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## A Phenomenological Study of Mid-Career Female Student Affairs Administrators' Experiences Navigating the Career Labyrinth Including Obstacles in Catholic Higher Education

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A Phenomenological Study of Mid-Career Female Student Affairs Administrators'  
Experiences Navigating the Career Labyrinth Including Obstacles in  
Catholic Higher Education

by

Michele K. Starzyk

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
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Under the Supervision of Professor Richard E. Hoover

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 2013

A Phenomenological Study of Mid-Career Female Student Affairs Administrators'  
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Catholic Higher Education

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University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisor: Richard E. Hoover

While the role of women in the Catholic Church has been a topic of much discussion, there has also been a call for the Church to partner with the laity. However, women who choose to work in Catholic co-educational, male sponsored higher education institutions may find a gendered organizational culture to embrace. Little research has been done in regards to the experience women have navigating the career labyrinth at mid-career while employed at Catholic institutions.

This study attempted to answer the grand tour question of what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth, including obstacles, in male order sponsored co-educational Catholic institutions of higher education? More specifically,

- What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?
- Who or what created these obstacles?
- How does the Catholic Church sponsorship influence the situation?
- How do women navigate career obstacles?
- Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?

These questions were addressed through a phenomenological design to allow for participants' voices to emerge through 15 interviews. Themes of motivation to work at the institution, personal obstacles, organizational challenges, coping and moving forward were shared. Career obstacles were experienced by mid-career women in Catholic, male religious order sponsored institutions both as personally imposed and organizationally constructed. Women struggled with changing personal goals, perspectives and life factors. Dealing with organizational constraints, women have developed a myriad of coping techniques to thrive in mission rich institutions. Relying on support systems, allies, mentors, professional/personal development and their faith, women navigated obstacles with positivity and hope, as many individuals enjoyed their work in Catholic institutions. The researcher offered recommendations for practice based on the participants' shared advice, such as providing orientation programs that name potential obstacles and strategies to overcome them for individuals new to the campus culture. Additional recommendations included institutional efforts that can be undertaken such as university committee work.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

There is an irony in this situation. If higher education is truly to be proactive with respect to social change, if higher education is to instill in its students both social and ethical patterns for leading productive and responsible lives, then these same institutions should be at the forefront of equity issues; the role of women in the academy being one of the most significant issues of equity. At a time in American higher education when many institutions are concerned with issues of diversity and multicultural representation, there should be an equal commitment to gender balance in the hiring, promotion, and retention of administrators and faculty alike. (Schlegel, 1993, p. 180)

While decades have passed from the time Rev. John P. Schlegel, S.J. wrote the above postscript in *Cracking the Wall: Women in Higher Education Administration*, there is still work to be done. The Catholic Church is a patriarchal religion which sponsors over 1,800 institutions of higher education in the world (Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, 2012). Over 250 Catholic institutions reside within the United States, enrolling over 900,000 students annually (Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, 2012). Within this subsection of American higher education, there are unique characteristics which define Catholic higher education leadership. Institutions are sponsored by gender specific Catholic religious orders, such as the Jesuits, the Sisters of Mercy, or by a diocese (Gallin, 2000). Some institutions have required or gave preference to a religious person to hold certain positions per their governing documents (Gallin, 2000). While some boards are amending governing documents to remove such requirements, preferences may still be given to allow for institutional continuity. There is a trend of increased laity in the presidential role at Catholic institutions, especially in institutions sponsored by the diocese, as opposed to those sponsored by male religious orders (Gallin, 2000). While there has not been a female president of a Jesuit Catholic

institution in the United States, there is a trend for lay male presidents assuming the presidency; eight of the 28 institutions are led by lay presidents (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Therefore, within this subpopulation of higher education, there are a variety of leadership roles to be filled, some of which may formally, informally and/or historically exclude women due to the gender required to serve in a religious order. This study looked to examine the experience female student affairs mid-career professionals had as they navigated the career labyrinth within these organizations.

Within higher education, women are making advances in a variety of areas. Reported by the recently closed The White House Project, there exists a feminization of the student body in higher education in which the majority, 57%, of undergraduate students are female (Madsen, 2011). Research on gender equity for students has examined how gender influences leadership activities, confidence in the classroom, experiences with harassment and discrimination on campus, etc. (Benokraitis, 1998; Carli, 1998; Chrisler, Herr & Murstein, 1998; Martinez Aleman & Renn, 2002). There is also a body of research that looks at female faculty members' job satisfaction, means for career advancement including tenure review and leadership, the role of mentoring, motherhood, etc. (Allan, 2011; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Martinez Aleman & Renn, 2002). However, there is less research done regarding female campus administrators. When research exists, it does so in pockets, such as academic administrators' roles (i.e., deans or chief academic affairs officers) or discussions regarding the "sticky floor" that exists for administrative professionals, experiences of senior administrators or career efforts, etc. (Allan, 2011; Cintrón, 1995; Harlan & Berheide, 1994).



Currently there exists a need for additional literature regarding the female educators outside of the classroom, within student affairs administration and specifically at mid-career (Renn & Allen, 2004; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). One reason to help add to the literature is that increasing job satisfaction has been shown to link to persistence, especially pertinent since Blackhurst and others have shown that women leave the field of student affairs in higher rates than men (Blackhurst, 2000; Blackhurst, Brandt & Kalinkowski, 1998a, 1998b; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). This is helpful as it is cheaper to retain a staff member than to rehire and retrain. “Turnover and replacement costs vary, but depending on salary level and job responsibilities, a private company loses, on average, more than \$13,000 when a full-time employee leaves - up 6.8% from 2002, according to a recent Employment Policy Foundation study” (Jackson, 2006, para. 4).

The concept of the glass ceiling for women’s advancement was first debuted in the late 1980’s in which the authors of a *Wall Street Journal* article described an impenetrable glass wall that women could see through to identify their hopes to advance, but that the glass ceiling represented the barriers that prevented them from climbing the corporate ladder (Hymowitz & Schelhardt, 1986). Many argue whether or not the glass ceiling still exists as select females have been able to seek CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies and have held positions in the Cabinet and other governmental offices, for example.

A new term has recently emerged relating the journey women leaders take to career advancement as a labyrinth (Eagley & Carli, 2007). Women are advancing to senior leadership roles; however, their paths may be more indirect and may have more

obstacles or barriers along the way (Eagley & Carli, 2007). Further research needs to be conducted to examine this path for women's advancement. The concept of a labyrinth for women to negotiate to career advancement was the framework for this study. The research hoped to share the lived experience of 15 individual women working at mid-career within this labyrinth and how each navigated the labyrinth.

The researcher interviewed women who were employed by Catholic co-educational institutions that were sponsored by male religious orders. Regarding the setting of this study, some people might argue that all organizations are gendered. "Although sex typing of occupations, horizontal sex segregation, and gender differentiated wage setting have more often been studied as aggregate phenomena at regional or national levels, organizations are the actual locations within which these patterns are created and re-created" (Acker, 1999, p. 179). Some researchers argue that bureaucratic universities are a gendered construct (Bird, 2011).

Related research has looked at women's leadership roles in evangelical Christian institutions of higher education. There are few women serving in higher leadership roles and when they seek advancement, they "meet more barriers than men" (Longman and Lafreniere, 2011, p.50). However, little research has been conducted within the mid-career female population working in student affairs at Catholic colleges and universities. As Catholic institutions lean further on their partners in mission that are lay (non-religious) due to the decreasing number of individuals taking religious vows in America, the experience and knowledge that current employees have within the organization is important. Lay student affairs employees can be ambassadors of the institution's rich culture and tradition (Estanek, 2002).

As job satisfaction is related with persistence, the conversation regarding the role of women in the church often is debated. In order for women to persist and succeed within a gendered system, organizational culture and context needs to be examined. Former Superior General of the Jesuits, a Catholic order of priests and brothers, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., challenged institutions to work in solidarity with women in society, as well as priests to partner with the laity to continue their mission (Kolvenbach, 2004).

Finally, the relevance of this study is timely as there has been a resurgence of focus on gender in higher education administration research. For example, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) debuted in 2008 the *Journal on Women in Higher Education*. The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) published in February 2011 *Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs* which argues that the lack of research on women in student affairs administration is a way to help continue to silence a voiceless population on the margins of society (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). And finally, the Association for the Study for Higher Education (ASHE) Higher Education Report published *Women's Status in Higher Education: Equity Matters* in 2011. This report urges readers that “lack of equity in higher education can have a far-reaching and negative consequences for learning environment, quality of life, and career satisfaction of both women and men studying and working in academic institutions” (Allan, 2011, p. vii).

The need for further research on women in student affairs at mid-career during a time of declining numbers of individuals taking religious vows in the American Catholic Church can help give voice to women in order to help others understand the meaning

making of their experiences. This research looked to see how females take individual, paths to progress along the labyrinth, named as such by Eagley and Carli (2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. Navigating career obstacles to advancement was defined as identifying means to overcome formal and informal structures, people and events which prevent professional advancement for females.

Catholic institutions investigated were those co-educational institutions which were specifically sponsored by male religious orders. This only included institutions that were sponsored by male orders that did not have affiliations with religious orders of women or single sex institutions. The intention of the research was to choose a setting in which a gendered, male organizational structure existed. The author acknowledged that female religious orders opened female institutions as a way to educate those on the margins and serve a profound purpose; however, that setting fell outside of the scope of this study.

### **Research Questions**

With a “topic and question rooted in autobiographical meanings” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103), the central question this study addressed was what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth, including obstacles, in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic institutions of higher education? More specifically,

- What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?
- Who or what created these obstacles?
- How does the Catholic Church sponsorship influence the situation?
- How do women navigate career obstacles?
- Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?

These questions were explored through an interview protocol that allowed for emergent conversations. Probes were utilized to solicit the meaning of navigating their career labyrinth, including obstacles. Beginning with a social constructivist point of view, the researcher attempted to learn from participants how they made meaning of their lived experience with the central phenomenon and the context in which these experiences existed (Creswell, 2007).

To accomplish this, interviews were conducted and digitally recorded. Fifteen transcriptions were imported into NVivo software, once cleaned and verified by the researcher. Data were analyzed by first bracketing out the researcher's personal experience, or *epoche*. A reduction process then took place, in which meaning units emerged and duplicates were eliminated. Through textural and structural analysis, the essence of the participants' lived experience emerged.

### **Definitions**

Navigating career obstacles to advancement was defined as identifying means to overcome formal and informal structures, people and events which prevent professional advancement for women. "Barriers exist where inequalities lie. Barriers are defined as those factors which circumvent or inhibit the entry or advancement of women into jobs, occupations, and organizations" (LeBlanc, 1993, p. 40). Barriers may include self-

esteem, lack of skills, limited networking, competing family needs, limited political interactions, ill-defined career path, lack of mentoring and networking, fear of being lonely at the top and a lack of macro vision (LeBlanc, 1993).

Additional terms are defined as follows:

*Advancement*—the desire to grow professionally. This may include advancing upward through an organizational hierarchical structure, but can also include a desire to gain new professional experiences and to move laterally through a structure. Sheila Shaw Horton described this as:

The career is not a string of work accomplishments or academic achievements. It is a compilation of life experiences that occur simultaneously, integrates in such a way that when you are ‘ready’ you have done much more than gained your position, you lived it. You have ‘arrived’ when you know the field, the job, and the philosophy of the organizations, institution, and the very essence of your field of interest. Accomplishing this goals is more than a series of experiences. It is growing up in the field. (2004, p. 153)

*Glass ceiling*—the invisible barriers associated with hindering women’s advancement in corporate hierarchy. First coined by “Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt in the March 24, 1986 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*” (Bandle & Wilhelm, n.d., para. 3).

*Stained glass ceiling*—Utilized by the press, similar to the glass ceiling, this term refers to the invisible barriers to advancement that occur in religious organizations’ hierarchies for women.

*Leadership labyrinth*—A term coined to amend the glass ceiling term from the 1980’s, the labyrinth refers to the fact that some women do make it to the top, although “the successful routes can be difficult to discover” and a “circuitous path” may exist for women (Eagley & Carli, 2007, p. 6). “The labyrinth contains numerous barriers, some

subtle and others quite obvious, such as the expectations that mothers will provide the lion's share of childcare" (p. 6).

*Career obstacles*—As defined in The Department of Labor's *Glass Ceiling Report*,

Glass Ceiling research reveals three levels of artificial barriers to the advancement of minorities and women in the private sector that contradict this nation's ethic of individual worth and accountability—the belief that education, training, dedication, and hard work will lead to a better life. (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 7)

These levels of barriers, or obstacles, are societal, internal structural and governmental barriers (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). This research focused on internal structural obstacles.

*Subtle sex discrimination*—As defined by Benokraitis,

the unequal and harmful treatment of women that is typically less visible and less obvious than blatant sex discrimination. It is often not noticed because most people have internalized subtle sexist behavior as normal, natural or acceptable. It can be innocent or manipulative, intentional or unintentional, well meaning or malicious. Subtle sex discrimination is often more complex than it appears: What is discrimination to many women may not seem discriminatory to many men (or even to other women). Thus, when women notice or comment about subtle sexist behavior, they may be chided for being "too sensitive" or "petty". (1998, p. 5)

*Mid-career*—

women who were no longer novices, yet not in the final years of their career . . . mid-career is not defined merely as being in a middle management position, though mid-career professionals predominate among mid-level managers as assistant and associate directors, deans and vice presidents. (Renn & Hughes, 2004, p xxi)

*Navigating career obstacles*—This describes means by which women chose to work around obstacles to persist in their situation.

*Student affairs professional*—The *Student Personnel Point of View* defines student affairs as “educational and introduce[s] a holistic approach to students that extends to all of higher education” (Allen & Garb, 1997, p. 4).

People who work in student affairs provide services, programs, and resources that help students learn and grow outside of the classroom. Some things that student affairs professionals do for students every day include: enhance student learning, guide academic and career decisions, mentor students, promote leadership skills and counsel students through crises. (NASPA, 2012, para. 1)

*Religious*—

When used as a noun, this refers to a man or woman who makes religious vows and is a member of a religious congregation. More specifically, one may speak of a ‘male religious,’ who may be a priest, seminarian, or brother, or of a ‘woman religious,’ who may be a sister and/or nun. (National Religious Vocation Conference, n.d., para. 25)

*Male religious order sponsored*—an institute of ordained religious men affiliated with the Catholic Church who sponsor an institution of Catholic higher education.

*Laity*—“the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy” (Merriam-Webster, 2012, para. 1).

Finally, the researcher acknowledged that there are differences between the terms gender and sex. Sex, male and female, is a biological term, while gender describes a cultural expression, such as man and woman (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Bem and Lev (as cited by Evans, et al., 2010) posit that gender identity is rooted in childhood and discussed gender identity in terms of a binaries and continuums. The researcher acknowledged that the terms female and woman have been intermingled in the literature reviewed and were also intermingled within this study.



**Assumptions**

The researcher assumed that all gatekeepers, individuals who provided names of potential participants to the researcher to contact, provided names which met the participant criteria. The researcher assumed that all participants were truthful and forthcoming in their interviews. The researcher assumed that the participants' institutions were gendered organizations due to their sponsorship by Catholic male religious orders. It was also assumed that all participants have faced a barrier or obstacle at some point in their career within their institution of Catholic higher education and the participant attempted to navigate said barrier. It was also assumed that participants understood the interview questions and asked clarifying questions if necessary.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations in a qualitative study "are those factors that limit the relevancy of your study to other populations or individuals" (Bryant, 2004, p. 57). Therefore a delimitation of this study was the specific population interviewed. This study did not take into account the wide variations of responses that may have been achieved by public institutions, Catholic female order sponsored institutions nor did it account for other Christian denomination or other religious sponsored institutions. The participants were specifically mid-career female student affairs professionals who currently worked at male sponsored, Catholic co-educational institutions of higher education. Participants also only represented one order of male, Catholic religious sponsored institutions. Due to the narrow scope of the participants, the generalizability of this study to future replicable studies was limited.

**Limitations**

Limitations within research are those “restrictions created by your methodology” (Bryant, 2004, p. 58). As a Catholic female, mid-career student affairs professional working at a male sponsored Catholic institution for higher education, the researcher had knowledge regarding navigating career obstacles. This lens with which the researcher viewed the data may have limited the interpretation of the findings, but intimately allowed for participants’ voices to emerge from the data collected. While present in the study through the process of reflexivity, potential researcher bias was limited through the bracketing out of her personal experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Participant interviews were conducted via the telephone which allowed for cost savings and allowed the researcher to continue to work full time while conducting the research. Participant saturation occurred through numerous participants being interviewed. Finally, the qualitative, phenomenological methodology captured only the stories of the 15 participants who had experience with the central phenomenon, navigating the career labyrinth.

**Significance**

The significance of this research helped give voice to population working within higher education. Jones and Komives (2001) identified a shift in the research from gender specific research in the 1980’s to gender neutral research in the 1990’s. Critics argued that the workplace is not gender neutral and that the “lack of research focus on women in student affairs administration is one way that this population continues to be marginalized and pushed to the periphery within the higher education community” (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011, p. 271). The added location of the research looked to

shed light on a population within Catholic education that continues to be a cornerstone of the workforce, as the graying of the priesthood in America calls for greater participation by the laity to be involved in university administration.

The research hoped to address the career obstacles that female student affairs professionals faced while working within Catholic higher education and how they navigated the career labyrinth. The research aimed to describe the experiences these professionals had while they were at mid-career, with the hope of providing awareness to those in university and college leadership that the issues of equity and parity among the staff ranks was still needed. Despite the feminization of higher education in the United States, this population of female student affairs administrators have been understudied, yet can have a tremendous impact on the overall culture of an institution (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011).

## **Summary**

Chapter One has presented an overview of the need for this research. Since a need is becoming apparent for further partnership with the laity, additional research is desired regarding women who choose to navigate the leadership labyrinth on Catholic college campuses in student affairs. Through a qualitative study, 15 female student affairs professionals at mid-career were interviewed to determine how they navigated the labyrinth, including obstacles to their career position as well as their thoughts regarding career advancement. In Chapter Two, the literature was reviewed. Topics overviewed included gendered organizations, women's leadership and barriers to advancement, career satisfaction, and finally the history of women in student affairs, the Catholic Church and Catholic student affairs. Chapter Three presented the qualitative

methodology purposefully chosen for this study. Chapter Four presented the study's findings while Chapter Five presented recommendations for future study and practice.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. In Chapter Two, the researcher reviewed the pertinent literature to establish the context for the study, explaining the need for the research conducted.

To begin, the researcher explored the literature regarding organizational culture to set the tone for women working in gendered environments. From there, information was presented regarding how the “glass ceiling” is being redefined as a labyrinth for women to navigate. Looking more specifically at higher education, the history of women in student affairs was outlined. Career advancement, job satisfaction and career development were briefly reviewed. Finally, Catholic higher education was reviewed as a subculture of American higher education. Topics explored included the history of Catholic higher education, women in the church and their leadership and finally Catholic student affairs. The review of literature demonstrated that there is a need for further research on this very specific population.

To conduct a review of the literature, the ERIC, EBSCO and Digital Commons search engines were utilized for scholarly articles. ProQuest was utilized to examine dissertation abstracts and applicable dissertations were ordered and reviewed. In addition, the two leading national professional student affairs professionals’ organizations’ publications were searched, utilizing keywords such as career barriers/obstacles, career advancement, higher education, educational leadership,

organizational culture, administration, student affairs, Catholic, women and female.

These terms were also used when searching in two major universities' libraries. Once a critical mass emerged, reference sections were reviewed for additional foundational works and were retrieved.

### **Organizational Culture**

Organizations that have strong cultures often provide cues for members on how to behave and act (Mabokela, 2003). Acker (1999) created a theoretical research movement through her work on gendered organizations. Acker posits that "organizations are 'gendered' social constructions and that theories of gender neutral organizations are ideological formulations that obscure organizational realities, including the pervasiveness of male power" (Acker, 1999, p. 178).

In these strong organizational cultures, minorities are required to conform to the values and norms of the majority culture with limited opportunities to assert their own beliefs. Because the majority establishes work norms, it establishes rules and regulation with which people of color and others who occupy 'minority-status' are expected to comply. (Mabokela, 2003, p. 132)

While women are not the minority in college environment as students, female faculty and staff are disproportionally represented in the lower ranks of positions and are underrepresented in senior positions therefore creating a minority status (Mabokela, 2003).

These underrepresented numbers were studied by Kanter (1977b). Looking at women who were employed in predominately male organizations, Kanter described how women were perceived as minorities (1977b).

Kanter (1977b) examined:

how group structures shape interaction contexts and influence particular patterns of male-female interaction. One advantage of such an approach is that it is then

possible to generalize beyond male-female relations to persons-of-one-kind and person-of-another-kind interaction in various contexts, also making possible the untangling of what exactly is unique about the male-female case. (p. 967)

Kanter (1977a) looked at women in organizations who were proportionally tokens in certain fields. Based on the numbers of women in an organization, Kanter (1977a) saw four groups emerge based on proportions – uniform groups which had a 100:0 ratio, skewed groups which had an 85:15 ratio, tilted groups with a ratio of 65:35 and balanced groups had a ratio of 60:40 to 50:50. Tokens are treated often as symbols in skewed groups, having only one or two in number (Kanter, 1977a). This may occur in a variety of ways: a male in a female dominant group field such as nursing or a flight attendant (Acker, 1999), a blind person in a group of sighted individuals, a female in a male dominant banking office (Kanter, 1977a) or a female in a section of the armed forces. This also applies to females who may be a token based on numbers within educational institutions.

The proportional token is subject to higher visibility than others and therefore undergoes additional pressure to perform (Kanter, 1977b). Polarization is a second tendency associated with “tokens” as those smaller in number tend to represent the extremes of the group to the majority (Kanter, 1977b). “Assimilation, the third perceptual tendency, reflects the stereotypical assumptions about ‘tokens’ leading to status leveling and role entrapment” (Mabokela, 2003, p. 133). Kanter (1977a) also pointed out that tokens, which could be male or female based on how the numbers occurred, were a “*system* and not an individual construct” (p.395). This is an important note, as individuals’ satisfaction with work is “influenced. . . by the sex composition of their work groups and the distribution of men and women in positions of power within

the organization” (Britton, 2000, p.430). “Mere numerical or proportional representation tells us little about women’s lived experiences when it comes to educational policies, practices, and programs” (Vaccaro, 2010, para.2). According to Bartol et al., within patriarchal organizations, men often do not see a gendered organization (as cited in Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009). Acker (1999) believed that Kanter’s central thesis was that women’s organizational experiences are best explained by women’s structural locations, not by their personalities and socialization.

Organizational culture, as defined by Schein (1990), has three levels which include a pre-conscious level, a values level and a visible level. The first level include beliefs and basic assumptions while the values level include espoused values such as mission statements, charisms, and so on (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003). The visible level includes the university’s seal, buildings, etc. (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003). “The environment, even at the level of artifacts, often creates a sense of ‘otherness’ for those who are not part of the dominant group” especially since these institutions were originally established to teach white males (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003, p. 173). With this in mind, women may “proactively carve space for themselves and others, working as change agents and border workers” (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003, p. 173). Efforts may include Women’s Studies departments (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003), gender specific networking groups, committees on the status women on campus, etc. This research builds off of Acker’s (1999) explanation of a gendered process in organizations which include procedures, interactions, knowledge and values, and mental work. All contribute to a gendered organization.



Subtle sex discrimination can occur at several levels, those being individual, organizational, institutional, and cultural (Benokraitis, 1998). “As Table 1 shows, the awareness and visibility of subtle sexist behaviors and practices decrease as the level of analysis becomes more complex and abstract. The source of remedies, similarly, becomes more diffuse and bureaucratic” (Benokraitis, 1998, p. 6). Subtle sexism can occur in a myriad of ways. This may occur through a use of varying titles between the sexes, intellectual intimidation and a lack of understanding of gender-neutral hiring practices that in turn discriminate (Benokraitis, 1998).

Table 1

*A Typology of Subtle Sex Discrimination Levels*

Levels of Discrimination	Characteristics		
	Awareness of Subtle Sexist Acts and Practices	Visibility of Subtle Sexist Acts and Practices	Sources for Remedies
Individual	High to low	Usually low	You, family members, friends, colleagues and coworkers, lawsuits
Organizational	Low	Very low	Advocates, mentors, collective action, lawsuits
Institutional	Very low	Practically invisible	Grievance procedures, revised institutional policies, redistribution of resources, unionization, lawsuits
Cultural	Negligible	Practically invisible <i>and</i> blamed on the victim	Government programs and incentives, business industry innovations, legislative actions, high education governing boards, media initiatives, lawsuits
↑	↑	↑	↑

Source: Benokraitis (1998, p. 6)

Additional subtle discrimination may occur when groups of people benchmark against similar groups (Bird, 2011). For example, when people compare themselves to others to review one's own performance, people often compare to like people (Bird, 2011). An example of a gendered bureaucratic system occurs in the form of stopping the tenure clock when female faculty members take maternity leave (Quina, Cotter, & Romenesko, 1998). While this policy may exist, if utilized, how it is perceived by tenure review committees may be another situation (Quina, et al., 1998). Additionally, such a policy does not address that "adding on policies that leave intact the structural forces that situate women and men differently in their abilities to succeed under the terms by which faculty roles continue to be defined and evaluated does little to remedy already existing incongruous" structures (Bird, 2011, p. 211).

As demonstrated above, and with a review of the literature, organizations are rarely gender neutral (Bird, 2011). Others argue that gendered organizations are not necessarily oppressive (Britton, 2000). Bureaucratic structures and organizations, as in institutions of higher education, may vary their level of gender neutrality within the organization (Bird, 2011). In order to address change to make systems less gendered, if even oppressive, (Britton, 2000), strategies must be devised to address the subtle discrimination which needs to be tackled system wide with support of top leaders who hold individuals accountable (Dobbin and Kalev, 2007).

### **Women's Leadership: Glass Ceiling vs. Labyrinth**

Much has been written about the glass ceiling for women's advancement in the work force, however it is scattered across disciplines and sectors affected (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). However, new studies question the term's applicability in today's

culture. Outlining a new concept of how women navigate leadership in the workplace, Eagley and Carli (2007) discuss leadership barriers in the modern day.

Eagley and Carli (2007) outline stages in access to leadership for women in America; the first period described is one of a concrete wall. The concrete wall was impenetrable as women were not allowed to hold public office, could not vote, and did not have access to enter into prestigious institutions of higher education (Eagley & Carli, 2007). While women garnered the right to vote in 1920, even till the early 1970's women were denied the right to interview for managerial track positions due to their gender (Eagley & Carli, 2007). "In the era of the concrete wall, the division of labor between women and men struck most people as part of the natural order" (Eagley & Carli, 2007, p. 3). Women stayed home with the family, while men went into the work place to earn a living to support his family.

The next stage in access to leadership roles for women, as described by Eagley and Carli (2007), was the glass ceiling stage. The term glass ceiling was first coined in the late 1980's in a *Wall Street Journal* article. The authors, Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt, explained that there was a phenomenon in the workplace that allowed women to climb the corporate ladder and see advancement opportunities, but there were barriers that precluded their advancement (1986). Hymowitz and Schellhardt explained that, "Even those women who rose steadily in the ranks eventually crashed into an invisible barrier. The executive suite seemed within their grasp, but they just couldn't break through the glass ceiling" (Hymowitz & Schelhardt, 1986, para.1). The phrase became a part of everyday lexicon in America. While the ceiling was defined, it still alluded to an impermeable barrier that could not be overcome (Eagley & Carli, 2007).

Hearing the public's discussion on the topic, the United States Congress created a commission to investigate the phenomenon (Eagley & Carli, 2007). In 1995, the federal Glass Ceiling Commission authored a report on the topic (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The glass ceiling was seen in a myriad of ways, especially in regards to a woman's role in the family. Women were seen as a risky business investment to hire into a leadership position due to their likelihood to have children and leave the workplace to care for them (Eagley & Carli, 2007).

However, a decade later in 2004, Hymowitz and the *Wall Street Journal* authored a special section entitled "Through the Glass Ceiling" (Eagley & Carli, 2007). The article was accompanied by a picture of 50 powerful women executives smiling. "The newspaper that was responsible for the glass ceiling metaphor sent a clear message that this barrier was a thing of the past; the glass ceiling had been broken" (Eagley & Carli, 2007, p. 6).

However, Eagley and Carli (2007) point out that a new stage in women's leadership advancement has set in; this current stage is referred to as a labyrinth, as described by Klenke. Eagley and Carli (2007) believe that there are paths to the top but that "the successful paths can be difficult to discover" and can be "circuitous" (Eagley & Carli, 2007, p. 6). They posit seven reasons that the glass ceiling metaphor is misleading in Table 2.

