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Leadership Stories: Defining Gender in University Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The leadership paths of successful women university presidents leading schools listed in the 2010 Carnegie Classification as being Research Universities, Very High Research are identified and described in the following manuscript. Two research questions guided the study: What is the path to the presidency? How do women university presidents recognize and negotiate barriers? Four female presidents were interviewed. The interviews were conducted at the president's institution. Interviews were hand coded for themes related to the research questions. Findings indicated that women university presidents experience an uneven path to leadership that mirrors the labyrinth described by Eagly and Carli (2007). Participants experienced barriers related to

gender, professional development and family life. Negotiation around these barriers was required for each president to achieve leadership success.

INTRODUCTION

University presidents are the leaders of their institutions. The university presidency is viewed as the pinnacle of leadership success and the career end point on the higher education leadership ladder. Although the role of the president is complex, it is especially complicated for women. The number of women in executive, administrative or managerial roles in higher education has risen 62% for the years 1999 to 2009 and the number of men in those positions rose 27% (National Center for Education Statistics).

Women's access to the presidency varies by institution type. The majority of women presidents serve in community college settings. However, the hiring of women presidents at doctoral-granting institutions is on the rise. In 2006, women held 14% of the presidential positions at doctoral-granting institutions. In 2011, women held 22% of these positions (American Council on Education, 2012). Although women have not achieved parity with men, the number of women in higher education leadership positions is increasing (Bornstein, 2007; Eagly and Carli, 2007a; Glazer-Raymo, 2008).

As students, women entered the university later than men. By the early 1900's, women had gained admission to most institutions of higher education. However, entry did not mean equality; and, women were often delegated to sub-par programs or areas of study that men deemed appropriate for women to pursue. Many of the elite institutions remained off limits to women. Women-only academies were created in response. Over time, these academies transitioned to teacher training colleges in response to the growing need for teaching professionals (Nidiffer, 2003).

Although women's colleges were often led by women presidents, women administrators were also present in co-educational institutions. As female students increased at institutions, universities responded by creating a new job titled Dean of Women. The role of the Dean of Women was to oversee the needs of all female students and included housing needs, physical care and academic requirements (Nidiffer, 2003).

The passage of Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972 and the Women's Educational Equity Act in 1974 brought the greatest change in the treatment of women in higher education (Stromquist, 1993; Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Commonly referred to as Title IX, this law prohibited gender discrimination in educational systems. Institutions in non-compliance risked losing federal funds. Post Title IX, colleges and universities were required to enact equity not only in admission but in all areas of functioning and included athletic programs, extracurricular clubs, and residence halls. This also included the hiring and promoting of faculty and administrators.

The result of Title IX was an increase in the acceptance, enrollment, and graduation of women at public colleges and universities (Stromquist, 1993; Glazer-Raymo, 2008). In 1974, 44% of total degree holders were women who earned a bachelor's degree and only 16% were women who earned a doctorate. By 1989, 52% of total degree holders were women who earned a bachelor's degree and 36% were women who earned a doctorate (Stromquist, 1993). In 2010, women outnumbered men in college enrollment by 40% (DiPrete and Buchmann, 2013).

The rise in women faculty and administrators was less robust but equally evident. In 1975, five schools in the category of four-year public universities, less than 1% of total institutions, were led by women presidents. In 1987, thirty-nine of these schools, or 6%,

were led by female presidents (American Council on Education, 1982; 1990). By 2010, this number grew to 27% (American Council on Education, 2012). Governing boards and presidential search committees have given increased attention to women in filling open vacancies (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Although change has been slow and women remain underrepresented in the university presidency, women have achieved the position of president.

According to Eagly and Carli (2007a), women are finding their way to leadership positions at the top. The increased presence of women in presidential positions at universities is evidence of this change (Eagly and Carli, 2007a; Glazer-Raymo, 2008). A complex labyrinth has replaced absolute barriers, and the ways in which women navigate the labyrinth tells a new story of women in leadership roles (Eagly and Carly, 2007a).

