership. Martha, a dean at a public university talked about strong women in
politics and public service that she looked to as her role models. Their comprehensive skillsets in how they approached their vocations were particularly inspiring for Martha.

I always look for strong women who are able to mobilize groups of people for a good, common cause and create – you know – some way of people agreeing. You know I think of Madeleine Albright or Hillary Clinton as people who can get all kinds of people to talk and negotiate and that’s very hard to do and you have to have the facts so that you can be sure of what your information is so that you can lead the discussion. But, it takes a lot of energy and you know then there are people like Mother Theresa who did the same thing – she was just doing it for a different cause. And, she wasn’t sure about a lot of things including how much faith she had but, she said we have to help these people and I’m going to keep on working.

Marcus, the provost at a public university also spoke about his reverence for individuals in public leadership roles:

Well, just about everybody looks to greats like Martin Luther King, for example. I think he was a great example of a clear vision and being able to get millions to follow that vision because it was so compelling. So, that always sticks with me and whenever I’m looking for inspiration, I look for quotes from him and so forth. I would also list Thomas Jefferson as a great example.

Similarly, Sabrina, the president of a public university talked about how Nelson Mandela’s leadership is a source of inspiration for her leadership. Years ago, she and her husband had the opportunity to visit South Africa and she describes her interaction with a local Afrikaner that helped her understand the impact of the people’s confidence in Mandela’s authentic leadership:

I admire Mandela as a leader. I once went to South Africa the year after apartheid was eliminated and I was very interested in what the people had to say about apartheid and about the change cause I thought, my God, the whites must be really upset because the power is now being given to the blacks. And, so I went into a bar with my husband and… a man sat next to me. I asked him about the transition. And, he was an Afrikaner and you know he talked about how hard it was …. And then I said to them, why didn’t the whites go up in arms, why wasn’t there a revolution? How could this be done so peacefully? And, he said because
we trust Mandela, there’s only one person in the world who could have done this, he said and that was Mandela. And, I said, why do you trust him? And, he said because he always keeps his word. And, I was younger then and I was not a president. And, I said it’s very important for people to understand that your word means something and to keep your word. So, that’s been a hallmark of my presidency. If I tell you I’m going to do something, I do it. If I can’t do it, I tell you why I can’t do it. But, I keep my word and I try to be honest and decent because he [Mandela] is perceived as an honest, decent person. And, I thought what a compliment to that entire country, peacefully was turned over from the whites to the blacks without spilling any blood.

On the other hand, William, a dean at a public university talked about how a literary figure in a book series by C.S. Forester about a Napoleonic ship captain, that he had read as a child inspired his leadership approach. He talked about the qualities that he admires in the Napoleonic ship captain and drew a parallel with the importance of these qualities in his role as a dean:

He’s very smart – smarter than the other people around him most of the time. But he is, and he commands this ship in battle and … on the inside, he always can see kind of all of the things that can go wrong with everything that’s going to happen. So as he’s sailing into battle, he’s imagining his ship being destroyed or even worse, him being horribly injured, but not killed and then a figure of fun by everybody. And, so on the inside you know he’s filled with kind of doubt and insecurity – but, he has studied how he thinks heroic Napoleonic ship captains should act …. And, so on the outside, that’s how he acts. And, he’s calm under fire and you know, if there’s an opportunity to do something brave even though he’s terrified by the prospect, he tries to do the brave thing and he gets himself into trouble by speaking up and proposing sort of novel ideas even when the conservative hierarchy in the British navy – you know, isn’t so much interested. And the result is – you know – that even though on the inside he’s sort of – spends half of his time terrified – by acting like a brave heroic, Napoleonic ship captain, he actually becomes one. And that was sort of always my model for this … The other thing he does…. there’s a big battle and afterwards when he’s reporting to the admiral … he basically gives all the credit to his subordinates and his goal is to see them promoted and recognized for their accomplishments and not to sort of claim the rewards for himself. And… he’s the person who kind of takes the ultimate responsibility even if somebody on his ship screws up. So, these are all things that I model myself on to the extent that I can.
This echoes themes of effective leadership that I addressed in Chapter 4: good, effective leaders engage the team, support the work of others, and share the credit to build morale among the team.

Learning how to lead means watching and learning about how others lead. Academic leaders look to leaders from a variety of domains as their role models. Sometimes, role models are other academic leaders and other times, role models are people that a respondent never had the opportunity to meet in person. Overall, my respondents recognized how these role models continue to inspire them for a variety of different reasons. On the reverse side, I learned that it is just as important to have a role model whose leadership one tries to emulate, as it is to have “non-role models” whose disastrous leadership serves as a reminder of how not to lead.

*The Non-Role Model: Learning from Mistakes*

In Chapter 4, when I talked about ineffective leadership, I focused a great deal on examples of leadership behaviors that were exceptionally unsuccessful, including not listening to key constituencies, being egocentric and self-promoting, and distant from the populations that they served. Some of the respondents talked about how they patterned their leadership outlooks to oppose their predecessors’ and others’ failings. In Chapter 3, I noted how Paul, the president of a private liberal arts college spoke openly about his “insufferably arrogant” predecessor who did not care about what the faculty had to say and who failed to consult with faculty on key university matters. I identified this phenomenon of noting others’ shortcomings in many of my interviews.

Sabrina, the president of a public university, spoke frankly about a former leader whose leadership style demonstrated to her how not to lead.
I worked for a woman, who I said, “Oh my god, if I ever become a president I don’t ever want to be anything like her because she was so mean. She was just so mean, a bad temper and she always ascribed the worst motives to everybody. And, so she would be vindictive. If you for example were in a meeting and you said something critical of her or her policy, she would remember that and the next time she could sock it to you, she would sock it to you. And, she wouldn’t be visible about it but her hands were always on it. So, I said, what a mean person and I worked for her for almost five years and then I said, I have got to get out because … I never came to respect her. She had a great mind and she was intelligent and she had made the university a better place because she had a good skill set. But, … I thought that she was not a good person. And, so in that way, I didn’t see her, as an effective leader because I thought nobody really likes her. … So, I learned not to be like her.

Sophia pinpointed a vice president that she had worked for who blatantly disrespected a colleague by calling her the wrong name: 20

… one of my staff members who is on this floor – there’s a vice president that she works with regularly – her name is Alyssa and the vice president sent her an e-mail and said Dear Alice – and it just erased years of work that had been built up. That person has no clue how much sort of capital he or she just lost because Alyssa now knows – you don’t really know who I am.

Matthew, a dean at a private university, also talked about a situation in which the provost’s poor leadership taught him some important lessons about one’s tactics in intervening in matters that are highly controversial and that question the integrity of others. Matthew commented on this difficulty that the provost confronted with a department’s faculty members:

… there were a bunch of curricular reforms that the provost was trying to produce and I would say that she did not understand how to operationalize them and managed even to alienate allies because of picking fights over the wrong issue so an issue for instance of departmental integrity in hiring came up. She thought they hired somebody stupid but approached it in a way that raised the general issue of departmental, disciplinary superiority in judging. I wasn’t on the committee that had the general oversight so we couldn’t support her. But, I’m completely sure she was writing the case and that she should have just done it in a way that was different.

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20 I have changed the name of this individual. However, the similarity between the two names demonstrates the point.
Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college, talked about components of the current president’s and a former president’s leadership styles that he chose not to emulate in his working manner. Samuel addressed how aspects of the current president’s more corporate leadership style were unbeneficial:

his Wall Street side comes in and I just think he’s an idiot when he behaves that way. It just doesn’t match this culture. So, saying things like somebody comes in and says, “I’m feeling like I’m not going to get everything done” and having the response be – “I pay a fair wage, get it done” is probably not quite … the person didn’t come in thinking that – they said I need help, I need somebody else to work on this thing.

Samuel also commented on a former president’s ineffective leadership, marked by having values that did not match institutional values.

Her biggest problem was – and it really stopped the college and it stopped her – was overreaching. She was a person given to seeing – I’ll use a different metaphor – she’s leading, we’re following – and she has walked so far ahead of us that no one can see her anymore. So, you can’t follow her. In fact, if you knew where she was going, you might not want to follow her because it’s pretty treacherous where she’s headed. So, I think overreach was one piece. [Name of president] was a person who [betrayed] her own gender in some pretty odd ways. So, she would flirt with male students in certain ways to try to get them to do things – not an individual student – but, she’d get in front of the student government association and you would be almost ashamed to see the way she would behave and then realize that what she was doing was trying to get the guys to behave in a certain way. I saw her once walk up to a young student who was smoking and she walked up and she said you know “smoking will keep you from getting erections.” This was the president of the college.

Samuel did acknowledge that some of this former president’s overreaching was beneficial to the college resulting in new programs and centers that are still in existence on campus. However, this president was overall, not in touch with the feelings and needs of her constituency, which oftentimes resulted in some fairly awkward encounters among students and faculty.
Anna, a provost at a public university, spoke more globally about matters pertaining to how others lead that she has observed and found to be detrimental to leadership. Broadly speaking, Anna listed the following qualities as indicative of ineffective leadership:

- Inability to make decisions, inability to resolve conflicts, inability to stick to a budget, inability to say no, inability to be honest and even if it sometimes means hurting someone’s feelings or saying difficult things – lack of courage – the list goes on.
- We have had – confidentially – we have had ineffective deans. We have had ineffective provosts; we’ve had ineffective department heads. There are ineffective people in department head positions all over the university right now. And, a lot of it comes down to these things.

Steven, a provost at a public university, also talked in a comprehensive way about a variety of qualities that he has seen in individuals that make them unsuitable for role model status. He has learned how not to lead by watching these individuals in action.

- They’re poor communicators, they’re very insular; they do not like to be outside of their comfort zone. And they react rather than be proactive and you know at the end of the day, based on all of those things that I said, one may come to the thought that maybe that person just didn’t have the intellectual capacity and I would say that’s not always true. Some of these individuals have tremendous intellectual capacity but not having had the experience or the comfort to be a good public speaker prevented them or in some cases really accelerated their inward looking perspective. So, as a leader, communicating your ideas is so critical. But, because they feel uncomfortable, they would shy away from those environments. So, they become even more detached from their role as being a leader. So, I would say that that’s probably a very critical one and we have at universities like this tremendously talented individuals but their full value to their scientific community, to our students and their training and education. It’s not met because they have this fear of communicating effectively. And, if they were to have spent ten percent or five percent of the time that they spent on their scholarship, they could be tremendous.

“You Have to Eat the Noodles”: Muddling Through and Learning On-The-Job

Respondents addressed how they found that it was not until they were actually “on the clock” in their administrative posts that they truly learned the ins and outs of how to lead. Since
many of these individuals had no formal academic training in leadership during their undergraduate or graduate programs, they approached their time in their positions as hands-on learning experiences. My respondents may have been world-renowned scholars in their disciplines; however, their previous scholarship and research, for the most part, did not prepare them for what they would face in the boardroom and behind closed doors in their executive offices. Through being in the middle of controversies and surprise situations, listening to the institution’s diverse stakeholders with variant interests, and overcoming a fair number of mistakes, leaders learned how to lead best.

In an ever-changing university environment, Isabella an associate provost at a public university discussed how she approached new challenges given the frequent need for her immediacy in responding:

I have a close colleague in the office […] She started a couple of months before I did and so she kind of helped me get the lay of the land a little bit. We have a great staff here. I asked them a lot of questions. And, you sort of figure it out as you go. And, there are a lot of great people. The team of leaders at [this university] right now is really good; they’re good colleagues. And so, even to this day, you wouldn’t believe the stuff that comes up so everyday, there’s … a new surprise, something you didn’t know was coming. You’ve got to ask somebody what he or she thinks. So, there is no training for this. You figure out who you can trust and who’s smart and you ask them. But, it’s a very much figure-it-out-as-you-go-along kind of job.

Stanley, a dean at a public university, had a similar assessment of learning leadership:

Most of us who are administrators in the university setting came into that role as a faculty member and strangely enough most of us don’t have a whole lot of training in management although we become managers and leaders. So, that varies a little bit by area. The people who have been in the business world have perhaps had more preparation and training in a formal way to be a manager because they’ve taken coursework and they’ve worked in the business world.
Given Stanley’s statement regarding the academic origins of most university administrators, some respondents reported that they consulted an executive coach when they had come to a standstill in terms of how to approach a difficulty. Cynthia, the dean at a private liberal arts college described a situation in which there was intense resistance from her direct reports.

The situation was so severe that she decided to hire a coach:

I had a sort of insurrection from some people who report to me who … did not want to change. And, it was pretty ugly. So, how did I approach it? I got a coach. I told my boss, look here’s what we need to do and clearly what I’m trying to do which is to try to cheerlead people into being able to think about what we need to do differently is not working. So, I got a coach, did a huge amount of work. Did a huge amount of reading. Worked with her to develop strategies and just little things like make sure you always take your secretary to lunch once a month. That’s a great idea. So, yeah, it was kind of a if you come from being a faculty member into supervising people who had been staff all their lives. I think I didn’t really appreciate not the differences, but how different that feels to people. I think I wasn’t as in tune with that as I needed to be despite the fact that [my mentor] and best friend is herself someone who has spent her life as a staff member. And honestly, getting a coach is something that she did at one point in her career for a different sort of professional crisis. I always really admired that she had done that because you can just sort of stick your head in the ground and sort of get your feelings hurt or think it’s other people’s fault or whatever and honestly it was my responsibility to figure out how to get us to a better place so let me get some help. And, I also knew that I wanted somebody, like it’s a little bit like going for counseling. I wanted someone whose job it was to want to make me successful. So, somebody who would tell me hard things that didn’t have any emotional attachment to me or any need to pull any punches and it was great, I learned a lot.

I asked Cynthia to further clarify exactly what had happened that led her staff members to become so disgruntled.

Yeah. What they did was several of them banded together and went to my boss and with basically a package of lies about me. That, so some of this was also managing up. So, it’s not only coaching about how to sort of disentangle things going on. Things that I needed to do to be better but also to disentangle some of the unhealthiness in the staff. But, also to train my provost to give her confidence that here are the things that I am doing. It helped to have a coach tell her what the dysfunction was and it
wasn’t me sounding like I was defensive or making excuses. So, we’ve gotten to a very good place.

Similarly, William, a dean at a public university talked about how he learned that while as a faculty member, freedom of expression against administrative decisions was a highly valued tenet, as an administrator such behavior was unfavorable.

The president was doing something that none of the deans really thought was a good idea – actually nobody really thought it was a good idea – in fact, it was a terrible idea and I was organizing sort of the lobbying effort against it and I learned that as a dean you are not supposed to be sort of organizing your fellow deans to rise up in opposition to the higher administration – they don’t like that. And that’s basically what I was doing. You know, we were writing a letter. It was like we were going to all write a letter and sign it objecting to this. And, actually I got in trouble with the provost – I don’t think he necessarily disagreed with us … what he said to me in between the – you idiot, never do anything like this again was – every document at the university is public and if something like this ends up in the newspaper, you can really embarrass the whole university and one of the things you give up if you’re going to be dean and have a nice big office is – you really are expected to support the university and if you have a problem with that, you should quit. So, he made that pretty clear.