### **Barriers and Navigating the Labyrinth**

Throughout the literature there are a myriad of barriers identified that challenge women in the workplace. For women to advance in leadership roles, "women negotiate labyrinthine arrangements that present various kinds of obstructions, few of which were

expressly designed to discriminate against women although they have this effect” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 137).

Table 2

*Seven Reasons the Glass Ceiling Metaphor is Misleading*

Reason
1. It erroneously implies that women have equal access to entry-level positions.
2. It erroneously assumes the presence of an absolute barrier at a specific high level in organizations.
3. It erroneously suggests that all barriers to women are difficult to detect and therefore unseen.
4. It erroneously assumes that there exists a single, homogeneous barrier and thereby ignores the complexity and variety of obstacles that women leaders can face.
5. It fails to recognize the diverse strategies that women devise to become leaders.
6. It precludes the possibility that women can overcome barriers and become leaders.
7. It fails to suggest that thoughtful problem solving can facilitate women’s paths to leadership.

Adapted from Eagley & Carli (2007, p. 7)

Organizational barriers to advancement are wide reaching. Organizational practices are established through the repeated utilization of such practices in the work force (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Barriers may be seen while others are invisible, or subtle (Benokraitis, 1998). While many employees may cite that their place of employment may be unbiased towards either gender, “underlying this veneer of fairness there is often an implicit model of an ideal employee” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 139). As employees have increased educational attainment, their weekly work hours increase, as managers typically have above average work week hours (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Work life balance issues occur for women who still have the primary family function, which is a subtle bias (Bird, 2011). In the age of technology, managers are often tethered to their jobs through

cell phones and home computers. Constant communication expectations may not afford women the luxury of family time or uninterrupted maternity leaves.

Women navigating parenting and careers are a barrier often discussed in regards to faculty (Fotchman, 2011). Marshall (2004) discusses her dissertation research conducted in 2002 in which she looks at student affairs administrators navigating family issues. Women shared that family responsibilities caused them to disengage from professional organizations, feel relationship strains with partners and feel guilt from being a working mother (Marshall, 2004). However, women also prospered by having support systems and offering advice to others to help navigate career and family balance issues (Marshall, 2004). Marshall (2004) also advocated for family friendly practices to be included in the workplace to foster a culture that supports families.

Luthans, Hodgetts and Rosenkrantz (1988) reported that managers that are often promoted are skilled at networking and politicking, which didn't necessarily equate to effectiveness. Some argue that "gender affects social capital: women usually have less of it" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 144). While social capital can be built through networking, oftentimes these networking experiences occur after hours which then lengthens the work day even more dramatically for time crunched women (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Another barrier to advancement for women is the organizational culture and fitting in. Reviewed research calls attention to the discussion of leadership being identified as a masculine characteristic (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). A culture that has masculine traits may be seen in a variety of ways. It may be demonstrated in the social outings of staff which reflect social norms which may be deemed masculine, such as driving cars, watching football, going hunting, etc. (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Other

examples may be seen in how communication occurs. For example, “masculine culture can also be manifested in taking fast action and being outwardly decisive rather than consulting and working out issues behind the scenes” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, pp. 147-148).

Another barrier identified in the labyrinth is lack of access to challenging work assignments (Eagly & Carli, 2007). By lacking access to difficult assignments and work, promotions may be withheld due to a lack of experience. Less access to travel, to supervise and to oversee complex tasks potentially due to a chivalrous mentality of male supervisors may all contribute to the lack of responsibilities to undermine advancement potential (Eagly & Carli, 2007). On the flip side, women who are entrusted with power during transitional times in which organizations are in financial crisis or in general decline, may be teetering on the “glass cliff” according to organizational psychologists Ryan and Haslam (2005). This tenuous position that women embark on the cliff has the same effect as a lack of promising job responsibilities since “both deny women access to the ‘good’ assignment that offer reasonable opportunities for showing oneself as a high potential manager” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 151).

More specifically in academia, barriers to advancement were identified by employees attending workshops hosted by the Department of Labor post the coining of the “glass ceiling” term (Quina, et al., 1998). Very similar themes emerged from participants across the institutional hierarchy, which are outlined in Table 3, compiled by Quina and Romenesko in 1993.

Table 3

*Barriers to Advancement in Academia*

Barriers	Additional issues
Power within the system	<p>Are women administrators clustered in traditional women's areas or human resources?</p> <p>Are women responsible for budgets, and do they have decision-making power?</p> <p>What support staff and budget are provided for women administrators?</p> <p>What is the gender ration in better-paid departments (business, engineering)?</p> <p>Is salary equity assessed using appropriate techniques?</p> <p>Are merit allocation fair and equitable?</p>
Hiring practices	<p>How do credentials of those hired compare to those not hired?</p> <p>Does tokenism appear: one woman per unit, one women administrator, and so on?</p>
Promotion practices	<p>Who initiates promotions?</p> <p>Are promotions delayed or denied?</p> <p>How much time is spent in rank or position before promotion?</p> <p>Are career tracks for profession and clerical staff clearly defined?</p>
Professional development, formal (small grants) and informal (course releases)	<p>Are internships publicly available and equitably awarded?</p> <p>How much, and what kind, of informal mentoring is received?</p> <p>How much, and what kind of, contact do women have with their supervisors?</p> <p>How comfortable are women about contact with supervisors/administrators?</p>
"Tracking"	<p>Are women found in only stereotypical areas?</p> <p>Are women "fast tracked" without suitable opportunities to do research?</p> <p>Are women in higher positions underemployed or underutilized?</p> <p>Are women undertitled (i.e., doing the work of a higher-level title)?</p> <p>Are service expectations and commitments greater for women?</p>
Information availability	<p>Who make decisions, and who know how long and when decisions are made?</p> <p>Are there clear job descriptions with unchanging expectations for promotion?</p> <p>Do individuals receive information about how they are meeting expectations?</p>

Table 3 continues



Barriers	Additional issues
Perceptions of peers and administrators	Is women's competence devalued? Are complaints about sexism trivialized? Is there support for women's studies, a Women's Center, and gender scholarship? Are administrators help responsible for discriminatory decisions?
Attitude toward stereotypes of administrators	What are the attitudes and stereotypes of women and minority administrators? Are women administrators treated like tokens? Are women administrators allowed to "fail" without penalty?
Family issues	Is there a parental leave policy which takes it into account in time toward tenure? Are day care and sick child care available on campus?
Working environment	Is there an "old boy network" operating at the top levels? Is there a chilly climate (harassment, stressors, perceived lack of support)? What reasons are given for leaving (comparative exit interviews)? What is the overall quality of life (including demoralization and fear)?
Safety issues	Do women curtail their professional activities because of safety concerns? How does the administration respond to women's safety concerns?

Adapted from Quina et al., (1998, pp. 219-220)

With these above potential barriers identified, how can women then navigate their way through the labyrinth?

### **Organizational Efforts to Lessen Barriers**

Mentoring relationships are crucial to assist women navigate the labyrinth (Allan, 2011). The benefits of these relationships are well documented and may help affirm women's commitment to the institution (Blackhurst, 2000b). Mentoring relationships for women seeking the senior student affairs officer role should offer women the chance "to gain the skills, experience, and professional contacts needed to move up, while also helping women who seek revitalization in their current positions find alternative ways to contribute to their institutions and the profession" (Blackhurst, 1998b, p. 32). Women in

student affairs have also discussed the sense of obligation to mentor others as they have been mentored (Fotchman, 2011).

Studies have shown that women who earn doctoral or professional degrees have a three times greater chance of dropping out of their careers after earning their degree than men do in the same fields (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Family obligations are the main reason for this career drop out (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Ways in which to counter this trend are to have flexible work policies that allow for women to reduce the demands on their time and allow for family obligations to also be met (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Such efforts may include flexible schedules, job sharing, on site day cares, paid family and adoption leave policies, and so on (Marshall, 2004).

For women to envision themselves advancing in the field, it is helpful to be able to identify others like themselves already in those positions. Increasing numbers of women in leadership roles through mentoring and professional development can elevate the status of women on a campus (Allan, 2011). Therefore it is critical to have women in positions that women can aspire to. This can be achieved if women are placed in leadership positions due to skills and not quotas, lessening people's perceptions of being a token (Eagly & Carli, 2007). "When women are not a small minority, their identities as women become less salient, and colleagues are more likely to react to them in terms of their individual competencies" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 157).

Women's leadership programs in higher education have emerged over the years which include a myriad of different learning outcomes. Such programs are vital to empower women with the skills needed to advance in their careers. "A major component of the labyrinth that women must negotiate to become leaders derives from the fact that

leadership has long been associated with men and masculine characteristics” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 158). In order to combat these perceptions, women can learn skills to embrace their leadership abilities without feeling inauthentic. Examples of such programs include the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Institute and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Manicur Symposium (Allan, 2011).

Beyond personal interactions within a culture, individuals can assist in navigating gendered organizations. Organizational training needs to not only cover anti-harassment policies but also the subtle discrimination that may occur (Bird, 2011). Change efforts need endorsement and visible support of key administrators in the organizational hierarchy (Bird, 2011). Finally, change efforts and agents need to be held accountable for their efforts (Bird, 2011).

### **Women in Student Affairs**

The history of women in higher education has a sordid past. With the formation of the United States in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, settlers came to America seeking religious freedom and tolerance. This freedom allowed early Americans to practice their Judeo-Christian ways which ultimately created a barrier for women in higher education (Nidiffer, 2003). Within this Christian context, women were called to be subservient to their husbands, defining their roles at home with the family while the men engaged society through politics and economic development (Nidiffer, 2003). Questioning the intellectual prowess of women, they stayed at home tending to the family (Rudolf, 1990). Women were also precluded from education due to the fear that it may impact their fertility and their ability to procreate (Nidiffer, 2003).

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women made gains through entrance into universities and colleges, allowing for greater access to professional education (Rudolph, 1990). While institutions first started going co-educational in the 1830's and 1840's, women faced chilly, barrier laden climates on campus (Nidiffer, 2003).

“Women rarely became senior administrators except when charged to care for women students in roles such as physical educators, doctors or deans of women” (Nidiffer, 2003, p. 21). The rise of women's colleges however allowed for the increase in female administrators in higher education, including university presidents, the only place where women rose to power before the 1950's (Nidiffer, 2003).

Early roles for female administrators were physical education teachers and deans of women. As institutions went co-educational, men worried about the health of female students, therefore creating a need to access the gym separately from the men (Nidiffer, 2003). In addition to providing exercise, these educators served as disciplinarians as well as cared for students' grooming (Nidiffer, 2003). The first Lady Principal of the Female Department, a female administrator at Oberlin, a co-educational college, was Mrs. Marianne Parker Dascom (Nidiffer, 2000). Marion Talbot of the University of Chicago was a dean of women who first organized a professional deans meeting in 1903, which continued biennially (Nidiffer, 2000).

During this time, there was an acknowledgement that there needed to be a professional organization for female administrators in higher education. Therefore in 1915, Kathryn Sisson McLean of State Teachers College in Chadron, Nebraska, started informal discussions with deans of women and the following year created the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW) which met during the National Education

Association's (NEA) annual meeting (Nidiffer, 2003). The organization underwent several changes in membership as it attempted to integrate non-majority women into its membership but eventually closed as an organization in 1999, as members found better professional fits in other organizations such as the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (Nidiffer, 2003).

The professionalism of deans of women have progressed and have been incorporated into other national professional development programs, such as NASPA's Alice B. Manicur Symposium for women aspiring to the presidency or vice presidency and the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Institute (Allan, 2011). These efforts continue to be vital, as the numbers of women advancing are met with mixed reviews. In 1997, women held 27.3% of the senior student affairs officer (SSAO) role at doctoral institutions and 40.5% of the SSAO roles at baccalaureate institutions (Hoffman, 2011). Currently those numbers are 38.5% at both doctoral and baccalaureate institutions (Hoffman, 2011).

### **Female Career Advancement**

Built off the foundation laid by pioneering deans of women, the presence of women in higher education blossomed. And since that time, career advancement has been discussed in the literature for women administrators in higher education (Cintrón, 1995); topics often include networking, mentoring, negotiating salaries, etc. Additionally, there is emerging literature regarding women who attempt to overcome the career barrier opposite of the glass ceiling, but rather the "sticky floor" to which clerical staff seek to advance to administrative positions (Iverson, 2009).

Women's career advancement is often linked to individual issues/skills, organization efforts (i.e., training) and interpersonal skills (Iverson, 2009). Individual skills and issues often relate to a woman's skills related to job performance. But it also includes issues such as motivation, ambition and family desires (Iverson, 2009). Instead of just a glass ceiling or a labyrinth being a barrier to advancement, organizational structures can oppress women in careers (Iverson, 2009). Organizations that utilize masculine hierarchical structures innately favor one gender over another (Iverson, 2009). Interpersonal factors include women who have supportive supervisors as well as mentors (Iverson, 2009).

An additional potential obstacle in the workplace is generational differences among female leaders on campus which can lead to competing interests and mixed signals (Kezar & Lester, 2008). Currently in the workforce there are several generations – veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials (Kezar & Lester, 2008). Each of these generations exhibit characteristics that tie generations together. Each of these generations appear to be tied to a distinct wave of feminism (Kezar & Lester, 2008). For example, Baby Boomer female professionals in higher education have often prioritized career over families, while Gen Xers are not so willing to make a choice, leaving resentment with Baby Boomers since Gen Xers appear not willing to make such sacrifices (Kezar & Lester, 2008). These generational differences may lead to confusion organizationally in regards to promoting women.

### **Job Satisfaction and Career Development**

Job satisfaction among females is linked to several issues, including personal attributes as well as their personal role orientation (Blackhurst, Brandt & Kalinowski,

1998a). Potential areas of frustration include role conflicts and ambiguity at work (Blackhurst et al., 1998a). Additionally, more subtle forms of gender inequities may exist such as work expectations, job assignments, etc. (Blackhurst, 2000a). Job satisfaction may also depend on pre-employment expectations, personal and professional goals and title expectations (Blackhurst, 2000a). Satisfaction and morale also often depends on professional development, professional job responsibilities (Rosser & Javinar, 2003) and feelings that institutions did not support their work (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011).

Salary is another factor of satisfaction. Gender is a significant factor in salary at both public and private institutions (Walker, Reason, & Robinson, 2003). However, recent studies are refuting these claims regarding gender's significance (Engstrom, McIntosh, Ridzi, & Kruger, 2006). Instead, when variables are held constant, the only significant finding regarding gender and salary comes in the form of women being underrepresented in the senior student affairs officer (SSAO) role, although there is pay equity at that level (Engstrom et al., 2006). Other qualitative studies however hold firm that salary disparity still exists, partly due to female negotiation styles, or lack thereof (Compton & Palmer, 2009).

Women who assume SSAO roles are often times less educated and less qualified than their male peers (Blackhurst et al., 1998b). Researchers believe that this is a commentary on the professional development that female professionals are receiving, or more so what they are lacking (Blackhurst et al., 1998b). Commitment to an institution has been ranked low for entry and mid-level positions, regardless of educational level and years of service (Blackhurst et al., 1998b). Job satisfaction and institutional commitment

wanes for mid-level women who have been in their position over five years and those who may feel stuck in a position and not advancing (Blackhurst et al., 1998b). Doctoral research done by Dale (as cited in Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011) outlined that those who succeed to senior leadership roles survived

within these ranks [ . . . ] based on (1) the establishment of collaborative relationships; (2) ensuring that individual values are mirrored by the office culture; (3) acknowledging and accepting the existence of gender issues; (4) being self reflective; and (5) utilizing constructive knowing. (p. 274)

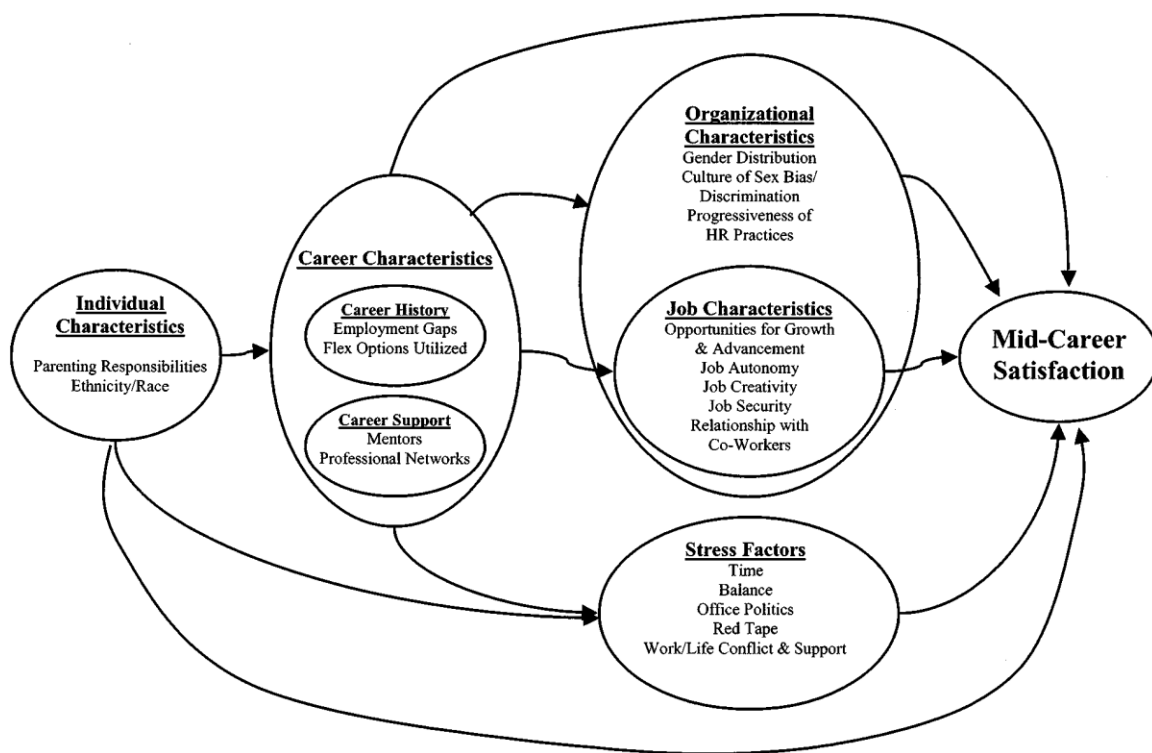
To thrive as a female in student affairs, entry point into the field is important to consider. As Barr et al. notes (as cited in Hughes, 2004), individuals entering student affairs do so intentionally, unintentionally, through a reorganization of the unit, through special training and those who are still not devoted to the field. However, Barr et al. (as cited in Hughes, 2004) continues to note that there are “many real, concrete barriers to full commitment to the field” (p. 136). These barriers include odd work hours, intensity of work, interaction with parents and students, managing crisis, remuneration, and the lack of societal knowledge of the field (Hughes, 2004).

The timeliness of this study is important to outline. Hughes (2004) reviews the literature that explains the number of mid-career employees are increasing. However, Belch and Strange (1995) call the time of mid-career a bottleneck. “Organization characteristics such as gender distribution, culture of sex bias and discrimination, and progressive human resource practices are defined as those having an influence on individual career satisfaction” (Hughes, 2004, p. 137). These characteristics also influence one’s career trajectory and decisions to leave the field all together (Renn, 2004). Attrition rates are concerning for many reasons. “Attrition at this level serves to



maintain the glass ceiling that keeps women out of senior positions” (Renn, 2004, p. 174).

In Figure 1, Auster (2001) explains a conceptual framework which contains six elements to mid-career satisfaction for women, which is defined with how content they are with their jobs so not to leave them or to time out of them. These include individual characteristics, career history and support, organizational characteristics such as the campus culture, job characteristics and stress factors (Auster, 2001). As Figure 1 demonstrates, these six factors contributing to mid-career satisfaction are interwoven characteristics that impact other factors.



Source: Auster (2001, p. 724).

*Figure 1.* Six factors affecting women’s midcareer satisfaction.

“Many of these dimensions are ‘leverageable’ from a managerial standpoint: to the extent that factors such as networking, mentoring, stress, job, and firm characteristics play a role, proactive organizations can facilitate higher levels of professional women midcareer satisfaction” (Auster, 2001, p. 723). “As numerous studies have demonstrated, once women begin to climb into positions of power and authority, both covert and overt biases tend to become more pronounced” (Auster, 2001, pp. 720-721). It is at mid-career that employees weigh the pro’s and con’s of advancement (Hughes, 2004).

### **Catholic Higher Education**

The Catholic Church currently hosts over 250 institutions of higher education in the United States of America (ACCU, 2012). This large segment of the educational population needs to be explored due to its impact on the educational landscape of the country. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012a, 2012b), in 2010, Catholic institutions had over 700,000 total students enrolled during the fall semester and employed more than 158,000 total faculty and staff members.

The history of Catholic higher education in America is long standing. While American higher education began with the founding of Harvard in 1636 (Rudolf, 1990), Catholic higher education started a century and a half later when Georgetown College, now university, was established in 1789 (Heft, 2003). Founded the following century was The Catholic University of America (Heft, 2003). As with other colleges formed at the time, according to the first American bishop, John Carroll, institutions were formed to educate and form future priests (Heft, 2003; Wittberg, 2003). With the shortage of priests, diocesan priests were in great demand; therefore bishops asked male orders to dedicate their work to these early seminaries (Wittberg, 2003). “By 1840, the Jesuits,

Sulpicians, Dominicans and Vincentians had all established colleges” (Heft, 2003, p. 36). Catholic education in America flourished at the university and parish level as the numbers of Catholic immigrants to the country increased three and a half times more than the country’s population growth rate from 1830-1860 (Heft, 2003).

During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic education shed its European model of a six year experience and embraced a four year university experience which allowed students to more easily integrated into professional studies (Heft, 2003). At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women’s religious orders founded colleges for women (Heft, 2003). This monumental task was done so efficiently that “by 1926 twenty-five of them made for more than a third of the sixty-nine colleges accredited by the Catholic Educational Association” (Heft, 2003, p. 37). These efforts were geared to teach Catholic religious women, as well as Catholic daughters (Wittberg, 2003). Additionally, the role of the Catholic college or university was to stave off “secular modernism” and allow for Catholics to be taught in their own culture (Wittberg, 2003, p. 264).

From 1920-1960, Catholic colleges grew in number from 130 to 231 and enrollment skyrocketed from 34,000 to 300,000 plus students (Heft, 2003). Vatican II, held from 1962-1965, was an ecumenical council in which Church leaders examined how the Church would interact with the modern world. From Vatican II, several documents were authored and the Church was seen to be more accessible, for example Masses were now offered in English. Some university leaders believed that Vatican II emphasized a greater role for the laity in the modern Catholic college and university (Heft, 2003).

However, an unexpected offshoot of Vatican II was that canon law was revised for the first time since 1917 (Heft, 2003). In 1983, the revision was published and

included a section on Catholic higher education (Heft, 2003) after a pastoral role for the Catholic Church in higher education was outlined in *Catholic Higher Education and the Pastoral Mission of the Church* (Geiger, 2003). “In 1985, a public discussion on the nature and mission of Catholic higher education began that led to the promulgation in 1990 of John Paul II’s apostolic constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*” (Heft, 2003, p. 39).

*Ex Corde* called for:

1. A Catholic University should have a mission statement that clearly identifies the university as Catholic.
2. Official actions of university officials are to be consonant with the Catholic identity.
3. A Catholic university should be autonomous “within the confines of the truth and the common good.”
4. There are three types of Catholic universities:
  - a. Those established or approved by the Vatican;
  - b. Those established or approved by an episcopal conference;
  - c. Those established or approved by a diocesan bishop.
5. A Catholic university must be “in communion” with the Holy See and with the local church and the diocesan bishop.
6. Bishops have the responsibility to promote Catholic universities in their dioceses and the right and duty to preserve and strengthen their Catholic character.
7. A Catholic university should communicate information about the university to the bishop or relevant ecclesiastical authority regularly.
8. Catholic universities should cooperate with each other and with appropriate governmental organizations to “confront the complex problems facing modern society.” (Geiger, 2003, p. 126)

In addition to the above guidelines, *Ex Corde* called for university presidents and the majority of faculty to be Catholic themselves and that the board members are also responsible as administrators of the university to promote the faith (Geiger, 2003).

Theology faculty members are also required to receive a mandatum to ensure that proper Catholic doctrine is being taught in the classroom (Geiger, 2003).

Critics of *Ex Corde* challenge it on grounds of loss of autonomy and academic freedom in the university. Peter Seinfelds, theology professor and author, argued,

The whole process of clarifying and strengthening the Catholic identity can be easily undermined by the intervention of nonacademic ecclesiastical authorities. Catholic identity simply cannot be imposed or assured by fiat. It must be implanted by persuasion and sustained, ultimately, by love. If that cause is associated with nonacademic control over academic matters, the effort is half-lost before it has begun (as cited by Geiger, 2003, p. 127).

Pre Vatican II, Catholic university and college founding, governance and administration was in the hands of the sponsoring religious order (Gallin, 2003) and rarely was the relationship between the order and the institution formalized through written agreement (Wittberg, 2003). Post Vatican II, Catholic higher education was forever altered. “By 1992, only two percent of governing boards for Catholic colleges and universities were ‘subsystems’ of a sponsoring religious organization, another two percent were semi-independent; and fully ninety-six percent were independent corporations” (Geiger, 2003, p. 118). While lay members are now the majority of Catholic university governing boards, religious orders have maintained a governing presence in several ways. Some religious orders created corporations that would maintain veto power over a board of trustees’ decision in certain areas, such as hiring a president or land acquisition or sale (Geiger, 2003). Additionally, religious orders may have institutional governing documents that require a certain number of board positions to be held by the order (Geiger, 2003).

Some of this slow transition from religious to lay leadership was in part due to fear. According to Leahy (1991), there was doubt that lay administrators and faculty could transmit the Catholic mission as effectively as those who had taken religious vows.

There has been a recent resurgence of universities revisiting their governing documents. This is due in part to the institution’s response to the decline in the number of religious on the college or university campus. In 2009, there were only 29,722

diocesan priests, 13,695 religious priests and 58,846 religious women in America, all numbers declining annually (Pastoral Ministry for Priestly Vocations, n.d.).

Post Vatican II and with the decline in the numbers of religious, a shift in university leadership and governance occurred. According to Morey, “by 1995, fewer than 38% of colleges founded by women religious had a president from a founding congregation” (Wittberg, 2003, p. 270). “All but sixteen of the 230 Catholic colleges and universities currently operating in this country—93% of them, in other words—have been connected with a religious congregation; 88% are still so linked” (Wittberg, 2003, p. 263). The Jesuits host 28 institutions; the Sisters of Mercy sponsor another 19 and the Dominicans, Franciscans, Ursulines, Benedictines and others sponsor or have sponsored the remaining others (Wittberg, 2003). However, Morey continues that “between 1967 and 1977, 98% of all Catholic colleges and universities in the United State became separately incorporated from their founding congregations” (Wittberg, 2003, p. 270). Overseeing such large institutions became overly complicated and counterintuitive to religious institutions (Wittberg, 2003) based on the principle of a Catholic family. Gallin (2000) points out that “the image of family which seemed so appropriate to the Catholic identity had its dark side; it failed to include everyone and it also kept power within a paternalistic mode” (p. 124).

### **Women in the Church**

The role of women in the Catholic Church has been a heated topic. “In recent years, debates about the role of women in the Church have divided the hierarchy, angered if not alienated large numbers of women, and put at risk many church programs that depend upon the contributions of women” (O’Brien, 1994, p. 23). Research has begun

looking at how women who identify as feminists can remain in the Catholic Church which limits their positions of influence (Ecklund, 2003). Some women are choosing to “defect in place,” meaning blending personal feminist ways of thinking with their own spirituality, all while remaining a practicing Catholic (Winter, Lummis, & Stokes, 1994).

However there are varying levels of alienation. For example, started by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, is an order of Catholic priests and brothers. If one asks what makes a Jesuit school Jesuit, the Jesuits themselves have identified ten key principles that need to be enacted which range from following an apostolic way, striving for justice, living by the tenets of the Catholic Church, having religious formation, teaching and acting justly, seeking excellence, enacting Jesuit pedagogy and so on (Jesuit Conference, 2007). In fact, the Jesuits state that “a Jesuit education should aim to free its students to confront honestly the social injustices of racism, sexism, and religious intolerance” (Jesuit Conference, 2007, p. 14).