The story of how women move from administrative to top leadership positions is one that is current and unfolding. The majority of women working in higher education function in mid-level management positions where 57% of faculty and administrative staff are women. Only 27% of women are represented in the presidency (American Council on Education, 2012). The disproportionate number of women who are close to top leadership positions but not promoted remains an important area of research.

The purpose for conducting this study was to gain an understanding of the navigational skills employed by women presidents who lead large, very high research institutions. Women presidents of large research universities are deemed successful by the fact that they are leading top research universities in the U.S. These women have navigated organizational and cultural barriers. They have lived the labyrinth (Eagly & Carli, 2007a). There is value in their stories. Learning the strategies of women leaders as

reported in their own words informs research on leadership. The movement through and around organizational roadblocks is best told by those who have experienced it. It is important to understand the ways women move into and survive pinnacle leadership positions. The lived experiences of women presidents of research intensive institutions offers knowledge for future leaders who might choose to pursue a top leadership position.

The following research questions guided the framework and operation of the study: What is the path to the presidency? How do women university presidents recognize and negotiate barriers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership for women is a complicated business. Historically, women have been underrepresented in leadership positions in corporate and educational positions. The cause of the underrepresentation has been attributed to gender barriers, discrimination, and a late entrance into the workforce and academia (Eagly and Carli, 2007c; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Rhode and Kellerman, 2007).

Eagly and Carli (2007a) described the evolving structure of the workplace. Women no longer encounter a glass ceiling in pursuing leadership positions but a labyrinth. The traditional glass ceiling, that allowed women to see the corporate top without being allowed to access it, has been replaced by a complex maze filled with barriers and roadblocks. However, although difficult to navigate, women are finding ways to move and reposition themselves around these barriers, and continue on a forward path. Eagly and Carli argued that women still must meet the expectations of a historically male domain, and organizational processes can slow women's ascent to leadership. Yet, as women navigate the barriers to leadership positions, organizations also change in

response to gender leadership styles and expectations. Most importantly, the path for women to leadership is not furthered by displaying male behaviors as a survival mechanism in a male world but rather for women to remain authentic to a female leadership style (Eagly & Carli, 2007a).

This is a complex task, and according to Eagly and Carli (2007c), women can exercise behavioral strategies that strengthen leadership effectiveness, and allow a more successful navigation of the labyrinth. First, women must “blend agency with communion” (p. 163). Organizations expect a leader to portray agency in negotiations and presentations. Typically associated with male leaders, agency brings credibility to the leader. Conversely, women leaders who display an over agenic style are suspect and seen as aggressive. Thus, women must balance agency with community, and display warmth in behavior when the situation allows. Switching between leadership behaviors is part of the complexity of the labyrinth.

Second, women must build social capital (Eagly and Carli, 2007c). Women must form relationships with all levels of staff, and build networks through self-initiation. Males in corporate settings have traditionally belonged to groups or built relationships as part of the executive pathway. To negotiate the labyrinth, women must mimic this process, and develop personal and corporate knowledge through a design of multi-level relationships.

Eagly and Carli (2007b) further clarify women’s use of transformational and transactional leadership styles. Unlike men, women in leadership will always be viewed through the lens of gender. It is a continuous challenge to balance a competent leadership style without appearing overly agenic and false. Women leaders switch between

transformational and transactional leadership styles to integrate authenticity in leadership style with gender expectations. Transformational leadership allows a woman leader to be warm and communal while transactional leadership allows a woman leader to display a stronger presence.

Women exhibit a greater degree of transformational leadership skills (Eagly, Johannesen, & Van Engen, 2003). In a meta-analysis comparing men and women, women were found to display a positive style of leadership that was inclusive in changing group agency. Leader behavior is one determinant of their leadership effectiveness. The transformational model of leadership seemed to match well with the traits and behaviors of women (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

Bornstein (2008) echoed a similar argument. Women have made significant strides in gaining leadership roles, specifically as university presidents, in the past two decades. Bornstein noted that leadership expectations run congruent with gender, and university stakeholders often expect their president to emit a masculine leadership style.