Nicholas, a president of a private liberal arts college also talked about the value of learning on the job. He addressed how he often helps less senior presidents when they call him for advice. Yet, he also acknowledged how the real learning does not take place until one personally champions through a difficult situation. For some challenging situations, such as the loss of students or faculty members, he felt that there is no training that could have prepared him for how to react. It is by going through such trying situations that a leader learns how to act in future emergencies. Nicholas discussed one of those incredible challenges when he learned how to react.

I had a murder-suicide inside the residence halls when I was president of [name of school] and there’s no training, there’s no bibliography. There’s nothing to prepare you for making those calls to the parents and coping with that. You just have to make very sure that you are
surrounded by very very competent people because there’s no panacea. It’s like the fire at [name of institution] years and years ago and how in the world do you wake up if you’re president and you’ve got five kids who are burned to death. There’s no training for that. There’s no Harvard seminar on the presidency that’s going to tell you, well here’s what you should do when you have to make those calls to the parents. So, if you’re surrounded by really good people, you’ll make it through the crises. But, those crises are the darkest moments of any presidency. Losing a kid. It’s the worst. It’s like what’s the worst thing that can happen to a parent? Losing a kid.

Lisa, a dean at a private university also addressed the importance of learning through on-the-job challenges. She addressed a trying situation that happened earlier in her career when she was a junior professor in which she confronted a full professor who was behaving badly toward her and others. Lisa talked about how that incredibly stressful time in her life prepared her for her current position:

And, I do think that in reading about literature and what causes people to grow in it – in leadership or in life – you’ve got to – you have to do challenging things. So, looking back now, that was an absolute gift. At the time, it was horrible, but that experience probably contributed to my success; in fact I know it contributed to my success. …you have to eat the noodles – meaning, you’ve got to do the hard stuff. If you don’t do the hard stuff, you’re not going to grow; you’re not going to develop. You’re not going to be able to do what you need to do when it gets hard.

Firsthand experience of the challenges of a higher educational institution also mean knowing that while predecessors may have operated in a certain way when they held administrative positions, the change of leadership marks the start of a new regime.

**Predecessors**

Learning “the ropes” and muddling through means that an administrator sees for her or himself the challenges that are at hand and decides how best to respond given her or his own best reasoning. Paul’s “insufferably arrogant” predecessor, as president of a private liberal arts
college, for example, was not a beneficial guide for him. He had to decide for himself how to respond to the faculty and student concerns. Furthermore, Laura, a president at a private liberal arts college charted a new direction when she took over as president after the leadership of a career administrator who did not put the needs of the college in highest esteem. Nicholas, a president at a private liberal arts college, had an exceptionally profound response to my question of whether or not his predecessor helped him at all with learning his position:

> The best gift a president can give to his or her successor is to get the hell out of dodge, never interfere, never intrude, and never go back. Go back for funerals and inaugurations and then only when asked. That’s just a hard and fast rule of American higher education. And, I believe that 1000 percent. You need to get out of the way.

While he had contended with a difficult predecessor, Paul, the president of a private liberal arts college, was open to being a sounding board for his incoming successor. At the time of my interview with Paul, he was in the process of transitioning out of his position as president at his present institution and preparing for a new presidency. As such, he reported benefitting from the open dialogue that he had established with his predecessor at his new institution.

> And she and I have had a dream collaboration. She understands the job as I do. We’re both seasoned presidents. We have a lot of respect and affection for one another […] I was on the phone with her till I came out here to see you. She was having a senior staff meeting and asked me to join the call cause there were some issues that were relevant to me, and I think it has been a model of collaborative transition. I’m lucky because it doesn’t have to be like that.

For the purposes of the transition, it is helpful to have a cooperative predecessor. Stella, the president of a private university, addressed her dissatisfaction with the lack of assistance with the transition that she received from her predecessor:

> [Name of predecessor] didn’t help me at all. It was not an easy departure for him. I’ll just put it that way.
While incoming administrators generally welcome some help, it is unwelcoming to have a predecessor who wants to keep her or his reins on the responsibilities of the position. Denise, the president of a private liberal arts college also addressed the value of having insights from a predecessor given that it can help a leader to be prepared for challenges that lie ahead. Yet, Denise also noted that some personnel matters, for example, that a predecessor may have faced might not replicate themselves under a new presidency:

Part of what’s interesting and what’s good about getting his [her predecessor’s] take on things is that you do realize that all problems and relationships are specific to the individuals in them.

Overall, the ideal predecessor/successor relationship would be a mutually agreed upon open dialogue in which the successor can ask questions and the predecessor can respond specifically to those questions. The predecessor might warn of foreseeable difficulties that she or he perceives may pose future problems for the entering administrator; however, that should be the extent of the exchange. After that, the successor, as Nicholas bluntly noted above, should withdraw from university proceedings so as to avoid stepping on the toes of the novel leader. Leaders need space to establish their own pathways that they develop after listening to the stakeholders, without worrying about imposing changes that may displease past administrations.

*Listening and Learning to Lead*

Besides experiencing challenges and living through crises, learning how to lead involves listening. In Chapter 4, I talked about the importance of listening as a strategy for effective leadership. For example, it is important to listen to the stakeholders of an institution before making a major decision that may not be in line with the culture of the institution. Paul, the president of a private liberal arts college, listened to the student population’s concerns over a
racially insensitive building on campus. Frederick, the president of a private university listened to his students when they expressed concerns over a variety of issues, including student group controversies as well as campus eyesores. Furthermore, Bradford, a dean at a private university and Rachel, a provost at a public university noted the importance of listening to and acknowledging diverse viewpoints from faculty who come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Listening to the stakeholders of an institution is one of the most important qualities for effective leaders to possess and also offers the most reliable method for leaders to learn how to lead in their given institution. In Chapter 3, I noted how Eugene, a dean at a public university relied on his open-door policy as a way of keeping tabs on the interests of the community. Furthermore, in Chapter 4, I also talked about how institutional cultures vary. As such, the process of learning how to lead in one institution may significantly differ from leadership learning in another institution.

For example, Maria, William, and Candace, all deans at public universities, each describe the importance of listening as a key method of leadership learning. As Maria noted:

[It is] important to listen, to really hear people. That means suspending whatever your own definitions of a situation are and that’s sometimes difficult. But, so oftentimes, the problems that come our way are because people simply need to be heard and they’re not feeling heard.

William talked about the need to listen to one’s advisors as a leader given that there will be instances in which one is called to make a decision on an issue, relating to the budget for example, and one is not an expert on that issue:

But, you know, we have professionals here with MBAs who do this. And, the most important thing is to listen to them. And, if they say – “I really don’t think that’s a good idea – you shouldn’t do that.” Then, don’t do it. So, I think some of those skills are overrated and compared to the communication and interpersonal skills, I think the communication skills and the interpersonal skills dominate.
Similarly, Candace talked about recognizing the importance of listening given one’s limited understanding of situations. A dean cannot possibly know everything that is going on within her or his college:

> Then, you have to listen to people. You don’t know everything. You have to talk to everybody who has something to do with whatever issue you’re trying to do something about. And, that requires that you’re the type of person who can talk to other people. And, you know, get their opinions.

A leadership training, workshop, or seminar may help a current or incoming leader learn the importance of listening to institutional stakeholders; however, that training cannot prepare the leader for the exact motivations that are going to matter to these stakeholders. By having “eaten the noodles” and muddling through one’s positional responsibilities, a leader learns what it means to lead at her or his given institution.

**FORMAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

Leaders also learn how to lead by attending workshops and seminars that focus on important skills that are necessary for academic leaders. The sessions that respondents most often reported attending were specifically geared toward academic administrators. Sometimes respondents attended these trainings because the institution specifically recommended that they attend them. Other times, the respondents sought them out on their own. Furthermore, there were some respondents who reported that they wished that they had had the opportunity to attend such trainings. Circumstances were such that they jumped right into their positions with little time for leadership reflection. For example, Frederick, the president of a private university reported not having the time to attend formal leadership training since assuming his position. Denise, the president of a private liberal arts college reported that her exceptional executive coach’s
assistance replaced her need to attend leadership training. Regardless of access to or desires to attend these trainings, here, I focus on the respondents’ reactions to leadership training and acknowledge responses to gender-specific training seminars for women leaders.

Benefits of Formal Leadership Training

Sophia, a provost at a private university, who had a very intentional career path without much research or teaching experience beyond graduate school, was exceptionally delighted by the awareness that she developed through her participation in a leadership training program. Sophia described an exercise that she engaged in as part of this 3-day leadership training:

The goal was to get the most points. And I realized that I was right and I started telling my table this and they didn’t get it. And so, then I tried to explain it again and they still didn’t believe me because they just felt like that all they really had to do was win the lottery of raising one red card when everybody else was raising blue cards and they would get the most points that one time, right. So, then, the game was structured – halfway through, there would be like a town meeting so I started explaining my theory and I didn’t even realize at this point that this was actually classic game theory. So, I told the group – cause this was out in the hallway where each table leader went out to the hallway to strategize and I explained what was going on and nobody – two of the other people – like they got it, but they didn’t know how to translate it. And, I realized at this moment that being right didn’t matter because I couldn’t change anything just by being right. My job was to persuade other people to behave in a certain way. And, if I could persuade them – then I could achieve a goal. If I was right, I wasn’t achieving a goal.

Sophia talked about how this particular training was not exclusive to academic administrators. Furthermore, she felt that she stood out as an individual who wanted to benefit from the sessions and was frustrated that others were not as excited about learning from the exercises.

And, then after the game we talked about the fact that – are we one organization? Or, are we five competitors? Because if you see yourself as five competitors, then if one group wins at the expense of the others,
you may have actually won. But, if you’re one organization, and one subunit within the organization wins at the expense of the others, that’s not a win, that’s a loss. But, this was a group of people – a lot of whom worked for the government. A lot of whom were sent there because they needed leadership skills and they felt like it was punishment and they didn’t really want to be there. And, I was there like you know hoping to try to learn stuff [laughs]. It’s kind of – it’s sort of embarrassing – because I was very eager and everybody else was like the only good thing about this place is lunch. So, those people weren’t interested in figuring this out.

Marcus, a provost at a public university also spoke enthusiastically about his leadership training experience. In particular, he sought out leadership training when he was in the process of transitioning into his present role.

I knew I was starting in early July of that year and before I began I contacted this institution and I said, I know I’m just starting this job, but I notice that this workshop is being offered and I’d really like to go. And they said – by all means – and what I liked about it in particular is they had us do a lot of scenarios and problem solving as a group. So, for example, they would have four or five of us together at a table and say here’s a personnel challenge of this difficult person is – and they would describe a hypothetical and have us solve it together and then share it with the broader group, so that was very useful.

Similarly, Louis, the provost at a public university talked about how he has benefited from his attendance at leadership trainings. He attended one popular academic leadership training program at Harvard University and, at the time of our interview, was involved in an ongoing leadership training program that was regionally based. Louis reported that one of the benefits of attending the academically focused training was the network that he built. He also talked about the extensive professional training that he received that has helped him throughout his profession. When he attended the Harvard training he was serving at a different institution. Yet, the ideas that he learned resonate with him still to this day in his current provost role:

These Harvard higher ed institutions, they’re pretty intensive. They’re residential programs, they come in different levels. There’s a program
for beginning leaders. There’s a program for what they call the president’s cabinet, so VP types and that’s where I was and then there’s one there’s like a senior executive leadership. So, I did that middle one. I was with deans, vice presidents, some provosts who were aspiring to presidencies. I was the chief academic officer at [name of previous institution]. So, the approach was really kind of styles of leadership …. There was a book that we read and the authors were there. So, we got it from the horse’s mouth and these were people who characterized different styles of leadership. …, they brought people that exemplified that kind of leadership including the president of [name of university], a woman who was a very charismatic person and then a woman who built a sense of community around. She was an emotive leader […] and so we were kind of asked to situate ourselves on these various spectrums and I think the takeaway is that you have to be aware of all of them and you may be predominately this kind of leader, but that there are circumstances when you might embody some elements of the others or that you needed to and that there are circumstances. I mean one of my deans is gone because he could only be one kind of leader. And there were decisions that I needed made that were just not part of his repertoire. So, I think you need that kind of, you need to be aware that whatever kind of leader you are, you may need to be another kind of leader in different contexts so that was kind of useful and helpful.

For Louis, learning about differences in leadership styles and the need to be versatile in changing circumstances, were key takeaway points for him.

Another dimension to the whole thing was just how to bring about institutional change and … I remember … that adage that the definition of insanity is to continue doing the same thing and expect a different result. … that was sort of a good lesson that we took away from that.

Clearly, Louis reported the many benefits of having the opportunity to attend this leadership training in the past. His strong recollection of details from the training, years after his attendance is a testament to its influence on his career. The more recent leadership training that Louis was involved with was a hands-on leadership training involving community charities and organizations. Given that the larger urban area that comprises the surrounding community of Louis’ public university faces substantial issues relating to hunger and poverty, this interactive program has been eye opening for him.
We’re seeing close up the problems that [name of city] faces and we’re getting to know the people who’ve dedicated their lives to trying to solve them. I mean everything from the director of the [city] library to the people who run the [city] Soup Kitchens, to the people who run the [city] shelters to the people who run the [city] Boy’s and Girls Club. You know, and some of them are really inspiring; they’re really passionate, dedicated, deeply committed people. Probably, many of whom don’t make a lot of money doing it. But, that’s not what motivates them. And, that program is asking us to think about authentic leadership. We’re reading a book called *True North*. That’s about finding your own inner compass; it’s about being true to yourself in the way you lead.

Laura, the president of a private liberal arts college, talked about how she had benefited from attending Harvard leadership training for new presidents. Similar to Louis, Laura also noted the benefits of establishing a solid network of presidents at peer institutions.

I went to the – you know Harvard does this program for new college presidents and I went to that the summer after I was appointed president and that was fantastic; it was great. And there is some leadership training embedded in that; it’s also sort of content, you know, learning a little bit more about running a college. But, and lots of good connections with peers at other institutions who are also new presidents and I’ve been able to maintain some of those connections. They are people who you can once in a while pick up the phone and call. So, that’s fantastic. So, that would be one. I went to – with our board chair – I went to an AGB conference … for board chairs and presidents and it really was focused on roles, the president, the chair, and the board. And, thinking about leading an institution and how you forge a partnership and do that together and I found that to be very helpful.

Laura reported that after both of these conference experiences, she came away with a clearer vision about her role and responsibilities as a college president.

Rachel, a provost at a public university, also lauded her experience at past leadership trainings and noted the importance of how she expanded her network through these programs:

I believe the Harvard professional programs – and, I’ve completed two certificates, were essential to strengthening skills I had already

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21 AGB stands for Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.
developed and recognized that I had. But, they were very helpful in that I developed networks. The most important piece wasn’t so much the books that we read as developing a network of peers and listening to their experiences of how things were done on their campuses. The second professional development program I attended at Harvard, persons were from throughout the world – it wasn’t just the U.S., they were from Australia, England. I think there was someone from Scotland. There may have been a couple of other countries – India. So, it took on more of a global perspective. And we then divided up into small groups, so we were men, women from all over the US. We were all given this long reading list, which was a good thing because that’s all we did. We were away from our campuses; we had an assignment before arriving and we read. We looked at a lot of case studies, lessons learned from case studies. So, that was important in that it strengthened my style of resolving and problem solving those issues from day to day. And, it also helped me to understand the transition between the role of a faculty member and an administrator.