Post Vatican II, the Catholic Church acknowledged that the Church was becoming one for and of the people, the lay members (Jackson, 2002). The Jesuits themselves have acknowledged this need. The immediate past Superior General of the Jesuits, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach’s international address “Cooperating with Each Other in Mission” called for the partnership to be further defined and nurtured (Kolvenbach, 2004). Fr. Kolvenbach also specifically addressed the role of women in society and the Church, calling for the Jesuits to stand in solidarity with women in a search for more consistent equality (Kolvenbach, 2004).

While women religious used to lead women’s colleges and universities, the number of women in the presidency has plummeted. “As women have risen to the top

job at more colleges overall, they've lost ground in Catholic higher education, their ranks dwindling as colleges went coed and lay leaders replaced nuns" (Nelson, 2012, para. 2). Colleges and universities that were founded by male orders are appointing a greater number of lay presidents than previous years (Nelson, 2012). "Georgetown University, founded by Jesuits, hired its first layman as president in 2001; seven other Jesuit colleges have followed suit. So far, none of the lay leaders have been women" (Nelson, 2012, para. 30). According to Susan Ross, who chairs the theology department at Loyola University Chicago, "It tends to be a kind of male culture. I think it still remains a very difficult place for women to move up the ladder" (Nelson, 2012, para. 31).

How can Catholicism and women role modeling for female students in higher education peacefully coincide?

Established religions and the educational system are two of the most important social institutions, and they affect large numbers of people in most societies. On the whole, when it comes to their influence on sexist attitudes, these two institutions may tend to work at cross-purposes, with traditional religions justifying gender inequality as divinely mandated and educational systems challenging traditional beliefs and affording women increased access to career opportunities. (Glick, Lameiras, & Rodriguez Castro, 2002, p. 433)

Patriarchy is defined as "a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men then enable them to dominate women" (Hartmann, 2004, p. 143). While a patriarchy is not only about hierarchy, it also takes place when certain people fill certain roles in that hierarchy (Hartmann, 2004). One element of patriarchy and how it is lived occurs in male institutions that are based or founded on male social interaction, such as sports, unions, professions, universities and churches, to name but a few (Hartmann, 2004).



The Catholic Church by its sheer structure is a patriarchy, as the Pope, or Holy See is the leader of the Church on earth. The Pope can only be elected as a priest and the Catholic Church only ordains men as priests. In Johnson's examination of Christology, she looks at the implicit inferiority of women in Christianity; "by making Jesus' embodiment as male an ontological necessity rather than historical option, theologians have dignified the male as the only genuine way of being human . . . this relegates women to the margins of significance" (Power, 2002, p. 91). A recent example of this came to light when Pope Benedict stated that attempts to ordain women were a grave sin and should be punished under the same means as those individuals who sexually abuse children (Donadio, 2010).

However, McGuire (2003) uses the biblical reference of the lion and lamb in her challenge to women leading in Catholic higher education. McGuire (2003) encourages women (the lambs) not to bleat and complain, but instead to lay down with all the lions (those obstacles that challenge them) and combat so to be heroes "through the small acts of faith and courage that give life to our mission each day" (p. 119). McGuire (2003) explains that

today we confront a great a growing leadership crisis in Catholic higher education, a crisis that has the potential to become cataclysmic with the generational turn of the next century. This is a crisis not simply for Catholic colleges and universities, but indeed, for the church herself. This is not simply a crisis of personnel, issues of male or female, religious or lay, theologian or financier. This is truly a crisis of mission and vision, the essence of all leadership, as well as a crisis of confidence in the possibility of that mission and clarity of that vision. This is a crisis that cries out for heroes. (p. 111)

In *Ex Corde*, the four principle mission characteristics of Catholic education include:

a Christian inspiration in individuals and community; reflection of knowledge in the light of the Catholic faith; fidelity to the Christian message as it comes from the church; and an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life. (McGuire, 2003, p. 113)

But critics question how this can be done when there are those who are excluded from full participation in the church (McGuire, 2003). While women served as presidents of colleges long before secular institutions through female religious orders leading their sponsored women's colleges, this does not speak to those co-educational or male religious orders sponsored institutions (Jackson, 2002). "While women in the secular universe still experience many barriers, each day brings news of glass ceilings shattered. But sadly, not in this church" (McGuire, 2003, p. 117). This is where McGuire calls women leading in Catholic higher education not to bleat like a lamb, but instead to channel despair to prepare women for future leadership roles (McGuire, 2003). This preparation includes maintaining credibility and being vocal at the decision making tables women are currently at, to advocate for a proud Catholic and unapologetic identity for our institutions and to recognize the "inherent dangers of heroism" while serving as a trailblazer who may attract unwanted attention in advocating for change (McGuire, 2003, pp. 117-118).

In 2000, the National Association for Women in Catholic Higher Education (NAWCHE) conducted a mixed methods study of 151 Catholic higher education institutions trying to examine the daily experience of women and Women Studies programs (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003). Thirty percent of the respondents spoke of a negative climate on campus for women and Women's Studies while 21.3% reported experiencing first hand gender discrimination (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003).

Additionally, 38.7% believed that their institution did not take discrimination based on gender seriously and 21% believed it was not dealt with at all (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003). Female administrators described a neutral environment that did not advocate for social justice and equity (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003), which is oftentimes contrary to charisms and mission of the university. Further recommendations from this study included focusing research directly on female administrators in Catholic higher education (Hesse-Biber & Leckenby, 2003). The tension between educating female students to live active professional lives with the Church's role for women denies leadership roles serves as a potential barrier for women studying and working at these institutions, especially those founded by male religious orders (Jackson, 2002).

### **Catholic Student Affairs**

The "stained glass ceiling" is a term that has been adopted in the press to describe the limited advancement of women in the Church. While the origin of the term is unknown, it has been referenced as early as 1994, in a *Time* article in 2000 and many subsequent references. "Women in the Catholic higher education continue to argue that the 'stained' glass ceiling is often perceived to be more shatterproof for women than for men because of the entrenched patriarchal tradition of the Catholic Church" (Jackson, 2002, p. 490).

Vital to ensuring the mission of a university is being lived are the president, the provost, the dean of arts and the dean of students (Geiger, 2003). Student affairs and its leadership play a key role in ensuring that expectations that are outlined in *Ex Corde* are followed, although little is written on how non-faculty are to utilize the document (Salimi, 2002). This may be due to the fact that the area of student affairs was often

overseen by sponsoring religious orders so to maintain the religious identity of the school (Schallar, 2003). As the field of student affairs has grown, there appeared to be a lack of training and formation of those in the field in Catholic student affairs (Schallar, 2003). Additionally, Estanek (2002) shared that while Church documents address the role of faculty, governance and other university issues, less has been authored about the role of student affairs within Catholic higher education. Additionally, Estanek (2001) believes there is a disconnect between student affairs professionals and their Catholic employing institutions since most new professionals are formed through public institution graduate work as well as Catholic institutions failing to communicate their mission properly.

Commissioned by the presidents of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), Estanek surveyed the senior student affairs officers at the ACCU member institutions (Estanek, 2001). Of the 209 members, 137 responded to the survey and found that

92% were white, 79% were Catholic, 56% were male, 54% were married, 48% were in their 40s, and 45% had been in their position for 3 years or less. At institutions founded by male religious orders, 88% of the senior student affairs officers were male. At institutions founded by female religious orders, 62% were female. In total, 23% of senior student affairs officers were living in religious life. (Schallar, 2003, p. 250)

The numbers, however, do not tell the story of how women navigate a patriarchal institution or why they choose to persist, navigating barriers.

Recent research in Jesuit Catholic higher education provides more insight into that specific community of institutions. In 1999, Maureen Fay, O.P., shared that there were more women in the lower levels of the institution's organization (as cited by Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). Increases in women in higher level positions at the institution, not just within student affairs, has been on the rise, although the level of the

vice president appears to still lack in women numbers (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). Through a study conducted in 2008, Perry and Collins DeLeonardo (2012) examined how women achieve higher level positions and what influences them. The researchers found women sharing the stories of being the “first” dean, chair, vice president and shared suggestions of subtle sexism (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). Supervisors, mentors, support from the president, raising awareness and starting dialogue were all mentioned as factors contributing to advancement (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012).

In an unpublished study by Ran, Zimmerman-Oster, and Zarkowski in 2011, the researchers described the results from their quantitative study surveying men and women in Jesuit higher education (as cited by Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012) regarding perceptions of glass ceilings and cliffs for women and how mentors play into their upward mobility. Women with informative mentors were more likely seen to advance; although fewer women felt that their skills were appreciated and that they had a chance to advance (as cited by Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). Women believed that organizational culture inhibited their advancement and that they perceived more barriers than men (Ran, Zimmerman-Oster & Zarkowski, 2011). However, survey respondents were positive about their career (as cited by Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012).

### **Summary**

In examining the literature, an abundance of material regarding women in leadership and student affairs administration exists. Career aspirations, barriers, salary inequities and many other topics have been and continue to be investigated by peer reviewed journals. However, there is limited research in Catholic higher education,

considered a strong network organized by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and other professional organizations. Additionally, there is little research on midcareer student affairs administrative staff (Twombly & Rosser, 2002).

Acknowledging that there are gender gaps for women in higher education, specific journals have recently been published dedicated to the topic, such as the *Journal for Women in Higher Education*. However, a lack of attention to the Catholic culture and how that affects women in leadership roles has yet to be studied. With the patriarchal nature of the Catholic Church, the research attempted to bridge an existing void in the literature. The hope was that this research would be used as an impetus to further studies regarding student affairs and higher education administration within the Catholic tradition on college campuses. The research questions and methodology presented in Chapter Three were created to give voice to women navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles on their campuses, which were rich with tradition.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. In Chapter Three, the researcher outlined the overall approach and rationale for choosing qualitative research as the selected methodology. The design overview was explained and researcher bias was acknowledged. Information on participant selection, data collection, analysis and validation were outlined.

#### **Overall Approach and Rationale**

Qualitative research is oftentimes described as allowing researchers to be present within the research, to let the study emerge and to allow for thick, rich detail to be shared regarding the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). This methodology also includes several other characteristics according to Creswell (2009), including the researcher collecting data in the natural habitat of the participant rather than in a lab; the researcher serves as the data collection tool; data is oftentimes collected in several forms such as interviews, documents, observations, etc.; data analysis is inductive while the data collection is emergent; the participants' meaning of the situation is viewed through the researchers theoretical lens; finally, qualitative research is "interpretive" and "holistic" (Creswell, 2009, p. 176).

Qualitative methodology design was chosen to better understand the central phenomenon, or shared lived experience, of how individual female mid-career student affairs professionals navigated the career labyrinth including obstacles at Catholic male

religious order sponsored institutions. The central question this study addressed was what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth, including obstacles, in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic institutions of higher education? More specifically,

- What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?
- Who or what created these obstacles?
- How does the Catholic Church sponsorship influence the situation?
- How do women navigate career obstacles?
- Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?

Current research emphasized the importance of studying female mid-level administrators since these individuals can have a great impact on the culture of the organization (Yakaboksi & Donahoo, 2011). As a population that has been argued to have their voice neglected in research (Yakaboksi & Donahoo, 2011), qualitative research was the chosen methodology to give voice to this population through thick, rich descriptive results.

### **Design Overview**

To describe the core of a lived experience, a phenomenological approach was undertaken. “The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). As Moustakas described, this description includes what someone experiences and how they experienced it (1994). More specifically, transcendental phenomenology focuses on the use of intuition instead of deduction, as meaning emerges with self-reflection utilizing one’s consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). This allows a researcher to focus more on the



participants' experiences than with his/her interpretation of those experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Moustakas aligns with Husserl's idea of *epoche*, or bracketing, "in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 59-60). As a researcher, bracketing personal experiences allows for personal biases to be suspended so to not affect the research (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) believed that this will allow a researcher to view the data with a new lens.

Phenomenological procedures for collecting and analyzing data were as follows:

- Once the research question was determined to be best answered through a qualitative, phenomenological approach, a central phenomenon was identified (Creswell, 2007).
- Next, "the researcher recognizes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61).
- Data collection occurred through participant interviews that were in depth. Polkinghorne (1989) suggested interviews with 5 to 25 participants with experience with the central phenomenon (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 61). In total, 15 useable interviews were conducted for this study.
- Moustakas (1994) recommended asking two questions in the interviews which were broad to allow for an emergent design. These questions include "what have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What context or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences with the phenomenon?" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Due to the nature of the interviews

being conducted by telephone and in order to build rapport with participants, an interview protocol with 12 questions was utilized but also allowed for emergent conversation.

- Once data were collected, they were analyzed. The personal experience of the researcher was bracketed out. The data were then reviewed for phrases, statements, etc. that explained how the participant interacted with the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) called this horizontalization. Once this occurred, these were grouped into themes (Creswell, 2007).
- Moustakas (1994) then recommended taking the themes and writing a textual description of what the participants' experienced, or the what of the experience, as well as adding structural description on "*how* the phenomenon is experienced" (p. 78).
- Finally, from the structural and textual descriptions, the researcher outlined the essence of the central phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Worldview**

As a researcher, the chosen world view was one of a social constructivist. "In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Therefore, the participants' world views are then made up of how they ascribe meaning to their situation that is based on "historical and cultural norms" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). This social constructivist view was demonstrated through open ended questions that allowed for participants to make meaning of their experiences.

### **Bracketing - Clarifying Researcher Bias**

Ethical issues were disclosed for transparency. According to Isreal and Hay (2006), “researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of the research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems” (as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 87).

As a Catholic, mid-career student affairs female professional at a Catholic institution, the researcher has experienced and witnessed career obstacles professionally. There were times in which the researcher found herself asking the question of: did I hear that right or did I imagine that? Did I hyper-analyze what was going on around me and to me? Additionally, there were at times few women at the university decision making table. In some departments, female colleagues did not receive the mentoring that their male co-workers received. Others struggled with maintaining family, professional and academic pursuits. However, the researcher also witnessed women navigate obstacles with “grace and grit,” borrowing the term from the title of Lilly Ledbetter’s book (Ledbetter & Isom, 2012). Throughout those experiences; however, women persisted at the institution, often referring to the intuition as a community and a family.

To remove personal experiences and to allow the voices of the participants to be heard, intentional and reflective discernment occurred to set aside the researcher’s personal story. Bracketing, or *epoche*, allowed the researcher to not focus on her personal experiences and instead allowed for the participants’ stories to emerge, since the research was not an autobiography but rather an intentionally chosen phenomenological study to focus on the participants lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).

## **Study Approval and Ethical Considerations**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) expedited review was sought once the proposal was accepted by the researcher's dissertation supervisory committee. IRB approval was obtained on September 3, 2012 (see Appendix A).

## **Participant Selection**

Participants were purposefully sampled to get at the heart of the common lived experience (Creswell, 2009). Female mid-career student affairs administrators were identified from a variety of Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) member universities (see Appendix A) that were sponsored by male religious order institutions, including geographically and institutionally diverse characteristics. Institutions hosted by male religious orders without affiliations with female religious orders were identified through an internet search of institutions' websites. After institutions were identified, individual participants' contact information was obtained through the Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU) online membership directory, which included job title and email addresses. Members were emailed to solicit their participation (see Appendix B). Since saturation with the central phenomenon was sought, the researcher aimed to conduct a minimum of 10 interviews with a cap of 20 interviews for the purpose of the study. Fifteen useable interviews were obtained from participants working within institutions all hosted by one male religious order.

In addition, gatekeepers were utilized to recommend names of additional participants, utilizing an iterative selection process. Gatekeepers allowed the researcher access into communities that had already established trust with the gatekeeper.

Specifically, women in student affairs who had participated in the NASPA Manicur Symposium, had held senior leadership roles in higher education (such as vice president or president), had held leadership positions within professional organizations (such as the Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administrators, JASPA), and/or had been awarded student affairs lifetime achievement recognitions were contacted. They were asked to submit names and contact information of women who met the participant criteria so that the researcher could contact them to ask if they would be willing to participate in the study. Referrals were also accepted if proposed participants met the participant criteria.

### **Data Collection**

Fifty-five initial email requests were sent asking individuals to participate in the research. Six emails were sent to potential gatekeepers asking for referrals. An additional 14 emails were sent to individuals referred to the researcher by gatekeepers; therefore, a total of 69 emails were sent. From the emails sent, 16 interviews were scheduled and conducted. One interview was not utilized in data analysis since the participant did not meet the participant criteria, as learned through the course of the conversation. Therefore, there were 15 useable interviews at this point in the research.

Due to the initial low participant response and the fact that responding participants all were currently employed at Jesuit Catholic institutions, the criterion on institutions was expanded to include institutions that were hosted by two additional orders of male clergy. Institutions within this category were selected as male order sponsored institutions that were not identified on their website as having been founded by a sister order. From these institutions, professionals who were members of the ACCU

and Association of Student Affairs for Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU) were contacted; 15 additional email invitations were sent out. Only one positive response was realized and the interview was conducted. This interview was not utilized due to the participant not meeting the criteria for the study; she did not have experiences with career obstacles at her institution.

Additionally, one individual was not interviewed due to her late reply to the researcher. Therefore in sum, 17 interviews were conducted. Two were not utilized based on not meeting participant criteria. Fifteen usable interviews were analyzed.

While an optional, unstructured journal activity was offered to each participant, none of the 15 participants took the researcher up on the offer and emailed a journal submission. Therefore, no additional data sources were reviewed besides the interview transcriptions.

### **Interview Protocol Design**

Once a central phenomenon was established and a literature review completed, an interview protocol was developed. While Moustakas (1994) advocated for the use of two questions, the what and the how of the experience with the central phenomenon, the researcher created an interview protocol of 12 questions. These 12 questions included rapport building and referral gathering. Since all questions were to be conducted via the telephone, in order to build a rapport with the participants, more than two questions were deemed appropriate. The interview protocol was proposed to the researcher's supervisory committee and was approved with alterations made with advisor guidance.

The interview protocol consisted of 12 questions, including probes, to solicit the participants' experience with navigating the career labyrinth and obstacles. The

interview began with the Participant Consent (see Appendix D) review and the researcher thanking the participant for her time. An icebreaker initiated the interview to help build rapport with the participant (see Appendix E). Additional questions, including probes, were:

1. Tell me about your career in Catholic higher education.
  - a. How long have you worked at your institution?
  - b. What are your areas of responsibility?
2. Why do you choose to work at your institution?
  - a. What do you enjoy about working in Catholic higher education?
  - b. What do you find challenging about working in Catholic higher education?
3. What are your experiences with career obstacles?
  - a. If clarification is needed, career obstacles, as defined in The Department of Labor's *Glass Ceiling Report*, "Glass Ceiling research reveals three levels of artificial barriers to the advancement of minorities and women in the private sector that contradict this nation's ethic of individual worth and accountability—the belief that education, training, dedication, and hard work will lead to a better life" (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). These levels of barriers, or obstacles, are societal, internal structural and governmental barriers.
4. Have you personally experienced an obstacle? Please describe.
5. How are obstacles experienced at your institution?
  - a. Do all employees experience obstacles similarly?

6. Have you tried to advance your own career? If so, how?
  - a. Do you feel that you have the ability to advance?
  - b. What are opportunities for advancement for you?
  - c. What are your desires to advance professionally?
  - d. How have you actively pursued advancement?
7. What have you done to deal with career obstacles?
  - a. What are your perceptions of organizational constraints to advancement?
  - b. What structures are a part of that situation?
  - c. What people are a part of that situation?
  - d. What other factors describe that situation?
8. How do you overcome obstacles professionally?
  - a. What would you need to work on regarding your skills and experiences in order for you to advance?
9. Do you have a professional mentor?
  - a. Please describe your professional mentor and your relationship with him/her.
  - b. In what ways do you communicate with your professional mentor?
  - c. Can you give me some examples of how the mentor has been helpful in your overcoming perceived obstacles?
10. What would you suggest to improve the career advancement climate for female student affairs administrators at your institution or similar institutions?



11. What have I not asked you that is important to know about navigating obstacles to career advancement at male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational institutions?
12. To whom should I talk to in order to find out more about navigating the leadership labyrinth of career advancement in male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational higher education?

Probes were included to help the interview flow and to help participants further elucidate responses. It should also be noted that while the protocol was utilized, an emergent design was employed to allow the researcher to establish a conversational flow with the participants and to continue to build rapport (Creswell, 2009).

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher thanked the participant for her time and reminded the participant of an optional, unstructured journal activity that could be kept over the next two weeks to further reflect on her experiences with navigating career obstacles. The journal was to be submitted electronically to the researcher; however, no journals were submitted.

### **Interview Data Collection**

Once IRB approval was obtained, participants were contacted by email for an explanation of the study. This initial communication contact was first to determine if the woman was an eligible participant. In order to participate in the study, the women must have self-identified that they were mid-career professionals, have experienced navigating career obstacles, and wanted to advance professionally.

Approximately one hour phone interviews were scheduled via telephone to allow for the researcher to maintain her full time professional position. Interviews were

digitally recorded and transcribed. The interview protocol was followed to conduct semi-structured interviews, but conversation was allowed to flow and emerge (Creswell, 2009). Hand written notes were also taken in case the digital recorder failed. Transcripts excluding filler words such as “um”, “ah”, etc. and identifiers were imported into NVivo software in order to code and theme the data.

As suggested by Creswell (2009), multiple sources of data are recommended in qualitative research mythology. Therefore, as noted above, participants at the end of their interview were asked to optionally journal about their reflections on the interview over the following two weeks and for their reflections to be emailed to the researcher. These reflections were not guided and allowed for participants to further reflect on their experience with navigating career obstacles. Had textual and pictorial data been submitted to the researcher, it would have been included in the NVivo database to have been integrated into the database.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Transcriptions were obtained through a paid, professional transcriptionist. The transcriber was required to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure participants' confidentiality. Transcriptions were completed verbatim excluding filler words such as “uh”, “um”, “ah”, etc. Once the transcriptions were completed, the database was cleaned and prepared for coding. Transcriptions were first read through completely while listening to the audio recordings so that the entire voice of the participant was heard. When transcriptions were verified, the digital recordings were erased.

Pseudonyms were used and all identifiers of people, places and programs were removed to retain confidentiality. An identity key was kept solely by the researcher in a

locked box in her personal dwelling. Digital files were kept on the researcher's password protected computer with backup files being stored on a hard drive stored in the same locked box as the identity key.

Transcriptions were reviewed by the researcher with a modified combination of Van Kaam's and Stevick/Colaizzi/Keen's analysis methods (Moustakas, 1994). These methods included grouping significant statements, reducing duplications, clustering horizons (codes) into themes and checking to transcriptions, and constructing textual-structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

The following steps were utilized by the researcher in the data analysis process. First epoche occurred by bracketing out the researcher's personal experiences so not to intertwine with the participants' experience. This was accomplished by reading and rereading the database, intentionally clearing the mind to allow meaning units to emerge. Phenomenological reduction allowed for "an uncovering of the nature and meaning of an experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). Therefore, significant statements were horizontalized and given equal priority (Moustakas, 1994). Duplications, non-significant statements and phrases that overlap with other statements were removed from the process (see Appendix F). As horizons surfaced from the interviews, they were clustered together to form meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). These meaning units were then used to explain the textural essence of the phenomenon, including rich detailed quotation passages (Moustakas, 1994). These were reviewed for structural experiences and meaning.

## **Validation Strategies**

To achieve reliability, the qualitative database was checked for errors to the audio files (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative validity is important in qualitative research to ensure accuracy in reporting data (Creswell, 2009). In order to achieve validity, several means were used. Member checks were conducted so that participants verified that their interviews were themed appropriately. Participants were asked to participate in member checks on transcriptions and themes. Thirteen of the 15 participants submitted responses expressing interest in participating in the checks. In addition, rich thick description was utilized in the findings section to help give voice to the participant's lived experiences. Opposing viewpoints were included in the themed passages for disconfirming evidence. Researcher bias was acknowledged and bracketed out for data analysis. Finally, an external auditor was utilized and signed a confidentiality agreement. The auditor reviewed the audio files, transcriptions and qualitative database to ensure accuracy and saturation (See Appendix F).

In addition, rapport was built with the participants so that they experienced a level of reciprocity. While no monetary rewards were offered for participation, participants have the opportunity to read the final research product as well as letting participants know what a critical role they played in furthering the research in the field of student affairs administration as well as assisting a graduate student. Additionally, each of the initial participants were mailed a hand written thank you note at the conclusion of the research.

All data collected were handled professionally. Data were stored on a password protected computer. Additionally, all participants' identifiers were stripped post the

qualitative data collection and pseudonyms were assigned in order to protect people's identities. Backup copies and an identity key were stored in the researcher's personal locked box.

While present in the study through the process of reflexivity, researcher bias was limited through bracketing of the researcher's personal experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, the researcher was bound by the sponsoring university's code of conduct, as well as the researcher's professional organizations' statements of ethical principles, and Institutional Review Board review. Ultimately, all participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, qualitative research, and more specifically, phenomenological methodology, was chosen to answer the research questions posed to a potentially marginalized population by the researcher. Through intentionality and intuition, as described by Moustakas (1994), the researcher bracketed out her personal experiences to immerse herself in the participants' interviews, which achieved saturation with the central phenomenon. Utilizing a social constructivist worldview, the findings of the above data collection were presented in Chapter Four with recommendations to follow.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. More specifically, the researcher wanted to seek to answer the overarching question and sub questions. The overarching question was what meaning do mid-career student affairs women make of navigating career obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic institutions of higher education? The sub questions were:

- RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?
- RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles?
- RQ3: How does the Catholic Church sponsorship influence the situation?
- RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles?
- RQ5: Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?

After completing the interviews and executing the methodology, the summarized findings follow.

#### **Participants**

The following 15 participants' names, institutions and cities were all assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. Identifiers, such as certain campus events or traditions, shared during the interviews were stripped so that confidentiality would be maintained. The cleaned and stripped data were included in the participants' passages shared in the findings section for ease of reading. It should be noted, that participants

were asked solely about their job at their institution and how long they had been there. Some participants offered additional information regarding their career history; others did not. Participant data regarding level of degree attainment, religion, age, race/ethnicity, etc. were not solicited. Due to the very small network of student affairs within Catholic higher education, participants expressed their need for confidentiality. Therefore, details shared on each participant included years at the institution based on a range. Group characteristics were provided in Figures 2-4.

**Abigail.** Employed at Holy Ghost, Abigail is an alumna of Holy Ghost, a Catholic and Jesuit institution. After receiving her masters, Abigail was employed at another Catholic institution before returning to Holy Ghost. While at her current institution between 6-10 years, Abigail has worked in a variety of student life areas.

**Ann.** Ann started her career at another, non-Catholic institution where she worked in student life. After leaving that institution, Ann has worked at the University of Our Lady of Hope for 6-10 years. Ann works in student life and has done so during her tenure at Our Lady of Hope, a Jesuit Catholic institution.

**Charlotte.** As a student life professional, Charlotte has held several positions in student affairs functional areas. St. Robert's was Charlotte's only experience in Catholic Jesuit higher education, and she has been with the university for between 1-5 years.

**Emily.** Emily worked within Catholic higher education for several years, including two other institutions. Emily has worked at Cardinal University, a Jesuit Catholic institution, between 11-15 years in student affairs.

**Grace.** After earning her master's degree, Grace went to work for several institutions before returning to St. Vincent's, where she was an alumna. Grace started working at St. Brogan, a Catholic Jesuit institution for 1-5 years in student affairs.

**Hannah.** Hannah's first experience in Catholic higher education was at Grace University, a Catholic Jesuit institution. She has been employed in student affairs for between 6-10 years at Grace. Prior to Grace, Hannah worked at a private institution, non-religiously affiliated.

**Isabelle.** Isabelle worked in student life at St. Aloysius University, a Catholic Jesuit University. During her life, Isabelle has accumulated experience at three Catholic institutions. Within student life, Isabelle was responsible for a myriad of duties. Her time at St. Aloysius has been 1-5 years, the shortest tenure of the other institutions.

**Kate.** An alumna of Faber University, Kate sought professional student affairs experiences externally at two institutions. After years of experience at those institutions, Kate returned to Faber. Through the 6-10 year tenure, Kate has worked at Faber, a Catholic Jesuit institution.

**Layla.** Layla worked in student affairs at St. Timothy and was only at the institution for a few years. Prior to that, Layla worked in student life at a large, state institution. St. Timothy was her first institution of employment that was Catholic and Jesuit where she has been for 1-5 years.

**Lillian.** Lillian worked at St. Pascal's. Sponsored by the Catholic Jesuit order, she was an alumna of the institution. Once graduating from St. Pascal's, Lillian went to work in student affairs at another institution. Lillian came back to St. Paschal's where



she has been for approximately 6-10 years. Lillian has worked in a variety of roles in student life.