Bornstein (2008) described women as favoring a transformational leadership over male associated transactional leadership. Still, leadership in higher education is based upon a “traditionally masculine organizational structure” (p. 163) and this structure is changing to favor of a more relational type of directing. As team building and group thinking gains increased acceptance as a leadership style, the door opens wider for women who more congruently display these skills. Women are more apt to practice transactional and transformational leadership as interchangeable skills employed through a situational approach. In the end, Bornstein called for a “degendering of the presidency” (p. 179) in order for universities to be successful.

According to Vinkenburg et al. (2011), gender expectations impact leadership perception and promotion. Men are perceived as visionary while women are expected to be communal. To elicit promotion, women must maintain a natural leadership style but also incorporate inspirational and motivational styles into their leadership practices. This is a dual burden for women who must exhibit both “inspirational motivation behavior while delivering communal behavior” (p. 19). The complexities of the gender paradigm add multiple challenges to women in fulfilling leadership roles.

Women experience bias in the expectations of gender roles in leadership (Bosak, Sczesny & Eagly, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Mladinic, 2011; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011; Eagly & Wood, 2013; Schein & Davidson, 1993). People perceive good leaders as those who exhibit male traits. According to Schein & Davidson (1993), when a person thinks of a manager, he or she thinks of a male. The connection of leader and male is close and immediate. The stereotyped expectations of a leader mirror masculine qualities (Koenig et al, 2011). Thus, although shared decision making is a proven leadership model (Burns, 1978), individuals view a good leader as someone who is aggressive, determined, and decisive (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Several authors investigated Role Congruity Theory and its relationship to women in leadership (Bosak, Sczesny & Eagly, 2012; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Mladinic, 2011; Eagly & Wood, 2013). Role Congruity Theory states that individuals are expected to behave in accordance with stereotypical gender expectations. Men are expected to exhibit strength and control while women are expected to exhibit warmth and care. The complication of Role Congruity Theory in leadership is the cross over when women must

lead with decisive and direct action. When women demonstrate this behavior, they are perceived as inauthentic or too male. This leads to criticism of the women leaders that centers on their behavior outside the boundaries of their gender stereotype.

According to Hoyt (2005), women leaders are sensitive to stereotyped expectations. However, a study of women leaders showed that stereotype activation did not alter a woman's leadership efficacy. Women were sensitive to the issue of gender. However, increased exposures to gender expectations did not disparage a woman's leadership abilities (Hoyt, 2005).

Responding to stereotype expectations was further explored by Madden (2011). Madden agreed that gendered stereotypes exist, but argued that stereotype expectations of leaders changed with time and culture. Since institutional culture and expectations are difficult to predict, Madden suggested women focus more on a feminist leadership style versus intentionally bypassing gendered expectations.

Rhode and Kellerman (2007) disagreed that women leaders are more collaborative than male leaders. Instead, team building and cooperation have become the organizational norm, and corporate leaders of both genders are expected to practice a communal style. Rhode and Kellerman agreed that barriers to advancement are more malleable for women seeking a leadership position. However, the authors described a "psychological glass ceiling" (p.8) created by women who internalize gender stereotypes. Similar to Madden (2011), Rhode and Kellerman argued that to be successful, women must create an authentic leadership style that aligns with the values of the organization.

In summary, the literature showed that women in leadership have opportunities. However, leadership for women is an evolving process and women need to embrace the

navigation path. An effective leader is reflected in the comments of constituents. Women should define themselves in leadership, and use their internal definition to create their leadership style.

METHODS

This study of leadership was a qualitative narrative study designed to collect the leadership stories of successful women university presidents. A search of the *2010 Carnegie Classification of Institutes of Higher Education* using the Classification Descriptor: Research Universities (Very High Research) yielded 108 institutions of higher education. A manual search of each university listed was completed to determine the gender of the school's president. This resulted in nine potential participants for the study. Each participant was sent an invitation letter via US mail and email requesting a one-hour in-person interview. Four participants agreed to be interviewed. Data was collected during a one-hour in person semi-structured interview at the participant's institution. Data was also collected through a one-hour in-person interview with individual(s) the president considered part of her leadership team. Interviews were transcribed and hand coded to identify actions, events, and story lines that identify the self-described leadership skills of each participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Identified themes were triangulated with field notes, participant public speeches, and media articles to build in-depth analysis.

