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Surviving at the Top: A Critical Case Study of Female Administrators in Higher Education

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SURVIVING AT THE TOP: A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

RENANDA WOOD DEAR

(Under the Direction of Teri Denlea Melton)

ABSTRACT

Women encounter significant barriers as it relates to their gender and leadership traits. The strong patriarchal system has made it more difficult for women to advance in higher education. Research has previously examined a number of factors, including characteristics, institutional influences, and practice efforts to increase the representation of women in leadership in higher education. However, exploring the persistence of gender inequality at the highest ranks of executive leadership is essential to understanding the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions in higher education (Bonebright, Cottledge & Lonquist, 2012; White, 2012). Even though women have been a part of higher education for decades, only recently have they been highlighted in the research and literature pertaining to higher education, particularly executive leadership.

This thematic and interpretive review considers gender and highlights organizational cultural barriers that further limit the advancement of women into executive leadership positions in higher education. The leadership journey and experience of five women serving in the role of Chief Academic Officer Positions (Provosts/Associate Provosts) in the Southeast United States, specifically the University System of Georgia were explored. Findings included opportunities presented to them through their hard work and dedication, the challenge of balancing personal and professional lives, understanding the importance of holding true to personal values, and the encouragement of mentors.

INDEX WORDS: Case Design, Gender, Organizational Culture, Executive Leadership, Intersectionality

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by

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DEDICATION

It is with deep love and appreciation that I dedicate this dissertation to my family, who have sacrificed the most for me to complete this academic journey. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to each of them for their unwavering support of me throughout this very long process. Each one of you have played a major part, both emotionally and physically for helping me complete this dissertation.

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support enabled me to accomplish my goals. I hope mommy has shown you that you can achieve anything you put your mind to, and that family always comes first.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Leadership, when demonstrated by one segment of society, suffers from a narrow perspective, a lack of richness of ideas and ideals (Harrow, 1993, p. 4).

The organization and structure of higher education appears to promote the advancement for male administrators while marginalizing female administrators. Traditionally, higher education administration has been dominated by white males. As men continue to hold the power in executive leadership positions in higher education, women continue to find it difficult to achieve advancement without encountering challenges along the way. Another explanation for women falling behind men is that men are the primary distributors of academic funding, which includes both salaries and promotion. Bonawitz (2009) explained, “Men have been administrators, presidents, and deans in American academia for decades longer and in larger numbers than women have held these positions” (p. 23). Simply put, men continue to make decisions based on gender norms, and in turn favor hiring men for leadership positions in higher education.

Historically, women have been underrepresented in faculty and leadership positions within higher education. Even though women have made significant progress in obtaining equal rights and accesses to the privileges men have in the United States, such as the right to vote, the right to an education, and the right to equal pay at work, there are still very few women at the top. Driven by the women’s movement, affirmative action, feminism, and women’s strong work ethic and abilities, women have made great strides, have become more visible within the workforce, have increased their numbers at colleges, and have made some inroads to university presidencies (American Council on Education, 2013). Although there are female faculty

members and administrators present on college campuses, they are not readily visible in positions of high power and authority, such as Provost or President.

Enrollment trends have indicated that women will continue to outnumber men in post-secondary attendance and degrees earned. The enrollment trends also indicate that women are attaining educational credentials at a rate similar to or greater than men, but the gender disparity continues to be prevalent in executive leadership positions in academia. The American Council on Education (2013) showed that women earned 58% of the bachelor degrees and 45% of the doctoral degrees granted to students in higher education institutions in the United States. Women hold 57% of faculty and mid-level administrative staff positions, but research has shown that women continue to be underrepresented in high level administrative leadership positions (American Council on Education, 2012). Furthermore, women make up less than half of full-time appointments in academia. This can be attributed to the “good old boy” network or the desire for the status quo. Male CEO’s of academia want to work alongside someone similar to themselves. Fitzpatrick (as cited in Bonawitz and Andel, 2009) asserted:

Academic rewards... are still largely bestowed by men, who have had decades more time to become ensconced in positions of campus authority. And until more women get promoted to full professorships—the springboards to plum administrative posts—that’s unlikely to change. (p. 4)

A quantitative study by Ballenger (2010) examined the barriers and opportunities that female leaders in higher education experienced in their progression toward promotion. Ballenger’s study supported the problem that gender biases against women in higher education limit the number of women in executive leadership roles. Therefore, educational institutions

must develop a leadership schema that more closely reflects the diversity of the student body that looks upon the leadership for guidance and modeling of acceptable behavior.

The primary career path for significant executive leadership positions in higher education is through the faculty tenured track leading to subsequent appointments into roles of department chair, dean and so on (Madsen, 2012; Tomas et al., 2010). Obtaining the rank of full professor affords women the opportunity for leadership in faculty governance, extends national influence in the disciplines, and is a traditional prerequisite for climbing the leadership ladder (O'Connor, 2015). However, as of 2012, women made up only 31% percent of executive vice presidents and only 38% percent of chief academic officers/provost positions (American Council on Higher Education, 2013). An explanation for women's continuing disproportionate representation in high level administrative leadership roles starts in research on women's disproportionate promotion to senior faculty ranks. King and Gomez (2008) stated, "Across institution types, women are more likely to serve in central academic affairs roles (such as Associate Provost or Deans of graduate studies) that are most typically staff rather than line positions" (p. 5).

Even women who have successfully navigated the administrative career ladder report experiencing gender bias as they progressed in their careers (Timmers, Williamsen, & Tijdens, 2010). Despite the representation of women in terms of higher education access, degree completion, and staff positions, women continue to be underrepresented in academic leadership positions. Unfortunately, women have not received the same opportunities as men when it comes to gaining access to leadership positions in the academy. Contributing to the problem is the idea that women still struggle with gaining acceptance as leaders due to gender biased perceptions about leader competency (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010; Fox-Cardamone, 2010).

Increasing the number of females in high level administrative leadership positions and decreasing gender disparity in higher education has become recognized as critically important (; Bonebright, Cottledge & Lonquist, 2012; Chin, 2011).

Delving deeper into specific positions in higher education, white men primarily occupy the position of Chief Academic Officer; however, there has been a slight increase in the number of women in the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost). According to the Almanac of Higher Education (2013), 38% of Provosts in the United States are women at four-year colleges and universities. Demographic data from the American Council on Education (2013) indicated that African Americans represent 3.9%, Hispanics 0.9%, Asian Americans 1.3%, Multiracial 0.9% and there is no representation of American Indians in the role of Chief Academic Officer. So not only are there very few women as Provost, but the demographic data indicate that women holding the position of Provost are primarily Caucasian females. Unfortunately, due to this underrepresentation of women in the role of Chief Academic Officer, little is known about the leadership traits and experiences of women on their journey to this particular role within the higher education system.

Many women who seek to achieve executive level leadership positions face visible and invisible barriers that force them to give up and/or to doubt their capabilities. Literature has shown how women have strived and gained leadership ranks in government and business organizations. However, one place where women's contribution has not yet been fully recognized as a significant force in decision making is in educational institutions. Several studies have clearly shown that women continue to be underrepresented in executive leadership positions in higher educational institutions (American Council on Education, 2012; Donohue-Mendoza, 2012; Madsen, 2012). There is a growing interest in leadership traits and styles in an

effort to find out differences and similarities in the ways males and females lead (Aiston & Jung, 2015). The findings of these studies are remarkably contradictory and at the center of the controversy is the relationship between leadership, gender, and organizational culture.

Numerous articles have been written about the leadership styles of females and males. Some claim that there are distinct differences between how males and females lead, still others state that it is the situation that determines the best leadership style, regardless of the sex of the leader (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). There are others who suggest that both men and women lead similarly depending on their positions or situations. According to Northouse (2013), leadership is not defined by a person's gender but by their ability to influence others, to direct attention to common goals, and to promote success with groups. However, there are some inherent traits that are indicative of all leaders regardless of gender. According to Northouse (2013), the most commonly desired traits are drive, persistence, motivation, insight, dominance, integrity, initiative, self-confidence, sociability, and influence. Studies by Airini, McPherson, and Madsen (2012) have revealed that self-awareness, which refers to understanding one's strengths and limitations, is important for leadership success. Leadership characteristics are often explained by stereotypes about gender and societal norms or expectations and not by experience. Stereotypes are defined as unsupported beliefs people use to categorize other people. Evidence has suggested that leaders who perform contrary to the stereotypical expectations of their gender are evaluated negatively (Aiston & Jung, 2015). Societal norms expect women to "take care" and men to "take charge" (Allan, 2011). It is concluded that gender influences human behavior (Shah, 2010) and, therefore, can influence leadership styles.

According to the American Psychological Association (2012), gender refers to "the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associated with a person's biological sex"

(p. 8). Gender is defined as a social structure used to view women as a group that is to be subordinate to men (Fochtman, 2011). The persistence of gender inequality in higher education has prompted an increase in the examination of the causes and effects of this type of discrimination. Additional explanations for gender related differences are societal role expectations, attributes, leadership suitability, and efficacy. The challenge of equality with regard to equal representation is critical to women. Studies by Airini, McPherson, and Madsen (2012) pointed out how academic institutions are structured based on gender, the enforcement of the patriarchal structure, and the devaluation of female faculty interest.

Women in executive leadership roles often face attitudes that consider them not as good or committed due to family obligations (Campbell, Mueller & Souza, 2010). Due to males monopolizing leadership and administrative roles, women are often viewed as less than their counterparts and are viewed as still holding traditional gender stereotyped roles (Donohue-Mendoza, 2012). Traditionally women have held roles inside the home, even though many are now holding more doctoral degrees than their male counterparts (Co'rdova, 2011). Additionally, gender differences in career aspirations, professional assets, and various personal variables have been suggested as contributors to the gender disparity. Allan (2011) argued that gender is an institution that is embedded in all of the social processes of everyday life and social organizations, and that gender difference is primarily a means to justify sexual stratification.

Leadership is “a cultural phenomenon” (Gerstner & O’Day, 1994, p. 123), but research on educational leadership undertaken from a cultural perspective is relatively scarce (Green, Mallory, Melton & Lindahl, 2011; Metcalfe & Gonzalez, 2013). As Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) explained: “Few scholars in educational administration subsequently have explored culture as a contextual determinant in understanding the exercise of educational leadership both

in terms of conceptual development and empirical research” (p. 132). According to Northouse (2013), culture refers to a set of symbols, rituals, values, and beliefs that makes one group different from another. Culture is learned and shared with people who live or lived in the same social environment for a long time and, for the purpose of this study, the higher education system will be the organization in which culture will be explored further. The widely known definition of *Organizational Culture* was coined by Schein in 1985. Schein believed that organizational culture exists at three levels: basic assumptions, values, and artifacts/creations (1985). Beyond this basic assertion, one must also consider that within an organization are many subsets and departments each with their own culture. Schein (2004) also stated that organizational culture is a set of “shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about and reacts to its various environments” (p. 24). Organizational culture is transmitted to new members through socialization, their behavior at work is influenced by said culture, and the culture works at different levels (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2014). The main element of an organization which helps or hinders good performance is a strong organizational culture. However, culture can also represent a barrier when implementing new strategies or making changes (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2014).

Lester’s (2013) examination of two institutions of higher education that achieved, or attempted to achieve, a cultural change acknowledges organizational culture as being a system of beliefs, understandings, knowledge, and meanings shared by organizational members. Schein’s assertion that culture manifests through three organizational levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions was prominent in the study. Lester (2013) further elaborated on this concept by identifying artifacts as visible behavior patterns resulting from behaviors including language, jargon, programs and policies. Espoused values are organizational values and beliefs

and can include philosophies, ideologies and attitudes. Underlying assumptions are beliefs that are tacit. They represent the deepest level of culture and are used to guide behavior.

The vast majority of executive leaders in large organizations are male. Since organizational culture is a function of leadership (O'Connor, 2015) and most high level administrative leaders in universities are men, it follows that men would largely define the organization's culture. In light of this, some have found that male-determined values have enforced a system in which there are certain acceptable roles for women (generally lower-levels) and certain acceptable roles for men (generally high-level) (O'Connor, 2015). Typically, however, this gender discrimination is invisible to men and the practice may likely be unintentional (O'Connor, 2015). Women, however, are much more conscious of a "male club", "systematic biases" and "unsupportive culture" within their universities (O'Connor, 2015, p. 32). When women attempt to enter male-dominated positions, they have the choice of either "performing femininity or resisting such a performance" (O'Connor, 2015, p. 34). The risk here is that women who embrace and display their unique personality may be seen as "other". In fact, some evidence suggests that no matter what women do, they may still be seen as "other". Some have suggested that unless women "mimic successful men" then they will "not look the part" required for success (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

Contrarily, Dahlvig (2013) contended that, "the culturally ingrained, traditional Christian beliefs of many Council for Christian Colleges and University (CCCCU) member institutions may foster a campus environment that discourages female leadership" (p. 94). By exploring the narrative inquiry of five female leaders in CCCCU institutions, Dahlvig (2013) sought to tell the stories of women who may have been marginalized due to the historically oppressive structures of higher education and Christian culture. Themes surrounding family-work balance,

transformational and androgynous leadership, imposter syndrome, and complicated relationships emerged relative to the cultural context of the institutions. While acknowledging the limitations of the study, Dahlvig (2013) concluded that higher education professionals working within the CCCU should “be attentive to Christian culture for both positive and negative forces impacting leaders; create and explore family-friendly policies and programs; and cultivate mentoring cultures” (p. 104).

Organizational culture also affects the way women plan their careers. Women who experience what they perceive to be less supportive workplaces are more likely to question whether they should stay in the workplace or leave (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). Further, once a woman has become a mother, if she perceives the workplace to be supportive, she is much more likely to return to the workplace quickly after giving birth (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

Organizational culture has been shown to carry over into parenting styles (Gary, Yarandi, & Hassan, 2015). Parents tend to instill the values they find essential for successful work performance in their children. Therefore, parents who work in white-collar positions tend to encourage independence and creativity in their children (Gary, Yarandi, & Hassan, 2015). As women take the unbalanced amounts of the parenting responsibilities, one can see how organizational culture and the ensuing pressures therein may affect the way a child is reared, and therefore, how that child will perceive his or her approach to the workforce. Thus, the cycle is internalized and perpetuated.

In conclusion, organizational culture is defined and perpetuated by the leadership of an organization. Because the majority of organizations are led by men, implicit or explicit rules of decorum, values, behavior, and roles are expected and are shaped by a male-centered perspective. Though men are often unaware of this, these expectations have a great effect on

women in higher education. Women, in trying to balance their female identity and, often, familial responsibilities, have a hard time “fitting in” with their male colleagues. In response to these difficulties, women largely adopt a communal form of coping which shares resources with others in similar situations. It is, therefore, suggested that organizations adopt a culture which does not ignore gender but embraces it. Colleges and universities that successfully adopt such a view can expect greater workplace satisfaction and performance outcomes from their female staff and faculty. While culture plays a significant role in the practice of women’s educational leadership, research in this field is limited. Therefore the exploration of leadership, gender and organizational culture’s impact on women in higher education was examined throughout this study.

This study examined the leadership traits that females in executive leadership positions in higher education deemed instrumental in their journey to the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost). Chief Academic Officers (Provost) are typically second in command after the President and are responsible for the teaching, research, and service initiatives on college and university campuses. The study explored the strategies that have proved beneficial to the success of female leaders in executive leadership positions in higher education. Such research provides insight into the underrepresentation of females in high level administrative positions in higher education as well as prepares aspiring leaders with information that will assist them on their journey toward executive level administrative positions within higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership is an important topic of research, especially in higher education. There has been a recent surge in the literature regarding female leaders in higher education but it is limited in scope and quantity. Many studies focus on the statistics of women on campus (students,

faculty, and staff). Within these, the emphasis is often on the levels at which women reach, whether as faculty members or in the administration, or on the number of qualified women leaving academia. Unfortunately, these studies do not sufficiently describe the experiences of these women. Examining the unique leadership traits and styles indicative of female leaders assists in understanding their journey toward leadership in higher education.

Additionally, more research was needed to explore and determine experiences that influenced the journey of female executive leaders in higher education administration. Exploring the journey of female executive leaders in higher education is important to understanding what assisted women in breaking through the glass ceiling and overcoming barriers that oftentimes limits the number of women from advancing in their careers to executive positions. Aiston and Jung (2015) suggested that hearing the voices of women who lead in higher education is important because leaders' perspectives and experiences become more visible by listening to stories as lived and experienced by other individuals.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership journey and experiences of women in the role of Chief Academic Officer in public four-year institutions in the Southeast United States. Additionally, the study explored what female Chief Academic Officers perceive as barriers they faced as well as described strategies they used to overcome the barriers. The overarching question that guided this study was: How do women in higher education executive leadership positions in the University System of Georgia describe their journey toward earning university leadership positions?

Theoretical Framework

Critical Theory is the overarching theoretical framework that informed the study. The theoretical framework was able to provide a better understanding of female leaders' experiences in higher education as they strive for executive leadership positions. According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), the critical theory paradigm is where multiple truths exist and are influenced by power relationships among people. Critical Theory provides the framework for understanding the experiences of women in executive leadership positions in higher education.