**Madison.** Madison has been at Holy Family, a Catholic Jesuit institution, for a 11-15 years. Prior to that, Madison had worked at public institutions. Holy Family was Madison's only experience in Catholic higher education. She worked in student life.

**Mia.** Employed by St. Gabriel's a Catholic Jesuit sponsored institution, Mia was a St. Gabe's alumna. Before working in student affairs, Mia also worked in another division at the university. Subsequently, Mia has worked in student life and has been employed for approximately 6-10 years.

**Natalie.** Natalie has been at St. Gregory's for between 1-5 years working in student affairs. St. Gregory's was a Jesuit Catholic institution and it was the first Catholic institution that Natalie worked for.

**Olivia.** Olivia worked at two Catholic Jesuit institutions during the tenure of her career. After leaving Christ College, Olivia began her work at St. Pius University. Olivia's role at St. Pius is within student life. Olivia had been at St. Pius for 1-5 years.

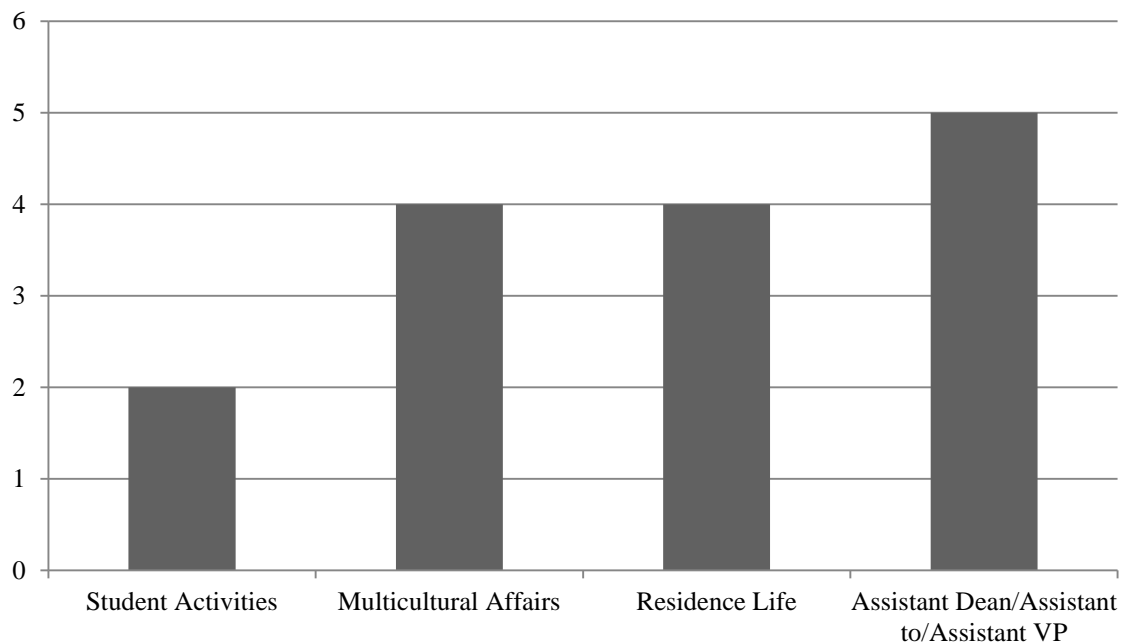
**Zoe.** Zoe was a product of a Catholic education. One she graduated, she took a job at Our Lady of Victory, a Jesuit Catholic institution where she worked in student life. After that time, Zoe began her employment at St. Dominic, a Jesuit Catholic institution, where she has remained for over 20 years in student life.

### **Participant Summary**

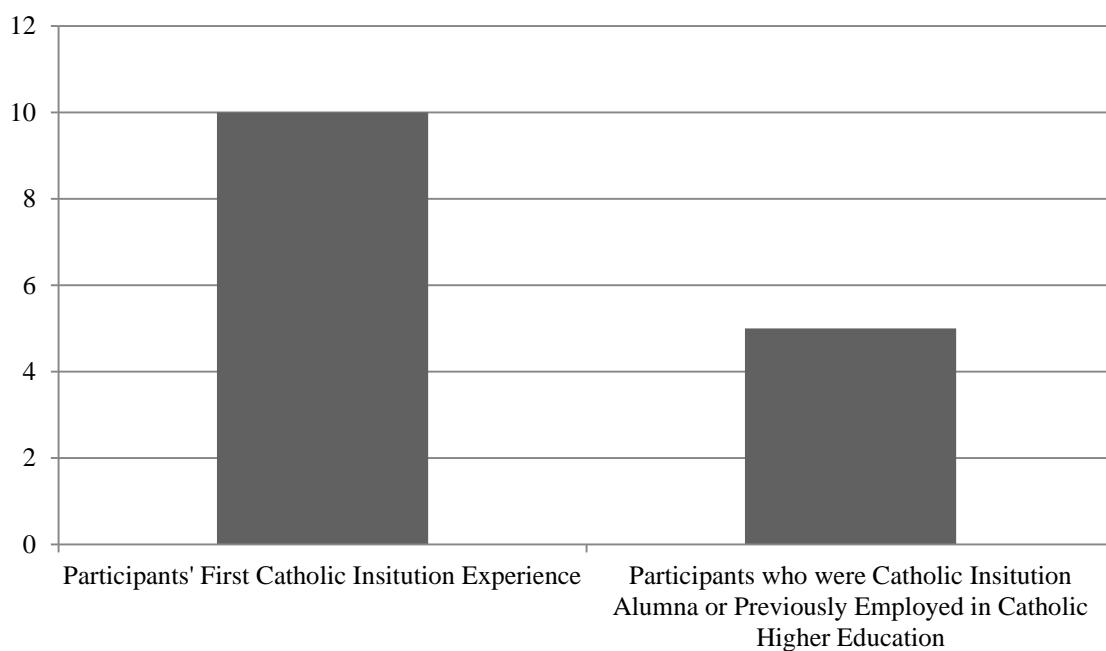
Of the 15 participants, all were employed at Catholic Jesuit institutions. Two worked in the area of student activities, four in residence life, four in multicultural affairs, and five in assistant to/assistant vice president/assistant dean roles (see Figure 2).

Five of the women had worked at and/or were alumnae of Catholic institutions. Ten women had their only Catholic higher education experience at their current institution (see Figure 3).

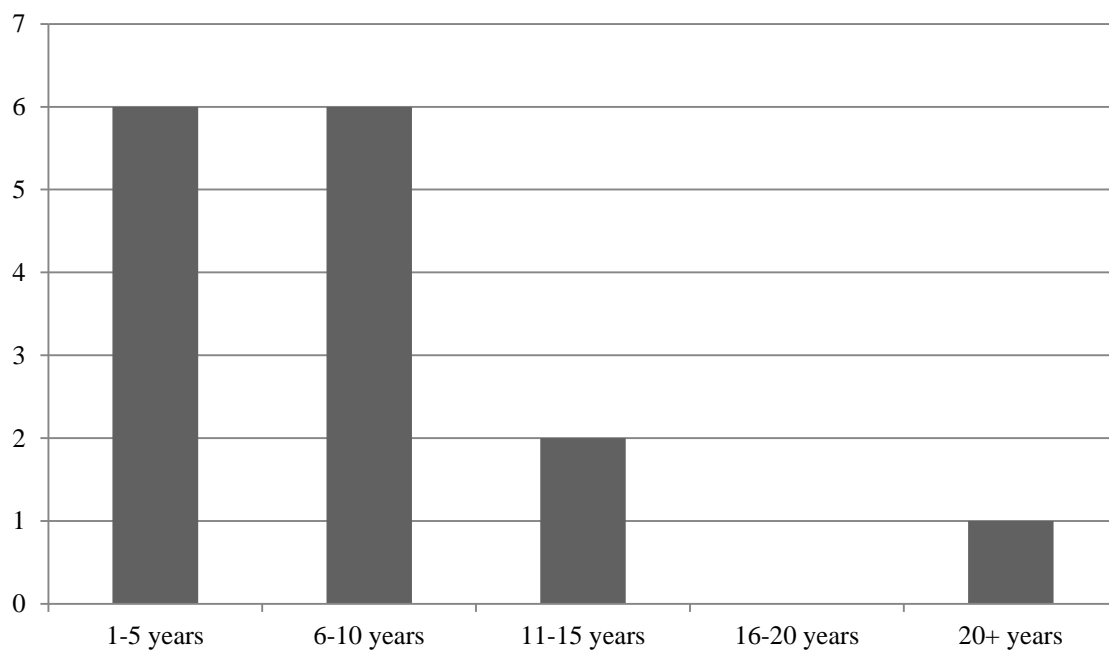
The 15 participants had a number of years of experience among them. The average number of years at their current institution was 7.5 years. Ranging from their first year on their college campus to over two decades of experience, the participants had a range of lengths of experience working at their current institution (see Figure 4).



*Figure 2.* Number of participants by functional areas.



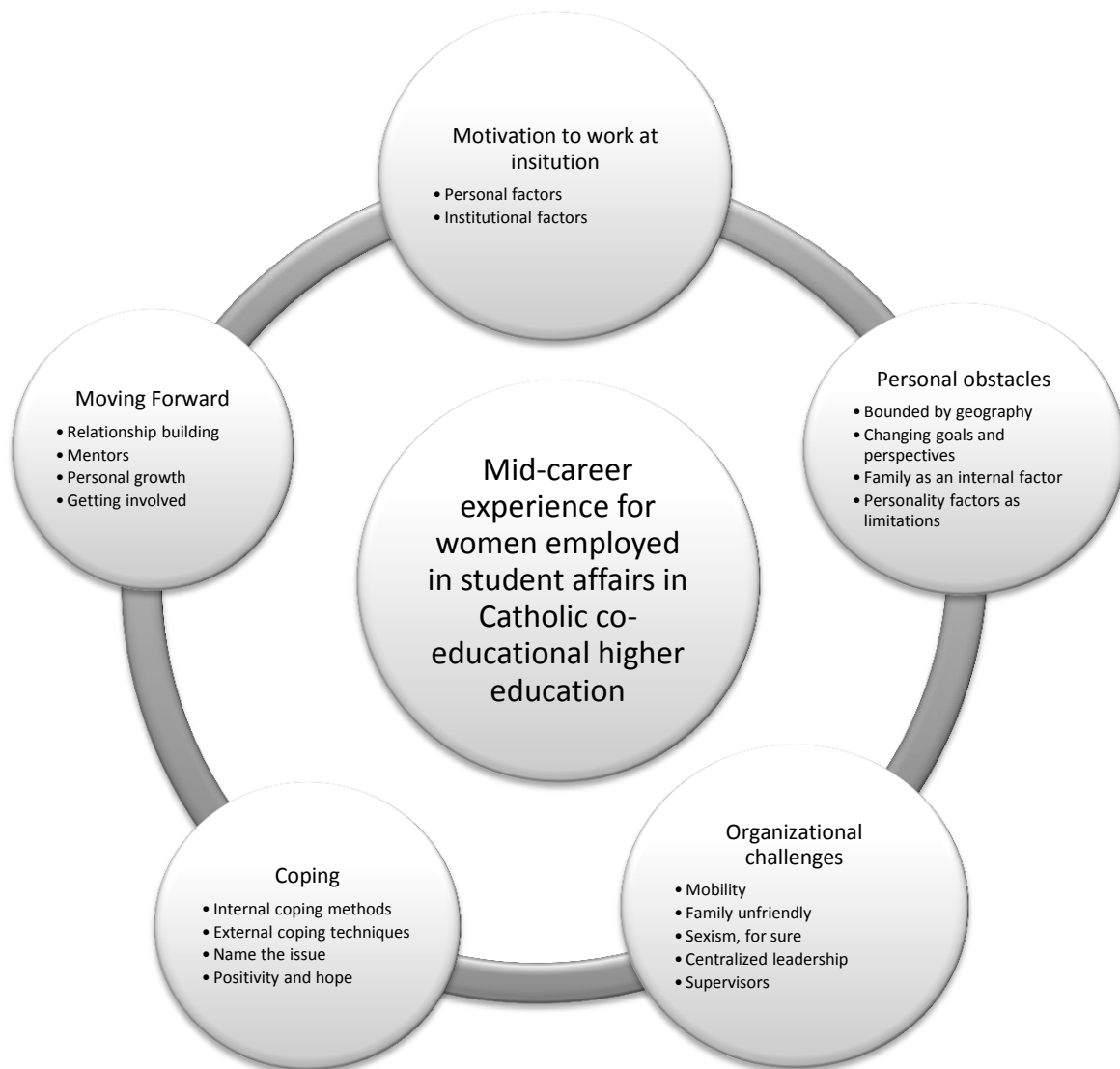
*Figure 3.* Familiarity with Catholic higher education.



*Figure 4.* Approximate number of years at current institution.

## **Findings**

Moustakas (1994) defined invariant horizons to be derived through significant statements which “point to the unique qualities of an experience, those that stand out” (p. 128). The researcher reviewed the database, marking significant passages and noting them in NVivo. Next the researcher identified 237 horizons. Through reduction of duplicates, a total of 128 horizons were identified (see Appendix G). The 128 significant statements or horizons were then clustered into meaning units or themes. “From an extensive description of the texture of what appears and is given, one is able to describe how the phenomenon is experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). The thick, rich detailed passages provided by the participants are shared within the themes and subthemes. Member checked and revised passages were also included (see Appendix H). The following themes and subthemes described how and what was experienced by the participants, as presented in Figure 5.



*Figure 5.* Themes and subthemes related to mid-career experience for women in male religious order sponsored institutions.

**Theme 1 – Motivation to work at institution.** Women professed a wide range of motivating factors regarding their employment within Catholic higher education. These ranged from geography, to the Catholic sponsorship of the institution to the job itself and the colleagues they would work alongside. These subthemes emerged from the conversations with the participants.

***Subtheme: Personal factors.*** Charlotte, Emily, Layla, Kate, Madison, Lillian, Zoe, and Mia all stated that geography was a factor that played into why they worked at their current institution. Madison's spouse was employed at the university. Lillian was a native to the area and wanted to remain close to home, whereas Layla and Charlotte shared that they wanted to move away from home. Their institutions gave them the opportunity to do so.

Another factor to their current employment was the fact that it was their only job offer. Ann shared that "Frankly, I thought it was beneath me, but I took it because it was available. I knew I needed out of my then current situation and I took the job." Natalie never intended to work for a Catholic institution but it kept coming up in her job search. She often described the job as finding her.

***Summary.*** The subtheme personal factors motivating participants to work at their institution included geographic factors that limited their search to a certain area and the specific job offer itself. This subtheme addressed RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?

***Subtheme: Institutional factors.*** Grace, Emily, Hannah, Isabelle, Kate, Lillian, and Zoe all cited their colleagues as factors at the institution that motivated them to work there. Zoe mentioned that "we hire folks for mission . . . no doubt about it . . . within student affairs." Lillian and Kate talked about the connections that they had made with their colleagues. Emily offered that "it's someplace that I feel is home. I have colleagues . . . I have a mix of colleagues that I have known now here [. . .], and also a great mix of colleagues who are new." Kate talked about coming home to her alma mater to help an area that was struggling.

Work with students was discussed as a driving factor for women to choose the roles they were in. Emily shared

What do I find enjoyable? Well I guess . . . well I think that's an interesting question I guess to say, because I would say, well very similar things to if I worked at a public school. I think it's the same thing, you know, about what's enjoyable about working in higher education in general. Working with college students is my passion, it's my vocation. I feel that I'm doing the work that I'm being called to do.

Others appreciated the learning and growth opportunities afforded to them. Charlotte shared

The other thing is that I feel like I've had a tremendous opportunity to grow here. For me to get promoted into the position that I'm in after [a few] years of working here, you know I feel like was very lucky and fortunate.

Grace appreciated that she could work in a variety of areas that allowed her to learn as a professional. "So I finally feel like I'm in a role where I feel like I'm using the best of my ability, it's challenging, it's interesting, and I'm already thinking about exciting things I'm going to work on for next year." Layla was excited about the challenges that were afforded her, as was Natalie who oversaw a service trip for students. Hannah appreciated the learning in her opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth.

I think I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about my own spirituality, and that's been welcomed. There are lots of ways that I think [U of Grace] as a Jesuit Catholic institution invests in the spirituality and kind of missioning of its staff and faculty. And so I've tried to take advantage of those opportunities.

However, by far the strongest institutional factor that the participants chose to work at their institutions was based on the mission of the institution and the fact that it was Catholic. Ann, a Catholic herself, shared the following

I like what they stand for. I like where the values that they always profess through higher education and through their education in general. I like that the Jesuits that

I have met seem to be reasonable human beings. So, I like that there is that sense of something bigger that you can attribute to a God-based something.

Abigail spoke of how her Jesuit undergraduate education was a formative experience for her.

Related to the mission, many women spoke of the open dialogue that was mission centric for their institutions. They appreciated the ability to engage their students in conversations regarding religion, spirituality which allowed them to care for the whole person. They believed that those conversations were excluded or discouraged in state institutions. Grace even referenced how nice it was to be allowed to have Christmas trees on campus, discouraged at her previous institution. Charlotte shared

I feel that all are welcome here, that we're able to have conversations about everything. And the fact that it's okay for me to ask a student how is their spirit and what are they struggling with other than school or relationships or life . . . and if they bring up the topic of spirituality that you know I can certainly go there and not feel that its outside of my rights and responsibilities as an educator. So that is a big part of it.

Hannah referred to the ability to talk about humanity in a religious way. "We can talk about human dignity, and those aren't unusual conversations. So I feel like the potential for collaborations is much stronger." Kate discussed the opportunity to engage all faith traditions in the dialogue.

What I enjoy about it is the fact that we can openly talk about religion and spiritual identities, and understanding that there is sometimes a very long journey in determining who we are as spiritual beings, as religious beings. [. . .] I have very much grappled with my religious identity and knowing that I'm in a place that is very rooted in their religious identity, and explore it and talk about it very openly. And I feel like I can do that . . . it's not taboo to bring up religious conversations or spiritual journey conversations. And that was something that I really valued, even as a [student]. The freedom to talk about religion was very important.



Natalie and Layla expressed similar sentiments as non-Catholics as well. “It is really [as] we say it, and I do believe we honor that . . . it’s a home of all faiths . . . and being able to integrate easily into an environment like this.”

Although a point of tension for some, regarding LGBT issues, contraception, and other controversial topics, participants appreciated the conversations that they could have surround the topic. One participant appreciated that due to Church teaching, conversations had to be more intentional and careful with students to stay within Church teaching instead of approving every request for an event or passing out condoms in the residence halls.

Zoe talked about the relationship between student affairs work and Catholic higher education.

I’m able to work with students and talk about values and morals, talk about spirituality, talk about religion, talk about the real firm beliefs of this institution in particular when it comes to mission and who we are as a Catholic Jesuit institution. I wouldn’t be able to do that at a state school. And I feel it would not feel right . . . it would feel very awkward to me . . . it would feel very kind of sanitary as far as doing student affairs work. Whereas, this feels very rich and grounded in a Catholic tradition.

Abigail went on to share

The mission itself is very, very strong at Jesuit institutions, and it ties us together in such a way that we can all talk about wanting students to be successful in their environment, and working with each student as an individual student. And it’s at the core of student affairs work anywhere is also very similar to the core of what Jesuit education is about.

Isabelle concurred as well, offering

I think the other thing for me, especially about Jesuit higher education, is so many of the Jesuit charisms that undergird the work that we do. The care for the individual; the idea of Magis and striving for more. Men and women in service to others . . . things like that . . . are so connected to what we believe to be true about our work in student affairs. To have that natural connection of the work that I do

in student affairs is so directly connected to the mission of the institution is really important for me.

Ann, Olivia, and Charlotte discussed how the Catholic mission was a match to their own personal values. The Catholic Jesuit values are “very much in line with my own philosophy of education” shared Madison. Emily and Grace echoed similar sentiments. Natalie, Kate and Mia were specifically attracted to the commitment to social justice. Lillian shared that she is Catholic. “It really is meaningful for me, and important for me when I on like a Holy Day can step out and take my lunch and run across the way and head to Mass for the hour.” Many spoke to the Jesuit heritage of their institutions as well. “And this is where again I think the Ignatian piece, the Jesuit piece, comes out like loud and clear in terms of *cura personalis* and people caring for one another” shared Lillian. The fit was critical to Zoe. “I wouldn’t be as good a student affairs professional if I weren’t in this environment . . . the state environment is not the environment where I feel I can do the work that I need to do.”

Despite this Catholic and Jesuit mission affinity, there were many challenges that were identified in regards to working at such an institution. This was offered in regards to the declining number of priests, according to Lillian, who used to be her “go to” campus experts. While sharing how strong the Catholic mission was at their institution, several women, including Ann, explained that there are points of conflict when students choose to attend their institution for academic or other reasons and are in tension with the institutional mission. Grace perceived the sheer number of Christmas trees on campus during the holidays may be off putting to those of other faith traditions.

Others struggled with a social justice commitment, the cost of private education was out of sync with this institutional value of increasing access. Ann and others felt that

institutional values, such as care for the person, led the university to never let staff go who were underperforming. Charlotte built on this and shared that she felt the culture was so tight that it prevented some from entering from the outside-those who were new to Catholic education-since people stayed at the institution for so long.

“What I find challenging in being [in a] Catholic institution run by a bunch of men . . . I’m not someone who appreciates the church in the capital ‘C.’ I don’t like most priests” shared Ann. She went on, “And I really don’t in more recent years, especially . . . I think the Catholic Church had its head in the sand” in regards to scandals that have plagued the Church.

Additional larger Church issues were of concern and a point of tension for participants. While larger values were in sync with individuals, certain issues were points of rub. Specific named issues of tension were the Church’s position on the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) community, the role of women in the Church, sexuality and co-habitation, and reproductive issues such as birth control and abortion. Charlotte shared her frustrations and challenges.

Part of it could be our order is all males . . . you know there’s no females in the Jesuit order . . . and I know that is a topic that is discussed . . . I wouldn’t say like daily or anything, but I’ve certainly heard other women who are even involved in the Jesuit order in some other way, you know why aren’t there women or sisters or lay Jesuits that they have in some of the other male dominated orders?

Charlotte also offered that working at a Jesuit institution, her president will always be a male priest. “I think that organizationally that is kind of . . . it’s definitely a barrier . . . you know, for better or for worse.” Grace concurred. “Well I think some things are just difficult because of the deeply embedded male um . . . what’s the word . . . the way that Catholic education is set up anyway is pretty male oriented.” Kate and Layla believed

that only allowing priests to be university presidents denied women those opportunities. The power afforded to priests because of their Church role was disconcerting to Mia “since there is a specific person on this campus who has targeted me . . . he is a priest and he is very powerful.”

While Catholic social teaching called for inclusion, some struggled with how the LGBTQ community was viewed by the Church. Many felt while there was tension, some appreciated that at least the Jesuit community encouraged dialogue on the matter. Hannah appreciated that in order to talk about LGBTQ issues on campus, conversations had to be intentional in order to occur. Grace, however, felt that conversations were stunted and shut down due to the Catholic tie even by individuals themselves. Isabelle shared that

I think that as much as I believe in what the work that we do, I think there’s times where we limit ourselves because we are challenged by the structures of the Catholic Church. And, we need to be respectful of those, even though personally or professionally they may limit or challenge us.

*Summary.* Subtheme institutional factors motivating participants to work at their institution included their relationships with co-workers, the challenging work assignments, growth opportunities and how the mission of the institution fit their personal values. Another large motivating factor was that their institution was Jesuit Catholic. This spoke to the participants’ values, their personal faith or the ability to engage in conversations about faith, inclusion and human dignity. Some spoke of their appreciation for the Jesuits who were the ones to hold the institutions’ “feet to the fire” to ensure the values were lived. However, women also discussed the challenges that were involved working at a Catholic institution, including the declining number of priests on campus, the cost of higher education, the male sponsorship of their institution, the Church’s role in

recent scandals, birth control and sexual orientation stances, were all points of disconnect for participants. For this reason, this subtheme addresses RQ3: How does the Catholic Church sponsorship influence the situation?

**Theme 2 - Personal obstacles.** Participants identified a variety of challenges that they faced within their work environment. These ranged from geographic constraints, to changing personal goals, to family, personality and other factors. These subthemes are discussed below.

***Subtheme: Bounded by geography.*** Several participants talked about how geography was a major contributor to why they were employed and continued to be employed by their university and why they were bounded by geography. This geographic pull limited individuals' job searches and their mobility at times. Many listed proximity to family and friends as being a strong consideration of why they worked where they did. For example, Ann described the geographic pull.

So, also, there was a relationship, so I needed to make some decisions based on that, and so somewhere in the course of two years decided; we got engaged and decided we really didn't want to leave [Springfield]. I mean everyone thinks [Springfield] is amazing because there are so many schools, and there are. There are opportunities here, but no one really leaves [Springfield]. But once you are here, you've got your family, you are staying, and so there are opportunities, but they are hard to . . . I mean, they are like you know . . . And I wanted to move to Kansas, I'd be a vice president now. But, I don't want to move to Kansas. So I'm in [Springfield], so it's harder to advance when you're in a city like this.

Mia echoed similar sentiments.

You know I'm regionally bound, which is it's own challenge. I [am a mom] and there's some family dynamics that keep me . . . it's not where I can [do] a national search, which would probably yield different results.

Olivia went on to share similar challenges.

I think that for me one of the main obstacles that I've had, which I guess is probably more self-limiting than anything else. But it really is the fact that it's

important for me to be geographically in a certain location because of family and friends. And it's difficult when you see these amazing job opportunities that you think it would be a really great fit with it, or you think it would be an amazing opportunity, or that you'd love to throw your name in the hat for, but that realistically just know that you don't want to work in Montana. Or that you don't want to work someplace really, really far away. So I think that has certainly been the main challenge, just trying to balance that personal and professional boundary and knowing what's important to me, which is family and the friends, and not wanting to go someplace where I wouldn't have that right near me.

Others shared that as a dual career couple, that the partner with the terminal degree set search parameters since there was higher income potential due to the degree. Another shared that geographically her family was tied to the area because with the economy they were underwater on their house. Since there was no option to sell it, the family needed to remain in place with the jobs they had to continue to make payments on it. Practical reasons prevailed with challenges that were geographically based.

*Summary.* Bounded by geography, women felt that their careers were limited by the number of institutions in the area they desired to work. This subtheme addresses RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles? as it relates to a self-imposed limitation that precluded them from applying for other jobs to advance.

***Subtheme: Changing goals and perspectives.*** Participants shared that an internal challenge was changing perspectives and goals. Women had similar stories to share about how eager and willing they were as they started in their careers. With time, experience and new life commitments, perspectives changed on what women wanted professionally. Ann shared

For the early part of my career at my previous institution, I was all about trying to advance. I worked very hard. And I thought by putting in an insane amount of time, therefore that meant I would be rewarded for that. And I think you can be in small ways different along the way. But I have learned over my illustrious years in the field the amount of time you put in doesn't necessarily mean a whole heck

of a lot, from my perspective. If you think that, you should probably readjust what you're thinking. Because you're just killing yourself for no good reason.

She continued that this shift in perspective led her into a sense of being jaded.

But I think, in certain, unless the stars all align, I've had many people, friends of mine get it since and we joke now and we say, whenever one of my friends gets it, we say welcome to the plateau of your career. I think I kind of got very jaded at a certain point. And I realized that it's not all what my experience has been that it's not necessarily what you think it's going to be. It's not just about following some track, working hard, putting in the hours, advancing, doing the work, networking, doing the conferences, doing the dissertation. Wow! Look at that, you're going to be a vice president somewhere. Again, I think it comes down to personal choices.

Emily expressed similar experiences of pursuing full steam ahead towards a goal and then shifting gears during her tenure in the field.

I have changed enormously over the past . . . [my kids have grown so]. And so much has changed in my life. You know I was so determined to . . . I was so goal oriented . . . so much needed to be the perfectionist . . . you know, so wanting to you know, I don't know what . . . go to the next level professionally, and who knew what that even meant. I had no idea really at the time. You know always wanting to be the best employee, and wanting my supervisor's approval. And you know really being honest, when I look back, I know I drove some of my colleagues nuts because I probably was always talking about how busy I was, and how many hours I was putting in [. . .] you know what I mean? And but at the same time, I was working myself to death. I was trying to fill this illusion of being the super woman, the super mom, the super wife, the super worker, and it's a total illusion . . . it does not exist. Multi tasking is a farce . . . it does not exist . . . you cannot do more than one thing at a time. And all I was doing was increasing my stress level by the day . . . [. . .] . . . my stress level where I'm just . . . I was doing nothing really good for myself. And you know what I've been learning, I would say especially in the past [couple of] years of my life . . . even more so is the importance of really living a holistic life and that it's not . . . you know I don't . . . it's not about how much I do, but it's the quality of what I do.

