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CONFLICTING CULTURES, COMPROMISING CARE: A HEURISTIC INQUIRY OF WOMEN DIRECTORS OF COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTERS

by

Lindsay Noele Johnson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
March 7, 2022

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Dedications

I lovingly dedicate this work to my husband, Cory, and our two beautiful children, Cooper and Owen. Cory, whoever thought we would go through *three* labors of love within a two year span (this of course being the most arduous of the bunch). Your unwavering support, along with your commitment and care for our family, gave me the strength, space, and stamina to accomplish this achievement. I love you and the life we have built together. And to Cooper and Owen: becoming a mother has been one of the greatest joys of my life. Thank you for creating a dialectic to my vigorous work ethic. And of course for cooperating with the compromises I had to make to reach my personal and professional goals.

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Abstract

Lindsay Noele Johnson
CONFLICTING CULTURES, COMPROMISING CARE:
A HEURISTIC INQUIRY OF WOMEN DIRECTORS
OF COLLEGE COUNSELING CENTERS
2021-2022
Ane Turner Johnson, Ph.D.
Doctor of Education

The role that women leaders of college counseling centers have is unique; they must contend with the inherent social norms that women face in gendered organizations, in addition to negotiating the dichotomous, and often conflicting, leadership expectations of a care work division and a care-less upper administration. The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic, phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of women directors of college counseling centers. Moreover, this study sought to understand the lived experiences, beliefs, and actions of these directors how these experiences influenced, and continue to influence, their leadership pathway in a care-oriented division within the careless institution of higher education. Three of the themes that encompassed the lived experience of these women in counseling leadership within a care-less context included: (1) caring about care, (2) (un)compensated care, and (3) care-less compromises. These themes portray the interaction between gender, leadership, and care work within the care-less landscape of higher education

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For any leader, there are challenges and obstacles that come with the position. However, for women leaders, there are additional difficulties precisely due to their gender (Eagly et al, 1995). Being a woman leader means routinely facing incongruent expectations and scrutiny of their performance based on their gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson et al., 2008). For example, women are penalized for displaying or lacking stereotypically female traits and exhibiting characteristics associated with effective leadership because they are too masculine (Frye, 1983; McGregor, 2013; Zheng et al., 2018). This exemplifies the catch-22, or double-bind, women in leadership encounter (Frye, 1983). The association of effective leadership with masculinity and masculine traits results from the early developments of leadership theory in the late 1800s in the United States (Spector, 2016). The original researchers of leadership, who were typically White men, exerted their perceptual biases about gender, which influenced who was seen as an effective leader (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). This resulted in the initial theories on effective leadership characterized by the traits and behaviors associated with men (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). This created a male-centric view of who a leader is and how that leader behaves.

Due to this male-centric view of leadership in the United States and the double-bind phenomenon, women have experienced many obstacles to their leadership at the organizational level. When women attempt to obtain managerial positions in organizations, they may be seen as less fitting for the job than men (Heilman, 2001). This

phenomenon was described by Heilman (1995); jobs and positions are associated with certain skills, abilities and traits. When the stereotypical traits of ones gender do not align with the associated skills of the job, she or he may be seen as less fitting and less able to be successful at that job (Heilman, 1995). Since leadership is viewed generally as associated with male traits, it causes a “lack of fit” for women in leadership positions (Heilman, 2001). Additionally, when women hold leadership positions, they are judged more harshly than their male counterparts (Heilman, 2001). The double-bind also plays a role in creating a barrier for women becoming leaders, and therefore an inequity of gender leadership in many different organizations in the United States (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). While this contributes significantly to blocking women’s advancement into leadership, it is just one of the many obstacles women face.

Aside from the double-bind phenomena, women also confront overt and covert organizational practices, cultural dynamics, and societal beliefs based on gender (Acker, 1990, 2012), hindering their movement into leadership positions (Seo et al, 2017). These practices have been recognized in many organizations, including educational organizations. Practices such as promotional ambiguity (Brower e al., 2019), unequal work responsibilities (Hart, 2016), and gender-based harassment (Ferlazzo, 2020) are just a few of the many examples of how the gendered nature of educational organizations restricts women leadership. While women have made significant progress over the last 60 years to combat this issue, the top leadership positions in education, such as superintendent and college president in the United States, remain underrepresented by women (American Council on Education, 2016; Robinson et al., 2017), with 23% of superintendents (American Association of School Administrators, 2016) and 30% of

college presidents identifying as women (American Council on Education, 2016). This phenomenon has influenced educational organizations at all levels, including higher education.

Higher education has explicitly been recognized as maintaining an inequity of leadership in relation to gender resulting partially from affording men more opportunities for promotion, growth, and resources than women (Hannum et al., 2015; Madsen, 2012). Research has also revealed that women are often held to different standards and expectations than men (Hannum et al., 2015). For example, women professors tend to teach more classes or work more extended time than their male counterparts before offered more prestigious positions (Misra et al., 2011). Additionally, the increased time demands of leadership positions at universities innately restrict women, as they often hold more family life responsibilities (Flaherty, 2015; Hannum et al., 2015). While some of these sexist practices are overt, many remain less detectable. This is because such practices have become part of the organization's culture due to the long-standing gendered nature of higher education.

Women's Leadership in Higher Education

Reviewing the past and present roles of women at universities can help explain how the gendering of academia has led to an inequity of leadership for women within higher education. The 1800s were a time when women were not allowed into the world of secondary education as students or professionals (Parker, 2015). Women voiced their dissent against not being able to obtain advanced education or be involved in teaching the nation's youth (Gordon, 1997). In response, 50 women's colleges were established by 1875 which helped initiate women's engagement in collegiate life (Parker, 2015). By

establishing women's institutions such as these and subsequent co-ed institutions, women finally had access to education. This increase in female representation at universities in the United States led to women's first leadership opportunities in higher education.

Due to the increase in women enrollees, universities created leadership roles in support services specific for female students. For example, many institutions established a Dean of Women to help lead and mentor the female students (Parker, 2015). Additionally, the declined enrollment of male students and professionals in higher education during World War II opened the door for more women to take on other leadership roles previously held by men (Eisenmann, 2006). However, these advances did not create a lasting, sustainable change for women. Once the war ended, many women’s leadership positions were eliminated (Parker, 2015), or women were fired from their roles when men returned to work (Eisenmann, 2006; Schwartz, 1997). It would not be until the 1960s that women would have opportunities again at higher educational leadership (Eisenmann, 2006). These opportunities came as a result of legislative changes in the United States government.

The second wave of women’s progress towards leadership came from a revolutionary social movement and subsequent governmental action that influenced women’s working conditions. The first was the passing of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Under Title VII, it was deemed illegal for women to be discriminated against based on their sex (Civil Rights Act of 1964). This law applied to many employment conditions, including hiring and firing practices, compensation, and benefits. Title VII also prohibited hostility within the workplace based on sex (Civil Rights Act, 1964). The second monumental action was the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of

1972. Title IX (Education Amendments Act of 1972) outlawed discrimination based on sex, specifically in educational settings that accepted federal funding (Galles, 2004; Parker, 2015). Institutions could no longer prohibit women from leadership roles or discriminate against them based on their sex within the academic realm (Galles, 2004).

While women's representation in leadership at universities is greater now than in the past, such changes are still questionable as *advancements* (Berg, 2020). The leadership positions garnered by women are more likely to be limited in scope (Berg, 2020) and reinforce the gendered nature of higher education. For example, in 2018, representation from women in leadership positions was as high as 69% in academic affairs, 66% in student affairs, and 68% in counseling services (AUCCCD, 2018; Bichsel et al., 2019). However, in other divisions, women remained less represented in leadership: 29% in athletics, 28% in information technology, and 19% in facilities (Bichsel et al., 2019). As reflected, the divisions at the university that have generated the most advancement in women's leadership are those that can be understood as care-oriented divisions. This is consistent with the societal stereotype that women are nurturers and caretakers (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, when women's leadership is concentrated in these divisions, there is less opportunity for growth into the higher administrative roles secondary to maintenance of gender role norms that limit women's advancement (Nidiffer, 2010).

Consequently, women are also still highly underrepresented at the top of the organizational leadership hierarchy. They hold less than 40% of executive positions such as President, Vice President, and Provost (Bichsel et al., 2019), which offer higher salaries and greater influence and prestige. Even as recently as 2016, women represented:

56.5% of total students enrolled in higher education, 53.5% of doctoral students, 51.8% of assistant professors, 45.4% of associate professors, and 32.8% of full-time professors (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), while only 30% of college presidents (American Council on Education, 2016). So while it may seem like advancements have been made in women's leadership, there is a divide in the types of leadership roles women and men are obtaining at universities that continues to restrict women's movement up the organizational ladder.

Women and University Care Work

The restrictions women face in higher education, specifically being concentrated in the care-oriented divisions at universities, mirrors the roles in which society envisages for women. This phenomenon, described as via social role theory, explains that our society expects people to exhibit particular behaviors and traits that are based on their gender (Eagly, 1987) and thus positions people accordingly. Women are expected to be nurturing, caring, and obliging, while men are expected to be controlling, bold, and self-assured (Eagly, 1987). Women have therefore been designated in society as caretakers (Lynch, 2010). People are then evaluated on their embodiment of these traits, and are evaluated poorly by others if they do not comply with the expectations (Eagly, 1987). These expectations of women as caretakers have manifested at the university in several ways. For example, women report feeling forced to mentor students or take on service activities at the university; doing so at much higher rates than their male counterparts (Misra et al., 2011). Additionally, women feel required to support their colleagues even when it comes at a professional cost to them, such as potentially receiving a negative evaluation (Hart, 2016). The gendered nature of higher education and its organizations

reflect and reinforce the implicit and explicit social expectations of women and their behavior.

Furthering this notion is that there are divisions and departments, where women are predominately located, responsible for the care work of the institution. For example, historically, the care of student safety and wellness has fallen on the division of student affairs, which often includes counseling centers (AUCCCD, 2019; Dungy, 2003). The division's mission has been to cultivate and attend to students' overall development and well-being beyond the classrooms (NASPA, 1987). This mission helped distinguish the division's role from that of faculty members and academic affairs, which was concentrated on the intellectual development of the student (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Given the focus on care work in these divisions, predictably, they are overrepresented by women. A new report from 2018 found that 71% of student affairs positions were held by women and 77% of mental health counselors at the universities are women (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). So while women may be obtaining leadership roles at universities in the United States, they are still limited in their growth and advancement given that they are confined to these gendered, and subsequently less prestigious, care divisions (Nidiffer, 2010).

The Care-Less Worker

In contrast to these care-oriented divisions within the university, higher education broadly has become an organization understood as care-less (Lynch, 2010). Changes in higher education culture have altered the organization to function more like a business in a privatized, public manner (Giroux, 2002; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001). This has resulted in the expectation that the university will work for the consumer at all costs. Since the

market and the consumers are volatile, university leaders are required to fully commit themselves to their work to keep the institution afloat (Bailyn, 2003). Therefore, a new version of the ideal worker for the university has been established.

The old version of the ideal worker was an individual who was unrestricted by care work in the family (Williams, 2000). This new version of the ideal worker at the university is not just unrestricted by care work, but also care-less. To be considered care-less, this worker chooses to be free of personal responsibilities to meet the university's highest performance standards (Grummell et al., 2009; Lynch, 2010). This ideal care-less worker also puts personal time aside and is available at all times to respond to the job (Lynch, 2010). This person is first and foremost loyal to the university over anything or anyone else (Lynch, 2010). The presumption is that the university faculty and staff, especially the leaders, will embody this ideal care-less worker (Lynch, 2010). Given that men are more likely to be unencumbered by care responsibilities, they can fit this image of the care-less worker more readily than women (Grummell et al., 2009). The result, to which men rise through the ranks to fulfill the care-less managers and administrators (Grummell et al., 2009), reinforces the gendered nature of higher education.

This care-less worker, within the care-less environment of marketized universities, is in direct contrast to the care-oriented divisions and work at universities. For women leaders within care-oriented divisions at the university, this creates a unique dichotomy. These women are the leaders of divisions and departments that focus on the care of students. This type of work aligns with the social role expectations of women (Eagly, 1987). But, their leadership position challenges these social role expectations, given that effective leadership is more associated with male behaviors and traits (Ayman

& Korabik, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). Simultaneously, as middle managers, these women are expected to fulfill the ideal care-less worker (Lynch, 2010) while meeting with men who serve in higher leadership roles within university administration. In turn, they must negotiate and navigate their gender within their position as care-less manager within a care-oriented division.

Leadership and College Counseling Centers

One of the departments within the university which can be understood as care-oriented is the counseling center. The counseling center's function is to help manage the mental health treatment and crisis response and prevention for the university population (Sharkin, 2012). This focus on the larger community's mental hygiene has been recognized as care work (Duffy, 2011). Associated care jobs, like mental health counseling, are found to be highly represented by women, but receive lower pay than other occupations despite increased responsibilities to shoulder society's interpersonal needs (Duffy, 2011). At the university setting, counseling centers hold a great deal of responsibilities, which is often managed by an individual director.

Women are increasingly obtaining these director positions within college counseling centers. However, this is consistent with the notion that women are relegated to leadership at universities considered "care work." The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey found 66% identified as women (2019). That is an increase from ten years ago when only 55% identified as women (AUCCCD, 2009). While that does reflect a closing of the gap compared to the top administrative roles in higher education, it still remains less representative of the 76% of staff at counseling centers who identify as women (AUCCCD, 2019). Additionally, this

growth is restricted to a less prestigious university division (Nidiffer, 2010). However, a lot can be learned from these women directors who accept and maintain leadership roles within college counseling centers. This is because college counseling center directors have a unique position managing a care division or department within a care-less organization.

The care responsibilities of college counseling center directors have expanded in the last ten years due to the widening range of student mental health issues (Hodges, 2015). Students are presenting at counseling centers with problems such as anxiety (61%), depression (49%), trauma (17%), suicidal thoughts (14%), and non-suicidal self-injury (7%) (AUCCCD, 2019). Therefore, most counseling centers across the country are now staffed by an array of licensed professionals (Hodges, 2015). Directors remain responsible for assuring the clinical soundness of the services provided at their counseling centers and the university students' mental well-being. But counselor center directors hold several other responsibilities aside from maintaining an effective clinical practice.

Outreach to the campus community, training programs, and prevention services are all included in counseling centers' roles (Mitchell, 2019). Subsequently, directors face serious care responsibilities such as campus-wide suicide prevention plans (Sharkin, 2012), crisis response (Bishop, 2016), and supervision of clinical staff (Sharkin, 2012). Often, directors work within limited budgetary restraints despite the counseling services influencing almost all university areas (Bishop, 2006). Their leadership includes managing these tasks and others and fulfilling the overall institutional mission (Bishop, 1995). Through all of this, college counseling directors serve as middle managers,

essentially directing a community mental health center while vying for resources with the institution's highest administrators.

Despite this unique role and subsequent responsibilities, the position at most campuses is still affiliated with student life and therefore reports to an associate vice president or the provost (AUCCCD, 2019). This means that the director meets regularly with an administrative superior who, statistically speaking, is likely to be a man (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Seltzer, 2017). So the directors of the centers who identify as women face many challenges. One is the innate double-bind women in leadership face, as discussed earlier. Another is the job of middle manager; leading a care-oriented, female-dominated department, while working under the expectations associated with a gendered organization. Lastly, these women have to balance the expectations of leading a care-oriented division while needing to personify the care-less leader within a care-less organization.

Despite all those difficulties, obstacles, and odds, over 68% of directors of college counseling centers across the country are women who are currently leading within these unique circumstances (AUCCCD, 2020). These women have an important story to tell: how they navigate the transition from care work, to care-less, leader. These experiences are essential to understand how women negotiate their gender, care work, and leadership expectations within the care-less, gendered environment of higher education. Exploring these leaders' professional lives and what experiences, beliefs, and behaviors assisted them in these trajectories may provide insights for future women leaders in higher education.

Problem Statement

Women in leadership face numerous challenges before and after entering their position. Those challenges stem from gender bias, which maintains women's underrepresentation at the top leadership positions (Warner et al., 2018). This includes higher education, given that institutional administration is male-centric (Longman & Madsen, 2014). Women in leadership within care-oriented divisions at universities, such as college counseling centers, encounter additional obstacles. The culture shift in universities to align more with the marketized economy (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001) has created a care-less environment that favors care-less workers and leaders (Grummell et al., 2009; Lynch, 2010). Women leaders of college counseling centers must contend with the inherent challenges for women leaders in gendered organizations in addition to the difficulty of negotiating being a leader of a care-oriented division and a care-less manager in upper administration. This is a unique and under-recognized position for women leaders. Understanding how women navigate this space is the type of first-hand knowledge that can advance women's leadership in higher education (Archard, 2013) and provide a deeper awareness of the challenges women leaders of higher education face due to their gender.

The literature is rich in exploring the obstacles and barriers women face in achieving leadership roles in organizations, including higher education, and the strengths and benefits when women do lead. Past research has also studied women leaders in higher education and their career trajectories (Woollen, 2016). However, leadership research lacks in involving women and their unique experiences (Delgado & Allen, 2019), including leadership trajectories. Understanding the leadership trajectories of

women directors of college counseling centers filled a void within higher education research by uncovering women leaders' unique experiences of multiple gendered dynamics within higher education.

Higher education has been scrutinized due to the organizational gender inequities, which affords men more opportunities and attainment of leadership roles than women (Blackmore, 2014; Brower et al., 2019). Learning about how women directors of college counseling centers experience their leadership roles and the impact of their gender on their position may provide insight into how institutions can address gender bias within leadership, foster the leadership development of women constituents, and ultimately support equity within higher educational leadership in the United States.

Purpose Statement

This heuristic inquiry aimed to explore the leadership trajectories of women directors of college or university counseling centers. A trajectory is a course carved from the experiences one has had in her life which have gradually impacted her personal development (Elder, 1998; Elder & Johnson, 2003; Van Geert, 1994). Trajectories are part of many human experiences, often culminating in major life changes or developmental milestones (Elder, 1998). Specifically, leadership trajectory is the pathway to a leadership role or identity created from experiences and transitions one has encountered. Drawing from this, this study sought to understand the lived experiences, beliefs, and actions of women directors of college counseling centers and how these experiences influenced, and continue to influence, their leadership pathway.

Through the exploratory process of heuristic inquiry, this study uncovered the lived experiences of a specific subset of women leaders at the university level. This study

helped bring awareness to the gendered nature of higher education, particularly how a leader's gender influences their experiences and how they navigate leadership at the university level. Additionally, this study helped portray the interaction between those personal experiences and agency with gender leadership within higher education. The participants of this study were current directors of college or university counseling centers from across the country who identified as women. The sample of directors was obtained through purposeful criterion and snowball sampling. The study methods included extended interviews and the collection of participant-generated artifacts exemplifying experiences in their leadership role. These methods helped to understand better how these women directors obtained and maintained their position and experienced their unique leadership position within higher education's gendered nature.

Leadership trajectories were explored through the lifeworld existentials of lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relations (Van Manen, 1990) and used to frame data collection and data analysis. Understanding the personal trajectories towards leadership in an organization that is not favorable to women leaders also helped provide more insight into the ways the gendered nature of higher education creates barriers for women leaders in higher education.

Research Questions

The following research question was the main guiding question for this study:

1. How do women directors of college counseling centers portray their leadership trajectory in relation to their lived experiences related to time, space, body, and human relations?

a. How do women directors of college counseling centers describe the transition into their leadership position?
b. What do women directors' of counseling centers reflect on regarding leading a care-oriented department within a care-less organization?
c. How have women directors of college counseling centers experienced their gender while at work?
d. How do women directors of college counseling centers express their relationships with others in the workplace?

Definition of Terms

Below is a list of terms defined for the purposes of this study.

Leadership Trajectory

A trajectory is a pathway created by numerous transitions one goes through in a lifetime (Elder, 1998; Van Geert, 1994). Transitions are experiences that initiate change in one's life, often gradually, and influence the trajectory of an individual's development (Elder & Johnson, 2003). Trajectories have been observed in several human experiences, often coinciding with developmental stages or processes (Elder, 1998). Thus, a leadership trajectory is the pathway to becoming a leader created through a number of personal transitions.

Lifeworlds

As theorized by Van Manen (1990), the lifeworlds maintain that our lived experience as a whole is made up of four existentials: lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relations. These lifeworlds help us conceptualize and understand human experiences (Rich et al., 2013). Van Manen (1990) contends that these four lifeworlds are

like threads, weaving the tapestry of our human experiences. Each of the four different threads provides a different perspective, yet they intertwine and influence one another in the bigger picture (Rich et al., 2013). Since these themes show up in all humans' lives, they can be used to reveal the essence of a particular phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). These four lifeworlds, defined further below, were used to explore the phenomenon in question through data collection and analysis.

Lived Time. The existential lifeworld of lived time is defined as how a person perceives literal time and includes the feelings in response to the perceptions (Van Manen, 1990). Lived time can also be understood as how a person conceptualizes moments in her life in relation to her life's trajectory. A component of lived time is how our experience of temporal time influences our emotions and, therefore, our responses to our world (Rich et al., 2013). Lived time can be distinguished from literal time in that it is based on the individual's perception. People can experience lived time about their past, present, or future (Rich et al., 2013). Our emotional state is important in relation to lived time. This is because our emotions influence our perception of time and, in turn, alter then how we experience moments of our life (Van Manen, 1990).

Lived Space. Lived space is our emotion-based experience of space, how space makes us feel (Van Manen, 1990). The context of the space and the people or things found within or around it (or not) also influences the experience of lived space (Van Manen, 1990). For example, walking onto a sports field may make us feel empowered, energized; whereas sitting in the doctor’s office's exam room may make us feel exposed, helpless, or reliant. Lived space can also be influenced in two ways; the space we are in can alter our experience of it, or how we feel can alter our perception of the space (Rich

et al., 2013). Ultimately, lived space is another category for containing our human experience.

Lived Body. Lived body is the physical representation of oneself that is seen outwardly (Van Manen, 1990). Lived body also includes our bodily experience of the world and how that is communicated with others through our visible body (Rich et al., 2013). Therefore, our lived body may look different based on where we are, what we are doing, or with whom we interact (Van Manen, 1990).

Lived Relations. Lived relations involve how we connect, communicate, and collaborate with others (Van Manen, 1990). When considering lived relations, the self is important since the dynamic explored is how the self interacts with others. Lived relations involve the relationship as a whole, including the creation, maintenance, or even cessation of a relationship (Van Manen, 1997).

Gender

Gender is a socially constructed concept related to the behaviors, presentation, roles, and expectations associated with being female or male (WHO, 2021). While gender includes identities outside feminine and masculine (Richards, 2016), the literature and research related to the leadership inequities related to gender within organizations discussed in this paper conceptualize gender through the binary of women and men. Therefore, for this study, gender refers to this binary concept as well. However, gender can also be understood by the actions and behaviors one displays that reflect the societal view of a particular gender identity (Butler, 1988). The social construct of gender can then influence the self-concept of gender or how people see themselves; as a man or as a

woman (Hoffman, 2006). In this way, gender also appeared in this study within the concept of the lifeworld related to the lived body.

Heuristic Inquiry

A heuristic inquiry is a phenomenological research approach focused on exploring a particular phenomenon experienced to some degree by the researcher herself (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic inquiry mirrors our exploratory processes as children, engaging our sensory perceptions and using self-reflection for discovery (Sultan, 2019). The word heuristic comes from the Greek word *heuriskein,* meaning "to discover or find" (Moustakas, 1990, p 9). Heuristic inquiry is a method to explore humans' living experience, meaning that events are interconnected and influence one another continuously (Sultan, 2019).

Guiding Concepts

My identity as a woman, experience working as a therapist within a college counseling center, and aspirations to become a director are all aspects of myself that have played a role in this study. These experiences led me to explore this topic and essentially impacted one another in this process, which interestingly remains no different than the women in this study. That is because their experiences related to their leadership trajectories occurred within larger social constructs. Those constructs include gendered leadership, feminism, and lifeworlds, and all three helped me to situate, conceptualize, and guide this research.

The first concept that influenced this research is that of gendered leadership in higher education. Gendered leadership has been used in organizational research to highlight disparities in representation and barriers women face to obtain or maintain

leadership. This remains true for higher education; this notion of higher education as a gendered organization helped to situate the problem at hand and conceptualize the experiences these participants have faced. As I envisioned myself in a leadership position, I became more aware of my gender and how it could hinder my goal of becoming a college counseling director. However, while gendered leadership has been applied to higher education, it has not been used to talk about college counseling centers specifically. Therefore, this concept of gendered leadership in higher education helped guide this research to further understand a specific department within the institutional setting.

Along with the gendered leadership, my own identity as a woman helped form the second guiding concept of this study; feminism. As I began to conceptualize the problem of gendered leadership in higher education, I realized that the overall phenomenon of societal systems oppressing and disenfranchising women consistent with feminist theory (Gimenez, 2005) would be inherent in this research. While feminist theory does not drive this research, it is impossible to ignore how these women's experiences occur within cultural norms driven by gender, such as the roles women are expected to fill in society (e.g. care work (Lynch, 2010)).

Lastly, my professional background as a therapist also played a role in this study's guiding concepts, particularly concerning methodology. Ever since I was young, I can remember feeling deeply about most things. Whether it was a person or an experience, I had strong feelings such as joy or fear, pain or pleasure, or others. As I grew older, I became more curious about the reactions and whether others had the same experiences. I came to believe that these responses are based on perceptual biases, which are

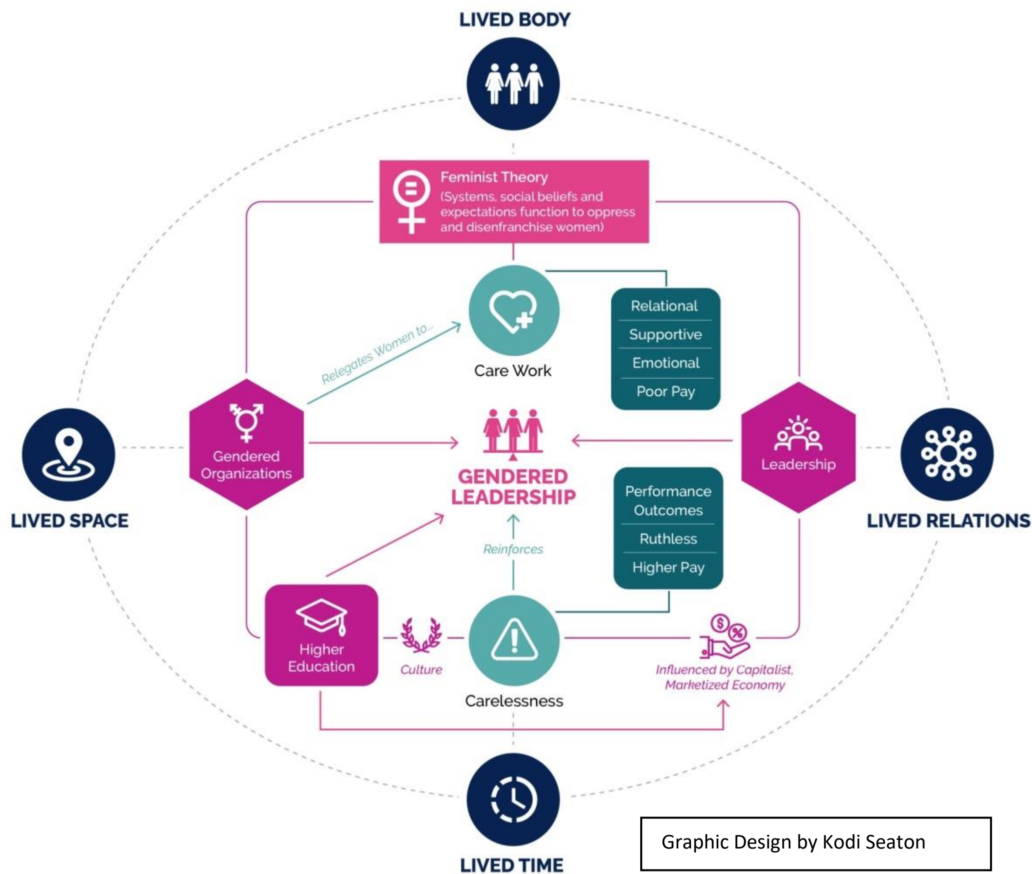
individualized but filtered through the same lenses of a shared human experience. Therefore, to understand the world, we need to truly understand the individual person and her experience.

This worldview is the foundation for my career choice of therapist and has allowed me to understand my clients better and help them understand themselves better. This belief system also connects to the foundational purpose of heuristic inquiry: to deeply understand the participant's lived experience (Moustakas, 1990). The research paradigm of heuristic inquiry speaks to the profound impact that self-reflection can have on one's understanding of the self and a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Additionally, Van Manen’s (1990) theory of the four existential lifeworlds guided the interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon in question. This is because similar to my personal beliefs, Van Manen (1990) notes that although human experience is unique, it can be understood through four essential concepts or “existential lifeworlds." Since grasping the essential experience of a phenomenon can be difficult to comprehend consciously (Van Manen, 1990), using these lifeworlds as a framework when collecting and analyzing data facilitated a deeper understanding of the research question.

Additionally, my experience as a woman therapist working under women leaders in a care-oriented division at the university spurred by curiosity around how gender plays a part in leadership of college counseling centers. Again, these personal experiences with the phenomenon in question led to the decision to use heuristic inquiry as the research methodology. A graphic for these guiding concepts and their interactions is reflected below in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Guiding Concepts



Delimitations

One of the benefits of heuristic research is the in-depth focus on a particular population to understand their experience of a phenomenon at a significant level (Moustakas, 1990). For this study, the phenomenon explored was the leadership trajectories of women directors of college counseling centers. Given that the population studied experienced the phenomenon in question (Sultan, 2019), the participants were

current women directors of college counseling centers. I decided to focus on women in particular due to the larger issue being addressed: gendered leadership within higher education.

Another boundary in this study was current directors rather than past or future directors. The decision for this came from the belief that women who have retired or moved on from such positions or have yet to take such a position might have difficulty separating their current leadership or other trajectories from the leadership trajectories that led them to their director position.

Additionally, while over 68% of directors of college counseling centers identified as women in 2020 (AUCCCD, 2020), I only sampled a small number of those individuals. I chose to seek out 15 participants because while Moustakas (1990) notes that heuristic inquiry can be achieved with just one participant, a more in-depth, profuse understanding of the phenomenon is reached with 10-15 participants. Despite the intentional focus on these particular women and their individualized experiences, overall, this small, specific sample is delimiting in nature.

Another delimiting factor for this study is the research design. Heuristic inquiry is a phenomenological research practice, and therefore the methodology chosen for this study was qualitative in design. While quantitative or mixed methods design may have allowed for many participants or varied exploration of this topic, neither was an appropriate design for this study. As the researcher, I had some direct personal experience with the phenomenon being explored. I was also highly interested and engaged with this research question due to my aspirations to lead a college counseling center. In addition to intense interest in the subject, this personal experience of the

phenomenon is what differentiates heuristic inquiry from other methods of research (Patton, 2002). This is why the study's methodological design is qualitative.

Lastly, heuristic inquiry aims to understand a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). This means that the data collection processes are both personal and humanistic in nature (Sultan, 2019). Interviews are often done in a manner that facilitates reaching that depth through techniques such as face to face, open-dialogue discussions in a comfortable setting with little or no fixed structure (Moustakas, 1990; Van Manen, 1990). When considering the sample for this study, I chose to obtain participants from across the country to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon in question through potentially more varied experiences. While seeking to maintain this goal of the participants' geographical diversity, there were challenges to in-person interviews. Restrictions related to finances, time, and a global pandemic called for more creative solutions. To account for these difficulties, I completed the interview portion of the data collection via an online video format. However, this solution generated potential delimitations.

Choosing to interview the participants through an online format did create delimitations and influenced the practices chosen to incorporate during this section of data collection. Given that online video interviews can feel less personal (Seitz, 2016) and create technical difficulties that hinder the development of a rapport (O'Connor et al., 2008), such a format contends with the aforementioned principles of heuristic inquiry. However, online interview formats do not always result in substandard exchanges (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). When researchers can identify the needs of their preferred participants and employ specific practices to develop a rapport virtually, online interviews can be successful for providing meaningful data for qualitative studies

(Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016). Such techniques were applied to this study, such as enhancing social-signaling to convey emotional expressions (Seitz, 2016) and communicating through email and phone beforehand (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). These methods were utilized to establish a stronger relationship with participants and rapport throughout data collection.

Significance

The purpose of this study was to portray the interaction between personal agency and experience, gender leadership, and higher education. This was explored through the leadership trajectories of women directors of college counseling centers. The significance of this study lies in applying the knowledge related to the experiences these women have had in their leadership roles to policy, practice, and research within higher education.

Policy

Although this study explored women directors' leadership trajectories at college counseling centers, it has implications for higher education policy changes. One way to influence policy is to create assessments that identify and measure obstacles that hinder and practices that support women in their advancement into leadership positions at the university. As discussed throughout this introduction, women face obstacles to advancement in leadership within higher education that men do not encounter (Blackmore, 2014). Uncovering these women's direct lived experiences provides deeper insights into this systemic problem and highlights specific challenges and support services, with which they encountered. Using these personal accounts and knowledge, universities can create assessments that accurately capture the strengths and weaknesses

of systemic practices. The assessments can be written for the institutional or personal level.

Completion of these assessments by all stakeholders would support commitment to the community. Such measures would help institutional constituents reflect on barriers and supports for women's advancement maintained by individuals, departments, and even the university culture as a whole. This can lead to systemic changes and organizational improvements through double-loop learning achieved through self-reflection (Argyris & Schön, 1974). This is because double-loop learning changes underlying practices, which are the root cause of problems within the organization (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Besides supporting double-loop learning, self-reflection is also an important tool for effective leadership (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004). Therefore, it would be even more appropriate for current institutional leaders to use the proposed self-assessments to identify their biases and practices that hinder women’s leadership advancement.

Aside from influencing the creation of these assessments, this study also has implications for other policy changes at institutions extended from these measures. For example, after the development of assessments, institutions could institute policies that would mandate the completion, review, and discussion of these assessments' findings. Such policies could help universities make strides towards changing gender bias within leadership through double-loop learning as an institution as a whole.

Practice

The implications for this study go beyond influencing policy through assessment development and review. Another implication of this study is to alter practices at institutions of higher education to better support women's leadership. These practice

changes can come from the insights gained from these women's experiences. As these women reflect on experiences that have helped and hindered their leadership trajectory, institutional administrators can assess their own practices, which parallel these experiences. From this, administrators may identify current practices that align with those supporting women's advancement; they can also identify those systematic practices that do not need to change.

Learning which practices are problematic in advancing women’s leadership is the first step towards equity in higher educational leadership. While the inequities in higher educational leadership have been recognized, institutions may not fully understand the stereotyping and discrimination perpetuated within their organization (Brower et al., 2019). By identifying those practices that hinder women's leadership, institutions can make the necessary changes in practice. Those changes can come about through sensitivity training and campus culture programming that draw attention to leadership barriers women face and how to avoid, address, and/or change these practices as individuals or departments.

Research

Along with implications for policy and practice, this study also encourages future research. To expand on these findings, future researchers could explore the leadership trajectories of women in other administrative roles in higher education. The results could build upon the concepts of leadership trajectories for women professionals by identifying commonalities between the two studies. Additionally, broadening the findings to a greater population of women leaders could help support larger organizational reform that could influence higher education's practices and policies as a whole. In addition to

expanding on the results of this study, future research may uncover additional concepts related to women's leadership trajectories in higher education. Such findings might not have been observable in the current study given the smaller sample and more specific population. The discovery of additional concepts could potentially draw attention to other policy changes and practices to support the growth of women leaders in this field.

Additionally, this study could serve as an entry point for future researchers to explore the impact that reading about the leadership trajectories of women leaders in higher education has on women in higher education. As discussed, women are underrepresented in leadership positions within higher education. This underrepresentation can actually fuel the continuation of this trend; when an individual does not see oneself represented in a particular role, it decreases the likelihood that they will feel able to obtain that position (Hannum et al., 2015). Highlighting the voices of women who are leaders at institutes of higher education could validate and inspire women professionals to attain such roles within institutions and beyond. Future research could explore this dynamic, thus suggesting the importance of continued attention to women's voices in research.

Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 reviewed the issue at hand and includes the problem statement, purpose of the study, conceptual framework, delimitations, and study significance. Chapter 2 reviews literature related to women leadership in higher education and the guiding concepts related to the study. Chapter 3 is the methodology of the research study, and Chapter 4 reveals the study findings. Chapters

5 and 6 are two separate manuscripts developed for professionals and researchers in the field, prepared for publication.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This dissertation is constructed in a manuscript fashion; therefore, the literature review is designed to provide a general overview of these concepts and how they relate to this current research's importance. The review will begin with a brief analysis of the nature of gendered organizations, followed by the literature related to higher education as a gendered organization. Following, I will discuss the two opposing styles of work, care work and care-less work. Then, I will review the impact the gendering of higher education has had on women's leadership, followed by theories of care work and care-less ness as they related to college counseling centers. Lastly, I will review the literature related to a unique subset of women leaders within higher education, directors of college counseling centers, and how the previous topics intersect with this population.

Gendered Organizations

Although women have made significant advancements to obtain equity and equality within societal systems, they continue to experience biases and prejudices that hinder their success and progress in organizations. Acker (1990, 2012) helped explain why gender inequality continues to exist, particularly at the organizational level, despite changes in laws and progress from women's liberation movements. Acker (1990) began by clarifying that rather than being gender-neutral, as previously discussed by theorists, organizations are profoundly gendered. The concept of gendered organizations explains the systematic structures, policies, and practices that create and maintain a division related to gender, with males being the advantaged, primary, and privileged gender (Acker, 1990). The division leads to women's marginalization within the organization and

reproduces inequities based on gender, affording men more opportunities than women. Based on Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations, Hart (2016) offers the alternative perspective that organizations should be deemed masculine to specify the privileged gender. Whether deeming organizations as "gendered" or "masculine", Acker (1990, 2012) identifies several processes that function to produce inequalities based on gender in organizations such as systemic sexism which includes inequitable organizational practices and expectations based on implicit or explicit gender stereotypes. These processes help draw attention to the profoundly systemic and often hidden or ignored practices that inhibit and devalue women.

Systematic sexism has been researched and explored extensively in the literature. However, Acker's (1990, 2012) theory of gendered organizations provided a new perspective on how and why systematic sexism persists. In Acker's (1990) first reflection on gendered organizations, she outlined five different ways that this process occurs. Later, she reframed these five elements to fit within the main components of "the gendered substructure of organizations" (Acker, 2012). The gendered substructure is a term coined to explain the differences and beliefs about women and men embedded in an organization's culture, inherent in the policies and practices at the organization, and sustained by continued divisions based on gender (Acker, 2012). This gendered substructure infiltrates the organization and establishes a hierarchy, placing women at the bottom and men at the top. As Acker (2012) notes, culture and human relations within the organization create and maintain these inequities related to gender. This system is also perpetuated by overt and covert practices that serve to legitimize this unjust process. Such practices include, but are not limited to, the separation of job duties by gender,

discussions around women's bodies and emotional expression, and even social engagements that exclude women (Acker, 1990, 2012). Although Acker did not specify all of the gendered organizations in society, her theory of a gendered, or as Hart (2016) describes, specifically masculine organization allowed other theorists and researchers to explore how such practices show up in particular companies, corporations, or institutions. One specific organization where those practices have been discussed in the literature is higher education.

Higher Education as a Gendered Organization

Higher education's gendered substructure can be seen within the literature in the field, even when it is not framed or named in this way. For example, authors have identified particular policies, procedures, and practices in higher education that inherently marginalize women while privileging men and favoring behaviors and traits recognized as masculine (Blackmore, 2014; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Hannum et al., 2015; Hart, 2016). This aligns with Acker's (2012) theory of gendered substructure, which includes the culture, human relations, and expectations within the organization that create and maintain inequities related to gender. I will review the literature related to the gendered nature of higher education within the framework of Acker's (2012) gendered substructures. The gendered substructure is created through three components: the organizational culture, interactions and human relations among organization members, and gendered identities working within the organization.

Organizational Culture

Acker (2012) explains that an organization's culture plays a significant role in its system's gendering. This culture is created through certain beliefs related to gender and

gender differences within the organization that infiltrates specific images, symbols, behaviors, and principles (Acker, 2012). When the organization privileges men over women, this is evidenced both overtly and covertly in the culture. Hart (2016) uncovered an organizational culture in higher education that restricts the growth of women professors of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics specifically. She found that these women professors reported job duties and tasks unbalanced to their male colleagues, with the women having greater expected workloads (Hart, 2016). Additionally, these tasks did not assist them in their promotion pathways and were often delegated by male superiors (Hart, 2016). In student affairs positions women are more likely than men to be tasked with responsibilities related to direct care and contact with students and parents (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998) or given tasks with less meaning and influence (Blackhurst, 2000a). Such practices create greater levels of stress, burnout, and attrition for women in higher educational leadership roles (Blackhurst, 2000b; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). These uneven and inequitable work responsibilities can be understood as maintaining the gendered substructure through an organizational culture by creating a division of job-related tasks and distribution of power based on gender.

Other aspects of an organizational culture that supports higher education's gendered substructure have been discussed in the literature. A frequent point in previous research is that particular practices and efforts related to recruitment, hiring, and promotion in higher education favor male employees (Hannum et al., 2015; Hart, 2016; Healy et al., 2011). Diehl and Dzubinski's (2016) work exemplified this with examples of how men already at the top of the organizational hierarchy tend to mentor and advocate for other men to obtain leadership positions much earlier and more readily than women.

When women are mentored within higher education, they are often coached in how to assimilate to the organization's gendered culture instead of empowered and supported in altering it (Blackmore, 2014). Promotional practices at universities within academic and student affairs are often obscure, with little to no clear steps for such a trajectory (Hart, 2016; Jo, 2008). Often, men move upwards through promotions because they are directed to apply for these positions (Hart, 2016), while women are waiting for opportunities for longer times than their male colleagues (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Even when women make it to promotional reviews, they are held to different standards and higher expectations than men (Hannum et al., 2015). Female university presidents cite similar unfair promotional practices as having hindered their professional progression, resulting in emotional strain (Oikelome, 2017). Within student affairs, the majority of women are stuck in entry level and mid-level positions, also resulting in lower salaries and less flexible working hours (Biddix, 2011; Blackhurst, 2000a; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994). This leaves women to face challenges in upward mobility and additional stress within the university.

Even symbols within the university culture reinforce the gendered nature of higher education. For example, many institutions display visuals of past leaders, either in artwork throughout the university or through honorary building names (Rennison & Bonomi, 2020). Since the majority of these individuals have been White men, women are inherently invalidated as appropriate leaders at the institutional level (Torres & Chavous, 2020). Additionally, MIT's well-known study revealed cultural aspects at universities that discriminated against women, such as through practices as giving smaller office space and lower compensation (MIT, 1999). Gardner (2013) found similar discriminatory

practices, but more subtle, such that women faculty reported a culture that did not recognize nor outwardly salute their contributions. Blackhurst (2000a) noted that discrimination based on gender also exists within student affairs such that women in administrative roles received less support from supervisors who were male, were not privy to mentorship given the lack of women represented at higher leadership levels, and were paid less than their male colleagues. When considering these discoveries with Acker's (1999) previous theories, it is evident how these practices align with her observation that the gendered substructure is generated daily through routine organizational tasks and processes.

Human Relations

The second component of the gendered substructure involves the interpersonal interactions that occur at the organization (Acker, 2012). This includes individual, as well as group, interactions (Acker, 2012). While Acker's (2012) theory reveals how these interactions may appear within organizations, other literature directly observes these within higher education. A common phrase read in literature around higher education's gendered nature is that it is an "old boys club" or a culture that supports, mentors, and privileges men while excluding women and is created by the interactions and relationships between men and women at universities (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Dominici et al., 2009; Hart, 2016). For example, women faculty and staff have reported being excluded from social get-togethers, which often result in networking opportunities for the men who attend (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Hart, 2016). Women university presidents also reported being discouraged by males to move forward in their professional endeavors at some point during their leadership pathway (Oguntoyinbo,

2014). These are just some ways that men may make displays of dominance through interactions at the university.

Other interpersonal interactions that reinforce gendered substructure at institutions include observed practices such as interrupting women in meetings and critiquing women for disagreeing with decisions or suggestions (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016), not assisting women after being helped by them previously (Healy et al., 2011), women being placed in roles to give more emotionally (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Healy et al., 2011; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004), or uneven verbal acknowledgments of accomplishments between men and women (Healy et al., 2011). Women administrators within student affairs reported men were given more support staff to assist their needs (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998), yet they were asked more often than male colleagues to work longer hours (Blackhurst, 2000a). Also, women working within student affairs report they were scrutinized more than male colleagues for conflicts with work that involved care of children (Mason et al., 2013). These behaviors reinforce the marginalization of women.

Additionally, as Acker (2012) suggested, the sexuality of men and women plays a part in relations within the organization, leading to harassment, belittlement, and other interactions that marginalize women. Women at universities have reported intimidation, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment when working in higher education (Brower et al., 2019; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Gardner, 2013). Women presidents of universities cite that their credentials and decisions are questioned more often than male leaders (Rennison & Bonomi, 2020). This leads to higher levels of criticism, scrutiny, and underestimation for women administrators (Oguntoyinbo, 2014; Rennison & Bonomi, 2020). These concrete examples represent how the human relations at universities sustain

the gendered substructure of higher education by robbing women of opportunities to excel while simultaneously supporting men's success.

Gendered Schemas

The last element of the gendered organizational substructure involves the influence gendered identities or schemas have on the individual members and their experiences while at work (Acker, 2012). Both society and the organization create these schemas. When looking at the literature regarding higher education, there are many examples of how these schemas influence the organization to privilege men and disenfranchise women. One of these societal schemas involves the behavioral expectations of men versus women. Historically, in the United States, men have been viewed as wage-earners and higher status holders, and specific behaviors are more readily attributed to them, such as aggression and dominance (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In contrast, women are seen as caretakers, sensitive, nurturing, and fit for lower-status positions (Eagly et al., 2000). These role expectations play out within higher education in several ways (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). One was represented in a study by Gardner (2013) as women faculty reported they were presumed to participate in activities associated with femininity, such as service and instruction, more often than their male counterparts. Whereas Hart (2016) found women reported men are often granted access to information that allows them to climb the institution's hierarchy because of their male status (Hart, 2016). Women working within student affairs at universities also reported they were left out of important decision-making meetings, leading to a decrease in their job satisfaction and higher rates of attrition (Jo, 2008).

Higher education has also created an ideal worker and leader at the institution whose schema most aligns with that of a man: one who is unencumbered by family obligations and can give all personal time to the university position (Grummell et al., 2009; Lynch, 2010). This results in pressures for women at universities to present in a more masculine way. For example, Hart (2016) revealed that women within universities did not openly discuss their families, especially children when reflecting on their leadership roles. Yet, women are still expected to juggle both identities and responsibilities: mother and professional. As a representation of this challenge, women in higher leadership positions within student affairs are more often not married or childless as compared to their male counterparts (Mason et al., 20013). Additionally, women who have decided to have children report that when they return to their student affairs work, they feel they are under more vigorous review than before having children (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). Women who ended up leaving student affairs administration reported one factor was the lack of flexible work hours, or lack of uniformity in application of such practices, since this impacted their balance of responsibilities at home (Jo, 2008). This type of sex discrimination based on gendered schemas eventually leads to work dissatisfaction, role confusion, and higher levels of stress for women within higher education (Anderson et al., 2000; Blackhurst, 2000b).

Nevertheless, women face an additional challenge when they do enact masculine traits or behaviors when in leadership positions. Often, they are chastised for appearing too stern or cold (Healy et al., 2011). These practices also often result in a repression of one's identity and greater tension in navigating ones roles at home and at work (Priola, 2007). Overall, the gendered schemas created from society and higher education result in

more scrutiny and judgment being explicitly placed on women (Hannum et al., 2015). Women, aware of this dynamic, try to avoid further negative evaluation by staying silent about these practices. However, these avoidance tactics result in the continued experience of unequal and unethical treatment (Healy et al., 2011). Therefore, the literature reveals some ways gendered aspects of identity influence how men and women view themselves and their roles within the organization, proving Acker's (1999, 2012) theory that such dynamics serve to reinforce higher education's gendered substructure.

While Acker (2012) may not have cited higher education directly as a gendered organization, the components she outlined as examples of a gendered organization's gendered substructure are evident within the literature related to higher education. The literature reviewed reveals concrete examples of how culture, interactions, and schemas within higher education serve to privilege men and masculinity while excluding and inhibiting women and femininity. This gendered substructure causes inherent barriers for women's success within the organization, further reinforcing higher education's gendering. Literature reveals the ways leadership is gendered in higher education, further perpetuating the inequalities for women.

Higher Education as Gendered: Impact on Leadership

One of the ways the gendering of higher education is materialized is through the leadership at universities. Aligned with the gendered substructure of gendered organizations (Acker, 2012), literature in this area reveals that women within higher education are excluded and discriminated against in both subtle and covert ways such that their advancements in the organization are affected (Airini et al., 2011; Maranto & Griffin, 2011). Part of the reason for these obstacles relates to the notion that women may

not be seen as exemplary leaders at universities due to gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 2007). This is partially a result of higher educational leadership associated with what society has deemed masculine characteristics (Blackmore, 2014; Deem, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002, Schein, 2007). Another factor is the changing landscape of managerialism at the university, as noted in the literature, which calls for a type of leader willing to be entirely devoted to the institution (Bailyn, 2003; Dominici et al., 2009; Grummell et al., 2009). This care-less leadership style (Lynch et al., 2012) is more likely to be fulfilled by men given the continued care roles women are expected to maintain at home and in the workplace (Dominici et al., 2009; Grummell et al., 2009).

These gender-based stereotypes and behavioral expectations found in the literature make it less likely for women to be seen as fitting to be leaders within higher education institutions. This phenomenon was described by Heilman (1995) in a more general organizational context. Heilman (1995) noted jobs within the workplace are associated with particular traits and skills. When an individual attempts to hold such a position, the gender-based stereotypes ascribed to her or him can produce a "lack of fit" for the role if those stereotypes do not match up with the ascribed traits of the job (Heilman, 1995). This "lack of fit" for women into the care-less leadership style at the university level influences the advancement of women into positions of power within higher education, therefore reinforcing this systemic injustice.

Since these inherent barriers to leadership are ingrained in the culture of higher education (Fritsch, 2015) and block women from leadership roles (Dominici et al., 2009), some researchers have found women are less interested in trying to pursue upper management positions (Evers & Sieverding, 2015; Morley, 2014). Additionally, if

women are interested in pursuing leadership, they are less likely than men to have mentorship and support in reaching those objectives (Dominici et al., 2009; Padilla, 2007). This is important given that literature in the field reveals the importance of female mentorship to advancing women's leadership at the highest levels in higher education (Baltodano et al., 2012; Brown, 2005). However, challenges in attaining leadership positions are only one way the gendered substructure of higher education infiltrates women's leadership in universities.

Even when women obtain leadership roles, the gendered nature of higher education still influences their position and success. For example, the literature reveals that when women are in leadership at universities, their roles are typically in positions with less clout (Nidiffer, 2010), less ability for influence (Settles et al., 2006), or reinforce gender stereotypes (Burkinshaw, 2015). Other studies have found that women leaders, in general, are often put into leadership roles when an organization is struggling, making it more challenging for them to succeed and more likely to be blamed for the failings that were already set up to occur (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Hewlett et al., 2008).

Additionally, since the higher education hierarchy is masculine-focused (Longman & Madsen, 2014), hidden expectations or rules of behaving based on masculine stereotypes inform the culture (Airini et al., 2011), which disadvantages women. Brower et al. (2019) point out that in leadership positions, expectations based on gender may differ depending on the division or department, making pathways to success ambiguous. Women leading divisions stereotyped as male-oriented, such as business or science, may be expected to perform in ways more associated with masculine traits (e.g. aggressive or dominant) than women leading divisions stereotyped as female-centric

(Brower et al., 2019), such as education or student affairs. These differences of expected behavior create confusion for women leaders as well as ambiguity of how to successfully lead and additional stress (Priola, 2007; Settles et al., 2006). However, because gender-based discriminations are often covert (Maranto & Griffin, 2011) and part of the cultural aspects of higher education (MIT, 2009), in any division, women may be unaware or unsure about the role their gender plays in the circumstances related to their 'othering' (Brower et al., 2019). The literature fails to recognize the unique experiences and challenges faced by women leading divisions stereotyped as female-centric.

Bearing these challenges in mind, women have to navigate the cultural playbook of the masculine-oriented organization of higher education by altering their ways of behaving to fit in (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Charles, 2014). This constant identity management takes a great deal of emotional energy (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Gherardi 1995) and has been reflected in the literature as a reason for many women to be less interested in leadership trajectories at universities (Bagilhole & White, 2013; O'Connor, 2001). However, a deeper understanding of this identity management and its relation to specific areas of university leadership is not addressed in the literature.

Given that women are obtaining leadership positions in different areas of the university, it is crucial to understand how the gendered nature of higher education further influences their unique leadership role and their leadership trajectories and how they negotiate these difficulties. This is also important, given that research has revealed change is happening with how leadership is viewed. For example, it was discovered that effective leadership might be becoming associated with stereotypically feminine traits, such as care and collaboration, along with the previously associated male traits of

dominance (Koenig et al., 2011). However, despite these changes, men still associate leadership with masculinity more than women do, and there is still a general stereotype that leadership is masculine in nature (Koenig et al., 2011). Due to this, women leading female-oriented divisions at the university may still face challenges of incongruity between their divisional leadership status and their leadership status when meeting with their male managerial counterparts.

This collision of leadership roles creates a new type of bind for women leaders of female-oriented divisions at the university; one that is influenced by the intersection of their gender, their leadership of a division associated with gender stereotypes, and their upper status administrative role within the context of a gendered organization. The traditional double-bind speaks to women leaders, who are expected to fit the mold of male-oriented leadership by adopting stereotypical male-traits but when doing so are scrutinized for being too aggressive yet not being nurturing or kind (Frye, 1983). When looking at women who direct female-oriented divisions, they face another layer of such a bind by having to navigate leading a gender-stereotyped division while maintaining a status with upper administration which is consistent with male-oriented leadership traits. This intersection of identities and leadership expectations is important to understand further given the many roles women leaders can take on within the university.

Care and Care-Lessness: Two Opposing Styles of Work

Care Work

Care work has been explored by theorists, looking to define what it is as well as highlight its gendered nature. While many definitions exist to describe care work, there are a few common defining features that are woven into all descriptions. First, care work

has been identified as tasks that involve service to another individual, which are inspired in some way by interest in the individual's needs and overall well-being (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Folbre, 1995; Tronto & Fisher, 1990). In this way, care work has an emotional basis with the providers experiencing some level of responsibility and altruistic nature to help others (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Tronto & Fisher, 1990).

Care work is also defined by the impact it has on the recipient. For example, care work has a positive influence on the recipient, developing their individual potential and supporting their growth and development in some way (England et al., 2002; Glenn, 1992). Therefore, care work is seen as labor which involves both emotional relations as well as helpful jobs and is done so with a level of selflessness (Abel & Nelson, 1990). This is in opposition to other work which is done in order to earn financial gains and does not involve emotional connection or altruistic nature (Leira, 1994).

Differing opinions with care work revolve around the directness of service. Some scholars contend that there is a relational aspect to care work and it involves an element of face-to-face interaction (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; England et al., 2002; Folbre, 1995). By this definition, the relational element of the work is essential (Duffy, 2005). Others note that care work does not have to include a personal interaction, such as through meal preparation or janitorial services (DeVault, 1991; Romero, 1992). These scholars note that despite the non-relational element of these tasks, they still have a relational element in that they support the health and wellness of others (DeVault, 1991; Glenn, 1992; Romero, 1992). Therefore, while care work may or may not have a direct face-to-face interaction, in scholars' definition it does involve some part of taking care of the needs of another.

Despite these minor differences in opinion on the relational aspects of care work, care work has been associated with unpaid domestic work or paid employment that involves looking after and supporting others (Acker 1995; England, 2005). Given that such caring roles, whether in the home or in the workforce, have a societal associated with women's work, care work has been conceptualized as gendered (Acker 1995; (Lynch et al., 2009). Women are therefore seen in culture as the default care workers (Lynch et al., 2009). Within organizations, such as higher education, this manifests as women being asked to take part in tasks which could be considered the care work, such as engaging in direct service to students and parents or encouraged to take on more thesis supervision hours more so than male colleagues (Henkel, 2000; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998)

Since care work is seen as improving the abilities of others by supporting their physical, mental, and emotional health which can ultimately benefit others as well, it has been argued as a public benefit (England, 2005). Care work in the paid sector has been associated with jobs such as nursing, child care, teaching, and therapy to name a few (England et al., 2002). Yet, paid positions such as these associated with care are often not compensated equitably. England et al. (2002) found that jobs associated with care work paid 5-10% less than was predicted when controlling for requirements such as education and skill. This may be a result of the work being considered a public good. Typically public goods are not compensated by our economy since there is no way to profit from the gains that result from such work (England, 2005). Another explanation is that because women are inherently undervalued in society, so the work associated with them is deflated (England, 2005). An additional argument for the poor pay of care work is that

the intrinsic motivation to satisfy such roles makes care workers less likely to seek out greater return on their work for fear it will impact the beneficiaries of their care (Folbre, 2001). For women, who are the majority of care workers, there is a belief that they engage in their care work from both a job and emotional basis (Graham, 1991; Thomas, 1993) This essentially sets a "social expectation that women's caring work should blur the distinction between labor and love" (Acker, 1995, p. 24). Therefore, women in care work can be easily taken advantage of by employers or administrators, who feel they can cut costs when necessary since these women will make self-sacrifices to continue their best quality of caring (England, 2005). This gendered nature of care work disadvantages women and creates expectations that result in further marginalization of women at home and the workplace.

Care-Lessness

Juxtaposed to the structure of care work is the concept of care-lessness and how it impacts managerialism, organizations, and in turn higher education. Where care work has fundamentals in the relationships of humans and importance of such connections, care-lessness is born from the capitalist society which does not consider the significance of interpersonal relations. Rather, care-lessness is recognized as the ability to perform a role in a way that disregards any other responsibilities and puts work in the forefront to enhance productivity with a focus on profits (Lynch, 2010). This ruthless, competitive, devoted, self-interest focused way of being in the workplace has become the model for citizens (Sklair, 2001). In this way, the ideal worker within the capitalist society is not encumbered by any duties (e.g. care taking) which would impede his or her ability to be

accessible at all times to answer the call of the job, resulting in a care-less work style (Giroux, 2002).

Higher education has had aspects of care-lessness woven throughout its history. Early views of education were that students should be seen as sensible beings who are being provided with information to become a meaningful participant in society (Nussbaum, 2001). Emotions, feelings, and relationships were not seen as having a place in the classroom. While these care-less elements have existed within academia for a long time (Lynch, 2010), the recent shift in the marketization of higher education due to academic capitalism that involves intense focus on the job, individual productivity, and overall profits has infiltrated higher education to a greater degree (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001). In turn, university culture has shifted to be one that is profit-driven, cutthroat, and independent and awards those who can satisfy the care-lessness needed in order to fulfill those traits (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Moreau et al., 2007; Lynch, 2010).

At universities, this care-less marketization is actualized by constant measures of performance, scrutiny of faculty and staff, heavier workloads with less compensation, frequent auditing, expectations to work longer hours, and view of the student as a consumer which leads to decisions based on what those consumers may want versus what they may need (Giroux, 2002). This increases individualism, self-centeredness, a diminished feeling of accountability towards students, and a culture which becomes more focused on the bottom line than on caring (Lynch, 2010). The behaviors of those at the university level that are based on care-lessness include a focus on individual needs, untethered commitment to the institution, and disregard for care responsibilities has

become the status quo and celebrated by institutional leadership (Lynch, 2010). This results in an ideology of care-lessness within higher education.

Due to the care-less attitude and behaviors needed to excel in this consumer-driven, capitalist academic environment, most managerial positions are attained only by people who do not have other care roles (Grummel et al., 2009). There is an expectation that those filling these roles are able to give their free time, including nights and weekends, to the job. Since the societal expectation is that women are caregivers (Lynch, 2009), and these roles exhibit stereotyped masculine-oriented qualities such as aggressiveness, authority, and care-lessness, these managers and administrators tend to be men (Bailyn, 2003; Hanlon, 2009; Lynch, 2010; Probert, 2005). In this way, the care-less style of work ethic necessary to thrive in the new culture of higher education is another gendered substructure given that it marginalizes women while privileging men.

Gendered Leadership: Women Directors of College Counseling Centers

As reviewed, gendered leadership, and its gendered substructure, have been applied to higher education. However, there is little to no information on how this phenomenon influences particular women leaders at universities. Additionally, past research fails to incorporate multiple theories, such as the role-congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002) or care work and higher education's care-lessness (Lynch, 2010), and how these play a part in the gendering of leadership within higher education. Even though the literature notes how gender discrimination and biases are reinforced in leadership roles at universities, less is known about specific leadership positions that may face additional challenges due to their gendered nature. This is particularly true for women leaders working in divisions at the

university that may be stereotyped or typically seen as "women's work." As previously noted, Brower et al. (2019) showed that expectations for women leaders might not be the same across the institution. They suggest that women leading divisions stereotyped as “male work” may be expected to behave in ways that differ from women directing divisions associated with stereotypical female work (Brower et al., 2019). Additionally, leadership is hypothesized to be stereotyped as less masculine in fields represented by a majority of women, such as education and health care, given those fields are associated with feminine qualities like care and nurturance (Koenig, 2011). However, without specific studies in this area, this is only an assumption, and the implications of these expectations on women leaders are unknown. Additionally, the authors do not theorize on the additional bind women leaders face who lead female stereotyped, care-oriented divisions in gendered organizations.

Regarding the overall research on directing college counseling centers, there is some discussion in the literature on the challenges of leading these divisions (Bishop, 1990, 2016; Chin et al., 2020; Davies, 2000; Guinee & Ness, 2000). However, such reflections are related to the changing responsibilities and challenges associated with managing increased demand for services, significant mental health concerns, and limited resources (Epstein, 2015) and how counseling centers can evolve to manage such changes (Mitchell et al., 2019). Organizational dynamics are discussed in some of the literature, suggesting collaboration and assessment of structures (Mitchell et al., 2019); however, gendered substructures and the impact on leaders of counseling centers has been neglected. Therefore, research on the leadership dynamics and gendering practices that impact the women leaders in this division, a care division, are unknown.

Interestingly, Seem and Hernández (1998) discuss gender stereotypes in relation to counseling centers, but instead underscore how counseling centers can, and should, help address problematic gender stereotypes on university campuses (Seem & Hernández, 1998). They do not consider the gendered stereotypes as impacting the counselors themselves, particularly the directors. The research on directors' personal experiences is limited as well. Grayson and Meilman (2013) did interview college counseling center directors, who served with 20 or more years in their role, and asked about their individual experiences. However, the work did not address gender or leadership trajectories related to gender. The study does hint at gender-related issues, such as one director reporting that she stayed for so long in her position because the university culture valued women's issues (Grayson & Meilman, 2013). A few directors mentioned struggles with administration, however they did not expound on how those may be related to gender issues.

Research on the leadership of college counseling centers has been shown to be influenced by a director's race (Chin et al., 2020), articulating some of the specific difficulties these directors face. However, it focuses more on staff dynamics than on those of higher education as a system. Also, despite two of the three authors being women, the emphasis is on the three author's racial identities rather than gender. Even when gender is discussed, it is in the context of the intersectionality of race with gender, such that the critique of the gendered nature of higher education is absent.

The disregard of higher education's gendered nature and specific ways it continues to hinder women is made even more difficult by the neglect of this issue within the system. Bird (2011) uncovered how leaders within higher education continue to

ignore this phenomenon, perpetuating the barriers women face in leadership. As a result, many call for the continued investigation of discrete systemic issues that disenfranchise women, how these impact all types of women leaders, and uncover the fundamental causes for the underrepresentation of women in leadership (Baltodano et al., 2012; Bird, 2011; Bonebright et al., 2012; Dominici et al., 2009; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Lester and colleagues (2017) noted the need for continued use of Acker's (1990, 2012) theory with other frameworks to understand gendered systems in higher education further, such as that of women's care-work and the care-lessness of higher education management (Grummell et al., 2009; Lynch et al., 2012).

Care Work and Care-Lessness in College Counseling

Brief History of College Counseling

The history of college counseling as it is known today began from a debate into what types of support services would be provided to students and by whom. Some believed faculty were best suited to assist students with their needs while at college (Patterson, 1928) while others argued that they should only be responsible for academic concerns, with trained professionals handling students' mental health related issues (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1938). As more students entered institutions through the passage of the GI Bill and other federal programs to support non-traditional students, counseling assistance became more readily needed and utilized for vocational and emotional support (Aubrey 1977; Forest 1989). This helped establish counseling services as its own department, with trained professionals supporting the personal needs of students (Forster, 1977; Winston, 1989). Today, counselors working in accredited college or university counseling centers are expected to hold at least a master's degree in a disciple related to

counseling or psychology such as social work, clinical or counseling psychology, counselor education or psychiatry (Boyd et al., 2003).

College Counseling as Care Work

As college counseling moved into the 21st century, it was seen as an essential part of university services (Hodges, 2001). The counselors working out of these centers began seeing more students with significant mental health related concerns (Bishop, 2016), and worked to improve the health and wellness of the students and the campus community as a whole (Guinee & Ness, 2000). The role then of college counseling services, meaning mental health counseling, was designated as care work in that it involved supporting the emotional and mental health and safety of students and the campus community as a whole and continues today (DeVault, 1991; Glenn, 1992; Romero, 1992; Roy, 2018;). Additionally, college counseling center missions parallel the ideals of the counseling field (Hodges, 2001), a care profession (England et al., 2002). Each client, or student, is seen as unique and important (Rogers, 1951), and the growth and maturation of that person is a major goal of the work (Williamson, 1939). College counselors also seek to enhance the capabilities of students through the improvement of their personal well-being, which matches the fundamentals of care work (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; England, 2005; England et al., 2002; Folbre, 1995; Glenn, 1992; Tronto & Fisher, 1990;) and therefore further designates college counseling as care work. Such care work is essential to supporting the well-being of the entire campus community. Studies have demonstrated the positive impact of counseling on student outcomes and supporting faculty. For example, teaching coping skills to student athletes improved their athletic coping skills and decreased anxiety (Fogaca, 2021), attendance in counseling improved student

academic performance (Kivlighan et al, 2021) and counseling centers assisted faculty in feeling empowered and supported to refer students for help (Kalkbrenner et al., 2021).

College counseling centers are among those areas within university settings where there are a majority of women employees (AUCCCD, 2019). This is not surprising given that the work is stereotyped and seen as both "women's work" and "care work" (Duffy, 2007; England, 2005; England et al., 2002). Aligned with the literature around care work and gendered organizations, college counselors report high rates of burnout and overextension from their jobs (Kafka, 2019), brought on by factors that are associated with gendered substructure (Acker, 2012). For example, counseling center staff are expected to go beyond their typical clinical counseling work and make more direct contact with the university community which includes faculty, staff, local providers, parents, and stakeholders (Cooper & Archer, 2002).

College counselors are also often expected to work extended hours to meet the high demand for services (Much et al., 2010). Additionally, counseling centers, and their female staff, are often seen as the magic fix for any student issue or student in distress (Gilbert & Sheiman, 1995). Similar to what is seen in the literature on care work, there is a belief that college counselors can and will take on any student, setting an expectation that their work is one of both “labor and love” (Acker, 1995, pg. 24). This increases the likelihood for care workers to be taken advantage of for their care work which is representative in reports from counseling center staff that their centers are understaffed, overworked, and under-supported by administration (Bishop, 1991; Stone & Archer, 1990). Staff within college counseling centers face the challenges of both working within a gendered organization and dealing with the stressors associated with care work.

Additionally, the intersection of the care-less style of management evidenced in today's universities and colleges further complicates these challenges.

Care-Lessness and the Impact on College Counseling

Given the continued cultural shift within higher education towards marketization and care-less styles of management (Grummell et al., 2009; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001), scholars have found counseling center staff facing challenges associated with organizational changes (Ayers, 2009; Jodoin & Ayers, 2013). Decisions such as fee for service, additional clinical hours, and cutting resources have increased the likelihood of burnout for providers (Kafka, 2019; Much et al., 2010). Additionally, organizational decisions based on the desires of the "consumer" (i.e. student) rather than what is in her or his best interest often creates ethical and moral dilemmas for counseling staff (Jodoin & Ayers, 2013). These care-less practices from the organization trickle down and in divisions focused specifically on care, such as the counseling center, it can result in specific problems.

College counseling center staff feels the impact of these care-less practices, and often responds in a number of ways in order to cope, some which are problematic for the institution. Research has found that some such behaviors include leaving the institution, subtle rebellion, loosening of professional ethics, or in some cases advocacy for change (Ayers, 2009; Jodoin & Ayers, 2013). The gendered nature of higher education suggests that challenges exist for counseling center staff (typically women) to address these concerns with care-less practices with administration (typically men). For the women that direct college counseling centers, there is an additional layer of difficulty given their dual leadership roles to a care division and a care-less organization.

Care Work, Care-Lessness, and College Counseling Center Directors

The care-less environment that has infiltrated academia means that managers and administrators are intent on reducing costs, optimizing productivity, and minimizing activities which could hinder either of these two goals (Anderson, 2008; Ayers, 2009; Giroux, 2002; Much et al., 2010). In contrast, those in care work roles are focused on what is best for the care recipient, with attention to extending access to quality care with little concentration on cost reduction or efficiency (Chaharbaghi, 2007). For individuals situated to fulfill both roles, like college counseling center directors, they are "looking in two directions simultaneously: they are regarding the client and the organization" (Davies, 2000, p. 66). This specific middle management role essentially sits between two opposing sets of values which produces its own conflicts and challenges (Ayers, 2009). Much of the literature on college counseling centers and their leaders focuses on these conflicts, such as directors coping with institutional pressures that do not align with the counseling field values (Bishop, 1991; Dworkin & Lyddon, 1991; Stone & Archer, 1990; Stone et al., 2000; Stukenberg et al., 2006). Yet, missing is the experience of the women who lead these care work divisions at the university, and how their gender may further complicate the expectations of leadership.

Since the majority of these directors are women (AUCCCD, 2019), they face the additional conflicts of the intersection of managing a care division associated with gender-based biases, within a care-less gendered organization. Given that women leaders in higher education are already noted as having to combat the masculine culture (Longman & Madsen, 2014) and expectations around being a care-less manager (Grummell et al., 2009; Lynch et al., 2012), it would be essential to understand the

additional challenges women leaders in care-oriented divisions face because their role outside of the male-centric manager is affiliated explicitly with stereotypical female social roles, such as care and nurturance. This dialectic, the expectations of their leadership as a manager within a gendered organization and their leadership expectations as a director of a care-oriented, female-dominated division, are unique. Since the literature discussed does not reflect how such a phenomenon impacts women who lead care divisions within care-less organizations, there remains a gap in knowledge in this area. This provides an opportunity to explore a unique experience that could further understand higher education's gendering, social role expectations, and even a broader sense of identity management of women leaders.

Conclusion

Although women have made significant advancements to obtain equity and equality within societal systems, they continue to experience biases and prejudices that hinder their success and progress in organizations. One such organization is higher education. The gendered nature of higher education is reflected in the systematic structures, policies, and practices that create and maintain a division related to gender, with males being the advantaged, primary, and privileged gender (Acker, 1990, 2012). For women within higher education, this creates a number of challenges, particularly in relation to their movement up the hierarchy at the university. Even when women do reach a form of leadership within the institution, they are still subject to difficulties. One such example involves the expectations for management. Since these expectations are associated with full devotion to the institution, they are only fulfilled by individuals without care duties, values or responsibilities. Women are therefore marginalized once

again due to their continued care roles and expectations placed upon them at the home and in the workplace (Dominici et al., 2009; Grummell et al., 2009; Lynch et al., 2012). However, the literature fails to recognize an additional intersection: women leading divisions that are stereotyped as care work divisions.

Women leading care work divisions at the university are exposed to expectations and values within their division that are opposed to the values and expectations of managers within the new care-less work environment of higher education. Due to this, women leading care work oriented divisions at the university may face additional challenges of incongruity between their divisional leadership status and their leadership status when meeting with their male managerial counterpart layered upon the current challenges of working and leading within a gendered organization. This collision of leadership roles creates a new type of bind for women leaders of female-oriented divisions at the university; one that is influenced by the intersection of their gender, their leadership of a division associated with gender stereotypes, and their upper status administrative role within the context of a gendered organization. This intersection of identities and leadership expectations is important to understand further given the many roles women leaders can take on within the university and to continue the work on uncovering gendered practices within higher education.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This qualitative heuristic inquiry explored the leadership trajectories of women directors of counseling centers within colleges and universities in the United States. Moreover, this study sought to understand the lived experiences, beliefs, and actions of women directors of college counseling centers and how these experiences influenced, and continue to influence, their leadership pathway within careless higher education institutions. Leadership trajectories were explored through the lifeworld existentials of lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relations (Van Manen, 1990). Understanding the personal trajectories towards leadership in an organization that is not favorable to women leaders sought to provide more insight into how the gendered nature of higher education creates barriers for women leaders in higher education.

Research Questions

The following research question was the central guiding question for this study:

1. How do women directors of college counseling centers portray their leadership trajectory in relation to their lived experiences related to time, space, body, and human relations?

    a. How do women directors of college counseling centers describe the transition into their leadership position?

    b. What do women directors of counseling centers reflect on regarding leading a care-oriented department within a care-less organization?

    c. How have women directors of college counseling centers experienced their gender while at work?

d. How do women directors of college counseling centers express their relationships with others in the workplace?

The Assumptions of and Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research is used for uncovering and discovering a particular societal issue (Creswell, 2014) and is beneficial to exploring the complex human condition. This type of research methodology comes from a social constructivist worldview; it focuses on the individual and her personal experience with that phenomenon to get a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the life we live as humans (Creswell, 2014). This is done by exploring, analyzing, and explaining how someone makes meaning from occurrences in their life (Patton, 2015). This means that qualitative research is associated with depth and detail in understanding the problem at hand (Patton, 2015). Although there is a smaller sample obtained through qualitative inquiry than quantitative research, this methodology results in richer detail and understanding of human experiences. This is achieved by using multiple data sources and interacting in natural settings with participants as they experience a phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Therefore, qualitative inquiry is an appropriate methodology for studies seeking to develop a thorough comprehension of a particular issue, problem, or circumstance experienced by humans.

Qualitative data are detailed information that describe and characterize a particular experience or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). This data is observable and can also be considered categorical, in that they can be understood in groupings that help better represent the qualities and features of that circumstance (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). Qualitative data can produce descriptive stories that help others understand more fully the nature, patterns, and properties of that experience (Patton, 2015). Therefore,

qualitative data are intricate pieces of information from an individual's life experience that come together to create a detailed picture of a societal phenomenon. Qualitative data are captured in real-world settings through in-depth interviews, observation, and artifacts (Patton, 2015). Such artifacts might include journal entries, memorandums, artwork, written documents, or any other personal item which provide information about a particular experience or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). These methods of data collection provide direct statements from individuals who are experiencing the phenomenon in question, and therefore provide in-depth, insider explanations (Patton, 2015). These thorough and personal methods of data collection make it possible to obtain the detailed, descriptive data necessary in qualitative research.

Qualitative research was the best fitting design for this study given that the goal was to seek a deeper understanding of the leadership trajectories of women directors of college counseling centers. Given the complexities these women face, with their gender, organizational dynamics, and leadership expectations, I chose qualitative research to discover the meaning of their experience in great depth and detail. A qualitative methodology was also an appropriate fit for this study since it does not press a fixed assumption of a phenomenon but rather facilitates the natural unfurling of findings that allow for recognizing the complexity of human experiences (Patton, 2015). This is seen as a respectful way to honor an individual's life; by coming in as a learner rather than with preconceived hypotheses so that participants can share openly. The researcher can then begin to grasp the idiosyncrasies in their experiences.

These humanistic elements of qualitative research are also essential when researchers seek to learn about individuals or organizations that may hold such values

(Patton, 2002). Since I sought to learn more about intricacies of being the director of a college counseling center, using a humanistic approach of qualitative research was also appropriate given that the counseling profession shares many of the same values as humanism. These include the uniqueness of individuals and the importance of understanding personal experiences (Dollarhide & Oliver, 2014; Vereen et al., 2014). Lastly, qualitative research is an appropriate approach when looking into a phenomenon of which people have little to no prior understanding (Patton, 2015). As seen through the literature review, the intersection of gender, leadership, care work, and care-less management within higher education can be considered exploratory work given the lack of prior research on the topic, fitting naturally with the assumptions of a qualitative methodology.

Heuristic Inquiry Design

Heuristic inquiry is a form of qualitative, phenomenological research meant to depict aspects of human experiences in an elaborate way to facilitate deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). In phenomenological research, the researcher seeks to discover more about a particular phenomenon through the lived experiences of those who have or are currently experiencing that phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Heuristic inquiry is a unique form of phenomenological research in that it encourages the researcher to use their own experience with a phenomenon as the catalyst for problem-solving. Unwinding from the researcher's encounters, heuristic inquiry seeks to understand a particular phenomenon of life and its significance in order to theorize about or explain particular societal patterns or human conditions (Sultan, 2019). In this way, deciding on a heuristic inquiry design can seem organic; rather than seeking out a

research topic, the subject arrives from an inherent curiosity and thirst for deeper understanding and integration of a personally encountered experience. Therefore, heuristic inquiry is a research methodology that involves exploring the essence of a particular human experience through the researcher's personal encounter with that phenomenon and others who have experienced it (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985).

The overall aim of this qualitative heuristic study was to understand the beliefs, actions, and experiences of women directors of college counseling centers and how these elements influenced, and continue to influence, their leadership trajectory. Heuristic inquiry involves dedicated and purposeful self-reflection, along with collaborative dialogue, to help explore the phenomenon in both individual and communal ways (Moustakas, 1990, 2015). Those collaborative discussions are held with individuals who have had first-hand experience with the phenomenon in question to help build a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Sultan, 2019). Heuristic inquiry also encourages the inclusion of creative methods of articulating oneself (Moustakas 1990).

Since heuristic inquiries are born from a researcher's experiences, Moustakas (1990) identified one of the first features of this research method as the initial engagement or first encounter. In the initial engagement, the researcher is spurred by their own experience, recognizing how understanding the lived circumstance further could have wide-reaching importance (Sultan, 2019). As the researcher, I came upon the design for this study because of the reflexive, self-evaluative, experiential nature of my inquiry. As a college counselor and within our organization, I serve as a team leader in a few regards: I am the coordinator of the outreach services provided through the counseling center, I am the leader of our Radically-Open Dialectical Behavior Therapy

treatment team, and I am a member of the university-wide well-being committee. I also aspire to direct a college counseling center and have worked closely with the director for a few years.

These personal experiences as a woman leader within a college counseling center have brought to my awareness my gender and how that influences my interactions at work. For example, when leading my treatment team who are majority women, I notice myself feeling quite comfortable taking that leadership role yet sometimes second guessing behaviors which may be considered "too harsh" or assertive. For example, addressing lateness or lack of adherence to the treatment model. However, when I am asked to attend a meeting as the outreach coordinator that may include upper administrators who are male, I notice that I am given less space to express my thoughts and opinions. Additionally, I feel that I need to be more aggressive or dominant to be able to have my voice heard. Also, working under a woman director of a college counseling center, I have been curious about the interactions she has experienced with our staff in comparison to lateral managers such as herself and upper administration. These initial questions began to ignite the beginnings of this research, which I explain this further in the "Role of the Researcher" section of this chapter.

Aligned with heuristic inquiry, this initial encounter led to further exploration and assessment of my feelings and thoughts about this lived experience. I began to question the complexities of being a woman, such as my boss navigating and negotiating being a middle manager: handling the needs of the counseling center within the larger context of the institution. This led to further questions: how do femininity and identity as a woman influence these factors and how do the expectations of a specific leadership role further

complicate becoming a manager within higher education? These questions came from my own experiences and lived encounters. These questions also called for a deeper understanding of a complex phenomenon experienced by a particular group of individuals. Therefore, I used heuristic inquiry as the specific qualitative approach for this study.

Participants

Heuristic inquiry involves participants in research as partners with the investigator in the joint pursuit of discovery. Therefore, participants are engaged, philosophically, as collaborators who are active in the inquiry process with the researcher (Sultan, 2019). Even as the researcher prepares to obtain participants, documents are provided to potential participants that include the purpose of the research, the research design and intended processes, and the role of the participant (Moustakas, 1990). Therefore, from the beginning of the data collection process, participants are considered partners and encouraged to be actively engaged in exploring the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). This signals the importance of the participants' collaboration and engagement with the inquiry. Such practices help researchers establish a positive rapport with participants right away (Patton, 2015). This positive rapport is vital given that in heuristic inquiry the researcher must develop a meaningful connection with participants, which inspires confidence in the process and therefore increased vulnerability (Moustakas, 1990). This vulnerability leads to openness which allows the researcher to understand the lived experience of the participant better.

The first step in participant selection for this study involved the creation of participant selection criteria. Purposeful criterion sampling involves the selection of

individuals in an intentional way, knowing that those people will be able to support the objectives of the research, fit the selection criteria, and best understand the phenomenon in question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). This study sought to explore the lived experiences, beliefs, and actions of women directors of college counseling centers and how these experiences influenced their pathway to leadership. The criteria I created for the sample were individuals identifying as women who were current directors of college or university counseling centers within the United States and had been in their position for at least one year. This year-length criterion helped establish their experience with the explored phenomenon. After the selection criteria were developed, I created a document that included information for participants to review surrounding informed consent, confidentiality, time dedications, and chances for criticisms or comments during the research process (Moustakas, 1990).

I selected the first few participants through this purposeful criterion sampling using my professional network. I provided the participants with information about the study and asked them about their interest in participation. Additional participants were obtained through snowball sampling to expand the sample size. Snowball sampling occurs when participants are asked to identify other possible participants that fit the identified characteristics of the sample needed (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). Participants identified through purposeful criterion sampling were then asked to identify other participants who might be interested in the research. The final sample size included 10-15 participants. As Moustakas (1990) notes, sample sizes of 10-15 participants help support a more developed and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Moustakas, 1990). This sample size also allowed for data saturation, in that by the

analysis of the last few interviews, no new themes or meanings of the phenomenon were being found in the data (Guest et al., 2006).

Data Collection Methods

One of the essential features of heuristic inquiry is immersion: the researcher must see herself as a learner, practicing self-reflection and communal dialogue with others to learn about the phenomenon (Sultan, 2019). Moustakas (1990) encourages passion, creativity, and vulnerability to immerse oneself in searching for meaning. Additionally, data collected in qualitative studies is wide-ranging in that it can involve anything conveyed to the researcher through sensory means (Maxwell, 2013). Whatever data collection methods are chosen, in heuristic inquiry, they must be open-ended; the processes developed should allow participants to openly express their thoughts, feelings, reactions in a way that is uninhibited by the methods of collection (Moustakas, 1990). Another goal of the data collection is to produce substantial, evocative, graphic portrayals of the experience (Moustakas, 1990).

These powerful and graphic portrayals of the phenomenon can be accomplished through communal dialogue between the researcher and those who have also experienced the phenomenon: the participants. Communal dialogue can be captured through in-depth interviews with the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). While these interviews provide essential data in heuristic inquiry, additional forms of data are encouraged. Another such form of data involves the researcher's thoughts, feelings, reflections, and reactions. This can be achieved through researcher journaling, which is an integral part of the reflective and immersive framework of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). Lastly, aligned with Moustakas' (1990) urges for creativity and openness to our sensory

awareness, the collection of art-based artifacts is also supported in heuristic inquiry. Therefore, in this study, data collection included all three methods: interviews, researcher journal reflections, and artifacts collected from the participants.

Interviews

The most common method for obtaining data in heuristic inquiry is through communal dialogue, which occurs through extended interviews between the researcher and participants (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). These interviews are extended in the sense that they do not typically have a time limit but rather give the participant enough time and space to express all the thoughts, feelings, memories, reflections necessary to fully explore the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Dialogue is an essential approach during the interviews, which means mutual, cooperative discussion between the researcher and participant to better express the experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Co-sharing is essential, and subsequently, self-disclosure on the researcher's part because such practices further encourage disclosure and in-depth descriptions from the participants (Moustakas, 1990). This practice makes heuristic interviewing distinctly humanistic; methods are designed to foster genuine conversation in order to truly understand an individual's personal life experience (Sultan, 2019). This means that the interview cannot be fully planned. While general questions may be prepared before the dialogue, over preparation influences the genuineness and flexibility of the conversation necessary to produce meaningful results (Moustakas, 1990).

The rationale for choosing these types of interviews for the central data collection for this study was to obtain an in-depth, meaningful examination and discovery of the lived experience in question, which is the goal of heuristic research. Since interviews

allow for the focal point to be on the research question, researchers can seek discoveries in greater detail (Rubin & Rubin, 2012)**.** Obtaining rich material through interviews also incorporates heuristic tenets of empathy, humanistic listening, and comfort and safety to express oneself fully (Sultan, 2019). Consistent with Moustakas' (1990) recommendations, this heuristic study included extended interviews, which consisted of meaningful, collaborative dialogue in a semi-structured format, with a purposeful sample that had experience with the research question. General questions for the interview were prepared in advance. However, I was also able to empathically listen and respond in the moment with follow up questions or comments that facilitated open, vulnerable, and meaningful dialogue around the phenomenon in question.

Since qualitative researchers often collect data where the participants are experiencing the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2014), this study connected with participants at their place of employment: college counseling centers. Interviews were set up to dialogue with the participants in their office while they had available time. The intention was to select participants from all over the country to explore possible differences or similarities in geographic location or type of institution. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and time and financial constraints for travel, online interviews were established in place of in-person meetings using platforms such as Zoom and Webex. These online interviews can be beneficial in the research to expand accessibility and ease of completion of the study to participants (Gray et al., 2020). While in-person interviews may more easily establish comfort and ease, virtual interviews have been shown to have the same level of quality as in-person interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

Additionally, virtual interviews may allow participants to be more vulnerable since there is a level of safety in not being face-to-face, as research has found that online participants can be more candid and revealing (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). The factor that matters most regarding the interview procedure, whether in-person or virtual, is to establish a trusting, collaborative relationship with the participant (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher is part of the data collection process. If a positive relationship is established with the participant, it will allow for access to the personal experience of the participant (Bogdan & Biklen 2003; Maxwell, 2013). During the study, I established this relationship through practices such as transparency, self-disclosure, open communication, and willingness to take in feedback.

As Moustakas (1990) also recommends, the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and I reflected on the discussions immediately following via the researcher journal. These data collection methods allow for later exploration of themes (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). The interviews also served as an outlet to obtain narrative, expressive information to understand better the lived experience in question (Van Manen, 1990). The conversations created helped me collaborate with participants on discovering each of their own experiences, perspectives, observations, and information about the phenomenon in question.

Artifacts

Another form of data collection in qualitative research and heuristic inquiry is attaining personal objects that are artistic (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2015). These objects are often visual offerings, such as poetry, letters, or artwork, that provide supplemental descriptions and meaning to the lived experience in question (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan,

2019). As Van Manen (1990) explains, such artistic gatherings produce a language of their own and can represent a lived experience in their own transformed sense. In this way, artifacts can provide knowledge to the study that is not available through typical data collection procedures (Norum, 2008). As long as the collected documentation pertains to the research question and informs the more profound understanding of the phenomenon in question, it can be justifiable as an artifact (Sultan, 2019).

The artifact collection method for this study included obtaining participant-generated artifacts exemplifying experiences in their leadership role. As Sultan (2019) explains, artifacts should provide depth to the research question at hand. To do this, the participants were directed to provide a picture of something from their office that represents their leadership pathway. Participants were given additional directives to consider items that make them think about how they got to their current position, how they manage their roles (leader of a care division and manager within a care-less organization), or something that spurs reflection on where they are today professionally. Given that these directives help address the central research question, artifacts produced contributed the necessary meaningful, additional information to the discovery of the phenomenon. Also, to honor the relational aspects of heuristic inquiry, a general question was included in the research protocol that produced dialogue around the participants' artifact and the meaning they attached to this object to create a richer narrative around the research question (Sultan, 2019). I asked that the participants provide the picture of their artifact to me in .jpeg format through email.

Researcher Journal

Journaling is an essential practice in heuristic research (Sultan, 2019). Journaling aligns with the exploratory, humanistic, contemplative aspects of heuristic inquiry (Sultan, 2019). Also, given that heuristic inquiry is autobiographical in nature, the researcher must reflect on her own experiences related to the phenomenon and the exploration of the phenomenon. Heuristic inquiry recognizes that individual experiences also have a larger, social, universal significance (Moustakas, 1990). Therefore, this self-reflective practice increases the researcher's awareness of her knowledge of the lived experience, which "enables one to develop the ability and skill to understand the problem more fully and ultimately to deepen and extend the understanding through the eyes and voices of others" (Moustakas, 1990, p.17). Aside from the reflective process that journaling provides, this data collection method also involves reflexive processing or reflecting on oneself and others (Sultan, 2019). In this way, journaling provides researchers with new and multiple ways of looking at an experience to help increase awareness, curiosity, and further exploration (Sultan, 2019).

The journaling process is flexible in that it allows for many forms of expression, such as written passages, drawings, single words, or visual representations of the researcher's experience (Sultan, 2019). The journal is a way of practicing heuristic scientific discovery, which occurs partly through self-inquiry; the purpose is to seek the meaning behind the explored phenomenon through oneself and others (Moustakas, 1990). This type of self-inquiry and self-dialogue is critical right at the beginning of the research process (Moustakas, 1990). When researchers engage in journaling at the start of the heuristic inquiry, they can uncover more about the aspects of the phenomenon and

increase general awareness and curiosity around the subject of investigation (Moustakas, 1990). In this way, the journal provides the researchers with further information to process and explore with participants. Additionally, the journal helps offer data related to possible themes as the researcher goes through the analysis process (Sultan, 2019).

Lastly, self-dialogue, along with reflective and reflexive practices captured through journaling, can help researchers process difficulties during the research study (Sultan, 2019). By taking the time to immerse oneself in the thoughts, feelings, sensations, reactions, and more that are spurred by the phenomenon, and the exploration of the phenomenon as well, researchers develop a deeper felt sense of the meaning of the phenomenon. This deeper understanding can help researchers connect to their participants to foster empathy, trust, and collaborative discovery (Sultan, 2019). Journaling in this study provided an outlet for me to explore my own experience with being a woman leader within a college counseling center and my experiences working with a woman director of a college counseling center. I noticed that reflections, questions, curiosities, emotions, and sensations all arose around topics related to the study, such as gendered organizations, gendered expectations, leadership practices, and more. The journaling tool allowed me to immerse myself into the research question and phenomenon and utilize that knowledge when working with the participants.

Instrumentation

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was developed to create as much consistency as possible in exploring the phenomenon with participants and help elicit descriptive narratives around their lived experience. Therefore, I constructed open-ended questions that invited

the participants to express in their own words and reflections in vivid detail how they have experienced their leadership trajectories as women directors of college counseling centers. The interview protocol included about ten open-ended questions aligned with the research question and sub-questions. See Table 1 below for a matrix that reflects the link between the interview questions and the research questions; the full interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

These questions provided some structure to the interview, which helped guide each participant to facilitate a collaborative dialogue of co-discovery. Yet, the interview protocol also allowed me to engage in necessary in-the-moment empathic responses, additional questioning, comments, and self-disclosure, which maintained the fluidity and adaptability necessary for heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). While Moustakas (1990) writes about the benefits of the construction of interviews without a set time frame, Sultan (2019) notes that this can be less realistic for participants and the intent of focusing on the question at hand. Therefore, the interview protocol included a timeframe of one hour to respect the time and energy volunteered by participants and set adequate expectations about our collaborative goal of exploring the phenomenon in question. To ensure that the interview questions facilitated discussion around what was meant to be studied, two techniques were applied: a pilot interview with a current director of a college counseling center and a review by an expert committee.

Table 1

Research Questions and Interview Questions Matrix

Main RQ: How do women directors of college counseling centers portray their leadership trajectory in relation to their lived experiences related to time, space, body, and human relations?	• How do you describe your experience of being a woman leader at your institution? • Can you tell me more about the object you chose [artifact] that represented your leadership pathway?" • How does this object reflect the experiences you've had in your role as a woman director of a college counseling center?
a. How do women directors of college counseling centers describe the transition into their leadership position? (Lived Time)	• Tell me your story. I'm particularly interested to hear about your experience as a woman getting to a high level of university/college leadership. How did you get here?
b. What do women directors of counseling centers reflect on regarding leading a care-oriented department within a care-less organization? (Lived Space)	• Tell me a little about your leadership style or styles at work. • How is your leadership style influenced by the role you are in at a given time (directing your counseling staff vs. manager of the counseling center)?
c. How have women directors of college counseling centers experienced their gender while at work? (Lived Body)	• Tell me about being in this role and being a woman? What has that been like? • How do you negotiate the needs and resources the counseling center has? How has your gender played a role in these dynamics? • Share with me what it's like to be a woman in your role as a manager/administrator

d. How do women directors of college counseling centers express the relationships they have with others in the workplace? (Lived Relations)	• Describe the relationships you have with colleagues and upper administration. What are the obstacles you've faced with these relationships? • How do you negotiate the needs and resources the counseling center has? How has your gender played a role in these dynamics?

Artifact Protocol

The artifact protocol was developed based on recommendations from Moustakas (1990) and Sultan (2019) to include creative, exploratory, and art-based forms of expression in the data collection process. Artifacts can be any visual object that expands upon the meaning one has for the lived experience being explored and gives more depth in understanding the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). Therefore, the goal of the artifact protocol was to elicit participants to exemplify their experience as a woman director of a college counseling center through artistic means. I provided participants with a message through email on what to find and how to submit it in order to guide them in this endeavor. This message was sent in email format to allow them time for reflection and revisiting the request as needed. The message included additional directives to support their attainment of an item that would help cultivate collaborative discovery about the phenomenon in question. The email provided to participants can be found in Appendix B. Participants submitted pictures of their chosen item via .jpeg format to the researcher's email address before their individual interviews. To further explore the meaning behind the selected object via collaborative, discovery-

oriented dialogue with the participant, I asked two questions during the interview protocol about the meaning of the chosen object. The questions posed were, "can you tell me more about the object you chose that represented your leadership pathway?" and "how does this object reflect the experiences you've had in your role as a woman director of a college counseling center?" Including these questions in the interview allowed for a richer, fuller narrative around the object's meaning and relationship to the main research question (Sultan, 2019). These questions are included in the full interview protocol, which can be found in Appendix A. To ensure the artifact protocol aligned with what I sought to explore, it was piloted with a current director of a college counseling center and they were reviewed by an expert committee.

Journal Protocol

I developed the journal protocol to assist me in both reflective and reflexive processing along with self-dialogue. The protocol was also developed to maintain my commitment to the practice of immersing myself in the research question and problem, which allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question (Sultan, 2019). The protocol began with an initial engagement into the material. As noted, self-dialogue and reflections are crucial at the beginning of the research to initiate understanding and knowledge around the phenomenon. The journal protocol included an initial entry with formulated questions to begin my heuristic journey: how does it feel to be a woman leader working at a college counseling center? How did I get here? What makes my experience fulfilling? What hinders my joy in this experience? These questions were completed before connecting with any participants so that such interactions did not influence my first reflections. While the journal protocol yielded some formal structure,

as with these questions, the process also included the freedom to produce poetry, notes, and pictures related to any of my experiences that emerged during the research (Sultan, 2019).

To remain committed to the practice of immersion, the journaling protocol included set time scheduled for reflection and certain prepared questions to help evoke thoughts, feelings, emotions, perceptions, sensations, memories, and beliefs related to the phenomenon and the experiences of the research of the phenomenon (Sultan, 2019). The protocol included scheduled reflective practices for me to complete at the end of each participant interview as well as opportunities for journaling that were not pre-set (Sultan, 2019). During the scheduled reflection, I answered the following questions based on guidance from Moustakas (1990), Sultan (2019), and Van Manen (1990):

> What did I feel when talking to her (participant)? What did I sense in my body during the interview? What new understanding has emerged for me around being a woman director of a college counseling center? What did I learn about myself through the lens of my participant? What were my thoughts during, and now after, the interview? What was not said during the interview?

After this initial immersion via the post-interview reflection questions, a period of incubation was initiated to allow for withdrawal from the concentration and focus (Moustakas, 1990). Moustakas (1990) explained that this period of disconnect from the research question allows for what can be described as almost spontaneous awareness and knowledge to take place. After incubation, reflection occurs once again to foster illumination or new perspectives or understandings of the information (Moustakas, 1990). This second series of reflections included a review of the transcripts and taped

interviews; I considered questions such as: what are the qualities that exist in this participant's depiction of the phenomenon? What themes occur in her description of her experience? How might I synthesize her experience?

As can be seen through the protocol, the journal procedure focused on both my personal experiences and meaningful contemplation of the connection of the participants' individual experiences to the larger society. Reflections also considered how daily occurrences with the lived world influenced the understanding and experience of the phenomenon in question. In this way, the journaling protocol helped me merge my individual perceptions of the phenomenon with those of others who have experienced the phenomenon (Sultan, 2019).

Data Analysis

Moustakas (1990) provides a straightforward procedure for data analysis in a heuristic study that was outlined by Sultan as well (2019):

1. Gather all of the data from one participant.
2. Immersion into the data until it is understood clearly both individually and as a larger whole.
3. Engage in a cycle setting aside the data to encourage rest and then returning to it with fresh energy (incubation, illumination, and reflexivity). After this practice, return to the data fully to identify individual qualities and themes. Construct an individual depiction.
4. Return to the original data to identify if the individual depiction identified aligns with the essential experience of the participant. If so, move forward with the

analysis. If not, begin again constructing an individual depiction that may better represent the themes of the participant's experience.

5. Move onto the next participant, completing the first four steps until all participant data is collected and each participant has a corresponding individual depiction.
6. Re-engage with the immersion, incubation, illumination, and reflexivity cycle with all of the individual depictions to generate a blended depiction representing a combined experience from all participants.
7. Select 2-3 participants whose original data best represents the identified group experience yet also accentuates the idiosyncrasies of each experience. From those data sets, create individual or exemplary portraits of these participants.
8. Develop a creative synthesis that represents the essential meaning of the lived experience and honors the cycles of analysis and self-reflection by the researcher.

As seen from these steps, data analysis in heuristic inquiry is a process that takes place as soon as data collection starts. This is because data analysis in heuristic inquiry occurs through more iterations than the traditional qualitative thematic analysis of interview transcripts. Instead, analysis occurs during data collection, organization, and analysis through self-inquiry, self-reflection, intuition, curiosity, and other steps that encourage the creative exploration of the data to reveal meaning and knowledge. One of the first formal practices in data analysis comes during the data organization phase. The researcher becomes close with the materials collected through an immersion into the data (Moustakas, 1990). During the immersion phase of this study, I started by completing embodied relational transcripts. This style of transcription involves a deeply relational connection to the interviewee's personal story. Transcripts are constructed with more than

just verbatim documentation of the interview, but notations of social signals such as voice tone and pitch, pauses, laughter, sighs, and breaks in speaking (Sultan, 2019). I listened to the interviews to seek both profound and detailed, and wide-ranging general understandings of the information (Sultan, 2019). Additional information was recorded about the interaction, including my felt sense during the interview and any thoughts and emotions that arose after, as well as awareness of how biases may have been influencing the process (Sultan, 2019).

After completing these embodied relational transcripts, I continued with the immersion phase and reviewed these transcriptions many times. I also read through the journal entries I had written and explored the artifacts in a similar holistic fashion as with the interviews. I also used Van Manen's (1990) lifeworld existentials as a framework when exploring the data collected. In many phenomenological studies, the notion of the lifeworld has been applied to articulate and formulate the nature of human experiences. Other researchers have conceptualized the lifeworld, one being Van Manen (1990), who developed the notion of the four lifeworld existentials. These four lifeworld existentials include lived body, lived time, lived space, and lived human relations (Van Manen, 1990). All four lifeworlds are interconnected yet offer unique ways of understanding a human experience (Rich, Graham, Taket, & Shelley, 2013). The notion of these lifeworlds is a valuable method to reflect upon and analyze data relating to human experiences (Rich et al., 2013). During data analysis, these four lifeworlds were used as a way to organize and reflect on the data gathered.

While engaging in this immersion process, there are also cycles of incubation and reflexivity where the researcher steps away and removes herself from this process

(Sultan, 2019). During incubation, the information is not actively explored, which often produces spontaneous new perspectives and awareness called illumination, and further reflection leads to thematic identification (Moustakas, 1990). I followed this data analysis practice by working for set times on the immersion and then stepping away and not looking at the material for a few days. As Sultan (2019) suggests, when I did return to the data, I did so in alternative ways and circumstances, such as during different times of the day or in other locations to further elicit new ideas and observations. Additionally, as Moustakas (1990) outlines in his data analysis procedure, this practice was done after each interview before collecting data from the next participant and again after all discussions were complete.

Since coding is not typically used in heuristic inquiry, these cycles of data immersion, incubation, illumination, and reflexivity help expose aspects of the phenomenon through theme immersion and an increased understanding of the meaning of the lived experience (Sultan, 2019). As I reflected on and reviewed the data in this manner, I discovered patterns and explored recurring themes. This led to preliminary theme identification where implied meanings were explored, and these preliminary themes were assessed as they connected to each interviewee and the universal experiences depicted (Moustakas, 1990). When engaging in this process, I continued to utilize the heuristic analysis practices of self-dialogue, reflexivity, and incubation to interpret themes and arrange them based on the research questions and Van Manen's (1990) lifeworld existentials (Moustakas, 1990). Following this theme illumination and identification, the findings were explained through the four methods of representation

found in heuristic inquiry: individual depictions, a composite depiction, exemplary portraits, and creative synthesis (Sultan, 2019).

Individual depictions involved creating unique narratives from each participant that focus on particular themes and standards that frame their experiences as women directors of college counseling centers. The composite depiction was then generated by integrating the themes from the individual depictions to establish a group portrayal of what it is like being a woman director of a college counseling center. This depiction includes both the sense of each participant's lived experience and the collective group (Moustakas, 1990). Exemplary portraits were produced by returning to each participant's depiction and finding three participants representing the group experience. These women's experiences were then emphasized further to highlight the individual and group experience of the phenomenon. Lastly, the creative synthesis was a way to illuminate the themes and essential meanings of being a woman director of a college counseling center. This analysis helped to better understand and communicate how the gendered nature of higher education creates barriers for women leaders in higher education and how these women navigate such challenges.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is often evaluated by four criteria first suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. In heuristic inquiry, trustworthiness is interrelated to rigorous practices during and after research established through meaningful self-reflection and continuous cycles of immersion into the data, incubation, and reflexivity (Moustakas, 1990). For heuristic inquiry, Sultan (2019) suggests using conventional qualitative criteria but

explored through heuristic features to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research. Following are the four criteria and how each was applied using heuristic characteristics to assess the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the appropriate use of research methods and design to collect and analyze data resulting in an accurate representation of the data through the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2012). Credibility in qualitative research is reached when the meanings of a phenomenon are perceived and shared by others who have experienced that phenomenon (Sandelowski, 1986). Credibility was obtained in this study by continued involvement and reflection on the methods and procedures, abundant descriptions of the data, triangulation by using multiple sources for data collection, and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Credibility was also strengthened by self-disclosing my personal experience and steps taken to mitigate biases in the research and by confirming the findings with the participants (Cope, 2014; Finlay, 2002).

Dependability

Dependability means that the research can be recreated and produce similar results (Koch, 2006). This is achieved through consistency throughout the research process; the research questions, data collection, data analysis, and representation of findings align with the research methodology chosen (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The choice for heuristic inquiry in this research study was substantiated and aligns with the purpose of heuristic research. Additionally, the methods to obtain the findings are consistent with that methodology and are well documented, supporting the study's

dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, I documented each step of the research process with detail and used my researcher journal along the way to practice self-reflection and reflexivity. These practices also help enhance the dependability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved when the data obtained can be understood as the participants' true answers as opposed to information altered by the researcher's personal biases, and there is an explicit connection between the data and the researcher's conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2012). Confirmability was established in this study by providing direct responses from participants in the findings. Confirmability was also accomplished by explaining how the meaning of the phenomenon was interpreted by using explicit examples from the data (Cope, 2014) and using member checking (Sultan, 2019). I provided participants with the identified themes and composite depiction to confirm that these results represented their lived experience. Given that confirmability can be threatened by researcher bias, I used my researcher journal to explore and reflect on my personal experiences and feelings. These self-reflections and reflexivity practices included my perspectives of the research itself and the participants. Most importantly, my researcher journal allowed me to explore and identify how all of those internal experiences might impact or influence data collection, analysis, and interpretation which enhanced trustworthiness (Sultan 2019). I also continued to utilize thick descriptions of the data to assure that interpretations came from participants' direct experiences rather than my interpretations.

Transferability

Transferability means that the study's findings or aspects can have meaning or apply to other settings, contexts, or populations (Guba, 1981; Sultan, 2019). This flexible perspective on transferability is essential in heuristic inquiry. While this study looked specifically at a small collection of women directors of college counseling centers, aspects of the findings have an application to other contexts. This study conceptualized how these findings may apply to other women leaders at universities, particularly those working within care-oriented divisions, to achieve transferability. Additionally, the rich description of the individual and composite depictions, which included detail and direct quotes, allowed readers to explore and identify connections in their experiences, thus helping to further transferability (Sultan, 2019).

Role of the Researcher

Heuristic inquiry is born from the personal experience of the primary researcher. In this way, the researcher is deeply and personally involved in exploring and discovering the phenomenon in question both individually and with the participants (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). While some may consider this level of involvement problematic, heuristic inquiry recognizes this engagement of great value since it allows for a profound connection to the individuals and phenomena we seek to understand (Sultan, 2019). Heuristic inquiry not only values the researcher's personal involvement but acknowledges the unfeasible way of removing any of our biases or relation to the topic in question. However, the role of the researcher is to recognize this subjectivity and engage in reflective and reflexive practices to identify the biases and beliefs held that have influenced the inquiry (Moustakas, 1990).

The research question for this study came from my own experience as a woman working within a college counseling center. I also serve as a leader on teams within my department and within the broader university. As a therapist myself, I became curious about the differences in my experiences serving as a leader in these two settings. I was also more aware over the years of my gender as I navigated these roles. I began to wonder how my experiences as a leader within my department and on the larger campus might be similar or different to those of the women directors of college counseling centers. I also aspire to be a director of a college counseling center, which led me to question how these women directors navigate the specific challenges in their position. These inquiries led to questions about the intersection of gender, leadership, and care-oriented work and the impact of those concepts within the context of higher education. As Moustakas (1990) notes, this closeness and bias to the topic are essential in heuristic inquiry. Given my personal experiences, I was aware that I already held beliefs, perceptions, and opinions going into this research. Therefore, the likelihood for confirmation bias was high, in that I may only see or take in the information that I already agreed with or to which I had similar thoughts and feelings. As discussed in my trustworthiness section, my role as the researcher was to mitigate the likelihood of confirmation bias through constant reflection and reflexivity on these feelings and thoughts and accurate representations of the data and explicit examples from the data that relate to the findings discovered.

Another role of the researcher in heuristic inquiry is to lead the participants through this process of discovery (Sultan, 2019). While the researcher and participants are collaborating to uncover the meaning behind the explored phenomenon, it is still the

researcher's role to create protocols, commence the study, and establish procedures that will allow for the communal sharing and dialogue that leads to the intended revelations (Sultan, 2019). To do this, I was open and honest with my participants about my own experiences and interest in the research question. This transparency and self-disclosure can help establish trust with participants and explore the phenomenon in greater depth (Moustakas, 1990). I discussed with my participants my aspirations to become a woman director of a college counseling center. During the interviews, when appropriate, I would self-disclose my own experience working in a gendered organization. I also made sure to redirect my participants when needed back to the question at hand. My self-disclosures and redirections helped walk with the participants in this journey for discovery rather than letting them venture out untethered, which can move the research away from understanding the phenomenon in question.

Ethical Considerations

Every researcher must respect their subjects' rights and welfare while doing their best to improve societal conditions through their studies (Dench et al., 2004). One way that the rights and needs of the participants were respected in this study was by providing them with a level of confidentiality in their participation. Given that these women were in administrative leadership roles, there was a possibility that their responses could impact their employment or comfort level in responding to questions. However, since women represent more than half of the directors of college counseling centers in the United States, there was a reasonable level of protection that could be provided to protect their identities by creating pseudonyms for the participants. Therefore, to both provide confidentiality and support openness and trust during the interview process, participants

were informed that fictitious names would be used in the research study to represent their experiences.

Aside from confidentiality, the entitlements and well-being of the participants in this study were also attended to by obtaining IRB approval and receiving consent from the participants. IRB approval was crucial, as these boards support and protect human subjects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Permission from participants was obtained through informed consent. In the informed consent process, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, any potential benefits, and risks related to the study, my connection to the research, and a general sense of what to expect if they are to participate (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). During the informed consent process, participants were contacted via email, provided with this information in a written document, and given time to ask questions. Along with this written document, a form was distributed for them to sign, which confirmed their understanding of the informed consent and obtained their official permission.

Lastly, to maintain ethical standards in this study, I also attended to the benefits, risks, and dynamics that might influence the rights or welfare of my participants. For this heuristic research study, the potential benefits for the participants lie in their chance to share and reflect on their own personal experience. Many times for marginalized groups, such as women, getting to voice one's own life story and how it relates to their marginalized identity can be affirming and validating (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Other benefits for the participants' include continued growth personally and professionally that comes from increased awareness and insight due to the profoundly reflective practices that occur during heuristic inquiry (Sultan, 2019).

Risks to participants for this study were minimal. One risk included the possibility for implications in their workplace based on their shared information, but this was mitigated through the use of pseudonyms. Another was the possibility for emotional effect due to the reflection of specific life events (Adler & Adler, 2002). Due to the therapeutic background of the participants, their awareness of how to manage and cope with such emotional experiences was likely. However, I utilized my therapeutic skills to support the participants' emotional responses throughout the interview. I also provided them with reminders of resources available to them if they experienced any lingering emotional impact.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative, heuristic inquiry was to explore the leadership trajectories of women directors of college or university counseling centers. Moreover, this study sought to understand the lived experiences, beliefs, and actions of women directors of college counseling centers and how these experiences influenced, and continue to influence, their leadership pathway in a care-oriented division within the careless institution of higher education. Leadership trajectories were explored through the lifeworld existentials of lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relations (Van Manen, 1990). Additionally, this study sought to provide more insight into how the gendered nature of higher education creates barriers for women leaders in higher education, especially those in care-oriented divisions. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do women directors of college counseling centers portray their leadership trajectory in relation to their lived experiences related to time, space, body, and human relations?
    a. How do women directors of college counseling centers describe the transition into their leadership position?
    b. What do women directors of counseling centers reflect on regarding leading a care-oriented department within a care-less organization?
    c. How have women directors of college counseling centers experienced their gender while at work?

d. How do women directors of college counseling centers express their relationships with others in the workplace?

This chapter discusses a description of the fieldwork completed, followed by a description of the participants in Table 2. Following the descriptive table are individual depictions of the research participants and lastly, a synthesis of the findings. The synthesis of the findings is presented as answers to the aforementioned research questions.

Fieldwork

Participants in this study included a total of thirteen current women directors of college or university counseling centers from across the country. Participants were interviewed via the virtual format of Zoom. The interview protocol included nine semi-structured open-ended interview questions aligned with the research question and sub-questions. While the questions provided some structure and guidance, the actual interviews involved my empathic responses, further questioning from curiosity, and self-disclosure when appropriate. This assisted in creating a collaborative discussion found in heuristic inquiry that allowed for adaptability and fluidity in the moment (Moustakas, 1990). Participants also submitted a photograph of an item that they felt provided more insight into their lived experience as a director. Questions were asked during the interviews about the photographs to garner more understanding about these women.

Description of the Participants

The participants in this study were all self-identified women who were currently serving as the director of a college or university counseling center for at least a year. Each participant was designated with an alias for the purposes of confidentiality. Table 2

lists each participant, her years as a director, her direct report including gender, and geographical location of school.

Table 2

Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Years as a Director	Direct Report and Gender	Location
Debbie	24	VP of Student Affairs (Male)	Northeast
Jennifer	8	Dean of Students (Male)	Midwest
Barbara	18	Dean of Students (Female)	Northeast
Leslie	1	Dean of Student Wellness (Male)	Midwest
Claire	11	Executive Director of Health and Counseling (Male)	Mountain
Helen	32	VP of Student Affairs and Athletics (Male)	Midwest
Abby	2	Dean of Students (Female)	Northeast
Ellie	5	Dean of Students (Male)	Midwest
Krissy	7	Dean of Health and Wellness (Female)	Southeast
Frankie	31	Vice Dean of Students (Female)	Southeast
Gillian	5	VP for Student Affairs, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Male)	Southeast
Ingrid	5	Associate Dean of Students (Female)	Northeast
Megan	5	VP of Student Affairs and Athletics (Female)	Midwest

Below are brief descriptions of each participant and the essence of her leadership trajectory. The descriptions attempt to capture the shared and yet unique experiences of being a woman director of a college counseling center.

Debbie: "My Heart Is Always at the Clinical Work."

Debbie is a self-described servant leader whose love and passion for clinical work is what she enjoys most about directing a college counseling center. She compares the administrative duties of the director role to the flurry in a snow globe, causing difficulty to see the joys of the clinical work. Through the years, Debbie has tried to counteract the misconception held by some administrators that she, and her work, is just about being "warm and fuzzy" which undervalues and misrepresents the severity and nature of college counseling.

Jennifer: "What's Important Is That We Are Seen as Important as We Are."

Jennifer was recruited into her role as director almost 10 years ago. Since that time, she continues to identify most with her identity as a clinician. She noted that she loves the clinical work with college students and finds that at times "the administrative stuff gets in the way" of that passion. Jennifer has found that one challenge she faces as the director is gaining respect and understanding of the center's worth from administration.

Barbara: "The Message in Higher Education to Do More with Less Is Invalidating."

Barbara felt an obligation to take on the role of director of the counseling center almost 20 years ago. Barbara shared that keeping foot in the clinical work without it impacting the administrative duties has been one of the hardest obstacles as director. After all her years as a director she noted still loving her role as a psychologist the most, "more than the administrative stuff". Barbara also explained that one of the biggest challenges with being a woman director is being taken seriously. She tries to manage this

through a leadership style that is less vulnerable and more political when outside the counseling center.

Leslie: "I Consider That My Role Is to Serve My Staff."

Leslie's passion and commitment to serving others through therapy and leadership, though occurring later in life, is still expressed with vigor and liveliness. Leslie was recruited by a former colleague to be a director. She expressed feeling pressure to make sure the hiring of a woman is a positive experience for the institution. She also noted that she believes her voice is not always respected due to her gender. Yet, her faith and servant leadership style allow her to continue advocating for resources and drawing boundaries to respect herself and her staff.

Claire: "Above All Else I'm Going to Approach Things with Caring Compassion."

Claire's college experience fostered her connection to counseling in a university setting. Through her life she never sought out leadership roles, but naturally moved into such positions with poise. Claire's feminist leadership style comes across in her collaboration with others and desire for a consensus as much as possible. Although, she has wondered if this collaborative approach, and her gender, impacts her ability to obtain necessary resources.

Helen: "As a Female Leader You're Going to Face -Isms Other Than Just Being Female...Like Having a Family or Not, Married or Not...You Have to Figure Out How to Continue to Operate."

Helen's therapeutic skills have assisted in her director position as much as her clinical role. Her ability to build rapport, care for others, assess situations, and learn someone's personal language has been an advantage in the political world of higher

education. Helen's servant leadership style is ever present with her staff, as she describes herself as "being in the trenches" with her team. Her many years as director has meant building social capital to obtain resources.

Abby: "I Try and Do the Right Thing, Sometimes It's Not What Everybody Wants."

Abby explained that she needed to courage to take on the role as director given the seriousness of the issues faced through the counseling center. Also part of that courage was decreasing her clinical load, which she loves most, to tend to administrative tasks. Abby shared that her leadership style is collaborative, transparent, and also still in flux. As she continues to learn and grow in her role, she is more aware of the strengths and limitations to her style.

Ellie: "What People Actually Need from Me, As a Leader and As a Counselor, Is Somebody Who Is Present to Them, Who Can Listen Well."

Ellie's leadership is defined by her dedication to being present. As a leader, listening and developing a connection with those she works with is just as important for Ellie as getting things done well. She also values doing quality work in the field of counseling, which at times means slowing down and doing less in order to be more present and effective with students, faculty, or staff. These values can conflict with some of her university's interests which at times encourage "doing more with less."

Krissy: "Success Is Different for Everyone."

Krissy describes herself as an in the trenches leader. Her caring attitude towards her staff, the students, and her work has helped her develop a supportive environment within the counseling center. Krissy notes that this relational, emotional, person-centered style of leading can be less effective with administration. A clash of objectives occurs

when Krissy is looking at what's best for the individual, not what's best for the "bottom line."

Frankie: "What I Want to Do...I Want to Do More Clinical Work."

Frankie is a long-standing director at her counseling center. She made note that most of her career it seemed like the school "didn't value mental health that much." This viewpoint clashed with Frankie's and in return she has faced a series of ethical and moral dilemmas in her position. She managed these dilemmas by prioritizing her ethics of care. Frankie explained that she uses her communication skills and service-oriented leadership style to help students to continue to receive the services they need.

Gillian: "What I Fear Is If I Was to Remove Myself from Clinical Work, It Would Be Easy to Impose a Decision and Not Understand Its Impact."

Gillian's passions for psychology and student affairs from a young age naturally led her into counseling at a university center. Gillian leads her center with curiosity, support, and a feminist perspective; she remains involved in the clinical work for her own purposes but also to remain aware of what her staff experiences and how decisions will impact their daily activities. Gillian expressed a challenge with negotiating resources is that the ethics and values between the center and the university can at times be in contrast to one another.

Ingrid: "I Want My Staff to Feel Very Cared for, I Want Them to Be Seen and to Feel Heard."

Ingrid grew up with a curiosity about people and ability to empathize that naturally led her to become a psychologist. Her identity as a psychologist is what feels most salient, despite her role as a director. The other identity she feels most aware of is

that of a mother. One of the greater challenges of her job is negotiating being a leader on campus with being a present mother. Ingrid has navigated this by bringing honesty, integrity, and meaning to her work and leading with transparency.

Megan: "I Gravitate Towards Leadership Roles...I Enjoy When You Get to Move a Group Through Conflict and the Group Is Better for It."

Megan has used her knowledge and appreciation for community mental health to create a campus community focused on well-being. Her ability and love for thinking through problems has helped her cope with the challenge of meeting high demands with limited resources. However, other challenges in her role that seem harder to solve relate to her identity as a mother. She often questions whether she is struggling with responsibilities of the role because they are unreasonable or because she is juggling other care roles. Additionally, Megan feels that the high value of care for students that her school holds creates more burn out for those in care roles.

Findings

This study sought to answer one primary research question through the use of four sub-questions. The main research question was to understand the lived experience of being a woman director of a college counseling center. The four sub-questions explored this phenomenon through the lens of Van Manen's (1990) lifeworld existentials of lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relations. The findings for these questions are discussed below.

Research Question 1: How Do Women Directors of College Counseling Centers Portray Their Leadership Trajectory in Relation to Their Lived Experiences Related to Time, Space, Body, and Human Relations?

When asked about their lived experiences, women directors of college counseling centers reflected that their pathway into directing was unplanned and in some ways, undesired. These women were influenced by those around them who saw them as a leader and good fit for the role. This influence was what brought them into the position as director, rather than as an intentional, calculated move in their overall leadership trajectory. For these women, what was most important and essential in their leadership trajectories was maintaining their identity as therapist or psychologist.

The identity as a care-worker remained present for these women in many parts of their lived experience as a director. One way was in their maintenance of some level of clinical work, another was in their leadership style. This style was defined as collaborative, transparent, caring, and servant, which aligned with their values as a care-worker. However, depending on the spaces and people with whom they interacted, these women altered their style of relating. For example, when in spaces that included leaders who did not have a marginalized identity in some regard, these women directors felt there was more expectation to prove the value of the counseling work. These women noted how proving the value of care-work is a constant battle and seemingly unattainable in a space that identifies with different values. So one reason for this switch in behaviors and presentation was a need to appear more aligned with the care-less values of the institution in order to obtain resources or reflect the value of the center.

Additionally, when these women were in spaces with peers or upper level management who were white men, it increased awareness around their own lived body and at times resulted in impression management. These women felt they needed to present to certain people and in specific spaces in a particular way to achieve what they wanted out of an interaction. Given that directors reported that their identity as a therapist or psychologist was most important to them, their presentation as a middle manager led to feelings of disconnect due to its incongruence to their care-worker identity. Therefore, returning to the counseling center felt like "home" where they could retreat into their natural care-oriented practices.

Lastly, as part of their lived experience as leaders of a care-division, these women expressed struggling with universities taking advantage of their natural tendency as caregivers to give more and do more even when resources are limited. Since these leaders have a division based in care ethics and values, there is a natural urge to "go above and beyond" which only reinforces to the university that the center can function on limited resources. Directors noted how this exploitation of their work, coupled with the administrators' limited understanding of the depth of services provided, led to feeling disregarded and that resources are not allocated justly at the university. Yet, despite these challenges of leading a care-oriented division at the university, the directors spoke of wanting to continue their role and assist in addressing these issues ongoing.

Research SubQuestion 1: How Do Women Directors of College Counseling Centers Describe the Transition Into Their Leadership Position? (Lived Time)

The women in this study reflected that their transitions into leadership were often unanticipated. Part of the unexpected timing of this trajectory was due to a lack of desire

or projected pathway to becoming the director. Also, the timing of taking on such a role was often unpredictable, usually brought about by the retirement or re-assignment of a previous director. A sense of duty or obligation to fulfill the role influenced many to feel pressured to take the job. This sense of duty was secondary to other timely influences such as poor candidates for the position, requests from the resigning director or other administrators to take the position, or nudges from colleagues to apply. Yet, while the timing of their transition may have been unplanned or undesired, the role was taken with purpose and intent.

Research SubQuestion 2: What Do Women Directors of Counseling Centers Reflect on Regarding Leading a Care-Oriented Department within a Care-Less Organization? (Lived Space)

The women directors of counseling centers expressed leadership styles that were care-based. While some described their style outright as “servant” or “feminist”, others used terms to describe the ways they lead that align with these practices such as collaborative, transparent, flexible, approachable, understanding, and caring. These leadership traits may have already been present in these women before becoming directors, as they also discussed these traits as synonymous to their identity as a psychologist or therapist. Additionally, directors expressed that this collaborative, transparent , and caring way to lead was exhausting at times, particularly when negotiating the needs of the counseling center. Their style with upper administration at times became more political and less transparent, a conflicting way of leading and being than their typical style.

The women directors also expressed that their style of leading and the values in their divisional space were not always compatible with the values of the institution. Many mentioned how their ethic of care did not align with the university's values of trying to do more with less, making decisions and negotiations challenging. For example, the ethic of care may prioritize the well-being of the individual (leaving the university) over the needs of the institution (retention). Additionally, care values that drive the divisional space of the counseling center could be taken advantage of, as directors explained how administrators would disregard their requests for more resources citing that the center was managing well with their current resources. Yet, directors reported that this was because their ethics often resulted in taking on extra tasks, extending their services, and additional changes to make sure student needs were still being met despite lacking resources.

These directors noted how this overextension keeps the center in a loop of not being seen as needing more. The women noted the burnout, and subsequent exodus, of their staff, as well as their own burnout. As a result, directors utilized strategies to maintain their ethic of care and minimize burnout, some of which included holding boundaries (on time and expectations of themselves and their staff), creative responses to needs of the center, listening to and validating staff needs, and a continuance of their own clinical practice by seeing a caseload of students.

Another perspective discussed around lived space by these directors was the challenge of leading a division that others do not necessarily understand, comprehend, or value. Directors explained the challenge of conveying the breadth and depth of services due to confidentiality and The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

(HIPAA). Also, while the stigma around mental health has decreased, directors still noted how faculty and staff across campus can be uncomfortable talking about mental health issues, particularly more serious issues such as suicidality and sexual assault. These factors can make it hard to prove the value of the counseling center, especially if the ethics of care of the counseling center do not align with the ethical stance and values of the institution.

Research SubQuestion 3: How Have Women Directors of College Counseling Centers Experienced Their Gender While at Work? (Lived Body)

As the women directors discussed their lived body experiences, it was clear that depending on what spaces they were in, or who they were with, their gender was more or less apparent. In spaces where they were one of many or all women leaders or administrators, their gender identity felt less salient or more validated. However, in spaces or interactions that involved male leaders or administrators, the women's gender identity felt more present, often in a way that felt marginalizing or "othered." Differences in this presence of the lived body occurred when working with male leaders who had an intersecting marginalized identity (e.g. race, sexual orientation). In these cases, experience of their body was still felt, but not in a marginalized or "othered" way.

For these directors, the experience of gender in their role was also influenced by societal expectations and messaging. Many spoke about their active attempts to avoid the socialized negative stereotypes of women. The result was often thinking deeply about the way in which to speak or address the needs of their center. Others noted the intersection of their identities as a mother and leader and how that influenced their behaviors and thought processes.

Research SubQuestion 4: How Do Women Directors of College Counseling Centers Express Their Relationships with Others in the Workplace? (Lived Relations)

A great deal of overlap existed for these women directors in regards to their lived relations and lived body and/or lived space. Their experiences with their staff, peers, and administrators were often influenced by their gender or even by the culture of the spaces in which these relationships took place. The familiarity and comfort with their own staff and peers led these women to have relations that were open, vulnerable, and caring. Yet, relations with upper administration were more calculated, strategic, and political. So depending on the relationship, and the values and goals associated with that relationship, the style of communication would be different. Additionally, the relations with staff and administration had their challenges, but in separate ways. Directors noted the consistent level of care, transparency, and openness given to their staff was draining and daunting at times. This style of leadership also got in the way at times of getting things done, since such care can take time and stall movement forwards in some ways.

While relations with administration were focused on getting needs met but through other means that did not always feel care-full. For example, words like "political", "gamesmanship", and "competition" showed up when directors discussed their relations outside of the counseling center. Yet, their desire to care still exists in such situations; to care for the campus community. This care-oriented mindset drives the decisions and behaviors these women make even when outside the counseling center.

There was also a sense of conflict for these women directors in wanting to lead with care yet not be seen by others as "warm and fuzzy" since that devalues their work and can reinforce negative gender stereotypes. When these directors interacted with upper

administration, there was often a question of whether they understood fully the nature of the counseling work. The belief that there was limited or skewed comprehension and appreciation for the work influenced the dynamics of those relationships. Some directors coped with this by rationalizing the situation, drawing firmer boundaries, or continuing to seek resources.

Conclusion

The lived experience of women directors of college counseling centers included managing their identities as care-workers, women, and leaders within the space of a care-less gendered organization. While these directors never aspired to their position, they embraced their roles by leading in ways that align with their values as a care-provider. This care-oriented leadership, along with maintenance of some form of their clinical work, allows the directors to feel connected to their meaningful identity and values as care workers. Retaining that care-identity is important given that it is often tested as a middle manager within an organization with care-less values where support and understanding of the counseling work from upper administration is often missing. Rather, misconception and exploitation of care-work by the organization influences these directors to establish coping strategies to enhance their credibility and maintain the care-values of the center. Some of these strategies include creating boundaries, impression management, and altering their leadership style, which can at times feels discrepant to their care worker identity. Despite often feeling unheard and unseen in regards to the value and needs of the center by their leaders, these women continue to make sure they lead “in the trenches” with their staff and help them to feel seen, heard, and valued.

The last two chapters of this dissertation are written in manuscript format with the intention of publication. Chapter 5 is presented as an empirical article for *The Journal of Counselor Leadership & Advocacy*. This journal publishes research and articles that stimulate conversation and to promote leadership around professional issues within counseling settings. The article will focus on the professional identity and leadership issues discovered for women directors of college counseling centers and ways they have learned to cope with such challenges. Chapter 6 is an article written for *Counseling Today*, a monthly magazine published by the nationally reaching American Counseling Association. This magazine publishes articles that support counselors in their professional development and clinical practice. The article for this magazine will focus on the lessons learned from these directors and provide recommendations for current and future counseling leaders to improve their practice. Both articles are co-authored by Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, who also served as my dissertation chair. A complete reference list for chapters 1 through 4 follows the manuscripts presented as Chapters 5 and 6 to complete this dissertation.

Chapter 5

Manuscript One: Conflicting Cultures, Compromising Care:

A Heuristic Inquiry of Women Directors of College Counseling Centers

Abstract

The role that women leaders of college counseling centers have is unique; they must contend with the inherent social norms that women face in gendered organizations, in addition to negotiating the dichotomous, and often conflicting, leadership expectations of a care work division and a care-less upper administration. Using heuristic inquiry, I explored the leadership trajectories of women directors of college counseling centers to understand how they are influenced by the care-less values of higher education. This study uncovered that these directors have to compromise their care work values and identities to adjust to the care-less institution's culture, leaving us to question whether care leaders can ever retain that identity and still survive in a care-less organization.

Keywords

Counseling leadership, college counseling, care-lessness, care work, women, higher education

Introduction

Like many organizations, higher education has been recognized as gendered evidenced by overt and covert practices, cultural dynamics, and societal beliefs based on gender that hinder women, especially their movement into leadership positions (Acker, 1990, 2012; Seo et al., 2017). Despite these prejudices, women have made significant progress over the last 60 years to move into leadership roles. A significant aspect of women's leadership progress in education in the United States came in the 1960s (Eisenmann, 2006), as a result of a revolutionary social movement and subsequent

governmental action that influenced women's working conditions, such as Title IX of the 1972 educational amendments that prohibited discrimination in education based on sex. However, while such legislative changes such as these have allowed women move into leadership positions at the university level, they are still highly underrepresented at the top of the leadership hierarchy; they hold less than 40% of executive positions such as President, Vice President and Provost (Bichsel et al., 2019), which offer higher salaries and greater influence and prestige.

The divisions at the university that have generated the most advancement in women's leadership are those that can be understood as care work divisions. For example, in 2019, representation from women in leadership positions was as high as 69% in academic affairs, 66% in student affairs and 68% in counseling services (AUCCCD, 2019; Bichsel, et al., 2019). And while these advancements in leadership are important for closing the gender leadership gap, these types of leadership positions are more likely to be limited in scope (Berg, 2020) and reinforce the gendered nature of higher education given their association with care work. One such division at the university is the counseling center. Mental health counseling at colleges and universities has changed dramatically over the last decade. College counseling has shifted from guidance around the general adjustments to higher education, to therapy for severe mental health issues that looks similar to community mental health treatment (Binkley & Fenn, 2019). Counseling centers are now seen as the main resource to manage the health, safety, and well-being of the college community as a whole (Roy, 2018). College counseling can be understood as care work given its emotional foundation, support of people with their individual needs, and selfless essence (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; England et al., 2002;

Tronto & Fisher, 1990). Such care work is essential in society, and thus the academy, since all humans need some form of care at any given time (Gilligan, 1982; Conradi & Vosman, 2016).

However, the values described above consistent with care work no longer align with the values of higher education. As a result of our capitalist ideals, a care-less culture has infiltrated higher education that centers on profits and consumer demands and has resulted in the rise of workers and leaders who are ruthless, aggressive, and forego care roles to be fully dedicated to the institution (Giroux, 2002; Grummel et al., 2009; Sklair, 2001). This care-less culture and associated values is in direct contrast to the care values of counseling, creating an incongruous fit for such care work and care leaders within the academic setting.

The purpose of this paper is to portray the interaction between gender, leadership, and care work within the care-less landscape of higher education. Using a heuristic design, I explore the experiences of women directors of college counseling centers and how they are influenced by the care-less culture and expectations of the institution. These experiences bring attention to how the care-lessness of the institution forces care leaders to compromise their identities, sabotaging their success as leaders and in turn reinforcing the gendering of higher education.

Conceptual Framework

The experiences of these women leaders occur within the framework of larger social constructs discussed below. These constructs include gendered leadership, gendered care work, and care-lessness. These concepts helped to situate, conceptualize, and guide this research. The first concept of gendered leadership highlights disparities in

representation and prejudices women face to obtain or maintain leadership, particularly in gendered organizations such as higher education. Following is a brief introduction to care work in order to frame gendered care work, the phenomenon of women being expected to fill certain roles in society and their marginalization as a result due to the devaluing of such work. The next concept reviewed is care-lessness including its juxtaposition to care work and how the values associated with care-lessness have infiltrated the realm of higher education. Lastly, care work is discussed in relation to its fit within care-less settings, such as counseling within colleges and universities.

Women and Leadership

Women experience biases and prejudices that hinder their success and progress in organizations. Acker (1990, 2012) helped explain why this gender inequality continues to exist, particularly at the organizational level, despite changes in laws and progress from women's liberation movements. Acker (1990) began by clarifying that rather than being gender-neutral, organizations are profoundly gendered. The concept of gendered organizations explains the systematic structures, policies, and practices that create and maintain a division related to gender, with males being the advantaged, primary, and privileged gender (Acker, 1990). The division leads to women's marginalization within the organization and reproduces inequities based on gender, affording men more opportunities than women including those within leadership.

Women, even when they do obtain leadership roles, face additional prejudices precisely due to their gender (Eagly et al., 1995) in the form of incongruent expectations and scrutiny of their performance based on their gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson et al., 2008). For example, women are penalized for displaying or lacking stereotypically

female traits and exhibiting characteristics associated with effective leadership because they are too masculine (Frye, 1983; McGregor, 2013; Zheng et al., 2018). This exemplifies the catch-22, or double-bind, women in leadership encounter (Frye, 1983). The association of effective leadership with masculinity and masculine traits results from the early developments of leadership theory in the late 1800s in the United States (Spector, 2016). The original researchers of leadership, who were typically White men, exerted their perceptual biases about gender, resulting in the initial theories on effective leadership characterized by the traits and behaviors associated with men (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Johnson et al., 2008). This created a male-centric view of who a leader is and how he behaves, making it less likely that women will be seen as “fitting” leadership roles.