Eisenhardt (1989:548) underscores the role that case study research plays in theory development: “Theory developed from case study research is likely to have important strengths like novelty, testability, and empirical validity, which arise from the intimate linkage with empirical evidence.” As such, for higher educational leaders, particularly those without leadership based disciplinary interests; the case study approach enables them to learn from modules that are based on actual experiences. Leaders who are exposed to case studies can then employ the theories into the development of their own approaches.

Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college, also talked about how his institution encouraged him to attend a leadership training earlier on in his career and how much he benefited from that experience—so much so that he in turn later shared what he had learned with others.

When I was [an] associate dean […] I went to – the management development program – ….. ….. This one was aimed at people who were four or five years in a dean’s role at the associate level. Perfect summer for me. The college both recommended it and paid for it and gave me the paid time off to do it so that I was absolutely encouraged here. I also
participated in something called the American Council of Education’s chief academic officer’s forum – new chief academic officer’s forum which is a series of meetings through the first year as chief academic officer. And, that worked out so well that I went back and taught at it twice.

Samuel encourages all incoming leaders who are chairs of departments, for example, to attend workshops on leadership. Furthermore, he has found his experience to be so beneficial that he has chosen to give back to assist the development of future leaders through his teaching role at these sessions.

In contrast, Caroline, a president at a public university, had mixed feelings about the merits of leadership training. She broadly discussed the benefits and drawbacks of leadership trainings.

I went to the two-week thing at Harvard – the institute for educational management. I went to the one for provosts. Yeah. It’s all right. A lot of these programs are about the other people you meet and also for the Harvard program because you’re there for two weeks and you stay there and they say do not do your email – get completely away from your home job – that’s very valuable because even if all the classes aren’t great and the faculty aren’t great, it gives you a chance to reflect out of your regular environment. One of our deans just did the same program and he felt the same way I did about it, but he felt it was worthwhile because at least it spurred him to think about his own leadership because he was in this place away from the day-to-day hassles. So, some people get a lot out of that. Maybe, I just didn’t go to the right program..

Similarly, Isabella, a provost at a public university, also expressed dissatisfaction toward the merits of leadership training given her experiences. Isabella felt that on-the-job training was the only way to truly comprehend how to perform the duties of one’s position:

Yes, I have been to academic leadership programs. They’re a little frustrating. Not that they’re not valuable. But, because a lot of academic leaders haven’t had other careers, they tend to be geared towards people who haven’t ever led people or supervised anybody. So, they’re a little annoying because that’s stuff that I was taught [in a previous leadership career] […] So, they exist, they’re out there. What I haven’t really found, I haven’t really been to any of the sophisticated senior executive
programs. But, I have been in and around them. […] They are pretty formalized, pretty valuable, but it’s still a little unsatisfying cause you still got to figure this out. Somebody can tell you that you should talk this way or act this way, but until you try it and do it, you don’t own it. It’s not a classroom activity.

Broadly, my respondents who reported that they had benefitted from leadership trainings most often cited that the most constructive aspects of the leadership trainings were the case studies. Often, higher educational administrators who had lived through and navigated such experiences in addition to the network-building opportunities led the case study exercises. Other highlights for my respondents included the opportunity to network with other administrators in addition to their establishment of a clearer vision of the responsibilities of their leadership positions. On the other hand, respondents agreed that there is no substitute for on-the-job training. While hearing from another president, provost, or dean on how she or he resolved a crisis has its merits, firsthand undertakings are most instructive for leaders.

So far, I examined formal leadership training in a general sense; but given what research has already shown about gendering in organizations, what gender-specific training might be available? Indeed, there are a myriad of gender-specific leadership trainings that are now available for women. How do they address gendered leadership issues?

*Training for Women: Gender-Specific Leadership Training*

Gender-specific trainings have evolved from women’s historical absence from leadership positions in higher education and in all spheres as a result of systemic, gender-based marginalization. For example, Debebe (2009) studied women’s transformational learning through women-specific leadership development training for scientists and managers. While she found that post-training, such formalized leadership training was advantageous, the only
discernible reason for offering a separate venue for women was based on their historical absence from the field. While it is indisputable that women are underrepresented in many fields including STEM disciplines and administrative roles, it is also the case that gender, work, and organizations scholars (Bird 2011; Bystydzienski and Bird 2006; Mayberry 2004; Rosser and Lane 2002; Xie and Shauman, 2003) argue that women-centered approaches are inadequate. As such, systemic-wide training to address barriers for marginalized groups carries more merit (Bailyn and Fletcher 2007; Bird 2011; Connell 2006; Czarniawska 2008; Ely and Meyerson 2000).

Training women how to lead and how to advance in their careers without addressing the role that men, who have largely held the positions of power within most major institutions, play in this endeavor therefore seems fruitless. Women in the workplace still confront the “old boys’ network” (Wass and McNabb 2006) and still shelter the burden of domestic work and care work (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Litt and Zimmerman 2003). Given these gendered experiences, the greatest merit in women-centered trainings appears to come from the women-specific networks that women can create based on their interactions with other women who are confronting the “old boys’ network” and traditional gender roles.

In my research, some of my respondents who were women administrators reported that they seek out and welcome leadership trainings that are specific to their gender. In addition, some of the men administrators reported supporting junior women’s involvement in such trainings. On the other hand, other respondents reported their hesitancy toward such trainings. For example, Candace, a dean at a public university reported that she had attended a HERS Institute session much earlier in her career. When I asked her to talk about how helpful she found that experience to be, she stated:
Yes, it was [helpful]. It was an introduction to setting goals and to me that’s the first thing that was noticeable. And, when I left – when I was done being part of the program, I realized and (I was interim dean that year) – the first thing to figure out was what I wanted to accomplish that year. You don’t think about [matters like that] when you start ‘cause you figure, my goodness, I’ve never been dean, here I am being dean. And, okay, I’m here and what am I going to do? And, I’m going to accomplish something; I’m not going to just sit around’ and so I did, I did accomplish, I asked – it makes you ask your supervisor, what do you want to get done – which a lot of times you don’t think about a simple question – okay, what do you want to accomplish this year? And so, I asked! And, he said … we need to have two majors developed – do you think you can do one of those? I said, yeah I can do the individualized major so, I got that one done and it was something that has made a big impact since then because it allows students to combine you know material from two different disciplines for a career that happens to be interdisciplinary to begin with and many careers now are that way and it’s – you know, it’s grown since 95 when it was approved by the state.

I also asked Candace to clarify who was in attendance at the HERS Institute session that she attended:

There were women role models, there were some male you know facilitators and presenters, but they were primarily women involved because it is a women’s leadership program and the women and the participants are women.

For Candace, the positive takeaway from her women-specific leadership training was that she should begin her tenure as dean by asking her supervisor to discuss goals and pressing items for her to address in her position.

Gina, a dean at a public university also reported her positive experience in participating in a yearlong women-specific leadership training, that was not through the HERS Institute, and that did not specifically focus on educational leadership.

It was run by an organization […] they were basically former executives of all kinds of different companies so it could have been the electricity board or whatever a couple of them were in education but they were right across the piece and they set up this company which operates […] So, they were all CEOS at least of a company and they used their skills to train people to become leaders and so the particular course that I did
was for women and how to empower women in a leadership role. So, all the people taking the course were women and almost all the people giving us the advice or giving us the lectures were men. It was really interesting so there were probably two or three women, four or five guys who came in to do different things and there was I think eight of us or ten of us and it took the place, it took the format of discussion sessions, roundtable discussions, the odd lecture scenarios presented to us and then we had to kind of respond. But, the most interesting thing about it was that everybody, all the women in the room in very different jobs all had the same jobs and the problems invariably were around people and that was the big issue was particularly when you see and again I don’t find it so much here but I’m sure it exists here as well where you’d almost have men looking down on women and kind of feeling well you’re not as good as us and it was learning how to deal with that through a whole different pile of scenarios and we acted out different situations, etcetera.

Gina’s account reflects that she was exposed to case studies that provided strategies for approaching instances in which men looked down on women for being in leadership positions. She also described her reservations about the leadership program while it was in progress.

And so at the time I was kind of doing it and I felt this is all a bit of common sense and I am not sure that I’m learning a whole lot but actually just the fact of doing it and I would think it was the personal empowerment that it gave me that it was about you know you’re not alone in this, this is not something that you’re just not good at this is just another skill that you’ve got to learn how to deal with. It’s tough personally, these kind of people so it was very useful.

Overall, she found the training to be constructive given that it helped her to establish a network among other administrators across a variety of fields. As such, this training fostered a sense of community that helped her to realize the systemic nature of her experience as a women administrator that was not only specific to her.

Nadine, the president of a private liberal arts college also talked about the benefits from participating in gender-specific leadership programs and how these experiences have encouraged her to give back through service to future generations of women leaders:
ACE has a series of programs to encourage women to go into leadership roles and I found those particularly valuable. And, when you’re in the job, the job’s the same but I think it was the encouragement from women in particular to go into some of the higher education administrative roles that I found encouraging and in turn […] I network with younger women; I’m no longer at the point where I’m going to workshops to learn about that next stage but I do go to workshops to help if I can play a role on a panel or help other women in particular advance or mentor women. And, so it’s that kind of payback that always I think is very important. But, yeah, ACE, I’d strongly recommend their programs; they’re very supportive of women. They’ve got strong women they’re concerned that not enough women are going into higher education roles and so it’s a great organization.

Nadine’s reflection demonstrates the value of mentorship and encouragement from other women in the field who inspire junior leaders to aspire toward more substantial roles.

Corrine, a provost at a private university also reported having a positive experience at a women-centric leadership institute:

[One] that I’ve particularly found useful was the HERS Institute, which used to be run like a boot camp, like a five-week residential boot camp. But, it really helped me. It was structured so that there were units on the various facets of higher education administration. Finance, development and fundraising, faculty development, legal perspectives, student affairs kind of thing and that kind of helped me see for the first time beyond through the lens of my discipline, my faculty status, what the business of higher education is all about. And, I think that’s a really important part of professional development is figuring out what game am I playing? And, is this the game I want to play?

Corrine’s experience at the HERS Institute did not necessarily reflect any gender-specific training that she found that she benefited from. Overall, her assessment is based on the general understanding that she gained for her leadership role. Yet, Corinne did talk about her role in assisting women through leadership trainings in which she was a facilitator.

The training that I was doing and I have very little time to do anymore is very specific. And, it has to do with, I would suggest it’s interpersonal communication, but it’s physical, so it’s nonverbal […]. So, I talk to women a lot about inhabiting their physical realm and what that can do to help them actualize themselves in a work environment. Everything
from becoming aware of vocal patterns, becoming aware of physical habits; how you carry yourself and how that might be interpreted nonverbally particularly in a male-dominated executive world. How much space you occupy, where you sit in a room – all of those are signifiers of power and in executive situations you’re almost, somebody is always negotiating the power in the room, in the conversation. So, it’s just a different way for women to have some awareness about what may or may not work for them.

Corrine’s assessment parallels scholarship on gender socialization and social role theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Eagly and Johnson 1990; Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000) that I explained in Chapter 3. Based on this understanding, women leaders may be more communal, collaborative, and deferential given their socialization. In Chapter 3, I dismissed these perceptions of women’s leadership in higher education and noted vast similarities between women and men in terms of leadership style that is marked by shared governance and transparency. Here, it is noteworthy that Corinne notes this difference in women’s leadership by mentioning that women need to become aware of the messages that they have been socialized to send through their body language, for example. Corinne impacts women who are aspiring to hold executive leadership roles by reminding them that these social conventions are disadvantageous toward women’s advancement and that they must reshape their responses in order to receive the respect that they deserve.

All of the respondents, women and men, demonstrated an openness toward supporting leadership development through media that were suitable to others, whether it include books, trainings, on-the-job training, or networking among colleagues and peers. There was a common understanding that certain individuals benefit from learning through particular media. Yet, a leader who is supporting training for others through a workshop did not necessarily find such
training of use. Two male respondents specifically addressed their open support for women’s participation in HERS Institutes if they chose to go down that path.

For example, William, a dean at a public university talked about his support for department heads’ training in general and for the HERS Institute that is specific to women. He stated:

There’s something called the HERS Institute at Bryn Mawr which is for women who are interested in higher education leadership positions. I think we’ve probably sent somebody every year to that. But, there is no regular program; it’s all on individual initiative.

I asked William to explain the application process and the institutional support.

You apply and you need a letter of support and the institution has to promise to pay the tuition.

Similarly, Steven, a provost at a public university talked about his support for women to attend gender-specific trainings in addition to more generalized training for women and men.

We have many deans who’ve attended the Harvard leadership forum that’s held during the summer. We also sponsored women faculty members who aspire to become administrators through two different programs. One is called ELATE and that’s run through Drexel University and the other is called the HERS Institute out of Bryn Mawr. So, we are promoting more of our faculty members to pursue that route. But, in academia we also have the ACE Fellows Program. […] That’s a great program where through – it’s the American Council of Education and through that program aspiring administrators will be assigned to a senior administrator at another university. So, they get to work with that person and also see the day-to-day dealings. It’s a great learning experience. It’s sort of like be a provost for a day, but essentially it’s for a year.

William and Steven did not force training upon junior colleagues; yet, they did note its availability for those who were interested in pursuing this route of professional development.

Lisa, a dean at a private university reported that she confronted exceptional pressure to attend gender-specific leadership training and that she resisted attending this workshop.
Starting this summer, I’m going through a yearlong leadership program for just women that the provost has really encouraged me to go. It’s one-week trips, three times a year through the course of the year and it’s women only. And, actually, that’s something that I don’t like about it. I don’t want it to be just women.

Given that I had not encountered such a response from a woman leader, I probed further to find out why she had the aversion toward attending this program:

Because, I have a pretty good network of women. There have been groups of women getting together regularly in my discipline the whole time. So, maybe it’s leadership, maybe it’s bits and pieces that it’s – I feel like I’m going to meet the women anyway. And, I could always just pick up the phone in fact I am planning on picking up the phone and calling the provost at [name of nearby university] and seeing to meet. So, I’m going to meet them anyway and since the program I did here [a university leadership program for women and men at her present institution] was about the strongest thing was the cohort – the network you’re going to have moving away from it, I didn’t want my network to be just women. I wanted my network to be men and women. But, now that I’m going I’m going to make the most out of it.

Lisa mentioned that she talked to others about her distaste for participating in women-centered leadership training and how she did receive some valuable input that helped change her mind:

Now, in my grumbling path about [name of program] being just for women, I did talk with somebody who said – who did give me a couple valuable things for it to be just women. That, while I said I could go reach out to these people, she said you’re not going to because you don’t have the time. You have to make the time. So, here’s a way to make the time to do it.

She realized that while she may have every intention of networking in the midst of her demanding schedule, the likelihood of that happening is uncertain. Consequently, purposefully building time into her schedule to establish these networks then took on a different meaning for her.