For the purpose of this study, critical theory was used to view women as the group with less power than men in the culture of the university system as an institution. The Critical Theory framework served to detail a hierarchical structured male dominated society where women are at the bottom of the system. Even though male dominated hierarches exist in higher education, there have been some women who have made it to the top. Therefore, it is important to explore the leadership style and the strategies those women used to overcome the barriers toward executive leadership positions in academia.

Additionally, Intersectionality, a subset of critical theory, was used to further explore the intersection of gender and organizational culture in the context of leadership by examining the journey of female chief academic officers. Intersectionality is the premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structured power (Crenshaw, 2008). Intersectionality has been used for well over a decade; it emerged out of attempts to understand experiences of women of color in the United States. Additionally, intersectionality takes into account historical, social, and political contexts while also recognizing unique individual experiences resulting from the coming together of different types

of identity. People are members of more than one community at the same time, and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege.

Significance of the Study

Despite the visible signs of success, many women are still finding the road to executive leadership rocky. There is a gap in literature in terms of what is known about the leadership experiences of female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts). This study is significant because it makes a distinct contribution to the gap in literature for female executive leaders in higher education. The researcher hopes this study serves to fill the gap found in existing research and literature about leadership traits and styles of women in executive leadership positions in higher education, specifically Chief Academic Officers (Provost). Additionally, studies such as this offer benchmarks for young female professionals in terms of what to anticipate on their leadership journey, as well as how to navigate potential pitfalls.

It has been demonstrated that women approach leadership very differently than men. It is this new approach that can bring about new values that can be incorporated into a traditional patriarchal system. Advocates for closing the gap in higher education believe that the result would be institutions that are more centered on process and persons rather than tasks, outcomes and masculinized priorities, creating more inclusive, equitable and caring environments for faculty, staff and students (Fochtman, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial that research in this area be conducted so that university administration can understand the context of female leadership, barriers, and strategies experienced by women serving in presidential cabinets in higher education institutions.

Procedures

A qualitative research design was used to gather information for this study. Qualitative research is an approach to studying individual and group constructions of reality (Merriam, 2015). It is defined as “research that produces descriptive data based upon spoken or written words and observable behavior” (Sherman & Reid, 1994, p. 1). A qualitative methodology with a case study design approach examined the experiences and challenges that female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts) experience as executive level administrators in public four-year institutions of higher education in the Southeast United States, specifically the University System of Georgia. Currently, there are 29 four-year colleges and universities located within the University System of Georgia, of those 14 have female Provost/Associate Provost. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods were utilized for the study. Five female leaders in the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) at public four-year universities or colleges were selected from institutions located within the University System of Georgia, which is located in the Southeast United States.

Several methods of data collection were used to further inform the case study. The researcher utilized five data collection sets for each of the institutional cases. Data collection sets included participant interviews, documents such as publication and articles written by participants, organizational culture review, curriculum vitae, and artifact sharing. Each point of data collection was analyzed using a variety of methods such as transcript analysis, peer examination, document review and artifact review. The researcher compared and contrasted the data of participants, noting any common themes that emerged and analyzed the data for significant challenges for individual participants as well as any common challenges that all participants identify. The goal of this research study was to explore and share the participants’

experiences in an effort to add to the knowledge-base related to the female experiences of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) in the university presidential cabinet.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

There were several limitations in this study. The first limitation was selecting public four-year universities in the University System of Georgia. This limits the generalizability of the findings, the decision was made so that participants will be engaged in a similar environment. The second limitation was the ability to select an adequate number of participants because of the limited number of female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) at four-year public universities and institutions in the University System of Georgia in higher education. Generalizability is applicable only to female Provost/Associate Provost in the University System of Georgia; however, transferability can be drawn assuming a similar situation. The concern was that there are more males than females serving as Provost in higher education (American Council on Higher Education, 2013). The profession, gender, region, and experiences of the participants served as the delimitations to narrow the focus of the investigation (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, women of racial/ethnic groups other than Caucasian were not interviewed as the experiences of minority groups are very different and the researcher chose to focus on experiences not related to race. The researcher assumed that the selected participants in this study have faced adversity of gender stereotyping and discrimination that has been documented in the literature on women in higher education leadership (O'Connor, 2015).

Definition of Key Terms

Leadership: For the purpose of this study, leadership will be defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2013).

Culture: Culture is the pattern of shared assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 2004).

Chief Academic Officer (Provost): In the realm of higher education, Provosts have programmatic and budgetary oversight over all academic activities. The provost reviews appointment papers of new faculty members and receives reports from the promotion and tenure committees. The deans of the various academic colleges or schools report to the provost for academic related matters (Madsen, 2012).

Critical Theory: The Critical Theory paradigm is where multiple truths exist and are influenced by power relationships among people (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Critical Theory provides the framework for understanding the experiences of women in executive leadership positions in higher education.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 2008).

Organization of the Study

The first chapter contains the introduction, problem statement, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, theoretical framework and organization of the study. Chapter Two will present a review of the literature that is relevant to the leadership experiences of female Chief Academic Officers, as well as an overview of the Critical Theory theoretical framework. Additionally, an overview of the intersection of leadership, gender, and

culture in educational leadership will be explored. This chapter will also explore the leadership traits that are indicative of female leaders. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections which delve into barriers and strategies. The first section examines the barriers and challenges faced by female leaders. The second section presents strategies that have proved helpful to overcome the barriers experienced by female leaders in higher education. The third chapter will provide information outlining the research methodology, participants and setting, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and validation of findings. Chapter Four will present findings from the research study and themes that emerge from the research. Finally, the last chapter will summarize the findings in relation to the literature and present a critical interpretation of the findings and discuss recommendations and implications for practice.

Chapter Summary

The journey of women as executive leaders in the position of Chief Academic Officers (Provosts) can be better understood by exploring the impact of gender as it relates to leadership traits, the barriers experienced, and the strategies employed by female leaders. This broadened understanding will enhance recognition of women who have achieved leadership positions and encourage future women to pursue positions of leadership, and move towards elimination of gender biases and stereotypes. Overall, this study will facilitate an understanding of the broad concept of female leadership and the journey that women have traveled who have achieved high level administrative leadership positions in higher education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the existing literature on the impact that gender and organizational culture has on the underrepresentation of women in executive level leadership positions in higher education. This chapter begins with an overview of Critical Theory and Intersectionality, which will serve as a guide for conception and interpretation of the study results. Additionally, leadership traits and styles that are indicative of female leaders will be examined in-depth to further understand the complexity of gender differences in higher education leadership. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections that delve into barriers and strategies. The first section examines the barriers and challenges faced by female leaders on their journey. More specifically, the review explores the glass ceiling effect, societal barriers, and institutional barriers associated with female leaders' progression towards high level administrative leadership positions in higher education. The second section will explore the strategies that have proved beneficial to the success of female leaders in executive leadership positions in higher education.

Critical Theory

An appropriate lens through which to examine issues of gender in higher education is Critical Theory. Critical Theory was originated by the Frankfurt School in the 1920's and is widely used across a number of disciplines. The theory was developed by the Frankfurt School of political and social theorists in response to both Marxist Communism and Western Capitalism. While the goal of most traditional theories of societal organization seek to explain society as it currently exists and has existed, Critical Theory differs in that it aims toward critiquing and ultimately altering society on a macro level (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013 Turner, Norwood, &

Noe, 2013). In essence, a theory is critical whenever it holds as its goal the emancipation and liberation of people. Critical Theory, though a specific theory in itself, may also be used as a term employed to describe all theories which hold democratization and freedom from oppression as their focus. These Critical Theories may include Feminism, Post-Colonial Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Queer Theory (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). Critical Theory is of greatest impact when it orients all the major social sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science, economics, etc.) toward the goal of societal transformation (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). For any theory to be considered *critical*, it must accomplish three objectives: it must explain the issues with the current society, identify the parties responsible and those who may act to change it, and offer models for criticism and a concrete path toward the appropriate revolution (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013).

When applied to academic research, Critical Theory informs and grounds the researchers in the task of reconstructing the power relationships present in the topic of study (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). These critical studies must also aim to empower those who have been constrained toward transcendence and greater liberty. For a study to be informed by Critical Theory, the methodology is as important as the outcome and those seeking to conduct such a study are encouraged to utilize dialogic or dialectical methodologies (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). A study by Lumby (2015) paired a Critical Theory perspective with an intersectionality framework in the exploration of the strategies adopted by South African women principals to position their identities in relation to their gender, ethnicity, and other characteristics. Lumby (2015) noted that a variety of definitions for Critical Theory abounds and acknowledges that this variance is in part a result of the range of perspectives represented by the various groups that have adopted its use. From the multiplicity of views as to what constitutes Critical Theory,

Lumby (2015) stated “a common commitment to give voice to and thereby to engage with those who are often silenced, aiming to create societies and workplaces which are free from domination where all members have an equal opportunity to contribute” (p. 29).

In Lumby’s (2015) study, the Critical Theory perspective was applied both to the presentation and analysis of the data obtained through interviews with 54 respondents. Lumby noted, however, that the critical approach presented a challenge in relation to the analysis of the data acquired from the respondents. The research indicated that this approach implied a dual analytical stance, and as such, even though the analysis credits the respondents’ narratives as their reality, it also takes into account socialization and contextual pressures and questions the respondents’ interpretations of their experience. Lumby (2015) further noted that as a result “...alternative interpretations are sometimes offered to those given by respondents” (p. 33).

Institutions of higher education themselves are not exempt from the forces of discrimination and domination as many were founded and molded by the cultural values and perspectives of the majority culture. Critical Theory as applied to matters of race and racial relations offers the perspective that the lack of racial factors contributed to the structural norms of institutes of higher education (Giles, 2010). Giles used Critical Race Theory as a starting point for a historical, biographical, and literary examination of the life of an African American leader in higher education. Through this lens, Giles was better able to understand the context and contribution shaping the experience of individuals and through this he was able to offer suggestions applicable today. Jacobs (2014) characterized Critical Theory as being “self-conscious about historicity and the role of the social environment....It is an emancipatory approach that enables us to dig beneath the surface of social life and uncover the assumptions that keep us from fully understanding how the world works” (p. 297). Jacobs (2014) asserted

that it is a theory that is concerned with solving social problems by emancipating humanity from domination. Jacobs (2014) noted that in the past Critical Theory was criticized for its failure to consider the full impact of cultural diversity on human existence and goes on to identify Craig Calhoun as being credited with broadening the tradition of Critical Theory and connecting it more closely to social and historical research. This expansion makes Critical Theory very useful for critiquing and changing established ways of thinking and established forms of life.

In light of the focus of Critical Theory and its uses and application, it seems appropriate to utilize this framework when studying higher education in general and women in higher education leadership in particular. Women in executive leadership positions in higher education being underrepresented has long been understood and ample studies reflect this assertion. Some of the aforementioned studies attempt to explain or elucidate the situation while others seek to offer suggestions based upon the successful navigation of the “Glass Labyrinth” of women in leadership. However, it may be difficult to categorize these studies as “Critical” in their theoretical framework as their main task is to understand or explain society, whereas a “Critical” study may be one that provides a normative base from which societal critique may take place (Turner, Norwood, & Noe, 2013). Utilizing Critical Theory in order to gain a fuller picture, researcher Odhiambo (2011) observed that improving women’s participation in leadership roles in higher education is a crucial part of the struggle for freedom and rights of women everywhere as institutions of higher education are where much of the thought and culture of a society germinate and grow (Odhiambo, 2011). Odhiambo suggested that policies at the national and local level be developed which would encourage women’s participation in higher education leadership. He called for a change of the culture of higher education toward one which recruits, promotes, and enhances women’s research capacity

(Odhiambo, 2011). To further examine women in leadership positions in higher education, Intersectionality, a subset of Critical Theory will be explored to examine the interlocking identities of women in higher education.

Intersectionality

Parent, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2013) asserted, “the intersectionality perspective maintains that multiple identities construct novel experiences that are distinctive and not necessarily divisible into their component identities or experiences” (p. 640). According to Warner and Shields (2013):

the origins of the intersectionality framework grew out of feminist and womanist scholars of color pressing the position that most feminist scholarship at that time was about middle-class educated, white women, and that an inclusive view of women’s position should substantively acknowledge the intersections of gender with other significant social identities, most notably race. (p. 303)

This model was additive and was based on the premise that the more marginalized statuses that were attributed to an individual, the greater the oppression. Black feminists considered this model to be limited, which helped to further spur the evolution of the framework (Warner & Shields, 2013). Currently, according to Warner and Shields (2013), “a fundamental assumption in every influential theoretical formulation of intersectionality is that intersectional identities are defined in relation to one another” (p. 303). The emphasis of the intersectional framework is on the qualitative differences among various intersectional positions.

Warner and Shields (2013) acknowledged that there is wide agreement that intersections create both oppression and opportunity, in that, “being on the advantaged side offers more than avoidance of disadvantage or oppression by actually opening up access to rewards, status, and

opportunities unavailable to other intersections” (p. 302). According to Warner et al. (2013), we can use “an intersectional perspective to make visible how systems of inequality function in overlapping ways, thus enabling the possibility of transforming these matrices of power” (p. 804). They further assert that when used as a framework, intersectionality reminds researchers that any consideration of a single identity must incorporate an analysis of the ways that other identities interact with, and qualitatively change, the experience of that identity.

Higher education and in particular women in higher education would benefit much from further research informed by intersectionality. The specific body of knowledge at this moment is severely lacking with little to no studies found which directly apply intersectionality toward the topic of women in higher education leadership. Rather, as this brief review shows, peripheral yet applicable studies have been conducted that show how Critical Theory and its subset theories may be applied to the benefit of the study and, hopefully, of society as a whole. Applying intersectionality to the study’s purpose is expanded from better understanding the situation of women in higher education leadership (a field which has been extensively examined) to a study which has the aim of constructive critiques and societal change. The broad umbrella of Critical Theory, initially formulated as a response to both Capitalism and Marxism, can breathe life into a stale academic culture as it reorients the goals of study toward progress and liberation. Intersectionality may be utilized by researchers to empower those they study and to employ their research as a tool for enlightenment and societal change.

Gender and Leadership in Higher Education

Many researchers have claimed that gender determines leadership styles, that is, men and women lead and manage differently (Carvalho & Santiago, 2011; Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014; Grant-Vallone, 2010). Traditionally, leadership studies have focused on males and the

masculine perspective because women were not in leadership positions. Since the masculine style of leadership is still perceived by many as ideal, women have had difficulties in gaining and keeping leadership positions because they have to contend with the pressure to fit their leadership styles into accepted models instead of being allowed to develop their own styles (Diehl, 2014). However, the changing trend in leadership theory to more collaborative models has coincided with the increased numbers of women in leadership positions (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Women have brought a new style of leadership that is more relational than hierarchical to organizations (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Gender is part of what informs female leaders' values and priorities while also encompassing women's different backgrounds and commitments are what have made a fundamental difference in leadership style used in executive positions (Morley, 2013). Researchers such as Eagly, Gartzia and Carli (2014) and Smith et al., (2012) studying women's experiences in higher education have focused more on providing balanced insight on gender inequality.

More recently, men and women's leadership style differences have been categorized as transformational and transactional leadership (Antonaros, 2010). Women tend to lean more towards transformational leadership while men are more prone to transactional leadership. Women have been seen to have a more communal leadership style showing a more caring side of being a leader. Female leaders are seen as being more collaborative, community-oriented and seek to empower others, whereas men have shown more assertiveness and control through aggressive leadership. Despite the controversy about gender and leadership, research on how women lead is growing. In this review of the literature, the variables that contribute to the gender differences in leadership will be explored, as well as the preferences that each gender has for leadership styles of professional leaders.

Leadership Traits and Style for Women in Higher Education

Even though there has been an increase in women in executive leadership positions, women still face a double standard despite the increase in research on leadership styles and theories (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). The difference between leadership trait and style is subtle, but extremely important. Leadership traits describe the characteristics and personality traits that are associated with someone in the leadership position. More specifically, leadership traits represent the characteristics that go into a specific leadership style. The traits that are specific to most females and their leadership style can impede their rise into and within administrative ranks. In contrast, leadership style refers to the methods and theories to solve problems and make decisions (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). In addition, higher education has traditionally been a hierarchical and patriarchal system that makes it more difficult for women to advance into administrative positions.

The style approach to leadership emphasizes the behavior of the leader rather than the personality characteristics of the leader as previously discussed or the capabilities of the leader which is the "skills" approach. The style approach focuses on what leaders do and how they act (Northouse, 2013). Styles can be broken down into two kinds of behaviors: task and relationship. Task behaviors focus on goal accomplishment while relationship is directed toward enhancing the subordinate's feelings toward themselves, their peers, and with the situation (Northouse, 2013). The style approach to understanding leadership through the behaviors of leaders has both strengths and weaknesses. This approach broadened the conversation to include not just traits or skills but behaviors. It also theorized the main functions of leadership as being task- relationship oriented, a very influential idea in the arena of leadership research. However, little research has definitively demonstrated the relationship between leadership style and outcomes. Further, this

approach has not found a style of leadership which is effective in a majority of situations (Northouse, 2013).

