Advancing Women in Leadership

JOURNAL

EDITORS: BEVERLY J. IRBY, NAHED ABDELRAHMAN, BRAD BIZZELL
ASSISTANT EDITOR: JORDAN DONOP

Full Length Research Paper

Women and Professional Generativity: Voices from the Field

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Aging brings with it a certain commitment to improving the lives of future generations and to giving back by engaging in productive pursuits that provide psychological well-being (Versey & Newton, 2013). Leaders and adults develop a heightened sense of communion with self and others and derive meaning and satisfaction through serving others (Slater, 2003). We present findings from a focus group comprised of nine college-educated women professionals from three countries, gathered for the purpose of discussing generativity in educational leadership. Purposeful sampling was employed to allow variation and representation of women in educational leadership. Positions held by focus group members ranged from principals, directors, professors to deans. The specific purpose was to obtain an in-depth understanding of experiences of women as they engaged with the concept of generativity in their personal and professional lives. The results suggested that commitments to generativity activities varied by experience, age, and race. Another important finding was the categorization of participant women into distinct identity markers of pathmakers, guardians, searchers and drifters (Josselson, 1996) as reflected by the focus and nature of their generativity activities. Further studies with women from different socioeconomic backgrounds and fields other than educational leadership need to be conducted to establish the universality of our findings.
Keywords: women, educational leadership, generativity

Aging brings a certain commitment to improve the lives of future generations, where adults give back and engage in productive pursuits that provide psychological well-being (Erikson, 1959; Versey & Newton, 2013). This stage of adult development is characterized by an ego shift from self-centeredness to other-centeredness (Slater, 2003). It is similar to a kind of parental responsibility where adults develop a strong interest in establishing and guiding the next generation. Adults will give guidance, ideas, skills, pass knowledge and remove barriers in order for the next generation to inherit a better world. Adults invest in the enrichment and development of the next generation as an acknowledgement of the mortality of life and the desire for a legacy of immortal symbolism in which the impact of one's good work should continue even if one's life ends. This concept of guiding and enriching the lives of future generations was coined as generativity by Erikson (1950).

We adopted Erikson's (1950) theory of stages of adult development as a conceptual framework to guide the study. Bradley (1997) acknowledged that most studies done on generativity have been based on the Ericksonian model and suggested the need for further research that provides comprehensive models of the generative-stagnation stage of adulthood. Although Erikson's (1950) initial study was conducted using privileged white middle class men, we believe that the theory still carries relevancy on other populations

because of its focus on adult development and lifespan and that generativity is performed by both men and women. In our case, we adopted it to interrogate the intersectionality of women's identities and generative pursuits at the different stages of their life's span and development. For example, did the generativity pursuits of the women in the study follow a sequential and linear pattern of the stages of adult development as espoused by Erikson (1950)? How does the social milieu affect their generative work? What other aspects of women's lives influenced their generative work? These questions cannot possibly be answered by one theory alone.

Acknowledging the nuances of the complexities of women's lives, Josselson (1996) concluded, "Psychology has no adequate theory for women's development, particularly development in adulthood" (p. 9), and we acknowledge that the results of Erikson findings cannot be viewed as universal and adequate in explaining women's identities and generative experiences. We, therefore, adopted the heuristic model (Pringle & Dixon, 2003) that relies on prior research (e.g., Gilligan 1982, Helson & Srivastava, 2001; Josselson, 1996; Versey & Newton, 2013) to guide, explain, and critique our results. Contrary to Erickson's model, Pringle and Dixon's (2003) heuristic model offers the argument that women's lives are complex, and they evolve in a non-linear and deterministic fashion. The model offers others lens of understanding women's identities given ethnic, cultural

and socio-economic variabilities as women continually explore, focus, rebalance and revive their lives. We also critiqued Erikson theory in the literature review given the harsh criticisms from feminist scholars who questioned the universal application of the theory to women and other minoritized groups (Gilligan, 1982; Helson & Srivastava, 2001, Sorell & Montgomery, 2001).

Literature Review

The theory of human development, or life cycle, is the seminal work of Erik Erikson (1950) who posited eight stages of conflicts in life which are: (a) trust vs. mistrust; (b) autonomy vs. shame and doubt; (c) initiative vs. guilt; (d) industry vs. inferiority; (e) identity vs. identity diffusion; (f) intimacy vs. isolation; (g) generativity vs. stagnation; and finally, (h) integrity vs. despair. Erikson (1950) postulated, "At any stage of the life cycle, the solution of one more nuclear conflict adds a new ego quality, a new criterion of increasing strength" (Erikson, 1950, p. 233). This stage theory assumes the development criteria apply to everyone (Helson & Srivastava, 2001).

Generativity is primarily the "interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erikson 1959, p. 97) through one's acts of care or selfless caring (Bradley, 1997; Erikson, 1950). Generativity begins at 40 (Erikson, 1980) and manifests in adulthood. According to Sagaria and Johnsrud (1988), "The commitment is to invest oneself in others' lives and to live out the values of caring and empowerment in the daily activities of one's own professional and personal spheres" (p. 25). It is demonstrated by fighting personal stagnation, a concern for guiding the next generation, and optimism about humanity (Slater, 2003, Versey & Newton, 2013). It is based on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, i.e., the desires to respond to cultural demands and for personal satisfaction and the desire to leave a legacy (Cheng, 2009). The degree to which an adult is concerned with guiding the next generation is determined by the intensity of involvement and inclusivity (Bradley & Marcia, 1998). Inclusivity refers to "caregiving activity in terms of who or what is excluded" (Bradley & Marcia, 1998, p. 41).

Generativity is "the instinctual power behind various forms of selfless caring, potentially extends to whatever a man generates and leaves behind, creates and produces (or helps to produce)" (Erikson, 1974, p. 131). Generativity means that "one participates otherwise in the establishment, the guidance, and the enrichment of the living generation and the world it inherits" (Erickson, 1974, p. 123). It is about the generation of new things and "encompasses procreativity, productivity, and creativity" (Erikson, 1997, p. 67), i.e., the nurturance of what one produces. Generativity also implies two things: imparting wisdom, knowledge, and a better future for the next generation, and working with urgency towards virtuous things given that time is of the essence because of the mortality of human life (Erikson, 1974). The hope is that "adults will learn to help each other, not to burden the next generation with the immaturities they themselves inherited from previous generations (Erikson, 1974, p. 125). At this stage adults must be ready to become role models or what Erikson (1997) called "a numinous model in the

eyes of the next generation and to act as judge of evil and a transmitter of ideal values" (p. 70).

Care is a critical element in generativity. According to Erikson (1964), "Care is the widening concern for what has been generated by love, necessity, or accident; it overcomes the ambivalence adhering to irreversible obligation" (p. 131). However, where generativity fails, "regression … or a pervading sense of individual stagnation" (Erikson, 1950, p. 231) follows. Stagnation can occur even in people who are productive and creative, and may also be overwhelming "to those who find themselves inactivated in generative matters "Erikson, 1997, p. 67). Of particular importance is the decline of generative activities as one gets older or if generative work is not valued and respected (Cheng, 2009).