FINDINGS

Each of the four participants described her path to the presidency as an indirect route. None of the presidents interviewed had a vision of being a president of a research

university as part of their career progression. Although each participant exhibited an internal drive to succeed, the road to leadership was not something predetermined in each woman's description of her career. One president said,

I don't know very many women that plan this kind of thing, and if they do, they're crazy. You make certain decisions in your career that ultimately can lead in this direction. If it works out, it's often times serendipitous. There are people that I know that have planned, this is what they wanted to be and good for them. I can't say that was ever part of any plan that I had.

When asked if someone had told her 30 years ago that she would be a university president someday, another participant answered, "Oh, definitely, it would be not. I never really aspired." She expressed that she enjoyed her previous leadership position at her former university and did not intend to make the leap to a presidential position. She explained,

I just wanted to keep doing what I was doing and doing it well and making a difference. So when the call came [for the presidency job], it was like, no, not going. But I always wanted to make a difference. I always wanted to be part of a team effort. And so, in looking back, it's probably not that farfetched but it seemed pretty farfetched.

A third participant recalled a mentor, who said to her early in undergraduate school that she should look toward being a university leader.

He said you've got to go to graduate school. And so I applied and went. Then he said, you know, you've got what it takes to be an administrator. You should think about doing it someday. I have to say that I wasn't planning and plotting or thinking how to get there. I loved graduate school. I loved the work of being a professor. I was fully immersed in being in the professorial lifestyle.

In reflecting, each of the four participants expressed that the job of university president was not something they set as a career goal. Each of the women presidents interviewed attributed career milestones to a mentor or person who encouraged them to seek administrative positions. More so, there were multiple mentors along each

president's career path who offered input on where they should go. One president described the person who encouraged her, "You know, it makes a big difference having somebody say to you that you can do this." Another participant described being contacted about an administrative opening. She was hesitant to pursue it due to personal and institutional events. When she mentioned this to the person who had contacted her, the individual said, "the [University] is a pretty unique place and things don't always happen in your life exactly when you want them to." This person told her to "at least apply." She said she will always remember that advice.

And so I did and I was very attracted to the position because it was the opportunity and the challenges of looking across the whole university and seeing how all the different parts interacted.

She reflected on her role at that school and said "It was a great experience." She said that she would not have considered the position had the person who counseled her not told her to apply.

Good leaders foster competence and confidence in those they lead (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). They get personally involved and build relationships that are inspirational. In the case of the four women presidents, each president could name more than one individual who had supported them in developing their leadership skills. By encouraging each woman to take the next step to a new position or challenge, the mentor was actually exhibiting good leadership. He or she was leading the president to her next challenge and building support in the process. Thus, it was likely these women tapped into qualified leaders in their pathways to the presidency. These leaders practiced effective leadership skills and knew how to best bring the emerging president's talent forward.

In addition to discovering a door to higher education administration, each president encountered barriers in their paths to the presidency. These barriers required navigational acumen and negotiation. The barriers each president encountered supported the development of their leadership traits and improved their leadership practices. The barriers described by the presidents were in three categories: gender, professional development and life and family.

GENDER

Gender was the most common barrier for all participants. Women experience leadership promotion differently than men do (Eagly & Carli, 2007b; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Hoyt, 2005; Madden, 2011; Schein & Davidson, 1993). Women move through organizations at an uneven pace and experience a narrowing of opportunities as they get closer to the leadership top. The complexity surrounding gender and leadership was expressed during the interviews with the participants.

One of the shocking things that I think people who get to my level suddenly discover is that you may have thought sexism was gone or diminished. It's not. It's front and center when you're in this job. Because now you're at the top of the heap and you're probably in a position where there's a lot of people who are either suspicious or envious or jealous and sexism will and continues to rear its ugly head.

Another president commented on her experience with gender and being appointed as president.

