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Career and Mentorship Experiences of Women Educational Administrators in Rural Community Colleges

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CAREER AND MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN EDUCATIONAL
ADMINISTRATORS IN RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE CAREER AND MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES OF
WOMEN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS IN RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BY

DIANE A. GIBSON

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DEDICATION

To my friend, Dr. Davidson who grabbed me by the hair and dragged me through my dissertation finish line. To my husband who has supported me every step of the way. To my mother who spent many days watching my three crazy, smelly, super sweet boys so I could finish my degree. To my three boys who lost many hours of my attention but still think my Oregon Trail dissertation meme is on point- and made it all worth it.

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ABSTRACT

This study will explore the topic of current women administrators and their mentorship experiences. The purpose is to examine if these individuals had a mentor at all and how that relationship evolved. There is a universal graying of administration in Higher Education Leadership and many institutions lack a long-term plan to mentor and replace the administrators after retirement. Many of the current leaders in rural education are approaching retirement opening many opportunities for new leaders to come in. Not only that, but there is a large disparity between the number of female educational leaders. One study by Wallace & Marchant (2009) looked at how females are being prepared for leadership in Australian universities and found an administrative gender gap where women hold only 24% of administrative positions and an age gap where more retirees will leave positions before new employees reach the qualification level. Women are not being prepared for leadership positions and often lack the qualifications to achieve such goals. These findings indicate an issue with learning opportunities, development opportunities, and career mobility. This study aims to report how mentorship relationship came about and delve into the state of leadership training programs amongst Higher Education Leaders. Along that line it is important to discover if that working relationship helped prepare female administrators for their job and how that experience shaped their career. Additionally, because of the hierarchical structure of educational administration, this study will investigate the mentorship experiences of women administrators in higher education.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Upper-level administration in the college setting is historically male-dominated and that plays a role in the culture of education in the United States (O'Connor, 2014 & Monroe et. al., 2015). There are many research articles recognizing a drastic disparity between the high percentage of male leaders versus the low percentage of women administrators in the United States (Falkenburg, 2003; Schwartz, 1997; Wallace et. al., 2009), but that number is not succinctly tracked by the United States government (Mertz et. al., 1988).

The disparity in numbers of women administrators is surprising because the esteemed arena of academia is a pillar of free thought and free speech in our society (Bastido et. al., 2016). Academia strives to be sensitive to the gender imbalance and ensure that more women are selected for leadership roles because women are just as qualified to lead as men but may have a different leadership style (Falkenburg, 2003). The 'like hiring like' principle may play a role in this gender imbalance in administration (Van Eck et. al., 1996). Furthermore, when women do attain these positions, they face additional criticism and scrutiny that their male counterparts are unaware of (Lumby, 2015).

In June of 1997, the National Center for Educations Statistics reports that during the 1993-1994 school year 65.4% of principals overall were male. By the 2011-2012 data year they reported that overall, 52% of principals were women (Bitterman,

et. al., 2013). Leading the reader to the conclusion that women are no longer being shut out of these high-end leadership positions.

However, the National Center for Education Statistics (2020) reported that 54% of principals were women in the 2017-2018 school year while 76% of women held teaching positions during that same period. There is a much greater distribution of women in the classroom yet such a difference of women leaders running schools. Additionally, these statistics become even more skewed when looking at middle and high school where women principals accounted for 40 percent in middle schools and 33 percent in high schools (National Center for education Statistics, 2020). This imbalance continues as one investigates the higher-ranking and more lucrative superintendent position where an astonishing 73% of men serve in this extremely visible and prestigious leadership role in education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

While the numbers of women principals are rising there still may be an issue with gender imbalance at other levels of school administration. For example, the state and national percentage and gender of superintendents are unable to be found. This statistic is also not tracked at the college and university level. Greenberger et. al. (2008) reported that women typically earn .78 to every dollar a man is paid. The statistics are even glummer as we begin reaching across demographics. Statistics specifically covering equal pay for equal work on women administrators in education are not readily available. The lack of information on this subject indicates that there is

an issue regarding equal pay for equal work in these areas as well as gender imbalance statistics.

Gender gaps begin early in achievement outcomes and many researchers focus on teaching methodologies to solve this issue; however, how social-psychological and cognitive processes play a role in achievement remain seldomly addressed. In one study (Miyake et. al., 2010) the researchers used a values affirmation assignment which consisted of having students spend 15 minutes writing down their personal values. Overall grades for women significantly improved with this intervention. Such a small intervention applied early and often could impact gender gap achievement outcomes. In lieu of a gender imbalance, many principal authors are looking at how the leadership styles of men and women differ (Burns, G. et. al., 2010; Gardiner, M. et. al., 1999).

Problem Statement

The disparity in numbers of men versus women college administrators is concerning. There are many researchers who cite the gender gap in the upper echelons of Higher Educational Leadership in the United States (e.g., Falkenburg, 2003; Schwartz, 1997; Wallace et. al., 2009). There is also a research need to explain why this gender disparity in educational administration exits and identify ways to mitigate the issue. The purpose of this research is to further expand upon these issues and attempt to identify common experiences among women in higher educational leadership by investigating if there are any commonalities among career beginnings and mentorship experiences amongst women in higher educational leadership.

This research project sought to further investigate and expand upon an explanation of the gender gap in administration under the auspices of the glass-ceiling, like-hiring-like theoretical frameworks. This area of study may help explain why women tend to shy away from certain types of jobs and may help to improve women's education by being cognizant of the training, mentorship, and social support women leaders require to be effective leaders as well as to explore why there are not more women in more visible leadership roles.

Another unanswered question seems to be whether women in educational leadership feel pressure to pursue a certain image to be taken seriously at the leadership table. Gammill & Vaughn (2011) stated, "…I realized that irrespective of leadership style the female superintendent must decide how to present herself to others", (p. 118). It is well noted that politics is a part of the job in Educational Leadership (Chalker, 2002), but whether the magazine image of femininity and power is part of the job is not documented. Additionally, uncovering more information about career beginnings and mentors will help expand upon the current understanding of the role mentorship plays in the careers of women educational administrators. It would be insightful to understand if women administrators were mentored by other women educational administrators. These questions could help explain the gender gap and shed light on how to respond to mitigate this effect.

Problem Background

Coleman (2000; 2002) reported that half of women administrators have been discriminated against during the application and promotion process during their

careers. Others offer the assertion that while leadership is often considered to be a male-dominated role, women are more fluidly accepted into positions in educational leadership as it is a traditionally woman-dominated career path (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, et. al., 2000; Garcia-Retamero, et. al., 2006). However, there is an assertion that women are reluctant to report incidents of gender discrimination which could change the current ideology behind this situation (Coleman, 2005). Grogan (2012) observed that women encounter leadership obstacles in the workforce that men do not face. Relatively few researchers have focused on the leadership strategies women use to overcome these obstacles (Brunner et. al., 2007; Gardiner, et. al., 2000). Overcoming these barriers is one incredibly important faucet as it may affect the duration of job tenure during the career of male vs. female administrators.

Women have long been a central part of the American education system (Schwartz, 1997). Over the years there have been a plethora of researchers weighing in on the topic of women in educational leadership. It is a hotly debated topic- especially regarding the actual presence of gender discrimination and its effects on leadership styles (Branson, 2016; Schwartz, 1997; Falkenburg, 2003). Loomis and Wilde (1978) famously observed that men run the schools and women nurture the learners. The purpose of this investigation was to find out if this is merely an antiquated remark or if it is a crude truth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to further investigate and expand upon an explanation of the male-female gender gap in higher education administration. There

has been evidence in the literature on this topic suggesting that career mentors have played a significant role in shaping the careers of women administrators in education (Brown, 2005). This study explored the topic of current women administrators and their mentorship experiences. The idea was to examine if these individuals had a mentor at all and how that relationship evolved. This study aimed to explore the nature of the relationship's women administrators had with their career mentors especially during the beginning of their careers. This investigation looked at how many of the participants had mandatory leadership trainings versus an informal mentorship training. Along that line it was important to discover if that mentorship relationship helped prepare women administrators for their job and describe the impact those early experiences had on shaping their overall career.

There is a suggestion in the literature that many women administrators felt that they had experienced gender discrimination at some point (Coleman, 2000; 2002), which is not surprising given that this is a traditionally male-dominated workforce at the upper echelon of leadership positions. Additionally, because of the hierarchical structure of educational administration, this study investigated if the women administrators had ever felt pressure to outperform their male peers.

The significance of the Research

Understanding the path women administrators take to get to the top in rural communities is not well discussed in the literature used for this research. Understanding the mentorship path will help strengthen the creation of such mentorship programs for future administrators. Additionally, discovering insights on

how the career paths unfold for women administrators will help identify where

administrators need support during their career path.

It is also important to uncover the reasons behind the disparity in the male-

dominated career path of college administrators, especially at the top ranks. If the

reason for inherent bias can be discovered, there may be a way to remedy the issue

through training programs. If bias exists, uncovering the content of that bias can help

improve the pathway towards more women taking charge at the highest ranks of

educational administration.

Research Questions

1. Have women administrators experienced gender discrimination at their

   job?

2. Do women administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their male

   peers?

3. Are women administrators' careers shaped by early career beginnings?

4. Are women administrators more likely to get a career start by other women

   administrators?

5. Do women administrators feel like they have had good mentors which have

   helped shape their career?

Definition of Terms

Academic Administration- The common hierarchy of leadership structures found in

   higher education.

Educational Leadership- The administrators who work in colleges and make the day-

to-day decisions required to effectively run a college institution.

Career Mentor- A colleague who helps guide less experienced individuals in their

career decisions and leadership choices.

Assumptions/Limitations

The delimitations present in this project are common for qualitative research

projects. The participants are only going to share to the extent they feel comfortable

with. This research is limited to their own personal and finite experiences. The

personal truth of the participants that is disclosed to the researcher may not represent

the entire non-biased truth. The researcher is only asking for the participants'

experiences as an exploration into the beginning career experiences of a very specific

group of individuals. The small sample size is an issue to consider due to limitations on

willing participants, the limited profile those participants fit into for this project, and

time to complete this research project. The researcher also lost some data as a result

of COVID 19 related technical difficulties.

Summary

There is a gender achievement gap in the number of women college presidents

in the United States. This gender achievement gap is not well defined or investigated

given the numbers of women who are well qualified and suited for the major

leadership role of college president. The purpose of this research is to investigate

possible reasons for this glass ceiling. Using the underlying theory of like-hiring-like

phenomenon whereby those in charge seek to hire others who are similar themselves.

This research seeks to investigate how women college presidents begin their career

paths and to understand more about their career mentorship experiences.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This research investigsted the possible underlying causes of the dearth of women administrators in higher education. This literature review serves to understand the unique characteristics that play a role in women educational leaders in rural areas. Women face a more difficult gendar gap in rural areas, in general. But, women leaders also face unique challenges in the communities they work in. There is also an underlying discussion on leadership styles and what characteristics a positive career mentor might wield.

Unique Qualities of Rural Schools: Merits and Flaws

Rural schools across America share unique qualities and barriers beyond geographic isolation. There is a widespread negative connotation with "ruralness" in America, despite our rural roots, which is even reflected in the dictionary with derogatory synonyms like "bumpkin". However, people from rural towns often hold a sense of nostalgic whimsy in their reflections of their hometown and paint positive pictures from feelings of warmth, closeness, family responsibility, simplicity, and happiness (Chalker, 2002). Unfortunately, ultimately most leave their small towns for city life in search of better jobs with higher incomes and ample opportunity which is too often missing from rural communities (Stricklett, 2016). There is a complex interaction taking place which researchers have only recently begun to uncover. In fact, defining what "rural" even constitutes is a surprisingly complex issue, despite that fifty-seven percent of public schools in the United States are in rural areas (Kena,

2014). Researchers tend to use different parameters in describing rural schools, which makes it difficult for the reader to compare and understand issues central to those of rural schools (Arnold, 2005). The intricacies of research in rural education begin with the unique issues and merits present in rural schools.

In his book, Chalker (2002) identifies several conditions that rural educators often work with which are considered unthinkable by their urban peers. Due to dearth funding, personnel, and space rural educators wear many hats and often operate as specialists. They may teach more than one grade level, as well as extracurricular classes (art, music, etc.). Teachers may also be required to manage classrooms may consist of multi-age groups on varying achievement levels. More problematic, rural educators are often new graduates with a limitation to their basic education and combined with limited experience can create a questionable classroom environment (e.g., lower salaries, lower quality of instruction, lower quality curriculum, etc.) (Chalker, 2002).

The students in rural schools are further disadvantaged because they often have access to fewer student services and extracurricular activities. Their families are more likely to deal with higher rates of poverty and to be from less educated backgrounds which directly impacts their social interactive processes and overall academic achievement (Adedokun, 2008). Socioeconomic status (SES) continues to be the single most powerful predictor of student achievement and outcomes (McCray, 2010). This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy because rural jobs often pay less, forcing families to move to the city for higher incomes and better jobs. Families who don't

leave their rural town make less money and don't reach potential which equates to

their children not reaching maximum potential. Beyond that, rural schools often lack

the resources and programs in larger, suburban schools (Chalker, 2002).

As an example, Coldarci's (2006) work explored the relationship between

achievement and poverty rates in smaller rural schools in Maine and considers the

validity of research that claiming poverty has less impact on student achievement in

smaller schools. Schools with a low SES student body appear to produce higher levels

of academic achievement. The author considers the possibility that a statistical artifact

could be skewing the statistical results of these data. If true, his work would challenge

the commonly held notion that small schools produce more academically prepared

students then their larger counterparts.

Coldarci (2006) used a traditional research methodology to test the hypothesis

of existing work. The author ultimately tested a colleague's work through replication

and examination. He separately compared eighth-grade achievement in reading and

mathematics using SES as the determining factor. In his work he evaluated each school

based on poverty, size, and the product of both through "poverty-size interaction".

The poverty-size interaction was evaluated to determine the presence of a statistical

artifact, based on pools with decreasing volatility scores (Group I had all scores, Group

II had the schools with highest volatility score removed, and so on). The supposition

was that the interaction would disappear with the least volatile scores. In essence, the

author looked at the impact of a school's poverty rating on achievement and found

that it is a factor for reading scores.

The unique qualities of rural schools also have a myriad of positive attributes, which some urban schools attempt to emulate to improve student outcomes. As Chalker (2002) noted, the new trend in education uses many of the old, rural school practices and employs them in urban schools to recreate a 'family' and personal atmosphere. Educators should capitalize on the closeness of community and family ties to increase social capital (Adedokun, 2008). Similarly, Stewart (2009) proposed several reasons why smaller schools are better equipped to close the SES-achievement gap and how urban educators can imitate their rural counterparts to reap the same success. Ultimately, Stewart (2009) proposed that urban schools should create a 'family' atmosphere within their school and send teachers to visit rural schools to boost student success in urban schools.

The indecisive nature of educational policy is confusing and difficult to navigate. On the one hand, rural schools can offset some of the SES penalties that often apply to urban peers, however, they are often penalized for their underperforming population, older materials and buildings, less well-educated teachers, and fewer resources. However, for all of that, they are celebrated for the importance of community and togetherness. Many students love their schools and the people around them, providing an important foundational framework for their education.

An overarching theme in the literature was the importance of involving the family in the school (Byun, et. al., 2012; Chalker, 2002; Coldarci, 2006; & Elmore, 2008). There are limitations with such collaboration such as the political nature of

boards of directors and budget restrictions. Community leaders and individual townsfolk can add much to the educational atmosphere by sharing knowledge and being involved in the classroom. This alleviates some of the pressure teachers face of "knowing everything". Some expert guidance can better educate students and provide more information for teachers. Small community schools are rich in social capital, and it is prudent to include it in the curriculum (Howley, 2006). Rural schools and communities should work together to create a shared vision to impacted daily life in a small town. Creating a vision is important, but not as important as the process itself. Bringing the community into the school to work on common goals is a key to student success and strengthening the social capital available within the community.

The political landscape of the public-school system can be fastidious depending on a myriad of factors within the community. Chalker (2002) described a history of school standards such as individualism and democratic governance and outlines eight political issues which plague modern education including: competing groups, lack common core, uninvolved parents, low graduation expectations, questionable teacher quality, state role is overreaching, universal education is not possible, and inequality continues to exist. Communities seem to distrust school leadership which plays a significant burden on the political arena in the public-school system.

According to Chalker (2002), local politics are even more mind-boggling because school boards rarely reflect the constituents of the district on the most basic sociological level (educational attainment, race, sex) and may include people who do not have children enrolled in the district. They also often lack an understanding of the

problems the district faces. Superintendents often face school boards which are described as dominated, pluralistic, or factional. The superintendent must deal with such groups with skill and understanding to be successful. An effective way to cope with divided political groups is to let teachers make legitimate decisions, as they are natural leaders. Often, one point of disillusionment between the school and its community stems from poor standardized testing scores.