In advancing generational pursuits in adults there are three choices to make. Erikson (1974) concluded, "In youth you find out what you care to do and who you care to be—even in changing roles. In young adulthood you learn whom you care to be with—at work and in private life….In adulthood, however, you learn to know what and whom you can take care of" (p. 124). Learning whom you can take of involves "rejectivity, that is, the unwillingness to include specified persons or groups in one's generative concern—one does not care to care for them" (Erikson, 1997, p. 68). There is a selectivity/rejectivity binary, and an adult has the prerogative to select whom they can and cannot care for.

Despite the choices an adult makes about whom to care for, the danger is negative perceptions about the value of generativity one generation pursues. Feedback about the worth of generativity is subjective and may be viewed as valueless or irrelevant, potentially causing regression or decline in one's generative work. Chen (2009) warned that "it is important to consider the declining status of older persons in contemporary societies and the normative feedback that they receive from younger generations" (p. 46). This is an important reminder considering perception gaps that exist between baby boomers and millennials in the workplace.

Slater (2003) suggested that "case studies of leaders could provide further knowledge about generativity as the intersection of society and the human life cycle" (p. 53). In particular, relative to women in leadership positions, generativity becomes an interesting topic to investigate amid challenges women face in the workplace, especially those in senior executive positions, be it in industry, politics, academia, or any other sectors. Sandberg (2014) in her book *Lean In*, urged women to have the gumption to put themselves forward, speak up, take risks, seek challenges and pursue their careers with zeal, passion, and gusto. This is critical because "implicit pro-social power motivation serves as a basis for generative concern, which, in turn, leads to conscious generative goals as well as life satisfaction" (Hofer et al., 2008, p. 21). In organizations, "leaders with a sense of generativity will be able to care about both the mission and the employees" (Slater, 2003, p. 57).

In generative work and psychosocial adjustment, individual identity plays a significant role. Maintenance of individuality in competing dynamics is anchored "in centrality, originality, choice and initiative,…attributes of what we call identity" (Erikson, 1964; p. 86). It is important to understand how women self-identify as they engage in generative activities. Marcia (1966) conducted research on how 86 male participants to determine ego identity achievement using self-reported measures based on semi-structured interview protocol. His study revealed four classifications of ego identity statuses: (a) identity achievement- someone has experienced a crisis and is committed to an occupation and ideology, (b) moratorium- someone is in a crisis and actively struggling to make commitments (c) foreclosure- someone has not experienced a crisis but has a commitment, and (d) identity diffusion- someone may or may not have experienced a crisis but lacks commitment to any occupation.

Expanding on prior work conducted by Bradley (1997), Bradley and Marcia (1998) conducted an empirical study based on levels of involvement (active of concern for the growth of self and others) and inclusivity (scope of caregiving concern). They classified participants into five categories (generative, conventional, agentic, communal, and stagnant) of generative functions. Their results showed that generative individuals are high on involvement and inclusivity. Conventional individuals are high on involvement but low on inclusivity for self and others. The agentic are high on involvement and inclusivity for self, but low for others. Communal individuals are high on involvement and inclusivity for others but low for self. Stagnant individuals are low on both involvement and inclusivity.

Studies that involved women participants also revealed similar categorization of women's identities. Josselson (1996) provided a categorization of women experiences into distinct identity markers, i.e., pathmakers, guardians, searchers, and drifters in a study that involved college educated women from non-elite colleges. A later study by Helson and Srivastava (2001) comprising of 111 women from a private college in California identified four configurations of mental health: achievers, conservers, seekers, and depleted. These two female identities of Josselson (1996) and Helson and Srivastava (2001) have common characteristics. Pathmakers or achievers experienced a period of exploration/crisis and then made identity commitments on their own terms. Guardians/Conservers have made identity commitments without a sense of choice, carrying forward the plans for their life mapped in childhood or designed by their parents. They absorbed values and attitudes of their families and were groomed to achieve according to Josselson (1996). Searchers or seekers were still in an active period of struggle or exploration, trying to make choices but not having done so. Drifters or depleted were without commitments. They avoided decision-making with values and standards shifting with each situation.

Later studies show different dimensions of generativity. Beaumont and Pratt (2011), using self-reported measures of identity styles among youths and adults, reported that middle aged adults scored higher on generativity than youths. A cross-cultural study of adults in German, Cameroon, and Costa Rica suggested that "implicit pro-social power motivation serves as a basis for generative concern, which, in turn, leads to generative goals as well as life satisfaction, as revealed using a generative model involving nested comparison statistics (Hofer et al., 2007), an observation concurring with Cheng (2009). A later study by Versey and Newton (2013) conducted among Caucasian and African American women investigated the relation between generativity and successful aging. The results confirmed a positive relationship between successful aging and generativity. The study also revealed that spiritual commitment is associated with generativity and successful aging, and it is especially prevalent identified with African American women.

However, viewing women's work through using the Erikson Stage of generativity versus stagnation is problematic as several scholars suggested that studies that involve only men as participants cannot be universal for all people (Elderstein, 1997; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1996; Pringle & Dixon, 2003; Schuiling & Low; 2006). Gilligan (1982) argued that Erikson only studied men in his studies; therefore, the theory does not address women's developmental experience. Evans (1985) argued that "[T]he life stage perspectives are based almost exclusively on the male experience and may not make sense for women" (p. 12). Pringle and Dixon (2003) opined that "the study of women's development has been distorted, narrow, and is a logical derivative of men's experience" (p. 293). In fact, Gilligan (1982) stated, "The discovery now being celebrated by men in mid-life of the importance of intimacy, relationships, and care is something that women have known from the beginning" (p. 17). Other scholars concurred with Sagaria and Johnsrud (1988) noting that "the caring and nurturing of others and the enabling of others to grow and develop are values long recognized in women…They are tasks of mature adulthood, tasks that should influence how we lead" (p. 17). This has to do with socially "prescribed gender roles of femininity than with biologically differing pathways for development" (Schuiling & Low, 2006, p. 24).

Similarly, Edelstein (1997) concurred noting women's generative work started early in life and does not follow sequential stages as outlined by Erikson. Rather, women's developmental stages are cyclical rather than linear, with women caring for both others and for themselves. Edelstein (1997) outlined three flaws of Erikson theory in relation to women. These are: (a) identity formation for men and women is not identical; (b) silence on how sexual differences may be a result of cultural conditioning, influence generative pursuits; and (c) "generativity fails to address the midlife shift, and fails to appreciate that women have already devoted years to nurturing others and may be moving into a natural self-focused period" (p. 6). That period focused on the self in midlife women was coined as interiority by Neugarten (1968). Women start nurturing others early on in life through raising families, caregiving to elderly parents, necessitating that women constantly balance coequal

responsibilities rather than choosing between this vs that according to Elderstein (1997). In midlife women take a pause and look into their inner selves, start discovering and creating their authentic self (Edelstein, 1997).