Leadership traits. Leadership traits may be defined as “innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great people” (Northouse, 2013, p. 9). Leadership traits commonly associated with great leaders are charisma, decisiveness, conscientiousness, and confidence. According to the trait theory, traits are distinct from styles or skills in that traits are something with which individuals are born. The traits theory has certain strengths which lend it credibility. First is that it seems to be intuitive that many leaders share common personality traits and characteristics. Second is that the traits approach has a century of research behind it, much more than any other leadership theory. The traits theory is not without weaknesses. The first is that no consensus has been made as to which traits are most important. Secondly, this theory has failed to take into account different situations and how they affect leadership. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, focusing on traits makes leadership training less useful as leadership is simplified to innate abilities rather than skills to be learned and improved (Northouse, 2013).

Great people and leaders throughout history are believed to possess these traits and as so much of the scholarship on leadership during the 20th century focused on determining the specific traits which differentiated leaders from followers (Ramachandran et al., 2011). Recent interest in the traits theory has been incited by people such as Barack Obama whose charisma aided his presidential bid. Aiston and Jung (2015) wrote that charismatic leaders possess traits such as self-monitoring, impression management, motivation towards social power, and motivation towards self-actualization. Studies such as this illustrate the direction that traits research has taken for the past century. Though numerous studies have proposed generally desirable leadership traits evidenced by those in leadership positions, two studies in particular are

often taken to be representative. These studies are the work of Stogdill in 1948 and 1974. Stogdill's (1948) first study found that inherent leadership traits are as follows: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability. His second found that inherent leadership traits were: drive to complete tasks, vigorous pursuit of goals, risk taking and problem solving, initiative, self-confidence, acceptance of consequences, ability to handle stress, mature handling of frustrations, influential personality, and management of interactions (Stogdill, 1974). It is important to note that much of Stogdill's work was during a time in which male leadership was normative.

Diehl (2014) found the following traits to be essential for leadership: cognitive ability, extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, agreeableness, motivation, social intelligence, self-monitoring, emotional intelligence, and problem solving. Specific to women, certain leadership traits may be more important in leadership roles. These include integrity, assertiveness, gregariousness, and risk taking (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). The word "integrity" comes from the same Latin root word as "integer" and thus means to be whole or entirely composed of one substance. People with integrity are the same person they say they are. Assertiveness is the proclivity to speak one's mind and stand up for oneself. It is the tendency toward clear and direct expression. Assertiveness is especially important for female leaders as women are less likely to promote themselves in the workplace (Fox-Cardamone, 2010). Gregariousness in leadership is something akin to charisma. One who is gregarious genuinely enjoys people, exudes energy and confidence, and is generally magnetic. Finally, the ability to take risks is important in leadership especially for women because the social costs are higher for women than they are for men (Fox-Cardamone, 2010).

Leadership style. Women's leadership styles are seen as more transformational—more caring, nurturing, and, focusing on the betterment of those being led as well as the larger context (i.e., the organization, community, or country) (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). Characteristics typically associated with nurturing characteristics include being affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, sensitive, gentle, and soft spoken (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). Women leaders tend to draw on personal experience and not just think of themselves, or the bottom line; their leadership style tends to have a greater impact on the people, the organization, and society (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; O'Callaghan, 2011). Female leaders are credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and to be concerned with the wider needs of the community (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

The paradigm shift in the literature that recognizes transformational leadership, a feminine leadership style, as legitimate and effective may have prepared the way for more women to take leadership positions. Longman and Lafreniere (2012) stated that:

this shift from power *over* followers to power *with* followers allows for mutual influence in the leader/follower relationship. Given this paradigm shift in leadership theory, the collaborating and empowering leadership style typical of many women prepares them well to lead effectively in modern-day organizations. (pp. 401-402)

The partnership that embodies transformational leadership encourages subordinates to accomplish the overall goals. Antonaros (2010) found that women administrators are usually concerned with creating change, building relationships, empowering others, delegating, and collaborating. According to theorist Burns (as stated in Northouse, 2013), transformational leadership involves a unique bonding among leaders and followers; emotional attachment, respect, and trust form the basis of these leadership approaches. Transformational leaders also

seek to raise the thought process of followers by encouraging abstract thinking and ethical standards based on independence, integrity, and humanitarianism. Transformational leadership places a strong emphasis on social change and justice.

Female leaders are known to create an environment that strives for excellence by developing relationships with those they work directly with and other leaders. Women are also perceived to value workplace relationships more than men, insinuating that female leaders may foster closer bonds with their followers than male leaders. One way of interpreting women leaders' effectiveness is the higher standard they have to meet in attaining their leadership positions and the perception that they "have to maintain better performance to retain these roles" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 33). Transformational leaders motivate those they are leading by penetrating individuals' desires and connecting them with their personal value system for their personal development (Poulson et al., 2011). Overall, women are expected to use language to enhance relationships while men use language to enhance social dominance and control.

These leadership style differences between men and women often create obstacles for women leaders in the workplace as they are seen as relational leaders in an organizational structure that is comprised of primarily task-oriented leaders. The accepted and distorted perception of women in leadership positions encouraged women to adopt a masculine leadership style. However, it should be noted that the adaptation of different leadership styles is only done by women, as men rarely change their style to accommodate their subordinates (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2011). Women's barriers and strategies used to overcome the barriers to their career growth are subsequently reviewed.

Barriers to Executive Leadership

In an attempt to explain why women are so poorly represented in executive educational leadership positions, a growing body of research has studied the barriers women leaders face in accessing leadership and fulfilling their roles (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013; Kim & Cook, 2012). Research conducted by Bonawitz and Andel (2009) found that women in executive level leadership believed the invisible barriers they faced were a lack of mentors, the good old boy network, gender inequalities, and slower career paths. Research on women's leadership has also found that women may experience unequal employment opportunities and role conflict as well as patriarchal attitudes towards women (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Pirouznia, 2011; Shah, 2010). These factors stem from culture, whether Western or third world, and have created a "glass ceiling" (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013) for women who want to access executive leadership positions. The glass ceiling effect, societal barriers, and institutional barriers are key identified barriers women face on their journey toward executive leadership.

Glass Ceiling Effect

To further understand the barriers identified by female leaders in higher education this literature review will define the term coined the *glass ceiling effect*. According to the United States Department of Labor, *glass ceiling* is defined as those "artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing in their organization into upper management positions" (Department of Labor, 1995, p 7). The Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 established the Glass Ceiling Commission whose goals were as follows:

- 1) to promote a quality, inclusive and diverse workforce capable of meeting the challenge of global competition; 2) to promote good corporate conduct through an emphasis on corrective and cooperative problem solving; 3) to promote equal opportunity, not

mandated results; and, 4) to establish a blueprint of procedures to guide the Department in conducting future reviews of all management levels of the corporate workforce.

(Department of Labor, 1995, p. 5)

The purpose of the goals was to identify what barriers existed, where they existed, and strategies to combat the identified barriers. Furthermore, the concept of glass ceiling is often a barrier that confronts minorities in addition to women when trying to reach executive leadership positions in higher education. In most cases, the discrimination is not blatant, but it is widely accepted as an unofficial policy.

The glass ceiling that creates unseen barriers for women to advance to executive leadership positions has been widely discussed for many years. It has been attributed to the source of stagnation in the advancement of women's careers beyond a certain socially acceptable point. However, with more women beginning to advance toward executive leadership positions in higher education, such as presidents of universities/colleges, provosts, department chairs, the glass ceiling seemed to have been penetrated. It is with this new penetration that the concept *glass labyrinth* emerges. Eagly and Carli (2007) defined the *glass labyrinth* as an obstacle course of diverse challenges experienced by women on their paths toward leadership. Eagly and Carli's (2007) work does not disregard the progress that has been made by women in the area of career advancement, but it enlightens the public to the blatant barriers on the journey for women that have ultimately negatively impacted the presence of women not only in leadership positions, but also in positions at every level. The glass labyrinth starts at the very beginning of a woman's career, and women ultimately navigate a continual set of barriers throughout their professional journey. As women continue to navigate the various barriers inherent in higher education, societal barriers create a different set of challenges for women to confront.

Societal Barriers

Gender stereotypes and societal norms or expectations have created the perception that men perform better than women in leadership roles. According to Northouse (2013), women are often perceived first through a gender lens and then through societal stereotypes that accompany gender, which is why they experience pressure once they achieve executive level positions. Gender stereotyping is the “consensual beliefs about character traits that describe men and women” (Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013, p. 486), which creates barriers to women’s career progress (Aiston & Jung, 2015). Diehl (2014) pointed out that not only men but also women frequently hold negative stereotypes about women, which may affect the appointment of a woman to an executive level position. Many researchers believe socialization and gender stereotyping can explain the poor representation of women in leadership (Shah, 2010). Socialization theorists have argued that “gender identity and differences are acquired through various developmental processes associated with life stages, such as schooling and work life” (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010, p. 19).

Gender Stereotypes. Individuals develop gender schema, which include expectations for how males and females are supposed to look, feel, and behave. It is widely believed that gender stereotypes affect the genetic code of the gender system since they constitute the cultural rules or schemas by which people perceive and enact gender difference and inequality (Smith et al., 2012). These stereotypes present an additional challenge for female leaders as the characteristics associated with leadership are historically masculine (Bonebright et al., 2012). A woman in a leadership role presents incongruity to these schemata. When a woman exercises authority over others outside of the traditional feminine context, her effectiveness is questioned or undermined as being less capable than a man’s effectiveness. In general, this research shows that it is easier

for men to be perceived as possessing the task-relevant competence and leadership ability that are essential to emerging as a leader (Eagly, Gartzia, & Carli, 2014). The brain expects women to act one way based on the gender schemata, but there is an additional schema for a leader, which is contrary to that of the gender schema when applied to a female leader (Bonebright et al., 2012).

According to Eddy and Ward (2015), a qualitative study on female presidents provided examples of how women needed to act tough to meet the expectations of their position. All of these challenges become a hindrance to female leaders as they attempt to advance in their careers. Dahlvig and Longman (2010) indicated there has been improved acceptance of women in higher education leadership, but there are still some invisible problems forcing women to work harder to achieve rank. Based on the existing literature, the major sources of stress for female administrators included time management, workload pressures, and responsibility to and for others, others' expectations, work and family conflicts, lack of resources, financial problems, and high expectations from the constituents (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010). Eagly (as cited in Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013) claimed that "it is societal expectations that produce and maintain inequality between genders" (p. 483). Their argument is supported by Pirouznia (2011) who asserted that "role expectations and cultural norms are shown clearly in the reality of the existing inequity" (p. 150).

It is evident that socialization and gender stereotyping limit women's access to and exercise of leadership. Female stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and social perceptions of women as inferior are also cited as possible explanations (Tomas et al., 2010). Additionally, exclusion from informal networks, gender-based stereotypes, lack of role-models in leadership positions and inhospitable corporate cultures were identified among the challenges faced by

female leaders in higher education institutions in Pakistan (Malik, 2011). Malik (2011) suggested that this lack of support is a reflection of the prevailing societal belief that women are not sufficiently capable to meet the demands of leadership.

Cultural Barriers. Cultural values refer to norms or standards that are considered acceptable in a society or community (Snaebjornsson & Edvardsson, 2013). Although culture is identified as a major barrier to limiting the number of women in leadership (Shah, 2010), its impact on the way they lead has not been paid much attention. The literature suggests that leadership practice is strongly influenced by culture. Culture has a great impact on women, and the traditional roles allocated to them influence their work lives. Metcalfe and Gonzalez (2013) claimed that since 1990, “for the first time in the short history of our field, scholars have become interested in how the practice of leadership and management in schools is influenced by culture” (p. 4). Masculine and feminine leadership styles are a reflection of cultural values and are important to understanding the potential cultural bias against women in roles of leadership. The literature has also acknowledged the influences of and interactions between culture and leadership. Schein (2004) considers culture and leadership as “two sides of the same coin” (p. 2).

According to Timmers, Willemsen, and Tijdens (2010), the cultural perspective is relevant in explaining women’s limited success in attaining senior-level positions in leadership in higher education. Culture resides at multiple levels, from civilizations, nations, organizations to groups (Schein, 2004), and it is generally defined as “the enduring set of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices that distinguish one group of people from another. The groups of people may be at school level (organizational culture) or at the national level (societal culture)” (p. 5). Research on female leadership has noted the function of

patriarchal culture as a barrier to women's advancement (Kim & Cook, 2012). Harris, Ravenswood, and Myers (2013) contended that "culture itself raises barriers for women's aspirations simply because of the attitudes, learned behaviors and routine practices that are practiced and reinforced" (p. 489). Not only are gender and ethnicity intertwined (Strachan, Akao, Kilavanwa, & Warsal, 2010), they are said to be influential factors in limiting the number of women in leadership positions (Shah, 2010). Oplatka and Hertz-Lazarowitz (as cited in Shah, 2010) pointed out, moreover, that "Any discussion of women in educational leadership or unique leadership styles of women that ignore important factors such as cultural differences, economic and social-political divisions...would not only be unrealistic but may present a distorted picture" (p. 130). Reducing the barriers that hinder the advancement of women into leadership positions will take nothing less than rebuilding and rethinking the entire structure of organizations (Co'rdova, 2011).

Family/Personal Obligations. Family and personal obligations may be one of the most prominent societal barriers for the limited number of women in executive positions in higher education (Tomas, Lavie, Duran, & Guillamon, 2010). One of the primary reasons females in educational leadership experience the promotion process differently than their male faculty is the increasing demands outside of work. Stripling (2012) added the practical issues of lack of adequate child care, inflexible tenure clock expectations for faculty, and inflexible work schedules to the list of reasons for underrepresentation. According to previous researchers, some women consider raising a family, and taking care of their physical and mental health as a priority rather than career advancement (Airini et al., 2011). Nguyen (2013) undertook an exploratory study in which she examined the experiences of female deans in selected Vietnamese universities to assess their perceptions of the barriers to female academic Deanship and the facilitators for

career advancement. Nguyen (2013) conducted face-to-face interviews with six female deans, three male university leaders, and two male human resources managers from one of the Vietnamese national universities. The study respondents identified strong family obligations, negative gender stereotypes, and an unwillingness to take leadership roles as the most common barriers to women taking academic management positions. Interestingly, none of the respondents identified university structures and policies as a barrier to female academic advancement. Further, they appeared to be satisfied with the level of support extended to female leaders by the university (Nguyen, 2013). The respondents further identified the major facilitators for the career advancement of female deans as self-effort, strong family support, and a favorable promotion context (Nguyen, 2013).

Nguyen (2013) further noted that the female respondents seemed to also rely on “luck” as a factor in career advancement, as they all alluded to their selection for promotion as being related to being in the right place, at the right time (p. 135). While acknowledging the small sample size as a limitation of the study, Nguyen (2013) concluded that family support is a very important factor that can significantly impede or facilitate the academic career progress of women in Vietnam. Furthermore, women themselves can be both objects and agents of change in empowering female leadership. From these findings Nguyen (2013), posited the following implications: “ i) appropriate policies and measures must be developed to lessen the time demands of women’s domestic work and childcare, thereby allowing women to invest an equitable amount of time to their career progression; ii) rather than viewing work-family balance as a barrier, women should learn to take advantage of the work-family interface; and iii) female academics must take an active interest in their own career advancement” (p. 136). Overall, the

above views reinforce that leadership behaviors that are effective for men are not necessarily effective for women based on societal expectations and views.

Institutional Barriers

Gender inequality is an issue that has a profound impact on higher education as more women infiltrate a male-dominated organizational system. Malik's (2011) investigation of the factors influencing the emergence of female leadership at the higher education level in Pakistan, conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with ten senior women administrators. The study found that 60% of the respondents identified dissatisfaction with the level of support extended to them by their institutions. The respondents further asserted that their incompatibility with the male dominated culture of the institutional environment presented as a hurdle to their progress (Malik, 2011). However, the respondents went on to identify a number of factors they believed contributed greatly to their success in achieving senior leadership positions in their respective institutions of higher education. Among these factors were the support of their parents and extended family, the inspiration provided by their parents and/or teachers, a strong sense of personal commitment throughout their academic period and professional career, a high level of self-confidence, self-esteem and ambition and the egalitarian nature of their childhood home (Malik, 2011). Malik (2011) concluded that the major factor emerging out of the analysis of the women's narratives was "...the importance of familial support in shaping their thinking and enabling them to aspire to higher education and career development" (p. 42). That is, the women were raised in a manner and environment that "...promoted their self-confidence, assertiveness and a strong sense of identity in dealing within male dominated environments" (Malik, 2011, p. 42). From these findings Malik (2011) drew the following implications: " i) women that able to achieve leadership roles are those that have been able to depend on family

and socio-cultural support; ii) building self-confidence in women and boosting their self-esteem opens the door to professional and personal success; and iii) organizations have to provide a more supportive to enable their professional women leaders to perform to their fullest potential” (p. 43).

Universities are beginning to look for ways to address this issue as it relates to retaining a diverse and highly qualified faculty and staff. Universities are specifically exploring the issue as it relates to how the glass ceiling or glass labyrinth impacts female administrators as they deal with gender pay gap, job rank progression, and family leave policies. Cahusac and Kanji (2013) argued that there is a gender gap in academia and that women are behind in tenure status and promotion to tenure status, due to their late beginning in academia as compared to men. For the purpose of this review and in order to gain a further understanding of institutional barriers, two institutional barriers were relevant and subsequently explored further: recruitment and retention, and professional development.