Once the realization occurred that "having it all" may be a myth, the drive forward wanes professionally for some. Ann shared

There was this pill, huge pill, I had to swallow, that I've been swallowing for the last [few] years. I think I'm more at peace with it. But I think I finally have digested that pill that I just can't believe this is what I'm doing. Which isn't to say I don't like it. There are parts of my job that I find very rewarding. But it was that

huge pill of saying, oh my God, [. . .]. Like, what the heck happened? [. . .] This is not where I saw myself. This is not where I wanted to totally see myself.

However, others responded to changing perspectives and altered goals in a variety of ways. Charlotte owned her experience as her new path and less of a situation imposed upon her. She reflected further.

And the more I learn about myself and just from my mentors is that I can . . . my own path to success will be mine, and I don't have to follow that of somebody else's. So that has sort of given me some assurance that it's okay to wait to do this, or to take one class at a time, or whatever that looks like for me.

Many individuals shared how family caused a shift in their goals, including Zoe. From adding spouses and partners to children, women shared that they tried to build more whole lives from caring for their families to caring for themselves through diet and exercise. Layla offered,

I talk about being a mother, because that's a salient identity for me. And I think a big portion of this, [. . .] I think for me I've been thinking about I wish the rhythm was a little different. I wish the rhythm allowed more flexibility and the schedule looked different in terms of 'what can I do?' and what the expectations are.

Lillian shared a similar shift in thinking.

So I'm kind of dedicated in that way, but to be perfectly honest with you, for me it's been more like my recent professional goal is finding work/life balance. So when people ask me like what do you want to do, in the next few years? I say probably focus on like having a family and like having a job that lets me do that in a supportive way.

As participants' lives became more complex and varied, some questioned the definition of advancement for themselves. Layla further reflected

But right now, I wouldn't even say I'm looking to advance at this point. I am content with where I'm at, and I want to fit in this for now and do more learning before I think about . . . even if I want to advance. And I think that's a big question right now for me is if I want to advance. I see the deans, I see the vice presidents doing the work that they do. And often times I feel conflicted because there is a compromise in life that I'm seeing played out where there's a lot of travel, there's a lot of being away. And for me I know my family is my priority.



And I feel like if I continue to advance, if that's what I choose to do, then my family is going to suffer. And I fundamentally feel like that's wrong, and that's for me. So I'm sitting with that question right now around advancement . . . not necessarily if I want to advance . . . I think if it's where if I can advance, if I want to.

Madison felt the pressure to pursue an advanced degree, but she wasn't willing to sacrifice family time to meet her personal expectations on excelling and doing extra readings, research and so on. She shared that she came to peace with that change in personal goals in regards how they interacted with her current reality.

I guess there's a patience element to it too. You know, for me, I'm happy at [Holy Family] and I know there's not going to be a lot of movement anytime soon with some of the things I'm interested in seeing moved. But there are trade-offs. And so, life is about choices, if you find yourself only bemoaning your work situation, or where you find yourself, then I think that's when it's time to look at okay am I in the right place, and is this what I need to do, and how can I change my attitude or my situation? Personally, I think for a lot of women sometimes you have to change your attitude, because the flexibility of your opportunity just isn't there to change their circumstances.

*Summary.* Participants' changing goals and perspectives on advancement were a self-imposed obstacle as it left them uncertain of next steps they wanted to take as they reassessed their personal and professional situations. This addressed RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? and RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles?

***Subtheme: Family as an internal factor.*** By far, family was the largest and most discussed subtheme in regards to personal challenges. Conversations ranged regarding family as a factor in personal challenges. Seeking life balance was a large factor. Trying to balance it all was discussed as participants shared that while working hard on the job and caring for the family, one didn't want to miss anything.

Some participants were willing to sacrifice opportunities to advance and grow professionally if these were to come at the detriment of the family. “Quite honestly, I am willing to work and I’m willing to get the job done . . . and I’m willing to work hard, but not at the expense of any sort of work/life balance” shared Abigail. This mentality was reported by some as a self-imposed challenge. An example given was forgoing conference travel that could produce networking options and professional development opportunities, was one of the sacrifices named. Charlotte offered that positional advancement was based on family factors.

I really enjoy working here and if that you know if that opportunity is available to me, then I would take it. If the opportunity was not necessarily given, but an option, I would fight pretty darn hard to get it. And then kind of from there, knowing I believe I could be very happy at a director level position for my lifetime. I don’t know about above that, and part of that is a family decision. Because my husband and I want to have children, and so you know, I don’t know . . . it’s hard for me to say how much time I want to spend away from my kids because I don’t have them. So I sort of left that part open, like what will the next step be from there.

Kate echoed similar thoughts, “So yes, I was absolutely looking for upward mobility. I always had a career trajectory. I actually thought it was going to be in [the department], but after becoming a mom, I said I can’t do [it] anymore.” Conflicting roles were echoed by Layla.

I think another component of this is being a mother and a partner, and navigating what I need to complete and do and be on top of in my position and in my responsibilities to my division and the institution. And how I do that while I stay true to my priority of being a parent and being a partner. Because often times, work really does take . . . it takes a lot of energy, it takes a lot of time. I work late, I work on weekends. And that’s been something that you know some people will tell me it’s the pressure I put on myself, and the standard that I set for myself. And at the same time, I also believe that if I wasn’t present and if I wasn’t doing that, then something would slip through the cracks. And then honestly, as a woman, I feel like there would be judgment . . . and that’s really tough . . . and I say I believe there will be judgment because I’ve seen it. And I think that’s difficult because I will hear that and then I will also hear the no, take care of

yourself, find your balance. And then I figure if I were to do that and if I were not present at this event, what would that mean. So I think that's been something that I've had to navigate more so in the last couple of years since having my [child] and really being present [. . .] and my partner, and also work.

Madison shared similar conflicts, despite good intentions by her spouse.

But I do . . . as I think about it . . . I think this might be one of the reasons why there aren't women, more women in the higher level of education. It's because we have to make a choice. And you know, my husband's really supportive . . . [. . .]. But he was supportive at least in theory, but at the same time there's certain things that I do that I don't think . . . you know, it's like the second shift for a woman when she goes home. You can have a fairly enlightened spouse . . . and still not get it I guess . . . is the best way I can describe it. I mean that was really the first time I felt like I'm limited in what I'm going to be able to do at least while my children are young.

Despite these conflicting roles and internal factors, women described juggling attributes to tend to a variety of roles within their lives. Layla shared that she unplugs when she gets home. Despite the technology that binds us all, she intentionally tried not to check email when she was at home but did a quick peek before going into the office in the morning to get a head start on the day.

*Summary.* Family was listed as an internal, personal factor that was a professional challenge for participants. Women sought life balance, although some acknowledged that it was unobtainable, as they juggled personal and professional obligations. This subtheme addressed RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? and RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles?

***Subtheme: Personality factors as limitations.*** Individuals were incredibly candid and shared how their own personalities could be self-limiting. For example, Grace shared, "In my head, I'm thinking, at some point if I do want to advance, unless I make a case for an advancement myself, which is hard to do when you're not already . . . it's hard to negotiate for yourself." Isabelle echoed similar sentiments.

I think some of the different obstacles that I think people have faced or that I have faced, as I think about my career, is just opportunities that are made available and how those become available. Sometimes if you are not the best advocate for yourself, you can easily get passed over, even though you might be the person who is most qualified.

Isabelle also reflected that one can self-limit based on why one chooses to work at an institution. “I think I alluded to it a little bit . . . sometimes the obstacle can be yourself. And this comes in when you sign up to . . . or when you decide to work at an institution.” If one doesn’t understand the mission of the institution and how that may impact one’s work, that can hinder a person from engaging in discussions based on a fit issue with the institution.

Ann described her self-limiting personality as being “a bull in a china shop. If I see an obstacle, quite frankly it’s not something I can ram my way through, it’s a real struggle for me to figure out how to get around it. Which is probably why I also stay at jobs for so long.” Instead of actively pursuing advancement, Ann described only seeing the tree in front of her and not the forest.

Additionally, others’ perceptions of participants’ personalities were described as hindering advancement. For example, Mia was told by others that she limited herself.

Well, I’ve been in [. . .], and again I don’t know how much of this is perception . . . I sure feel like it’s my truth or real . . . but I have been told that opportunities for advancement have been stifled because I’m a strong woman and that can be off-putting.

Madison ruminated on whether or not she internalized other factors that limited her.

And you know we talk a lot about in this [. . .] when you internalize oppression, you don’t see how you’re oppressed. And I sometimes wonder how much I’ve internalized my oppression as a woman. But I think I see the ways in which women are limited at our institution, and not just for [Holy Family], but other institutions of higher education.

*Summary.* An individual's personality was offered as an obstacle for some. A lack of self-confidence and self-advocacy or strong personalities were discussed as possible hindrances to advancement. This subtheme addressed RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? and RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles?

**Theme 3: Organizational challenges.** Women interviewed identified a variety of organizational factors that presented obstacles to them. These included mobility, being family unfriendly, organizational leadership. The following themes address not only what the obstacle perceived was but also who was involved in the creation of the obstacle, relating to research questions one and two.

***Subtheme: Mobility.*** Mobility was addressed in numerous ways by a variety of participants. Ranging from limited internal mobility for advancement, to lacking opportunities to help them to advance, to too much internal or external hiring, participants viewed career mobility as an organizational obstacle for themselves within their institutions.

Abigail, Ann, Emily, Hannah, Isabelle, Kate, Lillian, Madison, Mia, Natalie, and Zoe all saw internal mobility as a challenge to them. Several of these participants identified this as there was nowhere for them to advance at their institutions until someone else moved out or up. They then began a waiting game to see if they can outlast those individuals currently in their roles so that they could possibly advance in the future. This phenomenon occurred in a variety of ways. Some individuals stayed at their institution for great lengths of time. Madison shared, "In terms of other obstacles, part of it at [Holy Family] is just people stay here a long time." Grace mentioned

So, unless I'm taking her job, there's really not the next move there. And she...from what I understand . . . is planning to be here a long time . . . has been

here a long time. Loves it here . . . is going nowhere. The VP has been here for [years] . . . he's not going anywhere. The deans, [. . .]they've been here a long time. Loves this place. So everyone who is in a leadership position that I would aspire to be in next, whether it's a dean position, or assistant VP, or something, is already here. So unless somehow they created a new position, which I don't see it in the structure right now, when we're already trying to make cutbacks in some areas.

Hannah concurred offering that "it is just the assumption that I have to leave in order to continue to advance in my career" due to a lack of internal mobility, despite being content and energized by her institution. She further reflected that "people like Catholic higher education, like I think folks make a deliberate decision either to go into it, but certainly it seems [they] like to remain in Catholic higher education and Jesuit Catholic higher education." Hannah shared frustrations at all levels.

I mean in a similar [way] that I just described as being frustrated by the structure of the division, that [my staff members] experience the structure of the office as frustrating . . . that there aren't opportunities for them to at least have a title bump. But we can't give a title bump if we don't give a pay bump, and actually re-work the position.

However, Abigail and Madison offered that they felt their institutions had too much internal hiring. There appeared to be a good number of couples working throughout the university in which, when one was hired, the partner was also hired. Abigail shared

I often think, can we really post that job and do it in the pool before we . . . and I think it's human nature when you're hiring for a job, you want to know . . . okay let me anticipate two or three pretty good candidates that could be in that pool. But I think [Holy Ghost] is sort of right on this brink of hiring internally too many times. So I think the constraint then to further advancement is that is only going to be pushed so far before someone says enough is enough.

Madison concurred whereas Mia shared all openings were hired externally. And, finally, Emily offered that institutional size further contributed to the lack of mobility since the organizational structure is small and, therefore, overall positions are limited in number.

Mobility was also hampered by the lack of experiences individuals were able to have due to a lack of others leaving positions or forgoing opportunities. Hannah discussed that for her to advance she knew she needed to broaden her experience base.

I think one of the obstacles so to speak is that there are areas in . . . I'm going to say . . . there are several of us who would like some experience around crisis response. And there just isn't the structure to be able to accommodate that.

Others had similar experiences with a smaller structure not allowing for job shadowing.

Talk of mobility in regards to the terminal degree occurred as well. Charlotte feared that she would top out in her career if she didn't pursue a Ph.D. However, Emily reported that she's heard that it is "very, very clear that our field is saturated with Ph.D.'s."

*Summary.* Many participants bemoaned the limited mobility that their institutions could offer them for future advancement. This was oftentimes due to the fact that people intentionally chose to work in Catholic higher education and stayed for long periods of time. Therefore, until someone left, there were little opportunities for advancement within their institutions. While limited mobility was the obstacle in RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face, the staying power of current employees at the institution created the barrier, addressing RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles? which was both a structural and individual obstacle.

***Subtheme: Family unfriendly.*** Participants reflected on a number of ways organizationally that their institutions were not family friendly. Emily shared that meetings would be called after hours and she would need to leave early to pick up her child from daycare. She was frustrated that the meeting continued into the night instead of adjourning till the next day since decisions would be made without her.

Family leave policies were also discussed specifically. Layla shared that her colleagues assumed she would take x-weeks off for her maternity leave without asking her what her plans were. Some institutions did not have official parental leave policies; others excluded adoption in maternity leave policies. Mia mentioned “you would never see little kids running around, or you would never see young professionals start families or anything. And anytime anyone would have a child, they’d end up leaving.” Madison commented on the lack of flex time being unfriendly.

There’s not necessarily flex time or those kinds of things that are formalized in the university’s policies and procedures and stuff like that. I think with those kinds of organizational constraints, I think there are different ways we could things to be more accommodating to people’s lives and desires and wants and what they want to do, and capitalize on the talent that’s at the university. But that doesn’t always happen because there is also the mentality of well if you do it for one, you have to do it for everyone. And my issue this is what’s wrong with half the work force. And most people I would say at [Holy Family] are happy, it’s not that I feel like there’s a bunch of disgruntled people working here. But that’s not to say there aren’t either. I don’t know everybody at the institution . . . so I think that’s also possibly a constraint.

Participants noted a double standard that was not family friendly. Isabelle mentioned a divide among staff members in the division that had children and were married and those who were single. This division was further perpetuated by the students that staff interacted with.

I actually had a female colleague who is a newer professional . . . [. . .] and she is the advisor to [a] student [. . .] group. And she and I were having lunch one day and she was talking about how frustrated she was because she had told the student activities group . . . and this is students . . . that she wasn’t going to be able to come to one of their events on a Sunday night because she really had tried to hold Sunday nights as her time. And that she really was trying to respect that she needs not to be at work. And they were like you don’t have kids or a husband why can’t you come in. And she was just really upset by that comment and she knew that had her supervisor who was married with [. . .] kids [. . .] had said that to them, they never would have questioned it.



Additionally, Olivia was single and without children. She commented regarding how she was at times overwhelmed by the expectation to always being connected and responding to issues. When she worked out in the gym, she felt guilty for not reading emails. “But I do feel . . . I comment a lot of times to my friends about how my God, if I had children I don’t know how I would literally do this job.”

*Summary.* A family unfriendly environment was created due to a lack of policies supporting the family or professional practices that infringed on family and personal time. This situation created an unfriendly life balance culture which was a challenge for women as they felt unsupported by their institution, addressing RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? and RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles?

*Subtheme: “Sexism, for sure.”* Sexism at their institutions were identified in several ways for participants. This included sexist comments, lack of parity, gendered spaces and activities and a lack of women in certain levels of leadership. Participants had a variety of examples and stories to share.

Emily shared that her supervisor asked how her “vacation” was in regards to her taking maternity leave or how a priest sat down next to her in a meeting “and he said to me, you know Emily, I didn’t want to hire you because you [have kids]. Like he just comes right out and admits this to me.”

Participants shared how they were called “sweetie,” “honey” or “girl.” Grace shared that “I think there’s many men who hold most of the positions here, so if you’re not a white male, I feel like people look at you like, oh, it’s interesting that you’re here.” Several participants faced struggles with traditionally male dominated divisions. Emily shared that despite trying to work through multiple situations of being ignored or

“sabotaged” by the staff in that area, things only got better when she filed an official complaint. This was in spite of being discouraged by the men’s supervisor to file a report with human resources.

I was told . . . oh come on . . . they’re just really nice guys. Sometimes they just don’t know how to deal with women in authority . . . don’t do this . . . it could get them in trouble. So basically I was made to feel like I shouldn’t get them in trouble. Well I know that they’re wrong, but this might not be the best way to handle it.

Mia shared stories about women that she knew who were forced out of the university.

I have seen specific women who have been described as vocal, you know as individuals who spoke their minds who advocated for students that were against . . . that weren’t so popular as far as the fights or the battles they chose . . . have been taken down and forced to leave. Or you know really just made their lives miserable that they chose to leave. So I’ve seen that happen. There’s been a trail . . . and I wish I could say that I’ve seen it happen to men too, but I really haven’t. It doesn’t mean it hasn’t, it’s just that I . . . I guess there’s one, one individual that actually . . . so I’ve seen it happen consistently, but predominantly for women.

Participants consistently discussed the lack of female leaders in visible higher roles at the university. There were no female presidents and little to no female vice presidents or deans. Grace offered

So I find that there’s women on this campus that are brilliant doing really amazing things, yet they’re in roles where if they had been anywhere else, I think they would have been in higher positions, considering they have Ph.D.’s, they have advanced degrees.

Zoe shared “So I think there are some of the obstacles. I don’t think how you get away from that . . . obviously in the Catholic institutions, the majority . . . in all candor . . . almost everyone above me is male, and so that’s the reality that I live in.” Hannah offered that while there were “some” female vice presidents, “it feels like a male group.” She also talked about how space was gendered.

So I think I do experience kind of the leadership team of the institution being hierarchical. It just feels male to me, and I’m trying to think what are specific

things that help us feel that way. There's like the really . . . I'm kind of going off on a tangent here, I realize . . . but, the very basic thing like the only restroom in [one building] is a men's restroom. [. . .] there are more women that work [there] than there are men. But the decision is made, like, this is a male space. So I think that's one piece.

In addition to physical spaces, Madison described being excluded from activities.

I just think there's a general sense of . . . I'm never going to have access to some of the male venues of, I don't know, informal relationship building. I'm not a golfer . . . I'm not going to go golfing. [. . .] But there was an all-male [group] at one point for the upper admission and upper administration, and certain men were invited into that. And there certainly were never any women that were invited to that.

Layla further expanded:

I think it's very prominent here, the majority white men, and then you know, there are priests that are leading our institution in high powered positions. And so that's very different for me. And so I think at some time I do feel like it's an obstacle in the sense that I'm a woman of color, and I do identify that way.

Charlotte discussed the covert nature of the sexism.

I think that there is still a lot of discrimination that exists that is more covert . . . meaning that you know people would never admit it out loud, but you know they certainly feel this, that and the other about what a man is capable of and what a woman is capable of, and how a man will handle emotional issues and how a woman would handle emotional issues . . . and I think as you progress up the career ladder, that somebody who is perceived to be able to manage emotions in "the appropriate way" or you know as managing relationship, again "in the appropriate way" is better suited for a higher level position.

Two participants shared that a climate survey was finally conducted but that the results were buried when they sat on an administrator's desk for years.

Several participants reflected on how this sexism impacted students. Grace shared that men traditionally run for student government offices on her campus. When a woman was elected, it surprised campus and the following year a male was elected as president. "And this year, when it was men again, I actually heard a female administrator say, oh it's back to normal." Grace was shocked. "Yeah, and I was like, what? Normal?"

Wow . . . like it was so ingrained in that person's psyche I guess that they said it was okay to say that out loud."

Finally, several participants noted other "isms" occurring at their institutions. Layla, Grace and Lillian all mentioned that they were cognizant of their age through colleagues' comments to them asking if they were a student or addressing them as "sweetie." Lillian struggled to create a professional identity on campus as an alumna of her institution.

*Summary.* Sexism was felt by participants in numerous ways. From comments, lack of parity, gendered spaces and activities, to a lack of women in higher leadership levels were all examples of experiences seen as obstacles for women, addressing RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? Regarding RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles, obstacles were created by supervisors, colleagues and university leadership. This sexism was felt in regards to the Jesuit Catholic sponsorship of the institution, RQ3: How does the Catholic Church sponsorship influence the situation, as reported by participants, in regards to the lack of women in certain roles on campus.

***Subtheme: Centralized leadership.*** Participants struggled with centralized leadership due to the hierarchy and silos often created by the white male leader that dominated this group on their campuses. Grace was challenged by the competitive relationship between academic affairs and student life, which was not her experience at her previous institution. Hannah talked about someone she worked with who was described to her as "too activist." Finding that ironic based on the Ignatian vision for the university calling for social justice and action, Hannah further reflected that

I think that people who are perceived as too pushy aren't going to succeed in this culture. That there is, again in ways similar to how we've internalized the

hierarchy . . . I think I used that phrase earlier . . . I think that we have also internalized that there are . . . that if you push too much, then you can't be successful here.

Hannah feared that she herself didn't see the hierarchy of the university and had internalized it, ringing true to her when others brought it to her attention.

Isabelle and Natalie commented on how information was to be shared within her division. Any question by the president needed to be answered through the division's vice president. Others echoed the limitations of feeling micromanaged in communication up through a centralized leadership structure. "Jumping through hoops" to share information was challenging for Isabelle who questioned how information was being filtered as it went up the chain of command through a male lens. Madison echoed similar sentiments.

*Summary.* Addressing RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? and RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles? Participants felt that the hierarchical nature of their institution was a barrier as they needed to operate within such a structure that was limiting as they jumped through hoops.

***Subtheme: Supervisors.*** Another structural challenge faced by many of the women was in regards to their supervisors. Emily struggled sharing information on her health with her supervisor and especially after she had shared the information she felt pertinent due to the doctors' appointments she would need to take.

My supervisor is not always the most sensitive person to stuff like that, you know what I mean? And so it's been very difficult to do so, and I sometimes, like even in my performance evaluations, it had come up you know about, well you know Emily has struggled with some challenges this year. And I'm thinking why is this even coming up in my performance evaluation?

Grace shared how colleagues would turn to her for guidance since their supervisors were not “touchy feely” and didn’t want to hear about their struggles within their experiences.

Isabelle offered how different people’s experiences were based on who was the supervisor. Coming into the university at the same time as a group of other professionals, they often shared stories regarding those vast differences. Isabelle offered similar challenges

I know there [were] other women who were in a similar position to her in similar level positions that I was. I was just like I’m never going anywhere because of this person. I can’t let that dictate what I do, and so I just . . . there were times when I was very frustrated. I know I was in competition, isn’t the right word, but being considered that another man in our in our division was being considered for. And when in probably 8 out of 10 times went to the male member of our division. That got frustrating because we’re always seeing the same people representing us, when there are opportunities for others.

Natalie shared how she felt unsupported by her supervisors at time when they would not defend their own actions to others.

I have had supervisors that I felt like were not supportive in ways that I thought they should be supportive. When issues have come up related to my experience or some decisions that were made for my office, that they weren’t supportive, even though the decisions were theirs to make, and I was told to do, they didn’t stand up for me as a professional and say, well this was my idea for her to do this.

Kate shared an extreme case of workplace bullying that drove her predecessors, who were all female, out of the university.

In particular, they would always pick [on people]. And how I noticed it coming up in subtle ways, they would never pick on me initially directly, but they started picking on them in front of me. They had inappropriate nicknames for [everyone]. In particular the ones that were like easy targets that couldn’t stand up for themselves.

The situation was alleviated when the bullies left the university, post a filed formal complaint with human resources.

Conversely, Mia, Lillian and Madison shared how positive their experience was in comparison to others, based on a supportive supervisor. Mia specifically shared how her supervisor was a source of strength and support to her when she came up against a priest who targeted her in a number of ways.

*Summary.* Supervisors were discussed in a myriad of different ways in which they presented barriers for participants through a lack of support, bullying, not providing access to meaningful work, etc. This lack of trust in the participants denied them skill development which addressed RQ1: What are some of the obstacles they have had to face? and RQ2: Who or what created these obstacles? It should however be noted that disconfirming evidence was also shared that a number of participants had very positive experiences with their supervisors.

**Theme 4: Coping.** In conversation with the participants, the idea of coping emerged when they discussed how they dealt with obstacles or barriers. These discussions led to four sub themes: internal coping methods, external coping methods, advice and positivity and hope.

*Subtheme: Internal coping methods.* Participants employed a variety of internal coping methods when faced with barriers. For example, several ignored the situation altogether. Charlotte described a situation in which a colleague always “forgot” who she was.

Honestly more often than not, I ignore it. I think it’s easier sometimes. And at times when more appropriate, I think that I . . . if it’s something that I feel like is very blatant, then I’m like, really? For example, the person I was telling you about that I have met several times, I feel like every time I’m in a meeting with him it’s like either I’m not there, or meaning like I’m invisible, or it’s like I’m re-meeting him again, and I’m just like . . . dude, we’ve met like 20 times and we’re doing this again. You know, I kind of joke about it and talk to my supervisor about it. I don’t know . . . unfortunately I feel like that’s what I do more often is just kind of

move on from the situation. I don't feel like . . . I don't know . . . my personality is if someone is not willing to give time to me, then I just . . . not that I write them off . . . because I never feel that way. But I just sort of think I'm not going to invest a lot of energy in this when I can talk to someone else and get the same job done, or get support in another area. Maybe that's because I'm sort of at this mid-level where there's other people that can speak on my behalf or advocate for me.

Isabelle talked about colleagues who ignored the barriers as well, simply coming to work, doing the job and then going home. Mia described reflecting on the barriers as "it is what it is" and continuing to work. Kate offered another perspective, sharing that she just let her work speak for her.

I'm also very much of the mindset there are going to be challenges, and you just have to buckle up, put on the seatbelt, and ride the ride, but stay true in your foundation of who you are as a professional.

In the extreme cases, Isabelle saw colleagues leave the institution after not wanting to cope any further.

So to me there [were] multiple responses to it. I think the frustrating . . . while I was frustrated with the leadership and the direction that I saw in that person and how it was impacting those who reported to her, I also got frustrated by some of my colleagues who said I'm giving up instead of trying.

Natalie shared that in the past, she would leave an institution.

And most times is when then . . . I feel like I can negotiate, but every time it's gotten to a point where I have had to throw up my hands and say either I go along with the decision that was made, or I leave. And probably two times, I was like, I gotta go . . . it's time for me to go because this is not going the way that I thought it would. And it's not in line with what I believe and value as a person working in student affairs, and with the population that I work with.

Kate had also witnessed colleagues leave the institution, tired of coping with the situations at hand.

Another internal coping technique shared was "code switching," or acting in certain ways based on the situation at hand. Layla was describing situations in which she felt like she needed to advocate for herself. In order to do so, she code switched.



So I think that I've had to do . . . and I call them code switching . . . I feel like when I'm present in different spaces, I identify who is going to be there and who is there. And then the way that I choose to present myself is really important. And when I say that, is I will think about how am I talking . . . and this was some of the when I said how I dress, how I show up in the space . . . asserting myself and feeling comfortable in asserting myself . . . I will do that. I will also decide when I will challenge and when I will not challenge a person in that space and who I'm challenging. And so I'm very conscious about who I'm meeting with. That has been one of the greatest lessons I've learned over the [. . .] years that I've been in this field of how I choose to act and respond makes a huge difference in the way that I'm received. And that's how I really manage and cope with being in different spaces.

Isabelle described a similar technique in which she would see the few women in higher leadership positions employ male leadership characteristics. Finally, Abigail shared that she focused on her spiritual development while at her institution, taking advantage of retreats.

*Summary.* Women navigated obstacles (RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles?), by coping through techniques of ignoring the situation, letting their work speak for them, watching colleagues leave the institution in frustration, code switched and focused on spiritual development offerings.

***Subtheme: External coping techniques.*** Women shared several externally focused coping techniques. Charlotte offered the follow reflections on ally building

I feel that one of the reasons that I've been successful here, and you know I see myself in the future as being successful here . . . is that recognizing places where there was an opportunity for a relationship, and finding someone who is kind of in my corner...I don't care if that's a male or female, I think is extremely important.

Natalie concurred and built alliances as well. Kate also described building allies and being very intentional in her efforts.

So building those alliances with people in power and authority sometimes helps. But I do it in a way that's authentic. So I don't want to make it look like I'm doing this to get what I need. But there is strategy in that.