While theorists, such as Kohlberg and Gilligan, have contributed immensely to the study of moral development, their studies were criticized as not universal, sexist, and representative only of Western cultures (Woods, 1996). They also are criticized because their participants are primarily privileged participants from elite colleges who may not represent the general population (Josselson 1996). According to Sherblom (2008), Gilligan was "critiqued for overgeneralizing from small sample qualitative studies to all women and for not adequately specifying sample selection and analytic techniques in her publications" (p. 83). Despite these criticisms, Bradley (1997) acknowledged that most studies done on generativity have been based on the Ericksonian model and suggested the need for further research that provides comprehensive models of the generative-stagnation stage of adulthood.

Understanding women's identities is critical in informing women's generative work. Gilligan (1982) stated that "women…define their identity through relationships of intimacy and care" (p.164). Several feminist scholars acknowledged the complexity of women's identities and described it in metaphorical terms. McGuigan (1980) described woman identity as "a braid of threads in which colors appear, disappear and reappear (p. xii). Josselson (1996) used the metaphor of a weave to describe the complexity of women's lives.

> [T]he threads merge, sometimes tightly, sometimes not fitting well together. Sometimes a portion must be undone to make it for something lovelier to replace it, sometimes layers are crafted on top of other older patterns. The parts form a whole, but the whole is more than the sum of the parts…What women weave into their identities has been the major silences in psychological literature. A woman is how she weaves it all into a whole, articulating herself to the world with others and simultaneously making private sense of it. (p. 8)

Josselson (1996) was of the view that "Psychology has no adequate theory for women's development, particularly development in adulthood" (p. 9). In other words, psychology does not adequately capture the nuances of the complexities of women's lives.

Acknowledging the complexity of women's identities, Pringle and Dixon (2003) used heuristic model which is not linear and age related and uses previous research to describe women's career experiences. Their "model consists of four facets: explore, focus, rebalance and revive, each of which are interspersed by periods of reassessment." (294). Explore refers to time of testing limits and potential often discovered through relationships, work or educational demands. Focus involves devoting energy to one aspect of life, for example, raising children, or career

advancement, but does not preclude other competing aspects of life. Rebalance refers to a conscious choice to alter life's course triggered by a desire for congruence of values and activities where women "settle into themselves" (p. 297) marked by increased self-confidence and assertion. Rebalance can be precipitated by major events in life such as death of a loved one, divorce, job loss, retirement, etc. Revive refers to finding the freedom to consider other activities and interests after living a life of selfless giving to others. Borrowing from the heuristic model we will also use previous research to guide our results and discussion.

In summary, it is important to identify how dimensions of Erikson's seminal work are included in generative repertoires. The literature suggests that involvement in generational pursuits is motivated by the desire to give back and to leave an immortal legacy. Adults have a choice in generative activities and whom to care for. Understanding the generative work of women should be juxtaposed with how women self-identify in their life stages. Several scholars acknowledge the shortfalls of using Erikson's work to understand the generative work of women due to exclusion of women in his study and failure to understand the nature of women as cyclical and not linear as suggested by the stages. Gilligan (1982) argued that the standards for morality and maturity used in psychological studies were tested based on the experiences of men, and therefore, did not hold true for women. Other scholars critiqued Gilligan (1982) as work that is elitist as participants were from rich and private colleges (Josselson, 1996) and as only including white privileged and middle-class women (Schuiling & Low,2006). Women's lives are complicated, the essence which cannot be captured by psychology alone (Josselson, 1996); therefore, we will employ Pringle and Dixon's (2003) heuristic model as our framework of informing our discussion on the generative work of participants in our study. Their approach uses previous research to describe women's experiences. In this study we conducted interviews performed in a focus group setting, following the pattern established by previous studies to understand women's identity (Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1996; Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988). In the next section, we present our study.

Methods

Research Design

To best obtain stories of generativity with women in leadership, we used qualitative methodology focused on narrative research with focus groups. Narrative research focuses on collecting stories from individuals or groups using interviews as the primary source of data collection to capture experiences about a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013a). We used purposeful sampling to identify women with a variety of leadership experiences and interviewed these women in a focus group. Focus groups are group interviews led by a skilled moderator to solicit ideas, opinions, and experiences of others on a given phenomenon and occur in small groups of four to twelve people (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Focus groups use "interaction data resulting from discussion among participants to

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increase the depth of the enquiry and reveal aspects of the phenomenon assumed to be otherwise less accessible" (Doody et al. 2013a, p. 16). The primary research question is: How do women in educational leadership engage generativity in their personal and professional lives?

Population

The targeted population was women in educational leadership who participated at a conference. The conference provides a platform where issues germane to women in educational leadership are discussed, and it included over 140 participants from eight states and 13 foreign countries. The conference was international and included women from the public and private sections of K-12 education, community colleges, higher education, and support agencies. The list of attendees ranged from classroom teachers, principals, superintendents, professors, deans, presidents, vice presidents, and entrepreneurs.

Participants/Sample

The participants in this study were all college-educated women initially drawn from Australia, Kuwait, Uganda the United States. The participants represented K-12, community colleges and university levels. Of the 17 women invited to participate, nine women joined the focus group. Three participants were principals and were all from the United States (two elementary and one high school). Three participants representing the community college system were all from the United States. Two had recently retired where one had served as a vice president of academic affairs at a community college, and the other had served as a senior vice president and chief of technology at the state level. Another participant was serving as a Dean of Public Services and Academic Support at a community college. The university level was represented by three women: one participant was from Uganda and held the rank of professor; the second participant from the United States had served as Dean of Libraries and had had recently stepped down; and the third was from the gulf region of the Middle East and served at the rank of director. All of the participants' ages ranged from 37 to 64. Six (66, 7 %) of the women held doctorates. Two (22.2%) were in the process of finishing their doctorates, while one (11.1%) held a Master's degree. Table 1 (following page) shows demographic data of participants; pseudonyms are used to protect their identities.

Procedure

After obtaining IRB approval, invitation letters to participate in the focus group were hand delivered by conference support staff to purposefully selected participants. As directors of the conference, we felt that personal delivery of the letters could cause undue pressure for our participants. Invitational letters were delivered on the first day of the conference, and each participant had to sign a consent form before participating. The consent form, stating the purpose and length of the focus group, emphasized that participation was voluntary and members could withdraw at any point during the study, without penalty or consequence. The findings were coded to protect anonymity and confidentiality and were released as aggregate findings.

Data Collection and Analysis

At the beginning of the focus group, the directors as co-principal investigators of the study restated the purpose of the study and double checked if all participants had signed the consent form. They also restated issues of confidentiality and the focus group interview protocol. When this was all finalized, the video tape was rolled by a technology expert using Panopto on a university computer to allow for maximum security of data. The focus group discussions lasted for one and a half hours and were conducted in a secure room where there were no interruptions. The investigators used an interview protocol to guide the discussion. Immediately after tapping, the video was downloaded by the technology expert and converted to a CD. Each investigator was given a CD that is kept under lock and key in cabinets in the investigators' offices. Data were transcribed by a staffer who was involved with the conference. The constant comparative method provided the method of analysis (Cresswell, 2013, Doody et al, 2013b; Rosenthal, 2016). We read data and re-read data until we identified themes that emerged.