Recruitment and Retention. There has historically been a lack of effort to recruit, hire, and retain women into positions that will afford them the opportunity to advance into executive level positions in higher education. The Department of Labor (1995) stated that “inadequate recruitment practices are a primary institutional barrier for women and minorities” (p. 5). In Schein’s (2004) view, one of the most potent ways in which culture embeds and perpetuates itself in an organization is how its members recruit, select, and promote new members. Most jobs require networking which is typically done word of mouth. Studies suggest that organizations tend to hire or promote those candidates who resemble themselves (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Kim & Cook, 2012; Schein, 2004). This explains how women can be undervalued and deprived of employment opportunities because of biased and selection policies. Additionally, Van Tonder’s

(2014) research stressed the importance of the leadership/management role in the policies and procedures of recruitment to insure that the future candidates for the field or profession are the best. A strong recruitment framework could contribute to improving the retention of future professionals in higher education. Retention is viewed as equally important as recruitment because institutions should strive to retain talent that they work hard to recruit. Aiston and Jung (2015) suggested that selectors are influenced by the female stereotype which associates women with home and family, and that this pattern is difficult to break. According to Diehl (2014), “women are judged informally and subjectively on the basis of their perceived suitability for a post or for promotion” (p. 144), using, criteria such as age, relevance of experience, and ability to “fit in.”

Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2013) believed that creating a climate where people believe they are recognized and their ideas are appreciated may help institutions increase employee satisfaction. In this case, institutions should recognize women administrators’ talents, knowledge, skills, ideas, and creativity as important and significant contributions to higher education development. In a study by Balakrishnan and Vijayalakshmi (2014), retention was examined in relation to teachers and faculty members at an educational institution. An integrated retention system to empower a quality staff to refute staff shortages in educational institutions was explored. In this integrated retention system, a questionnaire was provided to a convenient sample of participants to research the loyalty of employees and their job satisfaction. Employee retention strategies included empowering the employees, recognizing and appreciating achievements, trusting and respecting employees, showing employees their value to the organization, etc. The study design was a descriptive research design and yielded results that showed that better working conditions, appreciation and motivation, opportunity for

advancement and improvement, better training, and work experience all contributed to employee retention (Balakrishnan & Vijayalakshmi, 2014).

Professional Development. Women are often not afforded the same opportunity as their male counterparts to attend professional development trainings or formal mentoring. Individuals with leadership potential are often times groomed early on for a future position either through additional education, development programs, or formal mentoring. Mentoring has consistently been identified as a barrier and strategy for women seeking or aspiring to executive leadership positions. Educational institutions have a responsibility to train and prepare future leaders. Providing students and faculty with mentoring and professional development programs may help them address and solve some of the problems facing women today.

Magrane et al. (2012) conducted a study to explore what influences the progression of women to advance in academic rankings, executive positions, and obtain informal leadership roles in academia. The Systems of Career Influences Model was used in this study to analyze these influencing factors. This model was formed from essential themes in the literature on women's career development, best practices of professional development programs, and the collective experiences of authors involved in academic leadership development. In this model, questions were developed to enhance the understanding of how professional development programs could be examined in further research on academic women's career development. The Systems of Career Influences Model is intended to enhance women's skills sets to navigate the complexities of advancing in academia. This is done through interactions of organizational, individual, and societal components (Magrane et al., 2012).

Each of these categories included aspects of the importance of leadership in the process of recruitment, retention, and professional development. These are areas that could be viewed as

challenges within the already established struggle to gain leadership roles in higher education. Each of the challenges that comes with professional development, retention, and recruitment also speak to the above stated challenges that have even caused the dwindling presence of women in positions in higher education that could lead to leadership positions. With the enlightening information on the concept of the *glass labyrinth* from Eagly and Carli (2007), there should be direction given to navigate and overcome the more blunt obstacles that serve as hindrances from women pursuing leadership positions and positions that make way for leadership in higher education.

Strategies to Overcome Barriers

In spite of challenges facing women, they are determined to improve their own lives and the lives of women who come after them (Ballenger, 2010). Pyke (2013) argued that despite the growing numbers of women earning doctorates, women are still underrepresented in executive level academic administrative positions. According to the percentages of men and women in higher education professions, few women are represented in top academic leadership positions such as dean, provost, president, or chancellor (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2010). However, successful female administrators have attributed their success to overcoming barriers of perceived gender difference. Further, learning how to deal with and solve problems may increase more women's chances to attain and succeed in executive level positions. Some of the experiences that have assisted women in advancing their careers included learning from mentors, team work, self-awareness, and willingness to take risks, readiness to take immediate opportunities, and completion of advanced studies (Airini et al., 2011). The researchers also found that the strategies to combat barriers women encountered when they were aspiring to leadership were supportive mentors, affirmative action, and university's awareness and actions

related to increasing gender and racial diversity in the workplace. Three main strategies will be examined that have been helpful for women to overcome barriers to success which are identified as professional development, mentoring, and networking.

Professional Development

Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) interviewed 91 female college presidents to determine how many participated in professional development programs. The results showed that of the 91 female presidents interviewed, 72.5 % female presidents participated in one or more professional development programs (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). The inference may be made that professional development can assist women to enhance professional skills, access social networking opportunities, enhance one's self-esteem, and increase women's career. Institutions can also assist with professional development by identifying female candidates, and encouraging and providing them with professional experiences that will support progression in higher education. According to American Council on Education (2012), higher education has been slow in formally developing its own internal talent in strategic ways. Women presidents stressed the importance of institutional opportunities for development of skills and demonstrated leadership (Ramachandran et al., 2011).

Professional associations are another way women can develop leadership skills that will be useful in moving up the career ladder. According to Eddy and Ward (2015), professional associations can provide opportunities to improve on interpersonal skills, be abreast about current issues impacting the industry and develop a career progression plan. The trainings or institutes offered by professional associations are an additional avenue to address any deficits or gaps in experiences not received at the university. Research on chief academic officers reported that the majority cited professional development opportunities as important to their career

advancement (Pyke, 2013). Serving as board members, participating in institutional staff development and attending leadership programs are just a few activities that supported the career advancement of chief academic officers in higher education. Professional associations are important for the additional training and development opportunities but the instrumental people that women come in contact with are important for lifetime professional development.

Mentoring

Researchers have shown that mentoring plays a role in the advancement of women in executive level positions and across various disciplines, including business, education, and government (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). The lack of women in such leadership positions also leaves very few mentors available for women who want a mentoring relationship with other female leaders in higher education (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). Mentoring is crucial for career transition, intellectual assistance, and psychological support. A study of female college presidents looked at career paths, mentorship, professional development, and barriers to career advancement and found that women who are mentored are more likely to attain higher levels of career advancement than those who had no mentors (Smith et al., 2012). Pyke (2013) believed that even women with outstanding credentials find it difficult to rise to the top of the organization without having a coach or a mentor. In addition, developing potential future leaders through mentorship is important because educational institutions cannot succeed without sustaining excellent leadership. Additionally, mentoring provides opportunities to access valuable information about the organizational culture (Buch et al., 2011). Based on the existing literature, mentoring and being mentored are critical career development opportunities.

Women who have succeeded and advanced into leadership positions often speak of mentors who were important to their development (Madsen, 2012). There are a number of

benefits that have proven beneficial for those who have engaged into one. Benefits include increased self-esteem and engagement in the workplace, increased job satisfaction, higher levels of career mobility and advancement, increased compensation, and reduced turnover. In light of the continued lack of representation of women in leadership positions, mentoring is especially essential for women seeking opportunities for advancement (Fox-Cardamone, 2010).

Unfortunately, due to the lack of women in leadership positions, many women will not experience the benefits attributed with same sex role models in leadership positions.

Networking

Odhiambo (2011) described networking as a relationship developed for the purpose of sharing information. Networking can be viewed as an art; it can be utilized to meet various needs. However, knowing who to contact and involve in a networking system is crucial to career advancement and professional development. Therefore, those aspiring to leadership positions need to set strategies and identify channels for developing their networking systems. Networking is essential for personal growth and professional development. Networking not only creates opportunities for development, but it also provides leaders a chance to build and strengthen relationships, explore new ideas, and share information and experiences with others in a form of coaching and mentoring. Maranto and Griffin (2011) found that female leaders/administrators use networks as a tool to seek information for personal support and professional development whereas men use networking as a means for making tough decisions.

Furthermore, networking may allow those aspiring to leadership to tap into the expertise of those involved in the recruiting and hiring process. Longman and Lafreniere (2012) suggested that female administrators need to find a way to find balance at work and home. He argued, “the key is not an all-out marathon, but rather a cyclical energizing” (p. 395). This implied that

seeking opportunities to participate in other activities outside the official job may help to increase women administrators' energy and sustenance in administrative roles. Engaging in family activities, social events, and other celebrations were found to give leaders a break which leads to gaining energy and exploring ideas for a new direction (Longman & Lafraniere, 2012).

Implications

Bonawitz and Andel (2009) indicated, that “women view power as a means of achieving change through people” (p. 6). Wolfinger (2013) indicated that, “Women see a career as personal growth, as self-fulfillment, as satisfaction, like making a contribution to others, as doing what one wants to do” (p. 14). Understanding what it takes to survive and thrive in an educational environment is important for both women faculty and students. Women are constantly striving to survive and thrive in a male-dominated leadership society. Timmers, Williamsen and Tjildens (2010) noted that to succeed in a complex environment, women must be able to adapt to change and maintain a positive attitude. The literature has shown that the gender and organizational culture are major determinants when it comes to the success of female leaders in higher education. Research is needed to assist in beginning to change a “culture” that is embedded in higher education institutions nationally and internationally. Some scholars argue that a change in the structure of higher education needs to take place before women and their style of leadership will be fully accepted. Future research is needed to assist women with breaking out of the stereotypical role that society views them. Hearing the lived experiences from current leaders who have penetrated the glass ceiling will inspire and encourage future female leaders to strive towards executive leadership positions when the odds are stacked against them. More studies need to be conducted to explore how those who have achieved success made it to the top and how have they sustained themselves in their current positions.

Chapter Summary

The *glass ceiling* and *glass labyrinth* will continue to be terms that researchers use to describe the journey for women as they seek to achieve executive leadership positions in higher education. The invisible barriers do exist as previous researchers have provided information on the relationship between leadership, gender, organizational culture in business organizations and in large numbers in higher education. Studies have just begun to look at the impact and intersection of organizational culture and gender with regard to the experiences of women as they seek promotion in a patriarchal system. In addition, socialization, gender stereotypes and, social expectations all contribute to the prevailing culture and are shown to exert influences and constraints on women even when they achieve high level leadership positions in higher education.

The debates on the relationship between gender and leadership and whether women are better leaders than men are part of increasing scholarly attention being given to the topic of women and educational leadership. Whether by choice, prejudice, discrimination, cultural expectations or some other factor that has yet to be uncovered, women are still underrepresented in roles of executive leadership in higher education. The review of the literature provides a strong rationale why future research is needed in understanding the impact of gender and organizational culture on leadership styles for women aspiring towards executive leadership positions in higher education. It is evident through research that future studies will consistently challenge traditional societal norms. This study will add to literature on women in executive leadership in higher education, by specifically highlighting the executive leadership role of Provost/Associate Provost for women in higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter details specific research methods that were used to complete this study. A full discussion of the research design, population and sample, data collection and analysis procedures are included. An overview of the qualitative design with a critical case study approach are provided. The following section details the selection of the participants and procedures for gathering and analyzing data. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of methods that were employed for enhancing the validity of the study.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership journey for women in the role of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) in public four-year institutions in the University System of Georgia. Additionally, the study explored what female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) perceive as barriers they faced on their journey as well as describe particular strategies used to overcome the barriers. The overarching question that guided this study was: How do women in higher education executive leadership positions in the University System of Georgia describe their journey toward earning university leadership positions?

Research Design

To examine the journey of women in the position of Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) at four-year public universities in the Southeast United States, specifically the University System of Georgia, a qualitative approach using a critical case study design was used. Qualitative research is an approach to studying individual and group constructions of reality (Merriam, 2015). The critical case study design has been used to further

our understanding of how people's experiences shape their beliefs and attitudes, and provides in-depth insight into their actions. Qualitative researchers stress the intimate relationship between the researcher, what is studied, the situational constraints that shape the inquiry, and the socially constructed nature of reality (Merriam, 2015). More importantly, qualitative researchers seek to answer questions that focus on how social experience is created and given meaning.

Additionally, qualitative researchers capitalize on the five principles of qualitative research: (a) reflects an insider's perspective, (b) uses the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, (c) involves extensive field work, (d) employs an inductive research strategy, and e) requires rich description while focusing the inquiry on a search for the essence and nature of the phenomena (Merriam, 2015).

Case Study Method

Numerous researchers (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013) have explained that qualitative case studies are common within the field of education. Selecting a qualitative case study design allows the researcher to:

Gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved.

The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case study can directly influence policy, practice and future research. (Merriam, 2015, p. 19)

According to Yin, the purposes of a case study are explanatory, exploratory, and/or descriptive. Case studies explain a causal link, depict the chosen intervention, show change, and allow for meta-evaluation (Yin, 2013). Strengths of this methodology include: "when", "how", and "why" questions are posed; the researcher has little control over the situation, and therefore, the results are more pure; and, the focus is applicable and real-life (Yin, 2013). Merriam (2015) asserted

that the single defining characteristic about a case study is its “bounded system” that allows the researcher to “fence in” what is going to be studied (p. 27).

According to Klein and Myers (as cited in Runeson & Host, 2009, p. 135), “a critical case study aims at social critique and at being emancipatory, i.e. identifying different forms of social, cultural and political domination that may hinder human ability.” A critical approach to narrative inquiry is when the story is examined to determine how the larger cultural forces within the social or structural world could have dictated which story was told and how that story was told given that particular time and place. The intent would be to identify sources of alienation, power, and domination, as well as to unearth the potential for emancipatory transformation (Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013). Pitre et al. (2013) further asserted that the application of a critical perspective to narrative inquiry enables “an examination of human action and interaction in dialectical relationship with social structural constraints” (p. 121). The assumption underlying this approach is that history has and continues to shape the prescribed rules, conventions, routines, and habits that allow structures of power and domination to be reproduced and perpetuated within people’s symbolic world.

As such, the influences of socially defined structures and ideology on patterns of human behavior, thinking, reflexive practices, personal meanings, and verbal/non-verbal communication processes are considered. In conclusion, case studies are empirical inquiries that research contemporary issues within their real-life contexts; this type of study is of special importance when the linkages between phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2013). By studying female administrators in the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost), a bounded system was formed where comparisons were made between participants’ journey to

leadership these perceived leadership traits, and the barriers they faced, and how they successfully navigated the barriers.

Population and Sample

The study explored the identified leadership traits, barriers, and strategies of female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) on their journey toward executive level leadership. The study took place in four-year public universities within the University System of Georgia, located in the Southeast United States. There are 29 four-year colleges and universities located within the University System of Georgia. The Southeast United States region also proved to be the most suitable area for conducting this study because, as Patton indicated (2014), a researcher must work within certain limits related to available resources. By selecting women in the region where the researcher resides, the researcher had a better understanding of the geographic location of the participants.

This study employed purposeful sampling to identify five participants in the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) at public four-year universities or colleges within the University System of Georgia. According to Patton (2014), purposeful sampling provides rich and knowledgeable information. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants based on specific criteria. Aside from geographical region, title, and gender considerations, participants had at least one year of experience in the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost). This ensured that the participant had completed a complete academic year in the position in a four-year public university and who were willing to participate in an interview and furnish documents.

In addition to purposeful sampling, a snowball sampling method was also utilized in the process of identifying and selecting participants for this study. According to Patton (2014),

snowball sampling is appropriate when the researcher may find it difficult to access an adequate sample. This method allows researchers to ask individual research participants to make recommendations for other potential individuals qualified for the study. The first participant for this study was identified through recommendations from the researchers' professional network of female Deans at a large public university in the Southeast United States. Additionally, participants in the study were asked to forward the solicitation and informed consent letter to other potential recruits. The participant's institutions did not require additional institutional review board documents in order to ensure the confidentiality and protection of the institution where the participant is affiliated, therefore, the researcher did not provide additional documentation. The solicitation letter and informed consent letter provided information about the researcher's study, the researcher's contact information, and explain the intent of the study, as well as request voluntary participation in the study. Also, the informed consent form explained that access would be restricted to secure participants' privacy and to maintain confidentiality, credibility, transferability and dependability of data provided.

Instrumentation

The researcher was the key instrument utilizing a case study approach with a structured protocol consisting of face-to-face interviews to conduct an in-depth exploration of female Chief Academic Officers' (Provosts/Associate Provosts) journey toward leadership. Merriam (2015) explained that in qualitative studies "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 15). Instrumentation included an opportunity for triangulation of the data through a combination of multiple data sources (Creswell, 2014). The researcher utilized five data collection sets for each of the institutional cases. Data collection included participant interviews, curriculum vitae, documents, organizational culture review, and artifact sharing.

The in-depth interviews provided participants with an opportunity to share a pivotal event or experience that motivated them to pursue their leadership journey. A review of organizational culture included reviewing the institutions website and, reviewing the history of female leadership to ascertain how many women are in executive positions of leadership at each institution. Document collection included but was not limited to reviewing publications, academic initiatives under their leadership, and newspaper or university paper career/research highlights. Artifact sharing was used in conjunction with interviews and document review to corroborate the information shared during the interview. Each participant was asked to share an object or picture reflective of their journey to an executive leadership position to further triangulate the findings. Each point of data collection was analyzed using a variety of methods such as transcript analysis, peer examination, document review and artifact review.