Layla made sure to point out that her ally building also included men and specifically white men as a woman of color.

So if they're in the space, I think that also helps me understand that okay they're in the space, I'm going to get advocacy and I'm going to get backup with them present. But then also utilizing my allies in a smart way is something that I've learned to do. And talking to people and saying . . . what do you think, I am going to go into this meeting. Do you have some advice for me? And being strategic about it. I think that's really critical. I find that this institution compared to my other institution is significantly more conservative and also political.

Some women sought counsel from their mentors. Abigail shared that her mentor described that "your job should be life giving, and when it doesn't feel like it's life giving, if it's life taking, you need to reevaluate." She took this advice to heart and would reflect on it as situations arose. This helped define whether situations were the issue or if the institution was the issue. Charlotte would touch base with mentors to check herself and ask if she was overanalyzing a situation. Her mentor also assisted her by checking on her work and progress towards her goals.

Abigail talked about the value of having a support system outside of her university.

I've been very fortunate to work with a few close friends who are sort of in the same sort of mid-management sort of thing . . . so we're able to sort of talk through some of those things in and outside of my department, which I think has been really helpful. So not in sort of a catty, gossipy way, but in a support group kind of way.

Charlotte described her relationship building as a way to overcome barriers. Through relationship building (she hated the word networking which gave her anxiety), she was able to devise a strategy to employ when faced with obstacles.

And so I think that's important, the relationship building is huge for overcoming the barriers as much as you possibly can so that when you do face the guy that still doesn't look you in the eye . . . but maybe there's somebody in the room that understands what you're feeling . . . but at least even when you can look across

the room at somebody, like you know what's going on, you smile and you just feel better about the situation.

Hannah relied on her relationship with her supervisor, a veteran in Catholic student affairs, as a trail guide to benchmark with. She appreciated that her supervisor encouraged her to ask questions and was willing to answer them. Isabelle and Natalie would speak to colleagues. Kate processed with her husband. Madison's mother was a role model for her and a mentor in the role of being a working mother.

Another external coping strategy was to have open and honest communication. Natalie, Madison, Lillian, Isabelle and Abigail all felt the need to be direct and honest to help advocate for their professional needs to others. For example, when being confronted by a colleague, a participant sat the person down and had a frank conversation to face the obstacle head on.

*Summary.* Participants coped with obstacles presenting themselves by building alliances, seeking counsel from mentors, building relationships and having frank conversations, all means to navigate obstacles (RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles?).

***Subtheme: Name the issue.*** Women also appreciated simply naming the situation and identifying the obstacles in front of them and others. Lillian offered

I think, and maybe this is my ignorant kind of Jesuit lens right now, there's just a very obvious . . . there's a very high chance that the next president is going to be a Jesuit priest, and if not probably a male. And I don't know why it's that way . . . that feeling. But that can be hard to swallow sometimes, even if you don't want to be a president. I don't want to be a president. But it's kind of a weird thing, like what does that mean in terms of why the head of the institution has to be a certain whatever. And so quite honestly, the make-up of at least this institution too is . . . the upper level, the cabinet, the higher administration is majority male. And that just . . . I think in terms of suggestions or advice that I would give is . . . I think it's fair to be aware of that.

Madison talked about self-limiting behavior that needs to be identified and further reflected on. For example, she shared a conversation she had with a group of colleagues about reproductive rights. Before they got very far into the conversation, people were already explaining why that program could not be done. The group self-imposed constraints to the conversation rather than asking the question of can it be done.

A couple of experiences were shared regarding behavior that needed to be addressed, but had to be done in a respectful way. For one person, a campus leader would enter a room and greet everyone verbally but with her he would greet her with a kiss. She gently asked if he greeted everyone that way and he then realized the disparity. Zoe shared an example of needing to name the situation as well.

But I think of another time when I was sitting in a room with some [. . .] folks, and it was all men from my office and from their office sitting in the room, so I was the only woman in the room. And the director [. . .] turned and said okay, Zoe are you going to take the minutes. And I looked at him and the two gentlemen that work for me were like, oh God, she's going to kill him . . . and he says are you going to take the minutes, and I said no I don't really think I need to be the one taking the minutes. Since I'm the only female in the room, I think we can probably pick somebody else here to take the minutes. And the person said, oh, okay. And it's funny . . . he and I still work together to this day and he remembers that . . . [. . .] . . . and he said to me, he said that was really a good thing you did that day because I didn't realize what I had done, but I had done it. You know what I mean, just by process of default. And so he and I still . . . again another person I have a great relationship with. But it's kind of sometimes calling people out on some of that stuff, but also doing it in a way that you can still maintain a relationship and a future with folks on that. Because if you're going to do it in such a way that you're going to alienate and ostracize, then you're not going to have a career there. So it's trying to manage that effectively I think is a skill that is real important in any institution of higher education. This is going to happen definitely in Catholic institutions where a predominantly male upper management system [exists] on a lot of our campuses.

*Summary.* Participants discussed the need to name the issue at hand, by addressing ill behavior appropriately or by not self-limiting and to not assume one knows

the answer to a question. These discussions related to RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles?, discussing means to navigate obstacles when encountered.

***Subtheme: Positivity and hope.*** Another coping technique that some employed was demonstrated through their positivity and hopefulness in their conversations.

Madison, Abigail and Ann shared how supported they felt through the university's flexible schedule which they believed was a family friendly practice. Hannah received flex time, working longer but fewer days, to allow her to work on her doctoral program.

I've received tons of support on my [. . .] my graduate program [. . .]. Just being able to leave early without taking vacation time. So if I leave an hour early for class, I didn't have to take that as vacation time [. . .]. But I think being able to ask for and receive support for those things has been really important to me.

Zoe summed up her experience and why she had decided not to pursue external job opportunities.

This is really a good fit for me. So I guess I'm one of those people when I find the right fit both for myself and for my family and for kind of who I'm trying to be, I can still find ways to do lots of different things here and succeed here and take on new challenges, moving into a different university and into that next step is not the best move for me. And it's been there. I've had it almost right there, but it's not . . . it's been a conscious decision right now to balance everything that I've got in my life and kind of how I want . . . my job and my career are very important to me, but they are not the only things. I have my husband and my kids and my family life that are extremely important to me. So I have a real need and desire to keep that balance.

It should also be noted, that some participants has dissimilar experiences regarding family and work. Participants also discussed a lack of formalized paternal leave policies, a lack of children around the campus, a lack of flex time and disparate expectations for single staff and staff with families.

Support for Lillian and Madison also came in the form of not ever being told no when they asked to do something. Feeling valued by their institution was also expressed

by many. Madison appreciated being able to serve on a diversity committee, an area she was personally passionate about. Olivia also felt appreciated and rewarded for her work and efforts.

I felt like I was being rewarded and appreciated pretty early on, and I always felt that support from the department, versus others who you know were kind of good soldiers, and did what they needed to do, but never received additional accolades.

An overall attitude of positivity was shared by almost all participants. Grace made time to reflect on when things were not going well.

Because I also feel things happen the way they need to. And if I didn't get a job, there was a reason behind it. And maybe I was better where I was at, or there was something better waiting for me . . . I just feel like sometimes things that we perceive as career obstacles are actually opportunities to just do something different. I'm a woman of color, [. . .] so there are moments when I have to sit and wonder and double-guess, and question whether I didn't get an opportunity. Or I'm being held back professionally because of who I am and what I look like. But I have to kind of switch things in my mind, and go no . . . I have to be self assured and know that my abilities are good. But that's a struggle sometimes.

Although admittedly a struggle, she attempted to find opportunities in situations that were less than positive. Emily also attempted to go after that positivity. Even in times of struggle, Emily found solace in the overall mission of the university.

Often to speak to how it is important that we do value women, that we do value others who are different, and that so when we kind of get brushed aside that we can come to the defense that this university is for all of us. And so I think sometimes that we can use the university's mission and its commitment to diversity and its commitment to all people to help us when we are in conversations or are in difficult situations like this. And I know that actually is one of the things that helped me when I had gone to HR.

Madison incorporated her faith when choosing an attitude.

So I think generally speaking, I'm in a good situation and any obstacles . . . I mean what I might perceive as an obstacle is just probably in the vast scheme of things not that big of a deal. And that's also my faith talking too. You know it's being able to put things in perspective and know that in many ways that much of this is all that significant. You know what's important is a relationship with other people, my family . . . I have a pretty good life.

Olivia attempted to not blame people for her situation.

I think that some people . . . I've just never been the type of person who is terribly . . . I guess I'd say I'm not the type of person who is terribly critical. I don't look at things and say, gosh I didn't get that because it's all men at the top. I look at things and say, gosh I didn't get that because the division wanted to go in a different direction, or I didn't have what this group was looking for, or whatever the case may be. But I don't tend to look at things and assume that I didn't get it because I'm not a man and that it's all men at the top. That's just how I view things.

And Zoe shared that patience and persistence paid off for her.

So I think while that was frustrating at the time and I was pretty unhappy about it at the time, it ended up getting me to the level of my career that I wanted to get to eventually. So a very frustrating time, but a very challenging time . . . and a big obstacle in the career . . . but also an obstacle that eventually lead to the opportunity.

Zoe attributed her overall career success to hard work, determination and persistence.

When passed over for a position she put her head down and worked. "I think back to those days . . . yeah, I worked even harder, which is kind of funny. But that's what I did . . . there's no doubt about it." She shared that her extreme work ethic was a gift from her parents.

While almost all participants expressed positivity and hope, there was the one participant who explained that she was looking to leave Catholic higher education due to recent negative experiences on campus.

*Summary.* A robust subtheme, participants shared their positive and hopeful outlook that did not allow for barriers to overcome them. Women navigated their barriers (RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles?) through a positive attitude regarding flexible time policies, their persistent work ethic and their faith. Women persisted in lieu of obstacles (RQ5 Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?) because despite

barriers, women felt valued by their institution. Their hard work and persistence allowed for them to find value in their work, which had meaning based on the mission of the institution.

A fifth theme emerged from the conversation with the participants. While not directly related to the study's central question, the information provided by the participants in the dialogue present a corollary theme. A partial result of question 10 in the interview protocol, the following data provided relevant information as participants advised women to advance their careers, sometimes offering how they themselves pursued that advancement.

**Theme 5: Moving forward.** Participants discussed several ways in which they would advise women in student affairs to advance their career.

***Subtheme: Relationship building.*** The participants offered ways to advance in regarding to relationship building. This came about in a variety of ways. Grace offered

The way I have advanced myself is by just being a lot more collaborative myself and reaching out and doing kind of showing people what we can offer them in terms of my department. So I think I've gained more exposure.

Kate talked about how she could be more effective in her work through relationships built which would be helpful to her professionally. In her work, she needed to work across the university.

So I think being able to talk about what those relations look like, how I foster those relationships, the political clout that I'm starting to establish for myself in being able to make these decisions that's going to benefit the university and our students. Those are just some of the major skills that I would think that an associate dean or an ombudsperson would need. And being able to articulate how do you do that when you're new to an institution or brand new to a role.



Hannah talked about the value of networking and building up oneself because the field of student affairs, especially in Jesuit higher education, is so small. Managing those relationships were critical so that the smallness of the field does not turn into a negative.

I mean I might say the other thing . . . I just didn't mention this earlier, which is that from experience of Jesuit higher education is it's a really small world. And so I feel like, which is good in some ways, and probably not good in other ways in terms of career advancement. I mean it's like we know each other and we know people who know you, and so I think reputation . . . like managing reputation in such a small circle could present challenges, right? Like if I . . . and I like Jesuit higher education . . . I'd like to stay in Jesuit higher education. And so that means that if I apply somewhere . . . and even if I don't have someone down as a reference, they're going to know, oh I'm going to call this person, because I know them. And so I think just managing that could potentially be challenging.

Mia also discussed building her network outside of her institution and doing informational interviews with senior student affairs officers to help identify skills she needed to further develop.

*Summary.* Participants built relationships in order to accomplish their work and to network professionally. Building skills sets, and establishing “political clout” were advice given on how to navigate barriers (RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles?).

***Subtheme: Mentors.*** Mentors were discussed by the participants. Some women established mentor relationships in graduate school; others were built along the years. Charlotte offered that her mentor was very task oriented which helped her. “She was pretty intense, so she keeps me on my goals. And you know we talked about it, and it really takes work because we got to schedule time each month.” She was able to talk with her mentor and check herself to see if she was over analyzing a situation.

Hannah spoke about two mentors. One was a supervisor who assisted her as a veteran of Catholic higher education. The other mentor was one that helped her develop

professionally. The mentor would always point out to Hannah's vice president at conferences that she needed to attend a leadership institute. And the vice president listened to Hannah's mentor, sending Hannah to the institute. Hannah also appreciated that she was able to be real with her mentors.

But these folks . . . you know the examples I've used like [Ella] and [Bob], like genuinely care about me and I think are invested in my . . . in me . . . and so I think that's then just really . . . I feel like I don't have to filter with them in ways that I do with some of the other people who I go to for advice.

Kate discussed how her mentor helped her find her voice. When she would second guess herself, he would remind her that she was hired to be the campus expert on her subject matter. She also shared how he always "pushes [her] to new challenges." Isabelle also spoke to the merits of mentors for women in student affairs as assisting in the advancement process. She felt that further emphasis needed to be placed in this area.

I also think that we have shifted in a way back towards mentoring men, and somehow women have gotten lost in the mix, and so I think it's more of a field of student affairs issue of how are we creating opportunities and how are we mentoring women in the field. And I know I'm extremely attentive to that as a more senior person I guess in student affairs of the female members who either report to me or who interact and who are in my division, and how do I interact with them and help, in much the same way as my mentor has reached out to me, how am I reaching out to the women specifically because I think. There's been a noticeable shift in how the profession as a whole is mentoring people, or providing opportunities, and I think we need to reexamine how are we . . . are there ways that we need to go back to, making sure that we're also fostering those . . . skills in women.

Zoe shared how she was able to unpack situations with her mentor.

I definitely spent quite a bit of time talking with her at the time I didn't get that job I mentioned. And kind of walking through . . . why did this happen, I'm more competent, I'm more capable, I'm the one for the job, I'm the one that can do this . . . and so I definitely spent some time with her. Because I think it was good to have a female to female conversation. Because this mentor is also in another Catholic institution, so it was a good person to be able to talk through what that feels like and what do I do now.

Participants talked about how mentoring relationships changed over their lives, how they addressed a variety of life and professional issues and how they could be “authentic” with their mentors. Olivia also discussed formalized mentoring structures.

I think our institution does a really good job in that we have a mentorship program already in our division, so that any new professional is linked up with a current professional who is here at the institution in the division and who has been here for at least a year and can provide insight and direction and support and all of those sort of things. And I think that that model works really well.

This formal structure has helped those who would not want to pursue a mentoring relationship because they may have viewed it to be too “awkward.”

It should also be noted that while a great deal of discussion was had on mentoring relationships, some found this area to be non-applicable or a source of frustration.

Abigail’s mentor left the field of student affairs; Mia didn’t have a mentor because the mentor was forced out of the university. Madison had a colleague constantly complain about her lack of a mentor and how that void has caused her colleague to be too internally focused on what she is lacking. Olivia was turned off by the approach one person had with her regarding mentorship.

And I’ll never forget one day she said to me that she really thought that I was doing great things and that she was going to be my mentor. And I just always found that was really strange, because I don’t think you get to determine who you’re going to be a mentor to. Like I just always thought of it as a thing, like, oh I’ll decide who my mentor is. I don’t want it to be decided for me. And so again, it’s my having been in one situation or one incident to make you kind of, you know, totally change things or make you have a different perception on the situation.

Abigail noted that as she has progressed in her roles, it was harder to find mentors as she became a supervisor and there were less identifiable women to serve as a mentor. Ann also shared some regrets after getting “burned” by a past mentor.

I would probably do some things differently and I think probably trying to really connect with somebody, who if I had the vision or wisdom of what I have now and knew what they could do for me, I would have latched on and really made sure that this person and I, or persons, if it was one or two throughout my career, was really someone that I looked to. And I think I would have approached it differently. I think I would have picked an administrator and a faculty member.

Ann reflected that she wished she had the wisdom she had now back in graduate school and would have intentionally selected a mentor who could assist her professionally over the years.

*Summary.* Those participants that had a mentor utilized those relationships for advice, counsel and as a sounding board. Conversations were discussions regarding meaning making of situations, such as a reality check of whether or not they were overanalyzing a situation. Participants shared that they could be authentic and vulnerable with their mentors. By using mentors as a sounding board, they were able to persist in the face of obstacles (RQ4: How do women navigate career obstacles? and RQ5: Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?). However, it should be noted that for some not having a mentor was a source of frustration at the not having a mentor or that they didn't see the need for a mentor.

***Subtheme: Personal growth.*** Another subtheme that emerged as a means to advancement was personal growth. This subtheme was heard through a plethora of comments and discussion topics ranging from personal development to actively applying for jobs and pursuing the doctorate. Olivia discussed her rapid career advancement and that she actively applied for jobs. Natalie, Mia and Charlotte all acknowledged the need for a Ph.D. Ann had already completed her doctorate and Grace was currently working on hers, sharing the following. "So I feel like when I'm done with that, I'll have a lot

more options and a lot more credibility, and just an ability to negotiate for myself in ways that I can't right now."

Abigail spoke to the need to diversify one's portfolio. She was able to do that by taking a new job outside of her experiences at the time.

I think it was really, for me, one of the keys was really being able to leverage on all my experiences to move away from [. . .] that first job. Which I think was part of sort of the conflict too, was I didn't necessarily see myself [in that area forever . . .]. I would have been okay with that, I think. But I analyzed the potential and knew that I would probably have greater opportunities . . . or certainly more opportunities . . . if I diversified a little bit.

Madison was able to do that without leaving her position but was able to accomplish the diversification through committee work and strategic planning efforts. Zoe spoke to the need to further round out her portfolio before taking next steps by learning more about athletics and other services. Mia, Isabelle, Lillian and Kate all referenced being forward thinking in their efforts. How could they advance and what next steps were needed to achieve those goals? Isabelle shared that she would "look at other ways to create opportunities for myself where they are not being naturally available to me."

Self-confidence was discussed as a trait needed in the field. Kate discussed her level of comfort interacting with the university president. Madison reflected on her level of awareness being the only woman in many meetings and the responsibility that came with that.

I think for me it's being confident in what you know. And I read something a number of years ago that said people aren't hiring you to sit in a meeting and be quiet. And so I've often times found myself in meetings where I'm the only woman in the room. And when that's the case, and my natural self tends to be reflective. I listen and then speak when I feel the need to . . . so I tend not to be generally a vocal person in a group setting anyway. But in those meetings when I have been the only woman, I have felt compelled to speak just so I'm not the silent woman in the room. Like it's clear there's already some silence, because I've been the only one there. But that's a problem . . . and I say typically I will

always comment on it too . . . it's open today . . . like that kind of thing . . . just a highlight for them in the room that you don't have any women in this room . . . and no problem.

Zoe also discussed how she had developed a level of confidence in male settings.

I'm someone that can . . . as I said above me right now, in particular, is all male pretty much . . . [ . . . ] at [St. Dominic], all male. But that I am not uncomfortable in that environment. I have been able to situate myself in that environment with folks so that I do feel that I'm respected by folks, that different people are calling me and asking me for different advice and things they might need from me so I haven't just shied away from that environment just because maybe it's an all male kind of environment.

However, Olivia acknowledged that this was an area of growth for her. She shared that she needed to "develop a thicker skin" and grow in self-confidence before she was able to advance and take on additional responsibility.

Personal characteristics, such as work ethic, were also discussed. From working diligently to being an ethical leader with integrity, participants talked about how this would help one advance in the future. Zoe shared the following.

I would suggest everyone male or female that everybody's going to work hard . . . that's what I tell them now . . . we're graduating some folks in a graduate program, and we're seeing it, and I know others are . . . because a lot of colleagues/students coming out of graduate programs that are coming into our entry level jobs that don't want to work, or that want to work 9 to 5. And I kind of look at them like, are you crazy? And we struggle with that a little bit, because I really have to sit and talk with folks, male and female, but just if you want to advance at [St. Dominic] or advance in student affairs as a career, you know the pyramids get smaller as you go up. There's a lot of RD jobs and a lot of assistant director jobs, but as you go up that pyramid, the jobs get fewer and fewer and you are not going to be the candidate selected if you're not ready to work.

Additionally, Zoe talked about leadership characteristics that made her successful in the past and hopefully years to come as she advanced.

My loyalty and honesty with folks above and below me is unbelievably strong. I think when folks know they can trust you and when the chips are down that you're going to be there to help get us through whatever it is we need to get through, and then you're going to do pretty well.

Other personal characteristics included a zeal for constant learning and discerning.

Charlotte knew that to advance she needed to gain budgeting skills in her role in residence life. Lillian offered that she needed additional supervisory skill development.

Grace shared how she learned to adopt masculine leadership characteristics.

I think that's how men . . . at least from my perception . . . many men that I talk to just don't bring up any of the issues. So I kind of changed my style too, just talking to a lot of the men that I'm close with. They go to their boss, meet with their bosses, and they don't tell them any of the issues. They reframe them and go, oh . . . instead of saying I didn't have any students at my program, they will say well students must have just not read my marketing . . . like put it back on . . . the language . . . it's very different. So trying to be more masculine in our communication and I hate to genderize it, but it really is gender-based.

Hannah talked about soaking up the 500 year tradition in Catholic Jesuit higher education and learning from that through spirituality offerings held on campus.

Personal means to advance were also addressed when women talked about forged life balance for oneself. Grace offered her thoughts on the matter.

I also am in [the gym], I do [. . .] yoga . . . so in terms of a personal balance. I have [. . .] children that I'm raising, and my husband . . . so I have my family to really focus on most of the time. And try to reframe for myself that my job is not my life, you know what I mean. In student affairs it's really hard to not think this is life, so I have to really reframe that, and I think I've done a pretty good job while being here to not let the job consume me to a point that I'm resentful when things are asked of me, or if I'm doing more than I'm supposed to and still not advancing.

Mia offered that she thought work life balance was “really a myth.” Zoe offered a broader view of life balance and incorporated a wellness concept and how that could contribute to advancement.

I think the other advice that I've given folks is while we are working hard, we also need to make sure we are keeping ourselves healthy, particularly for women in student affairs. I find that it's both physically, emotionally, spiritually . . . all those healthy areas need to be maintained because you're going to be no good to the institution or yourself if you're not taking care of yourself. And I'm a huge

proponent that you need to take care of yourself when it comes to exercise and when it comes to healthy eating, and to just managing your own emotions, wellness, spiritual wellness . . . all of that is going to make you a more balanced female professional in the field. Because I think there is a tendency sometimes that I've noticed in student affairs that sometimes some of the . . . it's male and female . . . but a lot of the women in student affairs are not taking care of themselves in a wellness kind of sense. And that then means they're not healthy. And if you're not healthy, you're not able to excel and do well in your job. So there's that whole balance thing of your career, and your job, and working really hard, but also your wellness and your health, and then also finding your social . . . for me I got married and had kids . . . and what is it for you that's going to be your thing that you're going to be doing outside of your job that's going to have meaning and have life and finding that. I believe that all of those things put together make you a more rounded, balanced, professional. And when folks come across you, particularly as a woman, as a well-rounded, balanced, articulate person who is able to come in and collaboratively work with folks and be able to sit at a table and have conversations and dialogue, then you're going to be going strong in your career, because folks are going to notice that and you're going to move along, at least from my perspective.

*Summary.* Participants actively sought growth opportunities which ranged from pursuing a doctoral degree to applying for jobs, to diversifying their portfolio through committee work, to developing a thick skin and self-confidence, to loyalty and a good work ethic. Developing oneself holistically through personal, professional and spiritual efforts were noted as a way to persist in the field of student affairs (RQ5: Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?).

*Subtheme: Getting involved.* Another strategy for advancement shared by participants was getting involved. This included issues such as networking, volunteering, joining professional organizations and pursuing professional development. Abigail focused her energies on using internal university committees to network. Ann, Grace, and Hannah, however, got involved in NASPA on regional conference planning teams and other volunteer positions. Charlotte took advantage of the university paying for her conference attendance. Isabelle presented at conferences.



Kate discussed how her volunteering to be on university committees got her noticed and led to attention from her vice president.

I became very active within the division. I started getting involved in committees. In fact I chaired a committee. I was volunteering for various things. I knew I wanted to get more breadth of experience, even though I was so busy as a new mom and managing a res life role . . . I don't know how I did it all. This gave me great exposure to our vice president, who saw potential in me. He would meet with me and say, [. . .], what do you want to do?

Lillian used women's on campus networking groups to talk about what starting a family may be like while maintaining her position on campus. Madison was able to teach a class at her university and called it "incredibly life-giving."

No matter what the outside development opportunity, Zoe made sure to mention that if you seek to advance, you need to be noticed when working in job specific functions or on committees.

I do tell folks that you've got to be ready and able and willing to make your mark . . . what is that program . . . what is that thing you're going to do at [St. Dominic] that everybody is going to notice. Like, wow . . . look what's happening down in this office, and so and so is in charge of this orientation program, and look what it's doing. Because that has then made your mark as far as someone that folks are going to look to advance, and folks are going to say wait a minute, that person has potential here at this institution.

*Summary.* Participants got involved in a variety of committees, networking groups and professional organizations to build their professional networks. Sage advice was offered that no matter where one was involved, you needed to get noticed for your efforts if you wanted to advance. Getting involved was a strategy offered to persist in the field, addressing RQ5: Why do women persist in lieu of these obstacles?

## **Summary**

In conclusion, Chapter Four presented the findings from the research. An overview of the sampling method, as well as the participants, was shared. Then through

bracketing of experiences and allowing for horizons and meaning units to emerge, five themes were offered: motivation to work, personal obstacles, organizational factors, coping, and moving forward. Subthemes were shared for all themes and a link to the research questions was overviewed. Chapter Five will discuss the findings, as well as share implications for future research and practice.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Findings Review and Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. Chapter Five reviewed the work set forward throughout the course of the dissertation. The researcher then reviewed the findings submitted in Chapter Four. Linking themes with the literature reviewed allowed for recommendations to be presented on areas of future research and potential areas to affect student affairs practice. Finally a conclusion was submitted.

#### **Essence**

Moustakas (1994) calls researchers to synthesize “the essence of the experience” (p. 182) once textural and structural experiences are reviewed. Career obstacles are experienced by mid-career women in Catholic, male religious order sponsored institutions both as personally imposed and organizationally constructed. Textually, women struggled with changing personal goals, perspectives and life factors, coupled with organizational constraints. These included a gendered campus culture, exhibited through a lack of visible women in higher leadership roles and sexist behavior, as well as limited internal mobility. Structurally, women have developed a myriad of coping techniques to prosper in mission rich institutions. Relying on support systems, allies, mentors, professional/personal development and their faith, women navigate obstacles

with positivity and hope, as many individuals enjoyed their work at a Catholic institution due to institutional values.

The women shared individual life experiences of navigating the labyrinth of leadership in their careers in Catholic higher education. There were moments of hope and reality. Moments of hope were grace filled, through their intentionally chosen positive attitudes, their faith and their employed coping techniques as they served students and staff while navigating obstacles in their career labyrinth. Moments of reality occurred when women acknowledged that they worked within gendered organizations that they did not see within their power to change. *Mid-career females in student affairs at male religious order sponsored Catholic colleges and universities experienced universal career obstacles differently based on their faith, positivity and coping strategies which allowed them to embrace their current place within the career labyrinth.*

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. Therefore, the researcher sought to gain understanding regarding the following questions:

- What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?
- Who or what created these obstacles?
- How did the Catholic Church sponsorship of the institution influence the situation?
- How did women navigate career obstacles?
- Why did women persist in lieu of these obstacles?

These questions were addressed by the participants in a variety of ways. Themes and subthemes presented in Chapter Four related to the research questions.

***RQ 1-What are some of the obstacles they have had to face?*** This research question was addressed in numerous subthemes, which included geographic limitations, changing goals and perspectives, family factors, personality factors, mobility, family unfriendly situations, sexism, leadership and supervision.

- Women shared that self-imposed geographic limitations were reasons as to why they were working at their current institution but also that it hindered their career advancement. Ann discussed that she could probably be a vice president by now, but didn't want to live in a less desirable geographic location based on her definition. Family and friends in the area were also factors that limited participants' searches.
- Additional internal obstacles included changing life goals. These goals were internally created and then also internally altered. Emily spoke to her once driving her colleagues "nuts" based on her past efforts to be a perfectionist. Some came to this realization of changing goals by themselves, while others utilized mentors.
- Balancing life was an internal obstacle for many participants. Trying to strike a balance of between life commitments, some strove for balance; others admitted that balance was unobtainable. Participants talked in great deal about this especially when they had families (spouses, partners and children). However, other participants who were single spoke about life balance as well,

wondering if they currently struggled for balance as a single, childless professional, how would a family affect the dynamic in the future?