Results

The nine women who participated in the focus group pursued activities that showed how each explored the concept of generativity. It was clear that the majority of participants six (66.7%) were influenced to become a leader in educational leadership by a previous school administrator, while the minority three (33.3%) were influenced by a parent. To better present the data, what follows are detailed profiles of participants grouped by the educational sector they represent.

Principals

Three principals participated in this study. One is a high school principal, while two are elementary principals in urban cities of the same state in the United States. We provide a profile of each participant and the generative activities that they pursue in order to get a sense of the values they cherish and the commitments they make to improve the lives of the next generation.

Lisa

 The youngest of the participants at 37 years old stated, "I'm a Generation X-er/Millennial born in the middle of a generation shift. I'm a cusper." She is a mother to five, a preacher's wife, and she is completing her doctoral studies. She was drawn to education by her five-year-old sister at the time. Her sister came home from school very excited about learning what a 'patterin' [sic] was. "I said, 'What is a patterin?' And she said, 'a patterin-bean-paper- bean-paper…a patterin.' And I said, 'Oh, a pattern.' And, she said, 'A patterin.'" Lisa stated that this incident prompted her to apply for a teaching scholarship because this experience with her sister ignited her passion for teaching. Later in her career an e-mail from her superintendent encouraged her to go into educational leadership.

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Gwen

Aged 45, is self-described as African American, divorced, and a mother to one son. She decided she wanted to be in education while she was in elementary school. She stated,

> I had some great elementary teachers, and actually elementary school for me was a safe haven when everything at home was not the best. So, school was my safe place and [I] figured as I went through my years of schooling that there was something about me that wanted to help others that [sic] were like me to feel loved, to be respected, and to be told that you are going to be awesome, great, and amazing. And I want to give that back to other children…that help I received to help me to be who I am today.

A phone call from a friend landed her a job as a third grade teacher. She enjoyed the experience of teaching for four years and realized that she had so many ideas about the direction of how the school could be going, though she hesitated to take leadership roles because of the politics. To her amazement, she ended up in leadership positions without ever applying for a single job. She has always been asked to take the leadership roles and interviews were private and just a formality.

Laura

Aged 48, is Caucasian, a mother of six children from two marriages and, like Lisa, she is completing her doctoral studies. She described herself as a very driven person. She went into teaching partly because her mother, a teacher, always encouraged her to obtain a teaching license with her degree. Laura's desire was to be a lawyer, but after interning throughout high school, she got married and had to shelf the idea of law to look after her children; she later finished her degree in English. She did substitute teaching for a while and enjoyed the experience, but she still kept in her mind the goal of going to law school. When it was time to go to law school, she had an epiphany.

> The kids got older, they were in middle school, and I said okay, "Now is the time for me to go to law school," and I thought about it. And, the more I thought about it I thought, "Why?" I realized that the depth of my knowledge about teaching in curriculum was deep enough that I didn't want to let go of what I wanted—to build on that. It was like a crossroads for me.

Laura ended up in education because she wanted to see what leadership looks like. She stated that as a teacher she realized she did not have much autonomy, and she applied to graduate school. She said of being a classroom teacher, "That was sort of a frustrating position for me to be in because you really couldn't create things. You couldn't be in charge of a vision. You were just kind of doing what needed to be done." As a driven person, Laura started pursuing higher degrees and applying for school leadership positions.

Community College

Three participants from the community college system had all served in senior positions. Unlike school principals from the K-12 sector whose goal was to become a school administrator, these participants followed very different and unconventional pathways to their senior positions.

Sydney

Aged 53, is African American and recently retired, having served at the rank of Senior Vice President and Chief of Technology for a state system. She is married and a mother to one son. She started with a corporate job as an engineer, a job she really loved. She stated, "I taught my father, my dad, how to do fractions when I was in the fifth grade, and it literally changed our economic status because he was able to get a job at the railroad. So, I know when you learn something, your life will change and I remember that from the fifth grade." She revealed that in her job as lead engineer she taught other smart engineers but wanted to learn how technical subject matter experts can learn to be good teachers. She decided to go back to school to earn a doctorate, and afterwards she decided to leave the corporate sector altogether to start a career in higher education.

Ingrid.

At 58, Ingrid is a mother to adult sons and, like Laura, she had always dreamed of becoming a lawyer, though her mother, early on had advised her that she needed to get a teaching certificate regardless of her degree. She is African American and she described herself this way,

> I grew up during a time when pretty much the only professional options for African Americans were teachers and preachers, and I was kind of pushing back against that. And, you know I was at the end of that point in time and wanted to do something different. So, my interest was in practicing law.

She completed an undergraduate degree in criminal justice and soon realized that she was no longer interested in law school. Instead, she spent time working as a paralegal doing community education. She realized she enjoyed the teaching aspect of the job and enrolled in a master's program with the local university to study adult education. She discusses this move

> I started to be just so enamoured by the whole teaching experience that I decided I would really like to get back on a college campus in some capacity. So, a position came up at my community college for a paralegal instructor. They really liked my resume, and …I got the position.

She stayed on the job and after four years, she was promoted to the position of program coordinator, and now she serves as Dean of Public Services and Academic Support. She never dreamed of becoming a dean, but she was encouraged by colleagues to apply for that position. Ingrid just completed the doctorate at age 58.

Table 1

Demographic Data of Participants

Participant	Age	Race	Country Represented	Educational Level	Job title	Marital Status	Number of Children
Lisa	37	African American	USA	Completing Doctoral Studies	Elementary Principal	Married	5
Gwen	45	African American	USA	Doctorate	Elementary Principal	Divorced	1
Laura	48	Caucasian	USA	Completing Doctoral Studies	High school Principal	Married	6
Sydney	53	African American	USA	Doctorate	Retired as senior vice president and chief of technology	Married	1
Ingrid	58	African American	USA	Doctorate	Dean of Public Services and Academic Support.	Married	2
Michelle	60	Caucasian	USA	Doctorate	Retired as Vice president of academic affairs at a community college	Divorced	2
Olivia	60	Caucasian	Kuwait	Doctorate	Director	Married	2
Natalie	61	Caucasian	USA	Master's	Stepped down as Dean of Libraries	Married	0
Heather	64	African	Uganda	Doctorate	Professor	Married	2

Michelle

She is a 60-year-old Caucasian and a divorced mother of two. She is retired after serving as Vice President of Academic affairs at a community college. Unlike other participants, she started her career in nursing working in an intensive care unit (ICU). A nearby community college was starting a nursing program, but it did not have teachers for advanced programs. Michelle went on to obtain a Master's degree in nursing and started teaching in a community college. She stated,

> Still to this day nursing excites me. …It was amazing to watch the transformation on the faces of students who are afraid to come into a room until the end of the rotation [when] they were actually caring for the patients. I thought I like that.

Michelle rose to the rank of Dean of Health Sciences in the community college system, and she had thought she had reached the pinnacle of her career until the day a senior administrator asked her if she had the doctorate. She started pursing the doctorate at age 50, but retired at 58, two years after obtaining a doctorate in educational leadership. Michelle wanted to focus on herself.