Triangulation of the data was also used to address potential researcher bias. Credibility and validity were addressed through peer debriefing sessions through consultation with the researcher's dissertation methodologist by asking her to review data as well as provide the opportunity for participants to review the accuracy of transcripts through member checking.

Data Collection

A case study inquiry is an appropriate research design for this study to explore how women in Georgia are navigating to top administrative positions. Investigating this phenomenon through the stories of these women and using multiple sources rich in context, can help us better understand their shared success and challenges. Case study research is detailed and pertinent to ensuring the data collected is in-depth using multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the researcher used multiple sources of evidence which triangulate converging lines of inquiry and strengthen the construct validity. Moreover, Yin (2013) added

that “the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews and observations” (p. 11). Patton (2014), Stake (1995), and Yin (2013) all stated that the data collection for qualitative research studies often includes in-depth interviews, and secondary documents. Yin (2013) and Stake (1995) added archival records and physical artifacts as additional sources of data. Patton (2014) recommended that multiple sources of information should be sought because:

no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective...by using a combination of observations, interviewing and document analysis, the field worker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings. (p. 244)

The researcher requested and obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University prior to beginning the data collection process. Thus, for this study, the researcher collected data using interviews, curriculum vitae, documents, organizational culture review, and physical artifacts. Thus triangulation, which refers to various sources of data collection, was achieved through the use of the five data collection methods that were used in the study. Through narrative accounts the experiences of being a woman achieving the role of Chief Academic Officer were explored as well as the organizational culture of the research university within the context of Intersectionality. A structured interview approach with open-ended questions were the primary method utilized for the duration of the study (Creswell, 2014). To ensure that the same information was obtained from the participants, the use of the same questions elicited a deeper understanding of the journey for women toward executive leadership. The researcher anticipated that participants would reveal commonalities and differences in how Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) perceive the journey toward leadership.

The interview questions were developed based on the leadership traits, barriers and strategies identified in the literature, as recommended by (Creswell, 2014). The structured interview questions demonstrate the alignment of the research question with the existing literature. The use of an interview protocol assisted in the structure and analysis of the interview data.

Interviews were supported with the document review and artifact sharing.

Interviews

In qualitative research methods, interviews emerge not only as the most common form of data collection for case study research but also a high quality data collection technique.

Interviews are an essential component of successful qualitative research. Structured open-ended interview questions were developed and utilized to inform the data collection. This type of interview approach assisted with organizing the structured interview questions through the lens of gender. Questions were used to collect stories from participants concerning their position as Provost, and their leadership traits, barriers, and strategies to overcome barriers. In person interviews were conducted to document and understand the experiences of women achieving the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost). Interview questions were developed based on the leadership traits indicative of women as identified in the literature. The answers to the structured interview questions provided a greater understanding of the experience. Issues revealed provided greater insight for future researchers to be able to expand on this idea.

Participants were asked to participate in one 60 minute face-to-face interview and an additional follow-up interview if needed. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. For confidentiality purposes, the participants' names and institutions were changed. Pseudonyms indicative of "Precious Gems" were assigned to maintain the confidentiality of participants. Each participant was given and asked to sign an informed consent form (see

Appendix B). The informed consent form introduced the researcher's efforts, provided participants the researchers' contact information, and explained the intent of the study, as well as requested voluntary participation in this study. As previously stated, the researcher sought the participants' consent and permission to record the interviews.

Documents

Once participants agreed to participate in the study, document review was the initial data collection procedure in this study. Yin (2013) argued, "because of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case studies" (p. 103). The following documents were reviewed as part of the document review stage: University website, presidential cabinet demographics, and participants' vitae. Participants were asked to provide a copy of their curriculum vitae to the researcher as part of the interview. The participants' vitae provided detailed educational information as well as allowed the researcher to look for specific training, and to assess strengths as well as gaps or omissions of leadership positions.

Additionally, documents were reviewed such as publications, academic initiatives under their leadership, and newspaper or university paper career and/or research highlights. Organizational culture review was ascertained by reviewing each participant's website to look for evidence of gender bias and to determine the makeup of the presidential cabinet. Additionally, it included reviewing the institutions website, reviewing the history of female leadership through archival records, and ascertaining how many women are in executive positions of leadership at each institution.

Artifacts

Finally, participants were asked to share an object or picture that is reflective of their leadership journey. Artifact sharing was used in conjunction with interviews and document

review to corroborate the information shared during the interview. Each participant was asked to share an object or picture reflective of their journey to the Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) position to further triangulate the findings. The researcher purposefully sought to collect artifacts that “might function as the carrier of a message, an object to be translated, an impediment to understanding, or, yet, as a prop to interaction” (Prior, 2011, p. 21). Additionally, each participant was asked during the interview to share a story or event that was the motivation or pivotal moment in their career that pushed them on their leadership journey.

Data Analysis

Qualitative case study methodology relies on qualitative data analysis guidelines. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), data analysis is defined as a process that involves “working with data, organizing and breaking into manageable units, synthesizing and searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 145). Several methods of data analysis were used for each data collection set. Member checking was used throughout this study. Once the data had been transcribed, a copy of her transcript was sent to the respective participant for member verification purposes. Participants had the opportunity to make revisions by removing or revising statements for confidential or clarification purposes. While awaiting confirmation of member checks, the initial review of data began with personal interview notes, which were more general in nature. Analysis was ongoing as transcripts were continually reviewed. Rubin and Rubin (2011) recommended two phases be utilized for interview analysis. Transcripts were transcribed, read several times by the researcher, and coded into themes and categories that related to the research question. Participants verified and offered feedback upon review of the interview transcripts.

Participant feedback provided the researcher with an opportunity to review for accuracy and continuity (Patton, 2014).

The researcher immersed in the interview transcripts, field notes, and other documents to organize the materials to become aware of patterns or themes that emerged. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method where data from the interviews, documents, organizational culture, shared object and pivotal story sharing were compared for each of the participants. This evolved into constant comparative methods, a version of constant comparative analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), but refined by Charmaz (2006), which consists of a careful review of each transcript, perhaps revisiting the audio recordings as needed for clarification or context purposes. “Making comparisons between data, codes and categories advances your conceptual understanding because you define analytic properties of your categories and then begin to treat these properties to rigorous scrutiny” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 178). Ongoing analysis provided further insight into the participants perceived leadership traits by including an ongoing review of the literature and interview transcripts. Information from the analysis of the participants’ curriculum vitae, interviews, organizational culture review, documents and physical artifacts were coded. Participant interviews were the main source of information, while curriculum vitae, organizational culture review, document review and artifacts sharing provided additional insight into the data collected. Data analysis was inductive, therefore the codes were generated from the data rather than predetermined. The constant comparison between these five data collection sources was essential in determining emerging themes and how the themes related to each other. Once the data was gathered from the participants, the researcher analyzed each of the data collection sources for key elements and categorized them into themes. Additionally, transcribed participant interviews were read from all

participants in order to identify key ideas or patterns. Key ideas were recorded from the interviews and tallied to identify the dominating patterns. Coding was further refined after the initial stage of coding to identify emerging themes through the use of colored markers and highlighters. Finally, the coding process was carried out by organizing and categorizing items and attributing a code to each item case where there similarities or differences. The emergent themes within the qualitative data analysis included the barriers and strategies each of the five Provost/Associate Provost faced and how they were influenced by these experiences on their leadership journey.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of a study is important to evaluating its worth. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that findings of any research should meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the truth value (internal validity), applicability (transferability), consistency (dependability), and neutrality (confirmability) are all criteria used in qualitative studies. Credibility refers to the truthfulness, which relates to internal validity which determines whether the findings are reliable as it relates to the study. Transferability refers to showing that the findings are consistent and can be used in other contexts. Dependability is a concept used to refer to consistency and duplication of the research. Confirmability refers to the degree of neutrality in the study with regard to the researcher's bias. Qualitative studies utilize several techniques to ensure that findings meet the previously mentioned criteria. Appendix B establishes validity and credibility, researcher bias and triangulation were data analysis methods used in this study.

Credibility

To establish credibility, a variety of measures were utilized throughout the study. Member checking and peer examination were utilized to ensure accuracy and to enhance credibility (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher included all of the participants' perspectives by using verbatim phrases from interviews to illustrate the themes presented in the findings. Results were sent to all participating women for additional validation. Additionally, triangulation was used to ensure the dependability and credibility of this study. The researcher constantly compared and contrasted all fore mentioned data sources. Thus, the analysis of collected data were triangulated using the theoretical framework, recent literature, and constant comparison to establish credibility of the study. Additionally, the researcher examined and carefully scrutinized her own familiarity with the topic and its source for possible bias (Creswell, 2014).

Triangulation

Triangulation is another way to maintain the trustworthiness of the study because it helps to minimize the threat of researcher bias. Triangulation is a method used to judge the validity and accuracy of data by comparing differing points of view (Creswell, 2014). Source triangulation was used throughout this study. In this study the various sources that were triangulated included, interviews, artifact sharing, and documents.

Confidentiality

Indicative of qualitative studies, ethical issues relating to the protection of the participants is a primary concern (Merriam, 2015). Confidentiality is the process of protecting the identity of participants in research. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym for the study, and the name of the university or institution was kept confidential using

pseudonyms as well. The interview, document, and oral/physical artifact data collected from the participants was kept in a locked cabinet, and the pseudonym key was stored separately in a different locked cabinet in order to protect the privacy of the participants.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability relies on providing a description of the content and context of the inquiry that is detailed enough to make a judgment about transferability. To ensure transferability, background demographic data was collected from each participant. Additionally, each participant's institutional website was reviewed for gender bias by reviewing the makeup up of the university cabinet for a minimum of three years. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that the burden of transferability lies with the inquirer engaging in the transfer but relies on the initial researcher to provide the data to make the judgment. To help ensure transferability, I have documented and described the research process, including data collection and analysis procedures and the participant recruitment strategies.

Dependability

Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. To ensure dependability, triangulation of the interviews, artifacts, and supplemental documents provided corroborating evidence for this study. Dependability, requires consistency of the research process and outcome (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability is considered the most abstract component of trustworthiness out of the four criteria, but one cannot have transferability of confirmability without it.

Confirmability

The research's study and conclusions drawn from the data can always be shaped by the researcher's personal experiences. As Malterud (2001) had pointed out, "A researcher's

background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (pp. 483-484). As a female who may aspire to become an executive level leader in higher education, the researcher inherently brought some personal assumptions about challenges that women face during their journey toward leadership.

Reporting the Data

Narrative case profiles were presented on each Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) interviewed for the study. Demographic data from the interview protocol are reported in narrative and table format in Chapter IV. Findings are presented by themes and supported by direct quotes to substantiate findings in Chapter IV. Additionally, the physical artifacts and oral stories reflective of the female leaders’ journey were organized by themes and supported by quotes.

Chapter Summary

The critical case study design was used to examine the journey toward leadership for five female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts or Associate Provosts) within the University System of Georgia, located in the Southeast United States. Data collection techniques included interviews, documents and oral, and physical artifacts which were used to deepen the researcher’s understanding of how participants experienced their journey toward the executive leadership position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost). Each point of data collection was analyzed using a variety of methods such as transcript analysis, peer examination, document review and artifact review. The researcher compared and contrasted the data of participants, noting any common themes that emerged and analyzed the data for significant changes for individual participants as well as any common changes that all participants identify.

Data were presented in a narrative profile format through the lens of Intersectionality which was used to guide the study.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership journey and experiences for women in the role of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) in public four-year institutions in the Southeast United States, specifically the University System of Georgia. Additionally, the study explored what female Chief Academic Officers perceived as barriers they faced as well as described strategies they used to overcome the barriers. The overarching question that guided this study was: How do women in higher education executive leadership positions in the University System of Georgia describe their journey toward earning university leadership positions?

This chapter will discuss the concepts that emerged from the qualitative data collected and an analysis of the data obtained from the participants in the study. Critical Theory was the overarching theoretical framework that informed the study. The theoretical framework provided a better understanding of female leaders' experiences in higher education as they strived for executive leadership positions. Additionally, Intersectionality, a subset of Critical Theory, was used to further explore the intersection of gender and organizational culture in the context of leadership by examining the journey of female chief academic officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts). This chapter explores the five individual profiles of female executive leaders in the University System of Georgia. Additionally, it captures the common themes and patterns that emerged across the cases.

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

The participants were selected through both purposeful and snowball selection processes. Participants meeting the criteria of the study were emailed a request for participation, and five

respondents were included in the study. The participants in this study included three women holding the position of Chief Academic Officer (Provost) and two holding the Associate Provost for Academics (Associate Provost) positions at a four-year public university in the University System of Georgia. Given that the names of the participants and their institutions are confidential within this study, the researcher has given the participants pseudonym names representative of "Precious Gems" and have summarized each participant's leadership journey and experiences. Any information that the researcher felt could potentially identify the participants has been omitted. Table 1 describes the participants' as it relates to demographics such as age, marital status, the number of children, and who raised the participants as a child. Additionally, Table 1 reveals that all of the participants in the study were between the ages of 45 to 57. In addition, it reveals that the immediate family structure of the participants include the following: Three participants were married, one participant was divorced, and one had never been married. It describes two of the participants as having two children, two participants having one child, while one not having any children. Therefore, the majority of the participants have had families throughout their leadership journey and had to learn how to balance the demands of the position with the demands of home.

Table 1. Participant's Demographics

Participant Names	Age	Marital Status	# of Children	Primary Rearing
Dr. Diamond	50	Married	1	Both Parents
Dr. Pearl	57	Married	2	Both Parents
Dr. Ruby	49	Not Married	0	Both Parents
Dr. Sapphire	55	Married	2	Both Parents
Dr. Topaz	45	Divorced	1	Mom Only

Table 2 displays the educational characteristics of the participants. Considering education attainment, three participants hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, and two participants hold Doctor of Education (EdD) degree. It is important to note that all of the participants majored in the field of education in either their undergraduate or graduate program of study.

Table 2. Participant's Educational Attainment

Participant Names	Highest level of Education	Undergraduate Major	Doctoral Major
Dr. Diamond	PhD	Education	Education
Dr. Pearl	PhD	Geography	Geography
Dr. Ruby	EdD	Psychology	Education
Dr. Sapphire	PhD	English	Education
Dr. Topaz	EdD	Education	Criminal Justice

Table 3 shows that all participants have between 10 to 25 years of higher education experience including their current position in executive leadership. Additionally, three of the participants worked at greater than three higher education institutions. However, two worked at fewer than three higher education institutions. Table 3 also shows that only one participant has been in their current leadership position for one year. Two of the participants have been in her current leadership position for four to six years. However, two of the participants had been in their position for greater than ten years. Most of the participants stated that they had to move up the ranks in their respective disciplines which included obtaining tenure which may account for the majority of participants only holding their current leadership position for one to six years. The table also reveals the previous positions held by the participants before their current leadership position held in higher education. From the table, most of the participants (3) had held the title of Associate Dean before moving into the Chief Academic Officer (Provost) or

Associate Provost Position. While only two (2), held the position of Director or Chair of a department before becoming Provost.

Table 3. Participant's Higher Education History

Participant Names	# of years in higher Education	# of Institutions previously worked	# of years in current position	Previous titled held before Provost/Associate Provost
Dr. Diamond	22	3	10	Associate Dean
Dr. Pearl	15	2	1	VP for International Affairs
Dr. Ruby	18	3	11	Dean
Dr. Sapphire	21	1	5	Dean
Dr. Topaz	13	3	5	Director of Enrollment Management

Findings

Participant Narratives

This section provides an overview of the leadership journey and professional experiences shared by the participants. According to Madsen (2012), if one is to examine the true value of her experiences, a women's development and journey (e.g., culture, traditions, religion, values, backgrounds, education, work-family issues, self-concept, gender barriers, expectations, previous opportunities, perceived future opportunities) must be reflected upon and understood. The researcher provides an interpretation of the data collected through interviews, documents, curriculum vitae, organizational review and artifact sharing with each participant. The participant narratives that follow highlight areas of discussion that the participants shared during their interviews. Therefore, this synopsis provides some insight into their individual perspectives and experiences.

Dr. Diamond

Dr. Diamond was born in Korea to military parents and subsequently moved back to the States when her father was reassigned to the Southern region of the United States. She was educated at a women's college at the undergraduate level and attended public universities for her graduate work. She has worked in higher education for twenty-two years and has been in her current position for four years. Her family has a strong tradition of pursuing higher education, and a number of her relatives have earned advanced degrees. She transitioned early into administration by juggling part-time administrative jobs along with her tenure-track faculty responsibilities. Additionally, she has experience within both academic and student affairs. Dr. Diamond has also served as a director, acting chair, chair of a department, and associate dean for a college. She has produced a significant scholarly record, including approximately 123 publications as a writer or editor as well as written book chapters. She is involved in various national and international organizations focused on civic engagement and has a leadership role within various accrediting and educational associations.

Leadership Style/Trait: Dr. Diamond identified her ability to “build strong relationships” as a leadership trait that has supported her on her journey toward leadership. She emphasized her ability to work in collaboration with deans and directors across the university as another strong attribute. In describing her leadership journey and experiences, she stated that “It’s the people who work around me, giving me space and guidance that pushed me to keep seeking more opportunities.”