SUMMARY
In this chapter, I have addressed the variety of learning pathways that administrators found to be most beneficial to their career growth. Through mentoring from senior administrators and peers at all stages of their careers, respondents reported that they benefitted from having a sounding board and a cheering section as they navigated their current and future careers. Respondents also indicated that by learning from others’ successes and failures, they equipped themselves to face similar challenges. They would sometimes reflect back on an instance of model leadership when confronted with seemingly insurmountable challenges. On the other hand, they reflected on the failings of inept leaders as motivation for how not to lead. Respondents adamantly spoke of the necessity of learning on-the-job and learning from one’s personal successes and failures.

Further, learning through leadership trainings proved to be an incredibly helpful avenue for respondents’ experiences in understanding their approaches to their responsibilities. For those respondents who directly experienced gender-specific leadership training for women, the most salient component of the sessions was the opportunities for networking. Such a finding warrants further inquiry into the construction of gender-specific trainings for women that may evolve into networking and community building exercises for women who confront the “old boys’ network” of executive administration.

Overall, these findings on women-specific leadership trainings shed light on the future foci of gender-specific leadership training. While the female respondents tended to acknowledge some benefit of gender-specific programming for women administrators, they also tended to express some discomfort with the idea that there still needed to be something gendered and separate. And they implied that the terminology of “women’s training sessions” that we use for these programs suggests that women and men should be trained separately and that men who are
not taking part in these women-centered trainings are already experts on what the women are learning in these settings. Such an implication promotes gender essentialism. What remains to be identified is what is to be gained, and what is lost, for both leaders and their institutions, in holding gender-specific training sessions, and, by contrast, more general, non-gender-specific sessions?

In Chapter 6, I further concentrate on the social construction of leadership as a gendered phenomenon and turn my attention to respondents’ personal experiences when they felt that their gender or someone else’s gender influenced her or his leadership.
Chapter 6

Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

Structural and interactional insights from gender, work, and organizations literature show how women have historically been placed in work situations in which they have faced institutional barriers to advancement (Acker 1990; 1992; Bird 2011; Britton 1997; 2000; Lorber 1984; Lovejoy and Stone 2012; Martin 2003; Morgan and Martin 2006; Ridgeway 1997; Walsh 2012; Williams 1992; 1995). The gendered work structure constrains workers’ dress, language, expressions, and actions to neatly fit into socially constructed masculine or feminine categories (Martin 2003) that suit the gender roles that women are traditionally expected to occupy (Butler 1990; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Eagly and Johnson 1990; Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000).

Just as there are tactics for approaching one’s place in a non-traditional role with respect to gender (Eagly and Carli 2007; Williams 1992; 1995), there are consequences for crossing boundaries, such as reprimands from superiors and peers, promotion freezes, and termination that delineate gender-suitable work behavior given these roles (Castro 2012; Hochschild 1983; Lorber 1994; 2000; 2005). Eagly and Karau 2002, Heilman and Okimoto 2007; Katila and Eriksson 2013; and Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Nauts 2012) confirm the negative consequences that result from women leaders’ practices that are not communal and suggest how women can diminish prejudice through altering their leadership styles. Eagly and Karau find that if women were to become more communal and taper their agentic qualities, “the existing female gender role would become more congruent with leader roles, and female leaders should experience decreased prejudice and increased acknowledgment of their effectiveness (Eagly and Karau 2002:591). Similarly, Brescoll (2011) and Brescoll and Uhlmann’s (2008) research
revealed that women who are exceptionally voluble or portray anger face damaging consequences that might subsequently upset their advancement.

Given these findings, what role does gender play in the narratives of women and men leaders in higher education? Furthermore, once women have attained positions of authority as deans, provosts, and presidents, do these same gendered barriers still haunt them as they might have throughout their ascendency toward these top administrative positions?

I asked my respondents if they could identify a time in their careers as administrators in which others responded to them less for being a president, dean, or provost and more because of their gender. I also probed for insights on their observations on the gendered treatment of others in administrative leadership posts, especially if the respondents indicated that they had never felt that their own gender identities had ever influenced their interactions with others. In some interviews, gender became more salient than in other interviews. Key themes that emerged from the interviews relate to the gendered work and family balance and traditional gender roles and gender and power.

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED GENDERED LEADERSHIP

Gender Roles

Socially constructed gender expectations imply women’s justification for their placement in a particular leadership role by comparing their organizational or oversight duties to traditional gender roles for women, including housekeeping or child rearing. Women are accountable for “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1983) via more nurturing and subservient workplace roles such as remembering birthdays and listening to associates’ personal problems (Kanter 1977; 1993; Martin 2003; Pierce 1995). While leaders are often accountable for at least minimal emotional
laboring and communality, this scholarship underscores gendered expectations that women confront. Furthermore, scholarship by Ollilainen and Calasanti (2007) suggests how metaphors pertaining to gendered family roles are sustained, often unconsciously, in self-managing teams with men and women workers. This finding parallels earlier research regarding the role that social role theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen 2003; Eagly and Johnson 1990; Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly, Wood, and Diekman 2000) plays in contributing to a gendered hierarchy within the workplace; this workplace hierarchy mimics interactions that we find in private, domestic spheres.

Three respondents spoke of specific examples in which they either experienced or witnessed differential treatment as a result of traditional understandings of women’s gender roles. Rachel, a provost at a public university offered a poignant example of a time in which she confronted backlash associated with traditional gender roles at a national conference. She noted the presence of gender inequality through assumed traditional gender roles. In this particular case, an older white man who was serving as provost at another institution made an assumption about Rachel’s contribution to a small discussion group.

We were in small groups and someone – we were told someone has to serve as a scribe. So, this older provost, male – looked at me and said, “Oh, well you can serve. You can take the notes, can’t you?” What was my response? A non-response. I continued to do primarily because what he thought and the others said – “why don’t you?” So, he then said – “well, you won’t be able to read my handwriting.” Well, how would he know that my handwriting would be legible? So, this is still very much entrenched and this guy was a much older provost.

Rachel expressed how this older white man assumed that she had legible handwriting because she is a woman. Yet, here we see how Rachel resisted this gender role to serve the group in this “housekeeping” capacity via note-taking services. Often, in a group situation, the note-taker
listens and is so consumed with diplomatically recording all contributions from a group that she or he is silenced from substantive involvement. Rachel made it clear that she was not about to take a backseat in this discussion setting based on gender assumptions.

On a related note, Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college noted an overall past work environment at another higher educational institution that was hostile and demeaning toward non-submissive women. Her experience being treated as an inferior with an expectation that she could easily be manipulated by the more senior administrators parallels gendered understandings that women will be submissive to men of authority. When I asked Cynthia if she had ever been treated differently because of her gender, she stated:

I felt like everyday. [It was a] very male place […] One of the reasons I left was because the then provost who I did not respect, called me into his office and shouted at me and threatened my job and asked me how I would behave differently in the future. You know, unbelievably belittling. Yeah, I’m not going to stay in a place like that.

Cynthia’s experience depicts how a clash of gendered understandings of how women ought to behave can conflict with a patriarchal social construction that mandates women’s subservience. Similarly, Marcus, the provost at a public university noted that he had observed others’ disparaging comments at his previous institution where there is a woman president. In this context, stakeholders disagreed with the president’s decisions by comparing her role to that of a queen.

There still were those who when they disagreed with her or they didn’t like her approach, they would be derogatory of female things. Like, they would say she’s being a queen, things like that. And, I remember when I heard those comments, I thought well, she’s the leader, she’s supposed to be the one who’s making the [decision] – you may not like it.

Furthermore, Paul, a president at a private liberal arts college also noticed gendered
differences, rooted in traditional understandings of gender roles, among the way in which his peers talked about the incoming woman president’s inability to attend a meeting.

She was not able to come to some meeting for something and I remember somebody saying well, she’s a mom, she’s got a lot of stuff to deal with. And, I remember saying it doesn’t have anything to do with it. She’s going to be the president; she’s going to have to deal with it. That isn’t why she’s not here today but nobody’s going to cut her a break because she’s a mom. She’s a president first in this job.

Paul also commented on perceived challenges that he felt that women leaders in higher education have with regard to matters concerning athletics:

I know for instance a colleague at an elite university who is dealing with an athletic issue and in the end she just didn’t do it because she didn’t have the same credibility that a man would have. If she were to take a hard line on athletics, it would be a war because who is she to do it, she doesn’t even understand it because she’s a woman and that may play itself out in certain kinds of issues where women are seen or have greater challenges because the gender issue is seen to be important.

Taken together, the observations offered by Rachel, Cynthia, Marcus, and Paul indicate a pattern of underlying gender role perceptions and expectations of women in the workplace that mirror socially constructed gender roles.

The Work and Family Balance

I did not explicitly ask about respondents’ management of work and family nor did I probe about family matters. Yet, this theme that gender scholars (Acker 1990; 1992; Cha 2013; Damaske 2011; Gerson 2010; Hochschild 1997; Kelly, Ammons, Chemack and Moen 2010; Macdonald 2010; Williams 2010) have identified as prominent with regard to gendered workplace experiences became apparent in my data analysis. Serving as a dean, provost, or president often warrants round-the-clock availability to respond to crises and to attend to the high
volume of work. Daytimes may be reserved for committee meetings, fundraising matters, and individual personnel meetings. As such, respondents reported a blurring of the boundary between work time and family time that required an ongoing balancing act.

Women, much more often than men, talked about managing familial responsibilities in addition to their professional responsibilities. Yet, men also recognized strategies for managing their work and family lives. While women and men both expressed these challenges, women respondents identified more significant challenges as they managed their personal and public personae. And while none of my respondents spoke of not having children or partners as a way of limiting the strains of managing a work and family balance, some of my women respondents did speak of the convenience of delaying leadership to a time when their children were grown. This finding parallels earlier scholarship that finds that women in academic medicine leadership do not advance as men do given their disproportionate shouldering of family obligations (Yedidia and Bickel 2001). Furthermore, scholarship also confirms that women who do not have children will statistically have higher salaries (Cheung and Halpern 2010; Dye 2005; Hewlett 2002). As such, it makes sense that while some of my women respondents addressed the challenges of the work and family balance, they also noted that having older children who did not require as much of their attention made for an easier decision to take on a leadership role. Notably, none of my men respondents made this observation.

Both Joanne, a provost at a private liberal arts college who was hesitant to take on a key leadership role given that she had a young child at home,22 and Anna, a provost at a public university talked about the “right time” for a leadership position when one is on an academic career track that offers flexible work hours. Anna noted her leadership pathway:

I had been asked to come into a vice provost role a couple of times, but I

22 See Chapter 3.
was struck between the need to be a good mother and to put my kids’ needs ahead of my own and my own love for my research.

Yet, years later when the position was available again, Anna had even more experience at that point, her children were older, and an administrative position felt more manageable for her. Anna reported that she works about 12 hours a day and that she always works on Sunday evenings. Anna did not perceive that she could have been as committed to this position earlier on in her career even with the help of her husband who also has a demanding career. For Anna, waiting until her children were older was key to establishing more flexibility toward taking a leadership role. Anna did not address whether or not her husband made similar compromises when the kids were small with regard to his work responsibilities. Corinne, the provost at a private university, also acknowledged that, in particular for women, it is much easier to serve in such a time-consuming leadership role once one’s children’s are grown.

I am and I think most women, particularly, in a position like this have to be total workaholics and I think I made a conscious decision that this would be a priority. I also made some decisions, as my children grew older that I can then assume larger and more demanding roles.

Here, Corinne draws a gendered distinction. Women, who are of an advanced age without school age children, for example, may have more flexibility to take on leadership roles than younger women with younger children.

Rachel, the provost at a public university also acknowledged how it is much easier to manage work and family responsibilities once children are either adults or at an age of substantial maturity. She stated:

my son’s now an adult, so I’m not at that point in my career in my life – my personal life where that becomes – a really important issue that impacts what I do.

Rachel did acknowledge that a way for women (and I would argue that this applies to men as
well) to overcome situations in which they cannot be on time to a meeting as a result of family matters is simply by being productive.

   When, I arrive late – I have to give credit to my colleagues who are all males – not a one makes a comment. But, generally, that’s due to my diligence in getting there and establishing a record of getting there early. And, that’s also because I’m aware of these kinds of existing nonsensical kinds of attitudes. But, it is – and individuals will say – it shouldn’t happen but it is a part of the world we live in. And, the only way to respond to that again is simply by being productive.

   Leaders also face situations in which being productive is simply not going to resolve a work and family balance issue. Furthermore, familial responsibilities, of course, do not necessarily end when one’s children are older. In Chapter 3, I recounted Sabrina’s graduation dilemma given that her daughter’s medical school graduation was scheduled for the exact same day as the first graduation that she would host, as president, at her present institution. Ultimately, Sabrina decided to choose family first and did not miss the opportunity to witness her daughter’s milestone. I asked Sabrina if she felt that men face the same sort of challenge with regard to putting their job first over family matters. Sabrina addressed what she perceives to be differences between women and men leaders and their approaches to the work and family balance:

   I think men face it, but I do think that they put their job first. I think there are men – there’s always the exception – who would have done what I did. But, I would love to ask in a questionnaire, how many men would have done what I did. Cause I think, well the woman [a friend of hers who chose to skip her daughter’s undergraduate commencement because of a work commitment] that I told you about at lunch, didn’t do it. She just, she said she was terrified of losing her job by not going to commencement for her daughter. So, I think that females are more likely to you know, to say this is a family issue; my family comes first.

   While Sabrina’s friend clearly did not put her family first and prioritized her job, Sabrina feels that more women than men are likely to put their foot down when their jobs require that they brush aside key family events. As such, given that women are
commonly held to communal standards and are understood to be more socially responsible for keeping families functioning, they may confront the expectation that putting family first is not a novel idea. Had Sabrina not done what she did, individuals within the community may have even seen her as too business-minded, or overly agentic (See Eagly and Carli 2007).

Women respondents, in particular, noted that leadership trainings for women offered a forum for discussing the challenges that women are more predisposed to confront given societal views on disproportionate women’s roles in contributing to “second shift” labor (Hochschild 1989).23 Caroline, a president at a public university, addressed the importance of gender-specific leadership trainings for women given that they provide the opportunity for women to talk about how they manage work and family.

I think it’s great to have it be all women because we do have specific problems related to life cycle and children and all that stuff.

Joanne, a provost at a private liberal arts college echoed Caroline’s thoughts with regard to the importance of women mentors in leadership roles given that women confront different issues than men confront based on socially constructed understandings of women’s share of household labor. Caroline noted:

Both as an undergraduate and as a graduate student probably here on the faculty I would say that I probably was mentored more by female faculty than male faculty. And that also influenced discussions about life outside the college too – you know, insights about work-life balance and so forth. So, we certainly – one of the things we used to do at [name of present college] was pair female faculty assistant professors with tenured faculty and so I think that was part of the culture here for a while.

23 In Chapter 5, I described leadership trainings and higher educational leadership.
While women respondents spoke explicitly of exceptional challenges that they faced as a result of managing their demanding work responsibilities in addition to family responsibilities, men respondents acknowledged the work and family balance more abstractly: the challenge did not impact them to such an extent that they ever thought of putting off a promotion for the sake of their family’s well being. Paul, a president at a private liberal arts college talked about his family commitment when he recounted his typical workday.