Higher Education

Olivia

Working in Kuwait, Olivia, a Caucasian, and a mother to two adult children serves as the director of the Foundations Program at a university. She did not plan to work in education; it happened by accident. A phone call from a friend changed her career trajectory. She stated, "After teaching third grade for four years, I realized I had lots of ideas of how I thought the school could be going. And when the elementary principal left, I decided to apply for the job." She accepted the job despite her limited experience with third grade teaching and zero experience in school administration. The job provided her with the needed experience and confidence, and she has never looked back.

Natalie

A Caucasian woman at 61, Natalie is married with no children and is a career librarian who rose to the position of Dean of Libraries and worked at several prestigious universities in the United States. She started working in libraries at age 17 while she was still in high school. In college she tried music performance and anthropology but was drawn to libraries. She enrolled for a Master's degree in Library Science. She said:

> If there is [sic] any librarian at my age that tells you they did not do it for the love of books, they are lying to you. But it's a fascination with learning and, uh, discovering and watching people change…. We believe librarians are very transformational also in that experience, and [we are] partners with teaching if not teaching ourselves.

She attributed her love for learning to her father who was a bridge engineer during day time and who taught evening classes

in astronomy. She was fascinated by watching him teach, and she always enjoyed playing school. Natalie recently stepped down as dean of libraries.

Heather

She is the oldest participant at age 64. She is an African from Uganda, is a married mother to two adult children, and works at the rank of a professor. Like Olivia, Heather joined education by accident at the time her country was going through political turmoil. She outlined her journey:

> I finished high school when my country was going through being ruled by a military man, Idi Amin and many foreigners were kicked out of the country, and there was a shortage of teachers. So, all the students entering the university that year were forced to do education. So, although I was not able to do a Bachelor of Commerce, I was forced to do education.

She became a deputy head teacher in a large urban school. She ended up teaching at university. While at university she applied to pursue a Ph.D. in Canada. Upon her return she continued teaching at the university and rose to the rank of Deputy Dean Academics. She was the only deputy dean with a Ph.D. She has been appointed to many positions such as member of the faculty senate and department chair. She attributed her success to her strong drive and hard work. She stated, "[For] me I am proud of being what I am, no man can claim. I am one of the first few people in the university to become a professor … I feel proud that I did it myself. I read my books…I have been ahead of the men in the faculty"

Generative Activities of Participants

When asked about how they perceived their roles in generative pursuits, participants revealed a wide array of activities. Themes that emerged were consistent with literature of women's distinct identity markers of pathmakers, guardians, searchers and drifters (Josselson 1996) and Helson and Srivastava (2001) categorization of women identities as achievers, conservers, seekers, depleted. We used these to classify the generative work of the women.

Guardians/Conservers

Women who feel obligated and committed to helping others improve their lives are classified as guardians (Josselson, 1996). They have a sense of urgency about it and carry the values and standards set by their families. Several women engaged in these generative pursuits in several spaces that included the home, work and community. For women managing young families, a full-time job, and obligations to other communities, they expressed that they had no choice but to commit to those activities. Lisa, a mother of five children ranging in age from four to 16, looked after her younger family, had a full-time job, and was involved at her church in her role as the pastor's wife. In addition, she spent countless hours with children at her church mentoring and providing guidance.

I saw a need to kind of support guidance counselors who are not able to give students that access as much as they would like to because of different barriers in their field. So, I work as a scholarship coach externally to high school students, so I can help them get access to funding.

She feels uniquely enabled to do the work as she fondly stated, "But I thoroughly enjoy all children, um, and I have been called a 'child whisperer.' [I] listen to children and hear what they're saying no matter how old they are." To balance work family life, Lisa has regular dates with her husband and also what she called mandatory family time (MFT). Each child is at liberty to call an MFT that could be in the form of activities that include ball games, day road trips, etc.

While Laura had similar work family life like Lisa, she did not emphasize on her family life but expressed how exhausted she was about her job. She expressed how she constantly battles balancing her roles of wife and principal.

[My husband and I] both have really demanding jobs, and I have to renegotiate what my role as a wife looks like now that I have this role [at work]. It's like you're constantly renegotiating how to make things successful as you move throughout your life. I mean it's all good, but you have to say, "Ok now, how am I gonna make this work because not working is not an option? So how are we gonna make this work"'

Both Lisa and Laura expressed how hard their jobs were but recognized that somebody had to do it. Laura expressed how gender affected her job but felt obligated to march forward:

I will be honest right now; I am really tired and what is getting through right now is, "I'm just too dang stubborn," because I started, and I don't want to stop. And I feel like if I do...we have limited gender scripts as females. We can talk about it all day, but until more of us do it we are not expanding those options.

Lisa added another layer of the complexity of leadership as a black woman, and supervising white teachers who grew up in times when it was unheard of for blacks to supervise white people. She summarized her experience this way:

It's hard being a female, and then when you add your race on top of that...it's hard being a black female school administrator, period. Because we have a whole different set of barriers…and then youth is also an issue that I struggle with just age, especially with white female older teachers who look at me like... "First of all, you could be my daughter. I have children older than you. What do you know? Who do you think you are?" I did not have a black woman or a black man, no black person—not even a half-black person was my boss … so that is a huge barrier for me.

Lisa and Laura demonstrate resilience and commitment despite the less than optimal conditions they face in their generative pursuits. Olivia felt the burden to apply for a leadership position in school administration because she felt the school was going in the wrong direction. She believed she had the ideas to turn around this school despite having no experience in educational leadership. She wanted to change that school by being the opposite of the then current administrator. Olivia also invests her generative activities in the youth. She stated:

For me, it started with my own children who are now 31, 29 and 25. And so as they were growing up, I felt it was very important for them to feel they had someone they could come to and ask questions and find out more. And I sometimes did that for their friends also, and as time went by people would come to me. She also coaches and mentors the youth. In fact, people are referred to her for advice.

Natalie a long time career librarian feels the impetus to give back because she believes the future is important and feels obligated to pass on the knowledge and wisdom.

I am pretty far along in my career, and so if I feel that I need to pass it along as well. And there a number of ways to do it in higher education. You can provide opportunities for people, so I advise people on how to get on committees for their professional service. I nominate them, advocate for them for being a leader or chair. If I have the power over a taskforce, I make sure they are involved with that…. I will always talk to anyone who calls me for a survey or advice or how do I become a librarian or anything because that future is so important that they are successful and engaged with what they are trying to do.

Natalie was also involved in coaching and mentoring and believes that every new recruit on the job needs to have a mentor and a sounding board. She takes those roles seriously as she shapes and influences the careers of others. She summed up her work: "I tell them I am always there for you, and I have been there for a lot of librarians just as people have taken care of me throughout the years whether I work with them any longer or not or don't work with them or see them much." It is clear Natalie maintains the traditions and is a gatekeeper in her field. On the other hand, Gwen simply tells her story about how she landed in school administration without applying for positions. She said women find her story compelling, and she realizes the power in her story and how she has seen other women transformed because of it.