Such policies, procedures, and practices that inherently marginalize women while privileging men by favoring behaviors and traits recognized as masculine has been recognized in higher education (Blackmore, 2014; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Hannum et al., 2015; Hart, 2016). Such practices include, but are not limited to, the separation of job duties by gender, discussions around women's bodies and emotional expression, and even social engagements that exclude women (Acker, 1990, 2012). Bearing these challenges in mind, women have to navigate the cultural playbook of masculine-oriented organizations, including higher education, by altering their ways of behaving to fit in (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Charles, 2014). This constant identity management takes a great deal of emotional energy (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Gherardi 1995) and has been reflected in the literature as a reason for many women to be less interested in leadership trajectories at universities (Bagilhole & White, 2013; O’Connor, 2001). However, a deeper

understanding of how gender and its subsequent social expectations relate to specific areas of university leadership is not addressed in the literature. For example, the literature fails to recognize how women leading divisions at the university that coincide with stereotypical socially normed “women’s work”, such as care work, are impacted and influenced by gendered leadership. Moreover, women leading these care work divisions face an added obstacle that is important to understand; care work contradicts the values of the institution which can be understood as “care-less”.

Care Work

There are divisions and departments within the university that can be understood as responsible for the care work of the institution. Care work has been identified as tasks that involve service to another individual, which are inspired in some way by interest in the individual’s needs and overall well-being (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Tronto & Fisher, 1990). In this way, care work has an emotional basis, with the providers experiencing some level of responsibility and altruistic nature to help others (Cancian & Oliker, 2000; Tronto & Fisher, 1990). Given that such caring roles, whether in the home or in the workforce, have a societal association with women’s work, care work has been conceptualized as gendered (Acker 1995; Lynch et al., 2009). Care work in the paid sector has been associated with jobs such as nursing, child care, teaching, and therapy to name a few (England et al., 2002) and in the unpaid sector as childrearing and other unpaid domestic activities that involve tending to the needs of others (Acker 1995; England, 2005).

Historically at the university, the care of student safety and wellness has fallen on the division of student affairs, which often includes counseling centers (AUCCCD, 2019;

Dungy, 2003). Given the focus on care work in these divisions, predictably, they are overrepresented by women (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). The mission of these care divisions has been to cultivate and attend to students' overall development and well-being beyond the classrooms (NASPA, 1987). This mission helped distinguish the division's role from that of faculty members and academic affairs, which was concentrated on the intellectual development of the student (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Such care work involves a commitment to relationships and focuses on the needs of the student over those of the organization, values that clash with the care-less culture of higher education.

Gendered Care Work. Consistent with the societal stereotype that women are nurturers and caretakers (Eagly & Karau, 2002), women are seen in culture as the default care workers (Lynch et al., 2009). For women, who are the majority of care workers, there is a belief that they engage in their care work from both a job and emotional basis (Graham, 1991; Thomas, 1993) This essentially sets a "social expectation that women's caring work should blur the distinction between labor and love" (Acker, 1995, p. 24). Therefore, women in care work can be easily taken advantage of by employers or administrators, who feel they can cut costs when necessary since these women will make self-sacrifices to continue their best quality of caring (England, 2005). This gendered nature of care work disadvantages women and creates expectations that result in further marginalization of women at home and the workplace, including higher education.

Care-Lessness

Juxtaposed to the structure of care work is the concept of care-lessness. Where care work has fundamentals in the relationships of humans and the importance of connection, care-lessness is born from the capitalist society which does not consider the

significance of interpersonal relations (Leira, 1994; Sklair, 2001). Care-lessness is recognized as the ability to perform a role in a way that disregards any other responsibilities and puts work in the forefront to enhance productivity and profits (Lynch, 2010). Care-lessness is in opposition to care work as it is done to earn financial gains and does not involve emotional connection or altruism (Leira, 1994). In this way, the ideal worker is not encumbered by any duties (e.g. care taking) which would impede his or her ability to be accessible at all times to answer the call of the job, resulting in a care-less work style (Giroux, 2002).

To be considered care-less, the ideal worker at the university chooses to be free of personal responsibilities to meet the institution's highest performance standards (Grummell, et al., 2009; Lynch, 2010). This care-less worker also puts personal time aside and is available at all times to respond to the job, loyal to the university over anything or anyone else (Lynch, 2010). The presumption is that university faculty and staff, *especially the leaders*, will embody this ideal care-less worker (Lynch, 2010). Due to the care-less attitude and behaviors needed to excel in this consumer-driven, capitalist academic environment, most managerial positions are attained only by people who do not have other care roles (Grummel et al., 2009). There is an expectation that those filling these roles are able to give their free time, including nights and weekends, to the job. Since the societal expectation is that women are caregivers (Lynch, 2009), and these roles exhibit stereotyped masculine-oriented qualities such as aggressiveness, authority, and care-lessness, these managers and administrators tend to be men (Bailyn, 2003; Hanlon, 2009; Lynch, 2010; Probert, 2005). The result of this care-less culture and expectation of care-less work is a threat to women's leadership.

Care Work within Care-Less Context: College Counseling

The literature fails to recognize the intersection of women leading divisions that are stereotyped as care work divisions in care-less organizations and the impact this has on women counseling leaders, despite the fact that women are increasingly obtaining director positions within college counseling centers. The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey found 66% of individuals in administrative roles identified as women (AAUCCD, 2019), up 10% in the last ten years. (2009). Since women are overrepresented in care divisions at the university and leadership associated with those decisions, such as college counseling, it is crucial to understand how the gendered nature of higher education further influences their unique leadership role and their leadership trajectories given the focus on, and gendered nature, of care.

The care work values of college counseling centers are central to the expectations of such a division of the university. The care responsibilities of college counseling center directors have even expanded in the last ten years due to the widening range of student mental health issues (Hodges, 2015). Students are presenting at counseling centers with problems such as anxiety (61%), depression (49%), trauma (17%), suicidal thoughts (14%), and non-suicidal self-injury (7%) (AUCCCD, 2019). Directors remain responsible for assuring the clinical soundness of the services provided and the university students' mental well-being, along with a myriad of other responsibilities such as: outreach to the campus community (Mitchell, 2019), campus-wide suicide prevention plans (Sharkin, 2012), crisis response (Bishop, 2016), supervision of clinical staff (Sharkin, 2012), and prevention services (Mitchell, 2019). Therefore, the care work and associated care values

are essential for the well-being of the university community and thus the institution as a whole. This is consistent with the assumption of care ethics: that all humans are dependent on others in some way and therefore always in need of some type of care (Gilligan, 1982; Conradi & Vosman, 2016).

However, concurrently, college counseling directors serve as middle managers, essentially leading a division focused on care within an organization that rewards and idealizes care-lessness in its workers and leaders. They are faced with the impossible expectation to care but be care-less. This creates a new bind for women leaders of care work divisions at the university: to be nurturing and care-full to fit their care and gender identity, yet assertive and care-less to fit their leadership status within a gendered organization. Therefore, these directors have an important story to tell: how they balance, prioritize, and compromise as care work leaders within care-less contexts. As such, these experiences are essential to understand how women negotiate their gender, care work, and leadership expectations within the care-less, gendered environment of higher education to help others better understand how the care-less values of the institution influence leaders of care work divisions.

Method

This study took the form of a heuristic inquiry, which is a type of phenomenological research meant to depict aspects of human experiences in a detailed way to facilitate deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic inquiry encourages the researcher to use their own experience with a phenomenon as the catalyst for problem-solving (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). This qualitative heuristic inquiry explored the lived experiences of women directors of college counseling centers

in the United States and how these experiences influenced, and continue to influence, their leadership pathway within care-less higher educational institutions. Leadership trajectories were explored through the lifeworld existentials, theorized by Van Manen (1990). Van Manen (1990) contends that our lived experience as humans is made up of four existentials: lived time, lived space, lived body, and lived relations. Given that these themes show up in all humans' lives, they can be used to reveal the essence of a particular phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990) and conceptualize and understand human experiences (Rich et al., 2013). As such, this study was guided by the following question: How do women directors of college counseling centers portray their leadership trajectory in relation to their lived experiences related to time, space, body, and human relations?

Participants

Participants with direct experience with the phenomenon in question were sought out using purposeful criterion and snowball sampling (Patton, 2015). The criteria created for the sample were individuals identifying as women who were current directors of college or university counseling centers within the United States and had been in their position for at least one year. Participants were contacted through this purposeful criterion sampling via email using a professional network. Additional participants were obtained through snowball sampling to expand the sample size. The final sample size included 13 women directors of college or university counseling centers. As Moustakas (1990) notes, sample sizes of 10-15 participants help support a more developed and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Moustakas, 1990). This sample size also allowed for data saturation, in that by the analysis of the last few interviews, no

new themes or meanings of the phenomenon were being found in the data (Guest et al., 2006).

Data Collection

In heuristic inquiry, data collection methods chosen must be open-ended; the processes developed should allow participants to openly express their thoughts, feelings, reactions in a way that is uninhibited by the methods of collection and allow for substantial, graphic portrayals of the experience (Moustakas, 1990).

Interviews. The most common method for obtaining data in heuristic inquiry is through communal dialogue, which occurs through extended interviews between the researcher and participants (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). Those collaborative discussions are held with individuals who have had first-hand experience with the phenomenon in question to help build a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Sultan, 2019). Therefore, directors of university or college counseling centers were interviewed through collaborative dialogue with the researcher to understand their individual lived experience. Nine semi-structured questions encouraged the exploration of their unique middle manager role, the complexities of being a woman leader, how they experience the gendered nature of higher education, and the impact gender, identity, and care work has had on their leadership practices. The interview questions provided some structure to the interview, which helped guide each participant to facilitate a collaborative conversation of co-discovery. However, the directors were also invited to share stories, anecdotes, and additional thoughts and reflections related to the research topic that spontaneously arose throughout the interview as consistent with heuristic inquiry.

Some of the semi-structured questions included: share with me what it feels like to be uniquely you, navigating through the ins and outs of your multiple leadership roles; tell me a little about your leadership style or styles at work; how do you negotiate the needs and resources the counseling center has and how has your gender played a role in these dynamics; what strategies helped you/help you get to where you are now? Interviews were between 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. To ensure that the interview questions facilitated discussion around what was meant to be studied, two techniques were applied: a pilot interview with a current director of a college counseling center and a review by an expert committee.

Artifacts. Aligned with Moustakas' (1990) urges for creativity and openness to our sensory awareness, the collection of art-based artifacts is also supported in heuristic inquiry to provide supplemental descriptions and meaning to the lived experience in question (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). Artifacts can provide knowledge to the study that is not available through typical data collection procedures (Norum, 2008). Therefore, I also obtained personal objects that were artistic in nature and allowed participants to reflect upon their lived experiences in a different way. The artifact collection method for this study included obtaining participant-generated objects exemplifying experiences in their leadership role. To do this, the participants were directed to provide a picture of something from their office that represents their leadership trajectory and experiences and send it in .jpeg format through email prior to their scheduled interview. During the interview, participants explored the nature of the artifact and its relationship to their career pathways. This question allowed for the creation of a richer narrative around the research question (Sultan, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed by following procedures outlined by Moustakas (1990) and Sultan (2019). The first phase of analysis was immersion into the data by completing embodied relational transcripts for each participant (Sultan, 2019) and reviewing these along with participant artifacts. The next phase reflects Moustakas' (1990) incubation, illumination and reflexivity cycles. The data was set aside for a period to encourage spontaneous enlightenment of themes and to conceptualize each individual experience of the phenomenon. Van Manen's (1990) lifeworld existentials were used as a framework when exploring, organizing, and reflecting on the data collected. Individual depictions were created that established unique narratives for each participant that focus on particular themes that frame their experiences as women directors of college counseling centers.

Once the individual depictions were complete, a composite depiction was generated by integrating the themes from the individual depictions to establish a group portrayal of the phenomenon. This depiction includes both the sense of each participant's lived experience and the collective group (Moustakas, 1990). Lastly, a creative synthesis was developed to illuminate the essential meaning of being a woman director of a college counseling center. This creative synthesis was designed in poetry format and depicts the intersecting identities of these women, subsequent obstacles due to these identities, organizational dynamics and coping strategies.

Findings

This study sought to understand the lived experiences, beliefs, and actions of women directors of college counseling centers and how these experiences influenced, and

continue to influence, their leadership pathway. Three themes were uncovered and are discussed below: caring about care work, (un)compensated care, and care-less compromises. Each theme discussed also reflects how it is impacted by the care-less environment of the university. Following the description of these three themes is the poetic adaptation of these findings obtained through the researcher's journal.

Caring about Care Work

As the participants spoke about their lived experiences as women directors of college counseling centers, the first main theme uncovered was their care about care work, demonstrated through their actions both as care workers and leaders. While this caring about care work was aligned with their identity as care workers, it had consequences in their role as a leader.

Clinical Care. The directors reflected upon their roots as listeners, care givers, and mental health providers and explained how that identity was most salient for them even upon obtaining a leadership role within the university. "Gillian" explained this by sharing, "It's important to me to do clinical work. It's the thing that I can do to connect me to what brought me here in the first place: being a mental health professional." The involvement in clinical work for the directors was important given it connected them to their purpose and aligned with their identity as care workers. As "Jennifer" noted, "…the clinical work, being in the field - that is my calling." They also discussed how the care for this care work was the most enjoyable aspect of their job. "Barbara" explained, "…after all these years, honestly I still love my role as a psychologist the most, more than the administrative stuff." Another director, "Debbie," expressed how much she cares for the care work through her artifact, a snow globe. (See Figure 2)

This is my snow globe...to me it represents that my heart is always at the clinical work and that's what keeps me going, but sometimes the administrative stuff is like a flurry, creating stress and panic and I don't know how I'm going to see my way out, but then that settles and I have my purpose back again and I can see.

Figure 2

Snow Globe

For these directors, caring feels more natural than leading. Their care about caring is demonstrated by continuing their clinical work, and this care work aligned with the identity with which they felt most connected: care worker.

Leadership Care. Caring about care was described by these directors not only through their clinical work, but as a leader of their division. As "Ingrid" explained, creating a caring culture was an essential part of participants' leadership goals: "I care for my staff by creating an environment where people feel very valued for their work and who they are, and what they bring forward." The directors intentionally strive to care for their staff, reflecting another way that their care for care work is infused into their daily

practice. Additionally, these directors reflected ways in which their leadership style itself coincides with aspects of care. For example, they spoke of styles aligned with “feminist” or “servant” leadership, which encourages connection, collaboration, understanding, and care. One director, “Claire” explained of her style, “I would describe myself as having a feminist oriented leadership style. I tend to seek collaboration and consensus when possible.” “Krissy” referenced collaboration in another way:

> I’m an in the trenches leader - I’m not going to ask you to do something I wouldn’t do myself - and I think some people would say my style is more like a servant leadership - I want my staff to see me as supportive.

The actions the directors take to practice care-oriented leadership reinforces their commitment and connection to care work. This demonstrates how the care for care work is infused into their identity as a leader and influenced their actions within their division.

Consequences of Care. However, caring about care was not without consequences. As such, the theme of caring about care also came up in the ways these directors felt taxed as a result of their caring. Barbara highlighted the personal impact of the care she has for her staff, “sometimes I can’t get through a meeting because I care so much about hearing everyone’s opinions and making people feel heard. It’s exhausting sometimes.” This exhaustion was mentioned by others as well, as the extent of their caring was far reaching.

> I have that feeling of being touched out at the end of the day...like I have extended more care, like I’m maxed out...I care for my staff, for my role as director, for the mental health concerns on campus - that’s a lot of caring (Ingrid).

For these women directors of college counseling centers, caring about care is central to who they are as professionals, leaders, but more importantly people. As such, they demonstrate that care by continuing to engage in clinical work and even incorporating care into their leadership style. However, given the abundance of caregiving these directors exhibit, burn out and exhaustion was noted in some way. This exhaustion was further compounded if they felt their care was not being compensated, which was evident in the second theme: (un)compensated care.

(Un)Compensated Care

Prominent throughout the lived experiences of women directors of college counseling centers was a second theme related to how and if care work was compensated via remuneration and the allocation of resources to their centers. This theme aligns with the institution's value of the worthiness of care work. This worthiness of care work was experienced by the directors through financial compensation and allocation of resources. Given the frequency of uncompensated care, the directors shared that they often feel the need to prove the value of care work to care-less leaders.

Financial Compensation. The directors explained how they and their staff are uncompensated for their work via the means of salary benefits. Claire explains how she has discussed this issue with leadership, "I've said to them (administration), 'do you even care that I'm losing staff because I'm not paying enough?' They said, no - we will just hire more people." Other directors noted the impact financial compensation had on their lived experience as well.

> I'm significantly underpaid...especially if you take gender into consideration…I have friends on campus talking [about salaries] and I'm like, 'you've got to be

> kidding me, what we do is deal with life and death all the time and somebody who sits and runs numbers is getting paid twice as much money?' It just blows my mind (Jennifer).

> For positions in counseling, whenever I tell them salary, it will drop 50% of the applicants and almost all of the male applicants. The last two searches I couldn't even get a single man to interview (Debbie).

The lack of financial compensation demonstrates a devaluing of the work done by the counseling center. This devaluing of care work also aligns with the gendering of care work; these directors noted the connection between gender and poor financial compensation at the university level. This lack of compensation for such essential work reinforces the marginalization of women in higher education and puts a strain on hiring and retaining employees.

Allocation of Resources. Another element related to the theme of (un)compensation of care at the university level is the allocation of resources. In the lived space of the university, directors noted the ways in which resource allocation influenced the feeling that care work is undervalued by the institution.

> I just had a counselor not come back this year and so I'll spend the rest of the day writing up a justification for why we need that position filled and…it's like – why do I have to keep justifying this? To me it's that they're not valuing mental health ("Ellie").

> I put in a proposal for a full-time counselor with a diversity, equity, inclusion focus because that's something that our new President has put in his strategic plan, and so I thought it would get funded because mental health is huge right

now, and the students are really struggling, especially during Covid. But it hasn't gotten funded yet (Krissy).

The lack of attention given to the resources necessary to effectively run the counseling center demonstrated a devaluing of care work. This lack of compensation also created more work and strain on the directors, as they had to continue advocating for necessary resources.

Some directors also noted the intersection between resource allocation and gender at the university. They explained that they didn't always feel like their voice was heard, or they faced barriers to obtaining necessary resources. Participants believed this to be partially because of their gender. Jennifer provided an artifact (See Figure 3) and exemplified this through the described significance of her picture:

> The mug represents a cup of coffee… with coffee; the same thing that's good for you is also sometimes the same thing that can have a negative effect. So I love being a woman, a female in a leadership role, but it can also be extremely challenging being a woman in this role…sometimes I think - maybe it would just be easier if I if I just wasn't in a leadership role and I didn't have to fight the fight all the time…it's a constant battle to like remind people that we need more resources… and you feel like a nag, which is exhausting and sometimes demeaning.

Figure 3

Coffee Cup

When the university does not compensate for care work through resources, women leaders are forced to speak up and out to get the needs of their division met. As Jennifer notes, this initiates gendered notions of being a "nag", which is a common derogatory term associated with women who make requests that have been ignored or disregarded previously. This stereotype often reinforces women making less direct requests in order to not seem like a "nag", which only repeats this cycle of them needing to ask further for their needs. This puts a strain on leadership by reinforcing negative gendered notions. The lack of resource allocation also puts a strain on leadership by taking up unnecessary administrative time and draining the emotional energy of the directors of the division.

Care-Less Compromises

The last theme that exemplifies the lived experiences of women directors of college counseling centers relates to the care-less compromises that they made, or refused to make, in their roles as leaders within a care-less organization. These compromises sometimes came at the expense of their other identities or values.

Compromising Identity. The women directors of college counseling centers reflected upon the care-less compromises that arose from their role as a leader and how the compromises were influenced by the needs and values of their competing identities as director, woman (for some this included being a mother), and care worker (psychologist, therapist, social worker). Ingrid shared how her leadership identity bleeds into her personal life, compromising her role as a mother, "you know, being in this role, things happen outside business hours. You know, I'm sitting at my kid's soccer games and I need to respond to a call." Others spoke of similar ways their lived experiences as leaders and care conscious mothers in a care-less institution collided.

> I return to work in the directors role, I'm pumping (breast milk) twice a day, I'm in my office, pumping, thinking about a million other things, that the bottles filled and then overflowed and made a huge mess on me - I didn't turn of the machine when they were full because I didn't realize, I was just thinking of so many other things (Barbara).
>
> So I get these calls all the time, I get a call two weeks ago with my kid in the bathtub and I'm like - I have to call you back, I have my kid in the tub - so I need to get my kid to my husband to be able to call back ("Megan").
>
> One thing I do not struggle with is walking out the door every day at five…I have promised these people my presence from eight to five but if it's not an emergency, I will do it in the morning - I wasn't going to jeopardize any of my time at home and my ability to be present with my family - I'm just not willing ("Leslie").

> On college campuses they always like to say we are family and we are community, but I think - no - this is my job, my family and community are somewhere else because they are using that as a way to have us do things that they should be paying us a higher salary to do - it's about the bottom line for them… ("Helen").

For some, care-less compromises were somewhat reactionary and infiltrated their care role as mothers. For others, their role as a mother was responsible for their conscious effort to push back against the care-less pull of the institution. Either way, the care-less culture of the institution was evident to these women in its contrast to their care role as mothers, and it was impossible to effectively perform both roles at the same time.

Another care identity that clashed with the care-less culture of the institution resulting in compromises was that of care worker. Barbara provided an artifact (See Figure 4) and explained for her how this compromise manifested:

> I have this singing bowl as a way to remember to be mindful - to slow down and do one thing at a time. It reminds me of how I started my role as director with a large caseload but then I was trying to figure out how to be director and I was mediocre at both things - mediocre in the therapy room, mediocre as a director, and then it was like 'oh boy now I'm not really good at anything'…I can't be doing good therapy and be thinking - oh I forgot to approve someone's vacation time, or respond to that call I got earlier…I learned that I really needed to be more of an administrator - if I'm trying to be staff psychologist and director at the same time, I'm not going to be good at any of it.

Figure 4

Singing Bowl

The contrasting identities of care worker and leader in a care-less organization, and the values and practices associated with each, are opposed to one another, according to participants. Therefore, compromising their care worker identity was essential in order to be an effective leader of their division.

Compromising Leadership Practices. Care-less compromises also came in the form of altering leadership styles and practices. The directors explained ways that they compromised their care oriented servant or feminist leadership style at times in order to become more political, authoritative, or less transparent as a middle manager. One director, "Abby", mentioned this shift in leadership practice, "I'm very collaborative and sometimes too collaborative...sometimes I'm like - I just need to make this decision." Ingrid also explains how she adjusts her style, based on her perception of spaces and other administrative units at the institution, "I'm more guarded outside our office, in part because…I think there's competition among departments…there's a bit of gamesmanship, so I need to be more strategic." The middle manager role within the institutional environment influenced these women's leadership styles at times to be less vulnerable, more strategic, or less collaborative. Their care work values associated with

openness and transparency were compromised at times to fit what was needed in a situation, for example to obtain resources or even avoid being taken advantage of by administration.

These directors also noted that as care workers, there is often a tendency to do more even with limited resources in order to provide quality care. As a result, these directors compromise their leadership practices grounded in care to avoid burnout and exploitation from the university. Megan supplied an artifact (See Figure 5) which exemplified this experience:

> Amidst stormy waters your boat won't capsize because it has a keel underneath it...so you're able to kind of sway to and fro with the storm….It’s like a call towards my leadership now...it's a reminder to me to be vulnerable sometimes, but sometimes to not be and instead to take care of myself and my team…set boundaries, say no, because the model right now (for college counseling) just doesn't work and people are strained all over the place.

Figure 5

Sailboat

The directors' leadership styles evolved to help them get what they needed from their environment. While the tendency was to promote a care-oriented leadership style within their division as the director, this was compromised by the care-less environment of the university when in their role as a middle manager while interacting with other administrators. The need to become more care-less in their leadership practices was necessary to obtain resources for, and avoid exploitation of, their care work.

Compromising Care Values. Lastly, the directors expressed ways in which care for the students was compromised due care-less cultural norms: a focus on bottom lines, profits, and the demands of the consumer (i.e, the student). These compromises were challenging given the directors' opposing values of care.

> Sometimes we end up having to make decisions based on student's demands. I find myself frustrated with that because some decisions are not really in the best interest of the student but it's what the student is demanding or the family and they're paying customers and while there is a push and pull, it puts the university and therefore us in a position to respond in a certain way (Leslie).

> So many more students over the years have been wanting treatment…and they let the university know they want services, and there were so many who were trying to get in who couldn't…now, because we do a single session model, which was us completely pivoting and adapting, we are able to accommodate more but we're providing less treatment and more brief, solution focused stabilization (Jennifer).

> Basically it's been 10 years of every year just being reminded like okay well, you might lose positions or if somebody leaves it probably won't be filled and in the meantime mental health issues are escalating so that's been - that's just tiring it's

exhausting…I'm so tired of working in a place that just feels like it never has the resources right…people are just stretched and strained and I'm really willing to be creative and try new things…we've shrunk our individual services down and expanded groups but at the end of the day, we still aren't meeting the needs of students who want more (Ellie).

These care-less compromises for student care occurred because of the care-less culture of the university. These directors are forced under this cultural norm to let the consumer (i.e. student or parent) or the bottom line dictate what is the care plan versus what they (as professional care workers) know would be most beneficial. As a result, the students suffer which will ultimately come back to the counseling center (and its leadership) being viewed as not meeting student needs. This sabotages the leadership of these care leaders, which is consistent with gendered organizations that often put women in leadership positions that are destined to fail.

Creative Synthesis

These findings suggest that women directors of college counseling centers have many identities that intersect with their role within a care-less organization. Due to the culture of the care-less organization, they must make compromises to these identities and their associated values to fit the expectations of the institution. As noted in the methods section, following is poetic form of the creative synthesis of the findings.

Steady

To remain even-keeled
In the deep and murky waters
Of a syndicate
Teeming with traps and snares
For strong and authentic women
Is like a dare.
One that can cause Chaos

Within her wondrous mind
For she isn't always sure
How much to give - How to take
Which part of herself to lean into or out of.
Balancing the strength of her voice
With the pitfalls of her body
She returns home
To the comfort of her arm chair
To negotiate her needs
And the needs of others
But still within the red tape
And the thin line
That separates her identities.
A leader
A woman
A care taker
Most importantly
A guardian.
But these identities nonetheless intersect
As she chooses who and what
Moves through the gates
Of her sacred spaces.
But for to stay even- keeled
Steady against the current
Of waxing and waning discernment
And still move forward
She must stay true
To her roots.

Discussion

The findings from this study demonstrate how women counseling leaders' care identities and values conflict with the culture of a care-less organization. For women care leaders in these care-less organizations, this conflict results in compromises to either their care or leader identities.

Care-Less Compromises

The findings from this study revealed that counseling leaders within higher education had to make compromises to their care identities if they wanted to embody the care-less leader role idealized by the university. This builds upon previous literature that

has recognized that the marketization of higher education can create an internal conflict with middle managers, particularly those in care work divisions that are centered in values contradictory to the institution (Black, 2015). This study uncovered that this clash of values for directors of counseling centers meant compromises that sometimes came at the expense of their care identities (as mothers and care workers) and the values associated with these care identities. The reason for compromising these care identities was to epitomize leadership within the care-less culture of higher education. This helps connect previous literature that has acknowledged the expectations of leaders within care-less settings (Lynch, 2010) and the conflicts psychologists are likely to face in their work settings that challenge their personal and professional values and ethics (Fassinger & Shullman, 2017).

This study also revealed that for counseling leaders, fulfilling the idealized care-less leader meant putting the institution above their role as mothers or making leadership decisions that were in the interest of the institution rather than those of student care. While necessary to fit the persona of a care-less organizational leader, compromising one's professional and personal values can be detrimental to a care provider's self-esteem (Wilkinson, 1987; 1988). Given that these directors' care identities were essential to their purpose and they cared more about caring than leading, it would be important to understand how these compromises impact their well-being and self-worth. Also, for counseling leaders and followers, staying true to oneself by maintaining values and ethics that align with the counseling field are important leadership traits (McKibben et al., 2016). Therefore, future research could explore the retention and effectiveness of leaders

who more readily make care-less compromises than those who do not make such compromises.

It would also be important to understand how these care-less decisions impact the counseling center at the institution. As revealed in this study, the directors of counseling centers at times had to compromise their care-oriented leadership styles, such as servant leadership, to be effective in their administrative role. Previous studies have found that servant leadership can actually help followers manage challenging work obligations (Babakus et al., 2010). Given that those working at the counseling center have a challenging job with high burn out (Kafka, 2019), these care-less compromises by their leader may be another factor that impedes their ability to cope in their position, and therefore influences employee burnout and retention. Also, it is important to recognize that when directors compromised their care identities and made decisions against the best interest of the student, they were working in opposition to the mission of the counseling center. Therefore, future research should explore how the clashing values and mission of care divisions within care-less organizations impact the effectiveness of one another.

As these results demonstrated, it is impossible for care work leaders to embody the values of their care worker identity and that of a leader of a care-less organization at the same time. This builds upon previous research that has discussed the ways the culture of an organization can directly impact counseling leaders (Peters & Vereen, 2020). Undoubtedly there are care work leaders who decide not to make care-less compromises, however as this study suggests that will have an impact on their effectiveness as a leader within the care-less organization. Future research could investigate these leaders and how their lack of care-less compromises impacts their care work division, leadership

trajectories, and work satisfaction. This could help institutions understand how detrimental the care-less culture can have on care work leaders and their associated care divisions, impacting retention, a diverse administration, and a healthy institutional climate.

Care-Full Compromises

The findings from this study also revealed that counseling leaders within higher education had to make compromises to the care-less leader identity if they wanted to maintain their care identities and associated values. The importance and integration of one's care identity in counseling leadership is consistent with previous research (Peters & Vereen, 2020). However this study revealed that this integration influences one's leadership in a care-less organization. When leaders did make care-full compromises (compromising their leader identity for their care identity), they did so in order to obstruct the care-lessness of the institution from infiltrating their lives as mothers, partners, care workers, or care leaders. Some of those care-full compromises manifested as continued engagement in clinical work, the maintenance of a care-oriented leadership style, and the maintenance of personal boundaries. By making the decision to stay connected to their care identity in these ways, these directors renounced the expectations of their leadership role of fully being committed to the university and working to do what's best for the institution and its consumers (i.e. students) over anyone else.

As this study uncovered, directors of counseling centers compromised the care-less leader persona to maintain their clinical identities and care-oriented leadership. Previous studies have found how counseling professionals' identity and its associated values has many traits that can assist one in being a successful leader (Fassinger & Good,

2017; Prasath et al., 2021), but fail to acknowledge what sacrifices this entails when leading in a care-less organization. As such studies reflect, and this study supports, counseling professionals can be effective with their followers when embodying their care identities. However, as this study reveals, a leader may be effective within their care division while at the same time compromising their role as middle manager in the care-less culture of higher education. This aligns with research that has found care-oriented leadership styles (such as servant leadership) can improve the quality of work in service based agencies (Chen et al., 2015), such as counseling, yet be less effective in organizations that have more masculine-oriented values (Zhang et al., 2019). Given the care-less gendered organization of higher education, servant leadership may work effectively within care divisions while being ineffective at the administrative level.

The results of this study demonstrate how the fit of one's leadership style to the organization impacts the leader. For example, the directors noted their own exhaustion with maintaining their care identities, including their care-oriented leadership style, within the care-less setting of higher education. They also expressed that they sometimes made compromises to their care identities in order to avoid exploitation from the university. This builds upon literature that has revealed the burn out care providers experience in a number of settings (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Harrad & Sulla, 2018; Lawson, 2007; Noseworthy, 2017). Therefore, we are left to question if the maintenance of a counseling leader's care identity risks their own burn out and therefore their effectiveness for their followers. Future research could explore whether these care-full compromises make these leaders less effective within the university setting.

While these directors were at times willing to compromise their care-less leader identity to maintain their care work identity, it remains problematic that they are unable to embody both identities concurrently. Literature has explored how effective leadership is dependent on the ability for a leader to exhibit her inherent traits, and organizations that do not facilitate servant leadership inhibit the growth of servant leaders and followers (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011). Additionally, the dichotomous values care leaders in care-less organizations face between their care and leader identities creates additional barriers to success, building upon the literature around the gendered nature of managerialism in higher education (Grummell et al., 2009). Therefore, care-less organizations would benefit from recognizing how the care-less culture inhibits effective leaders, particularly when such organizations include care work divisions.

Conclusion

Women care leaders within care-less settings are left with a formidable feat: to embody both the role of a care-less leader, while managing a division focused on care work. In such cases, these leaders are unable to embrace both their care and leader identities at the same time. The inability to maintain both identities results in compromises made to one in order to embody the other. These compromises create an inverse relationship with their identities; as effectiveness in one is advanced, the other is degraded. This means counseling leaders in care-less settings must accept that these compromises to their care identity must come at the expense of being an effective leader within care-less settings. However, one may wonder if being an effective care-less leader is truly a measure of personal and professional success, particular for a care worker. And furthermore, can an organization that forces care leaders to modify their values and

practices truly foster good leaders and ultimately a successful business? Only future research can tell us.

Declaration of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest is reported by authors.

Chapter 6

Manuscript Two: Compromising Care:

An Occupational Hazard for Leaders in Counseling

When I sought to interview women directors of counseling centers for my dissertation, I wasn't exactly sure what I'd discover. All I knew was that I was interested in their unique leadership experience given the conflicting values between care work and higher education today. You see, higher education is not that different from many other large organizations. Influenced by capitalism, institutions are now more focused on the bottom line and creating employees focused entirely on their work responsibilities to the benefit of the organization (but to the detriment of their personal lives), resulting in what is considered to be a "care-less" organization (Lynch, 2010; Grummel et al., 2009). This care-lessness manifests in leaders and workers becoming cutthroat, ruthless, and selfish in order to excel within the organization (Lynch, 2010). As a therapist working in a university counseling center for about ten years, I have become more attuned to the differing values between our division and the larger institution. To me, trying to lead a division centered on providing care, like the counseling center, within this care-less organization of higher education is fraught with tensions and contradictions.

Additionally, gender inequities inherent to higher education produces a gendered organization with its own set of challenges. Gendered organizations create and maintain overt and covert practices, cultural dynamics, and social norms based on gender that hinder women, especially their movement into leadership positions (Acker, 1990, 2012). So for me, as a women care worker, understanding how these directors navigate leading a care work division while negotiating their role as a "care-less leader" within a gendered

organization was essential to uncovering the interaction between gender, leadership, and care work within the care-less landscape of higher education.

My curiosity in this topic, along with my enrollment in a doctoral program in educational leadership, spurred me to interview 13 women directors of college and university counseling centers from across the country. I wanted to know what it was like for them as leaders and how they experienced their dichotomous work environment. Using heuristic inquiry, I uncovered a culture clash between contemporary higher education and counseling that further marginalizes women leaders, particularly leaders of care work, by forcing them to compromise their care values and identities. These compromises are inevitable; to embody the role of a leader within the care-less organization of higher education, counseling leaders need to trade off some of their care roles, values, and practices for those of the care-less culture. Without these compromises, counseling leaders risk their leadership status and effectiveness in the organization.

If you're reading this and thinking, "yikes, this seems pretty bleak as a counseling leader," I would say that while that was my initial reaction, it also spurred me to consider how this knowledge could be useful. To me, these insights help counseling leaders within care-less settings prepare themselves for the internal (and sometimes external) assault on their values and identities. Also, this knowledge can help start a larger conversation within and outside the counseling field about care-less organizations and how care-lessness influences care work. Below I've described the three ways in which these directors expressed they had to compromise care as a leader within a care-less context, followed by three takeaways for counseling leaders.

Compromising Care

As mentioned previously, care-less work is born from our capitalist society that focuses mainly on profits and productivity (Lynch, 2010) rather than emotional connection (Leira, 1994). Care-less organizations reward, value, and idealize workers who can fully commit themselves to the job, put aside personal time, and be unencumbered by any other type of duty (Giroux, 2002; Grummell, et al., 2009). Higher education has become one such care-less organization, and therefore the presumption is that university faculty and staff, *especially the leaders*, will embody this ideal care-less worker (Lynch, 2010; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001). These care-less values are in direct contrast to those of a division focused on care, such as a counseling center. As a result, leaders in these divisions must at times trade off their care to align with the care-less institution. There are three ways in which these compromises to care have been experienced by current counseling leaders: compromising care identities, leadership styles, and values.

Compromising Identities

As these counseling leaders reflected, compromises to care arose from the competing needs and values of their identities as director, woman (for some this included being a mother), and care worker (psychologist, therapist, social worker). As a result, they were forced to make sacrifices in their care roles given that it was impossible to effectively perform such roles while being the director. For example, one woman shared about her identity as a mother and how the director position impacted time spent with her children. She explained,

> “I get a call two weeks ago to do a suicide assessment with my kid in the bathtub and I’m like, ‘I have to call you back, I have my kid in the tub’, so I need to get my kid to my husband to be able to call back.”

Another director echoed similar sentiments in regards to time spent with her elderly father, “The hardest thing is I've been on call for so many years… I can’t just go home and spend time with my father uninterrupted…it can be a serious lifestyle inhibitor.” These examples exemplify the ways in which the care-less culture of higher education, and subsequent expectations of its leaders, infiltrate the personal lives of counseling leaders. The care-less culture is contrasted with their care role as mothers, and at times it was impossible to effectively perform both roles at the same time. And by not making sacrifices to those care roles, they risk their status as leaders within a care-less organization.

Besides personal compromises to one's external care roles, counseling leaders will also need to make professional care compromises when leading in a care-less organization. All the directors I spoke to maintained involvement in clinical work, however it was significantly minimized in order to manage their administrative position. One director with many years in her role explained why holding both identities (care worker and leader) concurrently was nearly impossible,

> “I started my role as director with a large caseload but then I was trying to figure out how to be director and I was mediocre at both things - mediocre in the therapy room, mediocre as a director…I can’t be doing good therapy and be thinking, ‘I forgot to approve someone’s vacation time’…I learned that I really needed to be more of an administrator.”

The engagement involved doing care work is difficult to sustain when juggling administrative duties and expectations, without taking into account how the values of the care-less organization clash with the values of the care work being done. Therefore, counseling leaders will need to compromise their care worker identity in some way to be an effective administrator of their division.

Compromising Leadership Practices

The second area that counseling leaders will most likely make compromises to care is in their leadership styles and practices. The directors I spoke with expressed that their leadership style is servant or feminist based, both which are driven by care-oriented values such as collaboration, transparency, and support. Yet, at times they had to compromise those values and adapt a style that was more authoritative, political, and guarded to navigate the murky waters of the greater care-less organization. One director explained why these changes needed to happen in her position, "I'm more guarded outside our office, in part because…I think there's competition among departments…there's a bit of gamesmanship, so I need to be more strategic." As reflected, the care values that exist even in our leadership styles as counseling leaders are compromised at times in a care-less organization to get what is needed, like resources.

Compromising Care Values

The last way that counseling leaders make compromises to care in care-less settings is in regards to their care values. These compromises come as a result of the care-less cultural norms inherent to care-less environments. For example, students and their guardians may make demands of the university that are not necessarily in the best interest of the student's mental health. But, because the student (and whomever is financially

supporting their college endeavors) are the “consumer,” the university is likely to appease these individuals. Middle managers of the institution, such as counseling center directors, are then subjected to following these decisions made by university leadership, without regard to care values. These compromises can range from keeping a student at the university when it may not be in his/her/their best interest, to shrinking individual services, or to expand group treatment in order to treat more students. Therefore, counseling leaders are forced to let the consumer dictate what is the care plan versus what they, as professionals, know would be most beneficial.

Lessons for Caring Care-Lessly

These lessons in how care-less contexts impact care leaders help demonstrate the conflicts and unique challenges that arise for counseling leaders within higher education. These lessons also leave us with three important takeaways as counselors either already leading, or looking to lead, within care-less settings.

Lesson 1: Expect to Feel Conflicted

After interviewing these directors, it was evident that counseling leaders should expect to feel conflicted regularly when working in care-less settings. That is because care work leaders must navigate their personal, and perhaps divisional/departmental roles and values, when they are in direct conflict to those of the organization. Other research has supported this, finding that care work leaders in care-less settings have internal conflict because of contradictory values (Black, 2015). These leaders should also expect to feel conflicted because sometimes they will need to make sacrifices that come at the expense of their care identities (as women and care workers). While counseling leaders may expect, and prepare for, ethical or legal challenges in their positions, the clash of

personal and professional values may be less expected. By understanding this before entering the field, counseling leaders can reflect upon these compromises and prepare by doing things like creating a plan as to when and how they may want to make such sacrifices.

Lesson 2: Expect to Become Flexible

As noted, I discovered that counseling leaders in care-less contexts often had to alter their leadership style when navigating spaces outside of their care division. Therefore, counseling leaders should expect to be flexible in their leadership approaches if they are going to get their care divisional needs met in a care-less organization. This is because while servant leadership can help followers manage very challenging work obligations (Babakus et al., 2010), and can improve the quality of work in service based agencies (Chen et al., 2015), it has been shown to be less effective in organizations that have more masculine-oriented values (Zhang et al., 2019), such as care-less organizations. Given that counseling leaders in higher education lead within both a care division and a care-less organization, they must then be ready to shift leadership styles based on what's needed in the moment. Therefore, counseling leaders should be knowledgeable of multiple leadership styles, recognize when it is best to use practices associated with each, and be prepared to apply these different techniques.

Lesson 3: Expect to Be Held Accountable

The last takeaway for counseling leaders in care-less contexts is that compromising care can come at the expense of client or patient well-being, and that the care leader is most likely going to be held accountable. This to me is the compromise that is hardest to stomach, and greatest call to action, as a care worker. As I described in compromising

values, care-less organizational leaders may at times make decisions that impact care divisions but go against the values and professional judgment of counseling leaders. As a result, the clients or patients may suffer and view the care division as the culprit, and the organization is not likely to take the blame given its care-less values. This sabotages the leadership of care leaders. Counseling leaders should be aware of this when entering into care-less contexts and have a plan for how to manage conversations with leadership when such issues arise. This should also initiate conversations and more research around care-less cultures, how they impact quality care within their settings, and who accepts responsibility for such compromises to care.

In summary, it is important for counseling leaders to understand that it is impossible for them to embody the values of their care worker identity and that of a leader of a care-less organization at the same time. The inability to maintain both identities concurrently results in compromises made to one in order to embody the other. Therefore counseling leaders in care-less settings should understand that compromises to their care identity must come in order for them to maintain their leadership role. As counseling leaders, this brings us to a crossroads. As we continue to expand our leadership into other industries, especially those that are care-less organizations, we must choose a path. We must either prepare ourselves to compromise our values and identities to fit into the care-less culture, or choose to confront the culture of care-less organizations. However, can care workers truly change the culture of a care-less organization? Do the care-less leaders need to be the ones to start a culture shift? Could counseling leaders be the catalyst for care-less culture changes? There’s only one way for us to find out…

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol: Questions

1. First, I would love to learn about you and some of your past experiences.
    1. Where did you grow up?
    2. What did you study in school?
    3. What was your first job out of college?

2. I'm particularly interested to hear about your experience as a woman getting to a high level of university/college leadership. Tell me your story…
    1. How did you get here?
    2. How do you describe your experience of being a woman leader at your institution?

3. Share with me what it feels like to be uniquely you, navigating through the ins and outs of your multiple leadership roles.
    1. Tell me what it's like leading a counseling center at a university?

4. Tell me a little about your leadership style or styles at work.
    1. How is your style influenced by the role you are in at a given time (directing your counseling staff vs. manager of the counseling center)?

5. Describe the relationships you have with colleagues and upper administration.

    1. How do you negotiate the needs and resources the counseling center has?
    2. How has your gender played a role in these dynamics?
    3. What are the obstacles you've faced with these relationships?

6. I'd like to hear about your experiences overcoming obstacles: those as you moved up into leadership roles, and those that still exist
    1. What strategies helped you/help you get to where you are now?

7. Share with me what it's like to be a woman manager/administrator (how do you experience your gender while at work)
    1. Tell me about being in this role and being a woman?

8. Tell me more about the object you chose [artifact] that represented your leadership pathway?
    1. How does this object reflect the experiences you've had in your role as a woman director of a college counseling center?

9. Is there anything I didn't ask that you'd like me to know?

Appendix B

Artifact Protocol: Message to Participants

Dear [Name of Participant],

I want to thank you again so much for your openness and willingness to work with me in exploring your experience as a woman director of a college/university counseling center. I am really looking forward to talking together! Before we meet up for our interview, I have one small request - I was hoping you could provide me with a photograph of something from your office to help me further understand your individual life experience as a woman director of a college counseling center. The item that you choose should be something found in your office that represents your leadership pathway. As you think about the item to pick, you may want to consider something that makes you think about: how you got to your current position, how you manage your dual role (as a leader of a care-oriented division and a manager within a bureaucratic organization), or your personal endeavors and where you are at today professionally. After you find your object, just snap a picture with your phone or a camera of sorts and send to me as an attachment (jpeg) to my email address (johnsonln@rowan.edu). You can put in the subject line "leadership object." Thanks so much! Looking forward to touching base with you on [insert date] for our interview.

Sincerely,

Lindsay