- Participants spoke of being limited by their personality. This barrier was described by some as their straightforwardness, while others described it as something that was pointed out to them as an obstacle for them to advance in their career. Others talked about their fit with institutional values due to lack of personal insight could be a barrier as well.
- Organizational barriers were also discussed by participants. One subtheme of great discussion was mobility. The lack of internal mobility because people stayed at institutions so long or a perception of too much internal or external hiring all were factors discussed.
- Family unfriendly organizations were discussed in regards to a lack of flex time, meetings held after hours, a lack of children around, inconsistently enforcement parental leave policies, with other institutions lacking such policies.
- Sexism was described in several ways. These included gendered spaces and activities such as disproportionate restrooms or perceived gendered events such as golf. Sexist comments were combined with a lack of visible women in high leadership positions on campus. Combined with a hierarchical leadership structure in which people felt like they were jumping through hoops. Participants shared both how supervisors could be a barrier and a positive element of the organization. From non-supportive behavior to bullying, supervisors were also described as allies by some.

In summary, a myriad of obstacles were shared by the participants. These included self-imposed limitations such as geography and family choices. Changing life goals, balancing life, and managing one's personality were also listed. Organizational obstacles shared were lack of mobility, sexism, supervisors and family unfriendly environments.

***RQ2-Who or what created these obstacles?*** The who and the what regarding the obstacles discussed can be seen overall in the themes two and three. Personal obstacles and organizational factors were the two overarching themes addressing the research question. While within both themes, the actual obstacle was described answering research question one above. However, the who and what creating the obstacles should be noted.

- Individuals presented self-limiting behavior in a number of ways. First they chose to be bound by geographic constraints in their job search, wanting to limit their search to live close to family and friends. Their personal reflections on their goals changed over the years creating new goals or a lack of clarity as to next steps professionally. Individual's personalities were also described as an obstacle to them and by them.
- Participants' organizations in which they were employed created obstacles as well. More specifically, the people employed by these institutions as well as the policies impacting the culture were involved in creating obstacles for participants. These included colleagues who stayed in their positions for a great number of years created a lack of mobility for the participants. Supervisors created or were obstacles themselves by acting as bullies, not

providing applicable experience (for example not allowing a participant to work with the budget) and exhibiting non-supportive behavior or coddling women. Leadership was described as centralized, hierarchical and very male driven. Some participants could not envision themselves in those upper echelons. The sexist language and activities were attributed to people; however, the gendered spaces were not specifically assigned to one person or area responsible for those decisions. Equally, unfriendly family policies such as a lack of parental leave or experiences of inflexible schedules were never attributed to an individual or position but were assumed to be institutional policies and practices.

In regards to who created the obstacles, those were experienced two fold. Internal obstacles were self-imposed by the participants. External obstacles included organizational factors.

***RQ3-How did the Catholic Church sponsorship of the institution influence the situation?*** The researcher wanted to know how the specific sponsorship of the institution could have potentially impacted the situation participants encountered in navigating career obstacles. Several subthemes touched on the Church in regards to participants.

- First within the subtheme of institutional factors, participants discussed why they chose to work at their institution. Many participants discussed that they chose to work specifically at their institution because of its Catholic sponsorship and for some because they themselves were Catholic. The open nature of the Catholic mission to engage in dialogue regarding spirituality and to express one's faith were important to participants. This inclusive



environment allowed for discussion to occur on religion and also allowed for women to actively engage their faith by attending sacraments, retreats and other faith sharing groups. Some discussed how specifically the Jesuit charisms were in line with student affairs teachings of advocacy, inclusion and social justice. Some spoke that they could only do the work they do within Catholic higher education.

- However, participants were also challenged by this sponsorship. Mentions of the recent American Church sex abuse scandals were shared. Some participants noted that the Church was run by men and that institution presidents were likely male priests. Women felt the male hierarchical order on campus. Many commented on the perception that Jesuit education was inclusive however the Church's teaching on the LGBT community was often at odds. Isabelle mentioned that participants often self-limited due to their interpretation of what people thought the Church's stance would be on an issue.
- Within the subtheme of sexism, participants specifically mentioned that the hierarchy of the organization was white male, and there were no female presidents. There was also the admission that this probably would not change in the near future. Other items noted were the role of priests on campus. While some individuals used sexist language, others presented a non-children family work environment when in positions of power to a lack of understanding of some family issues, while others were feared because of the sheer power they had on campus due to their religious affiliation. Conversely

others spoke about the significant learning experiences they had with campus priests or that they were the guardians of the institutional mission.

The Catholic Church sponsorship related to participants' motivation to work at their institution due to the fit between personal and institutional values. Females were challenged, however, by this sponsorship as it pertained to current events within the Catholic Church as well as sexism exhibited on their campus.

***RQ4-How did women navigate career obstacles?*** Participants discussed this question in a variety of ways. Subthemes of internal and external coping methods, as well as naming the issue and positivity and hope were all shared as means by which women navigate obstacles encountered in the labyrinth. Relationship building and mentors were also discussed.

- Internal coping methods included ignoring the situation all together and reconciling that there is only so much that can be done to address it. Some focused their energies into the work they did and let that speak for them. And others saw colleagues depart the institution because they grew frustrated with the barriers. A couple participants “code switched” and played different roles depending on the situation they found themselves in. Some employed male leadership characteristics as a coping mechanism in a male dominated work environment and finally others took advantage of the spiritual resources on campus to cope.
- External coping methods employed were building strategic, yet authentic allies. Others built relationships through networking. Some used mentors, supervisors and family members to benchmark their responses to things to see

how others would react to the same situation. Many felt that open and honest communication of one's needs were a strategy that they utilized.

- Women also needed to simply name the issue. While obvious to some, they needed to say, because the institution is Catholic, male priests are going to hold positions of power so that may exclude qualified women from university leadership positions. Others felt that naming the sexist behavior needed to occur in a politically savvy and respectful way so that relationships were maintained, yet the behavior would be addressed so that it would cease.
- Finally, positivity and hope rang through as a means to navigate obstacles. While others had not seen flex time for families at the institution, others did have that flexibility not only for family time but also to pursue a doctoral degree. Institutional fit and mission were large discussion items that energized participants. Participants talked about how their faith and self-reflection allowed them put their obstacles into a bigger picture which made them seem less critical. Others credited hard work, patience, faith and determination for their fortitude.

Women navigated career obstacles in the labyrinth utilizing internal and external coping methods. Additionally, participants wanted to name the issue at hand and employed positivity and hope to navigate obstacles.

***RQ5-Why did women persist in lieu of these obstacles?*** Several subthemes spoke to this research question, as women discussed advice they would share with others on how to be successful in the field. These included relationship building, mentors, personal growth and getting involved. Participants' positivity and hope were also a factor

in their persistence. As women shared advice on how to persist in the field of student affairs at a Catholic institution, they shared examples from their own life's story.

- Women talked about relationship building as a means to further their own advancement. This came in the form of serving on committees outside their work assignments, but also from their job responsibilities as well. Discussion also occurred about building a network outside of the institution. These efforts increased one's professional portfolio but also served as ways to be known in the field.
- Mentors were discussed, whether participants had a mentor or did not have a mentor. Beneficial mentoring relationships had evolved over time and were personally defined. Some mentors were very task oriented while others challenged the participant to do things outside of their personal comfort zone. Sharing of information and debriefing with a mentor was often discussed. Additionally, participants spoke of formalized mentoring relationships that were incorporated into the professional development curriculum of their division. Others however, shared that they had been "burned" by a mentor in the past and were told that they had a mentor without a choice; both approaches were less than desirable for the participants. The conversations with mentors discussed the ways they made meaning of their experiences by using them as sounding boards. This appeared to allow participants to gain perspective on situations as well as to formulate goals for next steps.
- Women spoke about personal growth being a factor in advancement. This was defined as actively applying for new jobs, pursuing a doctoral degree and

diversifying one's portfolio through committee work. Developing a thicker skin, self-confidence and having a tremendous work ethic were all attributed to advancement potential. Actively pursuing life balance and wellness were also discussed. These efforts to advance were discussed in a manner in which there was a hope to continue in the field of student affairs for the vast majority and the skills development would assist in that advancement.

- Getting involved in the profession was discussed in regards as a strategy for advancement. From networking to volunteering in professional organizations to attending conferences, all were means to build relationships with others in the profession and develop one's personal skills.
- Finally, positivity and hope, as discussed above, were factors that could not be ignored. Women chose to work at their institutions for specific reasons. Their discernment when issues arose, allowed for their faith in their institutions, in themselves and in others shone through. Only one woman expressed that was looking to move specifically out of Catholic higher education. The remainder found meaning in the work they were doing, some calling it a vocation, to serve students and found personal congruence with their institution's mission and lived values.

Women persisted in lieu of the obstacles they encountered in the career labyrinth through relationship building, mentors, personal growth and getting involved. Finally, participants' positivity and hope were shared through various examples regarding why they chose to remain in the career labyrinth at their institution.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings related to the participants' experienced obstacles are consistent with the literature reviewed. While family care may impact both male and female workers, as one participant described, even with her "enlightened" spouse, she goes home to a "second shift" to care for kids and the home after work. The lack of social capital gained from lost networking (Eagley & Carli, 2007) on the golf course was one participant's experience, although she would rather have been with her family anyways. The barriers to advancement in the academy, as described by Quina et al. (1998) and LeBlanc (1993) were echoed as well, in family issues, working environment and perceptions of peers. However, no participant spoke of salary in regards to their experience.

Participants spoke of the personal, career, organizational and job characteristics, as well as stress factors that Auster (2001) noted which play into mid-career satisfaction. In general, most participants were making meaning of their experiences with obstacles, both personally created and those from their institution. As Hughes (2004) shared, mid-career is the time that women decide whether or not to advance. Many participants were not only deciding whether or not to advance but what that looked like with new shifting goals and perspectives. For example, once self-described over achievers, a couple of participants looked towards part time positions to accommodate family needs. Career plateauing was reflected on by some participants as their goals changed, again consistent with the literature (Hughes, 2004).

Subtle and covert sexism existed for participants (Quina, et al., 1998), as seen by one supervisor not allowing budget work to be done, seeing unequal treatment of men and women and seeing few women in higher organizational positions. The gendered

nature of their organization was a point of reflection (Acker, 1999). Some participants wrangled with the question of not having a female president even if they did not aspire themselves to be a president. Additionally, participants noted that proportionally, women were not found in great numbers in higher leadership roles on the participants' campuses, echoing Kanter's work on tokens (1977a). Family policies and flex time were mentioned both as positive elements of their work and as a challenge to others. These themes were consistent with barriers shared by Quina et al. (1998) and others. The many stories shared by the participants were consistent with Eagley and Carli's (2007) labyrinth concept, in which individual women encountered obstacles along their winding career path. Participants shared stories of how they both encountered obstacles but also shared their successes, as they experienced growth opportunities in their positions as well.

In regards to the Catholic sponsorship of the institution, many participants talked about how the institution being Catholic was a draw for them as an employee as it fit their personal and professional values. Yet others were challenged by those same characteristics. Only one participant shared her overall disillusionment with Catholic higher education and that she had begun looking for work elsewhere. Other participants were looking for external positions for career changes or more supportive supervisors. No overarching theme emerged that obstacles were insurmountable or that a revolution was needed. Individuals expressed concerns, but the tone of the interviews was positive, even when discussing challenges. Many questioned whether or not the obstacles were due to the institution or other factors and would they be the same elsewhere? These reflections tie into Estanek's discussion on blending the philosophical framework for student affairs with respect for the Catholic tradition (2002).

Naming the issue was seen as a coping method by some. This is consistent with current research on asking why progress is so slow and the strategies suggested for contemplation (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). These included forming lay leaders and starting conversations regarding the topic (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). Additionally, the Ran, Zimmerman-Oster, Zarkowski study called for increasing awareness of barriers for women especially in male colleagues (as cited in Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). Other participants echoed themes of finding one's voice and building confidence, in congruence with McGuire's (2003) work.

Women were motivated to work for and persist in their institutions for a variety of reasons. Geographic constraints and family issues were large factors. Additionally, women enjoyed working within a Catholic mission which is consistent with research of women in Jesuit higher education at senior levels (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012).

Participants talked a great deal about relationship building, ally building and using mentors. These are all consistent strategies for women working within higher education (Allan, 2011; Fochtman, 2011; Hughes, 2004). As one participant mentioned, women also have to be their own advocate, which echoes sentiments of previous studies as well (Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). While some discussed the myth of superwoman and having it all, others shared a need to being committed to one's whole self and caring for oneself through proper diet and exercise. Some discerned their life path and reflected their obstacles within a bigger picture of their faith. Participants discussed strategies to care for self in attempts to balance life priorities.

When participants discussed moving forward and offering advice to others, including relationships with mentors, the findings were consistent with past research done



which offered advice from participants on advancing one's career (Marshall, 2004; Perry & Collins DeLeonardo, 2012). The advice that was personal lived experience spoke to how women navigated the labyrinth while offering counsel to others rising through the ranks.

### **Implications**

This study explored the lived experiences and thoughts on advancement of female participants working in male order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education. In reviewing the findings, the following implications emerged from the dialogue with the participants. Recommendations for practice were provided, as the researcher and the participants were student affairs professionals.

Known as the “godmother of Title IX,” Dr. Bernice Sandler has addressed audiences across the nation including campus administrators, faculty and students regarding advocacy efforts and how others can embrace similar challenges on their campuses. During a speech offered in the spring of 2013, she addressed a group of campus administrators. If you don't like the situation at hand, she shared; you have four choices in front of you. Sandler posited that (a) you can go somewhere else; (b) you can be bitter and apathetic about the situation; (c) you “can knock it all down and start a revolution;” or (d) you can slowly “chip away” and make “incremental change” (2013). Study participants were, for the vast majority, content with their overall situation with critiques regarding parts of their situation. Many would echo the sentiments of Sandler's fourth option offered to make small changes on an incremental basis.

In order to support incremental change that does not necessarily call for a revolution, the researcher recommended that student affairs divisions in Catholic higher

education create orientation sessions for new staff members to foster a climate of inclusion. By having knowledge of policies and processes, it would equip individuals with information to reach solutions. For example, staff members should know what family leave policies entail. This knowledge could prevent insensitive and irresponsible comments regarding a female's potential leave. Additionally, individuals would be knowledgeable regarding what recourse would be available to them if wronged by a fellow colleague. These sessions could help name potential obstacles and allow for women to proactively strategize their coping efforts alone or with an assigned mentor.

University Committees on the Status of Women still have a place on campuses today. While commissions like these started decades ago, there are still efforts to be done. As many participants mentioned a published climate survey to help name the issue and establish a plan to address such issues, a university wide committee, made up of faculty, staff and students is warranted. This is a chance for networking to occur and role modeling for students to see, all while change can be called for from a diffused entity that draws negative attention away from one lone individual (McGuire, 2003). Institutional support also needs to occur so that reports on campus climate are not buried if unfavorable results are obtained. Before engaging in such research, allies should be built with the president, deans and other key audiences on campus. Finally, commissions can engage the university community in professional development sessions on topics such as flexible work schedules, generational differences among women in the workforce, negotiating salary, etc.

The role of a Center for Women on Catholic campuses needs further review. At times, centers for women report through a student affairs unit. As these units continue to

evolve on college campuses, strategic discussions regarding programming challenges and opportunities need to be addressed as a network of professionals within Catholic higher education women's centers in order to foster such dialogue and collaboration. Several colleagues addressed the topic regarding birth control on campus and conversations with students around the topic. A centralized location for information to be provided within the mission of the institution would assist professionals navigate those conversations as well as serve the students within Catholic higher education.

Professional development opportunities for females need to continue to be offered and further developed at male sponsored Catholic institutions of higher education. As there are large numbers of women in Catholic student affairs, the pipeline appears to run dry within the upper echelons of the organizational hierarchy. Networking campus groups need to foster relationship building while sharing "hard skills", as one participant mentioned, so that the "good ol' boy" network can be permeated if a candidate so chooses to pursue that advancement. This can also focus on ally building and can tackle the topic of women needing to support women. Institutional financial resources devoted for aspiring women in student affairs should be set aside for women to attend NASPA's Manicur Symposium or the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Institute. Sessions within ASACCU, JASPA and similar Catholic professional organizations should address the nuances of leading in a male religious sponsored organization as a female.

As so many participants spoke to their fit with the university values and mission, those guiding documents need to be utilized when proposing changes on campus, as discussed by a participant. Those advocating for incremental change on their campus

should be knowledgeable of and own the values of the institution and utilize them to advocate for necessary improvements.

Hiring for mission will continue to be a critical effort on college campuses. When hiring for mission, institutions need to continue to be mindful that the laity can be champions of institutional mission and not just those who have taken religious vows. In conjunction with Church teaching, how will there be room at the table for dialogue? Hiring processes for staff need to be clear in regards to know how much agency is allowed by the institutional culture. Women should not be hired under the auspices of being able to enact change if certain discussions cannot occur. Once hired, women should be encouraged to participate in seminars regarding the university mission to understand the nuances of a new campus culture.

Women need to support women, as shared by the participants. If a colleague chooses to have children and get married, then support needs to come on a daily basis. As discussion occurs on accepting cultures other than one's own in regards to diversity and inclusion, similar acceptance needs to be had in regards to family and life choices. Therefore, policies need to be authored and enacted that allow for flexible work practices that allow for life commitments, whether those be family commitments, caring for aging parents, pursuing advanced degrees, etc. Single and/or childless workers' should not be forgotten in these conversations and should be engaged to accommodate their life needs as well.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The sheer nature of this research had a very limited generalizability from the established methodology. Qualitative studies are designed so that depth of data is to be

achieved and not the sheer breadth that quantitative methodology seeks to discover. Therefore, the number of participants interviewed for this study was adequate for doctoral research so that redundancy was achieved with participants' lived experience with the central phenomenon. However, results were not generalizable as they simply shared the experiences that the 15 participants have lived personally.

The finite population engaged allowed for a very narrow scope to be examined. When the researcher began this study, multiple Catholic male religious orders of higher education were sought as a subset of higher education. However, several things occurred. All but one participant came from one specific Catholic male order that was familiar to the researcher due to her work history. Due to that participant's lack of experience with the central phenomenon at her campus, the interview was not utilized. This may have occurred for several reasons. Because the researcher has been affiliated with a Catholic male order sponsored institution for over a decade, name recognition may have played a factor when women were deciding whether or not to participate. Also, several participants stated that they were happy to assist in the research since they had either completed their own doctoral research, were in the midst of conducting their own research or aspired to complete doctoral studies. Some felt that participation would be "good research karma."

This study did not take into account race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability or religious affiliation. Some participants offered these identities to the researcher during the interviews while others alluded to how "white" an institution felt. Participants who offered their religious affiliation shared that they felt welcomed at their institution although they were not Catholic themselves. These personal identities when in conflict

or in harmony with the institutional culture were beyond the scope of this research but present additional topics for investigation.

Only one male order was investigated in the research. An area of further research could then include broadening the scope of Catholic sponsorship to include orders that include both male and female religious and investigate if any differences in sponsorship affect the experience women have navigating the career labyrinth. As women's colleges were excluded from this study, as well as women's religious order sponsored institutions, both areas of sponsorship can be areas of future research in regards to how that culture may affect the dynamic with the student affairs staff. Another possible area of further research would be to compare how different sects of Christian religious sponsored organizations interplay with their student affairs female employees: for example, differences among Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic sponsored institutions.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to describe what meaning do mid-career female student affairs professionals make of navigating the career labyrinth including obstacles in male religious order sponsored co-educational Catholic higher education institutions. While much has been written about women in higher education, less research has addressed student affairs at mid-career and specifically within Catholic institutions of higher education that are sponsored by male religious orders.

Through a qualitative study, the researcher sought to give voice to women who did not find themselves well represented in the literature. For women to stay engaged and for future professionals to become engaged in Catholic student affairs, research like this study is needed to improve awareness of individual's lived experiences within the

career labyrinth. Further research is needed to assist in generalizing the findings to a larger audience. More robust literature being published can assist in advocating for resources to: help engage women at midcareer, help gain job satisfaction, and help women move further into the leadership pipeline in Catholic male order sponsored institutions of higher education.

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## **Appendix A**

### **IRB Approval**

**IRB Approval**

*By Becky Freeman on 09/03/2012 9:39 pm*

Dear Ms. Starzyk and Dr. Hoover,

Your project: Embracing the Labyrinth: A Phenomenological Study of Mid-Career Female Student Affairs Administrator's Experiences Navigating Career Barriers in Catholic Higher Education has been certified as exempt. You are authorized to begin data collection.

1. The approved informed consent document has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with - Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this document to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised document to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

Your official approval letter will be uploaded to NUgrant shortly.

Good luck with your research!

Becky Freeman  
472-8127  
bfreeman2@unl.edu

## **Appendix B**

**Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities  
ACCU 2010 Official Catholic Directory**

## Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities ACCU 2010 Official Catholic Directory

### Catholic Colleges and Universities in the United States

Institutions	City	State	ACCU Member	IFCU Member	Sem. and College	Seminary Only	College Only
Albertus Magnus College	New Haven	CT	✓				✓
Alvernia University	Reading	PA	✓				✓
Alverno College	Milwaukee	WI	✓				✓
Ancilla Domini College	Donaldson	IN	✓				✓
Anna Maria College	Paxton	MA	✓				✓
Aquinas College	Grand Rapids	MI	✓				✓
Aquinas College	Nashville	TN	✓				✓
Aquinas Institute of Theology	St. Louis	MO					✓
Assumption College	Worcester	MA	✓	✓			✓
Assumption College for Sisters	Mendham	NJ	✓				✓
Athenaeum of Ohio-Mount Saint Mary's of the West	Cincinnati	OH				✓	
Augustine Institute	Denver	CO					✓
Ave Maria School of Law	Naples	FL					✓
Ave Maria University	Ave Maria	FL	✓		✓		
Avila University	Kansas City	MO	✓				✓
Barry University	Miami Shores	FL	✓				✓
Bellarmino University	Louisville	KY	✓				✓
Belmont Abbey College	Belmont	NC	✓				✓
Benedictine College	Atchison	KS	✓				✓
Benedictine University	Lisle	IL	✓				✓
Boston College	Chestnut Hill	MA	✓	✓			✓
Brescia University	Owensboro	KY	✓				✓
Briar Cliff University	Sioux City	IA	✓				✓
Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius	Pittsburgh	PA				✓	
Cabrini College	Radnor	PA	✓				✓
Caldwell College	Caldwell	NJ	✓				✓
Calumet College of Saint Joseph	Whiting	IN	✓				✓
Canisius College	Buffalo	NY	✓				✓
Cardinal Stritch University	Milwaukee	WI	✓	✓			✓
Carlow University	Pittsburgh	PA	✓				✓
Carroll College	Helena	MT	✓		✓		
Catholic Theological Union	Chicago	IL				✓	
Chaminade University of Honolulu	Honolulu	HI	✓				✓
Chatfield College	Saint Martin	OH	✓				✓
Chestnut Hill College	Philadelphia	PA	✓				✓
Christ the King Seminary	East Aurora	NY				✓	
Christendom College	Front Royal	VA					✓
Christian Brothers University	Memphis	TN	✓				✓
Clarke University	Dubuque	IA	✓				✓
College of Mount Saint Joseph	Cincinnati	OH	✓				✓
College of Mount Saint Vincent	Riverdale	NY	✓				✓
College of Saint Benedict	St. Joseph	MN	✓	✓			✓
College of Saint Elizabeth	Morristown	NJ	✓				✓
College of Saint Joseph in Vermont	Rutland	VT	✓				✓
College of Saint Mary	Omaha	NE	✓				✓
College of Saint Mary Magdalen	Wamer	NH					✓
College of Saint Scholastica	Duluth	MN	✓				✓
College of the Holy Cross	Worcester	MA	✓				✓
Creighton University	Omaha	NE	✓				✓
De Paul University	Chicago	IL	✓	✓			✓
DeSales University	Center Valley	PA	✓	✓			✓
Divine Word College	Epworth	IA	✓			✓	
Dominican College	Orangeburg	NY	✓				✓
Dominican House of Studies	Washington	DC				✓	
Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology	Berkeley	CA				✓	
Dominican University	River Forest	IL	✓				✓
Dominican University of California	San Rafael	CA					✓
Donnelly College	Kansas City	KS	✓				✓
Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit	Pittsburgh	PA	✓				✓
D'Youville College	Buffalo	NY	✓				✓
Edgewood College	Madison	WI	✓				✓
Elms College	Chicopee	MA	✓				✓



Emmanuel College	Boston	MA	✓				✓
Fairfield University	Fairfield	CT	✓				✓
Felician College	Lodi	NJ	✓				✓
Fontbonne University	St. Louis	MO	✓	✓			✓
Fordham University	Bronx	NY	✓	✓			✓
Franciscan School of Theology	Berkeley	CA				✓	
Franciscan University of Steubenville	Steubenville	OH	✓		✓		
Gannon University	Erie	PA	✓				✓
Georgetown University	Washington	DC	✓	✓			✓
Georgian Court University	Lakewood	NJ	✓				✓
Gonzaga University	Spokane	WA	✓				✓
Gwynedd-Mercy College	Gwynedd Valley	PA	✓				✓
Hilbert College	Hamburg	NY	✓				✓
Holy Apostles College & Seminary	Cromwell	CT			✓		
Holy Cross College	Notre Dame	IN	✓				✓
Holy Family University	Philadelphia	PA	✓	✓			✓
Holy Name Medical Center School of Nursing	Teaneck	NJ					✓
Holy Names University	Oakland	CA	✓				✓
Holy Spirit College	Atlanta	GA					✓
Immaculata University	Immaculata	PA	✓				✓
Iona College	New Rochelle	NY	✓				✓
Jesuit School of Theology	Berkeley	CA				✓	
John Carroll University	University Heights	OH	✓				✓
John Paul the Great Catholic University	San Diego	CA					✓
King's College	Wilkes-Barre	PA	✓				✓
La Roche College	Pittsburgh	PA	✓				✓
La Salle University	Philadelphia	PA	✓				✓
Labouré College	Dorchester	MA	✓				✓
Le Moyne College	Syracuse	NY	✓				✓
Lewis University	Romeoville	IL	✓				✓
Loras College	Dubuque	IA	✓				✓
Lourdes College	Sylvania	OH	✓				✓
Loyola Marymount University	Los Angeles	CA	✓	✓			✓
Loyola University Chicago	Chicago	IL	✓	✓	✓		
Loyola University Maryland	Baltimore	MD	✓				✓
Loyola University New Orleans	New Orleans	LA	✓				✓
Madonna University	Livonia	MI	✓				✓
Manhattan College	Riverdale	NY	✓				✓
Manor College	Jenkintown	PA	✓				✓
Maria College	Albany	NY	✓				✓
Marian Court College	Swampscott	MA	✓				✓
Marian University	Indianapolis	IN	✓				✓
Marian University	Fond du Lac	WI	✓				✓
Marquette University	Milwaukee	WI	✓	✓			✓
Marygrove College	Detroit	MI	✓				✓
Marylhurst University	Marylhurst	OR					✓
Marymount College	Ranchos Palos Verdes	CA	✓				✓
Marymount School of Practical Nursing	Cleveland	IL					✓
Marymount University	Arlington	VA	✓				✓
Marywood University	Scranton	PA	✓				✓
Mercy College of Health Sciences	Des Moines	IA					✓
Mercy College of Ohio	Toledo	OH	✓				✓
Mercyhurst College	Erie	PA	✓				✓
Merrimack College	North Andover	MA	✓				✓
Misericordia University	Dallas	PA	✓				✓
Molloy College	Rockville Centre	NY	✓				✓
Mount Aloysius College	Cresson	PA	✓				✓
Mount Angel Seminary	St. Benedict	OR				✓	
Mount Carmel College of Nursing	Columbus	OH	✓				✓
Mount Marty College	Yankton	SD	✓				✓
Mount Mary College	Milwaukee	WI	✓				✓
Mount Mercy University	Cedar Rapids	IA	✓				✓
Mount Saint Mary College	Newburgh	NY	✓				✓
Mount Saint Mary's College	Los Angeles	CA	✓		✓		
Mount Saint Mary's University	Emmitsburg	MD	✓		✓		
Neumann University	Aston	PA	✓				✓
New York Medical College	Valhalla	NY					✓