Gender. In discussing leadership traits that are unique to women, Dr. Diamond believes women bring different strengths to the leadership table. She stated, “women have a softer way of

viewing the world." She goes on to say that, "women get people to come together to discuss their ideas and bring forth an openness that most male leaders don't value."

Mentoring and Networking. In respect to strategies to overcome barriers on Dr. Diamond's leadership journey, she stated, "Seek counsel from other professionals, both male, and females outside of your university." She stressed the importance of having professional connections both internal and external to your university. Dr. Diamond stated that "there were many mentors, role models and friends who believed in me and often encouraged me to take the next step at different stages of my career and life." She also pointed out that her previous male supervisors were the ones that pushed her the most and continue to serve as mentors, even now in her leadership position. Networking within your professional associations related to higher education and your discipline of expertise were equally as important as having a mentor. Dr. Diamond stated, "Professional associations are a central ocean supply of resources that all administrators need whether they are male or female but definitely if they are female."

Organizational culture. When discussing what role organizational culture played in her navigation toward leadership, Dr. Diamond exclaimed that "the ride has been fun, like a roller coaster with a lot of ups and downs but enough exhilaration to keep you going for more." She said the culture of any organization is one in which "you will constantly have to negotiate, but you can make the decision to not make that the focus of your professional life." Evidence from Dr. Diamond's website revealed that the university cabinet was not balanced for the past three years as it relates to women in leadership positions.

Pivotal Leadership Moment. Dr. Diamond begins sharing her pivotal moment in her leadership journey by first taking a deep breath. "The moment when I knew I would push without apology came fairly early for me in my career. It was while I was seeking tenure that I knew that I should

consider leadership because I could not make any changes from my current view point. I was frustrated with the tenure process as most faculty members are but I was even more frustrated that everyone seemed to accept the process as being broken. I felt the need to be the lead actress, no longer could I play a supporting role.” Dr. Diamond went on to explain in detail how striving for the “lead actress role” did not come without its share of obstacles, mainly from “female peers.”

Leadership Journey Artifact Representation. The object Dr. Diamond chose that was representative of her leadership journey was a pair of Louboutin’s red bottom heels. Louboutin’s signature detail of the red sole is synonymous with class. The color of the sole brands the shoe without the necessity of having to provide a logo with a label. She described selecting the heels as representative of her journey by explaining, "I know my worth. The outside world may not be able to readily see my worth, but I am quite exquisite just like a classic pair of Louboutin’s red bottom black pumps." I was intrigued that Dr. Diamond selected a pair of Louboutin heels for leadership journey representation.

Advice for aspiring females. “It is important to learn how universities function if you want to advance as a female in higher education.” Additionally, she stated that you must "take advantage of professional development workshops as a way to gain professional experience you may not get in your current position as a way to not only network but learn about areas of weakness." More specifically, she believed attending leadership training in your discipline or that are focused on women becoming leaders in the university such as deans’ and chancellors’ training.

Dr. Sapphire

Dr. Sapphire was born in the rural South and describes her childhood as “being a true country girl.” Within her family, her parents did not complete high school, and none of her

siblings attended college. Although her parents did not complete high school, they were supportive of her college attendance, even though they could not afford to send her. As a result, she worked and paid her way through college. She married young to someone whose goal was also to obtain a college degree, which was helpful as she focused on her education. She obtained her undergraduate and graduate degrees while working part-time and raising two children.

Within her institution, she was promoted through the ranks, serving as department chair, assistant vice president, Vice President for academic affairs, and now Provost. In addition to serving on boards of local nonprofit organizations, she also participated in various professional organizations where she held leadership roles. She has also produced a significant scholarly record, including approximately 50 articles, book chapters, and internal publications. It is important to note that, Dr. Sapphire started her career as a faculty member at the same institution where she now serves as Provost. Early in her career, she broke some gender barriers within her department by having a baby and returning to teach. She taught for ten years and became a full professor. Eventually, she was asked to be dean and served in this capacity for 7 years, and then was asked to serve as acting Provost. After a search, she was appointed to the job permanently and is currently in her fifth year.

Leadership style. In discussing her leadership style, Dr. Sapphire stated, “My style is to be more collaborative which is why I believe this position is a perfect fit for me. I don’t like confrontation, but I know how to handle it. In most confrontational issues, it is when the other person feels like they are not being heard or don’t have a voice.” Dr. Sapphire stressed the importance of working to ensure that everyone has a voice, especially when there is not much that can be changed from an administrative perspective.

Leadership Trait: Effective Communication. In discussing leadership traits, Dr. Sapphire indicated that having effective communication skills as being of importance. Dr. Sapphire stated “You have to understand and know when to use your effective communication skills, especially when you are faced with a difficult situation. You have to be able to hold your ground, yet remain very calm.” Dr. Sapphire stated that she feels gender has impacted her in a positive way because she learned early on how to get along with most people. Growing up in the rural South unknowingly prepared her to practice mannerisms associated with more feminine characteristics such as being polite and non- confrontational. Dr. Sapphire explained that girls were taught etiquette skills in charm class that emphasized the importance of being polite at all times and in all situations. Dr. Sapphire stated, “I saw my mom confront difficult people with a smile and her favorite saying of “Kill them with kindness.”

Gender. Dr. Sapphire’s summed up her thoughts about what was unique about being a woman in administration by stating, "The constant feeling like I have to do more and go beyond just to prove myself and my worth as a leader. You will find that many will not believe you are capable of doing your job, or you are inadequate, so you have to make sure you know your stuff at all times, and you stay a step ahead of the game.” She further indicated, “People buying into your ability to do the position assigned and looking beyond my gender has been the biggest hurdle."

Organizational Culture: Dr. Sapphire explained that there is still the perception in the organization that believes leaders are supposed to be men. Additionally, she indicated, “this is true especially in higher education where leadership is very much male dominated and when you have men making decisions about the hiring and you have men who are going to have to work with you, a lot of them may feel a little uncomfortable working for a woman.” Although she believes that she has noticed a change in this perception over the years, it remains a concern for

women trying to move up in higher education administration. Another institutional barrier, Dr. Sapphire indicated is that women have not often had the types of professional development experiences to make them competitive for many institutions. A thorough review of the university cabinet information posted on Dr. Sapphire's website revealed that the university cabinet was not balanced for the past three years as it relates to women in leadership positions.

Mentoring and Networking. Dr. Sapphire's leadership role in higher education began with the help of her mentor who saw something in her that she did not see in herself. Dr. Sapphire indicated that she developed social and professional networks with people that have helped her along in her quest to obtaining a leadership position in higher education. Additionally, she stressed the importance of having a mentor to talk to, even if it is just once a year. If you are going into higher education leadership, she stated, "you need to understand the culture, the processes, how to put together a budget, and continuously educate yourself and sharpen your skillset."

Professional Development. She stressed that receiving her doctorate and participating in leadership programs were equally as important. Dr. Sapphire participated in various leadership programs offered through her current institution. Additionally, Dr. Sapphire shared how the university promotes various initiative in the community to provide the linkage between the university mission and the community in which it is resides. Dr. Sapphire stated, "I find it extremely rewarding to work for an institution who values the community as part of its mission." Community service aspects of the position align with what Dr. Sapphire believes are her personal values of service to others.

Family/Life Balance. She indicated that balancing skills were very important and knowing how to manage well. Dr. Sapphire currently provides care for both of her parents who are in their

mid-eighties. Dr. Sapphire explained, “Caring for your parents as they age is extremely difficult to manage on top of doing a demanding job.” She shared that her mom was extremely active but her father was battling some illnesses that has compromised his mobility. Therefore, her father’s limited mobility makes it difficult for her mom to manage doctor appointments for her father without assistance.

Pivotal Leadership Moment. Dr. Sapphire shared that she had two defining moments in her career motivated her to keep pursuing leadership. The first was her mother’s diagnosis with brain cancer. It was the feeling of not being able to control something that could erupt at any time that made her delve deeper in her work. The stress she felt about the lack of compassion from her colleagues about her missing work to attend her mother’s doctor appointments just heightened the double standard she felt existed in higher education. Dr. Sapphire explained, “Male colleagues encouraged me to take Family Medical Leave while female colleagues said I would ruin my career so I should just do my best to adjust my schedule. The second defining moment in her career was actually related to the first but gave her a different perspective. Dr. Sapphire, shared that another female colleague whom she did not know very well had been observing her from afar as to how she negotiated her time while caring for a sick family member. Dr. Sapphire stated, “I was completely heartbroken that this young lady watched how I handled my mother’s illness and did something similar when she was faced with a similar situation but suffered greater consequences because she did not receive tenure.” Dr. Sapphire, stated that “I knew in that moment that I wanted to be a position that pushed for all administrators, especially females, to be able to take family leave without fear of punishment or backlash.

Leadership Journey Object Representation. The object that Dr. Sapphire chose to represent her leadership journey was a Daisy. She explained her choice by sharing, “I of course love Daisies.

You can always be something beautiful with a little water and sunlight. The petals may fall but you must always stay centered.”

Advice for aspiring female leaders. Dr. Sapphire stated, “Never be afraid to take calculated risks as that’s when you truly show what your leadership skills are made of, when things get tough.”

Dr. Sapphire stated that "knowing how to negotiate not only for yourself but for things you need to have completed on campus is crucial for success. Bartering is something I have learned to do well in the climate of budget cuts every year but initially it was an area where I struggled."

Dr. Topaz

In speaking about her childhood, Dr. Topaz stated that “college was always the only option, never a choice as to if you would go, just where.” Raised by a single mother who valued education, school was extremely important in her house. The oldest of four siblings, all who are successful college graduates and doing well in their professional careers. In discussing her childhood, Dr. Topaz recalled that she and her siblings grew up in an area where most of the children were disadvantaged. Since she and her siblings were identified as having academic potential, they attended an honors school outside her neighborhood. Upon completing her doctorate, she has worked primarily in student and academic affairs positions in both public and private institutions. She has written roughly 67 articles, essays and book chapters as well as served as an editor. She has held leadership positions within various educational associations devoted to higher education. Furthermore, she was the recipient of numerous awards for outstanding professional service.

Leadership style. Dr. Topaz characterized her leadership style by stating, “I would say I exhibit more of a masculine style of leadership with a hint of feminine leadership style. I am very direct, concise, and value data. However, I am keen on listening, sharing information and connecting

people to each other for a team approach.” Additionally, she stated, “Being respected and highly regarded in your academic discipline for scholarly work and research, makes you a top candidate for administration. It is definitely a way to get on the radar of others who are already in leadership positions.”

Leadership Trait: Cultivating Relationships. Dr. Topaz has maintained her position using her keen ability to cultivate relationships with people. She stated, “Even if you know that a person may not like you, you have to understand that they have skills and you have to look beyond your personal feelings to work toward the ultimate goal.” Knowing how to negotiate and communicate effectively are essential in overcoming the negative issues that may try to hinder your worth as a female leader. Also, knowing how to listen effectively was described as being of importance in cultivating relationships with students, staff, and faculty. Dr. Topaz stated, “You cannot take everything personal.”

Gender. As she reflected on her barriers to leadership, she commented that “Everything is not for everybody. Just because you were turned down or heard a no, it doesn't mean that it was because you were a woman. Maybe it was because you were not the candidate for that particular position at that particular time. It's okay to hear no, and not assume it's because you are a woman.”

Work/Family Balance. On a personal reflection, Dr. Topaz stated, “the real barrier is that I struggle to find balance between my personal and professional life, especially raising a young daughter. The youngest of all participants. Dr. Topaz has a young daughter in elementary school. I want to be superwoman, but I often have to miss school ceremonies or field trips due to work conflicts.” She spoke at length about the challenges of being a single mom, raising a young child while working in academia. The number of meetings and events in the evenings, along

with the stress involved, takes a heavy toll on the family and outside work obligations. Time and balance was significantly harder for those with young children or ones still in the K-12 system.

Mentoring and Networking. Dr. Topaz credits her leadership attainment success to her mentor whom she feels helped cultivate her knowledge and skills through being able to observe and watch how they managed and modeled some of those same behaviors. As she reflected on her leadership journey, Dr. Topaz commented on the role of mentors, observing that "many are responsible for my having gotten to this point." Additionally, she remains committed to service because she believes "that's where I can give back to the young women who need to see successful female leaders."

Professional Development. In discussing her interpersonal career strategy, Dr. Topaz stated, "I know I was reluctant to pursue a doctorate but having it is essential, especially for woman seeking to get into leadership. Having those credentials will not alleviate the challenges you will face but it does carry some weight for both you and them knowing that you are credible."

Pivotal Leadership Moment. Dr. Topaz shared that her the pivotal moment in her leadership journey came when she came to work with a former female colleague who was on faculty with her that had moved up some years earlier to an administrative role. Dr. Topaz states "I admired her ability to handle the nuances that seemed to come with administration with such grace and dignity. Well, in fact I thought she made it look so easy and so I thought I would give it a try. Surprisingly my first executive administrative role was working closely with my former colleague. It was honestly one of the most disappointing experiences in my career. She was not easy to work with and was not forthcoming with information primarily with me. It was a slap in the face to admire this woman from afar to only get up close and personal and realize that she gave all of the female deans and female administrators a tough time without reason or just cause."

It was in this very moment that I decided that I would not treat other women like that and would create a positive working environment for both males and females that I managed.”

Leadership Journey Artifact Representation. The object that Dr. Topaz chose that was representative of her journey was a Snow Globe. Dr. Topaz explained, “Snow globes are absolutely beautiful and people love to shake them up but the true beauty is when all the snow settles at the bottom and you are able to see the clear picture. Dr. Topaz further explained, “Once the snow settles, there is a sense of calm, much like any crisis in higher education, the dust will eventually settle.”

Advice for future female leaders. Mentoring is one the most important aspects of any females career, especially in higher education. Dr. Topaz states, “Informal mentoring has served me well, and surprisingly as I reflect on this, all of my mentors are men.” She further states that while she has had only male mentors, she has observed some strong female leaders on her journey. Dr. Topaz, states that “even though the female leaders didn’t serve as a mentor to me personally, I was still able to observe their behavior and pick up on things and mannerisms that served me well throughout my career journey.”

Dr. Pearl

In discussing the influence of her parents in the pursuit of her educational goals, Dr. Pearl stated that “they didn't get in her way.” Her mother did not attend college, but her father was college educated and a physician. As an undergraduate, she attended a small liberal arts college within a public university where she majored in the sciences. As she progressed through her postsecondary education, she spoke of the various mentors who influenced her, and made a “huge difference in her career selection.” Dr. Pearl spent most of her professional life at one public institution, eventually moving up the administrative ranks after securing tenure. During

her tenure, she received various external grants and research awards. Additionally, she authored almost 30 book chapters and journal articles and had presented at numerous conferences. As her career progressed, she became involved in her local community, serving in a variety of capacities in the public sector. She believed that her diverse professional experiences helped her advance and that her involvement in her community helped her secure her current position.

She began her doctoral education just after the birth of her first child and had her second child during the course of pursuing her degree. She credits her husband as being very supportive of her educational and professional goals and spoke of how both of their interests were viewed as equally important within their marriage. She characterized her husband's supportiveness by stating, "I absolutely admire his willingness to work as a part-time consultant, so that I could focus on my career knowing that my kids were well taken care of by a parent at home."

Leadership Style. Dr. Pearl reflected on her leadership style by commenting, "I've definitely had to adapt my leadership style to that of the university. Honestly, it has been a lot easier just to conform to the system versus trying to get the system to conform to you." Dr. Pearl explained that her immediate team understood her true leadership style as collaborative, but that she often adapts to the team or the situation in larger settings or committees.

Gender. In discussing what barriers were encountered on her leadership journey, Dr. Pearl, commented "I am sure that there were a significant number of barriers that kept me from being more successful than I am. However, I would be hard pressed to identify many of them. I have never focused on the barriers just kept seeking opportunities that I thought were a good fit for me and my lifestyle." She also stated, "I wouldn't call those obstacles and didn't feel like I've had gender issues" other than there were times when I felt "invisible." She believed that, "Being female was an advantage for me in many instances, because I was in a field that was

predominantly male, I was often just "overlooked, not intentional, I don't believe." Dr. Pearl shared that her male colleagues and supervisors often proceeded in meetings for example, as if she was not present in the room. She further explained that if she did not speak up or volunteer, she was not considered for the leadership opportunities that she held while in that department. Many of her male colleagues made incorrect assumptions that she would not be interested in leadership opportunities, because it was a hassle and because she was a woman. Dr. Pearl's former chair stated to her, "I never would have thought you would be interested in serving as chair of the department."

Organizational Culture. With regard to the perceived organizational culture contributing to the under-representation of women in higher education, Dr. Pearl indicated that the organizational culture had minimal to no impact on her ability to obtain leadership positions. Dr. Pearl indicated that she was in a male-dominated discipline, and her colleagues did not view her as a threat as she sought leadership positions. In fact, Dr. Pearl stated "My male counterparts did not see me as competition but more that I was doing something they didn't want to do because they felt they were way too busy with their research to add the university bureaucracy on top of conducting research." Although Dr. Pearl indicated that none of the barriers had impeded her personal success in obtaining leadership positions as she has been fortunate enough to get the jobs that she has gotten, she also stated that institutions could play a more proactive role in advancing women in leadership positions. A review of the university cabinet information posted on Dr. Pearl's website revealed that the university cabinet has had only three women in executive leadership positions in the past five years.