Pathmakers/Achievers

These are women who have gone through crises in life and make commitments to improve the lives of others based on their own terms (Josselson, 1996). In other words, for pathmakers, commitment to help, unlike guardians, is a choice and not an obligation. Achievers made sacrifices in their family lives for their careers (Helson & Srivastava, 2001). In the current study, the women worked hard to pave the way for others and to

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remove obstacles in the profession. Ingrid best described her pathfinder role this way.

> I always tell the folks in my division that I consider one of my biggest jobs to be to plow a road. I want to come in and try to remove as many obstacles as possible to facilitate them in doing their jobs, which is educating students. I also have the goal to leave whatever I enter somehow better than it was when I came in.

Yet others saw their role as that of doing trailblazing. For example, Michelle saw her role as somebody who inspired other women to work towards their career and educational goals despite her challenges of single parenthood and being a primary caregiver to aging parents. In addition, her roles initially as dean and, subsequently, as Vice President of Academic Affairs, normally would have stopped other women from pursuing doctoral studies, but Michelle was undeterred. She stated:

> I think now … I have gotten older and, in retirement-type-age talk, go back and see folks that have told me, "Michelle, you are a single mom, and you are able to juggle working part time as well." I guess I was the silent mentor. I guess I did not realize at the time and growing your profession, serving professional organizations and then go back and work on a doctorate at 50 because you had to wait until the kids were in college. They said that is why I did it because they saw that I could do it, and there was no reason I couldn't do it. So, I guess sometimes we don't know. But I think encouraging others to break those barriers, to go and do.

Another perspective of being a pathmaker was offered by Sydney, an engineer who ended with an executive position of Vice President in Educational Leadership. Because of the under-representation of women in her field, she often finds herself being the only female in the boardroom and how lonely it is at the top. Her approach to generational pursuits is rooted in self-identify, role of religion and skills set she brings to the table. She believes a balance of these attributes draws other women to her work. She described herself this way,

> If you see me in the boardroom, I have to be who I am wherever I am because I tried switching. I tried being what you wanted and what you wanted and what you wanted....and it wore me out and I didn't know who I was. Now I am at a point where you know what, I am an African American female, a brilliant, not just smart, I am a brilliant African American female who can mentor others, who loves the Lord. Who says you know what - this is me. Now do I go out and do all in the love the Lord… my faith is who I am, and I have found that women are drawn to that and they want to know how can they do that without being overbearing in the boardroom. I have to admit it is a skill.

Sydney also stated that she is very frank and candid about the advice she gives. She warns that if people do not like her advice,

they shouldn't waste her time: "I am very intentional, and I tell people, 'Don't ask me to mentor you if you cannot take the mentoring I am going to give you because I don't want to waste your time and I choose not to waste mine.'" Clearly these three participants exemplify that pathmakers have the role of paving the way for others by either removing obstacles, inspiring others vicariously, and projecting the skills needed to survive in the field. They are unaware that they are silent mentors as stated by Michelle.

Searchers/Seekers

These are women who are in an active period of searching (Josselson, 1996; Helson & Srivastava, 2001). In our study, only one participant, Lisa, still appeared to be searching. She was the youngest in the focus group and identifies as a "cusper," partly Generation X-er/Millennial. She supervised teachers who were old enough to be her mother and has experienced generational differences that leave her searching for answers. She said she exudes confidence that she perceives annoys her mentors who are of an older generation. Lisa expressed her frustration when she said:

> The confidence that I might exude that is just who I am. I am not trying to be anything different. I am just trying to be 'confident Lisa,' trying to be a confident person. But at the same time, I need the mentorship of others, and I have put it out there, that, that is what I need. But I have learned to put it out there. Originally the confidence was a turn off, so older people would say, 'She has got it; she doesn't need it.' What I'm trying to tell you, 'I am not gonna be weak looking and not encourage you that I want you to mentor me. I'm gonna be strong, but I also want you to mentor me. Can you mentor a strong young woman?' That is really the question that I'm gonna ask, 'If you can't mentor a strong young woman, then let's negotiate how we are going to make this relationship work.' I have had lots of mentors; I still do keep in contact with them. But I think that is a huge barrier, older women say, 'No, not even gonna try.' And I, I am like, 'What? Why do I intimidate you? I am just trying to learn? Please do not be turned off by my confidence or by whatever you think I have because in my head. I need a lot and what you see and what you think I need are not matching, and we repel each other.'

It is clear that Lisa is frustrated by this generational difference and may not be getting the mentoring she needs because perceives that the older generation is repelled by her confidence. She still needs to learn the art of portraying her confidence so that she does not come across as aloof. She suggested that the communication styles of the older generation are not direct, and this leaves room for one to come up with unintended results that stifle progress. For example, Lisa pointed out that when older adults use language, such as "...we really should, need to, we would love for you to," in a vertical professional learning community with generation X and Y, this could give the younger

generation options and work does not get done. She suggested language that is direct, such as "We should definitely collaborate on this math lesson and work together. What do you think?" And they always say, "Yes I agree." She believes this is the kind of language Generation X and Y understand because "they spoke their mind when their parents raised them to be like that." Lisa is still searching about the best way to navigate that intergenerational challenge in the workplace.

Drifters/Depleted

These are women who were without commitments. They avoided decision making, and their values and standards shifted with each situation (Josselson, 1996; Helson & Srivastava, 2001). At 60, Michelle decided to scale down her involvement. She had inspired and mentored other women as she progressed in her career. After getting her doctorate she decided to retire much to the disappointment of her friends and colleagues. They would have wanted her to go on and use her doctorate to reach higher career goals, such as becoming a president of a community college. Michelle justified her decision to retire by saying:

> I lost 2 parents in 7 years, traveling down East every weekend, and then had finished the doctoral program…then children finished college and married. And then I had the opportunity. I was retirement age and decided to retire. I got a lot of backlash, "How can you waste what you have done?" And it was a courageous step because part of me was going I know I could be president. I know I could have done it, but you know what, I found bigger gifts. In two years, I had to take that pause that we were talking about. I got healthy. I lost 76 pounds. But it was finding health again to re-establish, um, a healthy lifestyle, to start part-time teaching again in educational leadership where you have to get back in there, do research, and then have a personal life that I haven't had in 19 years. I hadn't dated, and now I am getting married. To say that sometimes we have to be courageous, to close doors for you at that moment. I had to breathe. I had been a single mom, run[ning] up that ladder like I was supposed to be a good girl. I was exhausted. So [it was time to] breathe.

After giving so much to her career and family, Michelle deliberately decided to reduce her generative pursuits and concentrated on improving her life which she had neglected for a long time due to caregiving roles, such as being a single mom raising two children. Then she was an empty nester and was at a stage where she was negotiating new meaning and direction about her life. She was "taking the pause" or slowing down despite the backlash she received, and, in her own words, "had found bigger gifts" that she wanted to enjoy. Michelle also refers to her ego identity, i.e., her physical psychological and emotional attributes (Helson, Stewart & Ostrove, 1995) when she referenced her weight, lifestyle and enjoying an empty nest as aspects that needed her attention.