Chalker (2002) discussed assessment methods for school districts and how the current method of the standardized test score is faulty and fails to paint the whole picture. There are two factions of literature revolving around school quality assessment. One area covers consolidation and the other considers indicator-based assessment. Oftentimes, state, and local administrators disagree about the criteria that are considered and the data that is used to make judgments about school quality. States often push for organizational reforms and use incentives to encourage districts to comply with the standards they set forth. The New York State Education Department (SED) investigated "citizens' reactions to state officials' assessments of their schools' quality" (Chalker (2002), p 69). The citizens' focus group identifies the following eight characteristics as being important in judging school quality: personalized education, subjectivity, diversity, achievement, community, discipline, money, and extracurricular activities. Next, the focus groups reviewed the state's criteria for assessment: physical factors, teaching environment, educational offerings, educational results, administrative overhead, expenditures, and tax burdens. Within the focus group, the citizens note that many of the qualities which inherently make

smaller districts look bad. The groups were then asked to rank these state-mandated

qualities. This study concludes that there was little relationship between the citizen's

assessment and the government's assessment

Opportunities and Challenges in Rural Leadership

Many of the current leaders in rural education are approaching retirement

opening many opportunities for new leaders to come in. Not only that, but there is a

large disparity between the number of women educational leaders. One study by

Wallace & Marchant (2009) looked at how women were being prepared for leadership

in Australian universities and found an administrative gender gap where women held

only 24% of administrative positions and an age gap where more retirees will leave

positions before new employees reach the qualification level.

Women are not being prepared for leadership positions and often lack the

qualifications to achieve such goals. These findings from Wallace et. al. (2009)

indicated an issue with learning opportunities, development opportunities, and career

mobility. There was a general lack of promotion opportunities in Australian and U.S.

universities which lead to a high turnover rate (Wallace et. al., 2009). The aging

population of current middle managers should work together and create viable

opportunities for new managers. That includes leadership courses, job-shadowing

opportunities, and the chance to lead groups that effect change on the university.

The gender and race gap in rural education is a real issue to be cognizant of.

There is an enormous wealth of information and perspectives that come from listening

to people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Leaders can create meaningful change

by getting feedback from people from various backgrounds. That is how we reach people who so often get left behind.

The issue then becomes the population of the rural community being served. Rural communities tend to be rather homogenous and need leadership from people with similar values and backgrounds (Chalker, 2002). However, this concept presents itself as a cultural barrier to women holding leadership positions due to the like-hiring-like theoretical framework.

Educational Administration in Rural Areas

The unique qualities of rural school districts present an interesting juxtaposition to their urban and inner-city counterparts. Rural schools experience unique circumstances which can be beneficial to students, however, there are also disadvantages. Some of these disadvantages are tied to the historical background of rural education and the independence that rural Americans hold so dear. However, rural students are often found to be lagging academically which effects rural student achievement.

Poverty is endemic in rural America and students often lower their achievement standards to match the opportunities of their hometown. However, rural students are often filled with civic pride that is difficult to replicate in the urban school system. The cohesiveness of rural America helps mitigate achievement-gap differences (Coldarci, 2006). The nature of the gender-achievement gap is nationally significant and deserves more research in rural schools considering the socialization of sex-role stereotyping and how the achievement gap effects woman's career choices.

There must be a definable set of reasons for this prevalent and well-documented gender disparity prevalent in United States school administration. Napier & Willower (1990) interviewed fifty female high-school principals. While there were many instances of mistaken identity, very few of the principals reported sexist situations and oftentimes handled these situations with humor or retort. However, the women reported having to work harder than their male counterparts to prove themselves as capable in their role (Napier et. al., 1990). The authors noted that due to the small number of women principals in the United States, the interviews that were conducted in their study were with highly competitive individuals who have fought hard to obtain their positions (Napier et. al., 1990). This reflects challenges at the societal and organizational level where women are inherently dismissed as incapable of this job without much more thought about why that it so. The authors continued to posit that due to the varied reports of sexist behavior, males have yet to master the ability to work professionally alongside women managers (Napier et. al., 1990).

The relatability component in rural education is a popular theme in the literature (Byun, et. al., 2012; Chalker, 2002; Coldarci, 2006; & Elmore, 2008). People living in rural communities want leaders they can relate to and leaders who understand them. A leader must have a vision for their school and community, but that vision must be shared by the community. The shared vision is what gets people excited and on board with the school leadership. Community buy-in through building

relationships is of the utmost importance in rural leadership because of the closeness of the community.

The leaders at educational institutions play a pivotal role in student achievement and school culture. Augustine-Shaw (2015) highlighted the importance of leadership training programs for new educational leaders because excellent leaders are what shape excellent schools. Principals have a great deal of responsibility for the students who perform below level while at the same time have very little control over budget, curriculum, and personnel (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). Furthermore, first-year principals need to create a shared vision of learning with the faculty, staff, and community (Augustine-Shaw, 2015).

To address these needs the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI) was designed to improve the success of new principals through a research-based program where participants both learn and lead (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). There is a strong mentoring component to the KELI program where the mentors provide meaningful feedback during onsite visits that include reflective discussions. This program also provides participants with seminars that offer training and networking opportunities. By the end of the KELI program, participants will have earned professional licensure from the state (Augustine-Shaw, 2015).

The workgroup that was charged with creating the KELI program identified several themes in their literature review about what makes successful leadership training programs including: Creating a vision for student academic success; shaping a culture of learning; developing leaders in others; developing relationships in the school

and community; setting goals; making data-driven decisions; providing professional development opportunities (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). Large cities (e.g., Boston, New York, and Chicago) have created similar programs and alternative paths for educational leaders to be certified for their position (Elmore, 2008). Chicago's leadership program included a new evaluation system for principals, bonus pay for meeting goals, and the use of outside mentors (Maxwell, 2013). Creating these in-situ leadership programs has become an important aspect of educational leadership, a trend that will continue to improve with time.

Women in Rural Educational Leadership

Women may have an uphill battle when winning the minds of colleagues, community, and students. Even when women are highly qualified for a position in rural higher education leadership, they may still have to fight an uphill battle of what preconceptions others may have about them (Koenig, et. al., 2011). Sherman (2000) interviewed twenty-one women administrators in rural Nova Scotia. The author discussed fundamental differences in leadership styles between men and women. Where men are focused on tasks and objectives and women are focused on forming relationships and community and argued that the androcentric attitude of women in charge is augmented when delving into rural settings. Rural schools have traditionally been led by male principals and have created structural policies that work against female-based leadership styles (Sherman, 2000). There is a theme of a lack of community support for women principals where the community members imply that the women won't be able to maintain control or that they will always be viewed as

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outsiders (Sherman, 2000). Sherman (2000) noted that there is an underlying, pervasive, and unspoken conscious that 'this job is not for a woman' and the thought is so ingrained that it seems normal and is, therefore, unaddressed. How power is disseminated, and the presence of cultural stereotypes and gender biases directly effects how career paths emerged, gender stereotypes within colleges, and how employees are treated (O'Connor, 2014).

Van Eck et. al. (1996) looked at gender disparities European educational leadership and describes the '*management route' model* a framework for understanding gender issues in educational management. The authors Van Eck et. al. (1996) conferred that the underrepresentation of women in educational management is a personal, societal, and organizational issue. The *like hiring like* phenomenon was also mentioned to highlight the concept that individuals often seek to hire other people like themselves (Van Eck et. al., 1996). I point this out as a commonality between the literature along this vein. The management route model attempted to explain how women's career choices impact their path to management (Van Eck et. al., 1996). The model described three management career phases (anticipation, acquisition, and performance) and the authors Van Eck et. al. (1996) believed that women encounter more obstacles than men in each phase. Women should be cognizant of finding role models and participating in extracurricular projects for their institution as a method of combatting these obstacles. The issue is that less women administrators equate to a smaller pool of mentors to choose mentors from.

Another challenge in rural education is the lack of an applicant pool. The

women in one study by Lumby (2015) reported often becoming principals as a second

career choice, because of economic need, or simply by default. The schools the leaders

oversaw in this study were deeply impoverished and in need of necessities, making the

school primarily responsible for the child (Lumby, 2015). These women principals

reported additional prejudices because many of them came from impoverished

backgrounds and were therefor seen as less desirable applicants (Lumby, 2015). The

author reported three positive attributes of women principal's including: they usually

have many years of experience in education before taking the job; they have a

dedicated work ethic to "prove" themselves; they are successful because they have a

high degree of similarity to the community they serve (e.g., language, religion,

ethnicity) (Lumby, 2015). The principals in these schools battled high dropout rates,

providing basic necessities (e.g., a building, telephone, copier), providing basic needs

for children (e.g., food, clothing, shelter), providing effective learning opportunities in

spite of barriers (e.g., untrained staff, poor curriculum, large classes) (Lumby, 2015).

Effective rural leadership and effective leadership are synonymous. Without a

doubt, rural leadership presents its own unique set of issues quite unconsidered by the

general leadership. The real issue is that people want to be lead. Humans are creatures

of habit (Skinner, 1974) and need structure to function to our fullest capacity. The

question becomes how does one become a leader? The simple fact is that a great

leader is someone people feel compelled to follow. There are plenty of theories about

the why component of this question. Extensive research has been completed on how

to get people to behave a certain way and why people are inclined to follow people who are "in charge" (Milgram, 1974). Effective rural leadership is directly related to being the example people look to for guidance. If there is a question about what is okay and what is not okay, always lean on the side of caution. Effective rural leadership is not just about living a life that can be respected, transparent, and transformative. Designated personal time is as important as showing up for work every day.

Effective rural leadership is also about showing results. If you want people to follow you, you must show them the results. If you want people to follow you then you must be the kind of person people want to follow. People want to see leaders understanding right from wrong, even when 'the rules' dictate otherwise. Another component of respect involves simply listening to other people. People crave understanding and want to be listened to. A major theme in rural education is the importance of community involvement with the school. As described by Chalker (2002), one way to mitigate common institutional problems (poverty, abuse, teen parenthood, drugs, healthcare, gang activity, homelessness, etc.) is through parental involvement in the school. Agencies who share common goals should collaborate *with* other leaders to improve the quality of rural life.

Leaders need to choose their legacy. It's not impossible to show people what needs to be done. The task is sharing that leadership and allow ideas to come from others. The leader shows people what needs to improve, has some ideas about how that improvement will take place. It's up to the others what to do with that

information. The leader is a guide to the group about what needs to be accomplished and breaks the vision down into accomplishable steps. Driven Leadership is the ability to define a groups' mission and the leader's ability to breakdown the vision into accomplishable steps combined with their ability to follow through with those steps to goal completion. Short term projects are important to leadership because people can see results to reaffirm what they are currently doing.

The Historical Perspectives of Rural School Reform

The history of federal involvement with schools is long and goes back to the 1960s and has worked to abolish discrimination and create and enforce standard educational goals across the country (Chalker, 2002). These standards are commonly created with the proverbial college-bound, middle class, white male in mind, therefore, leaving a multitude of children uneducated and unmotivated. At the state level education was legislated and created a world of standardized testing and lacking in educational standards (Chalker, 2002). This legislated learning led to school consolidation and funding inequalities (Chalker, 2002). Schools get their revenue from property income taxes which creates an inherent educational inequality because neighborhoods have houses which are worthless, they are less likely to vote to raise property taxes and are often found in rural and inner-city districts. This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy and propagates poverty.

Chalker (2002) discusses recurring issues in rural education and how it is fairing in an increasingly urbanized and educated United States. Between the late 1800s and early 1900s, rural schools began their transition from multi-aged one room

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schoolhouses to miniature factories seeking to churn out docile workers where students were taught similar sets of educational standards (Chalker, 2002). It became obvious in the late 1800s that rural schools needed reform due to the physical condition of schoolhouses and the irregularity of pupil attendance (Chalker, 2002). The suggestion of rural school consolidation was initially suggested in the 1890s in response to public outcry against these educational traditions, as schools would be better supervised, have more professional leadership, competent educators, and mitigation of interference from local politics (Chalker, 2002). As the nineteenth century rolled on, family farms went wayside due to a growth of the agro-industrial complex (Chalker, 2002). Families moved away from the farm life and to the city to find work, meanwhile cultural minorities began moving in to work on these for-profit business model farms.

Chalker (2002) notes two basic schools of thought emerged in the early 1900s on how to deal with the rural school problem. In 1912, Mabel Carney felt that schools did a disservice to rural students by teaching them city standards, making them less fit for rural life and that curriculum should reinforce what is important to each local community (Chalker, 2002). In juxtaposition, in 1914 Elwood Cubberly called for the scientific management of rural schools and school consolidation (Chalker, 2002). Carney believed that improvement would come from the bottom up, whereas Cubberly believed the best way to make a change was from the top down. The problems faced by rural education were cited as being: poor curriculum, poorly trained/inexperienced teachers and school leaders, poor equipment, students' general

economic disadvantage, best teachers eventually move to the city, poorly paid staff, underfunded school (Chalker, 2002). To fix these problems society suggested: consolidation, better leadership, improved curriculum, and better educators. Which are often still used as modern-day answers to educational issues (Chalker, 2002).

The late nineteenth century created a national call to action with the creation of the Department of Education, leaving in its wake standardized curriculum, high-stakes testing, teacher training, student accountability, licensure requirements for teachers and administrators. Interestingly, there is also the new trend in education using many of the old, rural school practices and employing them in urban schools to recreate a 'family' and personal atmosphere (Stewart, 2009). The duality embedded within American society and our love/hate relationship with the country life is astounding. The United States is currently amid another public-school change. They are facing consolidation, a call for better leadership, a push for improved curriculum, and better educators across the board (Stewart, 2009). More testing, more standardization, and the creation of "Common Core" is a recurring theme in American Education as a model for improvement (Stewart, 2009). Disenfranchisement resulting from such top-down curriculum change is widespread and extends to the Native American Community.

Gender Achievement Gap in Rural Schools

Achievement is often shaped by a student's attachment to place and that low aspirations reflect the opportunity that is available in the community the individual is from (Adedokun, 2008). Byun (2012) investigated the number of rural, suburban, and

urban students enrolled in and the number of students who had completed a degree eight years after high school graduation. Rural students had the lowest number of people seeking a college degree at twenty-six percent, followed by suburban at eighteen percent, and urban with sixteen percent (Byun, 2012). Similarly, the least number of students with a college degree as those from a rural high school at thirty percent, suburban had forty percent, and forty-three percent of urban students had earned a degree eight years after high school (Byun, 2012).

Byun (2012) also investigated many independent variables which may account for the degree attainment disparity, including: socioeconomic background, family composition, and social resources, community social resources, and academic preparation. Results from these data showed that there are socioeconomic disparities between rural and nonrural families (Byun, 2012). Rural families were less likely to have parents with bachelor's degrees as well as two-parent families (Byun, 2012). Rural parents were more likely to know the parents of their child's friends (Byun, 2012). Rural students tended to have lower standardized test scores than their urban counterparts and were significantly less likely to enroll in rigorous courses (Byun, 2012). Academic preparation, family composition, and social resources predicted college enrollment (Byun, 2012). It is notable that this study found that church attendance significantly predicted college enrollment until the academic preparation factor was added to the statistical model (Byun, 2012). The magnitude to which pre-college factors predicted college enrollment and degree attainment varied based on rural/nonrural local.

Another example of achievement issues was investigated by Farmer (2009) where the authors categorize the social groups of rural Appalachian fifth graders and attempted to correlate the subjects' social configurations with their academic achievement. The purpose of the study was to investigate how individual social factors affected the academic outcome and to identify how the change in one factor may promote change in other academic achievement factors (Farmer, 2009). Remediation of one problem factor of an individual's trajectory may influence their outcome in life and provide an opportunity for school-based intervention. Nearly forty percent of the subjects were in social groups characterized by positive academic, behavioral, and social features (termed high-confidence configurations) (Farmer, 2009). Meanwhile, only sixteen percent of girls and twenty-seven percent of boys were in high-risk configurations (troubled, aggressive, low-academic achievement, etc.) (Farmer, 2009). The findings implied that there are clear relationships between academic achievement and social configurations. The high-achievers tended to be popular and consort with each other and the low-achievers were associated with more negative characteristics and consorted with a similar peer group (Farmer, 2009). Among the population was a third group of students were at moderate risk and had difficulties in one domain and performed near the mean for academic success. Teachers should, therefore, employ instructional methods directed at behavior and classroom social dynamics to enhance the academic achievement of their diverse range of students.

Rural students often have lower aspirations to obtain a college education and are more likely to drop out of high school and college than their urban counterparts

(Adedokun, 2008). Students from rural towns are often attached to their communities and will center their occupational aspirations on what little opportunity is available for them in their hometown (Howley, 2006). There may also be personality factors involved in the rural achievement issue, where individuals from a rural town may have similar attitudinal characteristics.