Newman University	Wichita	KS	✓				✓
Niagara University	Niagara University	NY	✓				✓
Notre Dame College	South Euclid	OH	✓				✓
Notre Dame de Namur University	Belmont	CA	✓				✓
Notre Dame of Maryland University	Baltimore	MD	✓				✓
Notre Dame Seminary	New Orleans	LA				✓	
Oblate School of Theology	San Antonio	TX				✓	
Ohio Dominican University	Columbus	OH	✓				✓
Our Lady of Corpus Christi	Corpus Christi	TX					✓
Our Lady of Holy Cross College	New Orleans	LA	✓				✓
Our Lady of the Lake College	Baton Rouge	LA	✓				✓
Our Lady of the Lake University	San Antonio	TX	✓				✓
Presentation College	Aberdeen	SD	✓				✓
Providence College	Providence	RI	✓				✓
Quincy University	Quincy	IL	✓				✓
Regis College	Weston	MA	✓				✓
Regis University	Denver	CO	✓				✓
Registered Training College of Nursing	Cincinnati	OH					✓
Resurrection University	Oak Park	IL					✓
Rivier College	Nashua	NH	✓				✓
Rockhurst University	Kansas City	MO	✓				✓
Rosemont College of the Holy Child Jesus	Rosemont	PA	✓				✓
Sacred Heart School of Theology	Hales Corners	WI				✓	
Sacred Heart University	Fairfield	CT	✓	✓			✓
Saint Ambrose University	Davenport	IA	✓		✓		
Saint Anselm College	Manchester	NH	✓				✓
Saint Anthony College of Nursing	Rockford	IL					✓
Saint Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry	Rochester	NY					✓
Saint Bonaventure University	Saint Bonaventure	NY	✓				✓
Saint Catharine College	St. Catharine	KY	✓				✓
Saint Catherine University	St. Paul	MN	✓				✓
Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary	Wynnewood	PA				✓	
Saint Edward's University	Austin	TX	✓				✓
Saint Elizabeth College of Nursing	Utica	NY					✓
Saint Elizabeth School of Nursing	Lafayette	IN					✓
Saint Francis College	Brooklyn Heights	NY	✓				✓
Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing	Peoria	IL					✓
Saint Francis University	Loretto	PA	✓				✓
Saint Gregory's University	Shawnee	OK	✓				✓
Saint John's Seminary	Camarillo	CA				✓	
Saint John's Seminary	Brighton	MA				✓	
Saint John's University	Jamaica	NY	✓				✓
Saint John's University	Collegeville	MN	✓				✓
Saint Joseph College	West Hartford	CT	✓				✓
Saint Joseph Seminary College	Covington	LA				✓	
Saint Joseph's College	Rensselaer	IN	✓				✓
Saint Joseph's College	Brooklyn	NY					✓
Saint Joseph's College of Maine	Standish	ME	✓				✓
Saint Joseph's University	Philadelphia	PA	✓				✓
Saint Leo University	St. Leo	FL	✓				✓
Saint Louis University	St. Louis	MO					✓
Saint Martin's University	Lacey	WA	✓				✓
Saint Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology	Wickliffe	OH					✓
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College	St. Mary-of-the-Woods	IN	✓				✓
Saint Mary's College	Notre Dame	IN	✓	✓			✓
Saint Mary's College of California	Moraga	CA	✓	✓			✓
Saint Mary's Seminary and University	Baltimore	MD					✓
Saint Mary's University	San Antonio	TX	✓				✓
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	Winona	MN	✓	✓			✓
Saint Meinrad School of Theology	St. Meinrad	IN					✓
Saint Michael's College	Colchester	VT	✓				✓
Saint Norbert College	De Pere	WI	✓		✓		
Saint Peter's College	Jersey City	NJ	✓				✓
Saint Thomas Aquinas College	Sparkill	NY	✓				✓
Saint Thomas University	Miami Gardens	FL	✓				✓
Saint Vincent College	Latrobe	PA	✓				✓
Saint Vincent Seminary	Latrobe	PA					✓

Saint Vincent's College	Bridgeport	CT					✓
Saint Xavier University	Chicago	IL	✓				✓
Salve Regina University	Newport	RI	✓				✓
Santa Clara University	Santa Clara	CA	✓				✓
Seattle University	Seattle	WA	✓	✓			✓
Seminary of the Immaculate Conception	Huntington	NY				✓	
Seton Hall University	South Orange	NJ	✓		✓		
Seton Hill University	Greensburg	PA	✓	✓			✓
Siena College	Loudonville	NY	✓				✓
Siena Heights University	Adrian	MI	✓				✓
Silver Lake College of the Holy Family	Manitowoc	WI	✓				✓
Spalding University	Louisville	KY	✓				✓
Spring Hill College	Mobile	AL	✓				✓
Springfield College in Illinois	Springfield	IL					✓
SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary	Orchard Lake	MI				✓	
Stonehill College	Easton	MA	✓				✓
The Catholic Distance University	Hamilton	VA	✓				✓
The Catholic University of America	Washington	DC	✓	✓	✓		
The College of New Rochelle	New Rochelle	NY	✓	✓			✓
The College of Saint Rose	Albany	NY					✓
The College of Saint Thomas More	Fort Worth	TX					✓
The Institute for the Psychological Sciences	Arlington	VA					✓
The Mexican American Catholic College	San Antonio	TX	✓				✓
Thomas Aquinas College	Santa Paula	CA					✓
Thomas More College	Crestview Hills	KY	✓				✓
Thomas More College of Liberal Arts	Merrimack	NH					✓
Trinity University	Washington	DC	✓				✓
Trocaire College	Buffalo	NY	✓				✓
University of Dallas	Irving	TX	✓				✓
University of Dayton	Dayton	OH	✓	✓			✓
University of Detroit Mercy	Detroit	MI	✓				✓
University of Great Falls	Great Falls	MT	✓				✓
University of Mary	Bismarck	ND	✓				✓
University of Notre Dame du Lac	Notre Dame	IN	✓	✓			✓
University of Portland	Portland	OR	✓				✓
University of Saint Francis	Joliet	IL	✓				✓
University of Saint Francis	Fort Wayne	IN	✓				✓
University of Saint Mary	Leavenworth	KS	✓				✓
University of Saint Mary of the Lake/ Mundelein Seminary	Mundelein	IL				✓	
University of Saint Thomas	Houston	TX	✓	✓			✓
University of Saint Thomas	St. Paul	MN	✓	✓			✓
University of San Diego	San Diego	CA	✓	✓			✓
University of San Francisco	San Francisco	CA	✓				✓
University of Scranton	Scranton	PA	✓				✓
University of the Incarnate Word	San Antonio	TX	✓				✓
Ursuline College	Pepper Pike	OH	✓				✓
Villa Maria College of Buffalo	Buffalo	NY					✓
Villanova University	Villanova	PA	✓	✓			✓
Viterbo University	La Crosse	WI	✓				✓
Walsh University	North Canton	OH	✓	✓			✓
Washington Theological Union	Washington	DC				✓	
Wheeling Jesuit University	Wheeling	WV	✓				✓
Wyoming Catholic College	Lander	WY					✓
Xavier University	Cincinnati	OH	✓				✓
Xavier University of Louisiana	New Orleans	LA	✓				✓

## **Appendix C**

### **Participant Email Solicitation**

### Participant Email Solicitation

**From:** Michele Starzyk [starzyk@creighton.edu]

**Sent:** [date & time]

**Subject:** Interview Request

Dear [insert name]:

Good morning. Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Michele Starzyk and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. I will be conducting research on female student affairs administrators at midcareer working at male sponsored co-educational Catholic institutions of higher education. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the essence of navigating career obstacles to advancement for midcareer female student affairs professionals at Catholic universities.

Your name and contact information was given to me by the Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU) online membership directory. I am asking you to participate in a phone interview that will be scheduled at your convenience and should last approximately 60 minutes.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. The assistance that you provide by agreeing to hold the interview will help add to the literature in our field that currently lacks substantial data on women leading midcareer in Catholic higher education. The responses you provide will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in the research findings.

Attached you will find the informed consent form for my dissertation. Please review the document carefully as it explains your rights as a research participant and provides information about the procedures for the study. If you would like to participate in the study, you will need to sign it and fax it to me at 402.280.4706, attention Michele Starzyk.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. You may call me at 402.280.2775 or contact me via e-mail at [starzyk@creighton.edu](mailto:starzyk@creighton.edu). Thank you in advance for your participation and assistance with this research.

Sincerely,

Michele K. Starzyk  
Educational Administration Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Nebraska Lincoln

## **Appendix D**

### **Informed Consent Form**

## INFORMED CONSENT



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB#

**Title:**

Embracing the labyrinth: A phenomenological study of mid-career female student affairs administrators' experiences navigating career barriers in male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational universities.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the essence of navigating career obstacles to advancement for midcareer female student affairs professionals at Catholic universities. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. You are invited to participate in this study because you are employed at a male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational college or university as a mid career female in student affairs.

**Procedures:**

As a participant, you will be interviewed one time by Michele Starzyk for approximately 60 minutes by telephone. Your interview will be scheduled in advance by email at a mutually agreed upon time. During the interview, the conversation will be digitally recorded. Transcriptions will be conducted by a hired service which will sign a confidentiality agreement.

At the close of the interview, you will be offered the opportunity to journal for two weeks after your interview to collect any additional thoughts or reflections you may have on the topic. If you choose to journal, you will submit the journal electronically via email to the researcher at [Starzyk@creighton.edu](mailto:Starzyk@creighton.edu) no later than 14 days post the interview.

You will need to print and sign one copy of this Informed Consent Form and return it to Michele Starzyk via fax at 402.280.4706 prior to your interview date. Please note that this fax number is a public machine in the researcher's place of business. If you would like the researcher to personally retrieve it, please call her at 402.280.2775 to alert her to the incoming fax.

**Benefits:**

The outcome of this research will be used to complete a doctoral dissertation. The results from the interviews will be analyzed so to provide insight into a marginalized population of employees in higher education with the attempt to shed light on the experiences women have in male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational higher education.

**Risks and/or Discomforts:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential.

Transcriptions will be obtained through a professional transcription service. Transcriber(s) will be



required to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure participants' anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used and all identifiers of people, places and programs will be removed to retain confidentiality. An identity key will be kept solely by the researcher in a locked box in her personal dwelling. Digital files will be kept on the researcher's password protected computer with backup files being stored on a hard drive stored in the same locked box as the identity key. When transcriptions have been verified, the digital recordings will be erased.

The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data.

**Compensation:**

No compensation will be offered for your participation.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Please check the following box:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (insert first and last name), ☐ give permission / ☐ do not give permission for all interviews to be digitally recorded and transcribed.

**Signature of Participant:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Name and Phone number of investigators**

Michele K. Starzyk, Principal Investigator  
Email: [Starzyk@creighton.edu](mailto:Starzyk@creighton.edu)  
Office: 402.280.2775

Richard Hoover Ph.D., Secondary Investigator  
Email: [rhoover2@unl.edu](mailto:rhoover2@unl.edu)  
Office 402.472.3058



## **Appendix E**

### **Interview Protocol**

## **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Interviewer:** Michele Starzyk

**Interviewee:** [insert name]

**Date/Time:** [insert date and time]

**Location:** [insert location of telephone call]

**Interviewer instructions:**

- The interviewer will introduce herself to the participant and thank her for her time. The interviewer will reconfirm that the interview will take approximately 60 minutes, will be digitally transcribed, hand written notes will be taken in case the technology fails.
- The interviewer will remind the participant that participation is completely voluntary and no remuneration will be offered. If the participant wants to withdraw from the interview, she may do so at any time. IRB contact information is Lincoln will be offered if she chooses. The researcher will verify that a Consent Form was signed and returned.
- The researcher will offer the participant a chance to further reflect on the interview through the submission of a personal journal kept for two weeks post the interview. This journal will be submitted to the researcher electronically no later than 14 days after the interview.
- The researcher will explain that post the interview and submission of the journal, transcriptions will be professionally completed. The participant will have the opportunity to check the transcription for accuracy. Once this is complete, the digital recording will be erased.
- Confidentiality will be maintained as transcriptions will be kept on a password safe computer and in a locked box in the researcher's home. While the findings of the research may be published, all identifying information will be removed and data will be reported with pseudonyms.

**Interview Questions, including probes:**

13. Tell me about your career in Catholic higher education.

- a. How long have you worked at your institution?
- b. What are your areas of responsibility?

14. Why do you choose to work at your institution?

- a. What do you enjoy about working in Catholic higher education?

- b. What do you find challenging about working in Catholic higher education?

15. What are your experiences with career obstacles?

- a. If clarification is needed, career obstacles, as defined in The Department of Labor's *Glass Ceiling Report*, "Glass Ceiling research reveals three levels of artificial barriers to the advancement of minorities and women in the private sector that contradict this nation's ethic of individual worth and accountability—the belief that education, training, dedication, and hard work will lead to a better life" (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). These levels of barriers, or obstacles, are societal, internal structural and governmental barriers.

16. Have you personally experienced an obstacle? Please describe.

17. How are obstacles experienced at your institution?

- a. Do all employees experience obstacles similarly?

18. Have you tried to advance your own career? If so, how?

- a. Do you feel that you have the ability to advance?
- b. What are opportunities for advancement for you?
- c. What are your desires to advance professionally?
- d. How have you actively pursued advancement?

19. What have you done to deal with career obstacles?

- a. What are your perceptions of organizational constraints to advancement?
- b. What structures are a part of that situation?

- c. What people are a part of that situation?
  - d. What other factors describe that situation?
20. How do you overcome obstacles professionally?
- a. What would you need to work on regarding your skills and experiences in order for you to advance?
21. Do you have a professional mentor?
- a. Please describe your professional mentor and your relationship with him/her.
  - b. In what ways do you communicate with your professional mentor?
  - c. Can you give me some examples of how the mentor has been helpful in your overcoming perceived obstacles?
22. What would you suggest to improve the career advancement climate for female student affairs administrators at your institution or similar institutions?
23. What have I not asked you that is important to know about navigating obstacles to career advancement at male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational institutions?
24. To whom should I talk to in order to find out more about navigating the leadership labyrinth of career advancement in male religious order sponsored Catholic co-educational higher education?

### **Interview Wrap Up**

- The researcher will again thank the participant for her time and her contribution to research in the field.
- The researcher will remind her about the option to journal to further discern about this topic. The researcher will remind the participant about the 14 day deadline.
  - Recognizing that some people like to take time and reflect upon their answers and participation in interviews, I would like to offer you the

option to take the next two weeks and discern this conversation. If you have additional reflections via writing, drawing, etc. please feel free to email those to me. Would you like to consider the journal option? If so, I will email you a week prior to the deadline to remind you of the due date.

- The researcher will thank the participant for the assistance lent to a graduate student and colleague.

## **Appendix F**

### **External Auditor**

## EXTERNAL AUDITOR STATEMENT

April 2, 2013

Michele Starzyk  
 Doctoral Candidate  
 University of Nebraska Lincoln

Dear Ms. Starzyk:

I had the pleasure of auditing the data from your research study titled: "Embracing the Labyrinth: A Phenomenological Study of Mid-Career Female Student Affairs Administrators' Experiences Navigating Career Barriers in Catholic Higher Education". The findings and results from my audit are as follows.

- 1) After listening to 5 out of 15 of the audio files and comparing them to the corresponding "cleaned" transcripts, I am satisfied that dialogue between the interviewer and the respondent has been captured accurately. I noted that fillers such as "ums", "okays", and "mhms" were excluded from the "cleaned" transcripts, which is consistent with your methodology.
- 2) After reviewing the content contained within each theme and subtheme on Nvivo, I am satisfied that the text was coded accurately. I am also satisfied that saturation was achieved.
- 3) The main themes and subthemes appeared to emerge naturally from the text, which is consistent with your methodology. An excellent description was provided for each of the five main themes. After reviewing the main themes and subthemes within Nvivo, I brought the following suggestions to your attention, which you have already accommodated (see **Action Taken**).
  - a. There are a lot of subthemes under *coping* and not all of them appear to be forms of coping. Consider moving subthemes that are not forms of coping.  
**Action Taken:** Under the theme *coping*, there are now four subthemes: *internal*, *external*, *naming the issue*, *positivity and hope*.
  - b. I did not understand the meaning of the theme called *factors to work there*. Consider renaming.  
**Action Taken:** Changed to *motivation to work at institution*.
  - c. Consider removing the redundancy from the theme called *relationship building*.  
**Action Taken:** Redundancy removed.
  - d. Consider renaming *organizational factors* to *organizational challenges*.  
**Action Taken:** *Organizational factors* is now *organizational challenges*.

My audit of your data is now complete.

Sincerely,



Laura Shinkunas, B.A.  
 Research Associate  
 Program in Bioethics and Humanities  
 University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine

## **Appendix G**

### **Invariant Horizons**



## INVARIANT HORIZONS

1. There aren't very many women in key leadership positions
2. There are struggles particularly if you look at some of those mid-manager group of women.
3. And at the same time, I feel completely supported
4. Family friendly place
5. I am a firm believer in being a really good team player, and in forming good relationships.
6. I had always tried to volunteer when I could to help other folks, and to get to know other people's areas
7. A good support system in and outside the workplace has been really key for me
8. challenging myself to be really open and honest with my supervisors
9. more than just my employer.
10. How do I continue to have faith in an institution that's so meaningful to me, while also being able to recognize that whatever is going on right now is just crappy. And so it doesn't define the institution, it doesn't define my experience, it simply is just what is happening right now and while it's not good, and we need to do something about it.
11. the likelihood of that position being open in the next 10-15 years are probably really, really slim
12. in terms of a mentor relationship, I don't think I have that right now.
13. it simply is just about being able to acknowledge what's here.
14. getting women in that candidate pool adds to the diversity as well.
15. exploring ways that you can network or you can be known
16. maintaining that work/life balance.
17. I appreciate that I can really engage in my faith in a very meaningful way.
18. I have very much had to put my career . . . on hold because of personal choices
19. And I thought by putting in an insane amount of time, therefore that meant I would be rewarded for that.
20. I think I kind of got very jaded at a certain point.
21. I don't necessarily believe in the whole mentoring thing.
22. when I look at cabinet and I see just a bunch of white men, that makes me feel like I cannot advance my career
23. Let's just do our work and do it well and make sure we're providing the best student experience we can
24. I've had a tremendous opportunity to grow here.
25. hesitancy of trusting the new folks that had come in
26. Part of it could be our order is all males
27. I do think that you feel that more as a woman.
28. Mentor relationships
29. I ignore it.
30. I think that there is still a lot of discrimination that exists that is more covert
31. starting a support group in some ways just for professional women
32. keeping a positive attitude as much as possible
33. so that we would be around more family
34. Working with college students is my passion, it's my vocation

35. he referred to my maternity leave as a vacation
36. I think he was just scared crapless. But in front of everybody else, he had to use this bravado, and act like he was the man and he was the boss.
37. being called a girl, or honey, or sweetheart.
38. I actually filed an official complaint to our office of human resources . . . They would basically intentionally try to sabotage me.
39. pro-family policies didn't stick
40. when are the results of that survey going to come out?
41. it's because women are not important.
42. I was trying to fill this illusion of being the super woman, the super mom, the super wife, the super worker, and it's a total illusion . . . it does not exist.
43. women need to be good colleagues and good friends to other women.
44. I think sometimes that we can use the university's mission and its commitment to diversity and its commitment to all people to help us when we are in conversations or are in difficult situations like this.
45. there was never a moment on that campus that I didn't feel valued and taken care of
46. I just feel like sometimes things that we perceive as career obstacles are actually opportunities to just do something different
47. watching camaraderie around me that doesn't include me.
48. I find that there's women on this campus that are brilliant doing really amazing things, yet they're in roles where if they had been anywhere else, I think they would have been in higher positions
49. I couldn't tell if it was because I look young, or am I brown and I look different?
50. My husband is actually a pretty great person to talk to professionally, because he has nothing to do with what I do with work wise
51. the way that Catholic education is set up anyway is pretty male oriented.
52. don't give people a reason to have any more doubt about your abilities.
53. many men that I talk to just don't bring up any of the issues. So I kind of changed my style too
54. I think things around like reproductive rights are probably where I experience some just personal distance from kind of where the Catholic Church is and where the institution is
55. I think people like Catholic higher education, like I think folks make a deliberate decision either to go into it, but certainly it seems like to remain in Catholic higher education and Jesuit Catholic higher education
56. I think we are very hierarchical here.
57. it is just the assumption that I have to leave in order to continue to advance in my career.
58. I've received tons of support on my dissertation and my graduate program
59. I value my work here. I really value the folks in the division. I have felt supported in a lot of ways around my professional development.
60. There's frustration with what she calls the game, and I call

- navigating the politics. But we think about that in different ways.
61. So there's no way that the mission of the institution can be carried fully on the shoulders of the Jesuits.
  62. I would say just giving lots of personal reflection about what are issues that are core to you, and if the institution doesn't align with those, what does that mean?
  63. I feel like there is at least room for a dialogue and conversation.
  64. Jesuit higher education is it's a really small world.
  65. To have that natural connection of the work that I do in student affairs is so directly connected to the mission of the institution is really important for me.
  66. It's being able to find that balance of recognizing that this mission is bigger than I am, and bigger than perhaps the idea that I want to move forward and I need to work within that structure.
  67. supporting and educating our community and our students who identify as LGBT
  68. Sometimes if you are not the best advocate for yourself, you can easily get passed over
  69. So functioning sometimes in what we would consider a stereotypical male leadership way, and as a result impacting the women who are trying to come up behind them
  70. I think the obstacles are also different based on how the perception of how "controversial" what you are doing is.
  71. I'm involved in professional organizations and have served on conference committees and done presentations, and have networked in a way to . . . meet new people
  72. I also think that we have shifted in a way back towards mentoring men, and somehow women have gotten lost in the mix
  73. So part of it is sometimes your obstacle can be how educated you made yourself before you joined an institution. And I think that sometimes that's the responsibility of us as professionals who are making really good professional judgment about our careers.
  74. I just want to make sure that we're accounting for where our budget is going. And he said, that's none of your business, that's not your problem. I'll take care of it.
  75. I'm also very much of the mindset there are going to be challenges, and you just have to buckle up, put on the seatbelt, and ride the ride, but stay true in your foundation of who you are as a professional.
  76. some of the values, or the values that exist in Jesuit education in particular, found that they aligned well with the work that I do and the beliefs that I have around social justice and access
  77. there is a clear identity
  78. it's a home of all faiths
  79. I do feel like it's an obstacle in the sense that I'm a woman of color, and I do identify that way
  80. I think another component of this is being a mother and a partner, and navigating what I need to complete and do and be on top of in my position and in my responsibilities to my division and the institution
  81. as a woman, I feel like there would be judgment . . . and that's really tough . . . and I say I believe there will be judgment because I've seen it.

82. And it's women . . . it's not men . . . it's women. And I think that's been the double standard that I've seen
83. code switching
84. how I choose to act and respond makes a huge difference in the way that I'm received
85. utilizing my allies in a smart way is something that I've learned to do.
86. it makes me think of Machiavelli, because it's a very, almost a cut throat way of working
87. truly I really do feel a connection working at a Catholic institution. I am a devout Catholic myself
88. lack of a strong Jesuit presence on campus
89. lately there's been more and more expected and required of people
90. so contingent upon supervisors
91. But I do feel like that's a struggle sometimes in terms of just maybe like not completely in control of destiny
92. I would try to find a way that makes me happy.
93. definitely sensed and felt different ageism
94. grow some tougher skin
95. sometimes it is just going home and having a good cry
96. I just had a very frank conversation with somebody
97. there's a very high chance that the next president is going to be a Jesuit priest, and if not probably a male. And I don't know why it's that way . . . that feeling. But that can be hard to swallow sometimes, even if you don't want to be a president.
98. I don't think it's a male versus female kind of world.
99. I think that women generally may bring a different perspective to the same exact issue.
100. I think a lot of people see Catholic education as restrictive. And I have not found that to be the case
101. I think of the tremendous amount of flexibility and trust. And that may come down ultimately to a supervisory level
102. the Jesuits are conscience of our institution and I appreciate their voices on the board of trustees and in various meetings in which they find themselves. So I do think they play a valuable role in terms of holding our feet to the fire when it comes to our values as an institution.
103. we even shut our own selves down now
104. because we value people, and we don't often fire people
105. so I can either dwell on it and be miserable about it, or I can figure out a way around it
106. part-time is kind of the best of both worlds
107. owning your material and knowing what you're talking about and being confident in saying this is the way I think we need to go
108. I guess there's a patience element to it
109. I'm never going to have access to some of the male venues of . . . informal relationship building
110. I sometimes wonder how much I've internalized my oppression as a woman
111. I've definitely felt the negative side, negative effects of being a woman in higher education in the patriarchal top down, insular,

- boys club sort of leadership and management style.
112. I have been told that opportunities for advancement have been stifled because I'm a strong woman and that can be off-putting
113. regionally bound
114. I'm starting to shift away from the Catholic Jesuit environment. I'm sad about that, but this last year has been pretty, pretty tough for me as a result of some of that culture
115. there's so few opportunities to advance
116. equity study would be helpful. I know here that was done [several] years ago [. . .] and the results were so bad they buried them
117. I think that there's something to be said for work/life balance. I know it really is a myth . . . there's all those theories
118. that's a barrier that is based as well, because you have to educate the person that you work for instead of them being the mentor to you.
119. this is going to be bad. But I leave.
120. I never felt like I wouldn't have an opportunity to advance because I was a woman, but I do know many women who did feel that way
121. it's a family for me coming to work . . . the place that I work is literally a community and a family . . . folks that I truly respect and work so closely with
122. an obstacle that eventually lead to the opportunity.
123. I think I have been very committed to my ethics and values
124. I'm not afraid of a challenge
125. my job and my career are very important to me, but they are not the only things.
126. I have a personal belief that eventually things work out, if you continue to work hard and you continue to give something your all . . . there's some let downs and disappointments. But eventually things do work out for those that are when it's deserved
127. we also need to make sure we are keeping ourselves healthy, particularly for women in student affairs
128. I think there's a point in our careers when particularly as women we might not feel people have maybe treated us right, or spoken to us right. And I think we as women have to find ways to appropriately challenge that

## **Appendix H**

### **Member Checked Passages**

## HANNAH'S MEMBER CHECKED PASSAGES INCLUDED IN CHAPTER FOUR

I think I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about my own spirituality, and that's been welcomed. There are lots of ways that I think [U of Grace] as a Jesuit Catholic institution invests in the spirituality and [...] missioning of its staff and faculty. And so I've tried to take advantage of those opportunities.

People [enjoy their work in] Catholic higher education, [...] I think folks make a deliberate decision either to go into it, [or if they find their way, as I did, they seem likely] to remain in Catholic higher education and Jesuit Catholic higher education.

[It's] similar [to how] I just described [...] being frustrated by the structure of the division, that [my staff members] experience the structure of the office as frustrating . . . that there aren't opportunities for them to at least have a title bump. But we can't give a title bump if we don't give a pay bump, and actually re-work the position.

I think one of the obstacles so to speak is that there are areas [...] there are several of us who would like some experience around crisis response. And there just isn't the structure to be able to accommodate that.

So I think I do experience [...] the leadership team of the institution being hierarchical. It just feels male to me, and I'm trying to think what are specific things that help us feel that way. There's [...] . . . I'm kind of going off on a tangent here, I realize . . . but, the very basic thing like the only restroom in [one building] is a men's restroom. [...] there are more women that work [there] than there are men. But the decision is made [...] this is a male space. So I think that's one piece.

I think that people who are perceived as too pushy aren't going to succeed in this culture. That there is, again in ways similar to how we've internalized the hierarchy . . . I think I used that phrase earlier . . . I think that we have also internalized that [...] if you push too much, then you can't be successful here.

[...] I might say [another] thing . . . I [...] didn't mention this earlier, which is that [...] Jesuit higher education [seems to be] a really small world. [...] Which is good in some ways, and probably not good in other ways in terms of career advancement. I mean [...] we know each other and we know people who know you, and so I think reputation . . . [...] managing reputation in such a small circle could present challenges, right? [...] I like Jesuit higher education . . . I'd like to stay in Jesuit higher education. And so that means that if I apply somewhere . . . and even if I don't have someone down as a reference, they're going to know, oh I'm going to call this person, because I know them. And so I think just managing that could potentially be challenging.

But these folks . . . you know the examples I've used like [Ella] and [Bob], [they] genuinely care about me and I think are invested in my . . . in me . . . and so [...] I

feel like I don't have to filter with them in ways that I do with some of the other people who I go to for advice.