I tend to get up very early in the morning and exercise because if I don’t do it then, it isn’t happening. And then I spend a fair amount of time at home. I have breakfast with my family and I do emails and that kind of thing to get that stuff done. Then, I’m in the office typically between 8:30 and 9 mostly doing meetings if I’m not traveling. All day and then I typically get home by early evening and work until after dinner with my family. If I’m around then I work at my desk at home. It’s a long job. I would say probably a third of my time I’m away doing something.

Christopher, a president of a private university acknowledged that his wife’s choice to commit to being a stay-at-home mother, even when she had a promising career ahead of her after graduate school, has contributed to his ability to have such a time-consuming leadership role.

…she chose, when we had kids, to stay home and sometimes she struggles with that a little bit, some of her friends don’t sort of respect that decision the way – I guess they don’t appreciate that she made it in freedom. You know. I certainly encouraged her to do whatever she wanted to do if she wanted to stay home; we’ll make that work on one income. If she wants to work, we’ll make that work somehow. Whatever she wanted and she was the one who said – I think that we’ve succeeded when women can make that choice as I said sort of in total freedom and they won’t feel insignificant if they stay home or if they work or whatever. We’re not quite there yet but hopefully, we’re making progress. She elected to do that. Fortunately, we could afford to do that and you know I guess the big question is maybe I should have thought about staying home at some point and she could have. And, I think if I had done that, I would have been doing it to prove a point, not because it’s what I wanted to do. So, let’s get to a point where people do what they want to do not what they feel society allows them to do or forces them to do. So, maybe there’s a corollary there somehow.

Christopher’s thoughts are insightful because he acknowledges that his success as an
administrator is largely due to his wife’s promise to keep household affairs in order while he was off doing his job. As such, Christopher did not have added stress associated with the work and family balance that other administrators with children may have felt if their partners also worked. Furthermore, he recognized the gendered imbalance here in which it is more common for women to forgo their professional careers, to take care of family matters, than it is for men to do the same.

Frederick expressed how he sensed a gendered imbalance with regard to work and family obligations when he picked up his children from daycare while his wife was at her part-time job.

I’d show up at this very kind of enclosed [space] and I’d be one of two men there amongst thirty or forty women waiting for their kids and how uncomfortable that was and how I felt they made me feel uncomfortable like you’re in our space, what are you doing here? Go get a job. Why aren’t you at work? And, from that experience, I realized what women must feel like in many of these situations where they come into the room and they’re counting. They’re saying there are two women in here and there are eight guys; this is going to be bad news.

While Frederick addressed his experience with a gendered assumption that it was a woman’s job to pickup children from daycare, Douglas, a president at a public university, acknowledged that he has benefited from living alone for the majority of the academic year. Douglas addressed the career benefits associated with his long-distance relationship with his wife, who is a faculty member elsewhere. This structure has given him even more flexibility as a president to be present at even more meetings and events than his job entails.

We are used to this lifestyle but it’s really helped me in the presidency because during the week, when – how many basketball games can I watch on ESPN? So, I’m really available to go to student events or be on campus and so forth.

For Douglas, having a commuter relationship with his wife during the academic school year has been an advantage to his career development. As such, he recognizes how he has benefited from
living alone the majority of the time. He and his wife both have more time to devote to their professional pursuits when they are not together.24

Frederick, Douglas, Paul, and Christopher each talked about family-related matters in relation to the work and family balance and the way in which their individual families chose to manage it. Women and men leaders drew a connection between their work and family balance and the factors that alleviated the burden. Women reported negotiating for closer living arrangements as I noted in Chapter 3 with Joanne’s experience, postponing leadership, and prioritizing family over work. Men expressed gratitude toward their supportive wives, contributed when possible and convenient, and noted how a separate living arrangement could create an ideal professional environment. Christopher indicated that he and his now stay-at-home wife had discussed her career given that she had job prospects and potential given her graduate degree. While they had decided that they would make a dual earner family work if his wife chose to work, she opted to stay home. Christopher realized that the notion of him staying home and not pursuing a professional career was never a realistic option for him:

I guess the big question is maybe I should have thought about staying home at some point and she [my wife] could have. And, I think if I had done that, I would have been doing it to prove a point, not because it’s what I wanted to do. So, let’s get to a point where people do what they want to do not what they feel society allows them to do or forces them to do. So, maybe there’s a corollary there somehow.

Christopher acknowledged that societal expectations of suitable work for men kept him from ever seriously considering life as a stay-at-home father. As such, while women were more likely to make life-changing decisions based on the needs of their families, men were also quite aware of the implications that their roles had for their families.

24 Douglas did not indicate that he and his wife have children. If they do, it is likely that they are adults now since he did not mention them and how he and his wife juggle having children and a commuter marriage.
Gender and Power

Analysis of my respondents’ insights reveals the salient relationship between gender and power. This gendered dynamic became apparent through a questioning of authority, “power trips,” sexual harassment, and other gender-based advantages.

Questioning of authority

At work, we find that women are often held to different socially constructed standards than men; these differential standards often prevent women from rising to leadership positions. Women face a “double bind” (Lakoff 1975) that poses a Catch-22 situation: women leaders who act in ways that are not socially expected of women and who do not take the emotions of others into account in their decisions may be labeled as “bitches;” women who are overly empathetic in their decision-making may be viewed as “pushovers.” In contrast, men who exhibit similar traits are more likely to be defined in more positive terms such as “decisive” and “considerate” leaders (Jamieson 1995; Pini 2005; Shaw and Hoeber 2003). This circumstance is limiting and disruptive for women at all levels of an employment hierarchy who face “gender trials” for transgressing gender norms (Pierce 1995). These transgressions, in addition to other structural factors, may impose impediments to women’s advancement. Women who are in positions of authority challenge historical traditions of patriarchy where men are responsible for institutional changes. Yet, my data analysis does not confirm that women disproportionately felt that institutional stakeholders questioned their authority. Both women and men reported numerous accounts in which others had challenged their responses to university matters. While it is difficult to know whether or not a gendered framework is responsible for any of the challenges to authority, it is clear that both women and men higher educational leaders confronted intense scrutiny for their
executive decisions.

Sabrina, the president of a public university noted that people often questioned her authority. Her particular institution has an established culture of shared governance and openness in decision-making processes. Yet, Sabrina did speak of how she manages particular instances in which she feels as though she needs to command respect when others query her responses.

Yes, [laughs]. … people question my authority all the time. Some people do it gently and some people do it more forcefully. And, sometimes I have to really – you know, make a decision. I mean, think it through, make a decision and stick to my guns. No matter what people are questioning my authority. If I feel that I am doing the right thing for [name of institution] and for the students then I stick to my guns no matter who questions my authority. But, yes it’s questioned all the time because people, people believe sometimes that you shouldn’t be making that decision, that you should be sharing the decision making. And, there are some cases where it’s not to be shared, it’s a presidential matter and a president decides. But, it’s hard to communicate that, gently.

I probed further for Sabrina to provide an example of a time in which she sensed such intense skepticism:

The best example I can give you now that just came to mind was when I changed the schedule. The faculty had grouped their courses on certain days and certain hours. So, students had these conflicts because if you took one course at that time block, it blocked you from taking other courses because of the way they were creating their own times, the faculty. Instead of saying we offer classes at 8, 11, 2 and 4, and let’s say 7 o’clock at night, they would say 3:15 – you know, 1:20. They wanted to offer them any time they wanted. So, we cleaned that all up and said “these are the blocks of times” and a department, like sociology has to offer their courses sprinkled out all those times, and all these slots. You can’t just offer them – only every evening because your faculty wants the day to you know, the day time off, or vice versa. You know, they don’t want to teach at night, cause they just. And um, there were faculty members who said, “no that’s a faculty governance issue.” I said, “no, that’s a resource allocation issue because scheduling is about money.” If the students can’t graduate, then they spend more time here. If I have to add more courses cause you’re grouping them all in the wrong places or places where it compromises the schedule, then that costs me money. And so then we had a lot of discussions. I asked the faculty to participate in creating a new schedule and they did. I thought that was appropriate,
they gave me their best advice. We adopted what the faculty committee said. But, the issue of whether I could change the schedule was an issue that was debated about my authority.

Here, Sabrina demonstrated how she held on to the reins of her presidential authority while faced with heated faculty disapproval. She reminded faculty of her responsibility for budgetary matters and her overall concern with graduation rates that superseded faculty interests in course timing. By defending and explaining her position, she held onto her influence.

Sabrina, a provost at a private university, noted similar faculty disapproval with regard to budgetary and curriculum changes that she had proposed. Here, Corinne notes how she has learned to address such contention:

I think some of it is learning and I think this takes awhile, it took me awhile and I talked to different people about it, is beginning to find that you can compartmentalize that while this may feel very personal, it really isn’t. It’s about somebody else being angry because they feel their program is being devalued in your eyes and to sort of separate that professional and personal piece. So, you know, a lot of times you get the comment or somebody decides that it’s their time to get on the bully pulpit. You’re standing in front of the faculty senate and there’s nowhere to go. You have to stand there and take it. It’s just to try to be kind of neutral and to sort of listen as respectfully as possible and then take a pause and again not to respond quickly and to know that your buttons can be pushed. But, then to try to be as respectful as you possibly can in a response. Even if the response is – “I’m sorry we have to, respectfully, I just can’t agree with you.”

In this instance, Corinne held to her conviction by doing what she felt was best for the university. She listened to dissatisfactions with the proposed changes; however, her need to act in what she deemed to be the best interest of the university superseded her ability to respect the opposing position.

Eugene, a dean at a public university also spoke of instances in which faculty had questioned his authority:
Oh yes, it happens many times. There are instances when it is very severe and it is nasty to some extent and there are cases when people say, “I don’t agree with you. I don’t accept it, but I take it.” […] Mild instances here – in this place – but, severe cases at least in two other places – severe cases. And, one of the cases was another male who just – you know – I don’t want to make a judgment whether I was right or this person was right – but, just had this habit of not wanting to basically be cooperative and cooperate and then I was also challenged and not dealt with professional courtesy and respect needed when I was dean actually by a female faculty who had grievances […] I had a couple working in the same department, in the same field. And, in that system – we had these merit pay increases. It was a little amount of money; it wasn’t huge. But, in order to be objective, my staff and other deans – we came up with a formula. We said, we can’t be subjective, we can’t say, I like this person – I don’t like. Let’s do the formula and put everything in there and then based on that – we’ll say – you get $500, you get a thousand, you get 200 and the amount of money to be divided wasn’t huge, it was very small. And, it happened that somehow the score of the husband was higher and got a couple of hundred dollars more than the wife. And, the wife was upset and took it as a gender bias and also was very angry because she had completed her doctoral degree before her husband and she was instrumental in helping him to finish the doctoral degree and also get a job where they were working and she never forgave me for that. And, even after years- the husband came – the husband also reacted the same way. The day I left the place, he came to me and he apologized because he said, “I’m sorry, you know, I never thought you were this kind of person.” Because I never reacted, I never penalized. […] I provided resources regardless of this. But, the wife never forgave me. And, years later I went to visit my colleagues, I was passing through and I stopped – I stayed one night. I went to the school and everyone was there, it was an occasion. And, this person went out of her way to make sure that I am not respected, I am not even welcome. Almost like why are you here? It was like that [laughs]. Yeah, it happens.

Eugene’s experience is similar to Sabrina’s experience. He remained calm and confident in his decision to implement a transparent and objective policy. Eugene dealt with intense disapproval that subsequently lingered for years.

Similar to Eugene, Jake reported that faculty had questioned his authority to such an extent that he had to overtake a hiring matter. Jake was forced to intervene and say that if the
department did not make the hire, he would do it himself:

This year the [discipline name] department asked for a visitor, we gave them a visitor – we said, it’s going to be on a 3/2 schedule and they then decided not to hire that visitor. And, I had to tell them, “Look, the students need those classes. If you don’t hire the visitor, I’m going to hire the visitor.” And, actually this week they are reconsidering the policy – but, we’ll see.

Jake acted in the best interest of the students and the university in making his decision and he stood his ground in the face of this disapproval. For Jake, there simply was no alternative to making this hire. There was a particular need for faculty instruction and no reasoning with the faculty would have proven otherwise.

Yet, Steven, the provost of a public university indicated that when others question his authority, he sees it as an opportunity for dialogue and for further examination of his motivations for coming to such a decision:

Well, they [the stakeholders] would question for example why we make certain decisions and many times I feel that they have every right to ask. We are a public university that needs to be transparent but they may not understand the full scope, the entire story. So, I do share the reasons, the constraints and the thought process that resulted in my making the decision. Now, at the end of that process my reasoning could have been flawed or my assumptions could have been flawed and if there’s a better way, I’ll go back and revisit it. So, I know that some leaders once they lay down their mandate, they need to or they feel the need to maintain their reputation as being decisive so that they do not like to reverse their decision. But, for me, if there’s a better way to arrive at a solution, we’ll get there.

Steven’s reaction to this disapproval demonstrates his openness toward process-based decision-making. Sometimes, decisions may seem exceptionally obvious for leaders as in Sabrina, Corinne, Eugene, and Jake’s experiences. Yet, other times when formulating new policies, it is advisable to reflect on a decision before implementing a policy with significant opposition. Furthermore, it is important to implement a level of transparency in decision-making
to temper the questioning of authority. I noted the relevance of transparency and not portraying egotistical behavior in Chapter 4 when I presented how Gina, a dean at a public university had undergone intense scrutiny for budgetary matters. Instead of getting upset by this questioning of her authority, Gina opened the books so that others could see the allocations that she had approved for a project.

Similarly, Marcus, the provost at a public university talked about how he has learned to deal with others questioning his authority through openness and respect for his peers.

I would describe it [the questioning of authority] on a couple of levels. One is the kind of discussion that happens in a private office environment. Anyone is free to disagree about whatever they want to disagree about on a certain policy or guideline. But, in order for an institution to have integrity and consistency, once that discussion is done and either the president or myself has made a recommendation, then that’s what it has to be. So, if that person leaves my office and then goes around campus saying well, I tried to convince the provost, but he just wouldn’t agree and then they’re really angry and then they go around trying to undermine the discussion, that does damage, so you end up going backwards. So, that has happened a couple of times and I am very open and transparent with people and so I’ll bring them back in and say why did I hear that you were saying that I made the wrong decision? And, I just lay it out there and if they’re honest about it, they’ll say, well, you’re right, maybe, I shouldn’t have said that. And, I explain that we have to work together as a team and if you go out there and try to undermine it, it’s not going to help us.

Emily, the provost at a public university mirrored Steven and Marcus’ experiences when others have questioned their authority. Emily described how she has developed an appreciation for transparency; she welcomes the dialogue that ensues from disapproval:

I’m willing to share authority and power as much as possible. I think if I give somebody else the right to make a decision that doesn’t mean that I have less power or less authority. I think in most cases it just means that I realize that that person is going to do something better or make a better decision and should have the right to do so. So, I don’t have a problem with that. So, I would say it’s often questioned but you know, it’s not in a way that’s ever been a problem, I don’t think. And, sometimes I will
just say to people, that’s my job and I’m the one to make the decision and that’s the decision that I made and I’ll live with the consequences. If it’s a bad decision, I’ll accept the consequences.