Hardré (2007) investigated the characteristics of motivation within the individual and their performance outcomes using questionnaire data from rural students. The goal was to create a model which would consider individual motivation and school climate to identify their effects on student engagement in high school (Hardré, 2007). Learning goals and performance goals were predictors of engagement and instrumentality (i.e., could perceive the relationship between their current task and its outcome). Whereas performance-avoidance goals were negatively associated with engagement (Hardré, 2007).

Hardré (2007) also found that a students' perceived ability was predictive of achievement goals. Additionally, supportive classroom climates were related to productive self-perceptions (Hardré, 2007). The relationship between perceived instrumentality and engagement was an important outcome because teachers can easily and directly build this awareness with students (Hardré, 2007). Similarly, teachers can boost students' ability perception which will decrease the likelihood of a student pursuing performance avoidance goals. Teachers can also directly affect the students' perception of a supportive classroom environment, which was predictive of perceived ability, instrumentality, and learning goals which predict the students' effort

and engagement in school (Hardré, 2007). Students are especially subject to sex-role stereotypes in small towns (Adedokun, 2008). It's historically noted that there is a social bias claiming that women are good at language arts and men are good at math (Nosek, 2009).

Robinson (2011) discussed the historical aspects of the development in the gender achievement gap, where the significance of the gap seems to vary based on place and time. Over the last fifty years, there have been four basic schools of thought concerning why the gender achievement gap occurs: psychology, biology, sociology, and education (Robinson, 2011). Many studies have also considered the importance of teacher opinions regarding female math proficiency and that those stereotypes may be transferred to the students. Mitigating such gender differences in academic achievement is important because of the career and lifetime earning implications it has for the individual. The researchers analyzed longitudinal data from a cross-national proficiency test for kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grade. The results showed that overall, a math achievement gender gap exists beginning early on, favoring males (Robinson, 2011). It is of interest to note that the gap is not present upon entrance to kindergarten but that at the end of kindergarten only fifteen percent of the top one percent of scores belonged to girls (Robinson, 2011). Furthermore, girls represented forty percent of the top ten percent of math scores in kindergarten and in eighth grade (Robinson, 2011). This gap may occur in response to the social stereotypes that have developed around gender roles in academia.

Nosek (2009) investigated the relationship between the prevailing eighth-grade science gender achievement gap and implicit/explicit stereotypes. Research using the Implicit Association Test (IAT) reveals that both sexes associate men with science and women with liberal arts. The author accumulated a worldwide dataset and investigated whether implicit gender-science stereotypes account for sex differences in science performance (Nosek, 2009). Findings from this study indicated that implicit stereotyping significantly predicted science/math gender differences. This finding is important because we must start bridging the women science achievement gap by changing the prevalent implicit stereotypes individuals hold.

There is a research deficit addressing the issue of academic achievement gaps and gender roles in rural public schools. If such a gap exists, it would behoove educational administrators to address it as a means of increasing individual academic achievement, gross product of rural towns, and addressing the gender wage gap present in modern society. If more women from rural towns are empowered to obtain an education beyond that of their rural town, they may return to their native community and help improve its environment.

Diversity in Higher Education

People want to follow people they can relate to and respect. Authentic people are the people we look up to. During Jim Collins' (2010) keynote speech at the Drucker Day summit, he advised that leading through passion and curiosity is the key to authentic and successful leadership There is so much mess in peoples' lives. There is a tendency in American culture to see the "cant's". It is so easy to be negative. Finding

reasons why things can't be done is the pervasive culture in American life. The best leaders are authentic, simply lead by example, and strive to do the right thing.

There are Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) guidelines which rural colleges continually strive to meet to maintain the ability to offer federal financial aid to students. This first and often elusive requirement is the diversity standard. SACS rightfully expects colleges to maintain certain percentages of minority students in their student bodies. This is an especially important measurement, given that there are a disproportionate number of students are enrolled in American universities when compared to the whole of society (Karkaouti, 2016). However, Kentucky is one of the ten whitest states with more than 90% of its population being Caucasian- a statistic which holds true in rural Eastern Kentucky (ABC News, 2012). Going to college is an individual choice; not a government-mandated requirement. It is rare to see anyone who is not Caucasian on any campus across the state given the small number of minorities present. Improving diversity in a historically ethnic homogenous area is a difficult problem to solve.

The second common issue with SACS accreditation is the issue of getting students to repay their federal student loans. Nationally, more than 40% of student loan borrowers aren't repaying their loans (The Wall Street Journal, 2016). With the ever-increasing student loan debt of Americans totaling 1.3 trillion, student debt is a national issue (Friedman, 2017). There is another socially driven issue to solve with the national nature of this issue combined with the lack of job opportunities in an

economically depressed area (rural America) whose reverent culture is to keep family close to home at all costs.

Most students in rural areas continue to be first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds. These students may be at a great disadvantage compared to the average college student across the country because of all the responsibilities they are juggling. Besides being academically below level, many rural students are taking college courses full time, working at least part-time at minimum wage jobs, have children, and ailing parents/grandparents to care for. That is a lot of pressure and responsibility and often leads to students dropping out or not re-enrolling in courses to complete their degree.

Maysoon Zayid (2016) stated "When is the last time you have seen a person with real disabilities on television? It doesn't happen." Mrs. Zayid studied at Arizona State University acting school, suffers from cerebral palsy, consistently earned "A" grades in her courses, but failed to land any acting parts in university plays. This includes a play the school conducted her senior year in college about a woman with cerebral palsy. Zayid (2016) stated, "If a disabled person can't play Beyoncé, then Beyoncé can't play a disabled person." This poor reflection of American society highlights an antiquated belief system which is held so deeply by our society that we fail to question it. This extends to the lack of women leadership in the educational system. Most teachers in the classroom are women and yet most of the leadership remains male dominated.

The history and state of Native American Community schools are of note because they are rural and operate through a unique and specific culture. According to Chalker (2002), Cherokee Indians had an advanced educational system in the mid-1800s before their removal began. The Cherokee share a distinctive set of cultural values that must be understood to effectively educate the students in their schools. It is especially important to consider that educational standards are created for the white middle-class and thus alienates the diverse cultures which are taught in public schools. This principle could be applied to both rural and inner-city schools where the status quo is much different from the suburban schools which set the national standard. Furthermore, much of the staff in these schools are new teachers who come from vastly different backgrounds from their students, which creates a language and understanding barrier. That combined with teacher inexperience is a recipe for frustration to the peril of both parties, much like what is found in rural schools

Concepts and Theories in Leadership

Mertz et.al. (1988) used historical data to investigate the number of males vs. females in High School Administration in the United States. The authors reported that in 1971 only about three percent of high school principals were women. To investigate if a change occurred by the time of Mertz's et.al. (1988) research, they looked at the forty-four largest school districts and its male to female principal and assistant principal ratios (Mertz et.al., 1988). Next, they looked at these ratios in Tennessee schools and divided them based on their district type (i.e., urban, suburban, medium city, & rural) (Mertz et.al., 1988). The findings indicated the largest gains for women

principal/vice-principal representation were in large city districts at twenty-three

percent and thirty-two percent of (Mertz et. al., 1988).

While these historical gains are important, I think the real lesson is that there

was a concerted political effort (Title IX c. 1972) to increase women administrative

representation and that those statistics are still too low considering the number of

women teachers in the United States. Current statistics continue to show a skewed

representation of women principals where sixty-seven percent of women were

principals in elementary schools but those numbers drop off to forty percent in middle

schools and forty-three percent in high schools (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2020).

The government in South Africa set policy into place to increase the proportion

of women in senior management positions in the educational arena in rural South

Africa. Twenty-one years later Pontoso (2006) investigated the results and found that

advancement had not taken place. Looking at how policies and procedures impact the

advancement of women to senior levels has revealed that organizational and social

factors keep women from obtaining leadership positions. The author pointed out that

just because gender equality is guaranteed by law, a gender imbalance continues

(Pontoso, 2006). At least, by making the policy the government was acknowledging the

issue, but by not outlining appropriate measures to change the number of women in

leadership the government is failing to help fix the issue at hand. Gender

discrimination in the workplace continues and simply allowing women access to

management employment opportunities is not enough to get women hired. There

must be real consequences to excluding women from management and real investigations into why women aren't getting the job.

Similarly, Fulkenburg (2012) delved into the results of The Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH), which had put practices in place designed to attract and retain women applicants in leadership positions. Twelve years later the gender imbalance continued to exist and warranted further investigation (Fulkenburg, 2012). This institution tended to hire graduates from their own programs and since their programs retain less women students, there was less of an applicant pool (Fulkenburg, 2012). Additionally, men felt more organizational commitment than women (Fulkenburg, 2012). In other words, there is a dominance of "male values" within their school (Fulkenburg, 2012). Specifically, respondents suggested improving the school environment by creating a mentor program and increasing opportunities to combine job and social life (Fulkenburg, 2012). Interestingly, women students were more likely than their male counterparts to believe they had better career opportunities outside of the institution (Fulkenburg, 2012). Perhaps this issue of gender in educational leadership has more to do with societal values than hiring practices.

Another issue facing women leadership in rural education was investigated by Visiliki (2011) who considered the motivation of women to seek leadership positions within Greece's education system. She concluded that many women were motivated by altruistic reasons and not for personal gain or power (Visiliki, 2011). These women wanted to give back to the educational system and still maintain proximity to students

and classrooms (Visiliki, 2011). This study concluded that many women choose not to

seek out leadership positions due to their personal circumstances (i.e., children)

(Visiliki, 2011). Interestingly, the women in leadership roles tended not to wish to

promote from their positions due to having less student contact and more

bureaucratic responsibilities. The author concluded that women leaders are focused

on the social aspects of their job by creating a friendly and social environment within

the school and administration (Visiliki, 2011).

The gender imbalance in rural education is a real issue. Women face many

conflicting issues with work-life balance. It can be a very difficult decision to have to

choose between career and family. America needs to figure out how to make this

decision less black and white. Working mothers need options and flexibility in their

schedules (Brescoll, et. al., 2013). Families shouldn't have to choose between a

business meeting and their child's ball game. We should be able to work from home on

days our kids have to miss school. Having children is incredibly important to many

people and employers should allow workers flexibility in their work arrangements to

accommodate for the family's needs (Brescoll, et. al., 2013).

The Importance of Career Mentoring

The workforce is aging across America, and the education sector is no different.

According to the American Council on Education (2012), 58% of college administrators

are 61 years of age or older. There is a large age gap where much of the faculty and

administration is approaching or past traditional retirement age. This fact begs the

question about what happens when these people do retire and there are no leaders

and junior faculty members who are ready to replace them. The American Council on Education (ACE) (2012) cites Bryan J. Cook (director of ACE's Center for Policy Analysis), "The anticipated wave of retirements among college and university presidents is of great concern and may present challenges or even a temporary leadership shortage, however, it also presents a unique opportunity to diversify the leadership of American higher education" (p. 8). This leadership gap is documented at the National Level and demands some creative initiatives to build an administrative pipeline to ensure the future success of colleges and universities.

Mentoring is a very important part of career grooming and preparing individuals for future roles in educational administration. Individuals often benefit from guidance because to be successful in a vocation one needs experience. Experience can be learned second hand and still be valuable because it is about the lesson learned rather than the events happening directly to a person. Wallace and Merchant (2009) conducted a study about how women middle managers were prepared for leadership. Their findings indicated that women are not properly prepared for leadership roles (Wallace, et. al., 2009). Furthermore, the current leadership is approaching retirement age and appears to be lacking the foresight to prepare others for career mobility.

There is an overall lack of a support system for women administrators (Fulkenburg, 2003). Mentoring is an extremely important component of career advancement (O'Conner, 2014). Men and women both need career mentors, but women especially need a support system to help map the complex terrain of

leadership. Women have more expectations and standards than males, as documented by income penalties for being overweight (Levanon, A. et. al., 2009). Men and women both need career mentors, but women especially need a support system to help map the complex terrain of leadership. Women have many expectations and impossible standards to hold up to. There is a constant pull in every which direction, and it is impossible to please everyone. That is a sticky situation to be in when one chooses a career with strong political undertones.

Leadership training programs could help fill these upcoming gaps. Such a program should include segments where all parties would come together to discuss certain topics related to the field, but most work would be completed in small groups (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). One of the 21st-century skills of educational leaders is their entrepreneurial spirit (Shults, 2001). Capacity building is of monumental importance at colleges and universities in the United States (Aspen Institute, 2016).

Schawbel (2012) reports that hiring from outside an organization cost about 1.7 times more than it does to hire from within a company. Additionally, about half of outside hires tend to be unsuccessful in their new positions compared to a quarter of inside hires (Schawbel, 2012). Hiring from within not only saves money but can be extremely effective if there are leadership programs attached to these promotions (Schawbel, 2012). Communication issues are relevant because communication is one of the first and foremost important components of a mentorship training program (Allen, et. al., 2006). Additionally, it's good for employee morale to know that your job

is leading somewhere and building your skills so you can be successful in more advanced levels within your company.

Leadership Training Programs

The leaders at educational institutions play a pivotal role in student achievement and school culture. Augustine-Shaw (2015) highlighted the importance of leadership training programs for new educational leaders because excellent leaders are what shape excellent schools. Principals have a great deal of responsibility for the students who perform below level while at the same time have very little control over budget, curriculum, and personnel. Furthermore, first-year principals need to create a shared vision of learning with the faculty, staff, and community.

To address these needs the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI) was designed to improve the success of new principals through a research-based program where participants both learn and lead (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). There is a strong mentoring component to the KELI program where the mentors provide meaningful feedback during onsite visits that include reflective discussions (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). This program also provides participants with seminars that offer training and networking opportunities. By the end of the KELI program, participants will have earned professional licensure from the state (Augustine-Shaw, 2015).

The workgroup that was charged with creating the KELI program identified several themes in their literature review about what makes successful leadership training programs including: Creating a vision for student academic success; shaping a culture of learning; developing leaders in others; developing relationships in the school

and community; setting goals; making data-driven decisions; providing professional development opportunities (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). Large cities (e.g., Boston, New York, and Chicago) have created similar programs and alternative paths for educational leaders to be certified for their position (Elmore, 2008). Chicago's leadership program included a new evaluation system for principals, bonus pay for meeting goals, and the use of outside mentors (Maxwell, 2013). Creating these in-situ leadership programs has become an important aspect of educational leadership, a trend that will continue to improve with time.

Leadership Styles

Another interesting facet to this area of study is the differences in leadership styles between men and women. Researchers most often seem to define this in gender-role congruity theory (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006). Research suggests that male and female leadership styles are vastly different (Gardiner et. al., 1999). Where women leadership focuses on people and the working relationships between them, creating a more hands-on and group-work approach to tasks at hand (Gardiner et. al., 1999).

Conversely, male leadership is much more specific and goal oriented where men are looking to accomplish a set of steps to reach a determined goal (Gardiner et. al., 1999). Visiliki (2011) investigated the motivations behind Greek women in educational leadership positions. She found that the women in her study were motivated by their desire to give back to the educational system and the students they serve. Interestingly, Visiliki (2011) also found that many women choose not to take on

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leadership positions due to their personal circumstances and family life. While the women in power did not want to advance their careers because they were concerned about losing contact with the students they serve.

More and more in the 21st-century style of leadership we will see more of a demand for the woman-influenced interpersonal leadership style. As our society grows larger and becomes more inclusive, we will experience more push to create a social atmosphere in our schools. Working together, both students and teachers alike is the best way to create a sense of community and togetherness in the school setting. Even large schools are trying to emulate smaller rural schools using this principle to improve the educational achievement of students (Chalker, 2002). The more we work and solve problems together, the more inclusive and the school is by taking everyone's opinion into account. Community buy-in is essential to creating an inclusive atmosphere where all students and educators can thrive together.

Leaders are typically discussed in a "good, better, and best" framework (Mukunda, 2012). Mukunda (2012) proposed that there are normal and abnormal leaders asserting that the best leaders fall in the abnormal category. He considered normal leaders to be those who were products of the system and have worked their way up the totem pole (Mukunda, 2012). These leaders were generally considered good at their job and familiar to those who work for them (Mukunda, 2012).

Organizations in peril need to choose someone from outside of this box. The extreme leader will certainly pull the organization up and have two opposing characteristics; they have an absolute resolve and believe in their abilities (Mukunda,

2012). These types of leaders are going to succeed if success is at all possible. The

extreme leader is also very humble and listens to the opinions of those around her

(Mukunda, 2012). This is very applicable to rural leaders because of the plight of rural

education. Many schools are facing financial issues, consolidation, and lack of local

qualified leaders. Rural institutions are in a place where they need an extreme leader

to stay afloat and increase academic achievement.

There are differences in male versus female leadership styles and one of the

challenges women face is their tendency to let others speak and attribute their work

to the help of others (Sandburg, 2010). Similarly, O'Connor (2014) considered the

views of male vs. female college leaders about their positions and what it means to

them. Since senior management at the college level is historically male-dominated and

that plays a role in the culture of education in the United States (O'Connor, 2014).

O'Connor (2014) questioned both male and female college administrators about the

positive and negative aspects of their jobs and what their colleague's perceptions of

them may be as a tool to identify gender differences. The findings indicated that males

were more likely to consider how they shape the institution whereas their women

counterparts discussed how they are responsible for shaping the careers of junior

employees (O'Connor, 2014). The woman leaders regarded their gender as a

disadvantage compared to their male colleagues but enjoyed esteem given by women

colleagues (O'Connor, 2014).

Women are ideal leaders in the rural setting where the needs of students are

uniquely overwhelming. In one case, Lumby (2015) reported three positive attributes

of women principal's including: they usually have many years of experience in education before taking the job; they have a dedicated work ethic to "prove" themselves; they are successful because they have a high degree of similarity to the community they serve (e.g., language, religion, ethnicity). The principals in these schools battle high dropout rates, providing basic necessities (e.g., a building, telephone, copier), providing basic needs of children (e.g., food, clothing, shelter), providing effective learning opportunities in spite of barriers (e.g. untrained staff, poor curriculum, large classes) (Lumby, 2015). These are unique challenges that the male counterpart may not be able to address these needs because of how basic and maternal they are. However, for change to take place there must be a vested interest in making a change (Kotter, 2012).

One issue is those good mentors don't just happen from experience alone. Some training will be needed for administrative mentors to be effective at helping interested faculty and staff build their career. This problem is highlighted by Kotter (2012) that when there are any major reengineering efforts and training is provided it falls short because there is not enough, or it is not the right kind, or sometimes the training takes place at the wrong time. Institutional capacity building is an important role for community college administrators. The goal of leadership programs should consider addressing the need to increase institutional capacity through project-based leadership learning. Whether it's by working on a grant project or creating a new program, students could directly benefit from such a program. Additionally, new leaders would learn the skill sets and gain job shadowing experiences that will help

them become successful leaders. With reduced funding at the state level in conjunction with the continually lowering enrollment, this additional effort of a mentoring program may not be viable simply because there are bigger issues afoot.

Women remain under-represented in upper-level positions in higher education academic leadership and women are more likely to earn lower salaries than men (Monroe, et. al., 2015). Currently, there is little evidence as to what specific factors contribute to the rise of women to the top in a historically Caucasian male-dominated venue of college presidents. Monroe et. al. (2015) cited many factors preventing women from reaching the top levels of educational management positions including: glass ceiling, glass cliff, sticky floor, and labyrinth but lacks variety in factors that contribute to women reaching the highest levels of management. But what kind of background and experiences contribute to those women who have managed to move beyond those invisible social barriers?

Senior management at the college level is a historically male-dominated field (Monroe et. al., 2015). Women are woefully underrepresented at the higher levels of the administration taking only 14% of presidency jobs at doctorate-granting institutions (Morris et. al., 2015). This male-dominated workforce plays a role in the culture of education in the United States (O'Connor, 2014). As Karkouti (2016) explained, the lack of diversity on American campus has detrimental effects this has on not only students but American Society. Hohepa (2013) believed that the road to improving student diversity and inclusion meant that the institution also needs to support diverse faculty members.

Challenges in Educational Leadership Positions

Authors Branson, Franken, & Penny (2016) reviewed data from a middle-management study completed the university level. The purpose of this study was to look at insights into middle-management in higher education (Branson et. al., 2016). There are many nuanced and inherent complexities built into the job of middle management in Higher Education.

Most middle managers reported feeling as though they are navigating between two different planes of existence as they navigate their role at their institution (Branson et. al., 2016). The findings highlighted that there was an inherent duality as they negotiate between faculty and administrators (Branson et. al., 2016). These middle managers are pulled in two different directions as they have power and control over situations but are expected to also provide relational support and guidance. The participants described feelings of stress, discomfort, and uncertainty with their job (Branson et. al., 2016). The authors proposed that one way to deal with this would be to change the middle leader's role as one that is seen as more of a relational position (Branson et. al., 2016). Successful middle-leaders build relationships based on trust, consistency, and transparency. For the middle manager's work to be successful, they must be backed by a set of good policies and procedures that allow them the latitude to get the job done (Branson et. al., 2016).

This article opened my eyes to the problems deans and division chairs face on a constant basis. There is a general lack of respect for the deans and division chairs. Partly because they represent the authority of the system that seems hell-bent on

lowering working conditions and finding sneaky ways to give faculty more students

and less pay. It is important that the administration understands that without faculty

there is no business to run. Faculty need to keep in mind that without the

administration we wouldn't have students to teach. There is a dynamic partnership

between faculty and administration that should be respected and valued on both

sides. Leadership mentoring programs are important to help incoming leaders identify

the issues of leadership and how to identify which battles are worth fighting.

Principles and Processes for Successful Change

Kotter's (2012) Eight Step Change Model is very relevant to the problem-

situation in rural community colleges regarding the need for change and the

stagnation or resistance this change to create a climate of mentorship and leadership

training programs. Kotter (2012) suggested that people are resistant to change and will

intentionally and actively fight against change which undermines the effort entirely. To

combat this stagnation for change Kotter (2012) suggested building a group of

motivated individuals to promote the cause and create a clear vision that can be both

easily and quickly explained.

Creating change incrementally in the right way is essential to create lasting

change (Kotter, 2012). That is what makes a team of champions for change so

important. It is comforting when the employee knows who is in a group campaigning

for this change to take place. It creates transparency and venues to discuss the change

and how it will personally impact the employee. This team is also responsible for

creating a clear and explainable vision for change. In this case, the group would work

together to create an outline of steps or a vision for how a leadership training program would take place. This would help administration set clear goals and understand the time investment as well as give them direction for mentorship. This will also move the administration forward on the Stages of Concern (Hall et. al., 2011). This action would move the agenda for this initiative considerably forward.

Another issue in lasting change is the lack of a budget for any training that is needed. This problem is discussed by Kotter (2012) who stated that when there are any major efforts for change where training is provided, the training often fails because there is not enough, not the right kind, or the training is not offered at the right time. The system for change seems so fragile from Kotter's (2012) point of view because he went into detail about the pitfalls of change and why efforts to make a change often fail. Of course, knowing why efforts to make lasting changes often fail is essential to understanding how to successfully make a change. Another critique of Kotter's (2012) Change model is the lack of scientific evidence backing up his experiences and where his work fits into the other works of change theory.

Another area of concern for the institution of a leadership academy would be the administrative mentors using that experience against the faculty and staff who are interested in participating in such an effort. The administration could use this as a tool to keep participants they clash with or have different opinions than themselves from moving forward on the career ladder. Van Eck et. al. (1996) found that the 'like hiring like' principle is yet another cause of gender imbalance in academic administration. Monroe et. al. (2015) found an unconscious institutionalized bias as the cause of

gender imbalance at the top levels of administration. The authors surmised that those

currently responsible for hiring administrators hold a possibly unconscious belief that

women aren't good leaders because there aren't any top woman leaders.

Making the jump to a prominent leadership position can be difficult for women

and minorities. McCauley-Smith et. al. (2015) studied the experience of graduate

student leaders making the jump to educational leadership using sense-making theory

to explain how individuals put together their experiences to understand leadership.

There is also a high turnover rate in the academic administration where the average

administrator serves for six years (Morris et. al., 2015). There is a real financial cost

associated with losing administrators due to burnout and leaving mediocre

administrators in those positions where they are ineffective.

Cleverly-Thompson (2016) explained that the role of academic deans now

includes an entrepreneurial component to help find funding for their institution. Airini

et. al. (2011) discussed several important aspects affecting the advancing women's

careers in leadership positions including networking, institutional environment, the

presence of invisible rules, proactivity, and personal circumstances. Additionally, Airini

et. al. (2011) found that the reasons behind the rise or demise of a career in academic

leadership can be categorized as personal (family & health), professional (abolishing

protective paternalism), and organizational (reconceptualization & reorganization) can

either harm or build women's careers in educational leadership.

Part of this high turnover rate could be related to the increasing pressure

administration faces solving difficult societal problems. The United States college

graduation rate has held fast at 39% for the last 40 years (Morris, 2010). By comparison, other countries are graduating more traditional-aged college students which is causing the U.S. to fall behind the rest of the industrialized world.

More and more administrators need to consider how critical, creative, and practical thinking play a role in leadership development (Pigza, 2015). To address the stagnant graduation rates administration needs to create programs that support underprepared incoming students. Students lack the academic background, financial sustenance, and social support to be successful in the college setting. The next issue to tackle is to improve the college classroom setting. The issues that are leading college administrators, faculty, and students into the next century are complex challenges that must be addressed to advance America's educational promise to the next generation of students.

The work of leadership is really to be advocates for change and to help influence others to create change for a more desirable future (Baesu et. al., 2013). Employees can be very resistant to change. Many faculty members operate like Hall and Hord's (2011) poisonous mushrooms and do their best to undermine change by naysaying. When there is a conflict between faculty and administration both points of view are often valid. Administration works to cut costs which are ultimately to the detriment of faculty and students and administration works to create change to keep the institution running. Making incremental changes to improve efficiency is of the utmost importance (Kotter, 2012). Additionally, continuously making small changes allows the system to experience small victories along the way. Creating that clear and

intelligible vision for change is important so that the change can be communicated

without diffusion (Hall et. al., 2011). It is also important for the people involved with

the change see how those small victories are helping them reach the goals they have

set. It is also a powerful motivator to be able to measure your progress over time.

After creating a vision, making a timeline of events that need to happen to

achieve the overall goal can help. You can check off incremental progress towards your

goal and celebrate the small victories along the way (Kotter, 2012).

As Kotter (2012) stated, "Without credible communication, and a lot of it, employees'

hearts and minds are never captured." To begin the process of change there must be a

change in the institutional culture. All constituents need to be motivated to make

changes and I am worried that in our current dire state, there could be more of an

atmosphere of apathy. We are facing this time of severe budget cuts in education

coupled with lowering student enrollments, there is a good reason to feel that all is

lost. But there is also hope in institutional change. If faculty and administrators are

bold enough to try something new, they may be able to pull through this slump and

flourish.

For this change to be successful, there also needs to be training and support for

mentors. Good mentors are not born, they are made, and they need timely training

and support from other mentors. This idea is equally as likely to fail if the mentors do

not have a clear idea of how to approach the issue and what to do and when to do it.

This must be a top-down effort where those in academic leadership see and

understand the need for such an initiative. By tying this initiative to a capacity-building

project there could be a real and tangible benefit for leadership and for students. Such a project could also serve as an effort to bolster the entrepreneurial spirit that successful academic leaders need to embrace.

Interested faculty and staff should be willing to put forth the effort to make any project successful. A project to improve institutional leadership and mentoring programs are important to the individuals involved and to the institutional culture. If people aren't interested in devoting some fraction of time to this initiative, then such a project can't be successful. Faculty and staff are integral to such an initiative because they are the ones learning the ropes of academic leadership, but also, they are going to be the pulse of where the gold of the future capacity-building projects is going to be. They are the ones who know the students in the community and what the students' resource needs are. New leaders are also going to have a fresh perspective on what changes could be made to improve the institution.

It is incredibly important to consider the lines of communication and which cliques associate with each other. All institutions are just like the high school cafeteria. For a message to be sent with minimal distortion it is important to consider who will operate as a good hub and communicator between groups (Hall et. al., 2011). Choosing interconnected individuals with a clear idea of the project is of the utmost importance when navigating the political waters of change. It is important for the administration to see this as a worthy cause for the institution to move ahead if there is going to be any real change. Additionally, the faculty and staff members who are involved must choose to jump in without reservation about the worthiness of the

project. Having a clear vision regarding the purpose of a project like this would help it gain traction with other targets of communication.

The source of mentors in such a program should be the individuals who hold the highest ranks in educational leadership. The college presidents, the Chief Academic Officers, the Dean of Academics, etc. and the targets are the faculty and staff who are interested in such an undertaking. Since the idea is for the administration to work with the targets in a capacity-building program their communication should take place in all forms: face to face, phone, email, text messaging, and Skype. An initiative such as this will speak more to the innovators and early adopters because the nature of this initiative is novel and offers some control and experiences that will be valuable in the future through the collaborative creation of a capacity-building project.

This effort would require both personnel training and long-range organization planning. The idea behind this project reflects a cornerstone of organizational development, which is training and personal learning experiences in one division of the organization the impact will be improvement across the educational institution (Hall et. al., 2011). By training the individuals in administration the rest of the college and the faculty and staff who get involved in the initiative will benefit because they would also be building their capacity for leadership.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology used for this qualitative phenomenological study to provide insight into the career mentors, leadership programs, and the working conditions of women community college Presidents. This approach allowed the researcher to discover how these women's careers were started and what their mentorship experiences have been to develop a theory on how the career pathways for women leaders may be improved with additional support.

This is a phenomenological study because the scope of this study is to understand the essence of the participant's perspective of their experiences throughout their career (Khan, 2014). This chapter also includes discussion on the research design, population and sample size, sources of data, validity and reliability, data collection and management, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, research limitations, and the interview questions that were asked.

Research Questions

1. Have women administrators experienced gender discrimination at their job?

2. Do women administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their male peers?

3. Are women administrators' careers shaped by early career beginnings?

4. Are women administrators more likely to get a career start by other women administrators?

5. Do women administrators feel like they have had good mentors which have helped shape their career?

Research Methodology

This phenomenological study looked at the carrer and mentorship experiences of women community college Presidents. The researcher chose to use a phenomenological approach to answer the questions posed in this study. This approach was chosen to allow the researcher to investigate how the participants experiencenced their career and how those experiences lead to their leadership positions. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to investigate the deep feelings and thoughts participants have about the questions asked during the interview (Hays et. al., 2012). By employing the phenomenological approach the researcher was able to delineate code from the context of the research questions.

Research Design

A non-probability stratified purposeful sampling method was used for this project. All participants shared unique features within their subgroups as identified by the researcher before interviews took place, therefore this was a homogeneous sample (Hays et. al., 2012). This qualitative research design is appropriate in this case considering the main tenant of this research project is to gain comprehensive information about women college presidents serving rural institutions of higher education. Participants were selected based on (1) gender, (2) administrative title, (3)

length of time title has been held, (4) serving rural college institution, and (5) interview request response. The sample size was set at three women leaders serving a rural institution of higher education. These homogeneous criteria were established to aid improve the depth of knowledge around the researchers' guiding questions (Suri, 2011). This allowed the researcher to gather background information on what participants careers looked like in the beginning for women leaders in higher education.

The research was designed to conduct in-depth interviews kept to one hour in length to delve into this topic and attempt to understand the Participant's experiences. This research sought to investigate the career beginnings and identify if mentorship experiences existed for these women leaders. If the Participants felt they experienced some type of mentorship during their career the research sought to understand what those experiences were and how they came about. This research interviewed women Community College Presidents who serve in rural areas of the United States.

Semi-structured interviews were administered to women leaders in higher education. The interviews were semi-structured since all participants were asked the same questions from the pre-determined question set. The order the questions were asked changed in accordance with the natural flow of the conversation. The semi-structured research design allowed for the flexibility needed to foster a natural conversation and allowed the researcher to ask additional questions to clarify or further expand upon the interviewee's statement which arose from the conversation.

The interviews were conducted using a specific set of pre-determined open-ended questions of increasing sensitivity as the interview goes on. These questions were designed to be exploratory into the nature of the career progressions of the women academic administrators. It is the nature of interviews to be somewhat flexible in the timing and wording of questions asked in response to the direction of the topics covered and how the conversation flows, however interviews were held to the one-hour mark. Additionally, open-ended questions lead to more in-depth explanations of situations rather than a simple "yes" or "no" answer. Participants were contacted via e-mail by the researcher to request and organize an interview. All interviews took place online in a setting comfortable to the participant and were audio recorded and stored with the participant's permission until the dissertation was completed.

Population and Sample Size

Three participants were chosen to participate in an in-depth interview to answer the research questions as previously described. These participants were women community college Presidents who serve in rural areas. For the scope of this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data on personal histories and perspectives of three women academic administrators working in rural areas to explore the collective experiences of the women in charge. The researcher chose three women to get a variety of perspectives from several points of view. As stated by Queirós, et. al. (2017), "Qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representativity, but with the deepening of understanding a given problem" (p. 370).

Conducting three interviews allowed the researcher to discuss and analyze the nature of participants' career progression in much more detail.

Sources of Data

All participants were women who have held positions in academic administration as President at rural institutions of higher education for a minimum of twelve months. All women participants had held the title of College President for more than five years. The participants needed to be accessible to the researcher and willing to participate in the interview process. Participants were interviewed via skype or similar virtual communication program. Participants were referred to using a pseudonym to protect their identity which will only be known by the interviewer. The data collected was used to shed light on the research questions. All data came from the in-depth semi-structured interviews from the Participants' responses.