I think that women have a certain presumption to overcome. When I was named [to the presidency] a lot of people said I was named because I was a woman. My view is that I was named in spite of being a woman. I came here with a very deep portfolio of experience. I am a highly recognized and award winning scholar. I have been in lots of administrative positions at some of the largest and best public universities in the world. There is not any part of the academy I have not had some relationship with. So you could not look at that record and say "well, she's not really qualified." But there is an effort to demean the qualifications of women.

A third participant described the differences in leadership perceptions of men and women.

I think women are more apt to be criticized. You never really hear the words *powerful* or *distinguished* being used when you talk about women. It's usually in a more derogatory way of describing strength. You just kind of come to believe that's the way it is in some ways and it's a shame. I do think that there is that criticism that doesn't come to the guys.

Women experience a greater bias in leadership positions in both business and higher education (Bornstein, 2008; Carli & Eagly, 2012; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007a; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Madden, 2011; Hoyt, 2005). All four presidents interviewed voiced comments congruent with stereotypical expectations of gender and leadership. Women are expected to exhibit female-oriented traits of warmth, care and quietness. Women are still considered the caregivers of the family and public perceptions are often that women should adhere to their gender-defined characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When women behave outside these stereotypes and break the boundaries of expectation, they are criticized. Traits of effective leadership are most often associated with male stereotypical behaviors. Since men have been in leadership roles longer than women, male behavior is often viewed as the expected behavior of effective leadership (Eagly, 2007; Hoyt, 2005; Madden, 2011). Role Congruity Theory, that individuals are expected to behave in alliance with what others expect their role to be, has strong underpinnings in the leadership context (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The experiences of the four presidents interviewed support this theory.

The navigation around gender bias was difficult for each participant but as one president recalled, the experience of unequal pay actually caused her to evaluate her career and change directions.

I got into a discussion with the [administrator] at my university and basically said to him ‘I’m not thrilled at being the lowest paid [dean of college] among the AAU schools. I think I’m better than that and I think I deserve better treatment than that. At which point he said ‘Okay, but there’s nothing I’m going to do about it.’ I said ‘Well, I think I’m just going to have to look for another job.’ I had been getting lots of calls for [higher level] positions. I became a finalist in 3 searches.

The position she eventually accepted put her on the administrative team of “a very talented president.” This person was supportive of her taking leadership responsibilities and supported her in developing her leadership skills. Although triggered by inequity, the change in direction had a positive effect on her career.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The career pathway to becoming a university president requires the accrual of academic and leadership experience. In a survey of women presidents from all types of colleges and universities, approximately 75% reported working as faculty members at some point in their careers. Fifty-one percent of the women had served as a provost or senior executive in academic affairs prior to becoming a president (American College President, 2012). The percentages mirror those of male presidents. Sixty-eight percent of the men reported previous experiences as faculty members and 42% had worked as a provost or other executive administrator before entering the presidency (American College President, 2012).

The women presidents who participated in the study described their career progression. “I took the traditional path to the presidency. I rose through the ranks. I spent 20 years at [university] where I was a junior faculty member and then a senior faculty member,” said one participant. As she considered a move into an administrative role, she learned some important information.

I was willing to be on the search committee [for a Dean's position] because I wanted to be certain women were included in the pool since I was absolutely convinced that the applications for women were simply being overlooked. And what I learned was that while there were applications from women, the pool was not what I expected to see. And most of the women that were in the pool had somehow along the way gotten into administration before they had been promoted to full professor. So they didn't have the scholarly credentials that the men had. So I learned a lot from just reading those applications.

This experience on the search committee caused this president to reject positions that would move her into administration too early. She chose instead to stay in the professoriate. "I had to get my grants written, my papers written. I had to focus on my scholarship and my teaching." Once she had achieved the scholarly resume she thought was competitive, she moved into a Dean's position.

Another president described how she found administrative experience that would make her resume more robust.

I went up through the ranks in the ordinary way. I didn't really look for administrative positions but I kind of accreted them and they were never paid. They were kind of in addition to everything else I was doing. I became director [of a large campus program] which was an unpaid position. I was director for [another campus center] which was also an unpaid position. No course relief or anything. I just sort of went ahead and did it on top of everything else.

Although the work was unpaid, the president gained experience by accepting additional responsibilities. She developed a positive reputation and gained exposure to other facets of campus operations that proved helpful in her administrative learning.

I found out I was really good at doing this and still keeping up my research and doing all my teaching. One of the associate deans said to me at one point 'you know, in the dean's office, we know if we want something done right, we go to you.' That's the reputation I got and it was a good reputation to have. You see the structure of things, not just the personalities involved. So you can see where structures are going to collide and where you're going to have conflict and you can figure out how to deal with that.

She pointed to the lessons she learned about budgeting as the most important “take away” from her volunteer leadership positions. “Resources...as time has gone on, resource acquisition has become a much more important part of the job. If you don’t understand how it works, you’re going to get left behind.” In the end, the skills of budget and finance proved most valuable.

Once a president moved into an administrative role, there were often multiple moves from one administrative position to another. All of the presidents interviewed described moving into interim job assignments. Two of the participants eventually moved into the interim job permanently and two chose to take their experiences to other institutions. The four participants described the flexibility of being named an interim leader as a positive experience. One president summarized it as a point for self-learning.

I had a wonderful year as the interim [position title]. I really enjoyed it and I said that I would be willing to go back to the [former position] when the new [position title] was selected. I was unwilling to be a candidate for the new [position title] so I said that I would go back. However, I realized probably for the first time in my life, very late in life, in my professional career that I am not able to go back and do the same things that I did before. I realized how much I enjoyed new challenges and different things.

For this participant, the cognitive change that occurred in her leadership was connected to her role as an interim leader. She discovered that she could take on increased challenges and she enjoyed them. After taking on increased responsibility, her former role did not give her the same professional satisfaction.

Another participant described working outside of her area of study to create learning experiences that would be helpful in her leadership development. She summarized her path to the presidency as a process of getting involved in leadership at multiple levels. Her experiences working in different areas of administration and on

different committees at multiple institutions allowed her to view leadership in its human dynamics. “In some way, it took the mystery out of the leadership position as chancellor or president and I saw these people as human beings.” Her connection to leadership and the opportunity to view leaders in their positions supported her decision to move toward a presidential position.

The professional development needed to become a university president was something each participant had to navigate. Lessons around timing and training were strategies each president learned individually. One participant reported she needed a deep resume of scholarship. Another president learned through an interim assignment that her professional fulfillment was in new opportunities and not retracing old roles. A third president negotiated her professional development through a series of non-paid positions that added to her busy academic life. A fourth president learned through being close to other leaders and learning from their practices.

More than 50% of faculty and senior administrators in higher education are women (American College President, 2012). As the number of women in presidential positions does not reflect this pipeline, it appears that women are not pursuing the presidency. Statistics support this belief. There were 108 schools that met the criteria for this study and only nine were led by a woman president. These numbers suggest the extent to which women are outnumbered in presidential roles in this category of universities.

The women in this study became presidents through perseverance. They simply kept going. The presidents interviewed described their career movement as “all about perseverance” or “challenges.” The commitment of time and effort required to build a

robust portfolio and the challenges along the way may not appeal to other women in faculty or senior administrative roles.

Only one of the women interviewed participated in formal leadership training through a national organization. She experienced one leadership retreat which she attended after she became a president. The other participants described learning about leadership by watching others in leadership positions and reflecting on those observations.

According to Bornstein (2008), women with presidential aspirations must take responsibility for their own portfolio. They must seek appropriate mentors, fill gaps in their curriculum vitae, and seek a wide breadth of experiences in public speaking, management and implementing change (Bornstein, 2008).

The four participants reported their independent actions that conform to Bornstein's recommendations. They said "yes" to new challenges and learned from others in leadership positions. In the end, they understood the roadmap. Each president noted that it was essential to possess the skills required of an individual in a presidential position.

LIFE AND FAMILY

The four woman presidents described the need to negotiate the career around family and other life events. Many workplaces may expect more than an average commitment from employees. In some roles, 24 hour availability may be viewed as necessary. Marriage and children provide additional dimensions to the lives of professionals. Responsibility for family and home life may rest primarily on women. Career advancement may require relocation. According to Eagly and Carli (2007),

women are more apt to sacrifice a position for the sake of preventing a family or spouse relocation.

The women presidents I interviewed were past the stage of “children at home” and were able to reflect on how they managed their decisions.

I didn't consider even being a dean until my oldest child had graduated from high school and went off to college. I still had one child at home who was in high school. Those first few years of not having the flexibility of being a faculty member with your own internal pressure to get the work done but being physically present with your children that was difficult.

One participant suggested women learn to lead wherever they are in their career and be less concerned with the scaffolding structure or the next step.

If you want to have a family and are worried about work/life balance then do the things that will enrich your experiences and give you some leadership experiences and opportunities to see a campus outside your discipline.

She cautioned younger women leaders, “but it doesn't all have to be done overnight. It takes time.” She continued, “When you look at college presidents, they're not young and there's a reason. It takes time to have all these different experiences that get you ready for the [presidency] job.” Age seemed to bring wisdom to the president's position.

Three of the four participants spoke about a spouse and the impact being married had on their careers. Two of the presidents spoke about the challenges of having a trailing spouse. One participant described taking an early department chairperson job at a university, in part, because there was a position for her spouse.

I took the position for several reasons. I was married and my husband was a [area of specialty] and they had a very good program for [his area] there. And also they had a very good program [in my specialty] and they were hiring four chairs all at once so there would be some camaraderie amongst all the chairs. Even though [University of] was not a research intensive university, I had a wonderful time and really learned how to lead.

For this president, the fact that her spouse needed a position may have influenced her decision to take the job. Yet, it resulted in a positive leadership experience for her. Her navigation of a couple's move actually proved helpful to her career.

Work life balance and family emerged as a barrier that required consideration in each president's career. Although questions about childcare and spouse employment were not centrally addressed in the interview protocol, each president addressed these topics during the interview. None of the participants spoke at length about children or how the spouse made the transition through administrative positions. None of the presidents spoke of regret about the decisions they had made. No one mentioned regrets at decisions that led to more travel, increased time commitments or moving. The presidents seemed very satisfied with the directions they had chosen and the roles they had assumed.

In connection with gender and bias, marriage and family introduce an additional barrier to a women's career. The societal expectation that men work outside the home and women do so only as an option may pose a complication for women and men. Conversely, marriage and family is a boost to a man's career (Eagly & Carli, 2007b). The discordance with how gender and family are perceived may cause the personal navigation of a woman president to be a challenge. Each president found a way to balance marriage and children without apology or regret. These women chose the administrative pathway and created a balance to make it work. It was a choice they made and owned. None of the participants described it as easy or without stress. These women chose difficult paths and moved forward.

CONCLUSION

The path to the presidency for each woman was filled with barriers that required navigation. These barriers centered on gender bias, skill development and family life. Each president was compelled to find a way to sharpen her leadership skills. Each participant had polished her academic background, filled spots on committees, and volunteered for unpaid positions. Each president received support from mentors. However, for the most part, each president navigated her pathway based on her intuition. There was no guidebook. Family played an important role in creating an individual support system. In the end, each president created her own way around each barrier through individual decisions.

The skills required to navigate cultural and organizational barriers are significant. These reflect the labyrinth described by Eagly & Carli (2007a,b,c). The findings of this study support Eagly and Carli's research and the description of the labyrinth. The series of stops and starts with turns and redirection, as the way women move to the organizational top were evident in the four presidents paths. These women did not make career moves in a linear manner.

Gender bias may cause women to be held to the highest standards. When applying for presidential positions, each of these women needed to make sure her credentials exceeded the criteria. Each woman needed to fill the job application with a breadth of academic and leadership experience because she knew any holes in her resume would be a reason to remove her from the applicant pool. Yet, skill development was not easy for these women to access. Taking unpaid positions within an organization makes it difficult for women to balance time and finances. The responsibilities of children and family make it

challenging to commit to an organization and a challenging position. These women negotiated these barriers successfully through continued perseverance. None of the participants recalled their career paths as easy but none of them shared any regrets. In the end, their success at navigating the labyrinth was a celebration of their efforts.

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