Discussion

All the nine women in this study were well-accomplished professionals, authority figures, and respected women who engaged in some form of generativity work; hence, they were, as Erikson (1997) pointed out, adults ready to be a numinous figure in the eyes of the next generation. As generative leaders, the women felt obligated to empower others (Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988) and also felt motivated to keep the same tradition by passing it on to others, be it their children or colleagues, in order to make a difference and improve the lives of others. They wanted others to avoid the same mistakes and traps they had made. Each participant was productive, creative, and nurtured their work. Generative functions were carried out in spaces that included the family, workplace and the community as a "balancing act of this and this, an attitude that shows coequal responsibilities and not conflicting choices of this vs. that" (Elderstein, 1997, p. 11) as suggested in Erikson stage theory. The tenets of generativity as expounded by Erikson (1950. 1964, 1974, 1997), such as meaning making, teaching, and keeping the meaning, held true for women in our study

However, in light of the criticisms levelled against Erikson's theory of adult development as linearly ordered and claiming universality (Edelstein, 1997; Helson & Srivastava, 200; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1996, Pringle & Dixon, 2003), we employed Pringle and Dixon (2003) that relies on prior research on women's identities to guide our discussion. Pringle and Dixon's (2003) heuristic model offers the argument that women's lives are complex, and they evolve in a non-linear and deterministic fashion. In this model they postulate four evolving facets where women continually explore, focus, rebalance and revive their lives. The points at which women explore, focus, rebalance and revive vary from woman to woman as these aspects are largely influenced by events in life (Pringle & Dixon, 2003), family life cycle, and not necessarily by chronological age alone (Harris, Elliot & Holmes, 1986). This does not mean exclusion and ignoring events ordered by biology, such a menopause.

Participants in our study started generative work early in life through building relationships, caring for families, and building careers, or engaged in resolving problems in their communities, contradicting the age 40-65 as years of the generativity-stagnation stage (Erikson, 1950). For example, Sydney was already retired at 53 and Michelle at 60, while some older participants did not discuss any retirement plans. At age 37, Lisa was focusing on doctoral studies while Michelle at 58, and Ingrid at 60) had just finished their doctoral studies. Heather showed no signs of scaling down in her career. She showed assertiveness and independence. She had inner strength, was uninhibited and courageous, and she was a paragon at her work despite working in a poorly resourced institution in comparison to other participants. She exhibited pride for becoming the first woman to attain positions that had been historically held by men at her institution. She had earned a Ph.D. and become a full professor, and served in the Faculty Senate, just to name a few

of her achievements. She stated, "[For] me I am proud of being what I am, no man can claim. I am one of the first few people in the university to become a [full] professor … I feel proud that I did it myself. She commands respect, and helps other faculty publish and attend conferences. She also showed moral courage by investing in the youth by securing scholarships for disadvantaged young girls to pursue their education. This highlights the continuous assessment that goes with women's lives, and that this assessment is not universal but rather unique for each woman.

The balancing of life (Pringle & Dixon, 2003) is best illustrated by Lisa, the youngest of the participants. As a mother of with five young children, she had to balance being a mom, student, principal, pastor's wife, mentor, and a host of other responsibilities at her church and community, yet she scheduled mandatory family time (MFT) and regular dates with her pastor husband. Laura's experience also illustrates the balance and reassessment of life (Pringle & Dixon, 2003) where she constantly negotiated her multiple roles as wife, principal, and mother.

For professionals such as Gwen and Michelle, who were also single parents in our sample, they had to sacrifice their careers for their families. Gwen, a pathmaker (Josselson, 1996) worked hard to create a better life for herself having experienced a difficult childhood and, later, a divorce. She always told her story about how she rose to be an educational leader and shared how her story inspired others. Michelle postponed getting her doctorate until the children had finished college while also being a caregiver to her elderly parents.

Several women in the study had high levels of involvement and an uninhibited sense of purpose. Laura's best experience about her job was hiring because she realized there are not many women in her position and wanted to contribute to building a future pool. She also invested in offering quality coaching and professional development to new hires to increase productivity. Natalie, a former college dean enjoyed hiring and working with new hires, and she provided them with the resources they needed. She emphasized to each new hire that she was always ready to give assistance whenever they needed it when she said:

> I have talked to all of them and said, I am still here for you. I still have your back, come talk to me if you need to know the process you need to go through or if you need someone to talk to, I am always there for you.

A statement from Ingrid, another dean, illustrated the high level of commitment and her identity of a pathmaker (Josselson, 1996), "I always tell the folks in my division that I consider one of my biggest jobs to be, to plow a road".

Cheng (2009) stated that generative work is motivated by a cultural demand to address the needs of society and the satisfaction and well-being derived from the meaning of one's work, i.e., generative work has to address the needs of the community. Olivia stated "I feel like I'm making a difference, that is what keeps me going." Not only did participants in the

study attended to personal and workplace generative pursuits, but they also served the broader communities. Their work reflected social generativity exemplified by each participant identifying a need in the community and taking steps to address it (Morselli & Passini, 2015). The investment in others, particularly in youth as demonstrated by participants like Lisa, Olivia, Ingrid, and Heather was an effort to build a legacy and to ensure barriers and obstacles are removed for future generations. Like Lisa, Ingrid counselled and mentored youth at her church and Olivia had youth referred to her from friends and the community. Although Ingrid did not pursue her childhood dream of becoming a lawyer, she is a board member of paralegals for her state. Heather created a scholarship fund targeted for the education of young girls in her country.

Each participant was intentional about the focus of the generative work they chose and the people they served. They each birthed an idea involving programs affecting their families, work, or community and labored hard to sustain these, demonstrating the critical components of generativity: "procreativity, productivity, and creativity" (Erikson, 1997, p. 67). This clarity about the parameters of generativity is consistent with Erikson's (1974) statement, "In adulthood, however, you learn to know what and whom you can take care of" (p. 124). The statement from Sydney illustrated whom you can take care of:

> I am very intentional and I tell people, "Don't ask me to mentor you if you cannot take the mentoring I am going to give you because I don't want to waste your time and I choose not to waste mine."

This means there is an element of selectivity and exclusivity (Erikson, 1997). Therein also lies the danger that one's generative work may not be valued and respected, and this causes a decline or regression in one's generative pursuits consistent with a clash of values between the younger and older generations (Cheng, 2009). In this study, the clash was evident between Lisa, a searcher (Josselson, 1996 or seeker (Helson & Srivastava, 2001), who described herself as a "Generation X-er/Millennial born in the middle of a generation shift," and two older participants. Lisa revealed issues with her confident demeanor, thus: "Originally the confidence was a turn of, so older people would say, 'She has got it; she doesn't need it.'"

Older participants, such as Sydney, advised that from experience, such over confidence caused younger people to be resented because of the way they communicated with the older generation. Younger people needed to get enculturated in the mores of the workplace. That kind of confidence can alter power relationships, and, usually, this is not tolerated in the workplace. Younger people need to learn from those who have the wisdom and experience. Sydney summed it all when she stated:

> I teach my son all the time, 'Hey, you 'the man,' but when they take that confidence and they don't learn at the same time from people who have been there who are much wiser notice, I didn't say smarter, but wiser in

certain areas. And they don't take that and don't use that, then, it is to their disadvantage, especially coming out of college and get[ting] in these jobs.

Besides intergenerational perception gaps about workplace etiquette, there were also notable racial differences about generative work. African Americans made reference to their spiritual work and to God as they engaged in their generative work. Besides her professional role and family responsibilities, Lisa stated "Christ sustains me. I am a regular church attendee. Adding to the spiritual dimension, Sydney categorically stated, "My steps are ordered by the Lord." She shared that she was well known for praying while in a meeting in the boardroom.

> There are times I would be in a meeting, nothing would happen and I would go (bowed her head). Oh God she is praying again! [Laughter] but then again I had to learn to be my authentic me… and I am 53 years it took years to get there.

These generative experiences of Lisa and Sydney are consistent with Versey and Newton (2013) who associated spiritual commitment with generativity and successful aging, and, more so in African American women. Interestingly, Caucasian women in this study never alluded to spirituality in their generative work, perhaps suggesting a cultural difference.

Another important finding was the role played by gender and race. All the women had risen to positions that were historically occupied by men. They alluded to challenges including feelings of loneliness, role incongruence, and issues balancing family-work life. Laura stated:

> I will be honest right now I am really tired and what is getting through right now is I'm just too dang stubborn....We have limited gender scripts as females and we can talk about it all day but until more of us do it, we are not expanding those options. And you know right now, the smart thing to do is give up something. But I'm just not going to do it. You know, right now it's just stubbornness… it's just hard being a female leader.

Corroborating on this complex dynamic, Natalie stated,

> Being a woman leader and things like this are wonderful, and the results you achieve as a leader is [sic] often what sustains me and to see other people achieve is what sustains me. It is a hard road. I have been through it in a number of places, and I am different enough, um, in my thinking and my leadership that some people don't get it. And then they, for some reason,… make it even harder…[It] is lonely at the top and everyone has got their story of why. You have to accept that loneliness and often, if you are a woman of any kind of makeup in leadership, you will be lonely and you won't have other women to speak up for you around the table. You have got to put yourself out there and be willing to be shot down.

Lisa added the complexity of race to the gender issue when she shared that the situation was worse for African American women in leadership who supervise white people who grew up in an era when white, and even black, people were not supervised by black people. She pointed to her youth and race as challenges that potentially devalue her leadership. When she stated,

> It's hard being a black female school administrator, period, because we have a whole different set of barriers that we have to fight and mitigate every single day. There are some days where I think if I was just female this might be a little easier

Notable, was also how African American participants referred to their identity markers of race, professional contributions, and intelligence as premium assets. According to Pringle and Dixon (2003), "Identity has the double function of articulating the place of individuals in society and affording them a sense of their uniqueness" (p. 998). Sydney was proud of her achievements and the quality of her work as the only black woman in the boardroom. She stated.

> I have to be who I am wherever I am because [I] tried switching, I tried being what you wanted and what you wanted and what you wanted....and it wore me out and I didn't know who I was. And now I am at a point where you know what, I am an African American female, a brilliant, not just smart, I am a brilliant African American female, who can mentor others, who loves the lord - who says you know what - this is me.

Lisa described herself as confident and strong. This is important because it addresses negative stereotypes that have been associated with African Americans, especially the myth of the inferiority of black women's intelligence. These women have achieved identity statuses that help them to function and live uninhibited and showing inner liberation. Another important finding is that there were cross cultural differences in the motivations for generational pursuits. Heather and Lisa worked hard at improving access to education for students coming from economically depressed communities they served.

The revive facet of life (Pringle & Dixon, 2003) is best illustrated by Michelle, aged 60. Having spent her adult life taking care of her family and elderly parents as well as her job responsibilities and arriving at the pinnacle of her career as dean, she decided to retire and focus on herself, much to the surprise of her friends and family. She decided to focus on herself by concentrating on weight loss which resulted in renewing her dating life-something she had not done for 19 years. She stated she was going to be getting married soon at the time of our interview. Based on Erikson's stages she would fall into the category of stagnant as she was devoting her time for self-care, but this is where gender makes a difference. This is perfectly normal for women after 50 who would have spent most of their adult life caring for others. Neugarten (1968) called this process "interiority" p. 140), i.e. where adults in the second half of life refocus on self needs instead of others' needs. In fact, Edelstein

(1997) summed it all when she stated, "For many women, middle adulthood is a time to pause and consider a personal definition of accomplishment, whether it be work, children, relationships, integrity, authenticity, health, survival, or another value" (p. 9). Josselson (1996) and Schuiling and Low (2006) concurred that women can go back to things deferred in youth or to take care of things that were neglected. Michelle, in the study, said she had to take a pause despite the backlash. Michelle's example demonstrates Pringle and Dixon's (2003) heuristic model about the evolving nature of women identities, which Josselson (1996) as previously mentioned warned "Psychology has no adequate theory for women's development, particularly development in adulthood" (p. 9).

Conclusion

The participants in this study held senior positions in educational leadership involving K-12 education, community colleges and four-year colleges/universities. Most women in the study saw a need and used their professionalism, knowledge and talents to address identified needs in their communities. The women were motivated by making a difference in the lives of others. Each woman played the role of mentor and provided guidance and enrichment to others. The women worked hard in their generative pursuits in their families, workplace, and community. They exhibited high levels of involvement and selfless giving of their talents and expertise, capturing the essence of generativity-procreativity, productivity, and creativity" (Erikson, 1997, p. 67) and care Erikson (1950, Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1996). The women's generative pursuits placed participants into the distinct identity markers of pathmakers, guardians, searchers and drifters (Josselson, 1996), sometimes with women finding similarities and differences in each other. Women who had professional parents were influenced by family values to pursue an education and a career, while those who came from difficult backgrounds carved their own careers and became paragons in their own right. As professionals, all women gave back to their communities and professions, became functionalists by empowering others and making sure skills and knowledge were passed on to the next generation. African American participants added the role of spiritualism and participated in church activities in their generative work, a sentiment not shared by Caucasian participants. Absent from the participants was any mention of sustainability and looking after our planet as a generative role because Erikson defined generativity as the "establishment, the guidance and the enrichment of the living generation and the world it inherits" (Erickson, 1974, p. 123).

Although our study used a small sample employing a focus group model, the contribution of this study is important not only because it explores the role gender plays in generativity but also because there are no studies known that have investigated generativity among women in educational leadership with a racially diverse sample such as ours. This study adds to closing the literature gap and charts possibilities of new lines of research that involve other variables in educational leadership. Further studies with women from different socioeconomic backgrounds

and fields other than educational leadership need to be conducted to establish the universality of our findings. Because of our small sample size involving one focus group of highly educated women, there are limitations to the generalizability of this study. However, this study provides a sampling of the richness with which women participate in generative knowing and leadership, both personally and professionally, and it shows how they pay forward their generative knowledge to the generations that follow in the field of educational leadership.

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