Professional Development. Dr. Pearl indicated that obtaining a doctorate is essential to opening up doors to leadership obtainment through your academic preparation. She also believed it was

important to get as much experience outside of your area as you can. She stated, "Get on committees that provide a broad prospective, such as strategic planning on either the college or university level."

Mentoring & Networking. Dr. Pearl indicated that if you have prepared yourself academically, if you have a variety of experiences within an institution, if you have somebody to help move you and your career forward in the form of mentors and not just one person but it could be many different people, the opportunities of obtaining a leadership position in higher education is possible. She credited the influence of mentors in her professional development, stating that "I had people encouraging me along the way."

Pivotal Leadership Moment. Dr. Pearl's pivotal moment on her leadership journey was when she realized that she could be a leader. Dr. Pearl stated that, "I never saw myself as a leader but it wasn't that I didn't think I couldn't lead. I just never really thought about it." Dr. Pearl explained how she continued to volunteer for every position that provided a challenge within her department. Once she had been department chair for a good while, she wanted to try her chances on the university level. It is important to note that Dr. Pearl served in a variety of leadership roles within her majored discipline where she was highly recognized for her research.

Leadership Journey Artifact Representation. The object that Dr. Pearl chose to represent her journey was silly putty. Dr. Pearl explained her choice by saying, "Never allowing anyone to put or force me into the mold. I have always had the mindset of being able to be flexible and adapt to any situation." Dr. Pearl also explained that nothing really sticks to silly putty. She stated, "I go home each day, and release the grime of the day and begin each morning with a fresh smooth start."

Advice for Future leaders: “Let folks know what you want and what you want to be when you grow up. No one is a fortune teller. People have no idea to what you are aspiring and most are willing to help if they know. So find people who are in positions to help you and let them know of your career goals and see if they can do something to help put you out there.”

Dr. Ruby

Dr. Ruby described her childhood as an environment in which she "was spoiled due to being the only girl of four children. There weren't any boundaries set about what I could or couldn't do because I was female." Dr. Ruby stated that she "always out-ran and out-smarted her brothers on any given day." Her parents were first-generation college students, and they supported her both emotionally and financially to pursue her educational goals. At her undergraduate institution, she developed close relationships with many of her faculty members, and this experience inspired her to become a professor.

Dr. Ruby began her professional career as a tenure-track faculty member, eventually earning the rank of full professor. Under the advisement of her department chair, she was provided with different administrative opportunities in addition to her faculty responsibilities. Her leadership journey followed the traditional career trajectory of the department chair, Dean, and Chief Academic Officer. She chose to pursue an administrative career since she "likes the big picture" and thought she could make more of a difference in that venue rather than in the classroom. Dr. Ruby attended a variety of different professional development workshops. She believed these opportunities helped her learn about parts of higher education with which she previously had no contact and raised awareness of the need for "intentional preparation" in her professional development.

Leadership Style/Traits. In reflecting on leadership traits, Dr. Ruby stated that "when showcasing leadership traits that are more indicative of men, she is often perceived as cold or non-emotional." She goes on to explain that early on in her career journey this bothered her as she struggled with how to show emotion without seeming weak. Additionally, Dr. Ruby stated that she was often "perceived as demanding, hard, insensitive, unapproachable and distant."

Gender. Dr. Ruby reflected on the barriers experienced in higher education by stating, "the one thing that often bothered or, okay let me be honest, bothers me about working in higher education as that is the only thing I can speak from, is that the male colleagues I work with will let me know directly if they don't agree with a decision whereas the female colleagues will go out their way to undermine my authority." Dr. Ruby continues by stating, "I find it disheartening that women will not support women in leadership, at least not in the environment where I have worked for many years." She continues with, "I struggle when I hear the patriarchal nature of higher education is why so few women are in leadership, I don't agree. I believe women are the reason so few women are in leadership in higher education."

Organizational Culture. One of the major barriers Dr. Ruby indicated was that the perception from her senior counterparts that she did not have the ability to lead. She indicated that she had to be persistent and not allow their reasons to become her reasons to impede her advancement. A review of the university cabinet information and pictures posted on Dr. Ruby's institutions website revealed that the university cabinet has been made up of primarily men.

Leadership Trait: Persistence. Dr. Ruby stated that her primary strategy in overcoming some of the challenges or barriers was to be persistent. She stated, "Buying into the stereotypes and reasons why I couldn't or shouldn't do something was not an option." She stated, "You are

always going to have problems, whether they be real or fictional, don't spend your time worrying, use your time wisely and search out ways to improve yourself and your organization."

Mentoring and Networking. In discussing her leadership journey, she revealed both male and female mentors who identified potential in her as both a graduate student and a professional. Dr. Ruby also indicated that it was important for women to state their goals and aspirations for leadership attainment to people who can help get them to their desired goals. She stated, "You must be proactive in asking to be on committees and extra assignments so that the institution will know what she can do and the value she can bring to the organization. Women cannot just sit back and wait for an opportunity to land in their lap. They must actively search for opportunities and create opportunities when the institution will not."

Family/Work Balance. "Balance does not exist. I used to believe that there was such a thing when I first started my career but over time realized that wasn't the case." The participant goes on to share how what she has found is "compromise." Dr. Ruby stated, "Realistic Compromise replaces the old term of family/work balance." Dr. Ruby used to have to worry about missing out on special moments with her children because of work responsibilities or having to miss out on important conference or networking opportunities if her children had something that she could not disappoint. Now that her children are college students, she is still faced with a similar dilemma while taking care of her mother with Dementia. Dr. Ruby shared, "there are doctor appointments and caregiving responsibilities that I have to stay on top of and this is life or death for a loved one."

Pivotal Leadership Moment. Dr. Ruby shared her pivotal moment by explaining that there was not one moment that was pivotal on her journey but instead a lot of small moments that created a big push. Dr. Ruby stated, "I had a lot of ah-ha moments along the way that I just took in stride.

Were there disappointments, of course? Were there tears? Yes, absolutely.” Dr. Ruby went on to explain that she just continued to volunteer for more and more positions with the goal of learning more about areas where she had the least amount of experience.

Leadership Journey Artifact Representation Dr. Ruby chose a quilt as a representation of her leadership journey. The quilt was fitting as it was a lot of patchwork that wove together to create a story using tattered fabric where each square was individually unique. Dr. Ruby stated “The uniqueness of each situation is what defines leadership, being able to bring a fresh perspective and using what you learned from the last to create a whole vision for the outcome.”

Advice for future leaders: “A lot has to do with the mentoring opportunities and with people in leadership roles who provided opportunities for me throughout my journey.” I am very mindful of that, which is why I work to provide opportunities for other budding young leaders.”

Themes

Many factors have been identified that influence women as they attempt to enter into positions of educational leadership (Keohane, 2014). The four overarching themes that emerged from the data were, (1) primary care provider, (2) strategies and negotiations, (3) working with other women and, (4) the intersection of ability, age and gender. The first theme of primary care provider discusses some of the common obstacles that female participants encountered as they navigated their leadership journey. The second theme of strategies and negotiations toward leadership discusses ways and tactics that participants employed to negotiate the barriers. The third theme of working with other women encompasses the struggle and conflicts when working with female colleagues. Finally, the fourth theme discusses the intersection of ability, age and gender and how participants believed they identified with each of those simultaneously as they navigated their leadership journey.

The participants were aware that the study was designed to explore the leadership journey and experiences as women in the role of Chief Academic Officer (Provost/Associate Provost) in public four-year institutions in the Southeast United States, specifically the University System of Georgia. Participants were asked to share a pivotal moment during their leadership journey as well as an object that was representative of their leadership journey. The pivotal moment and artifact sharing provided a more in-depth understanding of why the overarching themes of primary care provider, strategies and negotiations, working with other women, and the intersection of ability, age and gender emerged. The themes are reflective of the experiences and narratives of the female Provosts.

Primary Care Provider

Family/personal obligations were cited as the primary hurdle for women aspiring toward executive leadership in higher education. Family responsibility and the competing demands on female administrators' time outside of the university proved to be a strong barrier for eighty percent (4) of the participants. Each of the participants brought up the challenge of family and finding balance with work and home as a major barrier navigating the leadership journey. Dr. Topaz described the experience by stating: "I know as an administrator, I work beyond the normal 9-5 schedule. Therefore, my day starts extremely early because once I leave the university, I go home to work a second shift and by the time I have done dinner, homework and bath time, I am just way too exhausted to do anything else related to work." Dr. Sapphire who has two children stated: "I definitely had more responsibility than my male counterparts, especially when my kids were a lot younger." Cultural and societal expectations also influence women in educational leadership. Dr. Diamond, who was caring for an aging parent stated, "caring for an aging parent puts just as much pressure if not more than caring for a child that

requires all of your attention. I can only imagine what women do who are sandwiched between both parent and child." It was apparent to the researcher that family responsibility was sometimes a deterrent for women in educational leadership as caring for both children and aging parents took precedence.

It was also evident that the juggling act of administrative responsibilities and family life left very little time for scholarly research. Family obligations will continue to be a barrier as more parents' age, and it is considered the gender norm for women to take care of them. Interestingly, in this study women are in their mid-fifties as administrators and caring for aging parents is more of a concern than caring for young children. Eighty-percent (4) of the participants are providing some level of care and support for aging parents. Dr. Diamond stated, "There is never really the perfect time to think about assuming a leadership position in a woman's life because when you are younger, there is typically the kids and as you age then there is the caregiving responsibilities that come with aging parents or in-laws." In this theme, several findings support the obstacles that many women experience on their journey toward executive leadership as noted in existing literature.

Strategies and Negotiations

The second theme of strategies and negotiations toward leadership focuses specifically on the value of mentoring. Mentorship was identified by all participants as the most important strategy in overcoming the pitfalls on the journey toward executive leadership. Participants stated that the mentor relationships made the difference in the perception of being able to pursue an executive leadership position within higher education. Dr. Diamond described the mentor-mentee relationship by stating, "Having people not just one person as a mentor who have already achieved the same position or a similar position at another university was beneficial. Helping me

to understand and navigate *kinda* the whole terrain, especially the unspoken political landscape was a big help." Dr. Topaz stated, "As a female, you set yourself up for career suicide or burnout if you don't find a mentor. You have to find someone that knows the system and can guide you. No one comes in knowing the system so being honest about your limitations will not only help you but strengthen your mentorship relationship." One of the most frequent statements used by all participants was "find a mentor early", which was the response to the question regarding advice for future females aspiring for leadership positions within higher education. Additionally, it was revealed through the interviews that that participants were often recognized by their mentors or colleagues for their work ethic, dependability, and efficiency.

Dr. Ruby stated, "My mentor was a female in the academic unit. It was surprising to me that she advised me to seek additional mentorship from a male in my unit as they frequently are present at the decision-making table." According to Dr. Sapphire, more males serve on the promotion and tenure committee, so having a mentor who has a place at the table helps as securing tenure is the first step toward most administrative positions. Even in disciplines where there are a high number of females, more males are represented in this capacity. The researcher was not surprised by Dr. Ruby's comments as other participants made similar comments about having a male versus a female mentor. Mentoring experiences were empowering as it allowed the participants to recognize their own skills, abilities and potential as a leader more clearly. It was apparent that the mentors in many cases served as a reflection of the participants' talents and areas of growth. It was through positive mentoring experiences that emphasized the importance and necessity of giving back to aspiring leaders. Ultimately, having people believe, guide and advocate for the participants had a positive impact on their leadership journey.

Working with Other Women

The third theme of working with other women was revealed as being an issue on some level by all of the participants. This emerged into a theme separate from obstacles associated with the primary care provider theme, primarily due to the external nature of the barrier and the individual experience of the participants. Dr. Topaz stated, “You do better working with women when they are not at your same institution.” Unfortunately, women are becoming their own barrier to executive leadership, primarily due to how they treat one another. Dr. Ruby stated, “If you are lucky enough to have another female working as an executive leader across campus, typically they put forth more of an effort to get along with males.” Additionally, Dr. Ruby stated, “The younger female leaders at my university are not team players and prefer to work independently as opposed to working with other women on projects.” In other words, one way to ensure that a patriarchal system remains in place is to pit the oppressed group against one another. Dr. Sapphire shared that it is common for the generational differences within the female leaders to impact women’s abilities to support one another. Dr. Sapphire stated, “It feels at times that the young women just are not cut from the same fabric or share the same values. For example, when you are attending executive meetings discussing initiatives that could have a major impact on female students, faculty and staff, the younger female leaders will not speak up even if the initiative is not favorable for the females on campus.” Unfortunately, when women view other women as a threat they focus their energy on tearing other women down therefore decreasing the number of women in executive leadership positions.

Intersection of Gender, Age and Ability.

The participants responses provided the intersection of gender, ability and age as largely influencing their journey in respect to their relationships with colleagues, leadership

development trainings and the length of time it took for them to move up to an executive leadership position. The participants in this study all shared experiences that dealt with age, gender and ability, none of which were mutually exclusive of the other.

Gender. Gender was a double edge sword for various reasons. Gender could be viewed in the context of institutional policies such as exclusion, sexual harassment, or discrimination for being a woman. Alternatively gender could be viewed in the context of working with others of the same gender: women working with women. Gender was shared by all participants as creating a sometimes unpleasant work environment. Gender issues were more prevalent when working with other women in the institution as opposed to working with male colleagues. There was an overwhelming response, 100% (5) expressing disdain when it comes to working with other women in leadership roles as well as women who directly report to the participants. Female staff and faculty made it more difficult to create a positive work environment for sixty percent (3) of the participants. Dr. Topaz, stated that “you would assume incorrectly that other females supported you because secretly many, not all are wanting you to fail so they can have your spot.” Another participant, Dr. Pearl stated, “Women are just not forthcoming with their concerns and instead prefer to share them with others who are not in leadership, in the gossiping manner.”

Ability. There was also the intersection of gender as it related to the participants leadership ability. Eighty percent (4) of the participants struggled with their colleagues or subordinates perception of their leadership styles. Participants described the issue of leadership style using the phrase “dang if you do, dang if you don’t.” Dr. Topaz described the issue of leadership styles for women in higher education by stating: “I am okay being known as the ice queen, because I know that I am a warm person, but I do demand 100% from those who report to

me, which is what I also demand from myself.” Frequently shared by the participants were the high expectations they have of themselves when working with others. Additionally, Dr. Sapphire stated, “it’s helpful to go in with a dominant and authoritative demeanor and then gradually loosen up as the meeting goes on but close with the same authoritative demeanor in which you started.” Participants reported that there was double standard at times because they would be ignored if they spoke up to contribute in meetings or discussions but would be looked over if they did not. The participants in the study perceived that it was a constant struggle to be seen as an equal without having to work so hard. Additionally, the participants indicated that effective communication was essential to being able to navigate the political landscape of higher education.

Age. The intersection of gender, ability and age was revealed through the sharing of the pivotal moment in the participants’ journey. The participant answers provided insight into the issues that helped or hindered their leadership progression were not related to the organizational culture primarily but more related to working with other women, their ability as seen by their colleagues and their age. Age was shared by eighty percent (4) of the participants as being a factor on various levels. The first factor impacting age was working with younger female colleagues. Dr. Ruby stated, “On one hand, once you reach a certain age, a certain level of respect comes with it. However, this is not my experience in my institution.” Dr. Topaz, stated “Younger male colleagues in similar leadership positions value your opinion but you often feel like the old one in the room.” Dr. Diamond stated, “In executive leadership meetings, I find myself looking around at how young the male leaders are sitting at the table.” The barrier associated with age is the primary caregiver responsibilities that eighty (4) percent of the participants face. The average age of the participants in this study is 51, and many are the

primary caregiver for their aging parents. Also, interestingly is that many of the participants in the study did not reach an executive position until they were in their forties which is contradictory to the average age of 38 where men reach executive leadership positions in higher education (Keohane, 2014).

Chapter Summary

While the number of years of experience in administration varied among the participants in this study, they still had a lot in common when it came to experiences shared during their leadership journey. The results indicated that the participants shared the perception that there were certain barriers and challenges that they had to overcome in order to navigate the journey toward an executive leadership position such as negotiating family and personal obligations. When discussing additional obstacles, participants frequently shared that working with female colleagues was one of the primary challenges. Even though they acknowledged these as challenges, each of the participants found ways to cope and address these issues. The analysis showed that there were ways to combat these challenges by identifying a mentor and building a support network both internal and external to the institution where the participants are employed. The participants identified individuals who provided them inspiration and mentoring throughout their professional journey. Additionally, sixty percent (3) of the participants acknowledged that this person was a male in either their personal or professional life. In discussing their ability as it relates to gender, participants consistently identified their work ethic and hard work as one of the major reasons they were given the opportunities they received throughout their journey to executive leadership. Finally, regarding advice for aspiring female leaders in higher education, all participants encouraged females to continue their journey and to embrace the challenges as it

helps develop the skills and abilities that are required for leadership in a challenging higher education environment.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The examination of the professional experiences of female executive leaders' journey toward leadership provided insight into the impact of leadership and gender. Additionally, the study explored what female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) perceived as barriers they faced as well as described strategies they used to overcome the barriers. The overarching question that guided this study was: How do women in higher education executive leadership positions in University System of Georgia describe their journey toward earning university leadership positions? As the female participants in this study navigated their leadership journey, several barriers and strategies to overcome the barriers were identified. Additionally, the participants provided insight that would prove helpful for aspiring female leaders. This chapter provides a summary of the study and discusses the findings that resulted from this study. Interpretation of the data, conclusions drawn from the information gathered implications from the study and recommendations for future research are discussed in this chapter.