Nadine, the president of a private liberal arts college noted that she also faces others who question her authority on a regular basis and expressed how she handles such situations with a respect for others’ opinions:

And, it’s kind of one of those things where authority; you have anyone in an administrative role, you do know what your authority is and there are rules and regulations that people follow and so if you violate some type of rule, sexual harassment, something like that – there’s no flexibility. This is the way it works and this is it. On the other hand, I think leaders – they do have authority. But, by and large, more gets by if you have the trust and the good will of a community. And so, sometimes people just don’t want to move in a direction and if it’s not illegal or unethical, it’s hard to tell people to do something. But, instead it’s trying to help people understand and again, colleges have a lot of smart people, it’s good.

Having stakeholder buy-in on a decision, when possible, is particularly important for the future of the university. Of course, everyone is not going to agree on every single decision that an administrator makes; however, an institution will function much more smoothly if stakeholders feel that their opinions are valued and that they are not blindly following authority. Ronald, a president of a public university talked about the importance of having buy-in from his direct reports and his belief that wielding his authority to tell someone how to solve a problem was not a viable way of approaching his work. As such, he welcomed a questioning of his authority given that it meant that the person implementing a policy believed in the problem-solving process:

What I value in people that report to me, leaders but in my relationship with them is – and I tell them all this on numerous occasions, I say look – you need to be – you won’t be comfortable in this job if you’re not comfortable with me asking you a bunch of questions. When we’re done – 99.99% of the time we’re going to do it your way. But, you have to be
okay with me going wait a minute. Why on earth do you think we should do this? To me, that seems crazy. Tell me; give me two reasons why we should do X instead of Y. And I said, even if you don’t convince me. As long as you believe in it and you got a decent idea. We’re going to do it your way, even if I don’t think it’s the best way. Why? Because you will do better with a bad idea that you believe in than with my good idea that you hate.

Heavy-handed responses in which an administrator responds to others’ questioning with ultimatums that do not allow for open dialogue are uncharacteristic of university leadership. Women and men as leaders confront challenges to their decisions and I did not identify any gendered differences in how they chose to deal with that contention. Furthermore, I did not get an overwhelming sense that respondents felt that women leaders faced more challenges than men leaders did. For example, Caroline, a president at a public university did acknowledge that she had faced more questioning prior to becoming president that may have been rooted in gendered understandings of women’s capabilities as leaders. When I asked Caroline if anyone had ever questioned her presidential authority, she noted:

Nobody, I mean that’s one of the only truly great things about being a president is no one questions your authority. Now, that’s not true for every other job I’ve had where even if it’s the area where you do have authority, people question you. Women probably get that more than men do but yeah – when you’re finally the president that finally stops. I mean – they may hate your decision, they may think you’re an idiot, but they don’t question your authority. When you’re the provost, when you’re the dean, when you’re the chair, people are always questioning your authority. They are always trying to go over your head. Like for me, there’s nobody to go over my head to. They can go to the – people tend not to go to the board of trustees most places because I think they know that the trustees work with the president. The president is basically on the board so the buck does stop here. Yeah, and people know it.

For Caroline, she credits the questioning of authority more to her positional standing than she equates it to her gender.
While I did not specifically intend to make age a factor in my analysis, I found that age and the amount of time that respondents had held a position was a salient factor to managing questions of authority. Anna, a provost at a public university and Douglas, a president at a public university had reported that earlier on in their career they had faced more questioning. Furthermore, Christopher, a fairly new president of a private university of just about a year reported recent power struggles over a particular budget and faculty compensation issue. As such, age, experience or tenure on the job, and the hierarchal level of a leader’s position may contribute more to the likelihood of having one’s authority questioned in a higher educational leadership role than gender (I will further consider the relationship between age and influence and its relationship to diminishing gendered responses to power later in this chapter). How do women and men exercise their power as administrators? Are women and men equally as likely to abuse their power through arrogant displays of authority?

*Women, men, and “power trips”*

When I asked respondents to consider examples of ineffective leadership, it was common for them to recount witnessing leaders who had demonstrated extreme manifestations of their authority. My respondents reported that both women and men were capable of engaging in such “power trips” in which they visibly displayed their command over others. Yet, it was interesting to find that in instances when respondents reported that women had illustrated these behaviors, it was often equated to gender and a woman’s need to prove her worth in a male-dominated environment. On the other hand, when respondents reported that men had shown such outward and domineering behavior, gender was not a variable. Ronald, the president of a public university talked about his observations of women in administrative roles that exhibited outward
authoritarian actions:

… not that there aren’t men with these traits. But, I think they may be a bit more common in women. I’ve known women who really were very retiring type individuals and they know it and so their response is to act extra tough and start tipping over tables to show people who’s the boss. It doesn’t work. It aggravates people; it irritates people. But they feel like if they don’t do that as a woman, at least I think – I mean, I’m not a woman so I don’t. But, I think that they feel like well people won’t take me seriously. People won’t – if it was a guy – oh yeah, he could do this […] But, as a woman, if I don’t show them that by God, I’ll get right in your face if I have to – and they’re a little more reticent to just kind of let the game come to them a little bit and take it a little bit easy and say, “Hey, I’m a nice person,” which is really more important to people, I think then – as long as you’re competent – I think being a nice person is probably more important.

Ronald finds that it is more important for women and men to be amenable as leaders than it is to outwardly demonstrate authority.

Bradford, a dean at a private university addressed differences in women and men’s leadership with regard to observations that he has had regarding some women’s assertiveness in their positions. Bradford equates this “pushiness” to an inherited male model of leadership that is currently an outdated and ineffective mode of leading in academia.

I work with an associate dean who’s a woman … my provost is a woman. My last provost was a woman. And in those cases, I can’t really psychoanalyze the present provost at all. I don’t know where her style comes from. But, the other two are in what you might consider, you can help me with this, you might consider this “old school.” But, their position is, it doesn’t matter whether you’re a woman or not, just lead and get it done and I see that as somewhat “old school.”

He continued to describe common scenarios involving these women and their leadership style:

It’s like they’re putting blinders on to the gender aspect. They are successful, but I don’t know why. Sometimes I think they can be a little bit, logic tells me that this is the answer, therefore, I will do it. And, whereas, it’s kind of a paradox. I have a male associate dean that will go, [Bradford] this will make 8 people angry, here are their names. So, the
woman is the one going – just push it through – and I think that that may be a sense of having affiliated to male models of leadership early on.

Similarly, Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college talked about a previous president who had overextended her authority and who chose to use her power in circumstances when her influence was not warranted. Samuel discussed her overreach in addition to her inappropriate behavior that comes off as “pushy” and “gratuitous:”

Her biggest problem was – and it really stopped the college and it stopped her was overreaching. She was a person given to seeing – I’ll use a different metaphor – she’s leading, we’re following – and she has walked so far ahead of us that no one can see her anymore. So, you can’t follow her. In fact, if you knew where she was going, you might not want to follow her because it’s pretty treacherous where she’s headed. So, I think overreach was one piece. [Name of president] was a person who treated on her own gender in some pretty odd ways. So, she would flirt with male students in certain ways to try to get them to do things – not an individual student – but, she’d get in front of the student government association and you would be almost ashamed to see the way she would behave and then realize that what she was doing was trying to get the guys to behave in a certain way. I saw her once walk up to a young student who was smoking and she walked up and she said you know “smoking will keep you from getting erections.” This was the president of the college.

While Jake, the provost at a private university did not specifically comment on an example of a leader who had demonstrated an overtly harsh demonstration of authority, he did acknowledge that in his dominant gender role, his experience as provost is much different from a woman’s experience as provost. As such, one can infer that a “power trip” would be less likely in such a circumstance given that he already has the respect of the community. He does not have to prove himself as worthy of community respect. When I asked if he could recall a situation in which he felt that he was treated less for being a provost and more because of his gender, he stated:
So this is really a question – it seems to be more for women than for men. At some time that I cease to become provost because I was just a woman. I mean – because I’m already the dominant gender, I don’t really have that problem too much. No one ever says to me – because you’re a man, I’m not going to pay any attention to you being the provost. I mean they pay attention to me for both reasons, unfortunately.

In Chapter 3, I noted that Jake referred to his leadership style as more maternal and found that this is more suitable to an academic environment where hierarchies with little room for open discussion are disadvantageous. As such, based on this observation, one might argue that it may be easier for a man to exhibit a maternal style of leadership given that he has a strong foundation of support, based on his dominant gender, from the onset (and for that to be seen as an asset rather than unprofessional).

It was not as common to find that my women respondents equated gender with power when it came to women or men leaders; however, Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college and Lisa, a dean at a private university each spoke of instances in which they felt as though men who were their superiors wielded their authority over them. I spoke about Cynthia’s interactions with her provost, who was a man, earlier in this chapter. Lisa spoke about an earlier time in her career when, as the first tenure-track woman in the department, she confronted an overwhelming power battle with more senior departmental colleagues:

I was doing things differently. So, I could have been a man in the department doing things differently. And, it would be okay. But, what I was doing differently, it wasn’t safe. They didn’t see it as the safe path. So, each of the things I’ve done has been unconventional. And, didn’t recognize it as being either really challenging, to reward it or would try to pull me back and say you’re doing the wrong thing, you need to do that thing. So, I think between that and senior faculty in the department who used power in an inappropriate way. There were just inequities all over the place.

Cynthia and Lisa’s experiences demonstrate observations of men’s power trips.
Caroline’s commentary with regard to unequal judgment of women’s leadership captures the inequality that women may confront with regard to their decisions. I do not wish to imply that women cannot be pushier than men can be for reasons beyond gendered understandings; however, I believe that Caroline’s observation depicts women’s challenges in expressing their influence, especially earlier on in their careers:

I’ve sometimes talked to women’s groups and ACE leadership workshops and women and I’ve told all of them – if you want to go into leadership, people will call you a bitch – they are calling you a bitch right now. Any time you make a hard decision – they are saying – and you’ve got to be comfortable with that. I mean, you’ve got to think – people out there are calling me a bitch and I don’t care. That’s a big thing because women – we do. I used to have meetings sometimes where I gave people – you know I was mad and then later I was like – was I too harsh? And, so you get a – you know, I don’t do it a lot anymore – and then you stop doing it, but, you’re doing it for a long time. And, you have got to let go of that. But, people are calling you a bitch or worse behind your back if you’re a strong leader, if you’re making decisions. And, you’ve got to be comfortable with that. And, if that gets back to you and it’s going to hurt your feelings, you probably shouldn’t be in it – at least in this time. Maybe, twenty years from now or thirty years from now – it will be degendered.

Caroline’s insights mirror the Catch-22 dynamic that women face for making decisions that may appear to be too harsh (Jamieson 1995; Pini 2005; Shaw and Hoeber 2003). Women and men are equally capable of misusing their power in such a way that we would call these misappropriations, or “power trips.” Yet, it is important to note that given the relative novelty of women’s leadership in our society, women’s power trips may sometimes be characterized through a lens that is not accustomed to seeing women in these positions. Furthermore, in some cases, women may resort to extreme manifestations of power because of a long history of not being taken seriously. Sexual harassment is one prime example of women’s gendered experiences with men’s unsolicited power.
Workplace harassment

Gender-based harassment, particularly sexual harassment (Chamberlain, Tope, and Hodson 2008; McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2012; Zippel 2006) can pollute a work environment to such an extent that it severely affects workplace affairs. Over time, a woman who has confronted a reproachful workplace environment develops strategies for balancing that negativity. In a few instances, respondents indicated that they had witnessed or experienced gender-based harassment in the workplace as a manifestation of gender and power. It is noteworthy how respondents overcame this harassment.

Earlier, I discussed how Cynthia, a dean at a private liberal arts college, had a heated exchange with a provost at her previous institution. This situation constitutes the label of harassment given the demeaning and offensive context of the exchange. Furthermore, for similar reasons, one can equate the experience that Lisa, a dean at a private university, had within her male-dominated department as a form of harassment. In both instances, Cynthia and Lisa sought positions outside of these environments to escape the disparaging treatment.

Anna, a provost at a public university noted that earlier on in her career, she had experienced sexual harassment. Although Anna did not label these experiences as sexual harassment, based on the unwarranted sexual attention that disrupted the workplace atmosphere, I am referring to these incidents as sexual harassment. I asked Anna to comment on whether or not she had ever felt that she was treated less for being a provost and more because of her gender. She instantly responded: “No. Not anymore.” But she did describe such experiences in the past:

Oh yeah. Thirty years ago, yeah, 20 years ago yeah […] These issues—gender issues have been hugely a part of my life, but they were more of an issue when I was young and attractive than they are. And, I’m not saying I’m unattractive—but, you know, once you get to be 60, the
games that people play are not games any more. You just learn to not deal with them. So, I simply don’t deal with them. I don’t have to any more.

Anna noted the relevance of age as a diminishing factor to a woman’s experience and developed coping mechanisms with regard to sexual harassment in the workplace.

… when I was young and people flirted with me – or when I was young and there were sexual innuendos or there were things that were said that were ridiculous – I find – as you reach a certain age that nonsense stops. You don’t have to – the interesting thing would be to be 30 in 2013 as opposed to 30 in 1980 and to have had the opportunities to see how it is for women today when I was younger because I can’t answer that question for younger women today. But, there’s a certain point in your life when you just become comfortable with who you are and you grow into leadership roles and you’re not afraid to be a leader. And, you’re not afraid to make a decision. There’s also the time when you stop worrying about everybody liking you and just understanding that you should always do the right thing and that respect is way more important than being liked. When you’re younger, especially when you’re a young woman, I think a lot of young women leaders and administrators get caught up in worrying about – will people like them. And, there’s a certain point where you – at least in my career and I think in some of my colleagues who are females’ career – you don’t worry about that anymore. You just try to do the right thing.

Here, it is apparent that a young woman who is at a junior level of administration, for example, may find it difficult to ignore unwanted sexual attention. Yet, as a woman matures, she may become immune to letting such factors bother her.

Likewise, Corrine, a provost at a private university, also noted the age factor and the transition she underwent in developing coping mechanisms for withstanding gender-based harassment:

25 Haraway’s (1991) concept of the cyborg, which has superhuman tendencies: who is “almost mechanically perfect – made to perfection by a male-dominated world” (Muhr 2011:338) clarifies this phenomenon in which a woman can come to tolerate disparaging gendered comments, for example. Muhr (2011) notes that the success of the cyborgian leader is based on her astute balancing act of masculinity and femininity that confines her in an inescapable “gendered machine” (Muhr 2011: 354).
There have been periods when I’ve been more aware of my gender than I am currently. I’m older now. I don’t take shit from anybody. When I was your age [meaning in one’s thirties], and somebody made a comment about appearance that felt inappropriate or if I were going into a meeting I would kind of wonder am I signaling something through my dress? And, again the work that I’ve done with women, am I diminishing my size, do I need to take more space because I was quite petite when I was younger. And that can be a problem especially if you’re petite and you look young. Well, who is this person who is 14 years old kind of thing. And, so, I think it was more important, I was much more aware about how I said what I said, how I portrayed myself physically as a woman when I was younger. Right now, take it or leave. I don’t take any shit from anybody. And, I’ve earned it.

When asked to consider whether or not age was a salient factor for men’s experiences in the workplace and if she feels that it is also relevant for men. Corrine acknowledged:

I do. I think men get there too. I still think though for women it’s still a little different. I’m trying to think about what somebody said to me once. You really get to a point where you think there is a wisdom that one just assumes. And, I think men in a room will grant me that because I have grey hair now. Where they wouldn’t have if I would have entered the room twenty years ago or thirty years ago. Go figure.

Caroline, a president of a public university also reported experiencing workplace harassment in the past. Yet, for Caroline, it was in the more recent past. Here, she talks about her experience with a “bully boss:”

It was my last job where it was really a horrendous boss, abusive. And, it was highly gendered and everything and then I was pretty senior, like I had my own relationship with the board. So, I wasn’t afraid like people are who are lower down. But, I did- I don’t think everybody should have a job or a boss like that cause it’s awfully painful. But, it was good for me in that now I know how a lot of America suffers. Cause I would go on the Internet and I would put into Google – bully boss and stuff like that to see if I was crazy or if it was just him.

Yet, in terms of her present day struggles, Caroline did not mention harassment as an issue that she either witnessed or experienced. Caroline also acknowledged that she was not certain if she
could tie this past mistreatment to gender, or if it was related to other factors such as a difference in disciplinary background. Again, similar to Anna and Corrine, this harassment took place in the past. Now that she has an even more respected executive role, she is beyond the realm of such mistreatment. Caroline did not particularly talk about age or experience as contributing factors to past mistreatment. However, it is clear that she, like Anna and Corinne, faced workplace obstacles that one may either partially or exclusively attribute to gender and power dynamics.

In two different, but related instances, Matthew, a dean at a private university and Douglas, a president at a public university reported women’s gendered reactions to women assuming positions of authority on their campuses. In these instances, the questioning was based on dress and allegiance to feminist issues in addition to potential assertiveness as a leader. For example, Matthew noted rumored behind-the-scenes chatter and disparaging comments from women regarding a hiring decision for the university’s new provost:

When the one person whose name was being floated and was the front runner and did indeed get it, there was some strange negativity that came up toward her and it came up in these anecdotes only from women of a senior, almost the first generation of tenured women and now this woman is more feminine, not more feminine – she wears dresses more, she’s more style conscious – that I could easily say and some of the discussion had to be about her sense of solidarity in the past with women’s issues. She actually studies women’s issues, but not on campus. She wasn’t a player in the women’s caucus or something like that from an earlier period.

Here, it is apparent how women can also wield gender-based harassment toward other women. Matthew noted the inappropriateness regarding an individual’s dress and her or his ability to do a job well.

Furthermore, Douglas reported a past situation at a previous university in which the new
president, who was a woman, asked him to recommend someone for the job of provost. When he recommended a woman for the provost job with whom the new president was not familiar, he was surprised by the president’s response:

I said our dean [of a particular college] was a really good person. And, I think she has credibility. And, she said, “Is she tough enough? And, it was wrong to ask that question. And, she hired someone else who was tough and they both lasted two years. Votes of no confidence, they were gone.

Here, it is apparent how sexual harassment can take place with regard to a hiring decision and that women can also be responsible for inflicting this offensive power.

All of the examples in this section depict gendered situations in which others made offhand comments that created a potentially harmful work environment for both the respondents as well as the individuals who were being considered for advancement. The majority of the examples in this chapter have referred to women’s experience with a weakening of power with regard to traditional gender roles, the work and family balance, questioning of authority, and unwarranted gendered power dynamics. How might women experience gendered advantages with regard to their power within the leadership hierarchy?

*Gendered advantages: Is the glass ceiling broken?*

Often, women can advance only so far before they hit a glass ceiling that they cannot break due to a lack of mentoring (Lorber 1984; Kantola 2008) or sexist perceptions about women’s ability to lead given an absence of prior women in leadership positions (Archer 2013; Cameron 2007; Schull, Shaw, and Kihl 2013; Williams 1992; 1995). This glass ceiling that women will inevitably confront in some manifestation at both lower-level and higher-level

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26 Douglas had announced his departure and he noted that he felt that the president would have made him provost had he not been on his way out.
management positions (Britton and Williams 2000; Ferree and Purkayastha 2000), and men’s ability to ride a ‘glass escalator’\(^{27}\) in all workplaces regardless of the work responsibilities that may traditionally be associated with men or women (Williams 1992; 1995), reveals structural gendered inequality in the workplace.

Valian (2004) reported that difficulties that women face in advancing to academic leadership positions are rooted in gender schemas that influence how society disadvantages and under-evaluates women. While women have historically faced challenges within their trajectory on the leadership hierarchy, particularly in STEM fields and administration (Bird 2011; Bystydzienski and Bird 2006; Mayberry 2004; Rosser and Lane 2002; Xie and Shauman 2003), some of my respondents reported that women might face gender-based advantages in their leadership ascendancy. Having women in key university leadership positions sends the message to other marginalized groups, particularly among the student population, that opportunities exist for them. Furthermore, there is an overall sense of fairness that an institution can gain from having women in leadership positions. An institution establishes a reputation for itself that subsequently improves its future (Valian 2004). Having women in positions of authority sends a message that an institution is forward thinking, progressive, and prepared for path-breaking innovations. We still live in an era in which witnessing first women presidents at universities is common. While some respondents recognized that women have historically faced (and some continue to face) gendered disadvantages in the workplace, they acknowledged that women’s gender identity could also serve an enabling role toward leadership advancement.

\(^{27}\) The glass escalator concept maintains that in work institutions where women are the majority, men receive preferential treatment by supervisors and peers. This exceptionally positive and welcoming treatment may facilitate men’s promotion and advancement in fields such as nursing where women are commonly in the majority. In such instances, a novice man, whose expertise and training mirrors that of a veteran woman employee, will be swiftly promoted to the role of overseer because of the stereotypical understanding that men are meant to be leaders. As such, men ride an escalator to the top of a work hierarchy as a result of archetypal pairings of men with leadership.
For example, Isabella, a provost at a public university, framed her thoughts on gender and leadership with regard to the legacy of male-dominated leadership positions that had previously been the standard at this university that presently has a woman serving as president. Here, it is apparent that Isabella finds that the climate has completely reversed. Isabella’s response implies that women may now face advantages as a result of not continuing a tradition that had been marked by a lack of transparency.

So, mostly I’ve heard that the reflection on the previous administration as a bunch of good ol’ boys. I haven’t heard the reflection on [the current president’s] actions as a result of being a woman. It’s more, it’s almost as if people are saying we finally got some balance here because there was a lot of smoke-filled room decision making, lack of transparency. Now, it’s not that I don’t think that there are gender biases. I mean, sure I see them in meetings or whatever. I happen to have benefited from a set of colleagues in my own department who were, it was really absent. But, there are groups of colleagues on this campus where I notice stronger biases against women and I know that women on this campus have those experiences and I believe them to be real. I don’t think they’re making it up; it just hasn’t been a part of my experience. But, I think the reflection that I’ve heard is more often than not a comment about behavior that people found distasteful previously rather than imbuing the current decision making with this gender identity.

Isabella’s remarks reveal that while she cannot claim that differences in the previous leadership were gender-based, the absence of the “good ol’ boys” network has had its benefits for the institution.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted that Caroline, the president at a public university, had identified gender-based discrimination and stakeholders’ gender-based responses to her decisions as part of her experience as a leader. On the other hand, Caroline noted that there are times in which women may face advantages that are gender-based:

… sometimes people liked it [the fact that she is a woman] like I had an advantage being female because they think it’s new, it’s different. So, I probably got more opportunities.
While Joanne, the provost at a private liberal arts college, did not acknowledge that being a woman had helped her to advance to her present role, she did acknowledge an emphasis on gender-based mentoring. She noted the past practices of her present institution that helped women make the transition from assistant to associate professors:

One of the things we used to do at [her present institution] was pair female faculty assistant professors with tenured faculty and so I think that was part of the culture here for a while.

Men who have traditionally held senior academic positions for years have also benefited from both formal and informal mentoring practices. As such, Joanne’s insight denotes the benefit that women may have when entering new assistant professor positions given that there is a significant push today to see women succeed. Furthermore, my discussion of gender-specific leadership trainings for women in Chapter 5 establishes a basis for claiming that women may also be at an advantage because supervisors may be more likely to direct them to such trainings given that they are so widely discussed and noted in academic circles. Women may then disproportionately benefit from this focused, gender-specific training that allows them to form camaraderie with other women leaders spanning a variety of institutions.

While I did not get an overwhelming sense from my interviews that any of the men respondents felt that they had been disadvantaged as a result of women’s achievements, Samuel, a dean at a private liberal arts college, did indicate that he had felt that his gender had worked against him in the past. Samuel discussed the oppositional exchange that occurred between him and his predecessor who was a woman:

[Name of his predecessor] did not think I should be the dean. And, we’ll get to one of these lovely gendered things here. I had been the associate dean for four years. [Name of predecessor] gave me glowing reviews and to this day if you ask her, “Did [Samuel] do a good job?” She will tell you I did a fantastic job as associate dean. […] But, she was of the
opinion that the college especially since the president at the time was male needed to have a woman in this office and she felt enough that way that she would not recommend me for the job and said, I’m just going to keep my own counsel on that. And, she and I had long conversations about that. I thought it was really despicable of her. But, okay, one of the other things about [name of his predecessor] that I really admire although I don’t try to emulate this is she was a woman who has principles that trump everything else. I think pragmatism ought to sometimes trump principle. But, we can talk about what are the limits of that. But, her principle was that if the president were male, they would absolutely need to have a woman [in this role]. So, when I took over it was sort of “here’s the keys; don’t drive it into a ditch.”

While I did not encounter similar observations from other participants, it is possible that such a dynamic may characterize future discussions on college campuses regarding the gendered chain of command. It is still premature to say that women have broken the glass ceiling in academia. Twenty-nine percent of full professors in the United States are women and women lead as presidents only 25% of the time (Ward and Eddy 2013). Yet, the insights from my respondents reveal that a friendlier climate is upon us for women in academia and in academic leadership.

DISCUSSION

Individuals’ gender perceptions influence women and men’s experiences as university administrators. The prevalence of traditional gender roles that exist in the domestic sphere are thus sometimes observed in various contexts, even once a leader obtains a position of exceptional authority. Yet, as institutions become accustomed to having women in leadership roles, we are seeing a mitigation of women’s gendered experiences that negatively affect their work. Regardless of women’s personal experiences with gender-based responses to their leadership, it is apparent that we have not yet arrived at a situation in which women are free from being labeled as “queens” or “bitches” when stakeholders discuss their decision-making and
overall institutional authority. Over time, women in leadership roles may also become either immune from or desensitized to gender-disparaging comments that can frequently occur in the workplace. As some respondents observed, women may in fact have benefitted from an emphasis on ridding universities of the “good ol’ boys” networks that once ran the show through greater attention to women’s professional development.

In conclusion, the intimate stories administrators shared here collectively demonstrate that gender still figures prominently into the narratives of academic leaders. They denote that we must not be blind to the significance that gender plays at all levels of an academic leadership hierarchy. Both women and men as leaders experience gender in very meaningful ways whether or not it is through their own experiences or their interpretation of others’ experiences. The women and men that I interviewed demonstrated exceptional antennae for gendered experiences as leaders. The promise of degendering leadership (Lorber 1994; 2000; 2005) can only be achieved through this ongoing focus. Attention to and an emphasis on deteriorating the labeling of leadership as “feminine” or “masculine” is part of this endeavor. Furthermore, a focus on gendered power dynamics, on the part of women and men in academia facilitates this feminist degendering movement.
Chapter 7

Conclusion, Implications and Suggestions

Women and men have undeniably different gendered experiences within their families, religious groups, peer networks, school instruction, and media exposure. Given historical legacies of gender inequality in the United States, teachers and guidance counselors may respond differently to a young schoolgirl’s aspiration toward becoming the President of the United States or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Furthermore, while fictional media portrayals are beginning to feature women in figurehead roles and we are seeing changes that reduce stereotyping in media (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media 2014), the majority of media representations of supervisors and leaders are still men. In spite of gender socialization that assumes men’s leadership and women’s continued underrepresentation in leadership roles, women are beginning to rise to leadership positions in corporate, governmental, and higher educational contexts prompting much discussion on women’s leadership style variation. Such discussions distract from the relevant job-specific qualifications of potential leadership candidates and promote a hierarchical framework that subsequently positions women or men as more capable leaders by virtue of their gender. Furthermore, this hierarchy endorses women’s adaptability to men’s leadership styles in order to fit into masculine models (Evans 2001).

This study clarifies that academic leaders evaluate leadership based on its merit, not based on the gender of the individual leader: “Instead of setting up an idealized picture of women in management in opposition to a (misleading) homogenous picture of male managers, we could advance the values which we care for and be careful about sex-labelling them” (Billing and Alvesson 2000:154). Sex-labeling leadership, then, is not constructive even if it entails a positive

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28 Women represent 4.6 percent of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst 2014).
focus on women’s feminine leadership styles that make them more suitable for a position of authority (see Thomas 2011). Citing a woman’s similarity with a man or difference from a man in discourse that promotes a woman’s suitable candidacy for a leadership position reinforces a socially constructed understanding of how women and men’s leadership differs. These stylistic differences are often rooted in traditional gender roles. As such, this rigid gendered categorization can potentially diminish the pool of effective leaders. My findings indicate that women and men’s leadership styles in academia are more similar than they are different.

Billing’s research acknowledges the relationship between the “de-masculinization of leadership and dissolution of the symbolic cultural connection between men and leadership” (Billing 2011:305). This research also destructs essentialist understandings of the male norm of leadership that contribute to women’s difficulties in advancing to leadership positions (Billing 2011; Binns and Kerfoot 2011). In this study, I showed how women and men academic leaders have parallel outlooks with regard to their responsibilities. The relationship between leadership and gender is one that I encouraged my respondents to consider; however, I was most interested in how the leaders comprehensively spoke about the meaning of leadership as it has landed in their lives. Based on their firsthand experiences, I asked respondents to provide explanations of effective and ineffective leadership. Academic administrators’ definitions of leadership steered clear of gendered assumptions and stereotypes regarding how a woman ought to lead and how a man ought to lead. At times, respondents’ remarks were reminiscent of gender blindness with regard to women and men’s opportunities in academic leadership.

Overall, the narratives indicate that effective academic leadership is marked by matching one’s personal values to the values of the institution, being open to a shared governance model, delivering on one’s promises, and understanding and respecting the culture of an institution by
not making brash decisions that undermine the commonly held values of an institution. Respondents’ accounts of personal leadership challenges constructed their understandings of how gendered frameworks may work in the backdrop of leaders’ workplace interactions. Collectively, these narratives create a broadly expressed definition of academic leadership that is absent of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, or age. Most important to one of my initial research aims of envisioning degendered leadership that is absent of masculine or feminine attributes, this study deconstructs the association of men and leadership and holds significance for existing theorizing on degendering.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

It is quite possible that organizations still embrace gendered social constructions prompting gender-based differences in leadership styles. I have drawn upon this literature in my discussion of leadership styles in Chapter 3 “Leadership Styles and Gender.” There is evidence that women and men adopt different leadership styles as a result of their own gender socialization and others’ gendered assumptions. Women might be more democratic, collaborative, and transparent than men may be in carrying out their duties (Eagly and Johnson 1990), and men may be more agentic and aggressive in their decision-making (Eagly and Carli 2007; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari 2011; Newport 2001; Spence and Buckner 2000). These studies are relevant to our understanding of differences in how leadership styles may vary; however, they do not analyze firsthand accounts of both women and men leaders’ perceptions on leadership. Instead, they offer theoretical explanations for the social and cultural factors that characterize women and men’s differential leadership. For example, Koenig et al. (2011) provide useful insights regarding stereotypes surrounding individuals’ perceptions of women and men’s
leadership. However, through their research, we do not get an intimate sense of the strategies that women and men leaders may use in reproducing or not reproducing gender stereotypes, or of how leaders may degender leadership through their practices. The abovementioned scholarship is noteworthy for its contribution to our understanding of gendered stereotypes and external perceptions of leadership; however, my study is nuanced to understand the everyday gendered and non-gendered experiences as they land in the lives of women and men serving as academic leaders.

While scholarship has addressed the need for a collapsing of boundaries that exist for women in academia, no scholarship to my knowledge has shown this specific degendered possibility. In this dissertation, I analyzed leadership in the context of women and men’s gendered experiences to underscore the profound similarity and need for the disassociation of masculine paradigms of leadership. This analysis is important because it speaks to the fluidity and malleability of gender (Butler 2004; Lorber 1994; 2000; 2005) and offers an open-ended framework of leadership that is degendered and therefore absent of gendered assumptions on how women or men ought to lead.

In “Leadership Styles and Gender,” through the narratives of women and men serving as deans, provosts, and presidents, I clarified a vision of degendered leadership within an academic setting. My respondents attested to the importance of shared governance, collaboration, and an emphasis on communal over agentic leadership styles. Both women and men recognized that they could not authoritatively wield their power and expect to earn the respect of their institutional stakeholders. These data reveal more similarities than differences between women and men’s leadership styles. Citing Butler (2004) and Verloo and Lombardo (2007), Bromley (2013:126) notes in her discussion of women in academic leadership: “It is the gendered world
itself that represents the problem [that women face in academia], not simply the exclusion of women or the existence of the male norm.” As such, Bromley (2013:126) argues that we must strive “to make the academy gender-free.” Bromley’s assertion needs to be addressed to understand how gender operates within an academic institutional setting and how envisioning a degendered leadership can be the starting point for degendering the academy.

Envisioning a degendered vision of leadership meant establishing a framework for what constitutes effective academic leadership. As such, my study focused on the components of effective academic leadership. In Chapter 4 “Effective Academic Leadership,” I build on research that notes academic leaders’ need for adaptability (Sternberg 2013), academic credibility (Goodall 2009), selflessness (Budig 2002; Goens 2011; Rowley 1997; Shugart 1997) collaboration (Buller 2011; Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, and Ryland 2012), and transparency (Jaradat 2013; Mahoney 1998; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, and van Meurs 2009). This scholarship underscores the gold standards of academic leadership. Through my interviews, I show how both women and men are capable of upholding these standards. Furthermore, I illustrate how women and men can also make mistakes with regard to these ideals. Neither women nor men can take shortcuts with regard to these standards. Gendered differences are not always operative in how leaders perform their jobs. Furthermore, this notion parallels gender scholars’ (Butler 2004; Connell 2010; Deutsch 2007; Lorber 1994; 2000; 2005; Risman 2009) warning of the power of gender as a rigid, organizing principle. For example, skipping around through the leadership hierarchy presents challenges for a woman or a man as an academic leader. Becoming a dean or a provost without having much of a research track record beyond one’s dissertation is also problematic for women and men. Furthermore, egocentric and non-transparent leaders, both women and men, with little regard for an institution’s culture will find their tenures short-lived.
and ridden with conflict.

This chapter’s findings suggest that regardless of gender, co-educational colleges and universities seek out leaders who will effectively lead their institutions toward future prosperity. This chapter is significant because existing sociological research does not bring together the narratives of women and men in these key academic roles to initiate a dialogue that recognizes the universality of effective academic leadership. The data reveal that there are multiple factors that contribute to a leader’s efficacy, one of which is her or his ability to adapt to new situations by listening to stakeholders and learning from the mistakes of others. As such, effective academic leadership is not feminine or masculine. Effective academic leadership encompasses understanding the institutional culture and respecting the position and prioritizing the interests of stakeholders through transparent decision-making. These standards are not gendered; they are universal to women and men leaders and displace the problematic feminine and masculine leadership divide.

I found that women and men leaders evaluate leadership efficacy on similar non-gendered standards. To understand how women and men hone their operative leadership personas, I turned to an examination of the evolution of the academic leader’s career given that there may be differences relating to women and men’s differential gender socialization. What I found is that the process of honing one’s leadership skills is not gender-specific. This finding mirrors Lorber’s (1994; 2000; 2005) call to move beyond harmful gendered characterizations that separate women’s experiences from men’s experiences.

I focus on the process of achieving a paradigmatic leadership style in Chapter 5 “Learning to Lead.” Here, I center the discussion on respondents’ insights on their early pathways, modeling or not modeling others’ behavior, learning on the job and listening to
stakeholders, and I conclude with a discussion of insights on formal leadership training that is both gendered and non-gendered. I documented how faculty mentoring and encouragement from faculty advisors at early stages in a leader’s career, in graduate school, contributed to leaders’ realization that a career in academia was right for them and that they should focus on scholarship. As faculty, respondents noted the importance of leaders’ recognition of their academic leadership potential. Modeling best practices of mentors in addition to figureheads with whom respondents did not have personal relations also proved to be relevant for women and men who sought strength from their counterparts. On the other hand, learning from others’ failings was often just as important as learning from their successes. This openness and “on-the-job” learning through listening and action proved to be exceptionally noteworthy for these women and men leaders who care for their institutions and want to ensure their viability. These aforementioned experiences, that did not present any noteworthy gendered differences, suggest an absence of a gendered framework in how women and men refine their leadership skills.

Yet, I found that gender-based differences are distinct when an already-accomplished woman is priming herself for further advancement on the hierarchy. At this time she may turn to, or she may be encouraged to attend gender-specific leadership trainings that are a response to women’s historical marginalization from leadership positions. These trainings provide an opportunity for women to network within a gender-specific context in which they can share insights on coping strategies for gender-based inequalities that they may have encountered in the workplace with regard to harassment, work and family balance, or gender roles.

“Learning to Lead” suggests that as women continue to advance to academic leadership positions in larger numbers, we may find more hesitancy than I uncovered with regard to these separate trainings that imply men’s natural command of leadership and women’s need for further
training. Trainings, as my respondents indicated, can be exceptionally helpful for both women and men, especially those with limited prior leadership training through their academic studies. Building networks through non-gender specific academic leadership trainings overcomes an “old boys’ network” and encourages a degendering of the profession. This chapter furthers the conversation on the efficacy of programming for historically marginalized populations.

Women’s documented historical absence from positions of higher educational leadership contributed to their ability to personally acknowledge the role that gender played in their career trajectories. In Chapter 6 “Gender and Leadership in Higher Education” I look at the role of gender in my respondents’ narratives. While gender is a salient issue for both women and men in these administrative positions, women, more often than men, were able to identify moments in their career when they felt as though their gender had specifically impacted a situation in a negative way. Furthermore, of the men respondents, while they could not significantly uncover similar personal experiences, they were incredibly perceptive toward women’s gendered experiences that complicated the work structure. Traditional gender roles may pervade women’s interactions with their peers leading others to question their resistance toward gendered power dynamics. While women and men, particularly in labor-intensive employment requiring their constant attention, both confront a work and family balance, women more often than men reported that they had postponed leadership until their children were older. Women were less likely to put their jobs as a priority over their families. As such, age became a salient factor here given that, as women’s children were grown and they themselves were older, I uncovered a diminishing of this variable’s relevance. Gender may intersect with age in important ways that are not deeply examined in the existing literature on gender and leadership. As such, age is a source of power for women in leadership roles.
Other manifestations of gender and power that emerged from my data relate to a questioning of authority, excessive power displays, harassment, and women’s gendered advantages. Colleges and universities are the hotbeds for open deliberation and criticisms. Faculty members, in particular, are not shy about questioning a dean, provost, or president’s new initiatives if they are not in line with their personal vision. As such, women and men academic administrators face similar pressures from stakeholder questioning. It is simply a part of the academic culture for open dialogue to exist with regard to an institution’s future direction. Data revealed that women’s power trips or exceptional displays of their authority were often equated to a gendered dynamic. Often, respondents reported that a woman who publicly demonstrated a heavy-handed decision was trying to prove her worth within a traditionally male-dominated field. As such, overly domineering women face a gendered roadblock in the execution of their tasks that men can surpass. This was one instance in which I identified a reproduction of gender stereotypes. Women are also more likely to be openly critiqued or demeaned based on gendered matters such as their dress, feminist commitment, and unwarranted sexual attention. These findings are key because they confirm how stakeholders can contribute to the gendering of leadership. These manifestations of gender inequality represent how gender can create disadvantageous work environments for women.

“Gender and Leadership in Higher Education” reveals the impossibility of gender blindness in academic leadership. While women and men’s experiences often mirror one another, gender roles, assumptions about the work and family balance, and power dynamics that are rooted in traditional understandings of women’s social roles characterize differential experiences for women and men. Yet, the reality of these socially constructed differences that will often follow women and men throughout their leadership experiences is they do not suggest that
women and men’s leadership is fundamentally different. Women and men have different obstacles to face. At times, women respondents even reported feeling advantaged and men reported feeling disadvantaged as a result of institutional priorities to put women in office. Regardless of these policies, my findings suggest that leadership is not profoundly feminine or masculine.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Women’s increasing representation in academic leadership positions provides prospects for change in the social construction of leadership, yet it is a systemic issue that will involve adjustments over time. As Caroline, a president at a public university stated:

Even if we all [the women presidents] got together and tried to work on this [degendering leadership], I don’t think we could. There’s not enough of us and we’re too different – styles and all that. So, some of it I think is probably just a matter of time, I hope. You know, I still think I’m probably pretty early. I’m obviously not in stage 1 […] I mean, there are more of us [women presidents] now, but I still feel like it’s the beginning.

Future scholarship should continue to incorporate the narratives of women and men in positions of authority in order to further understand and problematize, with the goal of destabilizing, gendered leadership. As Caroline suggested, we are at the beginning of a revolutionary period in which the prevalence of women in so many key leadership roles presents the prospect of a degendered leadership. In future work, I intend to further explore the relationship between leadership and gender by examining women’s experiences at gender-specific leadership trainings in academia, government, and corporate contexts. What remains to be identified are the benefits and drawbacks for both leaders and institutions with regard to women’s attendance at gender-specific training sessions.
Supplementary research might also question the patterns of women in previously male-dominated leadership roles and compare them to men’s experiences in previously female-dominated roles. Scholarship informs us that men ride a ‘glass escalator’ (Williams 1992; 1995) in traditionally female-dominated fields; however, future studies might examine the role that a gendered leadership model plays with regard to men’s experiences. For example, men’s experiences as leaders at women’s colleges and women’s rights based institutions would be a key place to start with this line of inquiry.

The women and men that I interviewed in this study come from institutions with open-minded views concerning non-discrimination toward women in leadership roles at all levels of a leadership hierarchy. While the prospect of having a woman as a president, for example, had not yet occurred at all of my respondents’ institutions, it was not a foreign concept. As such, future studies ought to consider women and men’s views at institutions that are closed to women’s senior leadership. These studies might consider leadership definitions at religious institutions that are unwelcome to women leaders as part of dogmatic practice, military institutions, and large public research universities that have never before seen a woman’s leadership. Furthermore, in a heterogeneous setting such as the United States, it is unreasonable to assume that gendered perspectives are homogenous. Do regional cultural differences regarding gender affect gendering in leadership? My data does not permit such an analysis; however, future research should examine this linkage.

Additionally, I suggest that researchers look more closely at race and sexuality and how they influence an intersectional understanding of degendered leadership. By expanding the research to new terrains in the corporate and governmental frameworks, researchers will have more opportunities for encountering leaders from historically marginalized frameworks. While I
do acknowledge race and sexuality in my Methods section, I have not analyzed the data through these lenses given the underrepresentation of respondents from these historically marginalized backgrounds. To capture the nuances of leadership that supersedes privileged white heterosexual male paradigms of leadership, research ought to look at how race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality contribute to defining leadership.

Lastly, future research might consider how university stakeholders degender leadership or reproduce gender stereotypes through their perceptions of women and men academic leaders in visible leadership roles. My findings probe academic leaders for their responses on the gendering of leadership that are highly valuable given their public roles and path setting potential. Yet, insights from students, faculty members, staff members, alumni, the board of trustees, the community, and corporate and governmental partners regarding gender and leadership would allow for a different perspective and subsequently further enrichment of degendered leadership.
Appendix: Interview Guide

Section 1: Background Information

1) Can you talk about the path that you took that led you to your present leadership role at this institution? Please address how long you’ve held this role and your present responsibilities.
2) What is your daily routine on the average workday?
3) What do you perceive as the benefits and drawbacks to working in a higher educational administration setting as opposed to a corporate setting and as opposed to a governmental setting?

Section 2: Defining Leadership

1) What’s an example of effective leadership? How do you define leadership?
2) Are certain people born to be leaders?
3) What qualities does your institution value in its leaders?
4) How does leadership shape your institution?
5) Was there ever a time while serving in your present role where you were treated less for being a president, dean, or provost and more because of your gender?

Section 3: Leadership Skills

1) Is there a particular leader that you admire that you may possibly look to as an example of the type of leader that you aspire to be in your work? Why?
2) If you were to give advice to an aspiring leader who dreams of filling your shoes someday, what would that advice be?
3) Have you ever taken part in a leadership workshop or seminar with regard to your present role? (Probe for background information, sponsorship, attending population). If yes, how useful were these workshops or seminars and who encouraged or sponsored you to attend this training?
4) Do you lead trainings and orientations for university leaders on your campus? If yes, what are the core values that you stress in this programming? If no, does your institution not support these trainings?
5) Do you take part in any informal mentoring groups on campus or off campus?

Section 4: Leadership Challenges

1) In your present role, have you ever encountered an ineffective leader?
2) Do you maintain contact with other leaders in higher education administration? [Probe for age, race, gender, years of experience, and type of institution they came from].
3) Who mentored you? [Same probe as in Question 2 above].
4) Can you talk about a time when you might have faced a significant challenge in your present leadership role and how you addressed or resolved this challenge?
5) Has anyone ever questioned your authority?
Section 5: Conclusion

1) Is there anything else that you would like to address regarding your present leadership? Can you suggest another university leader who might be interested in taking part in my study? Would you feel comfortable introducing me to that individual via an e-mail introduction?
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