Instrumentation

The final step of the research process was to interpret the data gathered from the interviews. To do this the researcher went back through the interviews and created a logical summary of the participants interview responses. This created a bucket thematic analysis for the researcher to begin working from. Working with the interview responses the researcher first summarized the interviews in order to have a baseline of understanding of where the participants were coming from. This also allowed the researcher to begin looking for implicite meaning and codes to for a baseline of themes within the interview responses.

Next, the researcher went back through the interview responses and, in order

to make sense of the data uncovered, the researcher compiled the data into groups of

information known as codes. This implies that the researcher generated codes from

the data rather than using a theory that has already been created to find codes that

can be applied to the data. This method of data coding allows dialogue between the

researcher and the interview participant allowing the researcher to identify codes on a

deeper level.

The researcher worked with the participant responses to the interview

questions to search for repeatitive codes that gave the researcher insights into the

participants' experiences and their perceptions on their career and mentorship

experiences. While this analysis was developed the researcher tracked the codes to

look for emerging patterns between participant responses. These codes were

employed to organized and to logically answer the research questions.

Next the used those codes to identify themes within the participants

responses. These themes signifed recurring patterns within the data that identify

concepts that are important to the participants. The researcher achieved

understanding of the participants experiences through subjective analysis of the

participants' thoughts and feelings about their answers to the questions posed during

the interview process. This also allowed the researcher to begin to uncover the

storybook thematic analysis of participant responses. This use of storybook thematic

analysis of the data is common in research with an underlying social justice framework

(Braun, et.al. 2012). Finally, the researcher reviewed the interview responses one last time to pull out direct quotes from participants to support the research findings.

Validity and Reliability

The nature of this study was to delve deeply into the career experiences of a very specific type of career pathway for women. Given that there are few women who choose College President as a career pathway it is important to note that the small sample size could skew data on a larger scale. There are not widely used instruments which cover the specific auspices of this research given that there are few researchers in this field and few individuals that fit the research criteria. The purpose of this research is as an exploration into the career pathways women take to get to this very specific destination and to look for commonalities in what their mentorship experiences looked like. By gathering this initial data, it may be possible to develop an instrument that could more widely be applied to quantitative research type.

The data collected here have the potential to be skewed because of the specific criteria used to find willing participants. Additionally, the subset of that population was to look specifically at rural community colleges to begin creating a profile for the career pathway for women Community College Presidents. However, the very idea of qualitative research is to begin putting together information in an in-depth manner to explore potential applications for a broader and quantitative approach.

Data Collection and Management

The responses were categorized based on storybook thematic analysis (Braun et.al., 2012). These categories of results were not described until after the interviews

took place, as it would be difficult to guess the kinds of data which would be collected.

The purpose of the questions was to describe variation in individual experiences and to

explain experiential beginnings of women in higher education administration. The

results were described the group norms of women educational administrators. The

data was textual and derived from the audio recordings obtained from the interviews.

This design is purposeful, the data collected from these interviews was used to

improve the research questions and improve the focus of the research project

according to what is learned for future research needs. The sources of data collected

during the interview will be destroyed after the researcher's dissertation is approved.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher reviewed the data multiple times once all interviews were

completed. Using the recorded interviews, the researcher used the guiding research

questions to summarize the participants' answers. The researcher then compared the

interview responses and begin to categorize the results to better piece together the

storybook themes underlying the data collected. Using storybook thematic analysis,

the researcher is able to have a degree of flexibility over the theoretical output. The

researcher used the information gleaned from the results to form an understanding of

the career trajectory and mentorship experiences of women college presidents

working in rural America.

After the interviews were conducted, the researcher analyzed the responses to

the research questions that were collected using an interpretive phenomenological

approach to determine if there are common themes in the perceptions and

experiences of how women Presidents experience their career. The researcher will

then review and develop an analysis of the responses received from the participants.

The researcher will then use the collected data to compare the early career

experiences of these women Presidents to find commonalities and/or stark differences

which will be included in the results. Exploring these commonalities during data

collection can be applied to explore how women can be better supported and

prepared for their careers as great leaders.

The process of qualitative research revolves around taking non-numerical data

to understand the individuals' experiences and to take those data and find patterns

and commonalities within those results. According to Wong (2008), "Analysing

qualitative data entails reading a large number of transcripts looking for similarities or

differences, and subsequently finding themes and developing categories" (p. 14).

Ethical Considerations

The participants were given numbers to maintain anonymity, for example

participant #1. Participants were told that they would remain unnamed when the

researcher requested interviews. The researcher reminded participants of their

anonymity before the interview began and that they were free to decide not to answer

questions they did not wish to. The researcher also asked if the interview could be

recorded once the interview began. All participants chose their own interview setting

and time. When summarizing data care was taken to redact any identifying

information.

Research Limitations

This qualitative study will experience the limitations which are most typical of such study set ups. The insights learned are limited to what interviewees are willing to share. Since individuals can experience the same situation in different ways then there will be observer bias present in the data. However, the researcher is only interested in commonality of certain major experiences and thus will look for major pattern rather than minute details. Due to the sensitive nature of the questions being asked, it will be up to the participant to be willing to provide honest feedback.

The small sample size of this study also has to do with the loss of data during the initial interview process. Due to the COVID 19 shutdowns the interviews took place on skype or a similar platform. Initially the researcher was using earbuds to lessen background noise and focus on the interview process only to find out later that the Participants responses were not recorded and as such could not be included in the research results.

Due to the homogenous nature of the participants, it is important to include that researcher bias could potentially play a role in the identification of outcomes. The participants had to meet a variety of pre-requisites to create the criterion for interviews. Because the researcher used a non-probability sampling method to identify participants researcher bias may subconsciously play a role in who was selected for interviews. However, the researcher did not interview any women known on a personal level.

Researcher reflexivity is the concept of self-reflection in the process of interpreting the data collected to mitigate any biases that may cloud the results and conclusions of the interviews (Hays et. al., 2012). As such, the researcher strived to use unconditional positive regard to create a safe space for participants to share their reflections free from judgement. Part of this process was for the researcher to empathize with the participants to generate more meaningful and in-depth responses from the participants.

Interview Questions

1. What is your official title?
2. How long have you been at this job?
3. Who is your boss?
4. How would you describe your job to someone who is outside of education?
5. How long have you been in education?
6. What is your educational background?
7. What kind of extracurricular activities do you participate in?
   a. Meetings/professional gatherings/conferences
8. Do you have children?
   a. How many?
   b. What do your children think about your job?
9. How would you describe your leadership style?
10. Who has been influential in shaping your career?
11. Tell me about how your career got started.
12. At what point did you know you wanted to go into educational administration?
13. Tell me about your mentoring experiences?
    a. Describe an early career mentor.
    b. How did you meet?

c. How did they become your mentor?

d. What were your experiences with them?

e. What lessons were learned from them?

14. Were there other mentors later in your career?

a. What were your experiences with them?

b. What lessons were learned from them?

c. How did you meet?

d. How did they become your mentor?

15. In what ways have these mentorship experiences impacted your career?

16. Tell me about any formal leadership training experiences.

17. In what ways have these mentorship experiences impacted their career?

18. How many hours per week do you work?

19. Has there been a time when you have experienced pressure to outperform/outwork your male peers?

20. Have you ever felt that to be true at your job?

21. What is your job like on a day-to-day basis?

22. Do you have plans for your future career?

23. Have you ever felt discriminated against on the basis of your gender or appearance?

a. Can you give a/specific example(s)?

24. Have you ever felt passed over for promotion or advancement?

25. Have you ever decided not to apply for promotion or advancement? Why?

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter contains the results of the phenomenological study conducted to

answer the following research questions:

1. Have women administrators experienced gender discrimination at their

   job?

2. Do women administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their male

   peers?

3. Are women administrators' careers shaped by early career beginnings?

4. Are women administrators more likely to get a career start by other women

   administrators?

5. Do women administrators feel like they have had good mentors which have

   helped shape their career?

This chapter also includes discussion on the analysis of how the

phenomenological theory methodology was used to answer the research questions

and the process used to analyze interviews from three Participants. This chapter

includes discussion on the objective of the research, the guiding research questions,

profile of participant commonalities, summary of context of the results of each

interview, and a summary of the research results.

Objective

The scope of this research was to discuss what career-related issues women face in

the rural higher education arena. Women are largely underrepresented in educational

leadership positions and the researcher is left asking how this could be given many

positions at lower levels of leadership consist of women. Leaders assume a large

responsibility to hold up the character of their communities and get an educational

system running smoothly. Women leaders face additional criticism and scrutiny that

their male counterparts are unaware of (Lumby, 2015).

The second issue the researcher addresses is how women leaders can earn the

community's confidence regarding leadership style. Additionally, there is evidence to

suggest that women face 'boys club barriers' whereby women are excluded from

topics of conversation not traditionally considered of interest to women, such as

sports and bourbon- both examples gleaned from the interviews that took place for

this research. Women Community College Presidents serving in rural areas were

interviewed to find out more information about their career and mentorship

experiences which played a role in the obtainment of their position.

Guiding Questions

- Are the careers of women in higher educational administration shaped
  by early career experiences?
- Do female administrators feel like they have had good mentors which
  have helped shape their career?
- Have female administrators experienced gender discrimination at their
  job?
- Do female administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their
  male peers?

- Are female administrators more likely to get a career start by other female administrators?

Profile of Participant Commonalities

All participants were Caucasian women either currently working as college Presidents in rural communities or had in the past. All women had served well over ten academic years in educational leadership, and they all held a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. All women identified multiple career mentors both men and women had helped shape all the participant's careers.

Table 1 Participant Profile

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

Participant Number	Formal Leadership Training	Career Mentor	Years in Administration
1	No	Yes	More than 10 years
2	No	No	More than 15 years
3	Yes	Yes	More than 15 years

Coding Process

The coding process took place after the interviews. The researcher re-watched these interviews three times through each. During the first re-watch the researcher summarized the interviews. This information is found in chapter 5. Next, the researcher looked for commonalities and differences between the Participant's answers to the research questions. This allowed the researcher to categorize answers and to look for patterning of shared meaning underpinned by central concepts and ideas derived from the interviews. At this time the researcher summarized the findings to the research questions. Next, the researcher was able to identify common themes from the interviews. These themes are found outlined in the results section below. The

third time through watching the interviews the researcher pulled direct quotes to expand upon and support the themes and answers to the primary research questions. Using this methodology allowed the researcher to derive thematic analysis from the interviews through coding.

Present Themes

The major and common themes identified because of this research projects are outlined below.

1. Need for peer support groups through leadership academies for women leaders.

   a. Participant 1 stated, "They really want you to get get to your feelings and what drives you to do what you do and what you know what, what what's really driving you…some things can't be taught, like some people just have better people relationship, type skills, and are able to relate to people better, some things can't be taught, but some things can be like how to give constructive feedback."

   b. Participant 2 stated, "and our group was interesting because it was…[diverse], but the women kept that relationship. We had lunch every month, we talked about our leadership experiences…we grew out of that week."

   c. Participant 3 stated, "When I was in [state] when we connected the women in leadership…and we, created really, I started this group of women in educational leadership."

2. Infiltrating the boys club barrier

   a. Participant 1 Stated "little easier for them to talk [with other men] probably than it is for us [women] just because they have more in common as far as the sports and whatnot, or the bourbon or whatever the case may be."

   b. Participant 2 stated she felt "[extra pressure] to be one of the boys in some way" but relies on basketball.

   c. Participant 3 stated she breaks these barriers because she, "enjoy[s] watching football and know[s] a bit about good bourbon."

3. Their inward and outward appearance and reputation to the community they serve is important to them.

   a. Participant 1 stated, "But you're also constantly trying to find other avenues for dollars to bring into the college with grants and donations."

   b. Participant 2 stated, "You are the face of the college and the community. You have. I was in a small community. But even in a large community, you do not have a lot, you know, much anonymity."

   c. Participant 3 stated, "You just tried to, you know, say sorry professional relationships only, whatever you you can do to draw the boundary or make light of it is what we do."

4. Career mentors are important and make a difference.

a. Participant 1 stated, "…there certainly were those key individuals that I mentioned, that I worked with at the college that I tried to kind of emulate after."

b. Participant 2 stated, "Now, all of us had a pretty good career, not all of us stayed at the college, but all of us went above and beyond to new roles. And I think that that group of us, particularly those four women, you know, making a commitment to each other. And being there was probably the strongest mentoring experience that I had."

c. Participant 3 stated, "women from the very beginning in [state] have encouraged me and supported me throughout my career."

These uncovered themes are all deeply grounded in the research questions asked. The research questions are all about the early career experiences of women community college Presidents. The themes pulled from these interviews all revolve around their career and mentorship experiences. The bottom line is that women need additional support systems that they may need to even create themselves to be strong leaders for positive change. These women leaders related in that they felt like they were always on the clock and consistently under scrutiny by those around them. However, their drive to lead well and their capacity to deeply care for their job and community set them apart from run of the mill leaders.

Results

The results of the research are outlined in order below. The researcher pulled themed data results from the interviews and discussed the themes uncovered from

those interviews to answer the research questions posed in this study. Using thematic analysis, the researcher was able to find congruent storybook codes and themes in the raw data from Participants' responses (Braun et.al., 2012). This lens allowed the researcher to see codes as fluid and flexible within the data results. This view can help the researcher avoid the data trap of looking for homogenous data. But rather, to be able to conduct interviews based on depth of the participants experiences. These codes are not fixed and may even evolve and change over time. This research aimed to reflect how the researcher is conceptualizing the data within the homogenous participant group. This will allow future researchers to conceptualize how the data shifts as time moves forward.

This allows the research findings to deepen and grow while the career experiences of women community college Presidents change and develops moving forward through time. This framework purposefully is not about accuracy or reliability, it may not even be possible. This research is about the depth of interpretive engagement. Telling the career story of women community college Presidents. Thusly, this process reflects the development of the understandings within these data. Actively engaged in interpreting the data through the lens of their own cultural membership and social positionings, their theoretical assumptions, and ideological commitments. The questions posed in this project sought to immerse the researcher in the career experiences of these women and deeply engage in the data to find phenomenological codes and themes.

Question 1: Are women educational administrators' careers shaped by early career experiences?

The participants had varied early career experiences. Participant 1 got her career start simply because she did not have an interest in working outside the area her family is from. She earned her career trajectory by sticking to her institution, working diligently, and earning a path to leadership by reputation. Her early career experience shaped her career because she enjoyed the work involved at her various posts within the institution she continues to serve. She stated, "And I always enjoyed education and enjoyed my time at the college and even then thought, well, wouldn't it be cool, you know, to come back here and work someday." Having a positive experience early in her career helped her make the decisions she needed to continue working in her area both geographically and within higher education.

Participant 2 is a self-described natural born leader. She got her career start because she made it happen. She turned a part-time position into a full-time leadership position. In this time, she also pursued her doctorate which led to her career start by moving on to work at another institution. She stated, "I always was chosen to lead things, be the editor of the newsletter…I'm not necessarily a basketball player, but I managed the basketball team." Her early career experiences in higher education gave her the idea that this career pathway may be the right fit for her. She struggled with finding her identity within the educational system. As a young student she was unsure of the career pathways she should go after. Thus, she had multivariant

undergraduate experiences across a range of fields. This was turned into a strength for her as she got to know a wide range of career pathways.

Participant 3 got her career start by working in adult education. This experience helped shape her belief in the purpose and place of the community college. Her job working in adult education inspired Participant 3 to earn her doctorate and move into educational leadership. She was truly inspired by her stent in adult education and the importance of continuing education for those who have few options. She very much places and emphasis on the impact an individual can have on the community. She stated, "The college president that I ended up working for him he supported continue to grow in college." I believe that that beginning career experience directly impacted her later career leadership style by realizing the importance early career support can have on your overall career trajectory. By supporting individuals to complete their education these individuals can benefit the community through their improved career pathways.

All three participants' career beginnings inspired them to continue down the path of educational leadership through obtaining additional education. Theme 3: All women had career mentors is derived from these data. Additionally, mentors were both men and women who showed participants both positive and restrictive ways to lead. Also present is some of the information deduced from theme 1 Women leaders need peer support groups and women need access to other women leaders. Participant 2 states, "But the women kept that relationship." Participant 3 added that, "being a woman impacts my leadership for liking people and wanting to make

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connections. To do that you have to be available to people." This was her way of understanding what is truly going on with the people working under her.

The circumstances triggering their future career were vastly different between the three participants. However, they related that they had enjoyed their beginning career experiences and that those experiences inspired them to continue down the path of educational administration. This is indicative of an underlying theme in the research findings that these women administrators have a supportive leadership style. These women all had positive early career experiences that gave them a sense of purpose in continuing to work in the educational field. In future research it would be prudent to investigate more information into the specific motivation to start the trajectory into academic administration.

Question 2: Do women administrators feel like they had good mentors which have helped shape their career?

All three participants identified various career mentors that helped them navigate the very political nature of their job. The career mentors seemed to be most influential and memories more salient early in the women's careers because they appeared to have more vivid description of their phenomenological interpretation of their reflection on career events. During my interviews all three women leaders their career mentors seemed most salient during the early phases of their leadership careers. Participant one stated, "I tried to kind of emulate after [Name]...always enjoyed her leadership style as well. We had some very lengthy meetings, but she

always got everyone's input...shared governance [was important]." The Participants all

identified having both male and female career mentors throughout the interview.

Their experiences on the depth of those relationships varied greatly. This is also

supported by theme 3: All women had career mentors who were both positive and

poor leaders is derived from these data. Some participants identified as having

maintained these relationships throughout the span of their many years serving as

leaders in education. Maintaining close relationships with peers is also a common

theme found throughout the literature and is indicative of the differences in the men

and women's leadership styles.

All participants identified the importance other women had been as pillars

helping them move forward through their careers. Women helping women was a

theme throughout the interviews with discussions focused on the unique

circumstances' women experience on their way up through the leadership pipeline.

Participant 2 noted, "women tend to support each other a little differently than the

men do." All women leaders discussed important women who helped shape their

career choices both inside and out of education. I think this is also incitive of the

leadership style women tend to have where it is more group oriented and the

openness to get everyone's feedback on a problem situation. Participant 2 noted,

"women were any more generous with their time than the men were." That theme is

found throughout my interviews where women would talk about at least one specific

time when other women supported them. Knowing that someone is free with their

time to help you or support you in your own problem helps form relationship bonds that may span a lifetime.

Another interesting point topic that all three leaders brought to light in various way was the 'anti-mentor' or individuals who were observed by the participants as being examples of how not to lead. The anti-mentor had somehow served as examples to the women leaders through instances of catastrophe. Participant 2 stated, "I think you you learn good and bad men." Some of these anti-mentors lead change that made issues worse or lead in nefarious ways. One specific example was that of an over-bearing anti-mentor whose attempts at micromanaging employees often backfired causing much discontent around them in from the viewpoint of the women leaders. It was noted during these interviews that when leaders attempt to micromanage it led to a feeling of incompetence on the part of the employee. Which, in one instance, lead to the apathy of the worker and ultimately more work for the leader.

When leaders allow individual workers to have a voice and input into some item of change the Interview Participant noted that the workers are then able to have a sense of pride in their work and will be more likely to continue growing their own skills in leadership for change. One participant noted that this is great for the leader in charge because in this way the leader can more fully trust that employee to make better decisions which lessens the already over-burdened workload of the leader.

Workers who feel autonomy, as one participant noted, are more likely to care deeply for the institution and its students. This ultimately benefits the institution because every student counts. When each individual student feels like they belong

they will be more satisfied with their time spent and will tell their family and friends. This situation ultimately leads to a positive community reputation and possibly more institutional investors.

The reputation the community college has within the communities these women lead in was a common theme of importance throughout these interviews. There was much discussion about how the community college is a vital asset to a growing and thriving community that it serves. The reputation of their community college within their service area was signaled as important by the assertion that these women leaders are essentially always on the clock and strive to present themselves to the community as such through their personal presentation during the daily human tasks we all attend to such as grocery shopping.

Question 3: Have women administrators experienced gender discrimination at their job?

Unfair gender bias was not a salient topic throughout these interviews. Two of the participants identified some negative interaction in one way or another, but they were shrugged off as more indicative of the human condition. That is to say that all humans bring their own biases to the table and that those biases can cloud or shape the judgement decisions of the humans involved in the interaction. Participant 2 stated, "But I think there was a little extra pressure from the guys to, you know, be one of the boys in some way." These negative interactions were not perceived by the participants as negative interactions because they are women leaders in a male-dominated field. These negative interactions were perceived by the participants as

pushback from a larger societal view. So, the negative experiences were not identified

by participants as being a result from their career or leadership choices. But rather a

result of the prejudices we deal with that are interwoven in the fabric of society.

Intriguingly Participant 1 divulged a highly salient memory of discrimination

within her workgroup because of her thick Southern accent. Participant 1 stated, "I

think that because of my Southern accent, there's been times when my thoughts or

ideas were dismissed in different meetings." She felt that within this group her idea for

change was blatantly and insultingly dismissed by her peers only to find that within

minutes her idea was re-spun by another women at the table. In this Participant's

viewpoint, this second iteration of her idea was met with much acclaim and agreement

within the workgroup.

This information is congruent with Theme 2: Women leaders care about their

inward and outward appearance and reputation to the community they serve is

important to them. Funding for their college is a central job function women leaders

worry about. This leads to the need to maintain a positive appearance to the

community and to those under their auspices. Participant 1 stated, "this year…I was

pretty heavily involved with legislators…it's external partners that you're working with

a lot of meetings, a lot of calls a lot of P.R., there's a ton of public relations, radio spots,

TV spots, interviews, newspaper interviews." Additionally, the participants divulged

that they felt they are always on the job. Participant 1 stated, "because you are the

face of the college, and you're promoting the college and all that it can offer." All

participants are dedicated and driven to succeed. These women leaders reported

working over 60 hours a week.

Difficult decisions are tough to make but women leaders carry the weight of

those decisions. Experiences like those can be met with disparaging feelings of

humiliation and defeat by those who are put into similar situations. In my interviews I

have found that such experiences fail to discourage these women leaders. Instead,

they may seek social support from their peers but ultimately keep moving forward

with their ideas in confidence that these isolated incidences will not be the last and

should be taken in stride as a momentary reminder that who they are is not defined by

someone else's biases. Great leaders learn from the negative experiences but work to

keep themselves from internalizing the encounters as a reason to stop leading for

positive change.

Question 4: Do women administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their

male peers?

All women administrators reported feelings of needing to outwork or

outperform their male peers. However, the events which triggered these feelings was

varied and was reported as being inconsistent amongst all participants. Participant 1

stated, "…we do feel the pressure that and I think all the female presidents with kctcs

would agree. And I'm not saying it's necessarily a bad thing. It's probably our own

created pressure that we've put in our heads that we need to outperform the men."

The women leaders who were interviewed for this research are all have very strong

and outgoing personalities. They all identified ways in which mentoring wasn't

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something that happened to them but rather something that happened naturally as a component of their relationships with their bosses and peers. They all identified as having participated in at least informal leadership programs or events of some kind which were designed to help participants identify leaders at the very least, if not encourage these individuals to grow as leaders in some way or another.

The Participants discussed having feelings to outwork or outperform their male peers, the caveat is that these women leaders are all very driven and competitive individuals by their own admissions. They identified as having feelings to outperform male peers perhaps simply because there are more male peers to compete with. That is to say that these women leaders feel driven to outperform their male peers but feel driven to outperform in general. Participant 1 stated, "It's probably our own created pressure that we've put in our heads that we need to outperform the men, but yeah, yeah, there is that." However, they did not report having these or similar feeling specifically towards women peers. They reported having more feelings of social support and togetherness from other women educational leaders.

Perhaps this is not a gender bias situation but more of a situation where women feel more at ease earning social and/or political support from women peers versus seeking social and/or political support from male peers. Conceivably, it is easier to for women to form social bonds with other women in high power positions due to the societal social constraints we have created for ourselves. The line of inappropriate or blurred emotional bonding for individuals in high power positions, whereby peers are actually few and far between, may be more deeply regulated by perceived societal

norms than by actual feelings of competitiveness. Therefore, perhaps, it is simply easier for high-power leaders to remain gender segregated when they need outside perspective from their peers to avoid unnecessary chaos in personal life.

Question 5: Are women administrators more likely to get a career start by other women administrators?

Women helping women was a theme throughout the interviews with discussions focused on the unique circumstance's women experience on their way up through the leadership pipeline. All participants identified the importance other women have played in helping the participants move forward through their careers. These high-power leaders rely on strong social support systems to help get through the tough calls that leaders are often faced with. Participant 3 was so driven to have this woman-based leadership support group that her and her friend in educational leadership created while working in a southern state dominated by the proverbial white male. Participant 3 notes, "I started this group of women." She maintained this group of women leaders across states and throughout her career.

When being responsible for running a facility as important as the community college, there are sometimes heartbreaking decisions that must be made. One participant described her experience of having to make termination calls due to extreme state-mandated budget cuts. This is a heart wrenching decision for the community college leader because by their own admission they must live and work closely in the communities they are involved in.

Community colleges are state-run institutions but rely intimately on their communities to remain operational. The students must continue to enroll for the institution to function, but local political leaders must understand and place importance on their continuation. There is a disconnect where uninformed local political leaders seem to misunderstand that there must be a champion at the state level. This communication is one of the major and important roles a community college president plays within the community.

This question relates to theme 1 that Women leaders need peer support groups. Women need access to leadership academies and to other women leaders.

Maintaining state-level funding is dire for the community college to continue to function. It is all too easy for state government to overlook and underemphasize the role a community college plays toward the betterment of an entire state. State governments understand the importance of higher education, but political leaders are more likely to champion the State University over the community college. People who play major roles in the political arena are less likely to come from a background as humble as that of their community college.

Summary

This research was conducted to glean more information into the early career experiences of women college Presidents serving in rural areas. These interviews helped to uncover more information about why there is a disparity of women leaders in the top ranks of academia. Additionally, these women Presidents gave insight into

their early career experiences and how their leadership skills developed through their career mentors and the leadership programs they participated in.

Overall, these interviews uncovered the need for women leaders to have access to women peers for the purpose of forming friendships and creating a solid social network they can rely on when they need additional support navigating the political minefields of their job. One Participant noted, "Because of the trust with the presidents, It's a really good group. It always has been even as presidents come and go there's just a lot of camaraderie and trust between [us]." Additionally, women leaders could greatly benefit from formal leadership programs to help them consider the nuances in educational leadership. Giving all leaders the space to consider what a good leader is and how they make decisions to enact meaningful change will ultimately lead to a more open and fair society for all constituents who are impacted by the decisions these high-power leaders make on a day-to-day basis.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECCOMENDATIONS

Introduction and Summary of Study

This chapter contains the results of the phenomenological research study to investigate the career trajectory and mentorship experiences of women in higher educational leadership. These women leaders were asked to describe their career experiences as far as how they got started. The research questions delved into the Participants' mentorship experiences and what those mentors have taught them about being a good leader. Participants were also asked to discuss the working conditions they operate under.

Participant 1

Participant 1 has been working in administration for over ten years and holds a doctorate in educational administration. Her tenure in a presidential position has been over five academic years. She identified having one child who was now grown and college aged and noted that she will ask his advice on certain topics such as billboards and ideas on attracting younger students to campus. Participant 1 identified her boss as a Caucasian male who oversaw leading several colleges. She identified one of her major professional associations is with several of the local and regional Economic Development Alliances. This tied back into her view of her role as primarily external relations.

She describes her job as one that requires a lot of meetings with community partners as well as political groups. Her main goal is to raise donations for the college and maintain governmental funding for the institution. She reported easily working

over 60 hours per week noting that as the college president she is always essentially on call. Participant 1 described her leadership style as one which seeks input from relevant parties before making an ultimate decision. She also stated that she relies on those around her to do their job well. She recounted not having the time to micromanage the individuals around her and that people perform better when allowed to make their own decisions.

Participant 1 identified her current manager as an excellent mentor who makes sure that the people, he manages have access to professional development opportunities that they are interested in. She stated that he gives people the latitude to explore career-related interests and that by doing that has had a major positive impact on the people running those institutions. She believes strongly in providing professional development opportunities for her employees despite the cost associated with such activities. She said she had been working with her current boss on and off many times throughout the duration of her career.

She gave an example of one leadership institute her boss sent her to that was the most formal leadership training she has received throughout the duration of her career. She described this training as "touchy feely" and designed to get to the root of why people lead the way they do to get participants to question and consider their managerial decisions. This was a multi-week training that took place as a smaller class setting that was therapeutic in nature. She reported this training as beneficial due to being given time and space to consider major decisions she has had to make and really

explore why those decisions were made and how that impacted the individuals who worked for her.

Participant 1 described her career trajectory that took place simply because she was from the area she works as president in and that she did not want to leave. She described having career opportunities outside of the service area but that she had no desire to explore elsewhere. Her career began as a student at the institution she currently leads. After earning her doctorate, she returned to her institution to teach for several years before beginning her tenure in administration as program director. She stated the desire to continue working in her current post for at least another decade or so before re-evaluating career goals.

Participant one identified one major lesson in leadership that was passed to her from her mentor was to stop apologizing for decisions that weren't hers. She said that she had the tendence to apologize for every little thing even when they were out of her control. She said that the important part is to work with the individual who made the mistake to make sure it doesn't happen again. She also remembered her grandfather as an influential mentor because of his anecdotal advice such as, "it's not a popularity contest, it's a results contest." Additionally, she reported being told early on as president that she would always be on duty. That it is a job that follows you out into the community. It's not a good idea to even go to the grocery store without makeup wearing sweats because sure enough that is the time you run into someone. Declaring that it is important to maintain appearance in a position like the one she holds because it is very much a community- driven enterprise.

When participant 1 answered the question about pressure to outperform male peers she agreed that she does feel that pressure to work harder to outperform. She stated that she believed all the women college presidents would feel the same about that. She also brought up feeling that there is a power imbalance between male and female administrators because men can give more authoritative guidance to get certain things accomplished while women would be seen as domineering and overstepping boundaries. She stated that there was a certain policy she needed to make and that she was experiencing a lot of disclaim over this change. Whereas a male peer who needed to put the same policy in place at his institution got the change made easily. She reported using the same verbiage as him in emails and on phone calls, but she got the opposite result.

Participant 1 also remembered a time when she felt she was not taken seriously at a meeting. However, it was not her gender that got in the way. She believes that it was her thick Southern accent that clouded people's judgement of her ideas. She remembered that a woman postulated the same idea she had just minutes before but that this other woman was given regard for the idea. Participant 1 believes that similar situations have happened to her throughout her career but that this incident is the one that stands out in her mind.

Participant 2

Participant two has worked in higher educational administration for more than 15 years. She is newly appointed as Chancellor in a statewide college system, but previously had served as a college president for over seven years. She has served

institutions in multiple states throughout the duration of her career. Her experience has mostly revolved around the administrative aspect of Higher Education. She has taught classes along the way but nothing long term.

As Chancellor, her office oversees many different areas that support the colleges around her state. One major effort revolves around creating curriculum and accrediting programs. They support Workforce Solutions, which is a program that helps colleges form an alliance with business needs creating training programs and finding apprenticeships for students. Online Learning is another major area she is involved in to make sure students and colleges help get the assistance they need to be successful. Additionally, they work with dual credit programs where high school students can earn college credits as well as running GED programs and disability services. Externally at the state level she cooperates with economic and workforce development.

Reflecting on her many years as President Participant 3 stated, "As a president, particularly since it's an individually accredited college, you are responsible for everything, you sign a paper that if there is a contract, that if something bad happens in your financial aid department, you are personally liable for that up to a certain amount of money. You are the face of the college and the community." Additionally, she made the reference to difficulties working in small communities include running into people at the store who were directly impacted by the President's decisions. The decision to terminate an individual is never a decision to be taken lightly, but in a small community that decision is especially confronting. As chancellor one has many roles

that impact many colleges but reports to the system President who, in turn, reports to the Board of Regents. The chancellor would step into the interim role if the President were not there. It is therefore a different level of responsibility in order of magnitude.

Participant 2 had been involved in leadership even early in her school career. Leading newspapers and managing sports teams. She reported growing up with a sense that there is always something to do and that she should be doing something. Even after college her career revolved around leadership at a night college where she was eventually able to take a part time position and turn it into a position as program director. Participant 2's leadership style is self-described as, "I hope it's a combination of service leadership and relational leadership, situational leadership." She believes strongly in leading with kindness and trying to understand where employees are coming from. She specifically noted that it is important to make sure new employees have the things and support they need to be successful. This includes letting them know when they are doing a good job and that their hard work is appreciated.

Participant 2 never participated in a formal mentorship program or was ever assigned a mentor. Her experience with mentors was all informal and casual in nature. She stated that her mentors were both male and female, however her first two career mentors were both women. She stated that her first career mentor was an African American woman who was able to, "gracefully break through a lot of barriers because of her gender and her race and had a larger than life personality." This career mentor had a supportive and encouraging leadership style. Participant 2 described this mentor as a cheerleader. Her second career mentor was described as having a direct and

energetic way of leading. This mentor was noted for her ability to take in a situation and summarize what happened. Having worked in leadership for many institutions across the United States her insight was that one picks up something from everyone they work with on a consistent basis. No matter the career point one reaches, there is always something to learn. She also noted that both good and bad leaders offer some lessons to take home.

Participant 2 stated that she had not participated in a formal mentorship program but went on to discuss that she participated in an intensive twelve month American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) program where participants from around the country who work in a variety of areas (HR, Finance, Academics, etc.) would be grouped together. These individuals would meet for one week of in-person training and participate in a variety of activities throughout the year. Her group consisted of six individuals five women and one man. She recalled the training of "those four women making a commitment to each other and being there was probably the strongest mentoring experience that I had". She noted that the women kept that relationship going and had lunch every month. Participant 2 noted that they would discuss their leadership experiences. She said that she grew as a better leader because of that singular experience and that it led her to her position as president. She recalled that the most important aspect was getting to see the college from such a variety of different perspectives that the individual would not have normally had the opportunity to encounter.

When she landed her Presidency the Board of Presidents was comprised of

eight men and eight women and remained that way for about ten years. Participant

two noted that the women would have a line outside of the bathroom they used

during breaks and that those conversations away from everyone else were often the

most meaningful and telling. She also explained that the meetings with other

institutional Presidents were important because it was easier to figure out the

historical perspective of where policies and practices came from. The informal

relationships she had with the other women Presidents was important because she

felt more comfortable discussing issues with them and that she felt there was a

camaraderie and trust between them.

Participant 2 noted that working as a team lifted people up and gave them

confidence that they had someone to call when there was a difficult issue to manage.

She also explained that it was very beneficial to see the different ways people

accomplished things. When there would be one system-wide problem there were

eight different approaches from the other women. She went on to discuss that the

men also had different approaches to the issue, but that, "the women tend to support

each other a little differently than the men do." She also noted that the other

Presidents who were closest to her institution geographically were also women and

that made it easier to go and visit in-person when she needed outside support in

handling an issue. From time to time they would also ride share to meetings or events

and that couple hour dive together was also very beneficial in getting outside support

or perspective. She also believes that the AACC leadership training she participated in

earlier in her career set her up to be able to form and maintain that profession bond with the other women Presidents.

When discussing how many hours a week Participant 2 works she reported about 60-70 hours. She reflected that it's probably actually more when considering the amount of informal work, she does. Her example was that even while watching television she is still thinking about a problem in the back of her mind. She stated that she tries to take Saturday and half of Sunday off from work but isn't always successful. She also struggles with the issue that half of her state is in a different time zone which equates to her workday being an hour longer. She posited that she could really work 24-7 if she wanted to. There is always something that needs to be taken care of. Participant 2 felt that it's difficult to walk away and take days off because the emails pile up and there is always someone waiting for her to do something.

She reported never having had the feeling that she needed to outwork male peers, except when she was in a male-dominated undergraduate college program. She has always landed the jobs she's applied for but recalled a time early in her career she was qualified for a position and was advised by a mentor not to apply. She chose not to apply and has wondered where her career would have gone had she gotten the job. She recalled a time when she went for an interview but that they made it clear to her they were going to hire the internal candidate and that she was only there so the institution could say the interviewed others. That situation was very irritating to her because of the amount of wasted time.

Participant 3

Participant 3 has worked as a college President for over fifteen years serving at three different institutions and holds a doctorate in educational administration. She stated that she would guess she carried a 60-hour workweek consistently. She had one child and noted that her husband is very supportive of her career and will help her see things from another angle when she gets stuck on a decision. There have been times when that support from him really helped her stay on the right track. Having outside support from friends and family on various issues has really helped strengthen and guide her throughout her life regarding career and otherwise.

She described the nuts and bolts of her job as being very different from day to day. Her example was that one day she might have an important meeting with a potential donor and the next day might have more of an internal focus. She would meet weekly with her leadership support team (e.g., CAO, etc.) and monthly with faculty council. It is important to her that she travels and visits the other campuses in her college at least once a month so she can meet with other leadership and get to know all the employees a bit better. She noted that this made it easier to decide who to encourage to get on which workgroups as well. She frequently met with local legislators to champion the community college.

Participant 3 began her career by teaching adult education and basic skills. She really enjoyed and takes pride in this part of her career because she felt she was able to directly impact and help individuals who had gotten stuck in life in some way or another. She focused her discussion on her many opportunities to serve students in

the various leadership roles she has worked in. She believed that her early career experience helped guide her to see the main mission of community collage as one to increase access to higher education for a broader set of adult learners. Participant 3 eventually went on to earn her doctorate in Educational Leadership. After her initial job she was able to secure a position as the assistant to the President at the college she worked for. In that position she supervised several departments including media and marketing among others. During that time, she helped set up the foundation for the college.

She described her role as President as a pivotal way to, "create the kind of place where every student can succeed if they want to". Her focus is to first and foremost direct resources to uphold excellent academic standards and then to the supportive structures across the college that help students achieve their goals. As a President in a system of colleges they would meet monthly to discuss the weighty issues that college presidents deal with day-to-day, and the multitude of decisions that they must make monthly. Then the Presidents meet in-person once a year to, "think more carefully and strategically about what we do and why and how." She said they consider the future of what colleges must "sell" to students and her view is that it isn't necessarily information or skills, but credentials, and even those are becoming more flexible, faster, and less costly online. She stated that she enjoys being part of a team so they can learn and lead in a collaborative manner. She believes it is important to connect with others who challenge you to listen carefully and see differently.

She noted going through many rounds of change during her career and that change can be stressful even when it is positive. There have been budget cuts for her institution year after year and that has greatly impacted her fundraising efforts. She believes that working with the companies in her community she can help an individual student get a higher degree which inherently leads to a higher paying job. She sees the community college as a reflection of the American belief that everyone can lift themselves up with a little help from our public education systems. She stated that it is important to, "make education accessible to all who need our services."

She sees her role as President is to be mindful of the needs of the students at her institution and the employers in the community. As a leader she needs to consider what programs are needed at the college and how to prepare students to be successful in their local career marketplace. She noted that her college serves a diverse population of students from the young single mother who requires flexible scheduling and affordable tuition to the worker in need of advanced skills required for a promotion at his job to the high school graduate who wants to benefit from small class sizes and caring and knowledgeable faculty to refugees fleeing violence and attempting to start over in a new country. It is, therefore, vital as a community college President to create an inclusive mission and climate at the college and to welcome everyone who can make use of the support community colleges have to offer to help individuals reach their educational and career goals.

Her way of taking charge and leading change was to plan for it, manage through it, inform the people of the change, and most importantly to celebrate the

positive aspects of successful change. Celebrating change is important to her role as a leader because she felt that it helps people see the impact you are making in real time. When people can see and be part of successful change then one gains confidence from those around you. Compared to the kind of leader that quietly makes change and no one really understands the tangible benefits of the change that was put in place. Participant 3 asserted that then people get excited to be involved in changes you lead, and they start to believe in the changes you see as necessary as a leader.

Participant 3 described her leadership style as one that is based on communication and trying to understand issues from differing perspectives. She stated that when there is good communication and through understanding, "we can all work for good as we know it and maintain hope for the future." She finds that people can decide how to be more thoughtful of others and get out of their own way. That cultural and communication barriers can be brought down when people are willing to see what we share rather than only what separates us. If we can be kind and thankful, we will continue to respect and celebrate diversity of background, thought, worldview, and opinion-up the point of threats or harm coming to others who are not like you.

She noted that she tries to find something about others that she can relate to. She intentionally seeks to provide honest appreciation and to genuinely value of their experience or service. Participant 3 believes that if you ask about others and listen in a genuine way, find some common experiences, and recognize the value of some aspect of the other person, you are a long way toward understanding one another. Engaging communication is pivotal in leadership roles because as a leader one relies on those

around them to help accomplish tasks and generally do their job well. Noting that leaders are not always right or always wrong. When people trust and believe in their leaders' great tasks can be accomplished and all parties can be proud of their work.

She described her leadership style as thoughtful and collaborative to make sure everyone has their time to speak and act on the plan, they have collaborated on to accomplish. She reported that it is important not just to ask questions but to ask the right questions. Participant 3 goes on to say that it is important to keep in mind who the change is for, what the possible outcomes are, to acknowledge the successful aspects of what you accomplished and tweak what needs adjusted. If a change impacts the business community, for example, then it is important to take the time to discuss the change while plans can still be altered.

The first career mentor that Participant 3 discussed was the male college President she worked as an assistant for during her time as a student. She stated that he consistently offered her opportunities that allowed her to continue to grow. After she graduated Participant 3 began applying for jobs where she found one working in adult education.

When Participant 3 was working on her doctorate she was involved with a leadership program designed to help women who were interested in academic administration. She was involved with that program off and on for a few years. She was also involved in starting another program where they networked women administrators across the state that eventually became a multistate initiative who held annual meetings. As careers moved forward and people relocated to new positions in

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other parts of the country. Participant 3 noted two other women leadership groups which she was involved with throughout the duration of her career but chose not to elaborate much detail about them. But she did note that she really enjoyed being part of those programs.

Participant 3 stated that simply networking with other women leaders and getting to know other thoughtful and self-aware women helped push her forward. The other women who worked within this same network played a role in encouraging her to move her career. She stated that just being a part of these women's groups made a difference in encouraging her to think about her goals.

Participant 3 recalled working for another President who was very outgoing, friendly, and gregarious. The type of person who enjoys and commands the crowd's attention and because she thought highly of him and his leadership skills, she did work harder to complete her assignments. But it wasn't a requirement or an unsaid rule. She chose to work harder at her job. She noted that she does believe that, as a culture, things generally seem easier for men like getting jobs and promotions but that she didn't recall any specific examples.

When asked about her experience with discrimination based on gender or appearance she related a story where a man from the President's office met her for the first time and told her she was cute and asked for her number. Which was upsetting for her because of the professional nature of their meeting and the fact that he was from her boss' professional circle. Participant 3 stated that she would guess that just about every woman has a similar story. She said that women handle it by

laughing it off and sort of ignoring it or by taking a direct route and telling the other person 'This is professional'.

This participant also extensively discussed what it is like to be a woman in the boy's club of academic administration. She commented that many of her superiors have been male and that she has broken down those "boys club barriers" because she has been involved in sports since she was a young girl. That link gave her the ability to stay in the conversation with the people who could help shape her career into what it is today. She continues to be athletic and has raised one son who is now beginning his college years. Another topic of conversation was the friendship she maintains with another female administrator whom she hailed as her mentor. She had support from a peer, whom she admires and told me that this person has been integral to her life as a success partner.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The importance of simply having women leaders in educational administration cannot be overstated. Women need to be in high-power positions equal to those same positions belonging to men. These in-depth interviews have uncovered a need for official leadership programs to be created and maintained as a fabric for new leaders to pave the path forward with an open mindset and honest heart. The dearth of intensive leadership programs is an affront to the vision of the future for our society. Intensive leadership programs are necessary to the path forward to a strong, just, and equitable American future. The nature of these programs is beyond the scope of this research, but high-power women leaders need to have access to both veteran and

new women peers to form the strong social bonds required to effectively lead a diverse and impartial American future.

Conclusions

Women need to be in high-power positions equal to those same positions belonging to men. In the 21st century our daughters need to be in a situation where there is no such thing as a 'glass ceiling'. This is not just an ideal but a necessity to create more balanced society. The time spent interviewing these pioneer women has made it clear that women require other women peers to maintain the social support required to lead with equity and importance. This is not to say that women leaders are more important than their male peers. But we should strive for an equitable society whereby it is not the gender or race that one is born with which describes ones potential. It is the content of one's character and capacity to learn to equitably lead that should foreshadow ones' potential.

It was clear from the interviews that women in higher educational leadership need support from other women peers. Most of the mentorship experiences these participants had seemed to occur haphazardly. Ideally women entering higher educational leadership would have access to intensive programs whereby they could form career long friendships with their peers. In this way American colleges could become more inclusive in the upper echelons of higher educational leadership. Leadership programs and forming peer groups will help improve women's success in higher educational leadership. Such opportunities could also be career starters

whereby women in these leadership programs could form friendships and earn jobs in this area without having to cold start from scratch.

Individuals who hold these presidential positions are all very hard working and dedicated to the cause of improving students' success and obtainment of lucrative career pathways. Women attaining Presidencies in Higher Education on their own accord is not impossible, but women holding these positions could use support when navigating heavy political and budgetary challenges. Women disserve the chance to lead at the top levels of society free from the confinement of gender-role stereotypes because that inhibits women's ability to make decisions and boldly lead for change.

Women have an important place in the leadership world, and we need to take our seats to the table. I think this is especially true in education where there are so many women at the lower levels of leadership. Women face stereotypes, especially in rural communities where men have been the leaders for so long. Women are thought to be too weak to handle high school boys or are the recipients of sexist remarks. There is a special place for women in rural education and we need to make sure we are filling those positions.

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Appendix A:

Email Recruiting Letter

Dear Dr. XXXXX

I am completing my dissertation on the mentorship experiences of women administrators in higher education. The title of my dissertation is: Mentorship Experiences of Women Educational Administrators in Rural Community Colleges. I hope that you would agree to allow me to interview you on this topic. My interviews will be recorded for use in dissertation conclusions. These recordings will be deleted after completion of the dissertation. You can request that the interview not be recorded. I will not take more than an hour of your time and your career experiences will be a vital addition to my research. This is, of course, a completely voluntary and friendly process. You can feel free to stop the interview at any time.

My research aims to gather the following information:

1. Are female educational administrator's careers shaped by early career experiences?
2. Do female administrators feel like they have had good mentors which have helped shape their career?
3. Have female administrators experienced gender discrimination at their job?
4. Do female administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their male peers?
5. Are female administrators more likely to get a career start by other female administrators?

Due to COVID-19 these interviews should take place on the phone or via skype at your preference.

I appreciate your time,

Appendix B:

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What is your official title?
2. How long have you been at this job?
3. Who is your boss?
4. How would you describe your job to someone who is outside of education?
5. How long have you been in education?
6. What is your educational background?
7. What kind of extracurricular activities do you participate in?
   a. Meetings/professional gatherings/conferences
8. Do you have children?
   a. How many?
   b. What do your children think about your job?
9. How would you describe your leadership style?
10. Who has been influential in shaping your career?
11. Tell me about how your career got started.
12. At what point did you know you wanted to go into educational administration?
13. Tell me about your mentoring experiences?
    a. Describe an early career mentor.
    b. How did you meet?
    c. How did they become your mentor?
    d. What were your experiences with them?
    e. What lessons were learned from them?
14. Were there other mentors later in your career?
    a. What were your experiences with them?
    b. What lessons were learned from them?
    c. How did you meet?
    d. How did they become your mentor?
15. In what ways have these mentorship experiences impacted your career?
16. Tell me about any formal leadership training experiences.
17. In what ways have these mentorship experiences impacted their career?

18. How many hours per week do you work?

19. Has there been a time when you have experienced pressure to outperform/outwork your male peers?

20. Have you ever felt that to be true at your job?

21. What is your job like on a day-to-day basis?

22. Do you have plans for your future career?

23. Have you ever felt discriminated against on the basis of your gender or appearance?

    a. Can you give a/specific example(s)?

24. Have you ever felt passed over for promotion or advancement?

25. Have you ever decided not to apply for promotion or advancement? Why?

Appendix C:

IRB Application

Eastern Kentucky University Institutional Review Board
Limited Review Application for
Exemption Determination

This application is to be used to request an exemption determination under a limited review process. Only the IRB may issue an exemption determination, and the investigator must receive this determination prior to engaging in research activities involving human subjects.

In order for human subjects research to be reviewed under limited review for an exemption determination, the study must represent not greater than minimal risk to its participants and include only activities that fall within the categories listed in this application (see Section 2).

Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Instructions for Applying for Limited Review

1. All applications for IRB review must be submitted online by the principal investigator.
2. After completing this application form and all required attachments, access the online submission system at eku.infoready4.com. Choose Limited Review Application for Exemption Determination from the list of available opportunities and click the Apply button on the right. If needed, you can filter the category column by Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects Research).
3. If you are a current EKU employee or student, click the option to log in as an EKU user. Your user name and password are the same as what you use to log in to EKU's network. Your user name is not your email address.
4. Complete the basic information in the online application and upload this application form and all required attachments in their original file formats (i.e., Microsoft Word documents). **Please do not convert files to PDFs.** PDFs are allowable for signed documents, CITI training documentation, and other files that were provided to you in PDF format. **If you copy and paste text into the application's form fields, please format your text to Tahoma font in size 10 prior to copying.**
5. Upon receipt of a new online application, the IRB administrator will review the submission for completeness and return incomplete applications for updates prior to processing.
6. Once an application is accepted by the IRB administrator, it will be assigned to the faculty advisor (if the principal investigator is a student) and the department chair for approvals prior to being reviewed by the IRB.
7. If the IRB reviewers have questions or request updates to the application materials, the principal investigator will be notified by email and asked to resubmit application materials by email.
8. Once the IRB has approved the application, the principal investigator will be notified by email.

Application Checklist

In order for the IRB to consider an exemption determination through a limited review process, the following items are required:

- ☒ Limited Review Application for Exemption Determination (this application)
- ☒ CITI Training Completion Reports for all investigators, key personnel, and faculty research advisors
    Note that the Basic Course for Social Behavioral or Biomedical Researchers is required. The Refresher Course cannot be accepted unless the investigator has previously completed the Basic Course and is using the Refresher Course to renew training credentials.

As applicable (check all that apply):
- ☒ Recruitment materials (i.e., advertisements, verbal scripts, cover letters, etc.)
- ☒ Consent Materials (i.e., introductory cover letter, consent script, etc.)
- ☒ Instrument(s) to be used for data collection (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, assessments, etc.)
- ☒ Letter(s) granting permission to use off-campus facility for research

All documents that will be provided to subjects must include the title of the study.
This includes recruitment, consent, and data collection documents.

1

Limited Review Application for Exemption Determination
Section 1: General Information

1. **Title of Study:** MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS IN RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES

2. **Principal Investigator:**
   Principal Investigator Name: Diane Gibson
   Department: Education
   Position: Graduate Student

3. **Degree Program, Faculty Advisor, and Committee Members:**
   (Skip to Item 4 if principal investigator is not an EKU student)
   Degree Program: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
   Faculty Research Advisor: Dr. Bill Phillips
   Committee Members (required for theses, dissertations, scholarly projects, field experience, or other studies guided by an academic committee):
   Dr. Norman Powell, Dr. Sherwood Thompson

4. **Other Investigators:** Identify all other investigators assisting in the study. If additional lines are needed, please attach a Continuation Page for Other Investigators.

   Name: Click and type.   Authorized to obtain consent? ☐Yes ☐No
   Responsibility in Project: Click and type.
   Name: Click and type.   Authorized to obtain consent? ☐Yes ☐No
   Responsibility in Project: Click and type.
   Name: Click and type.   Authorized to obtain consent? ☐Yes ☐No
   Responsibility in Project: Click and type.
   Name: Click and type.   Authorized to obtain consent? ☐Yes ☐No
   Responsibility in Project: Click and type.
   Name: Click and type.   Authorized to obtain consent? ☐Yes ☐No
   Responsibility in Project: Click and type.
   Please check if a Continuation Page for Other Investigators is attached. ☐

5. **Estimated Duration of Research Project:**   upon IRB approval through 12/6/2020
   Note that research may not begin until IRB approval has been granted. Projects may be approved for a period of up to three years, after which time, a new application is required.

6. **Funding Support:** Is the research study funded by an internal grant or an external grant or contract? ☐Yes ☒No
   Funding Agency: Click and type.

7. **Is the proposed study a clinical trial?** ☐Yes ☒No
   Please respond to the following questions to determine whether a study meets the clinical trial definition:
   ▪ Does the study involve human participants? ☒Yes ☐No
   ▪ Are the participants prospectively assigned to an intervention? ☐Yes ☒No
   ▪ Is the study designed to evaluate the effect of the intervention on the participants? ☐Yes ☒No
   ▪ Is the effect being evaluated a health-related biomedical or behavioral outcome? ☐Yes ☒No
   If the answers are all "yes," the study is a clinical trial. If any answers are "no," the study is not a clinical trial

8. **Risk Category:**
   ☒ Not greater than minimal risk
   ☐ Greater than minimal risk, but of direct benefit to individual participants – *Please complete full review application instead of this form.*
   ☐ Greater than minimal risk and no direct benefit to individual participants, but likely to yield generalizable knowledge about the subject's disorder or condition - *Please complete full review application instead of this form.*

2

Limited Review Application for Exemption Determination
Section 2: Exemption Categories

Research activities may classified as exempt when the only involvement of human subjects falls within one or more of the categories below and the study represents not greater than minimal risk to its participants. If any activities do not fit in the categories below, the project is not eligible for exemption, and the investigator is required to instead apply for expedited or full review.

1. Select one or more of the categories below that apply to the research project:

☐ **Category 1:** Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

☐ **Category 2:** Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
  ☒ (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;
  ☒ (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or
  ☐ (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination that there are adequate safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the subjects.

  IMPORTANT: Subpart D: Additional Protections for Children Involved as Subjects in Research restricts Exemption 2 in the following ways:
  - For research involving children, exemption 2 (i) and 2 (ii) above may be applied only to research involving educational tests or the observation of public behavior when the investigator(s) do not participate in the activities being observed.
  - Exemption 2 may not be applied to survey procedures or interview procedures involving children as subjects.
  - Exemption 2 (iii) above may not be applied to research involving children.

☐ **Category 3:** Research involving benign behavioral interventions* in conjunction with the collection of information from an **adult** subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection and at least one of the following criteria is met:
  ☐ (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;
  ☐ (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or
  ☐ (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination that there are adequate safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the subjects.

  *Benign behavioral interventions are brief in duration, harmless, painless, not physically invasive, not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on the subjects, and the investigator has no reason to think the subjects will find the interventions offensive or embarrassing. Provided all such criteria are met, examples of such benign behavioral interventions would include having the subjects play an online game, having them solve puzzles under various noise conditions, or having them decide how to allocate a nominal amount of received cash between themselves and someone else.

  Does the project involve deception? ☐Yes ☒No
  If the research involves deceiving the subjects regarding the nature or purposes of the research, this exemption is not applicable unless the subject authorizes the deception through a prospective agreement to participate in research in

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circumstances in which the subject is informed that he or she will be unaware of or misled regarding the nature or purposes of the research.

IMPORTANT: Note that this exemption applies only to adult subjects and cannot be applied to research involving children.

☐ **Category 4:** Secondary research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens, if at least one of the following criteria is met:

    ☐ (i) The identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens are publicly available;

    ☐ (ii) Information, which may include information about biospecimens, is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, the investigator does not contact the subjects, and the investigator will not re-identify subjects;

    ☐ (iii) The research involves only information collection and analysis involving the investigator's use of identifiable health information when that use is regulated under 45 CFR parts 160 and 164, subparts A and E, for the purposes of "health care operations" or "research" as those terms are defined at 45 CFR 164.501 or for "public health activities and purposes" as described under 45 CFR 164.512(b); or

    ☐ (iv) The research is conducted by, or on behalf of, a Federal department or agency using government-generated or government-collected information obtained for non-research activities, if the research generates identifiable private information that is or will be maintained on information technology that is subject to and in compliance with section 208(b) of the E-Government Act of 2002, 44 U.S.C. 3501 note, if all of the identifiable private information collected, used, or generated as part of the activity will be maintained in systems of records subject to the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and, if applicable, the information used in the research was collected subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.

☐ **Category 5:** Research and demonstration projects that are conducted or supported by a Federal department or agency, or otherwise subject to the approval of department or agency heads (or the approval of the heads of bureaus or other subordinate agencies that have been delegated authority to conduct the research and demonstration projects), and that are designed to study, evaluate, improve, or otherwise examine public benefit or service programs, including procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs, possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures, or possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs. Such projects include, but are not limited to, internal studies by Federal employees, and studies under contracts or consulting arrangements, cooperative agreements, or grants. Exempt projects also include waivers of otherwise mandatory requirements using authorities such as sections 1115 and 1115A of the Social Security Act, as amended. Each Federal department or agency conducting or supporting the research and demonstration projects must establish, on a publicly accessible Federal Web site or in such other manner as the department or agency head may determine, a list of the research and demonstration projects that the Federal department or agency conducts or supports under this provision. The research or demonstration project must be published on this list prior to commencing the research involving human subjects.

☐ **Category 6:** Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies:

    ☐ (i) If wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or

    ☐ (ii) If a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

2. Will the study involve any procedures that fall outside the categories selected in Item 1 of this section?
☒ No   ☐ Yes – *apply for full or expedited review instead of exemption*

3. Will the project involve prisoners? ☒ No   ☐Possibly Incidentally   ☐ Yes – *apply for full review*
Subpart C: Additional Protections Pertaining to Biomedical and Behavioral Research Involving Prisoners as Subjects restricts the exemption categories below from being applied to research involving prisoners except for research aimed at involving a broader subject population that only incidentally includes prisoners (i.e., a web-based survey that an inmate may be able to access from a prison computer without the researcher being aware of the prisoner status).

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Limited Review Application for Exemption Determination
Section 3: Research Description

1. **Research Objectives:**
   a. **List the research objectives/hypotheses.**

   This study will explore the topic of current women administrators and their mentorship experiences. The purpose is to examine if these individuals had a mentor at all and how that relationship evolved. There is a universal graying of administration in Higher Education Leadership and many institutions lack a long-term plan to mentor and replace the administrators after retirement. Many of the current leaders in rural education are approaching retirement opening many opportunities for new leaders to come in. Not only that, but there is a large disparity between the number of female educational leaders.   One study by Wallace & Marchant (2009) looked at how females are being prepared for leadership in Australian universities and found an administrative gender gap where women hold only 24% of administrative positions and an age gap where more retirees will leave positions before new employees will reach the qualification level. Women are not being prepared for leadership positions and often lack the qualifications to achieve such goals. These findings indicate an issue with learning opportunities, development opportunities, and career mobility. This study aims to report how mentorship relationship came about and delve into the state of leadership training programs amongst Higher Education Leaders. Along that line it is important to discover if that working relationship helped prepare female administrators for their job and how that experience shaped their career. Additionally, because of the hierarchical structure of educational administration, this study will investigate the mentorship experiences of women administrators in higher education.

2. **Project Location:**
   a. **Where will the study take place?**

   One hour, in-person interviews

   b. **If the study will take place at a location other than EKU, attach a letter from an authorized representative of the organization granting permission to use facility for research purposes.**
   ☒EKU only ☐ Letter(s) attached

   c. **Will any data be collected through organizations other than Eastern Kentucky University?**
   ☐No   ☒Yes, complete the following:
   - Will personnel of the organization be involved in the data collection process or have access to data after collection? ☒No ☐Yes - If yes, list personnel in Section 1, include copies of CITI training completion reports, and define role(s) here: Click here to enter text.

3. **Subject Population:**
   a. **What criteria will be used to determine the *inclusion* of participants in the study?**

   Women higher education administrators at rural community colleges.

   b. **What criteria will be used to determine the *exclusion* of participants in the study?**

   Males and individuals who do not work as administrators in higher education will be excluded.

   c. **Anticipated Number of Participants** *(maximum):* 4
   d. **Age Range of Participants:** 30-65
   e. **Gender of Participants:** ☐Male   ☒Female   or   ☐Gender not considered in subject selection
   f. **Ethnicity of Participants:** Click and type. or ☒Ethnicity not considered in subject selection
   g. **Health Status of Participants:** Click and type. or ☒Health status not considered in subject selection

h. **Will the study involve prisoners?** ☒ No   ☐Possibly Incidentally without the investigator's knowledge
   ☐ Yes (not eligible for exemption)
i. **Will the study involve subjects who do not speak and/or read English?** ☒ No
   ☐ Yes (see Translation Certification form and guidance)

4. **Recruitment of Participants:**
   a. **How will prospective participants be identified for recruitment into the study?**

      I will identify women in higher education administration and request interviews via email.

   b. **Describe the recruitment procedures to be used with potential participants.**

      I will look for higher education institutions within a two hour driving range of EKU. I will look on the institutions website and identify female administrators. I will then send an email requesting an interview and include the purpose of my dissertation study.

   c. **Recruitment materials to be used:** Check all that will be used and attach copies. The study's title must be included on all documents.
      ☐None   ☐Advertisement   ☐Flyer   ☐Verbal Recruitment Script   ☐Cover Letter
      ☐Text to be posted in electronic participant management software
      ☒Other: <u>email</u>

5. **Ensuring Voluntary Participation**: While studies that are appropriate for exemption are not required to formally document the informed consent process, investigators are expected to provide information to potential participants and ensure their voluntary agreement to participate.
   a. **What procedures will be followed to ensure that potential participants are informed about the study and made aware that their decision to participate is voluntary?**

      I will include the notice of voluntary participation in my email request.

   b. **Consent materials to be used:** Formal consent forms are not required for exempt research; the following are examples of items typically used in exempt research to ensure voluntary participation. Check all that will be used and attach copies: ☐None, ☐Cover Letter, ☐Introductory paragraph on data collection instrument,
      ☒Other: email

6. **Research Procedures**
   a. **Describe in detail the research procedures to be followed that pertain to human participants.** Be specific about what you will do and how you will do it.

      This is a qualitative research project and will glean insight into mentorship experiences which shaped the careers of women community college presidents through a series of interviews. Participants will be selected from current woman community college presidents who work in rural settings within a two-hour driving radius of the researcher.
      This will be a semi-structured interview technique where respondents will be asked to answer a pre-planned set of open-ended questions (Jamshed, 2014). The semi-structured interview technique is intended to help the researcher ensure that all presidents are asked the same questions, but in a flexible format to allow the conversation to flow naturally. It will be important for the researcher to ask each participant the same interview questions with the expectation that each question might lead to various unexpected discussion and results. The questions are designed to glean insight into the interviewee's career path and how mentorship relationships occur in Higher Education. In congruence with traditional semi-structured interviews, the interview will last no more than an hour. The interviews will be recorded to allow the researcher to focus on question content and interview style. Pseudonyms will be used on the transcripts and throughout the dissertation. The interview will then be transcribed within one week of the interview and will be attached to the appendix of the research dissertation. The recorded data collected from the interviews will be disposed of after the data is analyzed and will be kept no longer than one year after the interview occurs. Once the research is complete, the researcher will develop an analysis of the interviews based on the interview responses.
      The research will be conducted through face-to-face interviews, preferably at the campus office of the faculty being interviewed. The researcher will send an initial email invitation to women community college presidents who currently work in rural settings. The invite will include suggested dates and ask the participate to respond with their top two choices of date for scheduling their interview. The invite will request that the president will send a response to the invite within one week. Upon receipt of the reply, the researcher will schedule the 60-minute interview.
      According to Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) "To ensure a strong research design, researchers must choose a research paradigm that is congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality." To that end the

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researcher is taking a constructivist grounded theory approach to this research endeavor. Meaning that the nature of reality varies between individuals but through data collection theories may be formed on the nature of topics discussed. The researcher has no ideas to prove or disprove but is looking for common themes which interviewees may discuss to reveal common themes experienced regarding career formation.

Through the interview process, the researcher hopes to answer the following questions.
Research Questions:
- Are female educational administrator's careers shaped by early career experiences?
- Do female administrators feel like they have had good mentors which have helped shape their career?
- Have female administrators experienced gender discrimination at their job?
- Do female administrators feel pressure to outperform/outwork their male peers?
- Are female administrators more likely to get a career start by other female administrators?

The data analysis of the results will help the researcher develop an understanding of the pathways women community college presidents take to achieve their career goals. The researcher also will glean information on the degree to which individuals are prepared to take on these roles. The final analysis will be used to develop recommendations for creation of future programs which allow individuals the opportunity to recreate these mentorship experiences.

7. Potential Risks

a. Describe any potential risks—physical, psychological, social, legal, or other.

Minimal potential psychological risk may arise if an interviewee feels anxious or uncomfortable answering any of the pre-determined questions.

b. What procedures will be followed to protect against or minimize any potential risks?

Interviewees will be Areminded that participation in the interview process is voluntary and they can feel free to decline to answer any of the questions posed.

8. Potential Benefits and Subject Compensation

a. Describe any potential benefits subjects will receive

Interviewees may feel helpful and enjoy participating in research.

b. Will subjects receive compensation for their participation? ☒No ☐ Yes (describe in detail below)

Click and type.

9. Research Materials, Records, and Confidentiality

a. What materials will be used for the research process? Include a description of both data collected through the study as well as other data accessed for the study. Copies of all data collection instruments must be attached and must include the title of the study.

Interviews will be recorded for later data collection. After the dissertation is completed the recorded data will be deleted following the mandatory three year period.

b. Describe procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of data.

Pseudonyms will be used to protect anonymity during the writeup. All recorded data and notes will be deleted after the dissertation in completed following the mandatory three year period.

c. Who will have access to the data? If anyone outside the research team will have access to the data, provide a justification and include a disclaimer in consent documents.

Just the researcher and dissertation committee chair upon request.

d. Describe how and where research records will be stored. Note that all research-related records must be maintained for a period of three years from the study's completion and are subject to audit. Student research records must be maintained by the faculty advisor who identified in Section 1, Item 3 of this application or provided to the IRB for records maintenance.

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All recorded data and notes will be kept in a locked cabinant in Dr. Bill Phillips' office. All recorded data and notes will be deleted after the dissertation in completed following the mandatory three year period.

e. **How will data be destroyed at the end of the records retention period** (i.e., shredding paper documents, deleting electronic files, physically destroying audio/video recordings)?

Paper documents will be shredded and electronic documents will be deleted following the three year period.

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