Summary

The theoretical frameworks of critical theory and intersectionality utilized in this study facilitated a deeper understanding of the leadership journey experiences for female Provost/Associate Provost in the University System of Georgia. The theoretical frameworks were beneficial as they facilitated the stories through critical narratives of the five female Provost/Associate Provost experiences of how they were able to navigate the leadership journey toward their current position. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) described narrative inquiry as a vessel toward understanding a particular experience. In this study, the stories of the participants'

leadership journey were shared by the participants in their own words. Research by Clandinin and Connelly (2004) supported this as they stated:

An enquirer enters into this interview matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of telling, reliving and retelling stories, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social (p.20).

Therefore, narrative inquiry was appropriate to further understand the experiences of female Provosts navigation toward leadership in higher education.

Gender inequality in higher education is well documented and there is an immediate need for an increase in female leaders in higher education (Chin, 2011; Madsen, 2012; White, 2012). In general, the participants in this study recalled adverse experiences, if any, in an overall positive light. In particular, the participants recounted differing coping methods, understandings of relationships, and general perceptions while discussing their leadership journey. The participants in the study took their role as a leader seriously and felt a great sense of responsibility to not only the institution but also to the people they managed. Additionally, they were role models, both personally and professionally, and took those roles seriously as well. Most of the participants expressed that their leadership styles are both inclusive and collaborative. Their leadership was not just about getting things done; it was about the people, the process, and the difference they made.

Discussion of Research Findings

Female leaders are known to foster inclusion, collaboration, empathy, trust, and concern for others which are all characteristics indicative of a transformational leader (Diehl, 2014). Although participants primarily embodied a collaborative style, many were comfortable switching to a more directive leadership style depending on the situation. According to Gill and

Jones (2013), female leaders are traditionally more transformative but will conform to more traditional leadership characteristics if warranted. Additionally, the leaders appeared to have a solid understanding of themselves related to their values and priorities. Eighty-percent (4) of the participants characterized their leadership styles as relationship-oriented; they valued people and processes, along with results. They understood that including people in the decision-making process and engaging their employees aligned with their core values of people and processes. Most important was that they were aware that their decisions impacted everyone at the university, especially the students.

Peer Observation and Modeling.

Observations of other leaders was shared by eighty percent (4) of the participants as being of importance. The participants observed and reflected on how other leaders treated people, the actions they took, and their leadership strategies whether male or female. The observation of other leaders helped them develop a leadership style that was more reflective of their personality, values, and areas of comfort. In addition to the positive observations, the participants reflected on "what not to do" or "what to do differently" after observing some leaders. The participants were all mindful of the visibility of their position and were intentional about setting a good example for female leaders that would follow.

Gender in the Institutional Context.

In exploring the impact of gender as it relates to the leadership journey toward administration in higher education, very few of the participants would say that gender was indeed a factor as it related to them progressing in the system. Sixty percent (3) of the participants identified gender as being a small obstacle to overcome, but none would characterize it as a hurdle. Dr. Sapphire stated, "I was always ignored at meetings, and often they would say

it was because I wasn't boisterous enough." Research by Kellerman and Rhodes (2014), supports the participants' statement as their study showed that there are gender stereotypes associated with leadership and masculinity. None of the participant's shared that gender was an issue as it relates to salary, sexual harassment, or blatant discrimination, which is traditionally indicative of an institutional barrier. However, it was apparent that there was a sense of "detachment" from gender issues or the administrators had a different way of viewing gender. Despite their straightforward understanding of the gender disparities in educational leadership positions, these women did not find their gender to have made a negative impact over the course of their leadership journey. Dr. Diamond acknowledged the statistics concerning women in educational leadership positions is "relatively scarce." She nonetheless completed her thoughts stating, "We are making progress, just really slow depending on what area of the country you live in."

Gender as the Mirror Dilemma.

The mirror dilemma is what the researcher refers to as not working well with others that look like you. It was surprising that the study revealed that one of the biggest challenges women face in educational leadership is working with other women. Findings from Jones and Palmer (2011) indicate that women often view fellow female colleagues as a threat rather than a support. The study revealed that all of the participants had a negative experience with another woman on their journey toward leadership. Interestingly, eighty percent (4) of the participants stated that the negative experience was the reason why they serve as role models for other aspiring female leaders. According to Jones and Gill (2013), outward forms of competition is unacceptable for women by societal standards. Therefore, women sabotage each other in secret or as Dr. Ruby states, "Copying uninvolved parties on email exchanges is one of the most passive aggressive

ways women behave at this level.” An excerpt from Moss Kanter (as cited in the Telegraph, 2010) captures the reflections of participants:

In Men and Women of the Corporation, Rosabeth Moss Kanter reprinted a 1942 management survey that questioned 521 young working women about whether they would prefer a male or female boss: 99.81 percent picked a man. Among the reasons listed: Women were too controlling, too focused on petty details, too critical, too jealous, and too unwilling to delegate. Though the list echoed stereotypical characteristics often attributed to women bosses, Moss Kanter pointed out that such qualities are also representative of another group: People with limited power. (p. 113)

The critical inquiry used in this study reflected the research participants’ experiences and reflections as it came to working with other women. According to Jones and Palmer (2011), conflicts arise when women are working and competing within the same context. Behaviors exhibited by women toward other women in the workplace include but are not limited to: (1) competing between female colleagues; (2) boundary confusion of women’s friendship in the workplace, and (3) the inability to view one another as team members (Jones & Palmer, 2011). Even though there were no notable contradictions between the findings and previous literature, this was a distinct finding in this study.

Navigating the Institutional Landscape

Similar to what Dahlvig and Longman (2010) identified, all of the participants identified someone in their professional and personal life that encouraged them to pursue the next level of leadership within the organization. Previous studies that have used in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of women’s experiences, found that mentoring, networking, and professional development were important for women aspiring toward executive leadership

positions in higher education (Madsen, 2012; White, 2012). All of the participants in the study cited having a mentor as a crucial strategy to overcome the barriers in higher education, especially for a female. Additionally, the researcher was not surprised that mentorship was a crucial strategy that affected female's perception on their leadership quest in higher education as this is supported by the works of Carvalho and Santiago (2010) research on women in higher education. Sixty percent (3) of the participants had a male serve in the role of mentor while only forty percent (2) stated that women served in the capacity of mentor for them throughout their leadership journey. Additionally, the mentors identified by the participants were both internal and external to the participant's institutions. Several of the aforementioned studies have examined women's leadership barriers and strategies they employed on their journey and support either personal or professional mentoring as a necessity (Campbell et al., 2010; Kamassah, 2010; White et al., 2010). Interestingly, the mentors of the participants all had different backgrounds and not all held executive leadership roles or positions but they provided a level of support and encouragement that motivated the participants to keep going, or they had been in the system long enough to assist with navigating the landscape.

In addition to mentoring, networking was also an essential element to each of the participants' ability to navigate their professional journey. Networking within and outside of their institutions was considered by all participants to be the most crucial factor to reaching positions of leadership. Peer networks provided perspective and advice as well as offered support and guidance during times of crisis at the university. It is evident from the study that mentorship should begin while one is seeking tenure and continue throughout their leadership journey if they pursue the academic route. All participants explained that as a female in higher education, it would have been helpful to have someone who understood their experiences and could have

offered sound advice however, it was not necessary that this person was a woman, just someone who understood the landscape. Building mentorships and diverse professional networks was a strong point of every interview and often considered by participants to be the key to navigating the leadership journey. As universities work to recruit and retain female leaders more work is needed on creating successful and sustainable mentoring programs that provide networking opportunities.

Conclusions

The theoretical framework of critical theory and the subset of intersectionality were the primary lens utilized to analyze the data collected from the study and to address the research question. Given the small sample size, the interpretation of the findings cannot be generalized for a larger population. However, the findings support the critical theory and intersectionality theoretical frameworks which helped achieve the goal of gaining insights rather than generalizations. Institutions of higher education themselves are not exempt from the forces of discrimination and domination, as many were founded and molded by the cultural values and perspectives of the majority culture. The analysis showed that factors associated with societal barriers contributed to the navigation of executive leadership for the five women from the University System of Georgia in the position of Provost/Associate Provost who participated in this study. It also showed that mentoring and networking was perceived to be critical strategies for navigating the leadership journey for female Provost/Associate Provost in the University System of Georgia. Although leadership is embodied in a role, the act of leading includes social action between multiple areas (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). The literature offers support and added context for the participants' leadership experiences as women in higher education.

Through the lens of intersectionality, the researcher was able to examine a more complete picture of the participants and the multiple aspects of identity that defines them. Intersectionality framework enabled the study to embrace participants' performance of her gender, age, and ability status as they interact in the context of leadership in higher education. According to Metcalf and Gonzalez (2013), researchers have focused on the ongoing underrepresentation of women in higher education by exploring variables such as gender, age, family and marital status and personal strain. As the participants shared insights about their leadership journey, their reflections indicated that the multiple aspects of identity that define them as being women impacts every area of their professional and personal life. As discussed in Chapter 2, Eddy and Ward (2015) asserted that when used as a framework, intersectionality reminds researchers that any consideration of a single identity must incorporate an analysis of the ways that other identities interact with, and qualitatively change, the experience of that identity. The participants put tremendous effort into balancing the demands of their professional life with the demands of their personal life.

Implications

Despite the recent reports and research indicating that diverse leadership provides a strong institutional performance (Balakrushnan, 2014), academic institutions have been slow to change their executive leadership composition. The findings from this study support several aspects of previous literature on women administrators in leadership positions in higher education. Female leaders are seen as being more collaborative; communicative; relationship-oriented; seek to empower others; and address difficult situations immediately (Odhiambo, 2011). Also, this study supported Madsen's (2012) research which found that the women in her study did not seek leadership positions, but rather, they were very good at their jobs and were

sought out by others because of their work and work ethic. Several of the women in this study had similar experiences. Sixty percent (3) of them explicitly stated that they originally did not see themselves as leaders. Forty-percent (2) of the women stated that they were sought out for their positions because of their ambition and hard work. Participant's perceptions of their experiences reflect similar experiences described by researchers in previous studies and the literature such as Carvalho & Santiago (2010), Maranto and Griffin (2011), and Chin (2011).

These are important to note because too often women are not confident in their leadership abilities and are constrained by the societal limitations that appear to be placed on women (Madsen, 2012). However, as more women are encouraged to take on advanced roles and are seen in these higher positions, this could translate to more women being confident in taking on leadership positions (Carvalho and Santiago, 2010). Studying the experiences of the five female Provost provided vital information about whether the strategies and supports suggested in the literature are effective. In agreement with the work of Keohane (2014), and Maranto and Griffin (2011), there are fewer females in higher education and finding female mentors proves to be a challenge but helpful to achieve executive leadership at a higher rate. Unfortunately, due to the lack of women in leadership positions, many women will not experience the benefits attributed with same sex role models in leadership positions. Williamsen and Tijdens (2010) noted that to succeed in a complex environment, women must be able to adapt to change and maintain a positive attitude. The literature has shown that the gender and organizational culture are major determinants when it comes to the success of female leaders in higher education. Research is needed to assist in beginning to change a "culture" that is embedded in higher education institutions nationally and internationally. The findings of this study revealed that there is a culture in higher education, where women do not help other women. The findings of this study

warrant the need for professional development for women on interpersonal skills. According to Eddy and Ward (2015), professional associations can provide opportunities to improve on interpersonal skills, be abreast about current issues impacting the industry, and develop an intentional career progression plan. If females are not supportive of their own gender, it is going to be hard for others to respect them as leaders in higher education. Despite the controversy about gender and leadership, research on women in higher education executive leadership is continuing to grow.

Recommendations

The results of this study inform several recommendations for aspiring female leaders in higher education administration. Additionally, the findings warrant a need for further research in the area of higher education administration for females. According to Sandberg (2013), critical life events influence leadership choices, styles, and the motivation to pursue leadership roles. All participants, at some point during their interviews, acknowledged or brought up the fact that universities have yet to reach gender equity in leadership positions and that more must be done to help promote women's advancement to those positions. Issues surrounding the work-family conflict must be more thoroughly addressed, and the cultural assumptions about leadership potential or effectiveness must be further challenged. In contrast to this research, future studies may benefit from interviewing women who did not succeed at becoming leaders in education or those who chose to remain in middle management administrative positions. Additionally, research needs to be conducted to explore the working environments and relationships between female colleagues. Finally, conducting a quantitative study focused on a large sample population would be helpful so that generalizations could be made about the barriers and strategies female Chief Academic Officers (Provosts/Associate Provosts) face on their journey toward leadership.

Dissemination

The findings of this study suggested that women perceive navigating the road toward leadership in higher education is more difficult due to gender and organizational factors not associated directly with the academy, but with working with other women. The findings of this study would be best presented at women leadership conferences. Additionally, the stories of these female participants would be helpful for aspiring female leaders to read as encouragement to know and validate their feelings on their journey. Finally, the findings will be presented at educational leadership conferences. Increasing the number of women leaders in education can help create an environment that is more equitable for men and women.

Chapter Summary

It was clear that female chief academic officers' (Provosts/Associate Provosts) leadership journey navigation was greatly impacted by the perception of equality. Mentorship also proved to be a dominant strategy toward more females successfully achieving executive leadership in higher education. Participant's statements indicated that they all seem to have accepted the gender norms established by the male-dominated power structure. It is also evident that there is an unspoken acceptance of women having to work harder to prove themselves as competent leaders in higher education while men do not have to do the same nor are expected. The theoretical perspective of critical theory permeates throughout the study as it reflects how the female administrators perceive their leadership journey.

This study addresses a significant gap in the educational research: It takes multiple identity characteristics into account to allow for a more authentic view of female executive leaders experience. It examines the ways in which female executive leaders in higher education navigate the barriers and develop the strategies on their journey toward leadership. Notably, the

challenges discussed by the participants had little to do with systemic or organizational culture barriers, and more to do with the relational barriers that women create with other women. The participants' responses which are supported by the literature provide insights into the experiences of female administrators who have faced barriers, received informal/formal support, taken advantage of opportunities, and who have ultimately succeeded in the navigating to executive leadership positions in higher education. The perspective of women who have achieved executive leadership status is helpful for advising aspiring female leaders. This study is a critical case study as it raises the awareness of the issues that women are facing in higher education. Additionally, it revealed the lack of awareness and internal oppression that women in educational leadership experience and perpetuate among each other. Finally, it allows these stories to be told from the perspective of female Provosts/Associate Provosts, placing them at the center of their experiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research Questions in Relation to Interview Protocol Questions

Research Questions

How do women in higher education executive leadership positions in the University

System of Georgia describe their journey toward earning university leadership positions?

ITEM	LITERATURE/RESEARCH	INTERVIEW QUESTION	RESEARCH
Current Position Information	Demographic Information	1, 19	Overarching Question
Age/Length of Time Employed in Higher Education	Demographic Information	2	Overarching Question
Home Life	Demographic Information	2	Overarching Question
Formative Year	Demographic Information	4	Overarching Question
Leadership Traits	Northouse (2015)	5, 6	Overarching Question
Leadership Style	Eagly, Gartzia & Carli (2014); Northouse (2015);	7, 7a, 8	Overarching Question
Barriers	Jackson & O'Callaghan (2011); Eagly & Carli (2007)	9, 10, 11	Overarching Question
Strategies to Overcome Barriers	Jackson & O'Callaghan (2011); Cahusac & Kanji (2013); Eagly & Carli (2007)	12	Overarching Question
Organizational Culture	Shah (2010)	13, 13a	Overarching Question
Interpersonal/Mentoring	Madsen (2012)	14, 14a, 15	Overarching Question
Professional Affiliations	Morley (2013)	16, 16a	Overarching Question

Networking	Ballenger (2010)	17	Overarching Question
Intersectionality	Warner & Shields (2013)	18	Overarching Question

APPENDIX B

Data Collection and Analysis Methods Employed

DATA SOURCE	METHOD	DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE	ANALYSIS
Curriculum Vitae	Participants	Curriculum Vitae Review	Textual Analysis
Interview (Merriam, 2015)	Participants	60 minute structured and audio recorded interviews	Textual Analysis
Organizational Culture Review	University/Institution Website	College organizational charts, female leadership inquiry	Organizational Analysis/Textual
Documents Lincoln & Guba	Publications, University News Briefings and Newspaper articles	Publications	Textual Analysis
Physical Artifact	Participants	Physical Objects	Visual Analysis

*Table describes the data collection sources, methods, techniques used and analysis.

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board Approval

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-5465		Veazey Hall 3000
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	PO Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Dear. Renanda
Melton, Teri

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Initial Approval Date: 7/8/2016

Expiration Date: 6/30/2017


Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research –
Expedited

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H16469** and titled **“Surviving the Top: A Critical Case Study of Female Administrators in Higher Education”** it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to a maximum of 5 subjects.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research. Description: This study will explore the leadership journey and experiences of women in higher education who have successfully navigated and achieved an executive leadership position at a four-year college/university in the Southeastern United States.

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer