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An Examination of How Feminist Perspectives and Generational Differences Influence the Leadership Practices of Women Administrators in Higher Education

Marlene Kowalski-Braun
Western Michigan University, kowalskm@gvsu.edu

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AN EXAMINATION OF HOW FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND GENERATIONAL
DIFFERENCES INFLUENCE THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF
WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Marlene Kowalski-Braun

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Doctoral Committee:

Andrea Beach, Ph.D., Chair
Diane Anderson, Ph.D.
Erika Carr, Ph.D.

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Marlene Kowalski-Braun, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2014

This study explored how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education, specifically, how they lead and create institutional change. It examined the experiences of seven women who identified as feminists, who were part of Generation X, and who were at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions.

Phenomenology was the qualitative methodology used in this study to uncover how these women made meaning of their feminist and generational identities. The approach was grounded in feminist methodology and utilized feminist standpoint theory to legitimize women as “knowers.” It drew on a broad literature base that looked at women, leadership, and change in higher education; the influence of gender on leadership and organizations; the importance of intersectionality; feminism and feminist identity; and generational differences.

The participants in this study articulated a great deal of personal meaning for their feminist identity and little connection to their Generation X identity. Despite their proximity or distance to these identities, however, they demonstrated a variety of ways in which both frames influenced their leadership practice. Participants spoke extensively

about their engagement with change efforts and named numerous personal, organizational, and cultural influences that shaped their experiences. Although most women didn't name gender equity efforts among the most salient change projects they were involved in, they ultimately offered several examples of engagement in advocacy/activism.

The most notable finding was the emphasis that participants placed on other aspects of identity that shaped them, beyond feminism and Gen X membership. This emphasis calls into question the extent to which leadership studies inspire leaders to value intersectionality as a theoretical framework for understanding leaders and followers. If the influence of identities, within the interplay of systems in higher education, shapes the experience of empowerment and/or oppression, it seems that understanding this should be part of leadership competence. This intersectionality frame also has the potential for motivating continued social justice work in higher education.

Understanding this cohort of women provides valuable insights into the ways in which feminist perspectives and generational differences frame higher education leadership.

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I love the study of leadership because of its importance, yet I seldom see myself as a feminist reflected within its paradigms. For this reason, I am grateful that feminist scholarship exists to transform traditional assumptions. In particular, I care about the way feminist research practices are influencing the construction and production of feminist knowledge within higher education leadership studies. Through the stories of the women in my study, I am further motivated to explode traditional knowledge-making in leadership scholarship.

This research allowed me to make a contribution to what could be a seismic shift. Jeni Hart's (2006) analysis of 13 years of articles in the core journals in higher education revealed that only six articles used a framework that was explicitly feminist. From the day I learned this, I wanted to help generate new knowledge. I knew then, as I know now, that feminist perspectives must continue to find their way into leadership practices within higher education to provide new pathways for transformation.

There are numerous people who have been part of the journey that brought me to this point of earning my Ph.D. The following thank you's are heartfelt, but I also know they are incomplete. The list is long, but I'm taking advantage since it is too seldom that we get to publicly express deep appreciation!

To begin, I'm sincerely grateful to all of the students who have touched my life over the years, with special thanks to those who helped me solidify that my work in

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education, specifically, how they make meaning of leadership and create institutional change. It examines the experiences of women who identify as feminists, who were born in Generation X, and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions. For the purpose of this study, the term *women's movement* is used to describe the time period roughly between the 1960s to 1980s when American women were making great strides towards political, economic, social, and personal equity (Rosen, 2000) and *Generation X* refers to those born between 1965–1982 (Coupland, 1991).

Understanding this cohort of women, who came decades after the first women gained access to positions of authority in higher education, provides valuable insights into the ways in which feminist perspectives and generational frame have influenced higher education. In the 50 years since the commencement of the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the passage of Title IX, the number of women in higher education has grown significantly (Snyder & Dillow, 2010). During that time, strands of education, feminism, and generational influence have been examined in other research, but seldom together as factors in shaping the higher education landscape through the work of women leaders. Colleges and universities have tended to examine women leaders with an eye to those who have been most influenced by the modern women's

movement, rather than our newest leaders who were born during or shortly after this significant historical period. As women administrators who fit this demographic continue to enter into senior leadership positions in higher education, it is important to understand how they conceptualize leadership. These women have had different life experiences than those generations before them; shaped by unique individual journeys and historical influences. As higher education faces new and extraordinary challenges in a constantly changing environment (Rubin, 2004), how will these women lead and create change in colleges and universities?

Background

There has been tremendous progress toward gender equity in both the private and public spheres, including higher education. While the earliest models of higher education were designed for elite men, early activists, such as Abigail Adams exclaimed, “If you complain of neglect of education in sons, what shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it?” (Solomon, 1985, p. 1). A more radical catalyst for women’s education was the first women’s movement. In the late 1830s and 1840s, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and other women’s rights advocates included women’s education in the *Declaration of Sentiments* at the first Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 (Gurko, 1976). Elizabeth Cady Stanton, asserted that women needed to be given educational opportunities equal to those of men if they were to achieve their full potential (Aleman & Renn, 2002). It was not, however, until after the passage of Title IX in 1972, that educating women was a proposition that received increased attention, and began to dramatically change (Thelin & Gasmin, 2011). These changes were largely due to feminist responses to the criticisms of higher

education that emerged from the women's movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. The hierarchical structure of educational institutions and the manner and content of scholarly research were both seen as places that excluded women (Astin & Leland, 1991). Most leadership theories, for example, were based on models developed by men from studies of men. These studies did not include women, yet the concepts were generalized to women's experiences. Feminist critics also called for gender inclusive paradigms that resisted the dominant values of the patriarchy.

With regard to higher education, feminists sought to hold institutions accountable for helping women achieve equity in a variety of arenas. While not exhaustive, feminists gave attention to trying to remedy and balance the disproportionate number of women and minorities in administrative leadership positions and the disproportionate number of women in low-paying, low-rank positions (Cullivan, 1990), heightened awareness about sexual harassment (Sandler & Shoop, 1997), examined gender disparity in leadership (Chliwniak, 1997), and raised concerns about the needs of women in trying to find balance in work and life (Hewlett & Luce, 2006). Since women who identify as feminists have played an important role in shaping higher education, it is no surprise that their identity as feminists has been explored.

Many of the studies on feminist academic leadership were largely based in schools in Australia and New Zealand (Blackmore, 1999, 2002; Strachan, 1999, 2002). The research by Strachan (1999) illustrated that while feminist administrators in education were committed to many of the same ideals, for example, social justice, how they went about achieving their goals was dependent upon their personal value systems

and the students they served. Whether or not their personal values were tied to their generational context, however, was not explored.

In the U.S., Astin and Leland (1991) developed a conceptual model for the study of feminist women leaders in academe and other social organizations who were leading during the women's movement. Their study examined women's leadership, mainly during the span of three decades and three generational cohorts: the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Examining three groups of women who were active during this time—right before, during, and right after the women's movement—allowed Astin and Leland to consider developmental themes and generational issues, focusing on how these women expressed their leadership and instigated institutional change.

Specifically, Astin and Leland (1991) described the first generational cohort as the *Predecessors*, who came of age during the post-World War I and pre-Depression eras and emphasized education as a primary tool for achieving equality for women. They acted as individual leaders who often adopted male models of leadership. The second generational cohort was *Instigators*, who were the initiators of social change who came of age during the 1960s and became leaders during the second wave of feminism following the civil rights and anti-war movements. They focused on concerns about opportunity in education and other work settings and the inclusion of women in scholarly and curricular concerns; they brought their activism to academe. The third generational cohort was the *Inheritors*, who played an important role in shaping the Instigators' feminist vision, values and work. The Instigators often functioned as mentors and role models to the inheritors as they were often the "first" to do something. Most Inheritors were in graduate school when the Instigators were confronting systems, creating new

organizations and influencing institutions, and moved into leadership positions in the 1990s. As inheritors of new ways of seeing the world, they began to articulate alternative modes of leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991). Where are the stories, then, of women who came after the Inheritors?

Jane Rosser (2003) continued aspects of this research when she studied mid-level women who identified as feminists in student affairs and their experiences of trying to create change within this specific professional area in higher education. She emphasized the ways in which feminism(s) and feminist identity influenced how women navigated and transformed their student affairs environments. The narratives identified factors that facilitated or constrained organizational change in higher education, validated mid-level managers as potentially powerful change agents, and suggested that gendered hierarchical structures existed in student affairs and created a “chilly climate” for women and other marginalized individuals. What emerged was a model of organizational change that illuminated change strategies at individual, cultural, and systemic levels. While she included women who had 5 to 21 years of professional practice in higher education, she did not ask them about how their generational ties, including if and how their perceived proximity to or distance from the women’s movement, influenced them.

Following Rosser’s research, Tracy Barton (2006) conducted a study to gain an understanding of feminist leadership as constructed by feminist academic administrators, and to learn how feminism shapes an administrator’s identity and practice. Unlike other studies on leadership in higher education, Barton responded to the concern raised by House (2001) regarding no studies where women expressed, for themselves, what it meant to be a leader. As a result, her research provided important findings on how

feminist women leaders in higher education define feminist leadership. Like a small handful of feminist scholars who tied together the notions of leadership, feminism, and higher education, Barton's (2006) research, along with Blackmore (1999, 2002), Strachan (1999, 2002), and Rosser (2003), focused on the concept of feminist leadership as distinct from women's leadership. Studies of women's leadership have focused on how men and women lead and have pondered the question "Does gender matter?" In contrast, studies of feminist leadership have moved beyond simply promoting access for women to examine how women challenge the dominance of masculinity in definitions of leadership (Madden, 2005).

This study brings together several strands of literature: (a) leadership; (b) feminism, leadership, and change in higher education; (c) gender and organizations; (d) feminism and feminist identity; and (e) generational differences and leadership. This study also builds on questions first articulated by Astin and Leland (1991) after their study: "How did we get here?" and "Where are we going?" Looking at women administrators across the generations allows us to add a longitudinal perspective in answering these questions. After all, the personal accounts and contributions of women leaders in higher education are part of our evolving history and serve as a window into the future of feminist leadership in higher education. What are the visions for feminist women in higher education, farther removed from the influences of the civil rights and the women's movements?

Rationale for the Study

Despite the research conducted on women in leadership positions in higher education, there has been no comprehensive study on how feminist perspectives and

recent generational trends are influencing the feminist leadership practice of women administrators who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions in higher education. In other words, how does this new demographic of woman leader affect the culture of higher education? The minimal scholarly work that exists in higher education, on each of these topics separately, examines the individual influence of feminist identity on women and their leadership practice and ability to make change in higher education (Astin & Leeland, 1991; Barton, 2006; Madden, 2005; Rosser, 2003). There has been even less work on how generational differences (specifically those that identify with Generation X) impact women's leadership in higher education (Kezar & Lester, 2008). This study seeks to bring both influences to bear by looking at how feminist identity and generational trends influence women's leadership, specifically how they enact change, in higher education.

Broadly, researchers are advising that all sectors, including higher education, should take note of generational differences (Arsenault, 2004; Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Smola & Sutton, 2002). These researchers have suggested that generational qualities guide how people lead, make decisions, and respond in unique ways to common problems and choices. In addition, they caution that a lack of knowledge about these differences can create tremendous challenges. Kezar and Lester (2008) noted,

One of the more intense generational differences on college campuses is between women of different generations who were born and raised under different social, economic, and political conditions; who approach feminism in different ways; and who have experienced more or less overt forms of discrimination. (p. 51)

In addition, although they have made in-roads at many levels, women are still underrepresented in many of the highest leadership positions (Cook & Cordova, 2007).

With gender equity as an ongoing struggle, the observations and understandings of women leaders become increasingly important. While an assortment of articles and books, mostly from Women's Studies, have been written about this generational divide among women regarding a variety of social issues (Craig-Snell, 2005; Edut, Logwood, & Edut, 1997; Henry, 2004; Sidler, 1997; Whittier, 1995), the topic has produced little to no dialogue among college and university staff, administrators, and faculty (Kezar & Lester, 2008).

This research builds upon the work of Astin and Leland (1991), who found that, as a result of women's respective historical contexts, the generational cohorts they studied showed contrasts in their personal development, educational experiences, and opportunities for work. Historical times appeared to have shaped the choices and actions of the women leaders they studied. These were women who provided leadership during the first two decades of the women's movement in the United States, roughly from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s. They believed that, based on the influence of gender, the study of women leaders offered an opportunity to enhance knowledge and behavior involved in leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991).

This study also aims to further the research goals offered by Rosser (2003) and Barton (2006), which focused on feminism in higher education. Both concluded with a recommendation that feminism and change in higher education be explored through more lenses. A generational perspective offers new insights into the future leadership of women in higher education as colleges and universities seek new and varied approaches to leadership and change, searching for alternative methods to solve profound challenges.

It also lays the groundwork for looking at generational differences in higher education via another subject matter—change leadership.

This research gives an important demographic of aspiring feminist women leaders, who are part of Generation X, a chance to have their voices heard in higher education. In the book, *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation*, the editor, Barbara Findlen, shared that she was motivated to compile the text in response to her own students (as cited in Crawford, 2007). She understood the need for women to hear from others deeply concerned about the same issues—diverse women of their generation—beyond those “widely anthologized” (Crawford, 2007, p. 13). Findlen (as cited in Crawford, 2007) wanted to offer a chance for others to see how these women see themselves, and higher education, in the 21st century. The same can be said for more recent feminist women administrators in higher education who also want their voices to be heard.

Gender and generational difference are valuable aspects of diversity, a widely held value in higher education (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2005). This study will foster an appreciation for perspectives, skills, and knowledge tied to generational differences, while also alerting us to some potential challenges and shortcomings. It is critical to continue to examine higher education through the experiences of feminism, gender, and generation. These women are different than the women who preceded the women’s movement, as well as the Initiators and Inheritors, as described by Astin and Leland (1991). Their analysis of these three generations of feminist women leaders illustrated the impact of historical context and serves as a motivator to continue this deep meaning making for women in Generation X.

How does this next generation of feminist women leaders lead? How do women who are now rising in leadership conceptualize it as compared to those who came before them? Based on these similarities and/or differences, how may this leadership impact higher education?

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to explore how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education. It examines the experiences of women who identify as feminists, who were born into “Generation X,” and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions and how they make meaning of their feminism and generational membership as leaders and change agents in higher education.

The research questions guiding this study are: (a) How does a feminist identity and Generation X membership shape a woman academic administrator’s leadership practice? (b) How does a feminist identity and Generation X membership predispose the kind of change initiatives a woman academic administrator seeks and engages in? and (c) What personal, organizational, and/or cultural conditions have influenced how they lead?

Theoretical Framework and Methods for the Study

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory is used to inform this study. Feminist standpoint theory is rooted in the awareness that women hold a particular standpoint based on their experiences as women (Hartstock, 1983). Harding (1993) made the argument that starting research with women’s lives at the center will create less partial and biased

accounts, not only of women's lives, but of the social order as a whole. Wood (2005) explains that standpoint feminism focuses on the ways that social location shapes knowledge. While it does place emphasis on the individual experience within socially constructed groups, it places more emphasis on the social conditions that construct such groups (Collins, 1997a). As such, in a society structured by power relations, men are the dominant or privileged group and women the subordinate or disadvantaged. Standpoint highlights subordinate locations as having an advantage since the "outsider-within" is required to have "double vision," to be able to see things and ask questions from multiple locations (Collins, 2004; hooks, 1984; Wood, 2005). These experiences may be multi-layered due to the intersecting identities and experiences that women hold (Collins, 1990). Feminist standpoint refers not simply to identity locations (e.g., being a woman, African American, poor, etc.), but to the critical understanding of these locations shaped through reflection and struggle (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Phenomenology

This study utilizes the phenomenological qualitative method designed to tell the story of how feminist and generational perspectives influence women leaders. Qualitative research, as Sandelowski (2000) described, seeks to both authentically represent and make meaning of experiences, events or processes that people take part in while also, and importantly, describing the commonalities of those processes across participants. At the onset of engaging in this type of research there is a parallel commitment, however, to "treating research methods as living entities that resist simple classification" (Sandelowski, 2010, p. 7).

This study employed feminist methods of inquiry and analysis (Creswell, 2007; Harding, 2006) utilizing feminist standpoint theory which authenticates “woman” as a beneficial category of analysis. This approach allowed me to examine women’s experiences since feminist research “centers and makes problematic women’s diverse situations, as well as those institutions that frame those situations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 216).

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with seven participants who fulfilled several criteria. They were women who (a) identify as a feminist, (b) came of age after the women’s movement (those who were born in the generational years termed “Generation X” between 1965–1982), and (c) hold an administrative position at the mid-level (and be aspiring to senior level) or in a senior-level position. I recruited these women from a list of attendees from the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) institute in the past (a program that identifies women with senior leadership aspirations). I also asked participants to answer a question about whether or not they have engaged in conscious reflection of their identities as a feminist and members of Generation X. Standpoint theory requires not just that a person holds a particular identity, but that they have engaged (at some level) in a struggle around making meaning of this subjugated identity/identities (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The analysis drew out what these feminist women administrators, who are aspiring leaders, tell us about generational influences, how institutional change is enacted, and how leadership may be influenced in the future. To cope effectively and creatively with emerging challenges and continued inequities in higher education requires new skillsets for change. It is valuable to examine how emerging women, who identify

as feminists and are a part of Generation X, lead and innovate to meet the future needs in higher education.

Delimitations

While comparative works are necessary and useful, this study focuses specifically on women (as opposed to men) who identify as feminists and were born into Generation X. The examination of how these women make change, within their roles as administrators, enables us to think about a significant demographic of up-and-coming leaders in higher education.

There is a wealth of feminist literature that contends that there is no singular feminist identity or position, but rather many. While these delineations may at times be useful, this research does not seek to identify women according to different strands of feminism. It does, however, build on literature that illustrates the ongoing process of how women integrate their feminist identities with their leadership practice as well as other aspects of their social identity, including their generational, racial, ethnic, sexual, and other identities.

Many scholars who study Generation X have adopted “third wave feminism” as a way to describe feminist thought and activity that emerged in the early 1990s both as a reaction to second wave feminism’s ideas around what it means to be a feminist (Findlen, 2001; Maglin & Perry, 1996; Walker, 1995) and the concept that many, especially in the media, were proclaiming a “post-feminist” period. In the book *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, Heywood and Drake (1997) looked at women whose birth dates fall between 1963 and 1974. But the “Third Wave” analysis does not lend much usefulness to this study, which is more interested in a broad and inclusive

definition of feminism. Thus, despite the overlap in time frame, the term was not used in seeking participants. Whether or not study participants reference third wave feminism in describing their feminism and/or generational experience was of interest in this research.

Limitations

Some researchers suggest that using the label of Generation X is problematic since it cannot describe an entire generation. Kunreuther (2003), for example, suggested that the category reflects “a relatively narrow slice of White professionals” (p. 452). Others have suggested that Generation X is descriptive of those with middle to upper-class status, leaving out large numbers of other lived experiences. While it was used as a specific category for the purpose of this research, the limitations are noted and understood. In response, the researcher was certain to listen for and acknowledge rejections of the term based on its stereotypical limitations and note those.

Rosser (2003) noted that

mid-level managers are structurally limited in the degree to which they can make systemic change unless they are in an institutional structure where their relationship to the power structure is more “flat” and less hierarchical, or they have a particular entrée as a result of a specific issue or historical circumstances. (p. 356)

This study includes mid-level managers, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior level. The inclusion of mid-level managers was necessary to capture the emerging group of women leaders in higher education and the kind of change we might see as a result of their leadership. An additional question about what mid-level women who feel constrained by their position in the organization would do, given the opportunity to make change, was included in the interview protocol to lessen the limitation of positional power.

Chapter Summary

Feminist higher education research has explored the perspectives of women leaders most influenced by the women's movement. In contrast, this study seeks to understand the lived leadership experiences of our newest women leaders, feminist women administrators who identify as a part of Generation X, who were born during or shortly after this significant time in history. As women administrators who fit this demographic continue to enter into senior leadership positions in higher education, it is important to understand how they conceptualize leadership. This chapter has outlined the rationale for the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework and methodology, the significance of the study, and the delimitations/limitations of the study. The next chapter provides an in-depth view of the literature surrounding leadership, feminism, and generational differences in higher education.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will examine the literature base that deals with (a) leadership; (b) feminism, leadership, and change in higher education; (c) gender and organizations; (d) feminism and feminist identity; (e) generational differences and leadership; and (f) feminist standpoint theory. The information in the literature informs the research findings, which will be forthcoming. Higher education will benefit from learning about how these feminist women administrators, who are part of Generation X, are leading. Like leaders before them, their identities and experiences will impact leadership in colleges and universities across the nation.

Women and Higher Education

Any discussion about the role of women in higher education and the influence of gender must begin with an overview of history. In the United States, a profound barrier to white women's full participation in higher education was the Anglo-Saxon, Judeo-Christian tradition upon which the country was founded (Nidiffer, 2003). The reference to white is significant since white was the only race of concern and assumed, native-born, middle-class Americans (Gordon, 1990). These women were deemed worthy if subservient and skilled in the domestic sphere of life. The colonial colleges were designed to help young men enter the ministry, politics or the academic life—fields completely off limits to women (Nidiffer, 2003). Common wisdom also suggested that

woman were missing the intellectual capacity to be successful, citing biology and menstruation as reasons for such inferiority (Nidiffer, 2003).

By almost the end of the 19th century, separate colleges had been created for African Americans, future teachers or engineers, and women. American higher education was vastly different than the previous 50 years, but new stereotypes began to impede women. As Americans began to ardently embrace science, a belief took hold that women were incapable of learning in this way and that they were better suited for the humanities, languages and possibly applied social sciences. Despite many barriers, some colleges and universities became coeducational—due to practical and economic necessity. Historian Lynn Gordon noted that, even in these times of change, higher education did not accept women enthusiastically (Gordon, 1997). The admission of women did not mitigate the hostility toward them in higher education. While gains were made on legal fronts, attitudinal changes were much more difficult to change (Nidiffer, 2003).

Higher education continued to go through tremendous diversification and by the late 19th century Nidffer (2003) called the climate for women “downright frigid” (p. 23). Many male professors, administrators, and students made it difficult for women to enter what they considered to be their domain. Their disdain was often manifested in the inequitable distribution of resources. Nidiffer stressed the importance of recognizing the earliest formal women leaders in higher education. The first were physical educators, who assumed responsibility for almost all parts of young women’s lives, and the second were Deans of Women. Together, “these early women leaders dramatically shaped the higher education environments and experiences available to women” (Nidiffer, 2003, p. 24). The first women administrators were described as pioneers, combining “tenacious

activism and savvy pragmatism to attain genuine access to a full college life for women students” (Nidiffer, 2003, p. 30). Despite the fact that they were unwelcome, these women leaders were educators, reformers and fighters.

Leadership

“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (Burns, 1979, p. 3) and the desire to understand and enhance leadership has spanned centuries. While definitions of leadership have varied, one thing is consistent, we count on leaders’ abilities to transform and influence people and institutions (Astin & Astin, 2000). Studying leadership, therefore, can be seen as an active investment in the future, not simply a passive, reflective process. In addition, observing and learning about the exercise of leadership serves as a lens through which social situations can be observed (Astin & Astin, 2000). Richardson (2000) explained that we can gain great understanding of communities and groups by looking at leaders. In higher education, we often observe and study leaders since we know that effective leadership is essential to our future prosperity. The study of leadership in higher education is important not just for institutional effectiveness, but because higher education plays a significant role in shaping leadership in the larger society (Astin & Astin, 2000).

Women and Leadership

Early scholarship on women’s leadership was largely constructed using male norms (Nidiffer, 2003) and focused on differences in the traits and leadership styles of men and women. Trait theorists were among the first scholars to write about leadership, and they adhered to the notion of “hero leader” or the “great man,” a person who held a specific set of traits which were believed to be innate (Amey & Eddy, 2002; Denmark,

1993). Leadership studies also emphasized stereotypical expectations that were then imposed on women, with regard to their leadership. Ballenger (2010) elaborated that these stereotypes may have contributed to the invisible ceiling that women faced in trying to ascend to senior leadership. Men's work and experience has generally been valued over women, so that work identified with women is perceived as lesser (Coleman, 2005). Today, modern theorists consider leadership to be a complex interaction between traits, behaviors, and situational characteristics—as well as identity factors such as gender and race and ethnicity. In fact, some go so far as to say that the very qualities associated with women can be valuable to organizations (Barton, 2006).

McGregor Burns (1979), in the classic text *Leadership*, identified two fundamental approaches to leadership: transactional leadership, which promotes the compliance of followers, and transformational leadership, which converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. In the recent decades, researchers have begun examining how various approaches in feminist thought intersect with the study of transformational leadership (Kark, 2004; Ronit, 2004). These scholars recognized that the reconceptualization of leadership, which is defined as “a process of empowering others, of seeing power as energy to engender growth rather than to control; and of framing conflict as a source of new understandings about the worldviews that drive behavior” (Safarik, 2003, p. 423), is closely connected with transformational leadership. The current frame for transformational leadership, which emphasizes followership and empowerment, and stresses the need for organizations to become less hierarchical, more flexible and more participative (Fondas, 1997), aligns closely with the values of feminism. A noted feminist attribute, which is also closely connected to

transformational leadership, is being visionary—enabling people to consider options and to change the culture (Regan & Brooks, 1995). While authors Chin, Lott, Rice, and Sanchez-Hucles (2007) do not oversimplify the connection, they made the case that feminist leadership is necessarily transformational. If this is true, then it appears that the use of transformational leadership approaches may be key to how women who identify as feminists lead, and this study may further inform this growing body of research.

In recent decades, the study of women and educational leadership has produced a notable body of new information which has contributed to fresh ways of looking at leadership. In particular, the paradigms developed in women's studies have encouraged a problem-solving stance that strives to promote socially useful ends and new models of leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991). Feminist educational leadership has been defined in the literature as distinct from women's leadership (Strachan, 1999). It is a way of leading which contests and alters hegemonic institutional practices (Blackmore, 1996a). This commitment to social justice work has also been referenced as “agency” (Madden, 2005, p. 9)—the capacity for individual choice and action. Another common theme present in the research on feminist educational leadership is activism, which represents resistance and struggle against inequalities, a subject also commonly found in research that addresses the leadership of minority women (Strachan, 1999). Astin and Astin (2000) also highlighted alternatives to the leader-follower model that have helped envision higher education as the “cultivation of a community of change agents” (as cited in Safarik, 2003, p. 424).

Leadership and Change in Higher Education

As we look toward the future of higher education, research has understandably been focused on how leaders facilitate change as a function of their leadership. I agree with Rosser (2003) that “higher education is an important site for the exploration of the broad questions of how institutional change takes place and how people make meaning of their place within an institutional setting” (p. 14).

Transformational leadership literature, over the last 15 years, has emphasized that enacting change is one of the key contributions leaders can make to their organizations (Aviolo, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Tichy & Ulrich, 1984). Astin and Astin (2000) specified that leadership “is a process that is ultimately concerned with fostering change” (p. 8). In contrast to management, leadership infers “movement” to a place or situation in the future that is changed (Astin & Astin, 2000). This is supported by Komives and Wagner (2009) in the development of the “social change model” of leadership. This approach to leadership is based on a few key assumptions including the belief that leadership is concerned with effecting change on behalf of society and others, and leadership is a process rather than a position.

This movement toward change is not easy, however. Yukl (2006) argued that “leading change is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities” (p. 159). Change, by definition, requires creating a new system and then institutionalizing new approaches (Kotter, 1995). However, the organizational culture of the academy does not always lend itself to the change process (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Change is difficult and may be even more so in an academic environment where “change resistance is one of the most prevalent characteristics in an organization” (Banutu-Gomez & Bantu-Gomez, 2007, p. 6). Johnson stated (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003), “Clinging to old beliefs and habits when the world around you has changed is self-defeating” (p. 371). Therefore, the ability to lead change, while difficult and at times unpopular, is incredibly important and vital to the future of higher education. In addition, in order to create environments where new beliefs can be explored, there must also be an openness to new people, new leadership.

Women, Feminist Leadership and Change in Higher Education

Astin and Leland (1991) interviewed women leaders and noted the relationship to the women’s movement as significant to how they created change. As an example, they pointed out that women in the 1990s, and those before them, did not have an awareness of the role of power and politics in higher education. Women administrators were often viewed as hesitant to play power games to advance, knowing the rules needed to be changed (Kolodny, 1998). This perspective highlighted a shortcoming of leadership and change in these generations of women; they missed the perspective of power as one of “expanding the pie” of ability to influence (Valverde, 2003, p. 105). What relationship to power do women in Generation X hold? How is power, and their ability to influence it, viewed and enacted?

Kettle (1996) argued that gender equity work in academe has found little success since it has focused on improving current structures instead of changing them. However, feminist educational leadership is different in that it emphasizes emancipatory principles that emerge from women’s understandings and beliefs and go beyond gender equity to

include anti-racist principles, for example (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995; Strachan, 1999). For leadership to be emancipatory, critical reflection and action must be connected (Blackmore, 1996b; Grundy, 1993); “Critical reflection acknowledges that things can be different and assists in identifying just how unjust practices and relationships contribute to ... women’s oppression” (Strachan, 1999, p. 310). Consciousness-raising (CR) groups were a primary tool the women’s movement utilized to foster personal development and political awareness (Nassi & Abramowitz, 1978). These were places where women critically examined their lives, came to fuller understanding of gender inequality, and planned action. “When certain life experiences are interpreted through a feminist consciousness, they lead to action” (Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004, p. 772). If consciousness raising groups were the tools used to create critical reflection during the women’s movement, what are the tools used by Generation X feminists to engage in critical reflection?

In her book *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women’s Movement*, Nancy Whittier (1995) looked specifically at radical feminism and the importance of how feminist identity is shaped by the timeframe in which someone joins. In her book, she compared the radical feminists of the 1960s and 1970s to the feminists of the 1980s. She found “there were subtle but important differences among those who became feminists at different times, as well as divisions of race, class, and sexual orientation” (Whittier, 1995, p. 4). Generational differences contributed to how women redefined radical feminism. The radical feminists of the 1980s did search for new ways to be activists “in the face of mounting opposition, financial difficulty, and their own aging” (Whittier, 1995, p. 3). Regardless, radical feminism survived. Might this

example of evolution also be reflected in the feminist leadership of women in higher education? Are there subtle, but important changes, surfacing in the way women in Generation X lead and make change?

Blackmore (1996a) noted that feminist educational leadership is about the “doing of feminism,” leading in ways that contest hegemonic practices. While women’s beliefs, attitudes and values are central (Glazer, 1991), they are also concerned with a wider array of issues around race, class, sexuality, and disabilities (Strachan, 1999). Women in leadership have played a key role in drawing attention to and advocating for change on issues important in the feminist struggle (Marine, 2011). Since the women’s movement and the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, legislation largely credited with providing educational access and opportunities for women students and women in leadership positions, women have spent four decades engaging new strategies for creating change (Hoffman, 2011). These have been transformational shifts directly related to the culture of higher education and have yielded important changes in addressing the disproportionate number of women in low-paying, low-rank positions (Cullivan, 1990), work/life policies (Hewlett & Luce, 2006), heightened awareness about sexual harassment (Sandler & Shoop, 1997), examined gender disparity in leadership (Chliwniak, 1997), and brought attention to racial inequality (Collins, 2000) and other issues.

Rosser (2003), in her study of mid-level feminist student affairs professionals, found that feminist leaders made change by disrupting and challenging the status quo on a variety of equity issues (beyond just gender); by building networks and community and creating free spaces (described as creating networks and alliances, safe spaces and

organizational habitats); by “walking the talk” (described as creating individual change); by “doing the right thing” (described as creating systemic change); by “talking truth to power” (described as creating cultural change); and by “lifting as you climb” (described as modeling strategic activism) (pp. 333-334). She also went on to describe the price that change agents often pay for their activism, as well as the factors that facilitate and constrain change.

According to Barton’s (2006) research, the needs of modern higher education have suggested feminist leaders are also well equipped to meet the challenges of the future beyond gender equity work. She suggested that the harsh realities Altbach (1999) referenced require many things, among them a focus on students and their complex needs and identities (beyond gender—including race, class, sexuality and differing abilities) and the ability to create nurturing academic environments where so much divisiveness exists (around fiscal accountability/downsizing, tenure and workloads, and a disenfranchised public). Since organizations are no longer thought of as simply machines and bureaucracies, skills which create more nurturing academic communities may be welcome and necessary.

Neither researcher took into account generational difference when examining the leadership and change strategies of women feminist administrators in higher education. When examined, what might we find?

The Influence of Gender on Leadership and Organizations

Gender is an ascribed “status”—a category that a person occupies that largely determines how she or he will be defined and treated (Lindsey, 2005). This status is then associated with a “role,” which is a set of expected behaviors that are to be performed

according to “social norms.” Social norms are powerful in that they “determine the privileges and responsibilities a status possesses” (Lindsey, 2005, p. 2). In the U.S. and much of the world, the norms around gender are situated within a system of patriarchy—“male dominated social structures leading to the oppression of women” (Lindsey, 2005, p. 3). By definition, patriarchy elevates male-centered norms and makes them the standard for behavior.

Although many prefer to believe that organizations are gender neutral, research indicates this is not the case (Acker, 1998; Northouse, 2004). The research on gender suggests that all social interactions and organizations are gendered in some way; it has been argued to be situated in all aspects of everyday life (Kimmel, 2000; Lorber, 1994; Risman, 2004); it is deeply embedded and influences our personalities, cultural rules, and institutions, in complex ways (Risman, 2004). As such, the exercise of leadership is gendered and occurs within a social context that itself is gendered (Yoder, 2001). The “authorial voice” in the U.S. defines leadership in a largely white, male context (Isaac, Behar-Horenstein, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2009; Jogulu & Wood, 2006).

Now, new frameworks for leadership are embraced, seemingly giving men and women personal choices about what leadership characteristics they want to exhibit. However, there remains an interest in research which examines the culture of organizations and the options that appear to be viable in those environments. “While actions are a function of interests, the ability to choose is patterned by the social structure” (Risman, 2004, p. 432). Burt (1982) suggested that norms develop when people in similar roles in systems evaluate their options vis-à-vis the alternatives of those similarly situated. In organizations that are so constructed around male conceptions, it

can be difficult for women to even find definitions and examples of themselves in leadership. This, according to Risman (2004), is the power of gender. It is not clear, however, if Generation X women in higher education feel these same constraints as the women who have gone before them.

Feminist scholarship has made important contributions to the study of gender by linking it with other forms of oppression, such as race and class (Lindsey, 2005). This research has successfully made the case that discussions of gender need to be further critiqued to take into account other aspects of identity. Within gender studies, the race, class, gender analysis is known by different names including “intersectionality” (Mann, 2000, p. 477). It focuses on the importance of understanding multiple identities as well as multiple oppressions and how these are experienced by people (Mann & Grimes, 2001).

Higher Education as Gendered

In the last 30 years, higher education literature has given voice to researchers who have acknowledged the influence gender has on the leadership experience. Understanding the meaning of Carol Gilligan’s “different voice” through cognitive development, for example, continues to have implications for understanding gender and organizations. Gilligan (1982) found that men tend to envision the world as ladders (hierarchical) and women the world as webs of connectedness (relationships). Sally Helgesen (1990) drew on the ideas proposed by Gilligan in her book *The Female Advantage* by arguing that the male-dominated frameworks for management were dated and that feminized ways were not only desirable, but necessary. The draw to this approach is that it raised characteristics and ways of leading that were previously thought

of as “other” (Hatcher, 2003). Helgesen’s work inverted the gender hierarchy and echoed the concerns raised earlier by Carolyn Desjardins (1989). Desjardins (1989) explained that in the early women’s movement, women were expected to assimilate into the male-dominated structures and cultures of colleges and universities and, largely, were required to imitate men to succeed.

Numerous researchers in higher education have illustrated a masculinized leadership context (Amey & Twombly, 1993; Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Kettle, 1996). Drawing on Foucault’s (1979) work on governmentality sheds light on the ways in which gender establishes frameworks within which leaders can shape their style. As an example, in organizations where hierarchical and masculine values hold power, emotions are strongly governed and authority is exercised in a power-over manner (Hatcher, 2003). As such, leadership in a hierarchical and masculinized environment depends on status and behaviors that are self-promoting and competitive; all behaviors that are viewed unpleasantly when enacted by women (Yoder, 2001).

While contemporary thinkers are trying to stretch the boundaries of what is regarded as good practice, “Women are more constrained than men in the kinds of behaviors that they can engage in and still be influential” (Carli & Eagly, 1999, p. 215). During a 2008 address at the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) conference, Gilligan continued to explain the ways in which humans battle the rigid binaries urged in patriarchies—such as the forced choice between men versus women. Her conclusion, like that of other researchers, is that higher education institutions remain hierarchical and gendered (Gilligan, 2008; Madden, 2005; Task Force on Women in Academe, 2000). Rosser’s (2003) findings suggested that while we don’t know all the

ways in which gendered organizational cultures frame and regulate discourse and praxis, we do know they do. How do Generation X women handle these contradictions? Do they even see them as contradictions?

Intersectionality

There continues to be much needed discussion about the intersections of gender, culture, race, ethnicity and other dimensions on leadership in higher education. If we acknowledge the role that gender stereotypes have on leadership and organizations, then we must surely examine the interplay of other aspects of identity (Ridgeway, 2001). Researchers have identified the ways in which ethnic and gender stereotypes are intimately interwoven in ways that cannot be isolated (Moses, 1997; Valverde, 2003). Black women, students, faculty and staff members, for example, have shared both the explicit and subtle ways in which race and gender stereotypes combine to create double the hurdles (Moses, 1997). As a result, they often do not see their concerns and needs addressed in the mission, goals and organizational structures of higher education institutions.

Authenticity as a leader is more challenging when needing to negotiate multiple and intersecting identities. Women from diverse racial and ethnic groups might lead in different ways more aligned with their different world views and cultural perspectives (Chin, 2011). Turner, Gonzáles, and Wood (2008) described some of the examples of the connection between gender and ethnic or cultural differences and dissonance in the workplace: Latina administrators discuss functioning in two distinct sociocultural environments; Native American leaders discuss tribal college leadership as deeply connected to culture, and Asian American women are stereotyped as not engaging in

leadership behaviors which showcase power, authority and resolution (as cited in Madden, 2011). In other examples, African American women may identify with values of straightforwardness and assertiveness (Chin, 2011), styles not always welcome from women in leadership. How do these experiences magnify or minimize feminist identity and membership in Generation X?

Feminism

“Feminism is a movement to end sexist oppression” (hooks, 2000, p. 6) and a belief in feminism influences and shapes perspectives. To this end, feminists are people (primarily women) who want to see sexism, and other forms of oppression, eradicated from society. While feminism is often discussed in mainstream media in a singular manner, feminist culture is not monolithic; there are many strands of feminism.

Freidman (2011) asserted that since the early 1980s there has been “an acknowledgement of different feminist theories and movements” and that the “plural form of the noun feminism forced a recognition of difference as a way of refusing the hegemony of one form of feminism over another” (p. 244). Concepts of feminism include perspectives from women of color, as well as international women (Kezer & Lester, 2008). Some have referred to these distinct ways of viewing feminism as strands. There are numerous strands including womanism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, sex-positive feminism, and more.

Feminist Identity

Feminist identity can be best understood within the broader context of social identity (Zucker, 2004). Tajfel (1982) determined that group identification is related to a person’s self-concept and how they value and attach emotional significance to their group

membership. Alternately, there have also been stage-based developmental paradigms for feminist identity that suggest progression through a series of phases (Downing & Rousch, 1985). Yet another model by Henley, Spalding, and Kosta (2000) utilized scales to assess the type of “feminist position” one might hold (Zucker, 2004, p. 424). This model draws on the abundance of feminist literature which suggests there are many feminist identities.

Regardless of the framework used to understand this development, research suggests that *when* a woman connects with the women’s movement it shapes her feminist identity (Astin & Leland, 1991; Stewart & Healy, 1989). The stage based model, for example, was developed to reflect the experiences of women who became feminists during the women’s movement of the 1970s and, therefore, may be less relevant to the experiences of younger women whose lives were influenced by the changes, but did not grow up witnessing them (Zucker, 2004).

Stewart and Healy (1989) presented a theory linking personality to social change and made the case that the same event (e.g., the women’s movement) has different effects on different birth cohorts. According to them, young women who grew up in an era influenced by widespread changes shaped by the women’s movement should be more likely to have absorbed feminist ideals as part of their identity (Stewart & Healy, 1989). Zucker’s (2004) study, however, found that “there did not appear to be cohort differences in feminism between women who came of age during the women’s movement and those who were born into its aftermath” (p. 431). This study supports the earlier research conducted by Huddy, Neely, and Lafay (2000) and Hall and Rodriguez (2003), who found that contemporary young adults are still engaged with feminism and feminist

identity. Huddy et al. (2000) used public opinion data to review American support for the women's movement. Their research showed that public support was moderately positive and showed no signs of diminishing in the 1990s. They also indicated no evidence of generational change influencing this picture, but suggested that this research trend would be important to continue.

Hall and Rodriguez (2003) found that younger women, those born after the women's movement, were not less feminist than women who came of age during the movement. Their research (conducted in 1998) concluded the following:

1. Personal support for the women's movement did not change; instead they found that it increased or remained stable.
2. At the time of the survey, 18-29 year olds were more likely to report favorable attitudes toward the women's movement than any other age cohort. African American women (73%) were shown to support the women's movement more than any other racial group (European Americans 66%, and Hispanic Americans 63%).
3. About half of the respondents consistently considered the women's movement to be relevant over the 1980 to 1999 period.
4. The portion of respondents who were willing to identify themselves as feminists either remained unchanged or increased from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, supporting the notion that the importance of the women's movement has not diminished over time. This is in contrast to research by Huddy et al. (2000), which suggested a slight decline in self-identification from survey results gathered in 1999.

There are a variety of conditions that may contribute to a woman adopting a feminist identity. This may happen in an explicitly educational context (courses or experiences on campus) (Aronson, 2003; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994), through reading feminist texts (Horne, Mathews, Deitre, Burke, & Cook, 2001), or through personal relationships with people who identify as feminists (Findlen, 2001; Glickman, 1993). This is important to understand since women who adopt a feminist identity face a number of potential barriers including their willingness to contend with negative stereotypes or perceptions or backlash (Zucker, 2004). Since feminist identity can be hidden, and is often stigmatized, identifying as such is “both optional and potentially costly” (Zucker, 2004, p. 432). As a result, Faludi (1991) raised the question about whether continuing to claim this identity descriptor may represent, or perhaps even elicit, a deeper commitment to social change. Among women in higher education, collective action is greater among women who identify as feminists (Crosby, Todd, & Worrell, 1996). The women’s movement exposed women to many conditions that may have motivated their feminist identity. What are the conditions that inspire the development of a feminist identity for women who are part of Generation X?

Gender-race-class connections originated with African American feminists in the 1960s. They “recognized that an understanding of the link between these multiple oppressions is necessary to determine how women are alike and how they are different” (Lindsey, 2005, p. 12). Harding (1993) pressed feminist theorists and researchers to remember and recognize this contribution. She wrote about how knowledge is grounded in the human experience which reflects heterogeneity in race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. Women of color (in particular) have been described as having a complex and sometimes

strained relationship with feminism based on its lack of inclusion and acknowledgement of difference in early feminist work (Hernandez & Rehman, 2002; hooks, 2000). They became excruciatingly aware of how their life experiences were often excluded from the theoretical frameworks held by feminism. As a result, feminist identity became associated with the white and middle-class experience (Collins, 2005; hooks, 2000).

Generational Differences

Mannheim, as early as 1952, asserted that there have always been generational differences. “Generation refers to a group of people who develop a shared or collective culture that reflects specific attitudes, preferences, and dispositions, which in turn alters their activities and practices” (as cited in Kezar & Lester, 2008, p. 52). Today’s workforce can be divided into distinct generational groups, two of those being the Baby Boomers and X Generation (Yu & Miller, 2005).

In Douglas Coupland’s 1991 book *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, he devised the term *Generation X* to describe a generation different than that of the Baby Boomers—holding differing values and aspirations (Coupland, 1991). Generation X is also known by different names, such as the Thirteenth Generation, Xers, Baby Busters, MTV Generation, and Latchkey Kids. Generations are influenced by a shared culture, which is shaped by specific experiences that occurred during its duration, and these experiences shape a collective memory (Arsenault, 2004; Schewe & Evans, 2000). A generation is also viewed as a group of people that grow around sociohistorical events, termed *watershed moments* (Ryder, 1965). For Generation X, these influences and moments might include the Internet, the Challenger accident, and Desert Storm (Howe & Strauss, 1991; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).

There is a common narrative in generational discourse which suggests worry about an “impending crisis” that may arise as the Baby Boomers, often leaders of organizations, leave and retire (Kunreuther, 2003). What will happen to organizations? Are young people (those in Generation X) as visionary, competent, committed, or well trained? A variety of books—*Managing Generation X* (Tulgan, 1996); *Generations at Work* (Zemke et al., 2000); *A Politics for Generation X* (Halstead, 1999); and *13th Gen: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?* (Howe & Strauss, 1993)—make claims about misunderstandings between the Baby Boomers and Generation X. There is a long list of generalizations which include things such as: “GenXers work better in an informal environment ... Baby Boomers are more comfortable in hierarchical settings” and “Generation X is more comfortable than Baby Boomers working across race, gender, and sexual orientation” (Kunreuther, 2003, p. 452).

In a study by Kunreuther (2003) of staff working in progressive social-change organizations, younger people in the nonprofits had many of the same qualities as older people involved, but they did differ on some things. Younger participants came to social work based on their personal experiences, but often lacked a framework for the change they wanted to see made. Older people, on the other hand, had a framework but may not have identified with those they worked to serve. Another example concerned organizational forms. Despite ambitions to change them, older directors seemed to replicate organizational structures largely corporate in nature, while younger directors were trying to run things differently, with leadership circles, leadership teams, codirectors, and flattened hierarchies (Kunreuther, 2003).

Higher education is central to the education and enculturation of new generations and, therefore, “the academy’s power to influence society should never be underestimated” (Friedman, 2011, p. 7). While colleges and universities may not be seen as social-change organizations, the feminist women administrators within them have historically viewed themselves as change agents. How, then, might Generation X feminist leaders be motivated to do work and influence organizational structures?

Feminism and Generational Differences

There are numerous differences in perception between generations. In feminism, these differences have often been referenced as feminist waves. “Scholars typically label the nineteenth-century woman suffrage movement as the ‘first wave’ of feminism” (Crawford, 2007, p.1). First wave feminism (1848-1920) (coined this retroactively) is defined by feminist activity during the 19th and early 20th centuries and focused on getting women the right to vote. Second wave feminism (1960s and 1970s) is defined by the liberating work which women conducted through legal and social activism (Crawford, 2007). They fought for reproductive choice, equal pay for equal work, and to have sexual assault and domestic violence recognized.

The demarcation for third wave feminists is not entirely clear, but it seems to easily include women born after 1960. Third wave feminism represents a group that has begun with the achievements of the second wave and is thought to be a generational term—referring to how the feminist struggle manifests itself in the world today. Crawford (2007) stated that the third wave of feminism had its intellectual origins in response to the Clarence Thomas Senate confirmation hearings

and is a reaction to the popular stereotype that feminists are humorless man-haters. Third-wave feminists proclaim their difference from second-wave

feminists and celebrate “girl power,” the joys of make-up and femininity, the complexity of human desire and the importance of fun. (p. 1)

Heywood and Drake (1997) made it a priority to represent a generational perspective by gathering the voices of young activists who are struggling to come to terms with what it means to be feminist, while coming of age during or after the women’s movement. They, along with others before them (Findlen, 2001; Maglin & Perry, 1996; Walker, 1995) described these experiences within the framework of third wave feminism. The writings of Findlen (2001) and Walker (1995) were autobiographical and experiential. Maglin and Perry (1996) and Heywood and Drake (1997) offered collections of work grounded in research, theory, and social practice, combining interdisciplinary methods with an autobiographical style. Characterizing the “third wave” as a movement defined by contradictions is also reflected in the descriptions of women who are described as a part of “Generation X.”

Authors Rubin and Macko (2004) interviewed over 100 college-educated women between 25 and 37; all of them came of age during or after the women’s movement and all of them believed their lives were characterized by options rather than limitations. What they discovered in their research, however, was that there was also a realization that while some things changed as a result of the women’s movement, others (i.e., corporate structures and social conventions) stayed the same for these women. “While the empowerment part of the equation has been loudly celebrated, there has been very little discussion among women of our age about the real barriers and flows that still exist in the system despite the opportunities we inherited” (Rubin & Macko, 2004, p. 3).

Slaughter (2012) stated that “the pioneer generation of feminists walled off their personal lives from their professional personas to ensure that they could never be

discriminated against for lack of commitment to their work” (p. 16). As a result, there is sometimes a new pressure on women in Generation X to change the environments in which they are leading, to make them more women friendly and inclusive. Slaughter (2012), in her article “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All,” suggested that in the shared narratives between generations women still aren’t giving one another the whole picture, but rather partial truths about how difficult it is to aspire to and manage positions of leadership with a life.

We know that women born into Generation X have been given messages that they can “do anything” (Findlen, 2001, p. xiv). According to Findlen (2001), these messages may have come from parents, teachers or from observing notable barriers breaking down. However, there are often seldom discussed but numerous barriers that may stop them: sexist organizational cultures, sexual violence, narrow gender norms, pay inequity, etc. What elements in higher education administration pose roadblocks for Generation X women influenced by feminism? And, what strategies do they use to work through these roadblocks and create institutional change?

Standpoint Theory

Feminist theories value women’s perspectives and experiences and are designed, in part, to bring their voices to the forefront since they have been traditionally left out (Hartstock, 2004; Naples, 2003). Standpoint theory, a product of second-wave feminist thinking, assumes women’s lived experiences provide valuable resources for critiquing and evaluating prevailing knowledge claims. Harding (1993) emphasized that knowledge is grounded in human experience, and since women are represented in every race, class, and culture, feminist research must emanate from all women’s lives. Specifically,

feminist standpoint theory is based on the assumption that “the world looks different depending on one's social location” (Allen, 2000, p. 178).

According to Wood (1998), standpoint theory was influenced by German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who looked at the different standpoints between slaves and masters. He examined the master-slave relationship, looking at how positions affect how people receive knowledge and power. Karl Marx subsequently studied how workers’ experiences are also shaped by their position in society (Harding, 2006). These men gave insight to the perspective that oppression and injustice are better analyzed and understood from the point of view of the slave or worker than from that of the master or boss. The connection of feminist standpoint theory to these philosophers is controversial since some feminist scholars also believe that they subjugated women (Harding, 2004a; Wood, 2005).

Two of the most influential authors of standpoint are said to be the U.S. political philosopher Nancy Hartstock (1983) and Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987) (Campbell & Manicom, 1995; Harding, 2006; Hirschmann, 1997). These standpoint theorists extended and reframed the idea of the standpoint of slavery and the working class to create a space for a feminist standpoint. Harstock (1983), often described as the locus of feminist standpoint theory, explained “how women and men create their own realities through different activities and experiences” (Hekman, 1997, p. 343). Smith (2004) concentrated on women’s positions in sociology and wrote,

Thinking more boldly or perhaps just thinking the whole thing through a little further might bring us to ask first how sociology might look if it began from the point of view of women’s traditional place in it and what happens to a sociology which attempts to deal seriously with that. (p. 21)

The theory has evolved over time to include Haraway's (1988) conception of "feminist objectivity" which challenges us to take into account *all* the knowledge available to form a standpoint, not just that presented through the positions of "Man and White" (p. 581). In doing so, Haraway (1988) suggested we can avoid binary opposition, dichotomous ways of thinking. "There is a premium on establishing the capacity to see from the peripheries and the depths" (p. 193). Strong objectivity, as describe by Harding (1987), fused into feminist theory a way to maximize objectivity by bringing to the fore certain experiences and beliefs that more traditional objectivity has considered to be inept. An example that Hartstock (1983) used to demonstrate this is with the viewpoint on housework. Through the standpoint of women household labor comes to be understood as work rather than as a labor of love. Additional and deeper understandings of child rearing and sexual relations have also become visible as a result of moving beyond the standpoint of men.

Collins (1990) also contributed to the evolution of this theory by challenging feminist research and the conceptualization of feminist standpoint theory by asking, By whom? She brought attention to the notion of subjugated knowledge, which results from elite, White male interests that pervade academic scholarship, even that of white feminist scholars. In feminist standpoint theory, subjugated positions are "preferred because in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical interpretative core of all knowledge" (Harding, 2004b, p. 88). As an example, exposing the subjugated knowledge of black women allows their lives to be exposed and understood since they "have been routinely distorted in or excluded from traditional academic discourse" (Collins, 1990, p. 201). Black feminist theory articulates the lives, practices, and

identities of black women specifically and contends that race, gender, and class combine and intersect in a “matrix of domination” (Dickerson, Parham-Payne, & Everette, 2012, p. 95).

From Collins’ (1990) writings came an understanding of the dangers of taking an “additive approach” to making meaning of women’s experiences (Collins, 1990). “According to an additive approach, if one wants to describe a particular woman, one takes as the baseline her gender and then adds to it such layers as race, class, geographic region, and sexual orientation” (Jones, 2000, p. 37). By not considering all identities from the beginning, the most salient parts of a woman’s identity may be left out or assumed—highly problematic. Feminist standpoint commits, therefore, to take into account how oppressions link to affect life experiences. Collins (1997a) clarified feminist standpoint as “an interpretive framework dedicated to explicating how knowledge remains central to maintaining and changing unjust systems of power” (p. 375).

Standpoint theory may rank as one of the most debated feminist theories (Harding, 2004b). “Its advocates, as much as its critics, disagree vehemently about its parentage, its status as a theory, and crucially, its relevance to current thinking about knowledge” (Harding, 2004b, p. 340). A critique of feminist standpoint as a theoretical framework is that it proposes an essentialist universalism; affording women privilege based on their gender (Wood, 1992). This monolithic view can be further problematized when the view of women’s lives reflects the lived experience of mostly middle-class, mostly white, women academics. Since the early history of feminist standpoint, a great deal of work has concentrated on incorporating considerations of difference. In O’Brien Hallstein’s (2000) review of feminist standpoint research, she concluded that it allows for

the study of both commonality and difference in women's lives. In response to the criticism, I agree with Harding's (2004a) conclusion that the continuing debate over standpoint claims is that the persistence of its core tenants "to stir up reflection and debate" is in itself an important resource for philosophy and research (p. 27).

Hirschmann (1997) suggested that "a standpoint does not come 'naturally' or spontaneously to anyone. Rather, it must be achieved through 'struggle,' where in lies its 'liberatory' potential" (p. 75). In other words, a standpoint is achieved through a process of social mediation and group interaction; it is not achieved by acting alone (O'Brien Hallstein, 2000). In addition, standpoints are considered political since a person must go through a particular development process to achieve a standpoint (O'Brien Hallstein, 2000). A standpoint requires, as Welton (1997) suggested, "active, political resistance to work against the material embodiment of the perspective and experience of the dominant group" (p. 11). It is the act of pushing against the power group that constitutes it as a political standpoint and makes it hypothetically liberating.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the literature base that deals with (a) leadership; (b) feminism, leadership, and change in higher education; (c) gender and organizations; (d) feminism and feminist identity; (e) generational differences and leadership; and (f) feminist standpoint theory. I discussed the ways in which the lives of women administrators in higher education, who identify as feminists, have been studied and illuminated the current gaps in the research. I then made a case for why understanding these women, through the additional framework of generational difference, is significant to the future of higher education and their individual and collective lives. Like the

feminist women leaders in higher education who came before them, their identities and experiences will impact the leadership of colleges and universities across the nation. The next chapter will address the methods used in the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenologic study is to examine the experiences of women who identify as feminists, who were born into “Generation X,” and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions and how they make meaning of their feminism and generational membership as leaders and change agents in higher education. Feminist scholarship has provided a new paradigm for inquiry that is well suited for a study aimed at understanding how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership and change practices of women administrators in higher education (Creswell, 2007; Harding, 1987, 2006). This study utilizes a feminist methodological framework and combines postmodern perspectives that regard experience and identity as constructed and situational (a constructivist paradigm).

In recent years, the profound impact of feminist scholarship on the academy has been analyzed and documented (Safarik, 2003). Feminist scholarship has focused on “transformative efforts” to liberate institutions and create space where multiple worldviews are acknowledged and valued (Lincoln, 1991). Universities matter, not just as powerful social and cultural players, but as spaces which define both what constitutes valid knowledge and who is allowed to be a legitimate knower (Weiler, 2009).

Feminist pedagogies encourage students to think critically about their own experiences (Madden & Russo, 1997). Madden (2005) suggested that women in higher education need also engage in their own critical thinking about their experiences as

leaders. Therefore, examining how feminist women administrators, who are part of Generation X, are making meaning of their leadership experience and ability to make change, supports the emancipatory nature of feminism and feminist inquiry (Harding, 2006).

Research Questions

The feminist academic administrator's standpoint, from a Generation X perspective, is a newer lens from which to view leadership and change in higher education. As such, I examined: (a) How a feminist identity and Generation X membership shape a woman academic administrator's leadership practice? (b) How a feminist identity and Generation X membership predispose the kind of change initiatives a woman academic administrator seeks and engages in? and (c) What personal, organizational and/or cultural conditions have influenced how they lead?

Feminist research views people as actors who try to affect their own situations with intentionality (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983). Like Barton's (2006) research, this study acknowledges that participants consciously own the label feminist and, as such, should be able to talk about the importance of this label in their own terms. Trying to understand women's consciousness regarding their feminist and generational identities is helpful to other women who are making meaning of their leadership in colleges and universities. It is also incredibly valuable to higher education as these women are now shaping institutions as leaders and agents of change.

Phenomenology

Qualitative researchers think it possible and important to find out how people make sense of the experiences in their lives. According to Locke, Spirduso, and

Silverman (2000), qualitative research “includes asking research questions about the meanings people assign to particular experiences, as well as discovering the processes through which they achieve their intentions in particular contexts” (p. 97). As such, qualitative methodology is well suited for an investigation that examines the meaning women make of their feminist and generational identities because it seeks to provide rich descriptions of the complexities of individuals’ lives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative research is discovery-oriented and is intended to understand phenomena in their naturally occurring state (Rudenstam & Mewton, 2001; Willig, 2001). It is also described as emerging and unfolding (Creswell, 2003).

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative research, the position of the researcher is important to consider. The positivist paradigm has taught us that there is an objective reality and “impersonal, neutral detachment is an important criterion for good research” (England, 1994, p. 242). Smith (1990/2007), however, disagreed with this assertion and claimed that researchers’ identities matter and that it is not possible for a researcher to stand outside of the research. Instead, Smith (1990/2007) suggested, and I agree, that researchers must especially take account of their own *position* in relation to the research participants and those being studied. In the social constructivist paradigm, researchers recognize how their life experience shapes their understanding of the world, and in turn how their understanding is influenced by their own experiences—personal, cultural, and historical (Creswell, 2003).

In this study, I set out to construct a reciprocal relationship with my interviewees and a stance of supplication (England, 1994). My supplicant stance included showing

empathy and mutual respect, sharing knowledge, but most importantly, recognizing my reliance on the research participants to provide insight into the subtle nuances of meaning surrounding my questions. For the researcher-as-suppliant there is an “unequivocal acceptance that the knowledge of the person being researched (at least regarding the particular questions being asked) is greater than that of the researcher” (England, 1994, p. 243).

In studying the meaning other women in higher education make of their feminist identity and identification as part of Generation X, I took into account my role as the researcher by identifying both these and other aspects of my identity: white, 45 years old, woman, middle-class, able-bodied, aspiring to attain a senior level position in higher education. I also noted the occasions where my race, educational level, age, views on feminism and/or generational membership, higher education type and work within higher education, among other factors, differed from those of my participants. Before engaging in this research, I spent time reflecting on my own feminist and generational identities. After I conducted my interviews, I recorded my reactions in detail in field notes and discussed my positionality with a peer debriefer. I found this far less distracting than the bracketing I intended to do as suggested by Husserl (1913). The act of bracketing during the interview process interrupted my ability to be a good listener. Based on my personal views and my literature review, I had some general expectations for my findings which I also recorded and share in Chapter V.

Feminist Research Practice

Feminist research practice emphasizes the value of women’s voices, lives, and experiences as central to the research process, as their experiences have largely been

missing, undervalued or treated as an afterthought in all types of investigations, even in research about women (Harding, 2006). Feminist research practice reframes the way research is designed by challenging status quo forms of research (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Instead, it looks for ways to create more equality between the researcher and research participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008) by having an awareness of how power and authority might impact the interview (Hesse-Biber, 2007). As outlined below, in this study I focused on the principles of objectivity, reflexivity, and intersectionality as I strived for more parity between myself as the interviewer and the study participants.

Objectivity

According to feminist research experts, appeals to objectivity “have often been used to discredit women’s perceptions and feminist analyses” (Harding, 2004b, p. 20). While there may not be a single, set definition of what “objectivity” is in research, it has generally been defined as the researcher’s ability to separate her or himself from the research in order to reduce bias (Harding, 1987). Feminist critical thought has challenged this view, pointing out that objectivity may also be achieved by acknowledging one’s power as the researcher by contesting privilege and deconstructing knowledge. Kuhn (1982) called this “passionate detachment” and Haraway (1988) pointed out that it requires more than self-critical partiality.

According to Haraway “feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). Harding (2004b) suggested that strong objectivity is generated by placing the subject of knowledge on the same causal plane as the object of knowledge. In the case of this study, the participants were viewed as partners in the process of understanding social phenomena instead of passive participants or “subjects”

to be examined. The women's movements needed knowledge that was *for* women (Harding, 2004a) and, I believe, in our continued efforts toward gender equity in higher education, we still need these voices. Women have long been the object of inquiries but have too seldom been the creators of knowledge about themselves. According to Harding (2004a), this has largely been left to authorities who rarely mentioned their particular location or human perspective.

Objectivists believe that objectivity “requires the elimination of all social values and interests from the research process and the results of the research” (Harding, 2001, p. 157). As a researcher, I side with Harding's belief that not all social values and interests have negative and distorting effects upon research results. Harding (2004a) went on to explain her view that democracy-advancing values may actually generate less bias than others by actively examining how and by whom knowledge is constructed. In this research, I am transparent in my desire to highlight women's knowledge construction.

Intersectionality

Feminist methodology specifically requires that the researcher be responsible for giving voice to issues of difference. A critique of feminist standpoint as a theoretical framework is that it has been accused of being essentialist, viewing all women as having the same condition or experience (Harding, 2004b). Assuming commonality based on a single dimension of identity is harmful to fully exploring power and knowledge creation (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). In this study, differences were not only noted, but their significance was investigated. I embraced the critical work of women of color in developing notions of “intersectionality,” locations where the structures of gender, class,

race, sexuality, and other factors intersect to create varying experiences and levels of oppression for women (Collins, 1990, 1997a; Harding, 2004a). When women identify with multiple identities, being on the periphery is even more pronounced and, therefore, needs to be highlighted and analyzed. In this case, I examined whether the women of color in my study were more loosely connected to feminism, for example, since it is often seen as a white middle-class issue (Nicholson, 1990). Beyond race, other categories of identity influenced women's experiences including class, sexual orientation, religion, mother or non-mother status, and other personal identifiers.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is defined as the process in which the researcher methodically considers how the person he or she is shapes the study (Creswell, 2003). Building on the historical discourse of qualitative research, feminist research suggests that reflexivity “permeates every aspect of the research process challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of those we study [with] and those whom we select as our audience” (Hertz, 1996, p. 5). As a feminist qualitative researcher, I had already begun the process of reflection prior to connecting with the participants of the study, which continued through the analysis and writing. Additionally, I believe experiencing this research process will continue to motivate my reflection of being a feminist, a member of Generation X, and a professional in higher education indefinitely. I am aware that my lived experiences in terms of my personal biography, shape what I am studying and my approach to studying it. I, therefore, acknowledged my personal and cultural biases, knowing that I cannot separate from those, just as I cannot separate from physical aspects of my body (e.g., eyes, nose, etc.). According to Creswell (2003),

acknowledging that the personal-self becomes the researcher-self is honest and highlights the fact that all research is value-laden. The benefit, according to Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2007), is that practicing reflexivity allows “alternative forms of knowledge into public discourse” (p. 496).

Research Design

Qualitative research allows participants to detail their lives through narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), a study focusing on individual lived understandings should utilize an in-depth interview approach, with the primary goal of capturing the profound meaning of the experiences in the individual’s own words. Oakley (2004) added that “finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical” (p. 222). Her perspective grew out of experience with research approaches that were based in masculine paradigms.

Interviews

Interviews “provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of people’s personal perspectives, for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located, and for very detailed subjective coverage” and “are also particularly well suited to research that requires an understanding of deeply rooted or delicate phenomena or responses to complex systems” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008, p. 36). Therefore, I utilized narrative phenomenology by conducting qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews in which I asked probing, follow-up questions. With semi-structured interviews I was able to leave open opportunities for spontaneity on the part of myself and the participants. Much qualitative feminist research has highlighted the complexity

and power of human talk and has used it to bring forward rich and previously untold stories (DeVault & Gross, 2007).

Perhaps because of the significance of listening, “feminist interviewing” explores language and discourse, often using interview data in nuanced ways. It embraces interviewing “as a way of making experience hearable and subjecting it to systematic analysis” (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p. 177). A dimension of interviewing that feminists have utilized involves disclosure on the part of the interviewer, which could include personal information, research interests, or political commitments (DeVault & Gross, 2007). For the purpose of this study, I shared with participants that I attended HERS, and that I’m a feminist and a member of Generation X.

In-depth interviews. Varying traditions in qualitative research have produced diverse perspectives on in-depth interviewing. In this study, I borrowed from Kvale’s (1996) use of the “travel metaphor” which falls within the constructivist research model. In this case, knowledge is created and negotiated, with the interviewer seen as a traveler who journeys with the interviewee. “The meanings of the interviewee’s ‘stories’ are developed as the traveler interprets them. Through conversations, the interviewer leads the subject to new insights: there is a transformative element to the journey” (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Through this research I was seen as an active participant in the creation of meaning. Utilizing a feminist approach, I tried to be non-hierarchical, being sensitive not to view the participant as an object. Interviewer and interviewee “share in the process of negotiating coverage, language and understanding” (Legard et al., 2003) and that indeed happened during my interviews.

“Understanding motivations and decisions, or exploring impacts and outcomes, generally requires the detailed personal focus that in-depth interviews allow” (Lewis, 2003, p. 58). In my research, I acknowledge that the fundamental principle of in-depth interviewing is listening and that it is not as simple as it sounds (Legard et al., 2003). According to DeVault and Gross (2007), “A researcher’s practice of listening deeply affects the data and knowledge she or he produces” (p. 182). In order to listen deeply, I had to visit with the audio recordings, the transcripts, and narratives many, many times.

For the purpose of this study, I conducted the interviews over the telephone. This allowed me to connect with women from diverse geographic areas who fit my criteria for selection. While phone interviewing has been criticized (Weiss, 1995), recent scholarship shows that it seems to allow for the same results as interviews conducted in person (Holt, 2010; Novick, 2008). I was careful to try to replicate the benefits of face-to-face interviewing as much as possible by making the participant feel at ease, checking in for meaning, and using silence comfortably so as not to make the conversation seem rushed.

Participant selection. In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants, a technique typically involved in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Ritchie & Lewis, 2008). The participants fulfilled several criteria. They are women who: (a) identify as a feminist, (b) came of age after the women’s movement (those who were born in the generational years termed “Generation X” between 1965–1982), and (c) hold an administrative position at the mid-level (and aspiring to senior level) or in a senior-level position. I found participants through an email sent to past attendees of the Higher Education Resource Services

(HERS) Institute. Ritchie and Lewis (2008) support researchers' use of organizations, which provide services to or represent particular populations, as a useful way of generating a sample.

The choice to use HERS was based on three factors. First, the HERS institutes are designed to prepare women faculty and administrators for institutional leadership roles. The women who attend HERS go through an application process in which they must explain how they have exhibited leadership while also articulating a desire for further leadership development. HERS institutes are offered in multiple locations, resulting in sizable and diverse cohorts of women. Finally, I was a former attendee at a HERS institute and knew first-hand that the demographic I am seeking is well represented among participants.

Informed consent and selection specifics. Interested participants responded by sending me an email of interest. Women who responded to my invitation were then emailed my informed consent letter which outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of the research, how the data would be used, and the right to withdraw at any time (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008; Ryen, 2004). To be further considered for participation, women who returned the informed consent were invited to fill out a data collection sheet since my goal was to produce as varied a sample as possible. The data collection sheet identified the title of their current position, where they saw themselves on their professional path (e.g., mid-level aspiring to senior level, senior level, or none of the above), date of birth (to confirm membership in Generation X), level of education (highest degree attained), number of years in higher education, and their racial/ethnic background.

Importantly, I also asked two questions about degree of identification as a feminist. I offered a 9-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 = *I do not identify as a feminist* to 9 = *I closely identify as a feminist*. I also asked interested participants to check which sentence most closely described the extent to which they engaged in conscious reflection about their feminist identity. The choices were: “I have not thought much about this aspect of my identity and don’t share my feminist identity with many people”; “I have moderately thought about my feminist identity and share this aspect of my identity with some key people”; and “I have thought about this aspect of my identity often, claim it publicly, and can identify what has influenced my feminist beliefs.”

Since standpoint theory requires that a person not just hold a particular identity, but rather be able to show engagement (at some level) in a struggle around making meaning of this subjugated identity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), these two questions were incredibly important. Of the women that I ultimately chose to participate in the study, four of them identified with a 7 and three identified with an 8 on the “identify as a feminist” scale. For the second question, I didn’t choose anyone that indicated “I have not thought much about this aspect of my identity and don’t share my feminist identity with many people.” Four of the women said they “moderately” thought about their feminist identity and three of the women “claim it publicly” and can identify with what has influenced their feminist beliefs.

I began each interview by highlighting the consent document, verbally sharing the fact that their identity would only be known by me, and explaining the use of the recording system. Each participant was told they could end the interview at any time and I was certain to leave room open for questions about me, the study, or what would

transpire during the interview before questions began. The shortest interview was 1 hour and 30 minutes (1:30), and the longest was 2 hours and 10 minutes (2:10).

Correspondence, including the informed consent, the initial email to potential participants (sent out by HERS), the data collection sheet, the interview protocol, the interview questions, and the thank you letter are in the Appendix.

Sample size. Important to this qualitative research design is the sample size.

Qualitative research sampling suggests a reasonable number of participants based on the ability to capture the essence of the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this threshold as the point of redundancy. For the purposes of my research, I committed to continuing interviews to the point of saturation (Mason, 2010). Mason (2010) points out the obvious, that new data will always add something new to a study. But he acknowledges that as a qualitative study goes on it does not necessarily lead to more insights.

Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic. This is because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalised hypothesis statements. (Mason, 2010, p. 1)

I felt as though saturation was largely met after six interviews; however, I chose to do a seventh as it aided me in seeking a negative case. This demonstrated that my sampling design did indeed remain flexible and emergent (Patton, 2002).

Through my sampling process, I sought out participants who might serve as negative cases (Patton, 2002) by offering new or different viewpoints. While it was impossible to know if a selected participant would provide a fresh or varied viewpoint, my commitment to choosing women with varied identities and lived experiences was meant to engender negative cases as much as possible. Three participants were chosen

for their potential to be negative cases. Two had earned master's degrees (while one mentioned a desire to consider a doctoral degree, the other did not). As women aspire to senior level positions, the doctoral degree is often tied to this pursuit. Another participant was chosen because she is in student affairs. Of the numerous responses that I received for participation, almost none of them were in student affairs. Most in the larger sample identified that academic and business affairs were their professional homes.

Interview Questions

Rapley (2004) suggested that the questions in qualitative research should be generated in relationship to literature in conjunction with the researchers' thoughts and intuition (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman, 2004). In response, the questions I asked were designed to achieve both breadth and depth and included both perspective-widening questions and content-mining questions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008). I utilized perspective-widening questions to understand the interviewees' viewpoint fully and allowed participants to have an opportunity to give more than their first thoughts on the subject. I also encouraged them to look at issues from various perspectives to uncover layers of meaning and richness. Content-mining questions were used for exploring what has been raised by the interviewee—striving to obtain a full description of phenomena, understanding what underpins the participants' attitude or behavior, and so on.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data were collected through audiotaped telephone interviews which were later transcribed. I also took some very basic notes in the event that the recording equipment failed. I took my ethical obligation to protect participants' identities (Ritchie & Lewis, 2008; Ryan, 2004) by creating pseudonyms and avoiding the attribution of comments to

identified participants (Ford & Reutter, 1990). Following transcription, interviewees were given the full narrative and had an opportunity to review the content through member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I asked them to provide their general feedback and address any major errors of fact. I also asked them if, since the time of the interview, they had additional thoughts to share regarding the following questions: Have you made any further meaning about your generational identity? And, do you have any further thoughts to share on how your feminism and generational identity influence your leadership and how you make change? Participants had the opportunity to add, delete, or edit the content of the narratives before I began to work with them.

Generating themes and sub-themes. Qualitative content analysis was utilized which has its roots in a variety of scholarship areas including critical scholarship (e.g., feminist theory). The process for creating the narratives first included just listening to the audio recordings. This was followed by a systematic listening to the audio recording while reading the written transcript. This initial audio/transcript read was a time to correct grammar and/or make notable content corrections. I achieved this by frequently stopping the audiotape after each paragraph. This engagement began a cursory understanding, which then allowed me to begin reading the transcripts in more depth. This deeper content analysis required an even closer reading of relatively small amounts of text at a time (Krippendorff, 2013). The process I utilized was inductive content analysis, which allowed themes to emerge from the raw data (Mayring, 2000).

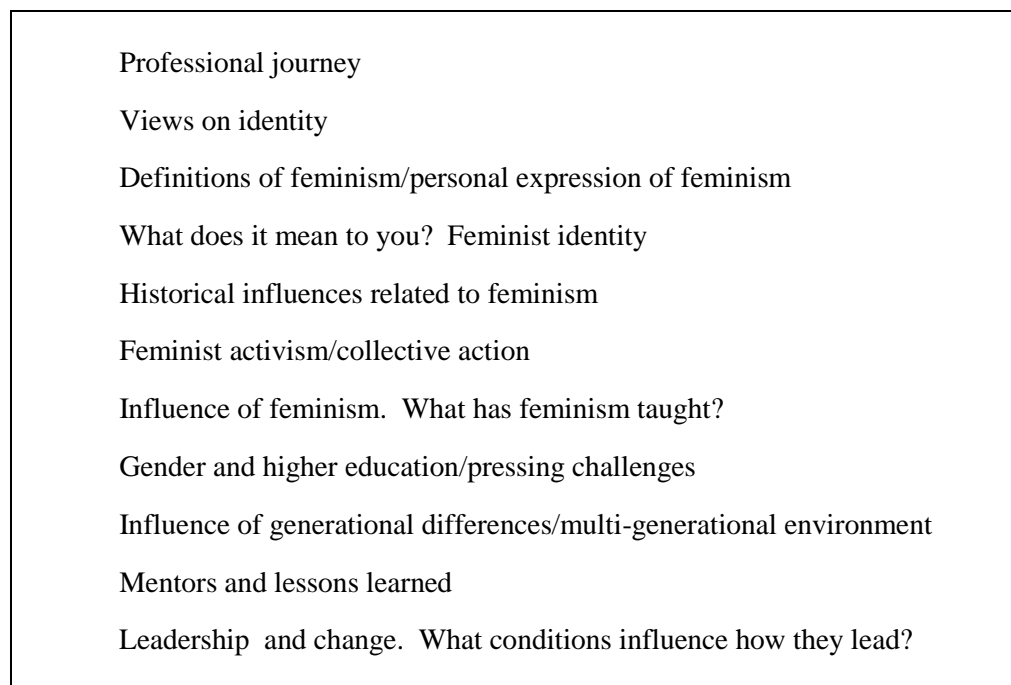
By revisiting the transcripts on multiple occasions I was able to create a list of larger a priori themes in Figure 1. This process reflected the recommendation by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) to keep themes rather open in the beginning. Interviewing “is a

conversation with a purpose” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 75), so it was important that I listened to and read the transcript a few times, demonstrating considerable attention in trying to understand the meaning of what the interviewees said (Kvale, 1996). These larger a priori themes were then coded for more specific content and organized accordingly. For each code, I have provided examples for the type of information that was being captured (see Table 1). The culmination of the coding strategy and my own reflection on the interviews allowed me to determine the “narration” of the experience (Creswell, 2007) as well as emergent themes and sub-themes. I agree with Marshall and Rossman (1999) that identifying recurring ideas and patterns of thought and linking the women together was the most intellectually challenging phase of the analysis.

This process was time consuming as I found myself working in hermeneutic circles, very aware that my socially constructed considerations were influencing how I was putting the narrative together. To account for this, I added my reactions and feelings about what was being shared in comment boxes on the outer margins of each document. This helped me to achieve, to the extent possible, the unmotivated exploration of the data described by Perakyla (2004). And since this took place after the interviews, it also helped me to refrain from disrupting participants’ perspectives (Mishler, 1986).

I conducted two pilot interviews with the draft protocol, which I recorded. During the process, I asked the interviewee to debrief with me about the questions. This is where I shared my motivation for asking each question and received feedback regarding whether or not I was achieving the desired outcome in terms of meaning. This resulted in some reworking of the protocol, although it remained flexible.

The audio-recordings were taped using *Lync* software on my laptop computer. Currently, they can be accessed only through my personal login. Each interview is identified by a phone number, but no names or other identifying information appears. I created a master research list with the names of all participants and generated corresponding code numbers and pseudonyms. Once the dissertation is defended and all edits completed, the master list will be destroyed and all materials will be stored in a faculty office of Western Michigan University on a password protected server space for a three-year period.



Professional journey
Views on identity
Definitions of feminism/personal expression of feminism
What does it mean to you? Feminist identity
Historical influences related to feminism
Feminist activism/collective action
Influence of feminism. What has feminism taught?
Gender and higher education/pressing challenges
Influence of generational differences/multi-generational environment
Mentors and lessons learned
Leadership and change. What conditions influence how they lead?

Figure 1. Large a priori theme summary.

Table 1

Coding Summary

Codes	Descriptors
Professional Journey	Aspects of life motivating professional career, positions held, current role, career trajectory
Views on Identity	Lived experiences that have shaped world views, ways identity has influenced personal/professional interactions and ways of seeing/experiencing the world
Feminism and Feminist Identity	How feminism is defined; what motivates the definition; relationship to feminism and feminist label; degree to which feminism is owned as an identity/label
Historical Influences on Feminist Identity	Historical and/or contemporary moments that illuminated a connection to feminism
Advocacy/Activism	Actions that represented advocacy/activism within a feminist frame
Influence of Feminism on Leadership	How feminism has influenced leadership
Successes and Aspirations in Leadership	Proudest moments in leadership; ideas on things yet to achieve
Intersectionality	How identity influences experiences the world; how these experiences relate to feminist identity
Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education	Experience of being a feminist
Making Change in Higher Education	Strategies for making change
Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues	Gaps in gender equality that need to be addressed
Generation X	How Generation X is defined; what motivates the definition
Generational Differences	Similarities, differences and connection; distance to Millennials and Baby Boomers
Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors	Level and types of interaction with those from differing generation; mentor descriptions; advice from Baby Boomers
Leadership in Higher Education	What is needed in higher education leadership for a successful future; do they see themselves as exhibiting the characteristics needed?

Progressive subjectivity. Progressive subjectivity involves being diligently cognizant of a priori assumptions and how these assumptions may influence the inquiry and analysis processes (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As a researcher committed to progressive subjectivity, I anticipated and monitored my prior and emerging assumptions and interpretations. Specifically, I wrote down what I expected to find during the process as well as my initial assumptions following the interviews. My intention was to avoid privileging my personal feelings by reflecting only what I expected to find and leaving the insights of the participants invisible.

The question I asked myself was: What did I expect to find? What follows are the assumptions that I expected to find: I expected that participants would have a broad definition of feminism that included addressing multiple forms of oppression. I believed they would talk about many aspects of identity as defining who they are as people and professionals. I predicted that the kind of leadership change they were engaged in most, or cared about most, would tie back to gender equity. I expected that participants would not struggle with their identification with Generation X, would easily be able to name women mentors who were Baby Boomers and would find some of their advice problematic. Finally, I anticipated that participants would be able to readily articulate challenges with gender equity in higher education.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Achieving trustworthiness was of utmost concern in my research. Numerous researchers describe the means to attaining trustworthiness in various ways. Creswell (1998) outlined eight strategies, while Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered four criteria. In all examples, trustworthiness is connected to procedures for verifying qualitative research

strategies (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, I followed Creswell's eight strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the results of this study which included: sustaining prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation; peer review or debriefing; sample case analysis; clarification of researcher bias (reflexivity); member-checking; rich, thick description; and external audits.

Specifically, I conducted interviews for a sustained length of time to get detailed and thoughtful information, and in a way that was sensitive to the participants' concerns and feelings. As outlined, I protected the identity of interviewees and their institutions by using pseudonyms and, where necessary, changed details when representing them in the research reports (DeVault & Gross, 2007). Every effort was made to ensure the findings resembled, as much as possible, those studied. For example, I utilized member checks to verify my accuracy in capturing the participants' stories and perspectives. I valued the women's voices in the study by using their own words to help build thick, rich descriptions of their experiences. I also discussed the coding and themes with peer debriefers to check my conclusions to be sure they were consistent with what was narrated. In the analysis, I searched for elements of the narration that did not support or appeared to contradict emerging patterns.

While qualitative research is not generalizable (Stake, 1995), an effort was made to make it relevant to other contexts or persons (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transferability that Denzin (1989) emphasized was partially achieved through thick, rich descriptions. In terms of fidelity, I was generally able to achieve a consistent delivery of the protocol model originally developed (Mowbley, Holter, Teague, & Bybee, 2003). When I did exercise slight deviations, I did so to advance the study by making it stronger.

I certainly believe that my study has been detailed in a way that would make replication possible (Mowbley et al, 2003).

Dissemination of Research Findings

At the conclusion of the study, a hard-bound copy of the dissertation will be mailed to each participant. I also intend to prepare my research for use by national audiences following its completion. I look forward to disseminating my research through conference presentations and will seek a suitable journal for professional publication.

Chapter Review

In closing, feminist research is often characterized by a desire to make change (DeVault & Gross, 2007). As I set out to conduct this study, I felt an ethical responsibility to not just contemplate the influence that feminist identity and generational difference had on the leadership of women administrators in higher education, but to use this knowledge to further women's aims for full inclusion and to foster diverse and excellent leadership as higher education faces the future. I do this explicitly in the recommendations section. In addition, DeVault and Gross (2007) reminded us that "we must be cognizant of how our representations of other women will operate and travel as ideology" (p. 189). I understand that the stories that I wrote about these women may create a representation of them that will carry on long after the study. Therefore, I focused heavily on their own words in trying to determine the meaning of what they were sharing. In the next chapter, I tell their stories.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I am honoring my earlier commitment to avoid creating a master narrative. The following pages illuminate the voices of the women in my study by presenting them as individuals first, before ascribing meaning to aspects of their collective narratives. At the onset, I recognize that I cannot tell their stories as well as they do. I did, however, take great care in combing through the hours of audio tapes and pages of transcripts in hopes of capturing the essence of their thoughts. As much as possible, I have grounded the narratives in thick and rich descriptions, as is compulsory in qualitative research, so that the reader can know the participants in this project. Since the stories don't belong to me, I feel deeply responsible for representing them and am grateful for how openly they were shared.

The seven women who participated in this study reflect diverse lived experiences and provide insightful perspectives. Each self-identified as a feminist, as a higher education professional in a mid-level aspiring to senior level or senior level position, and a member of Generation X. They do not speak for all feminists who are members of Generation X in higher education, though their stories may certainly resonate with some. The goal was to tell about each participant in her own context and location. Each story was shared through the participant's own lens, and my role has been to help create a collective understanding. As Rosser (2003) said, without their stories "there is nothing to bridge the individual isolation of our professional lives" (p. 181).

Participant Variation

The seven participants varied in their educational attainment (highest degree earned), personal characteristics, higher education functional areas, and institution type. In Table 2, I provide a matrix that summarizes a portion of the profile of each participant. I believe this helps to show the overall characteristics of the group and some of the diversity. I emphasize *some* since this is the information that was gathered from the data collection sheet that I asked potential participants to fill out prior to being selected for interview. Beyond this basic information, participants shared incredibly interesting, and seemingly much more meaningful, information during the interview. Those details will be highlighted within the narratives.

As it relates to the information provided in the Table 2, three factors are particularly relevant: race, degree, and institution type. Three of the seven participants identified as women of color. While this proved to be a very salient aspect of identity, race and ethnicity intersected in many ways with other categories of meaning. Five had terminal degrees in their fields: four held a doctoral degree, and a fifth had earned a Master of Fine Arts (MFA). Of the remaining two women, one planned to complete graduate school, but was having a hard time fitting it into her work/life schedule. These women indicated that the type of institution they worked in (public, private, and community college) influenced their experience as a leader.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Race/ Ethnicity	Area of HE	Education	Years in HE	Level	Institution Type
Elle	Afr. Amer.	Senior Administration	Doctorate	10-14 years	Senior level	4 yr., private, doctoral granting
Hannah	Afr. Amer.	Senior Administration	Masters	20-24 years	Mid-level, aspiring to senior level	4 yr., private, doctoral granting
Torie	Hispanic	Business/ Finance	Masters	5-9 years	Mid-level, aspiring to senior level	4 yr., public, masters granting
Dorey	White	Academic Affairs	Masters (MFA)	20-24 years	Mid-level, aspiring to senior level	4 yr. public, masters granting
Bernadette	White	Academic Affairs	Doctorate	15-19 years	Mid-level, aspiring to senior level	community College
Mary	White	Student Affairs	Doctorate	15-19 years	Senior level	4 yr. public, masters granting
Mia	White	Business/ Finance	Doctorate	15-19 years	Mid-level, aspiring to senior level	4 yr. public, doctoral granting

Utilizing the mid-level aspiring to senior level and senior level statuses yielded an array of Gen X participants that closely matched the timeframe I adopted from Coupland (1991). My study included women born between 1965–1980 in the following years: 1965, 1967, 1970, 1973 (2), 1975, and 1980.

What follows is my introduction to the seven women: Elle, Torey, Mia, Hannah, Bernadette, Mary, and Dorey. Each participant was deeply committed and genuinely excited about her work in higher education.

Elle

Elle is a 46 year-old African American woman who has been in higher education for 20-24 years. She has a doctoral degree and is working at a 4-year private institution where she has been in her current senior level position for the past four years. Her work focuses on diversity initiatives at her university, namely race, gender, and sexuality. And while she has worked in other organizations outside of higher education, this type of work has always been a staple of her career. She wanted to participate in the study because she “thought it was an interesting idea to think about women’s leadership in the contemporary moment as opposed to either historically or in the future.”

Feminism and Feminist Identity

Elle does not see feminism as one particular thing. In contrast, she acknowledges that there are a multiplicity of “feminisms” that exist. She believes feminism motivates a person to be interested in how power operates in relation to the objection or objectification of women socially, politically, historically, etc. She goes on to clarify that, as a feminist, “I am not interested in gender dynamics, but rather power and how it is engaged on the interpersonal level and in systems.” For Elle, feminism is personally meaningful as it affects how she looks at both her interpersonal relationships and her work. In her work, for example, it influences her to care about certain issues (i.e., compensation between men and women or how men and women get talked to differently in the workplace). “I guide people through a variety of different things. It’s an attempt to recognize those power relations and negotiate areas of equality and fairness, across a variety of different factors.”

Elle’s college experience influenced her feminist identity:

When I was younger I went to a single sex school until I went to college. In my 17 year old wisdom, I wanted to go to a co-educational college. I did that and upon entry I realized that the world as I knew it was very different.

In co-educational spaces she realized that there were issues at stake when gender was at play in ways she had not noticed when the environment was girl/women-centered. The gender dynamics in the co-educational institution really demonstrated to her the power of gender inequity.

Elle indicated that she was labeled a feminist by other people before personally owning that label herself. She said that the process of asking questions about gender and the politics of gender motivated others to call her a feminist. “I didn’t know the questions I was asking were ‘wrong’ let alone feminist.” As a result of being labeled a feminist she decided to own the descriptor for herself and said, “I took feminism on wholesale.” Since her institution didn’t have a Women’s Studies major at the time, she earned a concentration in Women’s Studies and also became a teaching assistant in her junior and senior years for Women’s Studies classes. “I figure if people were going to call me names I would at least know what they were talking about.”

Elle’s office provides ample evidence—books and posters—that demonstrate feminist connections that are important to her, partnerships with the Women’s Center at her institution and other feminist organizations.

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

The event Elle deemed most important in shaping her feminism was the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 80s since this transpired during her young adulthood. She said that while she was alive in the early 70s when things like *Roe v. Wade* happened, there was a distance since she didn’t watch it transpire as a young adult. Elle also described

the era of President Reagan as a time that was negative toward women. This was also a time that overlapped with her development as a college student. She said that living through the Reagan administration “helped to cement her feminism.” She thought that the drug experimentation was a backlash to the conservatism that was coming out of the administration. Other pieces of history that were before her time, but greatly influenced her, were notably Stonewall, the marches on Washington for a variety of rights, the fight for the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment), and last, “the fight between women of color and white women at NWSA.” At the National Women’s Studies Association 1990 conference in Akron, Ohio, women of color and their allies staged a walk-out protesting the organization’s racism.

Influence of Feminism on Leadership

In order to understand institutions of higher education, she finds feminism to be a helpful tool. Feminism provides her with theoretical frames to better understand structures and environments in higher education. As an example, she thinks that feminism has made her a more compassionate leader, and not specifically in a gendered way. She describes herself as, “a leader who attempts to balance the needs of a variety of different constituencies” whether they be Republicans or Democrats, folks holding a variety of perspectives. She said it has also made her a more reflective leader, quick to act. The process of moving from theory to practice, which feminism requires, has been helpful in her role, where she has to be decisive. She added that feminism has made her tough to the criticism that comes from being who she is in higher education. “There is something about being a woman of color leader where people constantly question your

capability, your credentials, and your effectiveness. I'm tougher than I was say 20 years ago."

Elle makes sure that an understanding of gender equality is present in how she coaches and mentors those that she supervises. "I have members of my staff I work with on committees that are looking at gender issues and not because they are a Title IV Officer." She makes sure that people who don't necessarily have something official in their job description care and "have and understanding of the gender issues and how ... dynamics [are] happening on campus."

Elle sees herself as a collegial leader. "I like higher education because I like the idea of research and scholarship influencing our leadership and leadership practice. And there is the study of leadership in higher education and I've participated in a number of those opportunities." She is constantly evaluating her strengths and weaknesses and believes there is a certain amount of confidence that comes from knowing what you do and don't know. "Sometimes leaders do the wrong thing by hiring people who aren't as strong as they are so they won't take over certain areas. I don't think that's the best approach because not everyone can be the best in everything."

A final influence of feminism she shared:

I think growing up privileged blinded me to some things. And so there are still blind spots that I have but in terms of people who are disenfranchised dramatically and it's really important for me to remember that I am only able to do what I am able to do on the backs of other people. And therefore I have to not just make people's lives better but make those people who are at the very bottom of the world lives better.

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

Elle is a problem solver. In previous jobs (and with this one) she was hired to "fix" things. Institutions have "hired me to deal with issues around affirmative action,

Title IX, disability, protests, diversity” and “I’m almost always hired after a protest. So my achievement is that I’m often able to fix things.” She is also the first Title IX officer at her institution. In this role, she had to think about how to look at gender, but also beyond that, to disability. “So setting up a shop very differently than a lot of models” is important to her.

She wants to continue to promote leadership professional development opportunities within her institution, but also wants to do more with high school kids to demystify the college process. She sees higher education, the business and education sectors for certain, as being ideal to reach out and partner.

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

For Elle, there are multiple aspects of her identity that intersect in meaningful ways—her gender, race, class, religion, and ability—and she believes these intersecting identities have very much informed her feminism. As an African American woman, she shared:

Race and gender are pretty much inseparable. A lot has to do with the way in which African American or women of color women get coded differently than white women but also get coded differently than men. And then class and gender are interesting as well because I’m from an extremely privileged background. And so I’ve also been read because of my African Americanism and my gender as poor black women. So that has influenced my thinking around feminism and the intersections of gender and class how different bodies get read or misread and made me think a lot about poor white women who often get lost in the conversation around race because of the stereotypes that happen particularly to Latino and black women.

She also talked extensively about the role that religion played in shaping her feminism.

Elle said she wasn’t raised religiously, though this didn’t mean that she had no spirituality in her life, it simply meant that she didn’t go to a church, temple, or synagogue on any regular basis. She thinks this has proven to be most interesting since

she is operating in a society that is very Christian. “There’s a lot of emphasis on Christianity, on the roles that women play, that then get sort of played out through Christianity.” Labels, she said, such as “bad women, good women.” She said she doesn’t even know the references that she is being compared to at times. In response, Elle spent two years in graduate school just studying the major religions. “It was one of the best things I ever did because it also, later in life, has helped me think about the past and think about the present and how gender is so constructed through macro religious” ideas, whether it’s Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or others.

With regard to ability, she talked about a time when she had a temporary disability and was using crutches for an extended period of time. This experience made her realize how she had learned how to read spaces based on race and gender and enter them differently depending on the crowd. She could not, however, maneuver with ease (figuratively) she was using a wheelchair or cane because she had not grown up with a disability and was not used to how the physical difference put a distance between her and other people. It wasn’t as easy to make accommodations in these settings due to the physical constraints. “I’ve been in charge of Disability Services long before I had this temporary disability. I’m somebody who speaks sign language.” However, she said that she didn’t anticipate this. For her, it shed light on the difference between experiencing something and knowing it firsthand.

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

“Feminism is a bad word now in case you didn’t know, and I say that as someone who’s been deeply entrenched in second and third wave feminism.” She still thinks that people see feminism as a little off, not grounded in reality. Add the word *radical* to the

mix and she thinks people are really intimidated by feminism. Elle points out that there are institutions where activism, social justice, and social change are part of the environment, either academically or in a co-curricular sense. The institution she is at is not such a place. Her institution did not have a Women's Center until just over a decade ago so holding conversations about inequity is challenging.

Making Change in Higher Education

A barrier she sees in making gender equity changes in higher education is that a majority of people are looking at gender equality as purely an academic exercise, not something that is influencing systems and the environment. She goes on to talk about how often the conversation about gender misses the piece about power. She said that when she talks about challenges facing women in higher education, people automatically want to focus on the number of women and suggest there is no problem. What often gets lost in these conversations is where women are positioned, how much they make, and how they experience the campus. To her surprise, people have said to her "Now we need to change Title IX so it'll be for men and boys." She said that this kind of response is evidence that people don't understand the role of power, still, in discussions about gender inequity. Part of her role is to bring that into view.

Elle calls her primary strategy for getting around a problem "finding a workaround. I try to find a partner or partners who are influencers." She thinks there are many entities in higher education that should be collaborative partners, but that don't talk to one another.

Generational Differences

Elle believes there are some “translational difficulties” when talking among women who identify as feminists in higher education, but who are from different generations. She said that the current focus on girl culture is really anti-feminist. Because it is presented as a nonpolitical and nonthreatening alternative to feminism she thinks it has serious implications and could be an alternative for people who find feminism threatening.

Elle identified the theme that women can and are “doing it all” as a continuing challenge for feminism. She said that “feminists are saying well we can do it all,” but women cannot. While she understands that feminism has helped women see themselves in ways they had not previously—creating room for them to enter arenas otherwise off limits. However, she also sees that women are struggling with trying to “do it all.” They are expected to be stellar professionals, caregivers, and other things (as needed) but structures have not changed to help women keep these things in balance. She also expressed frustration with old stereotypes that continue to influence women’s experience. She expressed, “Women are not naturally nurturing, women do not have some special gene that makes them the primary [caregivers] of children.”

Elle said, “It’s always been important for me to have people who I can be in conversation with” around feminism and feminist ideals. She laughed and said that it is also important that some of those conversations take place with people who are historical, no longer alive and with us. The work of past feminist change-makers continues to be important to Elle and she draws strength from reading and understanding their work.

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

Elle thinks we need to look at leadership in higher education. “When we look at [leadership], even now, who becomes full professors, how tenure is set in most institutions, who is with or without tenure leave” she sees problems. She said that many institutions went from maternity leave to parental leave and now what is happening is that men are taking that parental leave but the wives are still taking care of the children. In the end, we’re seeing a disproportionate rate of women not earning tenure which is concerning.

Where men are not only getting tenure at the rate they used to but in some cases, getting tenure more quickly because they’re taking the year off to supposedly to care for the child, but then they finish their book while the wife is taking care of the child.

She says that she won’t enter the battle of whether or not tenure should exist, but sees the road to promotion and tenure as playing out differently.

Advocacy/Activism

Elle describes her involvement in advocacy and activism as being frequent and enduring.

I have been part of national organizations like Victim Assistance Project, NOW, Planned Parenthood, Black Women’s Health Collective, you name it. I even worked at a women’s health clinic for 6 years. So lots and lots of work: rape hotline, battered women hotline, suicide hotline.

This has largely occurred outside of higher education. When asked about advocacy and activism inside higher education she said she’s been responsible for defending rights “when people are discriminated against or treated poorly. I am often the person in our office responsible for dealing with that.” An example of her work was training a judicial panel that was going to hear a sexual harassment case. She had to make sure they

understood the dynamics of sexual harassment in order to have the most informed frame to decide if there was a violation and what the sanction might be.

Generation X

Elle teaches about generational differences as part of her job. This is how she described Generation X:

Generation X to me is the lost generation because we're not the 1960s generation, not the baby boomers; we didn't really do anything in the 60's. And we're pre the next generation. We are sort of the beginning of innovation and technology but we're not the people who take it to the whole new height; we're not credited for it. I don't say we're lost, like I don't mean like I personally ... lost. I'm saying that that's the generation that sometimes people gloss over.

She goes on to say that Baby Boomers ask Generation Xers, "You didn't do anything. What are you doing, you need to be more political." And then the Millennials say to the Generation Xers "Well, who are you? We knew about the 60s" but we don't know about you.

We're the sometimes the overlooked generation and some of that is because in higher education we don't have a retirement age so people stay a real long time. Unlike other industries there's not a lot of turnover. The other thing is I think our generation has attempted to challenge the status quo. So things like work schedules. In many ways we're the first generation to say this whole 9 to 5 really isn't working out, and we need to work in the evenings or whatever. I think also ... we're the first generation to challenge the very specific gender roles (i.e., maternity leave) that are happening in higher education because we're in the position to do so.

She goes on to say that the Millennial generation is able to take advantage of this push and move things even further and the generation before us didn't make those particular kinds of demands.

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

Elle experienced multigenerational connections to women in her work that she thinks have been capacity builders. She said that about 40% of the women she interacted

with were Baby Boomers, about 35% were a part of Generation X, and the remaining 25% were Millennials. The benefits of these broad connections have been an increase in community development, networking, and leadership opportunities.

From the Baby Boomer generation, Elle has received practical benefits like help with resumes or job searches. In this generation, she was raised by people who taught her to “do the best that you can do and make people’s lives around you the best that they can be.” Some not so welcome advice has been that they “sometimes seem to want you to be just like them.”

The advice has come like this “suck it up,” “it was harder in my day,” “you don’t know how hard it is,” “women need to be less soft—be harder,” “woman use too many excuses” the old bootstrap mentality. So I’ve heard a lot of that. I’m not saying it’s everyone but I’ve not passed that along for the most part.

Instead, Elle said she would translate this message in this way: she would tell women that there are difficulties in terms of gender and the key is to learn to read certain environments and figure out ways to navigate them. She thought this was a much better model than “suck it up.”

Leadership in Higher Education

Elle thinks we need leaders who will take risks and be willing to make mistakes. She also thinks we need to do more to groom leaders and utilize intentional strategies to identify people and develop them. Traditionally, “we’ve just let our leaders emerge” and often out of faculty ranks. She doesn’t think this model identifies the most innovative people and yet this is a time when we need innovation the most.

Personally, Elle is invested in studying leadership and strives to be innovative. She sees herself as moving into yet another leadership position, but is not certain that her way of thinking about leadership matches the current model. At a recent conference

where higher education was being discussed, she felt like the emphasis was on the financial bottom line that made her uncomfortable:

But what I'm saying and what I hear leaders talking about is a business model like an IBM model or a Johnson & Johnson model. And what I say innovation what I mean is you can't have a business model in higher education because our bottom line isn't money. Just that fact alone means that you if your bottom line isn't money then your bottom line is the production of scholarship. So But how are you going to measure that across time and space in a business model? Those are the kind of things when I mean leaders are going to have to be much more innovative to think about learning outcomes just can't be a business based model on a job as Obama suggested.

Her feminism has her striving for a model that brings a diversity of perspectives to the table.

You have different minds at the table so then you have different ideas as opposed to a singular idea. A singular idea is a business model. A complex idea is an intersected model that has business in it because you just can't throw business out, but it has all of the other factors in it as well.

I laugh now every time I walk into a classroom and people are sitting in a circle or a half circle or they're having little discussion groups—that's feminism. Nobody was doing that before feminists came along and started to do consciousness raising circles, teaching differently in the classroom, re-centering power. Now it's just part of how you teach in the classroom to be innovative and engaged. And that's important to me and where feminism made some real innovation in the classroom, we didn't get credit for it but we definitely made some real innovation.

She goes on to explain that as educators, we came to realize that we needed to break up the classroom to magnify different voices—chairs and people had to be moved around. She thinks the same needs to be done in higher education.

Torie

Torie is a 34-year-old Hispanic/Latina American woman who has been in higher education for 5-9 years. She has a doctoral degree, and is working at a 4-year public research institution where she has been in her mid-level, aspiring to senior level position for the past two years. Her work focuses on relationship management, a unique position

in higher education. She was motivated to participate in the study because of personal reflection and also because of discussions she has had with peers who are mothers and professionals regarding career paths and choices. In addition, she finds that there are large generational differences when it comes to how women's issues are now viewed and she thinks that "having those conversations with one another has been challenging" but believes that they are necessary.

Feminism and Feminist Identity

Torie defines feminism as "understanding and supporting the value of women in society, ensuring that there are not barriers ... and [valuing] and respecting women as individuals." She also defined action as being inherent to feminism. It means "really putting some stake in the ground or being willing to call out things that I feel are unfair or are biased." She went on to say that "feminism is in small acts and in large. Anybody can call themselves a feminist, it's not defined by the magnitude of the action it's the intent."

Torie thinks her mother and her own motherhood have been positive influences in further developing her feminist identity. "I don't think my mom would've called herself a feminist" but nonetheless Torie sees feminist attributes in her. Torie said that, while growing up, she was often the kid who had a working mom. "She was definitely the holder of the family and I didn't comprehend how much she did and did on her own without resentment (most of the time)." Now that Torie is a working mother, she is more aware of all that her mother did. In addition, her father was supportive of her mother and women in general. "My dad was another influence because he stayed home with me until I was in kindergarten." She noted that, when she was young, there were occasions when

she was cognizant of inequality in their relationship and this motivated her to address such issues. “[It] infuriates me when I don’t see people being fair to one another.”

Torie says that she had a sort of glamourized view of what life as a feminist, mother, and career woman was going to be like. She thinks a lot of Generation X feminists had this feeling and it hasn’t really played out that way. “I ... think we grew up with this disgust against the word ‘feminist’ and so a good portion [of Generation X] doesn’t use the word ... I definitely call myself a feminist but I don’t [evangelize] about it.”

In her office, Torie has some visible signs of her feminism and commitment to gender equity. She has a Chinese poem, that is a water color painting, that says “One day all under heaven will see beautiful free women blooming like fields of flowers.” She said it speaks to the fact that oppression exists and must be addressed far beyond the confines of China. She spoke about another piece of art that reflects women’s need to free themselves of things that are a burden. It is a picture of puzzle pieces and one is floating away and says, “One day she just decided to let go.” She also has pictures of her son and husband, content to display the fact that she is a partner and a mom.

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

When asked about historical influences on her feminism Torie said,

Eleanor Roosevelt was my first thought. I’ve always loved her. When I think of the feminist struggle I think of these women that society holds up, but it’s interesting because women leaders either fall into “she’s amazing” or “she’s a strong woman” category. Eleanor was just so fantastic and she’s someone [that] the more I learn about her the more amazed.

She talked about the pressures that Eleanor Roosevelt had in disguising her lower pitch voice by trying to learn to talk in a higher pitch in order to be more accepted. Torie then went on to talk about her fascination with the fight for women's right to vote.

More recent historical events include pop culture influences. Torie mentioned movies in the 1980s about working moms and babies including "Baby Boom" in which a working woman inherits a baby from her sister that died. She also talked about the working Barbie doll that wore a blazer. She remembers being inspired by a class trip to a university as a young kid where she saw a female professor walking across campus with long hair, a scarf, and briefcase. She connected to this image and somehow saw herself in it. "Here I am in higher education and I [can recall] this random person that I saw for a few seconds, but it was this idea that there were women working in higher education and that could be you someday." She also remembers "a hooding ceremony and I can't believe how much that shaped [me]. It was a person I knew getting their doctorate. It's funny how those iconic images are sort of in your head."

Influence of Feminism on Leadership

In terms of her feminism, Torie has always followed what she is interested in, which has historically put her in places where she is the only girl or woman. She said the guys hated her in high school and it wasn't until college that it was "cool" to be progressive. She felt like it prepared her for being comfortable in many male-dominated fields.

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

An area she wants to grow as a leader is in feeling more confident about what she does and doesn't "own." "Right now I feel I'm 75% confident and I'd really like to be at

85%.” She finds herself often questioning aspects of work/life balance and doesn’t want to be doing that to herself constantly. However, in the end she says:

I’m really proud of the fact that I made it through college and graduate school and working in higher ed and I made this crazy career path that I’m really proud of where I’ve gotten to considering I can look at all the things I should’ve done but I feel like I’m really happy with the choices I made. There’s some things I started at the university in terms of communication and change management that they were just seeds planted originally, almost a whisper campaign. Knowing that three or four years ago I was working very hard on these things and working with a number of people and explaining to them how we could be more effective and now seeing those things come out is great. It’s like “oh wow I was working on that and now it’s living with these other people” and that’s a fantastic feeling to say “we helped create this thing.” I’m proud of my son and that I survived through being a spouse with a Ph.D. getting through that dissertation process. And through 3 job searches. And I think that I’m really proud of how our family has been able to navigate that and learn from it.

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

Torie’s identity has been shaped by her first-generation college status, her disability, her own parenting status, and her ties to her working class immigrant parents. She had a unique path to getting to where she is in higher education today. She went to college by following guidebooks that helped her decide what she wanted to do for a career. What was she to major in? How small/large should her classrooms be? She determined she would major in biology with an eye to being pre-med. She was a first generation college student and she was looking for an institution where she could pursue this dream with the support of a scholarship. She ended up choosing a small liberal arts school and majoring in biology, though she now realizes she could have been happy at any number of places.

After being there a while, she began having health problems and wondered why she was going into medical school, which she did not consider disability friendly? She was strong at creative writing, but when a professor asked her about switching her major

she said, “I laughed at him. What does anybody do with a creative writing degree? I need to have a job; I’m a biology major.” The professor helped her with this first-gen translation and she did end up switching.

Instinctively I knew people followed what they are interested in ... but I felt that there was that working class, recent immigrant oldest child feeling of “but I have to—everybody at home is waiting for me to do something and coming back as a creative writer isn’t what they’re waiting for.” But I did do it and my parents were very supportive.

This led her to her next institution at a time when they were starting a Disability Studies program. It matched beautifully with her own journey in exploring herself as a person with a disability and her love for all things interdisciplinary. She said that her disability has actually kept her connected to “the softer side of things, nurturing and balance and what we normally appreciate as more female characteristics.” She has often been the only woman in mostly all male environments where taking care of oneself, vocally and outwardly anyway, has not been the norm. Because she has to focus attention on personal well-being to stay healthy, this has helped her to achieve a greater sense of balance.

But when she found out that she was pregnant she said she “very quickly ... had an identity crisis. I love my son, I love being a mother. But I felt like every other risk ... paled in comparison to being a mom. And thinking, ‘What do I do?’” She said that her identity was so tied up in her intellectual pursuits that the fear of not being able to tackle those due to a potential dip in productivity made her question a lot of things.

She went on to talk more about how being a mom has shaped her feminism.

It challenges you to think about, what is it that you want to teach your son about the world? And in particular it challenges ... your thinking about how much home influenced me (and it influences everybody). But what is happening in the space of our house and our home and [my] conversations with my partner and how does

that influence my son's view of women. Certainly it has weighed into my decisions to take certain positions, or not to apply for certain positions, [or] to go back to school.

She shared that she is conscientious about what she teaches him, hoping to one-day influence him as the "ideal partner."

And that really forces you to look at yourself and to say "What are the behaviors that I'm exhibiting that he's going to learn from?" Is it going to be resentment, is it going to be closing myself off, is it going to be sacrifices, or is it going to be happiness knowing I'm giving more.

Finally, the influence of family origin has also played a role in shaping Torie.

Her grandparents came from very male-dominated cultures: Greek and Puerto Rican.

Despite this, she was surrounded by almost all girl cousins and the women in her family have very strong personalities. "I do feel bad for my dad now," but she also recognizes the sexism in how people talk to him about their family. She said that people say, "Oh, you have 4 daughters? You poor guy" but people don't say that when you have four boys." She then laughed and remarked that they should say, "You lucky guy!"

In the end, she thinks that being a feminist is at the top of the list of the most salient aspects of her identity. Working to dismantle inequitable structures and resilience seems to also be tied into her feminism and her working class, immigrant connections closely. She said feminism

defines me and I think about it often. It's one thing to care about women and feel like I need to work about it but it's another thing to have that grit to be like "yeah I'm going ... to experience prejudice and bias and be personally conflicted all the time and I'm going to get up and do it again."

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

When asked about obstacles or challenges to holding onto her feminist identity Torie said this, "I have one of the most supportive husbands that I know of and he was

raised by a very strong feminist, who has also been a tremendous influence in my life.”

Despite this, she said, without even realizing it, they are also filling traditional gender roles. He being the typical male faculty person, exercising flexibility, and she is being the typical woman in higher education, bending where needed. Of the two she said,

I'm the one that's constantly more flexible, I'm the one who is making the career decisions that will not risk his career. I think [that being] dual partners [in higher education] is a challenge to my feminist identity. I will say that I've been told by many people to expect a divorce or have that conversation ... it's depressing to be told that and makes me angry and hopeless.

She went on to say that she wonders how all of these brilliantly smart people in higher education can miss how “biased” the system is. Torie thinks that higher education is making superficial moves to “make it look like we are family friendly,” but that people know better. Many choose to “not [have] kids or they're choosing to have one child or they're choosing to have children in a certain time period” in reaction to these constraints.

Making Change in Higher Education

During her career, Torie was working in instructional design and communications and policy. With these skills, she became interested in how ADA (Americans with Disability) rules are created and communicated. What she found was a “lack of governance and implementation across the university and reinforcement, especially when it comes to staff and faculty members.” Her method to change, in this case, was to do what she needed in order to find out how it works to affect it.

She ended up leading a huge change project that created one identifier for the university. In this process, she was able to turn around some less than positive relationships with different departments.

I was responsible for getting them on board and making sure they helped, and I came up with and spent a lot of time talking with them and facilitating and getting feedback from them and being transparent [about] what we could do and what we couldn't. I also created an advisory group made up of technical people from the community ... actually involving them with the project and certain project decisions. And then also we created a steering committee for the project where I helped identify the university leaders that needed to be on it and then sat on that committee with the project manager and the program director and I was responsible for giving them updates and change management and communications. And really honestly calling out where people were fearing change.

The process she took them through was increasing awareness, creating understanding, and moving them to acceptance. "There's going to be fear or people are going to have their natural change response which is to be suspicious or not like it. You're not going to get 100% agreement but we have to accept that and move on." She thinks this approach is somewhat unique in higher education where we talk about things forever and have to have consensus. She designed group liaisons to overcome some of the resistance.

I had made a lot of allies in that process and really working through this and saying "we all know we need to do this" and at the start of the process people hated it and were like "can't do this, no way."

In the end, she believes the outreach to others was key and has become a standard for doing other large scale projects. Torie thinks the key to change is "being able and willing to bring those people into the conversation that are going to be your outliers that can actually help you identify what are the things we should consider and haven't thought of?"

Generational Differences

Torie took note of the dissonance she has felt in dealing with contradictory messages she garnered as a child and then as an adult. As a child, she was raised by a

strong, working mom, surrounded by three sisters and a supportive father. Through those interactions, she received the message that women “can do anything.” But now, as an adult, professional, and mother, she is having trouble implementing the concept. At the end of one particularly tough semester she looked back and had these reflections:

I’m home less, my house is a mess, and my husband is totally stressed out. Was this “leaning in”? Had I made it? Because I don’t feel that excited about it. Why am I doing that? There are days when I fanaticize about staying home.

As it relates to feminism, she thinks there are “huge generational differences in women” and what women are fighting for. She also senses some distance from women who are considered “role models” when it comes to how they observe and/or judge her choices. Sometimes she feels “dismissed or almost this resentment at the choices I have that others didn’t have.” She said that when she has framed the solution to a dilemma as being good for herself she has felt that others (older than her) view this as “really selfish.” Since “selfish” is not an adjective she wants used to describe her, she has asked herself the question “How [can] I be strong and independent but not selfish and also be responsible to all these other things that I am still responsible for?” She reflected that women’s empowerment in the 30s and 40s can feel limiting in a way that simply doesn’t exist at age 16 or 17.

Throughout her career, she has frequently had colleagues/friends that were 10 to 15 years older than her.

We’re experiencing things in different times ... and that’s definitely contributed to my identity in good and bad ways. Good in allowing me to view certain things or find certain opportunities that I maybe wouldn’t ... have. Bad in that I’m holding myself up to someone who’s ten years ahead of me and feeling like “why haven’t I done these things yet?”

She also described people in their 40s or 50s as being closer to, or in, “their golden years.” She said, “Their kids are older, they just seem happier and I think ‘It’s going to take me 20 years to get to that point?’”

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

Torie’s personal research interests reflect what she sees as some of the pressing gender inequity issues in higher education. She noted women dropping out of the pipeline (e.g., in Ph.D. or master’s programs). “There are so many issues with women adjuncts ... and they have no rights whatsoever. They have no access to maternity leave and it would never happen to a man.” The fact that we think it’s “ok” is really bothersome to her. “We have an incredibly talented population of people who are being undervalued and underpaid, and over worked.” She adds that this is especially concerning since they have

the most face time with our students but ... the least influence in the future of the departments that they are in. Women who are in those roles have no maternity leave or course reduction options and to me it feels like we’re back to early industrial U.S. Yet we’re consciously ignoring it.

She goes on to mention hiring practices as being problematic. What “mystifies me is that the criteria for hiring is so loose ... it’s so obvious that people are hiring not [using] consistent criteria. We like this person, they look like us, they act like us.” She contends there are ramifications of this. “We’re losing great leaders in higher education because of these things and we’re allowing them to exist. I think we lose women in higher education ... and nobody does anything about it.”

She said she inwardly struggles with whether to stay in higher education or not because of the many inequity issues.

I love higher education but it is very male dominated. We have the pay discrepancies, the cultural attitudes, collaboration is bad ... there's not the recourse that you would have in companies because you risk black listing yourself across the country. Higher education has all these really smart people who are taught to work independently and at the expense of the other people. We're taught in graduate school to be smarter, better, get ahead, [and] collaborate, but it's only collaboration for yourself. It's not for the greater good. It's collaboration to help [further] your perspective or research or your writing.

Torie believes that, in the end, this influences “how people address problems, their willingness to join in.” She said that too often, it is women taking on the collaboration and becoming caretakers. Torie had a tremendous moment of personal empowerment after participation in the HERS institute. She said that she came home thinking “I could be president.” When she shared that news with her partner, he said, “Well, you're going to have to consider what that's going to mean for us ... me ... what would that mean for us?”

Advocacy/Activism

In terms of her advocacy/activism, Torie said, “There's time where I've been much more politically active and I don't feel like I'm politically active right now. I feel like there's a lot of younger women without children or partners who say ‘that's no excuse.’” She says this pressure is something that should be discussed among intergenerational feminist women leaders. Torie does view her commitment to teaching as a tie to her advocacy/activism. She said that, at times throughout college, she became frustrated with “sitting in the classroom talking about things and not actually doing.” From her place in higher education, she tries to do as much as she can within the constraints of time and role.

She bases her decisions on her personal values and has stepped off projects that don't align.

Last year I stepped off, that was highly political and a power play and I was responsible to be the project manager during the org change for it and it involved people's jobs. I felt like I could do it and do it right and I realized very quickly that there were games being played on a much higher level than me and I would not be able to.

In this instance, she courageously removed herself from the project. She said it was later redesigned in a way that it should have been from the start. "I lost some career momentum with that but I know it was the right decision." She said that she wants to believe there are authentic leaders everywhere, but realizes that not everyone operates in this way. As someone that is navigating leadership in higher education, she feels good about knowing the kind of leadership she is comfortable with.

"I have this belief that we can change the world," she said, even though she communicated that she knows the world is messy and change is hard. She does work with women on campus by supporting events and participating in focus groups that direct recommendations to the President's Council on Women. She is also on her unit's culture team and on the sub-team which centers on mentoring. The mentoring program is restarting after a few years of stagnation.

Generation X

Torie said, "Even though I'm at the tail end of Generation X I feel I closely identify with Generation X. I'm [also] married to a Gen Xer." She feels like Generation X is shaped by the financial boom. She thinks that this generation operates on an assumption that they will have cars, houses, families, careers, and jobs and that they "should" all have that. She thinks this generation was also shaped by efforts to "take care of the earth" and recycling. What she says she likes about Generation X is that it is made up of individuals who are "willing to redefine things."

Torie feels like Generation X likes to “challenge the norm and/or the constraints.” While she doesn’t think everyone is entitled (though there are plenty out there who think this way) she does believe Generation X is “calling out for individuality, but individuality that’s not selfishness.”

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

She said that over the last couple of years she realized that women in her generation (Generation X) need to be talking to other women. “We never know what we’re going to say that is going to help that person make the next step.” She spoke about the fact that, as feminists, the frames are different. She is around women who have broken the glass ceiling without the protection of non-discrimination laws. She, on the other hand, grew up with the icon of “Working Girl” and a host of other movies that were really about women coming into the work force. “I have women that I’ve worked with that are older than me are like ‘the first woman technician for AT&T’ and I’m aware that they went before me and [the] responsibility [I have] to really do something.” She said she may not be the first, but she does feel like she has high expectations to fulfill due to the level of work and the amount of angst earlier women endured. She added that while she still thinks there is work to do, it is not necessarily a fighting situation in the way it once was.

She gave a resounding “yes” when asked if she has women mentors. She shared that most of the women that have mentored her are Baby Boomers and not a part of Generation X. The woman that she spoke most about is 15 years her senior and shares in her journey of navigating a disability (she has one, too) and using creative writing as an outlet. Torie said that her departure from the university spoke volumes about the

difference that she made since so many people showed up to tell her what a difference she made in their lives. It made her hope that she, too, would leave this kind of mark at the university. She joked that “sometimes that higher education can suck out your soul,” but in the end, it is full of a lot of wonderful as well.

On the one hand, Torie said there can seem to be notable differences generationally, but believes these can be refuted when women really talk. As an example, she thought about the struggles of working women who were nursing who came before her. “I’m still standing in a bathroom stall” still struggling. She thinks some things haven’t changed enough. She had a woman come up to her at a leadership development workshop and say to her “Do you have a kid?” When Torie replied “Yes,” the woman said, “I’m just so proud of you. I decided I could never have kids because of my job and I’m so happy that you made that decision.” She thought it was heartbreaking to hear and she was stunned by it. That was a moment when she realized *that* other people are still feeling forced into choices not entirely their own.

Nonetheless, there can be friction when trying to understand what the current limits for women are who are Baby Boomers versus Gen Xers. She referenced her mother-in-law who has been an amazing influence, but who’s also very passionate about who does and doesn’t call them a feminist. They had a conflict over the book *Lean In*. Torie thought it reflected some important messages, but her mother-in-law, using a more dogmatic feminist lens, was quick to point out all of the things that were missing in Sanberg’s analysis. “Her and I had this conversation and that’s where us being able to have these intergenerational conversations” allowed them both to grow.

When it comes to advice, what she has heeded has been around “being in control of my own career, following what I am passionate about, getting the continuous development that I want, building a network, and not being ashamed and just doing it.” She said she has ignored advice opposite this, that suggests that she should take her time. This has come to her in comments like “Don’t really worry about [advancement] that much or [don’t] be as upfront if there’s changes that need to be made in the organization.” She has gotten the sense from some that she has to pay her dues before she should have access to certain senior level leaders.

I think that depends on who it is. There are baby boomers that are more aggressive with encouraging you to stand up and be known and others who are like “oh well you really shouldn’t get involved.” So I tend to [connect to] what I think is the most helpful and appropriate for my situation. In higher education the advice that has stuck with me has been around the dual career search and career progression and how women negotiate that with their spouses ... partners and that’s ranged from “be prepared that you may need to get a divorce” to “be prepared to let go of certain positions ... for the sake of your spouse’s happiness.” It’s nice to know that everyone is struggling with this.

Since Torie can spend a whole day in meetings with all men, and never see another woman, she has to be really intentional about reaching out and mentoring. With few women, “there’s a number of us that are looking for ways to support each other through coaching [especially] if there’s any discrimination happening and helping ... find resources.” Since she is knowledgeable and connected to a lot of resources at the university she makes it her responsibility. “I’ve made it my personal goal to make sure that all the other women that are new to the organization, I invite them to anything I see coming, and if they don’t want to come that’s fine.”

Torie says she enjoys connecting with Millennials “a lot.” She said that working with them has made her more aware of how she might be perceived as the older

generation to them. She loves their frankness when asking questions like “I’m considering going back to school, should I do this before I have a family or after?” or “Here’s what I’m thinking about.” Their directness, she thinks, is a bit different than Generation X. She does think that there is friction between Generation X and Millennials, just like there is friction between Generation X and Baby Boomers. “Baby Boomers seem to have this resentment sometimes ... like we need to put you through more fire because of what we went through.” She spoke about a mentor relationship with a Baby Boomer where she thinks that the differences are highlighted by this person’s need to have an elevated stance.

Leadership in Higher Education

Her interest in organizational design and communication has influenced her practice of leadership. She was trained in the “Art of Hosting” which is focused on assisting people communicate more effectively, engage in change, and bring people together. She has really used this in her IT work where she says that communication is not a premium. As a result, she practices “mindfulness and keeping the purpose in the center of things.” She says this process is a “fantastic ways of facilitating difficult conversations or easy ones, too.”

“My philosophy is that a leader is best at helping the people that they’re leading to succeed and that a leader’s happiness comes from, not their own successes, but the successes of the group.” She also believes that a leader can acknowledge when they need to step out of something. She is grateful for people who have assisted her and saw some hard times coming.

They saw this coming and let me have this mistake and then helped me learn from it. When I supervise people or work with groups it’s really important for me to

remember that if they're looking to me for leadership it doesn't mean telling them how to do everything, it means helping them to learn.

As a leader, Torie sometimes feels guilty for things that she has nothing to do with. She is trying to work on "giving myself the freedom to let go of thinking about something and owning it. Especially in my role as a relationship manager, people tell you a lot of what is not working." Torie leads with the value of transparency and seeks out supporters who are at the center and can sway decisions to desired outcomes. She says that people in higher education have a nasty association with that word "politics" and say "we're not political" but in reality everything is political.

It just exists everywhere. And it can happen on a global level and also at a very departmental level. There's people who have perceived roles with power, there's people who actually wield that power, there's people who are afraid to lose power.

She finds higher education's hierarchical structure is a challenge.

There is this great perception that all these layers need to be aligned in order for the bottom most layer to do something. In reality the top layer is saying here are our goals and mission, go do it. I don't need to bless every little thing that's going to happen. But we get caught up in the "Well, this person needs to be informed because they do get missed if they're not involved." When do we start trusting? We'll never make anything happen in higher ed if we have everybody who has a position of power involved.

Torie spends time with people at all levels helping them to facilitate change. She thinks a barrier to doing this well is being able to "look at a living system of people and departments" through the lenses of university priorities and roles. She says that people often have a hard time letting go of folks based on time in service. If people were to look at the whole system, they would not always automatically move people with seniority into senior level positions. They would think about roles "agnostic of the people" and sometimes make different decisions.

Torie said that while she doesn't particularly like politics, she does take some enjoyment in trying to figure it out. "For some reason I've also discovered that this is something I'm good at ... reading the way people are acting. Sometimes you can predict what changes are going to happen like way before they happen." She also thinks a sense of humor is necessary. She says that integrity is key in leadership and stresses that the leader should be working for the good of the whole and not themselves. Torie's personal values, that operate in her leadership, include integrity, empathy, responsibility, intellectual ideation, balance or sustainability, and family.

She thinks colleges and universities are at a tipping point. She attributes part of this volatile time to the rotation of presidents every 5 years or so. That timeline can be "destructive in being able to make progress ... [but] sometimes that disruption is good." She thinks that leadership that is willing to make change is necessary. People are now realizing that constant quality improvement and the ability to make change are "viewed as a skill and asset rather than a quirk." She does think her intersecting identities as a woman with a disability, as Hispanic, and as a mother give her a unique perspective. She recognizes, however, that "there's a limitless amount of things that need change ... and I'm not [limitless] person." Nonetheless, she feels like she has what colleges and universities need."

Mia

Mia is a 41-year-old White woman who has been in higher education for 15-19 years. She has a doctoral degree and is working at a 4-year public, master's comprehensive institution where she has been in her current mid-level position for the past six years. Her work focuses on technology where she has responsibility for about

one-half of university Information Technology (IT) work. She wanted to participate in the study “because I think your research question aligns and is related to what I’m interested in researching, which is women in leadership.” She was also motivated as someone who is in a mid-level position, aspiring to a senior level position. Mia believes that the current male leadership in her department will be around for another 3-5 years and that, following their departures, she has potential for stepping into one of their senior leadership positions. She is also interested in branching out beyond IT to understand administration and finance and sees these as fitting into her plan of becoming a Vice President in the next decade.

Feminism and Feminist Identity

Mia defined feminism as “the idea or belief that men and woman should have equal rights and opportunities. But I don’t think that this is how most people understand feminism.” Mia articulated that using the word *feminist* can be challenging for her based on the largely held meaning of the word. “I actually don’t like the word because it sounds like it’s a preference for women to have more power than men or power over men.” As a result, she chooses not to use it.

Mia expressed that she adopted a feminist identity about four years ago when she started her Ph.D. program:

I faced some adversity at work which I thought resulted partially because of my gender. So what I started to do was research what barriers women faced in the workplace. The more I read the more I realized how many of the barriers had affected me without [my] being aware. For example, I found it difficult to exert confidence and decisiveness as a leader.

She also stated:

Before I started my research I really didn’t think gender was a factor in the workplace, and of course it was based on my own experience, either I thought you

worked hard or you didn't. And if you worked hard you'd be rewarded and if you didn't you wouldn't be rewarded.

Mia's placement as a woman in a male-dominant environment and her role as leader in that space have shaped her interest in the influence of gender in higher education. "So out of the thirty or so people that are in my group, five of us are women. And I'm like the most senior one." In this predominantly male environment she spent some time thinking about how men may or may not identify with the term.

A lot of men don't identify themselves as feminist because in our culture masculine is preferred over feminine. So I think that for a lot of men it's a threat to their male power and that perhaps their male identity to identify as a feminist. I do think a lot of men, many, they do believe in equal rights and opportunities at least theoretically. They just won't identify with the label.

She went on to say "I actually hesitate to identify myself as a feminist to others because of that issue, that it's a misunderstanding of the term. But I have no problem expressing that I believe in equal opportunities for women."

In Mia's office you can find a certificate of completion for a women's leadership program, but she indicated that one would have to look really hard to know that it is specific to this population. Other than that, there are no visible indicators of her feminism.

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

Mia indicated that while she doesn't recall women gaining the right to vote in her lifetime, this shaped her thinking about feminism. In her lifetime, she remembers the first female candidate for Vice President, Geraldine Ferraro, and then, more recently, the candidacies of Sarah Palin for Vice President and Hillary Clinton for President. What she remembers about the last two is that:

their opponents were quick to pull out the cards related to their gender and use them against them. For example, the media would focus on their looks, their hair, their attire, things they would never say about their male candidates. They would write about it and focus on the female candidates. It was about the issues but they would also pull out the other things related to being a female or woman.

She went on to reflect that this act of focusing on issues that take away from the substance of women also happens at the university; she sees the higher education environment as a microcosm of what happens in society. She says, it may

not be to the extreme, no media reports, but there's more attention put on women in their looks, their hair, and things like that that don't occur with men. I notice myself in how I dress. I feel how I dress in the workplace is important because it's projects an image if you're a man or a woman. I have a struggle because I have to look feminine but not too feminine. But I can't look too masculine. I find myself wearing pants suits all the time and think "I'm dressing just like a man" but of course they make them more feminine.

When asked about how these historical events may influence her leadership, she said that she can't say these events necessarily affect her leadership style, but rather how she portrays herself.

Making sure I look professional, a little feminine, but that I don't stand out because I don't want to walk into the workplace and I hardly ever wear skirts but I want to make sure it's the right length, not too short, the whole outfit can't be a flamboyant color. It can't stand out.

Influence of Feminism on Personal Leadership

Mia indicated that because of feminism "I sort of have this lens where I notice inequality that exists for women in different situations." Mia engaged in her own research on gender differences as part of her doctoral work in the hopes of helping women identify barriers to their personal success as well as skills to overcome those barriers. In engaging with the literature she recognized that some of what she was reading about women in leadership resonated with her own experiences. She said she realized "Hey, some of this stuff has been happening to me." By reading and connecting

with the stories, she recognized that what she viewed as an individual problem was potentially more systematically tied to gender. At first Mia was wondering “What’s wrong with me? Why can I not communicate the same way my male boss communicates and get away with it or be respected?”

Mia has noted gender differences that have influenced her leadership in higher education:

I had a male boss and he could just issue an edict that would be accepted by the group. He could just say something like “Ok we’re going to do this” and the group would be like “Ok.” But if I did that I found out quickly that I wasn’t respected and people didn’t buy into the solution or the direction. My only option is that I learned to lead my group in a collaborative and consultative fashion. I realized that there were unspoken rules for leadership in the workplace that enable men, I believe, and at the same time these rules disfavor or even disempower women.

Mia’s feminism

colors how I look at situations at work I am consciously thinking is this like if I see something like an injustice (usually minor) but if I see something that happened at work, I consciously ask myself was this a gender issue? Or even, when I think about our hiring practices, I have to think of my own conscious biases when evaluating applications and applicants. Do I look at someone who’s a woman and apply stereotypes of women to this person? Perhaps give a disadvantage to the person. And I’ve had to speak these things out and with my staff. I’ve had to talk about “What do we need to do more to hire woman in our organization?”

She talked to them about not just hiring computer students, since there are a lot less women in computer science, but rather looking for students who have the skills but may not be in that major.

It has also motivated her to ask questions and respond in certain ways:

How can I apply what I know and make a difference in the workplace and make a difference in other things outside of the workplace like family stuff? Like if I was in a marriage how would I do something differently? And if I were a close friend, speaking something out, I don’t want to feel confrontative or judgmental to my friends.

Mia indicated that being a feminist in leadership in higher education also “means that I have responsibility to mentor younger women especially those that report to me.”

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

Mia views her approach to leadership as part of her success.

I believe you work with the people you lead and you develop with them a shared vision and work with them to enact that. I think it’s key to build relationships with all stakeholders inside and outside your department and organization. It’s key to enlist their support and also work towards mutual beneficial goals.

Mia believes the leader needs to be the chief communicator and have the ability to recognize the team member’s contributions and celebrate victories. How does Mia enact that? She responded:

I would say I hire good people and I allow them to do the job that they are hired for. I support them for what they need to do their job whether it’s resources or professional development or whatever. But then I expect them to be the expert in their domain and I go to them because I want to know what their best strategies are and I want their input. And I use the 1:1 meetings and the team meetings to gather their input and thoughts and add to the collective vision, but even the day to day goals for what we’re doing.

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

When asked about other aspects of identity that intersect with her feminist identity, beyond generation, Mia said “another aspect that I know shaped my identity as a feminist is my relationship status and my status as a parent. I’m single and I don’t have kids.” She went on to explain that this is another reason she is hesitant to use the feminist label, because these identities already make her a bit of an outsider. She again indicated that while she hates the label “feminist” and won’t use it, she agrees with the space it creates to critique things. The example she gave is the inequity that exists in marriages around caretaking and shared responsibilities. Being single has allowed her to hold more

firmly to her ideals and not fall into these traditional roles and she thinks this is an advantage in the workplace. “I’m not getting on the “mommy track.””

But she also acknowledged that her single status

does affect how I lead although I can’t say it’s a positive thing. For me I feel I have a decreased sensitivity to those who have families only because I don’t understand what it’s like to have children or family responsibilities. I am supportive of whatever flexibility that they need but it’s up to them to tell me what they need, I can’t guess it.

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

When asked about whether holding onto a feminist identity has been challenging in higher education, Mia indicated:

There have been no challenges within the context of higher education. As far as environments go I think higher education is relatively progressive and accepting. I don’t proclaim myself as a feminist at work or anywhere else because I think that using the labels politicizes it which causes divisiveness. I will listen to political conversations at work and engage in them but I don’t say my stance, like I’m a Democrat or Republican. I would rather engage with the person and listen to what they have to say and not cause any kind of divisiveness. I will express my belief in equality for men and women I just will not use the term or label feminist. I prefer to work towards feminist ideals without using the labels.

Making Change in Higher Education

Mia’s strategy for instituting change is to communicate “why the change is needed, what are the deadlines, what’s the purpose, what’s the goal? And it’s not stating it once but it’s repeating it.” She also refrains from defining the specific way that change will be accomplished. “I allow that to come up from the team. That gives them buy-in to the solution and ownership which is huge.” She also sees her role as connecting her unit to the larger university discussions—being in the larger campus community communicating the goals to make sure they are included.

Mia believes there are always political limits that can hold up change. Her strategy is to go to the people who she has relationships with—those that may be below those who are in power, to tell her story and to strategize. She spoke about a specific situation in which she thought a senior management person made a poor decision. Mia expressed that she didn't feel comfortable in going to her in a direct manner and saying, "Hey, you guys screwed up" or "You should've come to us." Instead, she felt she had to come off as nice and deal with it. She said,

I couldn't be real and frank. All I can say is "Okay, you made this decision, let's go forward and make the best of it." If I'm too direct, I'll be labeled the "b" word especially when I'm dealing with another woman.

Mia went on to say that power

affects everything in higher education from what gets taught, who teaches it, what knowledge can be created, who gets to create that knowledge. What viewpoints, politically correct ones, that the institution adopts. As with many organizations, change in higher education is very slow and it's often opposed by those at the top of the various structures, such as the university administration, the top of the faculty union, the top of the staff union, even those in student government.

She concludes that, in general, change is often opposed because it could be a threat to personal power or status quo.

The goal of those in charge is to stay in charge, and the goal for those with status within those groups is to maintain their status. So anything that could disrupt the status quo negatively is opposed by those in control by default. That means change is a slow process and major change only happens when there's new leadership to replace the old of the various groups.

When asked about how her feminism influences her change-making in the workplace Mia offered "at times if I have the opportunity I'll point out the inequality to other people, but not in any kind of forceful way."

After reflecting and reading her narrative, Mia added:

I see change as evolutionary process and not a revolutionary process. I am not an idealist, who believes that revolution can occur. For example, when we elect a new president for the United States, that person may be able to make progress, but he or she will never be able to “change Washington” culture or politics overnight or even within 4 years. University culture is similar in that way. A new university president is much better served to adapt to the existing culture and make step-by-step incremental changes, then to step in and throw everything upside down. I consider myself to be realist, and I understand that almost all change occurs in baby steps. So when I lead, I lead toward evolutionary change, which is a slow, methodical process. This slow process ensures that as many stakeholders as possible are on board and are comfortable with the change.

Generational Differences

Mia said that she had never thought about how she defines herself as a part of Generation X. She indicated that she believes it encompasses people born between the mid 60s to the mid 80s. She remembers most the iconic markers of the 80s—movies, TV shows, etc.

Her comments on generational differences focus far more on what’s different about Generation X versus the Baby Boomers or Millennials:

It seems to me that there was a more healthy balance in child rearing. The Baby Boomers ... had children so they could work on the farm. They were there to be a service to their families and not much individual attention or focus on each child. Some of this is based on my own experience and my parents both came from farming families. They were large, eight on my mom’s side, seven on my dad’s. But the male children were expected to become farmers and the female children were expected to become wives. So higher education wasn’t valued or needed. But I found that though growing up in the 80s things had changed, I was taught a good work ethic. I was responsible for chores around the house. But my parents allowed me to play in sports if I initiated it. They allowed me to go to college but that was at my initiation to go to the local university. They didn’t take me on a college tour. They didn’t spoil me, they didn’t schedule me in a myriad of extra-curricular activities to take up my every waking hour.

As a result, she notes the generational difference between Generation X and Millennials. Generation X parents seem to focus more on the idealization of children. Mia said there is “more focus on children, overscheduling of their time, trying to mold

the perfect child who has all the right clothes, toys, educational equipment, and the right schools, the right activities, all to create this perfectly balanced person.”

She also feels like there wasn't an expectation on Generation X to work and give service like there is for Millennials. Generation X parents did not provide enough balance for kids. “I can see my friends and the way they have their kids in all these activities and think ‘my parents never did this.’”

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

According to Mia, gender can help or hinder depending on the circumstance, but it is most definitely a factor. Her own experience of gender in her male-dominated field in higher education has been complicated. On the technical side, she was able to excel in her role and actually felt very acknowledged for her performance as a woman exercising these skills. When she moved into a leadership role, however, she began to see gender differently. At times Mia said her gender

enabled me to advance and only because I work in a university where gender diversity is important. I was the only woman who had the skills and abilities to advance so that helped me. That's where I wasn't seeing that gender was an issue; it wasn't until later when I got into, maybe the last 8–10 years ago, where I was leading larger teams of people and realized that the leadership aspect and that being a woman was a hindrance. I couldn't emulate my male boss and that was a little bit frustrating because at the time he was the only example that I had to be a good leader in IT. It was this awakening that “gender is an issue” but it wasn't until I worked my way through the institution.

In her current leadership role, being a woman is a conscious status for her.

I can't just go into even my team who I have responsibility for, and who report to me, I can't go into a meeting and say “we're going to do this.” It's more subconscious. I can go into a meeting and I can direct the meeting but I have to do it in a way that leads them with my questions

as opposed to her authority.

An area of gender disparity that Mia noted was the paucity of women in STEM majors. “Even though there’s more females than males enrolled in college in general there’s a huge gap in the technology majors.” She also indicated that leadership is a pressing issue: “There’s a large gender gap for presidents and their senior leadership teams. And that gap is more pronounced at the more prestigious institutions like the doctoral granting institutions.” She also noted the gender gap for tenured faculty and for full professors. “Women make up the higher proportions of the non-tenure tract lecturer and the temporary adjunct.” She concluded with concerns about equitable pay for all positions.

Advocacy/Activism

When asked the question about her involvement with feminist activism or collective action Mia indicated that she has not been involved in any. However, I noticed examples of “advocacy” during her interview. She said that she strives to

create an inclusive environment and inclusive culture where women are supported as leaders. I do that in various ways with my research, mentoring other people, and then with promoting myself in a way that doesn’t come across negatively. Not settling with my current level of authority and responsibility, doing what I can to advance myself into senior leadership, so I can have more responsibility and ability to make change.

Generation X

When asked about the narratives that shape generations Mia had a difficult time coming up with those for Generation X. “I know there are narratives out there for the Millennials, the need to multitask all the time and preferring to work from home.” But, as it relates to her own generation, she said she had never really thought about it. She said, “I almost think that because I’m an insider it’s hard for me to get outside and see the narrative that other people are telling about me.”

She did, however, identify cultural differences based on generational placement. When recently at a leadership program for women, Mia indicated that a consultant presented on appropriate “dress” for women when they are applying to a presidency. She noted the comment of a woman scientist in the group who said, regardless of the cultural norms for dress in this type of role, “I’m just going to be the person who I’m going to be.” While Mia appreciated this, she noted that “the people who are hiring presidents and senior leadership team, are the boards of trustees and they tend to be the older establishment.” There was a sense that, while this is the current reality, there are things that can and should change over time.

Mia describes her personal values as stability, loyalty, mutual respect, being true to one’s word, honesty, integrity and harmony. When asked if these values are shaped by her generation she said, “I would think they all are shaped by my generation but can’t give specifics.” In response to being asked to think about her Generation X identity, she said “It’s easier for me to answer the question about the feminist identity. I feel like I’ve made much more meaning of my feminist identity.” When it comes to Generation X “the only meaning I came up with is the common tie with other people in my same age group. Beyond that I have a harder time making meaning of it or I haven’t really thought about.”

After reflecting and reading her narrative, Mia added this:

My connection to Generation X is a common history that can be shared with others in the generation. For example, socially, I can say, “Do you remember this 80s movie or the Challenger explosion or when Reagan was shot?” and have a shared connection with someone else who is in my generation. That is important as a social glue to others, as it makes it easy to relate to someone, even if you have nothing else in common.

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

Mia has had mostly male mentors and has not thought much about the benefits of having women mentors. The two primary male mentors that Mia has had are Baby Boomers.

My mentors have been male and my direct supervisors ... and I've had totally different experiences with the two of them. The first one was much more controlling. My current supervisor is much more open and he actually "gets it" related to issues with women in leadership. As much as any man is going to get it, he gets it.

After reflection and reading her narrative she added:

I did have two female bosses at my college internship and then first professional position. They were not mentors, but they were role models for me, as I watched them lead our workgroup. Both had earned MBAs, which inspired me to go to graduate school to obtain an MBA.

Mia indicated the process of succession planning by the Baby Boomers she interacts with has been helpful to her in furthering her leadership aspirations. She has two senior men in the organization who will be retiring who see her (and her other two male colleagues) as part of the future. "They're getting me involved with the budgeting for the university division because they feel I have the skills to get my hands around the resources as a whole and best be able to manage that." She acknowledged that her gender may have made her a bit "token" (given her the ability to be noticed), but it is her skills and abilities that are ultimately defining her.

Since she had no women mentors, I asked her if she has had a desire to connect with other women or if she has had other women reach out to her.

I would say that the women that have reached out to me have been two of them that are very new in our organization. I respect them immensely and I've actually been talking to them, but I don't consider them mentors. It's just been very limited in conversations.

She also indicated there are two female vice presidents in her organization that she had had a chance to talk to a couple of times. With each of them, she interviewed them as part of a women's leadership program assignment.

I've had opportunities to talk to them on a handful of times. One was for the [program] project and it was helpful to talk to them. They were accommodating and answered questions, but for them to be considered a mentor, I would have to feel more comfortable with them.

Mia's field is dominated by men so that is where a majority of her contacts come from. She indicated, however, that the interview made her think more about the role that women could play in mentoring her.

I hadn't really thought about it before. One of the reasons is that my current mentor and supervisor is very aware of issues and stuff and I also feel that he has a style of leading people that's not as command and control as most men. He has more of a collaborative, feminine approach, so watching him I feel I can emulate. [Although] he's a white male and [has] white male privilege, I can see though the value of having it and reaching out and establishing with a more senior woman.

She said that she is almost always in multigenerational spaces.

Most of the meetings I'm involved in, and I've found this as I'm working my way up, I've been the youngest one. I'm on the President's cabinet and if I'm not the youngest, I'm one of the youngest. And then with my team I have Millennials there's one girl in her mid-20's. And then on my team I have a woman that's a Baby Boomer, probably in her late 50s early 60s.

She did indicate that these generational differences can, at times, produce some conflicts for her as a supervisor. In the instance she talked about, Mia indicated that the generational divide can sometimes make communication and confrontation between Baby Boomers and Millennials challenging. In this case, the older woman feels disrespected and the younger woman is afraid to talk to the older to work out problems.

In terms of advice, Mia has heard three primary pieces of advice from Baby Boomers. The first was to "be over-prepared because the environment doesn't expect

you to succeed.” She personalized this by thinking about her current work environment. She said that she largely sits in a world where if she believes if she works hard and confidently she will be rewarded. Mia said “I did not realize that the women in the generation before me had to be over-prepared in order to move up.” They had to do more than just their jobs and do them well, they had to do them better because if they were equally competent to a male they were going to be passed over. A second piece of advice was to “learn as much as you can about the university culture and all parts of the institution.” The last piece of advice was to serve on committees outside of one’s functional area to establish a larger network.

Mia didn’t resonate with the “over-prepare” notion, but does resonate with the idea of being fully prepared and confident. She finds the networking advice important and has decided to utilize her lunch hour to talk and connect with people she wouldn’t otherwise see. “There’s a café and dining area, and at lunch there’s a table where anyone is welcome to sit there. I used to eat lunch at my desk or go off campus or something and eat alone.”

Leadership in Higher Education

While Mia recognizes the power differential for those in leadership based on gender, she said, “It makes me feel a bit frustrated that I can’t say ‘this is what we’re doing.’ My former male boss would go and do that and everyone would respect him.”

Upon reflection, though, this reality has positively influenced how she uses power. Mia said she uses her power to guide

the conversation, leading them through the pros and cons. I think in some ways that’s the best way to make use of power because you’ll get buy-in from your group, you’ll come up with solutions that are best for the institution by really looking at it and it’s not just one person that makes the call.

A way that Mia continues to lead is by believing in herself.

I don't let my insecurities stop me because I know in my research how women have made meaning of adversity and a lot of cases manifested a feeling of insecurity. I don't know if men have similar insecurities or not. I know for me when I run into challenges and barriers, the first thing is the insecurity that comes up. I have to not allow that to stop me and that to succeed I have to try. And with trying comes failures and mistakes but the important thing is to not quit trying.

Mia indicated that patience is a cornerstone of leadership. "Change at colleges and universities takes a lot longer than people think it should, not like a business, because you have to get buy-in from the different stakeholders." She mentioned collaboration and listening as being key. She also mentioned the ability to network with others.

I enjoy working in a state system because I'm able to reach out to colleagues and say "Hey, we have a problem, how have you solved it?" And they have been able to provide ideas and assistance at times. And then the last thing is seeing the change process as positive and communicating that to stakeholders ... help them to embrace it.

When it comes to characteristics needed for leadership, Mia felt like she made the list. She said "creativity" is essential. "I use my network to come up with creative solutions. Working in higher education for 18 years you learn very quickly that nothing happens fast."

Hannah

Hannah is a 39-year-old African American woman who has been in higher education for 10-14 years. She is working at a 4-year private institution where she has been in her current mid-level/aspiring to senior level position for the past three years. She currently works in communications in the President's Office at her institution, though prior to this role, she worked in residential life and development. Pursuing a masters and doctoral degree early on was a choice: "I made it early on in college because

I wanted to work in higher education.” As a result, she finds the notion of navigating and finding a career path very personally interesting.

Feminism and Feminist Identity

Hannah thinks of a feminist

as being someone who is supportive other women, and yourself, in having choices. For some reason the choice piece really speaks to me. It’s not that you think women have to be out in the workforce, or need to behave a certain way. It’s that there are options. I think that one of the particular aspects of being a feminist is not just thinking “well, I have choices,” it’s that I need to somehow be helping other women to have choices available to them.

She believes women should be self-aware and have as many options available to them as they would like.

Hannah’s mom was one of the primary influences in her adopting a feminist identity.

My mother worked outside the house when I was growing up, as did my grandmother, actually. My parents had a very diverse group of friends. So we had, my mom had a lot of gay friends, she had a lot of folks who weren’t married or were in long standing relationships but chose not to be married. Several women had chosen not to have children, and I was aware that they had chosen not to have children. I think that helped me have the sense that there were a lot of different ways to be a woman in the world and to be working.

She went on to say that great mentors also influenced her, both “accidental mentors” and the ones she “purposely sought out.” She also pointed out a particular philosophy course and professor and how the class helped her think and reflect. She left the class “having kind of a purpose and seeing myself more as a woman and somehow being able to articulate that into reality.” There was something in the course that said to her “this makes sense to me, this is a framework that I can see myself in.”

I think the course really helped me a lot because when you’re having to write a paper and reflect on someone else’s experience of feminism and then thinking about “How different are you from that person?”

Hannah also remembers her mother explaining how affirmative action was developed and who has benefited most from it. Her mom mentioned that it was veterans and white women. And she thought, “Well, that’s really different from what I’ve been hearing.” A number of smaller conversations and events, as opposed to big historical markers, served as her introduction to women’s rights. “You can’t really talk about being a woman and having full freedoms ... you need other people’s freedoms to be just as important or just as acceptable or honored.”

In terms of outward examples of her feminism, Hannah said that people could tell she’s a feminist if they were paying attention to her bookshelf. She has titles such as *Becoming a Woman Leader*, *Lean In*, and *Road’s Taken*. She also mentioned visible women’s quotations and

I have some artwork, one of which was done by a sexual assault survivor who does ethereal artwork of women entering a dreamlike space. I don’t know if other people see this as feminist but it reminds me of the talk this woman gave and her experience.

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

When asked about historical events, she said the influences that came to mind weren’t necessarily gender related but instead included the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement influenced her to ask herself questions like “How do you live more fully? How do you get to express who you are? How do you have freedoms?” For Hannah, the Civil Rights movement is a very salient one and she tends to apply the lessons from the movement to equal rights in general. “Maybe that resonates with me more, especially as a feminist, and in part because my mom used to be an affirmative action officer for a city government.”

Hannah also mentioned her grandma and the limitations she and other women of her generation faced, such as not being able to have a checking account in their name. She then went on to mention Geraldine Ferraro “who almost seems like a forgotten name these days.” Especially during the Hillary Clinton run for the presidency, Hannah was surprised to hear so few references to Ferraro since this wasn’t the first time a woman was running for a major political office.

In those moments I’m reminded that maybe we’re not as far along as I think we are because we seem to only be able to hang onto these moments as, literally, Hollywood moments, rather than a steady building and steady stream. In theory it should feel like really less significant in some ways. That would be the ideal. You’d have a plethora of moments of the little things or challenges or places where people did something unique or interesting but it’s happening all the time and you’d be constantly aware of it. Versus it feeling like it’s a one off and everyone’s taken by surprise.

Feminist contemporaries have also influenced Hannah’s identification as a feminist, notably bell hooks and Rebecca Walker. She went on to say that the book *Feminista* may be really old now, “but at the time, it was sort of like the anthology for feminism for what I think of as my generation. Like every woman in college was reading that same book and walking around with it!”

Influence of Feminism on Leadership

Hannah thinks that reading about and watching other feminists forced her to think, “Am I going to be like this or am I going to be like that? Where do I fit? Am I somewhere on the continuum?” She believes she has settled into a place, but it is constantly evolving. Moving into work and being able to align with other women has influenced how she leads. Going to an all women’s leadership institute “and being in other organizations that are gender or women centric helped me articulate in a very different way.”

She offered an example of how this has translated in her work:

It's interesting the more I work with younger professionals, we have typically have two young professionals, and by young I mean they just graduated ... And they work with us each year and typically I'm their supervisor and watching them and really trying not to just supervise them but offer some mentorship and some thoughts on how to be more successful. This has helped me come to a clearer understanding of these are the things that are important to me, this is what it means to be supportive of other women, and here's a way to really give back

Hannah had more to say about how her feminism has shaped her leadership style:

I find myself being really cognizant of having to perhaps tell a little bit of history or give people some perspective. In some ways I feel that my job as a leader or mentor is yanking off a band aid. There's a lot of hidden conversations or unspoken conversations and realities about women in leadership roles and I tend to be very straight forward. So I think that the way I'd like to approach things is that even if I'm in a meeting and thinking "Hmmm. I don't think I can really say the thing I want to say the way I want to say it," given who's at the table, I try to be, I wouldn't say "subservice," but have enough of a network to find another way to get the same thing accomplished.

She goes on to talk about the importance of building allies. Sometimes, as the black woman in the room, she feels that she shouldn't be the one that needs to bring up certain topics in the conversation. During those occasions, she tries to find men who she could plant a seed with "and frankly let them have the credit if they need to have the credit, but as long as it's addressed. I don't personally care that much, I just want it to be done."

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

Hannah operates from a place of being somewhat more positively inclined than, perhaps, others. She tries to be extremely self-aware, respectful of differences, and curious. She has seen others operate from this place. She believes that when leaders have these qualities as part of their framework they are successful "because it invites others to throw things out there ... you can be really creative without any fear because the response ... is tell me more."

You have to have the ability to listen but to also tune out a little bit. Some of that is taking in what others are saying really understanding what's out there, what are people experiencing and thinking, but also being able to separate the noise, the white noise that's out there. I think you have to be discerning about what is useful commentary and feedback and what's just noise.

She also commented that she knows leaders tend to hire people who are more like them and sees this as understandable, but nonetheless a problem. "You feel comfortable. It's hard to invite someone into your personal space who doesn't think anything like you and reacts or responds very differently". She thinks leadership in higher education needs to cultivate difference and dissonance more. "Having people who are real visionaries could help us a lot."

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

Hannah made a strong connection between her feminism and her racial identity:

Whenever I talk to other women about women's issues or rights, I think about how strongly it's related to me being black. And for me the two really can't be separated. I always think of myself as being a black woman. And then in some respects think about my race a little bit more than I do my gender.

Hannah also noted how we don't think about aspects of our identity unless they touch us. As a result, she tries to keep various aspects of how people identify at the forefront of her communication and her work:

My mother is handicapped, so when we go places I'm very aware is it accessible or is it not. When you don't have a family member and your able bodied, you're less aware. I think sometimes being a feminist and thinking about women, thinking about places where there's difference, I'm often keyed into that in the conversations we're having or in the pieces of communications I'm writing. I try to when I'm at the table, or if I'm looking at something, that's the lens that I try to bring to it so it's asking people questions.

Hannah's status as a person that is educated is a privileged identity that she is aware intersects with the Feminist Identity and Generation X status. She is also very aware of class in light of her work in higher education. Working at a public institution

made this much more visible than at her current private institution. At a public institution there was awareness about how many students were first generation. At her private institution, and in her family, there was no choice.

This is what you'll do and afterwards choose whatever career you'd like. But you're going to do it with a bachelor's degree. There are more moments where I'm aware that being someone with two degrees does separate me, but it's a privilege. [I'm aware] how much that has shaped where I work or what I do/how I see the world. We often forget about how being degreed or credentialed gives you power in different places.

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

In her observation of women that outwardly identify as feminists, Hannah was thoughtful about what this means for her and her actions:

There are these moments where you think "If this was a room full of women, how different would this conversation be? And how free would I feel to say certain things ... ?" ... because it's been mostly male and mostly white men, I think there are these moments where I find myself kind of questioning what I want to say, how do I want to say it, when do I what to say it.

While Hannah thinks it is useful to think before speaking, she goes on to question how helpful it is to question oneself because of gender or feminist identity. In the moments these factors seems to come up, she finds herself being more cautious:

I think there are places where I watch other people that have been more outspoken, more aggressive in their support of women, perhaps labeling themselves as feminist. And if you see a couple instances where that wasn't well received or just seemed to isolate them ... a lot of those women seem to be marginalized ... in less prestigious or meaningful positions at the institutions.

She added that she does "find myself covering a little bit and hiding things a little bit, like 'I'm just going to leave that alone right now.'"

Hannah experienced a really challenging leadership experience with a president that was a woman, but who did not espouse or emulate feminist ideals. "It was one of the hardest things I've ever been through, being a woman working with someone who I

perceived as being very difficult, not wanting to undermine her in any way.” Hannah described her as unproductive, ineffective and insecure. On the one hand she wanted to unconditionally support her as a woman; on the other hand, it felt anti-feminist not to call out bad leadership. Regardless of gender, Hannah felt that poor leadership needed to be acknowledged. To magnify things, this woman was really supportive of women on campus and was outspoken about women’s issues including male-dominated professions, childbearing years pressures on faculty, and motherhood. In some ways she had this great story and she was very strategic about inviting women into conversations, celebrating their contributions.

There was a real hard moment, how do you navigate being supportive of other women, and you have someone in a key leadership role, who is supportive of other women, but they are not particularly an effective leader in many ways, what do you say? Do you applaud when they receive another position even when you don’t feel that that’s necessarily a good thing? And I think for me having to go through that experience that it was an accomplishment to walk this fine line of trying to be helpful when I could, trying to acknowledge that there were flaws and issues and at the same time, there were strengths. And I think that that was a more challenging moment.

She said it was easiest to be a feminist when she didn’t have a real personal challenge to being a feminist. She closed with, “I don’t feel that I’ve been oppressed. It was a moment when I questioned if I had to go along with this and pretend that everything is going to be ok.”

Making Change in Higher Education

One of Hannah’s aspirations as a leader is to create a program that would support change in her institution. A number of years ago she was able to work with a senior administrator to develop the idea for a formal mentoring program at her university for

women. She is committed to building a pipeline within her institution and has plans to see this project through.

On a more personal note, she also hopes to create more change by finding ways to state a position and call out more of the elephants in the room. When she doesn't, she feels like these are missed opportunities. It also makes her feel fearful to be so uncertain as to where her colleagues stand.

It's partly me and how comfortable am I but it's also "well, I don't really know if you get feminism and what this is about and can support women." And without knowing that why would I just toss this out for you to smack them? I think that's a hard one. ... I'd love to see more of our leadership being comfortable talking about women, feminism, in public forums. It's so interesting because ... you rarely hear male leaders talking about it. In some way I think it'd be helpful to influence how people talk about this. If I could have a role helping people develop this as part of their everyday dialogue and understanding. So it doesn't feel like a special call out.

Hannah uses her communication role to think about who does not feel included in messaging, whose lived experiences are not reflected. As an example, the place she works at used to be a single-sex institution up until the mid-70s.

So we're still dealing with the fact that many of our alumnae did not have a very positive experience during their first several years here. And when we're sending out communications to the general alumni body, I'm thinking, "yeah this is true for 75% but there's a pretty strong group of alumnae that had a very different experience and this is not true."

In this case, she sees her role as restructuring that communication; bringing in voices that may not be heard. She did this even more intently in a recent anniversary project she was working on. Part of her task was to highlight change projects at the institution over the decades since the school went co-ed. She made sure that women were represented in these stories—the first woman as member of the board, chair of the board, etc.—but she also made sure these weren't the only voices. In the stories, she told about

the difference that diverse alumnae who hadn't been recognized previously made. She wanted people to think

about collective contributions and how you need lots of different folks, including white men, in the mix and how instrumental their work was to encouraging women. Some of them were involved in the creation of the first child care center and child policies on campus.

Generational Differences

With regard to how closely her Gen X descriptor is tied to her identity:

Now that I'm getting a little bit older and have another fully developed generation behind me entering the workforce, I might be a little bit more aware of it now and how it's influencing how I interact with others or how I think of myself as a woman or feminist more so than it did when I was younger. I had no real sense of what those differences meant.

When it comes to the differences between generations, Hannah says, "There's a different crop of people working with me, a little younger." In response, "I find myself being more aware of those of my age, my race, or of my personal history and my generational history. It's like your reality, your millennial reality, looks very different than mine."

In further describing the differences between Generation X and those who come after it, she thinks the influence of elders may play a factor. She felt up close and personal to many of the Civil Rights and Women's Rights stories she was hearing about:

I grew up with my grandmother. I saw her really regularly which I think is increasingly becoming uncommon. So people not really having daily or weekly influences or opportunities for that sort of storytelling and sharing of personal experiences. So it feels more removed versus having the sense of it's so near. For me it feels like it wasn't that long ago. My mom can remember being in segregated schools and there's something about for her, cutting her hair off and being her own woman. My mom was a single mom for several years. She married my dad and I always saw her as being independent. She was married but never like a housewife or subordinate, she was very much her own person who happened to be in a partnership.

These first hand stories have stayed with Hannah and shaped her and her leadership.

Hannah commented that when she is interacting with women closer in age, envy may start to be a factor. She sees this creeping in when women may be peers, but one is mentoring the other. She said these relationships are sometimes less helpful because you get the other person's stuff, their baggage in the conversation.

I think some folks are better at offering broad suggestions and guidance but not needing to see you in a particular way. They don't need you to live out their fantasies, they don't need you to take on the job they wished they had. It's hard to say, "I can see why you think that, but I'm not interested in that." [Instead] the people I'm closest to ... see potential in you.

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

When asked about the most pressing gender equity issues in higher education Hannah offered "family workplace leave, planning."

I don't have children, I'm childless by choice but I think until we really figure out how to create policies and practices and figure out the affordability issue to allow both men and women to stay home part time or have flexible schedules, it's not ever going to be equal for women to show up in the same way.

Hannah also talked about the problem with being non-attentive to the pipeline conversation and the fact that it isn't working. In the 70s attention was drawn to the paucity of women in higher education and the need for their development. In the 80s and 90s this grew to include programs for people of color at the institutional and national level. She feels like we have moved away from giving these things full attention and yet there is a problem. As professionals living longer and stay active, they are staying in their higher education leadership seats longer. As such, there is a need to do something with the high-achieving women who are in the pipeline, interested in administrative roles, but have no place to go. And, because there are still a lot of men in hiring positions she said, we need to keep "a finger on that pulse of educating, informing, and being more

vigilant about what are our hiring practices. I've been looking at the number of hires we've made and there are fewer and fewer women that are making the final cut."

Advocacy/Activism

When asked about acts of advocacy and/or collective action/activism Hannah first said she wasn't involved in "any big ways." She followed, however, with two specific examples of addressing inequity. The first was during college. She worked part-time for the police in the city where she grew up. There were a couple of officers who were using lewd, crass language all the time, telling jokes, stories. They were exposing the people in the communication center to this, who were almost all women. As a result, Hannah reported it. The officers had to go through internal affairs investigation. This was tough on her as she was about 19 years old when she reported the incident.

Another was when she was involved in a search for a position within higher education for a peer position. As the search went on, she felt that there were arbitrary decisions being made about who did not meet the "required" aspects of the job as posted. She went to Human Resources and they suggested she talk to the group first. When she was unclear as to whether the job would be re-posted reflecting the requirements they were using, she said this:

If you are going to move forward with these candidates and you are not going to re-post using different language about the requirements, then I need to remove myself from the committee. I felt so strongly about this and said I think that people who don't know this system don't know that in reality you can apply for these positions and that required doesn't mean required so to speak.

She took this concern to a senior person on the committee who she thought would be an empathetic ear and was very disappointed. This person identified as gay, grew up relatively poor, and worked her way up through the system where she's now an executive

director. But this person bought into the system—a reminder that our life journeys don't always force an equitable frame. She said "it was a hard moment to call out people and say you're being discriminatory."

She talked about utilizing trusted resources such as colleagues, her mom, and staff in Human Resources to determine just "how big" of a deal this was to her. In the end, she just couldn't sit back and wait to see how it played out since harm could have been done. She concluded that, in the end, there may be places where she can overlook things. However, this wasn't one of them. In the same scenario, if she had not been in the room, she is convinced there would have been no women in the pool. When it comes to equity, these "are places where I'm very conscious about living out my values and hopefully passing them onto other people that I work with."

Hannah also described advocacy in more general ways. As an example, she volunteers for things even when it may not be her preference, but she feels an advocacy voice is needed:

It's not necessarily my first choice but I think it's important that a woman be in the room or important that I say the things that others can't or won't say even if I would rather that someone else would say it. I think being good colleague to other women and sometimes that's making sure they know of other opportunities, putting in a word for them.

She added:

There ends up being the ability to influence from the side or behind or from below, which is a great skill to have, but rarely do people teach you how to do that. How do you help other people become aware of things? How do you plant a seed? Each person that I've worked with has been a little different, some people you can say it right out to them in a meeting "by the way you should know this is a problem" and other people you have to say "have you ever considered that maybe someone may not like this?" and then say "I'm just wondering" and leave the room.

Generation X

When asked about her generation, Hannah did think it was an interesting time to grow up:

The 80s and 90s were formative years ... a lot of the discussion was this person is different but they're just like you, like their life matters, there are lots of choices. It's important to be self-aware but it's also important to be aware of others and their difference. And I think that's part of my mentality. Lots of people I meet in my generation think along those same lines.

When it comes to work and life, Hannah had some things to say about the frameworks that she thinks guide her generation:

I think there are a lot of instances of ... wanting or needing some sense of personal satisfaction from work in a way that was very different from the generation ahead of us and different than the generation behind us. If I think of the Boomers, there wasn't the same sense of "I'm seeking personal satisfaction from work," it was "I need a good job and it should have a certain amount of prestige or make a certain amount money or demonstrate a certain skill or knowledge." And then the Millennials, I think it's more "I want to have fun, I want to do something interesting, I want to do something creative."

She goes on to share that she thinks Generation X is in between the Baby Boomers and the Millennials:

I want to be impactful and by being impactful I'll find satisfaction ... it seems like the easier way to be impactful is to find a career I really love or feel passionately about. It's not quite the same as like the Millennials. They think ... work is play and play is work. My generation still separates it.

Hannah's sense is that there isn't as much of a narrative about Generation X as there is for the Millennials.

I think people see them as more defined or uniquely different. I think of the technological advances that were made before they were born and [how they] really shaped them in a very different way than it did for Generation X. I still remember the first computers and getting time with computers.

When Hannah worked in Development, she actually spent time looking at generational differences and how the differing perspectives shape philanthropy. From

this work she learned that for Generation X, and those after that, the focus is on the individual. She learned that the “we’re one big group” mentality is not of interest to these younger generations. “They’re much more questioning things.” It used to be that families had a stronger sense of giving. Now you get to Generation X and beyond and the question is “what’s in it for me?” and the skepticism is “I don’t know that I buy what you’re saying.”

The institutional rhetoric is seen as truly rhetoric. Prove it, back it up with numbers, people are expecting more, their asking more questions, they have a clearer sense of “I could put my resources elsewhere.”

Hannah thinks that generational difference is interesting to think about from the viewpoint of feminism and making change. “I think the generation before me, my sense was they felt strongly about the idea of giving back and helping others. That was part of their responsibility.” She sees fewer women that are her peers interested in helping women do well. She also sees that some of the frustration people are expressing is related to generational differences, but they cannot articulate it.

They want different generation values than what we have now as a nation. You see it translated at work and that’s why you have fewer programs being offered to women. You have fewer women getting together ... It sounds good but people don’t really spend time that way. They’re not as interested in that type of interaction.

Hannah noted that age, sometimes even more than being a woman, has impacted her ability to make change:

I’m turning 39 this month and I’m in a room where most folks are 55 and up. And there are these moments when I feel like I’m by far the junior person in the room and do I have enough experience, is there something else I’m missing? You don’t want to be perceived as too idealistic or sometimes too pessimistic. Something that keeps me from pushing things a little bit more is the question “Maybe there’s something I don’t know or haven’t had the experience or know about that yet?” One of the things that is interesting is that my husband doesn’t work in higher education and ... he finds it baffling. So trying to figure out how to navigate a

system that is very lax and each institution is different based on their culture. I know this is true of other organizations but I think particularly when you look at the shared governance model that you end up in this weird place of “I don’t know how to make change because I don’t know who’s responsible for it.” No one owns it. If you knew who owned it you would think “I’m going to apply my energy here.”

As a result, Hannah says, “I choose the low hanging fruit.”

After reflection and reading her narrative, Hannah added:

In the last couple of months there’s been a lot more in the press about women’s pay, the gender gap, and women’s leadership. I think that Gen X has a funny relationship to all of this. It feels very much like the conversations I witnessed my mom or other women of her generation having in the 80s and the conversations they’ve continued to have in the decades since. [However], the Millennials seem to be picking up on this in a new way; [they are] more aware, more interested in battling this language—whereas my generation seems to know it exists and there are issues, but either is unconcerned or deals with it at a local level or works around it. We’re not always a “take on the fight” generation it seems. We’re more of a try to handle it with savviness or learn how to find other measures of success or other ways to succeed. In some ways I think that’s why today’s activism oriented culture/generation doesn’t resonate with me or many of my peers—or it only goes so far.

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

Hannah said that almost all of her mentors are in the Baby Boomer generation.

More recently she does have some mentors that are a part of Generation X, however. She said,

It’s always been important to me to have a safe space where we can talk about lots of different things that I was observing, things that are going on, things that I wanted to see happen and have other women speak to me very candidly about. Kind of a reality check [about] what is or isn’t possible, ... what may be going on, here’s something to think about.

She said that some of her mentors have moved beyond advocates to “champion status.” While this wasn’t a requirement, it has been really helpful to have women who have more senior roles “offer me some different perspectives on ‘here are some things to think about’ or areas to pursue.”

In terms of wisdom that has been passed along, she does struggle with the perspective she has gotten from Baby Boomers that there is one way to advance and that advancement is of ultimate importance. “You have to always be aspiring to the next level and you should be aspiring to a senior level position [and] do whatever you need to advance.” She added that the only time she felt there were exceptions was when children were involved.

When you have children you can make concessions ... but if you don't have children, there's no reason that you're not advancing full steam ahead. And that means moving, going to other institutions, moving up a career level, and ... having increasing levels of decision making power. It's a very hierarchical, traditional sort of model for professional development and career growth that isn't as fluid as I would like it to be.

As a result, she has had to just decide there are some pieces that don't work for her. She continues to seek advice for how to create a long-term professional career in a fairly small environment without having to move.

Occasionally I've had folks suggest to me that I need to throw my elbows out more but that's not my style. I'm pretty outspoken, I'm willing to do a lot of stuff, [but] I can't do that. Even with people I do not like and I'd love to take them down at work, I just can't be the person. I'd rather win on my own merit than making someone appear less.

When it comes to multigenerational spaces, Hannah said that she supervises some Millennials, Generation Xers and works with a fair number of Boomers. Her friend group is technically a part of Generation X, but she has two close friends—one is seven years older and one is 14 years older.

I'm always impressed with what I learn from women 15–20 years older than me, what they're doing, what they remember; different ways of looking at things. I also think it's good for me to question them. And I love working students, young professionals, it's interesting and I think sometimes I'm so old. It forces me to check myself. When I hear younger women talking about things or having a certain experience, I have to stop and think if that's my experience. I had a very different experience growing up, I have more working experience. Their

experience working will be different than mine but I hope by the time they're my age that their working experience is different in really significant way, culturally and nationally that we're in a different place.

Leadership in Higher Education

Hannah's personal values that guide her leadership include integrity, honesty, respect for others and for difference.

The biggest thing is about having integrity, I need to feel that I am able to sleep at night, that I did my best, that I was honest and respectful of others and myself and my own opinions. For me I can't sit back and say it's okay for women to not have the same opportunities or the same place or to not notice where there are these differences or these places where it's not equal.

Since Hannah is not in a major decision making role in her current position, she tends to be the one

to facilitate a more productive conversation. I tend to be the person at the table trying to keep different constituents in mind, thinking about each of their particular needs or interests and trying to find mutual ground without compromising what's in the best interest of the institution. And when I say institution, I mean faculty and students, with staff as the third piece as needed. For me and my leadership philosophy I want trust and respect from my colleagues and what they're bringing to the table. I start from a position of each of us have something to contribute ... the sum of our parts is greater than any one individual.

Hannah feels she is most effective when she can help others better articulate themselves. "Whether that's bringing something that someone's afraid to bring to the table and talk about or mentioning that this happened the other day, sort of the elephant in the room." She recently sat down with someone in leadership and said, "I haven't been able to get an answer to this, so maybe you can get an answer to this. Here's the elephant in the room that no one wants to discuss and you should know about it."

Maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm right. I don't know if that's a philosophy but finding the right moments to say what needs to be said, making sure the right people are at the table, and for me mentorship of these younger professionals is really important. Any new staff member needs a certain amount of on-boarding but I feel it's really important with younger professionals and thinking that most

people didn't start out for a career in higher education. They fell into it through some other course. When I have younger folks, newer to higher education I want them to have a good feeling about it because it's so different than nonprofits, or certainly a corporate environment. A lot of my philosophy is you should treat this as an educational opportunity. This should be a chance to help others learn, be inquisitive. Part of the way I lead is to try and always stay in a place of curiosity rather than judgment. I think that's helpful.

Hannah thinks that power looks different in higher education depending on where you sit. She thinks the faculty have tremendous power, but also recognizes that she has power over some staff and students.

Who's at the table? comes into play a lot. Who gets invited and once you're there what role are you supposed to play? And it's funny because I've often commented to people that if you don't like politics you shouldn't work in higher education. It's full of it. And I know it's the shared governance model. One of the first pressmen I worked with had this great saying that higher education is the only place where you couldn't tell anyone to do anything.

Ironically, Hannah thinks that progress in higher education is made by bringing people together—trying to motivate people to see your perspective. It's really hard and she likes the complexity.

It's neat to think about how do you influence, how do you move people, how do you get things done even when you don't have any real responsibility for something, or you aren't the decision maker. Most of my work, rarely am I the decision maker in the room, I'm just a contributor. But I often think about that place of being really savvy about who needs to feel like they have power, who needs to feel like they're on top, how do you move that person forward, how do you help other people not feel like their powerless because you're acknowledging their power?

She critiques this notion of higher education as “egalitarian” and says it would be so much easier if we could just acknowledge that all are not equal in the academy, “faculty have more power than staff, professional staff have more power than our union or non-exempt employees.” As a result, she thinks the kind of people you see as being

less successful “are the people who don’t read between the lines and figure out that there are politics at work here and there’s a different power dynamic ... that just doesn’t work.”

Since Hannah is aware that things are not equal, she is “pretty conscious” about how she uses power. When she moved to her current position in the President’s Office she said it was “pretty interesting how that dynamic changed the relationships of long standing friends and colleagues.” She had a peer warn her to “be prepared for people treating you differently in some good ways and some bad ways, so just don’t be surprised.” Her position requires her to constantly call on other offices.

If I just call and I’m pleasant they might say “no, I’m sorry,” but then if I say “I’m calling from the president’s office” ... I’ll get things done much more quickly.” SO I do use that very judiciously. I try to keep good relationships with people ... I try to work with people. You become aware of your own power.

In the midst of this power discussion she talked about her current relationship with a male that she has been supervising. She is thinking about why she feels “less sure, even less willing to assert myself as the boss even when I know if this was a woman I’d just say ‘this is the way I want it.’” In comparison, her recent experience supervising an older woman was very productive. “I wondered if I’d feel awkward around the age difference and her being more experienced in a very different way. It wasn’t at all, it was a very productive relationship and she was very respectful of that.” This exchange highlights interesting perspectives about the influence of gender or age and the differences in managing these.

When it comes to leadership challenges in higher education, Hannah had this to say:

I don’t think we cultivate leadership. I think most of our structures don’t necessarily make a lot of sense. We’re not great at succession planning. We’re not in the business of building a pipeline. You look how most faculty are brought

into administration. And in some places, it's seen as ... it's your turn to be chair, too bad for you. And it's sort of haphazard the way the people end up being leaders and achieving a senior level position. Particularly [when] looking at the highest level ... when we do have visionaries they tend to be so constrained or outside the system that they don't work well with the existing system.

When asked about her own leadership future in higher education, Hannah said, "I certainly think I'm an outlier. A couple years ago some were asking 'What's next for you?'" Her response was that she wanted something that was more of the number two person. She likes to be kind of behind the scenes making it happen. She also reflects a bit critically of the thought of not being the most senior position and worries it may be a cop-out:

I think if I was really committed I would say I want to help change the system and there's a different way you could lead. And that would be more appealing to me. Then just making the cut. I'd rather be part of something entirely different. Having a different conversation because when I was reading [a recent book on leadership], one of the things I was struck by was that there was an assumption that there was a "way to be." There was a very strong view of the best thing for women to do is to seize power, seize opportunities, move forward, advance in this particular way. And I think that's interesting because I don't know that that's necessary or that that's fair. I don't think that women have failed for not doing that, their just doing something different. That should be an option as well.

Bernadette

Bernadette is a 43-year-old White woman who has been in higher education for 15-19 years. She has a doctorate and has been working at a community college for the past 19 years and has been in her present mid-level/aspiring to senior level position for the past three years. She currently works with developing university partnerships with K-12. She has

always had some role in connecting higher education in the community ... I've always had a position that is not your traditional part of a college that has specific professional associations or specific areas that people can nod their head and understand what you do. I've always had to explain what I do. It's always been a little bit non-traditional or outside of the box.

She grew up in the city where her institution is located. She said, “I saw it as an institution that was dedicated to the community and helping people.” She just finished her doctoral degree one year ago.

Feminism and Feminist Identity

When asked to define feminism, Bernadette says, “I think it’s as simple as equal rights for men and women and making sure that women have equal opportunities. I think that’s the crux of it.” She then went on to describe the meaning she makes of her feminism in both personal and professional ways. Personally, she says:

I’m raising two sons. So as a mom [it’s] just very important to raise socially, responsible, open minded boys who are respectful of women and see that everyone can have the same opportunities. That’s on the personal side.

She goes on to describe having a father who, while older than the Baby Boomer generation, aligned with some aspects of feminism. Bernadette said he wanted his daughters to have every opportunity possible. Ironically, he also expected them to adhere to traditional gender roles. “It was this interesting mix of having traditional expectations but at the same time wanting us to have opportunities.”

As a mother, she talked about how challenging it can sometimes be to make feminist values align with daily living. She jokingly said, “Why can’t everyone just get along and have world peace?” She goes on to describe a family situation where the issue of war toys and toy guns came up. In the end, she did buy her boys these toys but said “Santa will bring a Nerf gun but your mother had nothing to do with it. I have a reputation to protect!”

She also mentions her Catholicism and her academic studies as motivating her feminism. “Growing up Catholic, I remember that there got to be a point in high school where I was not interested in what the Catholic faith had to offer in terms of women.”

And then in college I was a Women’s Studies minor, and that was extremely influential in how I viewed myself as a feminist ... I think at that time feminism was losing some of its appeal but that didn’t bother me, I thought that was really important. Being a Women’s Studies minor gave me confidence knowing that there are other people out there who think that the world should be different too. So I attribute that to my giving myself permission, that things can be done differently.

Professionally, she thinks the environment that she works in has further supported and shaped her feminism:

I work in an institution that has more women leaders than men. So it’s a place where women are in roles of leadership all over the place. So that’s one of the reasons I’ve been there so long. It’s very comfortable and in line with my values. But I do whatever I can to promote equity professionally.

In conclusion she stated “Being a mother is very important. Being an educator is very important. And I think being a feminist is connected to those two.”

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

When asked about events that influenced her feminism, Bernadette mentions watching the *Roe v. Wade* debates. In more recent times, she recalls observing Sarah Palin as a potential Vice President and the discussions that surrounded her. She particularly remembers hearing from Gloria Steinem, of whom she is a fan, and listening to her perspective on Palin’s candidacy. Bernadette quoted Steinem as saying, “Just because she’s female doesn’t mean we’re making strides in terms of protecting women’s opportunities and rights.” She also remembers when Geraldine Ferrero ran and other notable local events such as having women leaders win in state elections, as well as the female judge who made gay marriage legal in the state where she lives. She also

mentions observing how women CEOs have been treated in the media over the years and the double standards that exist. She says that recalling historical influences makes her think “Why does it have to be this way? We have so much further to go.”

Influence of Feminism on Leadership

Bernadette does read about feminist struggles and think about them (she mentions the book *Lean In*). And, as she describes her feminism, it does appear that this has shaped how she leads. She describes herself as having “a collaborative, relational, approach to leadership as opposed to autocratic.” When she started at her current institution,

I was the youngest member on the Academic Council which is our group of deans. And I would say that there was an equal amount of men and women at the time in the 1990s or early 2000s. Because of age and being female, I didn't come into my own for a while.

She thought, however, she could do things differently:

Everybody ran meetings the same way, approached things the same way and it was as I got more confident as a leader that I believed I could do this so much better. And I got more confidence to do things differently and in ways that were more collaborative, using technology, and just approaching things in a way that I felt was a better way to lead.

Her personal values include things like social justice, taking care of the environment and making sure people have opportunities. And, these values in turn influence how she leads. She tries to lead

in a way that's relational [and] values everybody's contributions; making sure everybody's needs are met, trying to lead in a way that everybody benefits and that we're able to accomplish what we need to get accomplished without hurting anyone in the process.

Since Bernadette closely connects her role as mother to her feminist identity, it was no surprise that this has also impacted her leadership:

I just felt like I became so much more informed as a person. It definitely informed how I lead. It gives me more confidence because I've seen how with my kids that I can direct them to behave in ways that are appropriate and responsible and caring. So by having that experience, I'm definitely more confident in leading other people.

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

In terms of aspirations, Bernadette is feeling quite content with where she is:

I'm still feeling, even though I've been out of my doctoral program for a year, I'm feeling burnt out. I want to redecorate every room in my house, I've had a lot of wine, and I'm definitely enjoying having a life again. I joined a book club, so right now I'm ok being where I am so I can learn how to have a life again.

She did, however, take on a new challenge that she has wanted to do for a while, which is teaching. The class is a graduate course on the American Community College.

I'm teaching a class [and I] haven't taught in 20 years. I see that's something for my professional development that I really need to be doing and I'm doing it now.

About the future, Bernadette says:

I don't know what I want to do when I grow up. I think there's different ways I can go but I want to continue what I'm doing and develop expertise in the K-16 partnership world. It's something that's immerging. People are paying attention to the transitions between high school college and university. So I want to continue with that and figure out that I maybe have another 2-3 years before I need a new challenge.

She's not sure if that next thing is a Vice Presidency position—or going from an Associate Dean to Dean. She also leaves open that she may want to consider changing institutions. She has been at the same community college for her entire career. “Just going to a different institution would be professional development because I would have to put on my organizational development hat and see ‘how you do things in a different environment.’” She is also open to the thought of getting involved in state-level opportunities. In the end she concludes, “I'm not really sure.”

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

Bernadette identifies as an environmentalist and sees this “identity” as connected to her feminism. Both require her to be socially conscious and responsible. “I think [feminism] connects to being an environmentalist in a popular way of wanting us to protect the earth. Social justice, being community oriented, education, and so all those things put together.” She also sees her feminism as connected to her motherhood.

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

Bernadette has not struggled with holding onto her feminist identity in higher education “because I work in an institution where we’ve had a female president for more than 20 years. There’s a lot of female leadership” and can’t recall a time when it has been a challenge. As we explored this environment further, it became clear that this was in part tied to the mission of her institution as a community college.

We are at the bottom of the hierarchy of prestige in higher education. I think there’s more opportunity for female leadership and more opportunities for being innovative and entrepreneurial and being focused on social justice issues because we’re not focused on prestige. We’re focused on our mission, which is to provide access and opportunities to students.

Bernadette hasn’t felt a need to hide her feminism, though she isn’t sure how apparent it is to the casual observer.

I was on the board for Girls Incorporated, which is female only, nonprofit, social service type of agency and there’s a painting that I was given when I went off the board. People might not look at that and see that as a feminist statement but being a board member for an organization like that.

Making Change in Higher Education

Bernadette found herself in a challenging position when a new Vice President came on board. She took over responsibilities for university relations and articulation agreement development with universities. The person before her had been doing it the

same way for almost two decades and she felt the need to develop a much more transparent process. She had to turn around the opinion of the Deans who were not pleased with how things were going:

When I took it over, I increased the transparency and everybody knew what was going on ... I demystified a lot of different things and tried to educate people on the whole process because it's so important when advising students that faculty, deans and assistant deans understand the process.

She also brought in people who had previously felt shut out of the process. She had a way of seeing their expertise and what they had to offer:

There was no communication, they didn't get answers when they needed them and I really reached out and created a team between the two transfer counselors and myself. I included them in everything; really tapped into their expertise.

She is always trying to find ways to be more organized, efficient and to increase transparency and communicate in many different ways that will work for all the different groups of people.

I created reports. I created a ... site where people could log in whenever they wanted to be able to look at the status of agreements. I held open office hours where there would specifically focus on articulation at a time that was convenient for faculty, department chairs and deans. On this day, you can come and meet with me and talk specifically about articulation. We have a newscaster on our internet to put information out there, so to come up with a communication plan and in this situation that was a huge change to have communication around this area.

In the end, she was pleased with the change that she motivated:

I saw something that I could offer from my leadership style and also being able to look at a system and how to improve it. That was a huge accomplishment and it was recognized by others.

In terms of barriers to change, Bernadette thinks there are sometimes positional limits.

In my position I'm not part of the core group of academic deans. The academic deans manage our faculty and the programs and they are at the hub. And the way

that our provost has structured it is that everybody in academic and student affairs gets together once a month.

She has tried to address being “out of the loop” and not having access to people due to busy schedules and the external nature of her role, which takes her away from the community college often. “I try to find out when the deans meet and when I need to I need to be assertive and ask if I can come to their meetings.” Sometimes she needs “to set up appointments with our VP when I need things because he’s so busy he’s not going to ask what I need.”

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

Bernadette indicates that there need to be more women in all levels of leadership in higher education, including the presidency.

We need more female presidents especially at research universities. We need more women in the STEM fields teaching and leading. [We need] to figure out how to attract women and faculty of color, underrepresented faculty who pursue higher education, and come up with different ways to reward and structure and to be more flexible in universities ... to get the talent that we need.

She shared that, based on what she has read, women and men in the STEM field have opportunities in corporate America that include better pay—so entering higher education and working through the tenure process is not as much of an interest. She urges that “everybody doesn’t have to fit into the ‘publish or perish’ model. She also thinks higher education needs to stop “taking advantage of people by having so many adjuncts without benefits.”

When it comes to students, she has different concerns:

In terms of students, I think we’re actually seeing a trend where we need more men so we need to attract especially men of color. So that’s an interesting gender issue on the student side, attract and keep male students.

Advocacy/Activism

Bernadette was involved in supporting reproductive rights while in college. She organized buses to go to Washington for the march on reproductive rights.

Rowe vs. Wade was being challenged and I was working with the Women's Center and organized buses to go to Washington, the march and all of that. That was a huge influence.

Bernadette used to be the on the national board of what is now called Girls Incorporated. "To be a board member supporting an organization that is dedicated to making sure girls living in poverty have opportunities. That's important to me."

Now, she says "I'm just trying to support women elected officials, making sure we have female representation in government." Additionally, she recalls being among a large group of women and men in her institution who were new to parenting and trying to provide support.

I organized a group of mothers and fathers to come together and have lunch and talk about "how do we do this." Many of us were first time parents. That lasted a little while. Just to support one another. Most of the people who attended were women. But just to support people who are trying to be first time parents and work full time.

She also thinks that both time and the state of the political environment keep her from being more involved in advocacy and activism.

I'm not as able to be involved in politics or social issues as I would like because there's not enough time. But then, just looking at the political atmosphere and what's going on, it's like "oh my goodness" I just want to be in a bubble. It's very out there in terms of our elected officials and everything that was going on with the last election. Women's reproductive rights continue to be attacked. I just don't understand all of that.

She outwardly shows her commitment to broader issues of equality, however. "I have things that promote diversity, a bumper sticker that says 'diversity' and I have a

sticker that people can put on their windows that [indicates] it is a safe space for gay, lesbian students.” Her feminism also influences how she is in the world:

People who know me very well know they can't say things in front of me because they'll be scolded if I'm comfortable with them. That's in my personal life. And I didn't take my husband's name. Professionally I feel it just informs who I am and how I act, but it's not as out there.

Generation X

When asked to describe Generation X, Bernadette shared that she thinks this generation is out to create change, but not just any kind, systems change. During our conversation, she reflected on the 60s and how people were really trying to create change and stand up to people in leadership, in power. In contrast to the Baby Boomers who were a part of this, she said this about Generation X:

I don't think our generation is against leaders, but I think we're interested in changing systems ... not just the person at the top. And we're definitely innovative and entrepreneurial. I attribute the whole technology area with our generation. That may not be accurate but I think a lot people who are creating new technology are within that age group.

She also described Generation X as privileged, “Our generation is the most educated I believe.” Bernadette had a difficult time, however, describing the narrative that may exist for this generation.

I'm sure there is [one] but because I work in higher education, I'm focused on the Millennials and Generation Y so I'm not as focused on our generation.

As she thought more she added:

We're focused on our kids. As I talk about this out loud, I think we're the generation responsible for everybody gets a trophy mentality. Which I tried to change as a member of the Little League board and was not successful. That's one example we're always telling our kids that we love them. They can't move 10 feet without us telling them that. I'm not sure what the narrative would be but I'm sure there is one.

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

Bernadette shared that she has benefitted greatly from having a network of all women peers.

Creating a network ... that I can trust and have honest conversations with but also to call and ask “What’s going on?” Having that network is really important for my own personal sanity but also to bounce things off of them and process and be strategic and figure out how I’m going to deal with this.

She said that having the personal network of other women that she can call keeps her from feeling isolated, and this is really important to her.

Bernadette spoke specifically about a woman mentor who hired her at the institution where she works. She was a Baby Boomer and had a daughter her age.

I was 25 years old. I was a year out of my master’s program and she just guided me in terms of everything at work. She would, because we developed a trusting relationship, she would explain to me the politics that was going on or we would process meeting and discuss things. She’d provide feedback. She’d sing my praises to other people and she would provide opportunities. She was amazing.

She also mentioned another woman in a senior leadership role who was a Baby Boomer. This person placed her under a manager that ended up providing really poor leadership—and Bernadette admired her because she also had the insight to also remove her from the situation.

Bernadette finds multigenerational spaces “great.” Her administrative peers are within ten years of her, older or younger. She views the diversity in opinion and perspective that multiple generations brings really rich.

I’m 43 and we’re hiring people that are in their 20’s. We’ve had a lot of new staff, faculty and staff in their 20’s and it’s wonderful. Just last week a woman in her early 30’s, who has two very young children, a toddler and an infant, [called] me for advice [asking] “How do I balance? I’m considering a part time position what does that mean for my career?” I really appreciate that somebody from a younger generation would trust me and value what I have to offer. I supervise an

administrative assistant who is about two years away from retirement. And there are other women in my office area that are about to retire or are new moms.

Bernadette said that she consulted Baby Boomer women when she was considering applying for the doctoral program.

I consulted women who had children and had doctorates. They were enormously helpful to me because it was a big leap and necessary for me to get a senior level position. And at the time my sons were 5 years and 18 months old and what they said was, "Do it now or when they're in high school because in middle school they don't want you to be there, but you need to be there and they need you in a different way." I didn't get it at the time, but I knew they were right. When you put them in daycare, they stay there, whereas now, my youngest will be in middle school next year, so they're in 7th and 4th grade now. They're going to be going places and coordinating with other parents, they don't stay in one place. I'm really glad I'm done now. Again they don't want me there, but I'm going to be there.

In whole, Bernadette valued their perspectives because they lived through it. By talking to them, she was able to make informed choices. She did, however, get some advice she simply couldn't use. When she was struggling with a dean who was a poor manager, she asked for advice on how to talk to him. The advice she got was not useful. Her mentor said, "Just use your feminine wiles." Her response was, "I don't have those and if I did I wouldn't know how to use them." She characterized this as really bad advice "because that was not me, I couldn't do that." She said that while the suggestion was rather funny, it was not all how she operates, so not useful.

Overall, she found the advice of Baby Boomers to be helpful. She said that the whole subject of finding balance is a continuing conversation among women of all ages. The only disconnects she has seen in terms of perspective is with regard to work specifics. She said that women older than her came from a time in higher education when budgets weren't as much of an issue. She thinks the commitment to sustainability and external stressors on budget are specific to Generation X and beyond.

Leadership in Higher Education

Bernadette's perspective on current and future leadership in higher education focused on a current Vice President who she sees as making tremendous change.

He takes in people's concerns and considers them and incorporates that into what he's going to do, but he's going to make the decision. It's been very interesting to watch somebody that has similar values.

In him, she sees leadership that she aligns with and can emulate. With regard to other leadership she has observed, she has not been as comfortable. "Other people have led before and I was like 'That's not in line with what I'm comfortable with,' but I watch him and it's like 'I can do that' because that's how I would approach things."

In general, she thinks leaders are "way too connected to their own egos. I think people need to be more open to collaboration." Specific to her work are the connections she sees that need to be made between K-16, community colleges, and 4-year institutions. "We need to create systems that will connect everything we're doing, we can't be separate or in our own silos. We have to partner or else what we do is not going to be sustainable."

Bernadette sees leadership moving in this collaborative direction and thinks she aligns well. "I have a book on educational partnerships and it talks about people who are boundary crossers. They can be in two different kinds of spaces and understand and translate for other people." This is what she sees herself doing between K-12 and higher education:

I can be comfortable and effective in both worlds and then go back to my institution and explain that this is what people in high schools are experiencing and this is why we need to do things this way. And I think that that's an important role to be more collaborative with other institutions. And I see promise of more of that to continue and not going back to silos. But there are people that just don't think that's important.

Bernadette acknowledges that there are different levels of power in higher education leadership. She acknowledged that leadership and higher education politics are influenced at the government level (e.g., workforce development grants) and at the state level (e.g., governor influence on how board of trustees are named). She also talked about power within institutions, but said that her place in leadership allows her to avoid some of the maneuvering. She sees the Vice President's jockeying for power and control and says, "but luckily I have a buffer." "So it's all going on and I try to stay apprised of what's going on and understand the power and politics so I understand how that trickles down for decisions, but I try not to get involved."

In her own leadership experience, she says that she has moved from being in a position that oversaw a department, with a staff and large budget, to a place where she is now an individual contributor. She uses influence to "work with people that I don't supervise to get things done."

My power is my position but it's also my ability to work with people so that they want to work with me and get these things done. It's definitely a collaborative approach and communicating what the benefits are to whatever we're doing.

Mary

Mary is a 40-year-old White woman who has been in higher education for 15-19 years. She has a doctoral degree, and is working at a 4-year public institution. She has been in her senior level position for the past three years. Her work is in student affairs. She began her professional career through positions that focused on student involvement and student leadership development and now has a full portfolio which includes crisis management, conduct and other aspects of student affairs. She defines her journey as "a traditional student affairs experience"; she was an active student leader, was encouraged

by a student affairs mentor to go in the profession and, upon graduating, immediately went into a master's program in higher education. She then took on positions with increasing responsibility at two different institutions before landing her current position.

Feminism and Feminist Identity

Mary defines feminism broadly as “an awareness of the role of women in terms of how it relates to institutions, how it relates to access, how it relates to advocacy for women to have partnerships and equal footing in all those contexts.” In terms of how it applies to her personally, she said,

It relates more to my own interest and advocacy, ensuring that women have access to opportunities and education without [concern] for any of the “isms” associated with our world; so racism, sexism, heterosexism, all of those things but obviously focused on women in this context. Making sure that I'm doing my part to advocate for access for women in all contexts.

Mary's mother was a big influence in her feminist development. However, she said “I don't think she'd identify herself as a feminist although she may. I've never really asked her. That's a good conversation starter the next time I see her.” Her mother was one of nine children and the only to graduate from high school. She became a working mom and primary breadwinner, while being a single mom for part of Mary's upbringing. “She was always very motivated and I know she was one of the only women who worked in her industry” at the managerial level. As a young girl, Mary didn't realize how rare this leadership role was for women. Now, she sees just how exceptional it was.

The messages Mary's mom shared with her had a big influence on her.

She always said to me that she expected me to be successful, expected me to go to college, expected me to do those things and I think that's a kind of feminism. I think people think of feminism of a woman burning her bra or whatever, those old images. I think it's much more practical. She was able to be successful in a world that wasn't always accepting she had to work really hard so she was my example.

She recalls engaging in feminist reflection for some time.

I remember being in graduate school and I wrote my paper on some of Carol Gilligan's work for my lit review. I think it's always been part of my consciousness. Not necessarily at the forefront, but I'd say that I've always identified in that way.

Mary said that she uses this mindfulness in other ways now, often with students.

I think about it when we're trying to get students to do certain things or be on certain boards or participate in certain activities. I'm always mindful that we have ... diversity, not just gender diversity, but all kinds of diversity.

In her workplace, she has relics that display her feminism, books related to women and women's leadership, quotes by women, artwork that is woman-centered. She said the women softball players had just brought her a poster of them to hang in her office.

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

Mary thinks that being in student affairs has supported her feminist development. "In student affairs we tend to be more accepting of diverse viewpoints and of diversity just in general. And there tend to be more women, at least at the entry to mid-level." She thinks that the environment in student affairs is more accepting because of the close connection to students versus other administrators and/or faculty. "Yes I think that the ability to hold one's identity is more prevalent in student affairs than if I [were] a Provost." As she has participated or facilitated at national coalition building event, she has often been asked to write down her identities and she always puts "woman" first. She said, "This is different than feminism."

In terms of other aspects of her identity that are salient, beyond being a feminist, Mary stressed her role as "educator." She thinks there are equity issues that educators are called to address. Some of those concerns relate to access, socialization of girls into

academic fields outside of STEM, and other equity issues. “I do think my overarching goal in being a feminist is to ensure that women and girls have access to education in a way that helps them achieve whatever it is that they want to achieve.”

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

When asked about historical influences that have shaped her feminism, Mary said, “I don’t know how I know about them, I just do” and went on to mention Gloria Steinem, Susan B. Anthony, and the suffragists who were “leading the feminist movement.” She added that these are the earliest stories she remembers from reading literature and this engagement happened mostly as an undergraduate student.

She went on to say that she has always had an awareness of when women rose into leadership roles.

I very vividly remember when Geraldine Ferraro ran for vice president with Walter Mondale that was very much in my consciousness. I thought that was so awesome to see a woman in that kind of leadership. In today’s context ... things like Lilly Ledbetter and equal pay, those kinds of political issues, I have a greater awareness of.

She said that something that also struck in her consciousness was when the woman was assaulted in Central Park.

That particular moment I felt very connected to her struggle to say that this is unacceptable that this happened to me and no one stood up for me. That sort of mindset that allowed that to happen in a public setting really resonated with me.

Influence of Feminism on Leadership

Mary’s feminism does influence her leadership, but feels that she needs to be realistic with her expectations.

I think it’s naïve [of me] to think I can walk into every meeting and try to advocate for a specific perspective ... because the reality is that you still have to navigate within the systems that are present and it’s really hard. There are lots of

well-meaning people who just say and do ridiculous thing, and it's hard to continually advocate for women, for equality in those contexts.

The constraints have led her to adopt a specific approach to doing equity work. She said that when she is in a meeting and something sexist or inappropriate has come out she tries to “address it in a nonthreatening way in the meeting” in the location where it is happening, but then also follow-up afterwards. “It’s not always easy to do that and, particularly in my role here, I am one of very few women in leadership and there are still a lot of older men.”

“I work from the framework of ‘yes.’ I always try to be the person to figure out how to do this.” Her hope is that this positive framework mitigates drama, but it is challenging. She had a situation where she was dealing with a sexual violence issue and, out of five total attendees, she was the only woman.

It was everything I could do in the meeting to just to hold it together and not just scream or become emotional. Afterwards I said to ... my supervisor, “I won’t be in this situation again, where I’m the only woman around a table when we’re talking about issues of sexual violence. Because what just happened in there to me was harassment.”

Mary shared that age has had an influence on how she is viewed and her leadership experience. She said that being a younger woman in leadership is difficult, because you have to “traverse the landscape around ‘well I don’t have as much experience as this other person’ and then layer it on top of ... I’m a woman.”

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

Mary is proud of what she has accomplished in the last three years since she stepped into this senior role. She described a more “robust” student life with many more activities and student organizations. While the example is tangible, she describe the

outcome as students “now have more connection to the institution; it doesn’t feel quite as transactional like ‘I’m just coming here to go to class and leave.’”

Mary aspires to be a Vice President someday as an administrative goal.

But my ultimate work goal is to be a full time faculty member in higher education/student affairs graduate program ... because I really want to be able to help shape the future of our profession and the way [to] do that is by educating the people coming into it.

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

In higher education, Mary has found ways to stay connected to her feminist ideals by being in community with other women who believe the same things. “I’m very involved with the American Association of University Women (AAUW). I’m the president of our council chapter so I’m around all these women who believe in feminism.” She said that before this, though, being connected to Women’s Studies programs and taking classes also had a strong influence.

Making Change in Higher Education

Mary is clear that regardless of the position one holds in higher education, knowing how to navigate systems is a required skill. “It’s not [necessarily] about picking your battles ... it’s about recognizing [when] I can assert this position or viewpoint and it’ll be successful or well received” versus a situation where one concludes that is not what will happen. “That doesn’t mean that I’ve abandoned my feminist identity ... it’s that I’m making the right decision politically, ethically, in that particular moment.”

When she stepped into her role, she said that the Division of Student Affairs was not broadly understood at the institution. To change this paucity of knowledge, Mary wanted to bring the campus community into a conversation about the work so it didn’t feel like the division was creating a vision in isolation.

I had hosted a series of [events] to open dialogues where we invited faculty, staff and students to come and sit around and have conversations around these directed questions that I came up with. And once we did that, we used that as a division to develop a strategic plan. And so once we developed the strategic plan we once again hosted another set of conversations to say “this is what we heard you say” and “this how we think it should be implemented or operationalized.” “Is this what you think we should be doing as an institution?”

She said that this has always been her approach to change, trying to bring together people who are interested and invested. Mary recognizes that not everyone’s ideas will rise to the top, but hopes that being involved makes them feel their perspective is valued and leads to broader buy-in later when ideas are being implemented. She also utilizes work groups often, made up of faculty, staff and students, to ask “Is this what you were thinking about?” The questions she uses frame the divisional priorities, but then people get to react and weigh in.

As for barriers to change, Mary said there are limits we all face regarding resources (financial or human). She is lucky to be working at an institution that is young, so it has fewer “sacred cows” than most. “That makes it easy in many ways.”

Generational Differences

Mary thinks there is a lot of awareness of Millennials, and the stereotypes associated with them, in higher education since this frame reflects the students we are currently working with now. Since the faculty and staff that are largely managing higher education are between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, they aren’t viewed as subjects in the same way. “I don’t view them as being discussed or controversial at all.” She said there just seems to be “an awareness that we have this older group of folks, the Baby Boomers, that are retiring out. But then we’ve got this middle group of people, our generation, who are ready for more leadership.”

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

Mary indicated that the concerns that still exist in higher education around gender equity have changed.

I don't think the question any more is about access. Women have access to higher education. So I think the question becomes, is it the kind of higher education that is going to lead them to careers and jobs where they can be financially stable, successful or whatever goals they have for themselves?

She thinks that women may access community and technical colleges, as well as for profit colleges, at higher rates than men. She said one of the factors in this might be socioeconomic.

I do think that women can be disproportionately impacted either because they are single parents or come from a single parent environment, because they may have stopped out of their educational experience for childbearing. I think that the single greatest issue could be the ... kind of institutions that women are accessing. Related to my previous point that women aren't being prepared as girls in the younger grade to access fields where more jobs are available.

Advocacy/Activism

Mary feels that advocacy is her responsibility. "It's my job to advocate for other women to...ensure that I'm bringing along the next generation of people." Some of her own research has demonstrated the importance of creating "opportunities for women to have leadership and developing student activities or groups that support women in leadership."

Mary identifies her work with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) as advocacy/activist work. "We do a lot as an association and I participate in different campaigns through AAUW, writing legislators, contacting the president, signing petitions." She said AAUW makes it easy for people to be involved. "Online they have

the two minute activist and ... a system [where you can] send an email to your legislator directly, you senator, your congressman or woman. It's awesome."

Generation X

Mary said that Generation X is supposedly the group that is disenfranchised "not being connected to things, places, causes, all that stuff. Some of which applies and some of which doesn't." On a positive note, she thinks that the idea that we should respect and recognize that we all come from different places is a product of Generation X.

I think our generation was one of the first generations that was faced with a more diverse population and certainly the gay rights movement came to life in our generation. Certainly an awareness of diversity in a different way than our parents' generation.

Mary thinks that, largely, people reject their "generational label unless they're the positive ones. I'm sure that as the Millennials come into leadership we'll look back and have a better perspective on what our own approaches were."

Mary doesn't identify with being a Generation Xer in the same way she identifies with being a feminist. "I just don't think about my generational identity. I recognize myself as a younger administrator."

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

As Mary thinks about the differences in generations, she recalls times in her life when she thought that Boomers were really different than her. Times when she thought "well that's not going to happen to me because things are different now." She went on to say that, while she didn't think she was discounting their experience, "I assumed that the environment had changed significantly enough that I wouldn't have that experience." She thinks differently now and said, "They were right."

Mary went on to recount a situation from a couple of years ago. She said that her male supervisor, someone in a senior leadership position, said to her, “We need to stop hiring women who are of child bearing age” and went on to explain the frustration he felt for women that went on maternity leave and didn’t return. “I never thought I’d be having this conversation,” Mary said. “I was like, ‘Is that really what you want to say to me?’ and he didn’t see that as being sexist or inappropriate in anyway. It still happened and I assumed that it wouldn’t.”

Mary has always had male supervisors except for one instance, where she said the woman was wonderful, but she wouldn’t put her in a mentorship category.

I was always mentored as a student by men. Then in my leadership roles I’ve always had male supervisors. I have not had women supervisors ... sometimes you seek out mentors elsewhere. I have great women colleagues and friends but no one that I would really hold up as a mentor. If I’m going to pick up the phone to call somebody because I need help or I’m in a crisis or whatever, it’s not to one of those people.

In terms of being in multigenerational spaces, Mary thinks there are a lot of benefits “to [hearing about] the experiences of the women who have come before you. Not that their experiences are going to be exactly the same ... but to be able to learn from those experiences, to hear their stories and find meaning in them.” When it comes to students, Mary said she works with Millenials often, and the generation coming behind them.

I think it’s important to share with them what our experiences are, not in the context of telling a war story, but how to navigate and find resources in ways that are informative for them not so they follow our same path, but so the path may be a little bit easier.

She talked about participating in a professional development opportunity where she had the chance to sit down and talk with a Vice President in Student Affairs. This woman was a Baby Boomer and offered advice she found incredibly useful:

Find opportunities to have experiences that are going to expand your knowledge base ... don't limit yourself to what you think you need to know. Instead always be looking out for something outside your normal frame of reference or comfort zone because that's the thing that's going to get you to the next job, to the next opportunity.

Mary said that the advice she has received from Baby Boomers, in general, has resonated with her. "They haven't asked me to abandon feminist principles" but rather have been encouraging.

Leadership in Higher Education

Mary described her leadership philosophy as inclusive, flexible and supportive, but seemed to think she should have a better answer than that. She went on to say,

I think my philosophy is that everyone has the capacity of leadership. That's why those traits are what they are. So how I operationalize that in my day to day work is recognizing that we all come from different places and experiences so I try not to have expectations that either the students, or my staff, or others that I deal with have the same understanding that I have about a particular situation and/or knowledge of whatever the activity is that we are going to take part in. Trying to address folks where they're at. I try to be flexible so much as recognizing that everybody's approach to leadership is different. Just because it's not the way I would do it, doesn't mean it can't be done.

Mary said that to be an effective administrator you have to understand the role of power and politics in higher education.

To be an effective administrator you have to understand who has the power and then who is sort of playing the game of politics. I tend to have a lot of awareness of power and politics but I also tend not to be involved in it. I tend to find myself being the observer of it. And that is ... intentional. I always focus on this idea of this circle of control and I really try only focus on my circle of control and my circle of influence.

She said that she spends time observing the things that fall outside of that, but tries not to play into it.

You have to be astute, aware of what's happening and who's connected to what, where, and then decide if you need to exert some sort of influence to get something to happen. The way I use power in my particular role is I use the power of students to make things happen. That's the leverage that I have with anyone on campus, to get students to say that this is what they want to have happen, which generally lines up with what I want to have happen. And then take that to the president or whomever.

Mary thinks that leadership in higher education is often unfair to women when it comes to navigating politics. In similar situations, "men can be called savvy and women ... called bitches."

Her personal values include integrity, which to her means "having congruence between who you say you are and who you demonstrate you are" and respect for others which she defines as "going back to that idea of leadership that everybody has a story. Recognizing that we don't all come from the same place, the same framework, so having respect for that other person's perspective, experience, and so forth." She also values work ethic, achievement, and being motivated by wanting to contribute in some way.

Dorey

Dorey is a 48-year-old White woman who has been in higher education for 20-24 years. She has a Master of Fine Arts degree and is working at a 4-year public institution. She is Canadian, but began her professional career in higher education in the United States as a professor, then as a department chair, and most recently she has a split role as both department chair and senior Academic Affairs officer. The inability to fill the chair role is due to finances, but she anticipates she will lose this portion of her responsibilities soon. It was during a stint as an interim administrator that she decided to pursue

leadership outside of teaching. She attributes much of her success to the work ethic she inherited through her Mennonite background. It was her “gut” that determined the selection of her current institution eighteen years ago and she continues to be pleased with her choice.

Feminism and Feminist Identity

Dorey defines feminism “as trying to enable women to pursue whatever their dreams and aspirations are at any level, whatever they may be, and having equal opportunity to do that.” When asked about the development of her feminist identity, Dorey went back to her biography. She began as an art history major and then switched to the art studio program where she became an artist. In pursuing art, she knew she was getting an education in something she was “interested in rather than something that was practical and would get me a job.” Dorey attended a Center for the Arts and this experience shaped her world view. She met people from around the world and said,

I think this was pivotal to me in some ways just because it gave me a lot more exposure to different beliefs systems, and cultures and experiences than I had had in my hometown ... so it pushed me to expand my horizons a bit.

After graduation, she had another eye opening experience by living in a multicultural setting in a city with very diverse people.

“I sometimes think of myself as the accidental feminist,” Dorey said. While she grew up in a Mennonite community, which she shared “is not a hot bed of feminism,” she saw her mom and her three aunts as role models. “I saw ... professional women and that were educated and pursuing careers, even though [they were] nursing and teaching [which] are more typical careers [for women].”

Dorey added,

My mother was very supportive of her children pursuing whatever they wanted to do, whether it seemed like it made sense or not. I had a very, very smart brother who decided to be an auto mechanic and mom encouraged him rather than telling him to be an engineer because that's what he wanted to do. We were always supported in pursuing our own dreams. That kind of becomes the seeds of later world views. I think those are the seeds of my grounding in pursuing a feminist approach [although] I wouldn't say I'm a radical feminist by any means.

Dorey does not identify with a specific wave of feminism:

I guess I just don't want to pinpoint aligning myself with any particular [strain of feminism] except to say that I think it's still important and I wish more of my young female students actually felt more strongly about feminist issues. Many of them are completely ambivalent.

Uniquely, as an artist, Dorey said it would be more odd if she didn't consider herself a feminist. And, now that she has been at her institution for so long (18 years) she said that it's no longer about the "feminist" title anymore, people just know Dorey.

I asked her to look around her office and name any items that would signify her identity as a feminist.

I am in my office and looking around. There are some books on my shelf. Most everything else is my own artwork but not particularly feminist although I probably have some pieces in storage that are. So not in a particularly obvious way.

Historical Influences on Feminist Identity

Dorey said,

A big part of my MFA program in the early 90s was looking at feminist artists and what they were doing and it was the height of the AIDS epidemic. [What] we were looking at and [critiquing] and ... reading was either career related or feminist related because those were the people tackling those issues. And so I think that expanded me into a more intellectual kind of notion of feminism.

She said it was interesting to see how AIDS was so big to her generation, a huge crisis, and yet the generation now doesn't even seem to think about it.

Dorey said they looked at some of the feminist artists in the 70s, like Judy Chicago, but she didn't connect with their approach. "I didn't like knitting and women's work and all those things they were trying to embrace to promote themselves as artists in their own right, without imitating men."

Dorey said she also remembers going to a class in upstate New York, around 1998, during the anniversary of the suffrage movement. "They were doing a big thing related to Susan B. Anthony and that whole group of women, and being a Canadian, I don't know that whole history well. But Hillary Clinton was the keynote speaker and she was amazing." She said she felt like "whatever Hillary does, I'll vote for Hillary. I think she's like a goddess. That was a pivotal thing for me as far as a recent sort of thing. I know of the suffrage movement and support it." She did say, however, that she isn't really looking back at historical women all that much.

Dorey recalls 9/11 as a big event:

I remember at that time I worked a mile from campus and I walked first thing in the morning to get some exercise. I would come through the sub to the art building. And I walked through the sub that morning and the TV's were on and it literally blows you away. Everyone was in shock.

She also mentioned a college campus shooting and those in Columbine and then Aurora.

She said that specific event doesn't necessarily influence her leadership, but it does

"make me think more about how people treat each other."

In thinking about the question of historical influences, Dorey had this to say:

I don't know whether world events have influenced me as much as specific people and personal experiences. I think those have been more influential; where someone says or does something that I truly agree with or disagree with. That kind of informs how I approach things.

Influence of Feminism on Leadership

Dorey is motivated by “helping other people advance either in their own aspirations or in studies like yours to actually expand the knowledge base and resources for other women.”

Successes and Aspirations in Leadership

She worked through a difficult situation in her department where she learned to divide and share power for the betterment of the unit. Basically, she was able to talk with the other senior person in the department and work out differences in order to make the department productive. She said they still don’t always get along, but they have learned to work through it.

Her successes as a department chair, and her time in an interim senior administrative role, motivated her to talk about her potential interest in administration. As a result, she attended two leadership institutes designed to help folks move up into senior level leadership. One of the institutes was HERS and she loved being in the learning environment with other women.

A project Dorey is especially proud of was pulling together a faculty institute that focused on diversity. She also started an arts extravaganza for high school students where they come to campus and participated in a day of workshops and info sessions to get to see what college is like. “It has significantly increased our enrollment in the arts department as well as other areas. I think that’s a big achievement on the departmental level.”

Intersectionality and Feminist Identity

Dorey referenced her upbringing as a Mennonite as almost being in contrast to her feminist beliefs. She also mentioned that she is a lesbian and this, she said, “very much shapes my feminism.” She described it as almost fighting two battles at once, because many of the things that have advanced for women are still not rights that gays and lesbians have.

That’s a bigger frustration for me than just being a woman, but they’re not mutually exclusive either. We’ve advanced some ... my partner works here too, [but] if she didn’t, we’d have the right to have medical benefits. And Colorado finally approved civil unions so we’ve made advances on that part. But there’s still attitudes and lack of awareness that’s all around me.

In terms of acknowledging differences, Dorey recognizes the strength diversity can bring to a higher education setting. About her department she said, “We have a pretty diverse department with six or seven full time people right now; two lesbians, one gay man, one from Canada, one from New Zealand, one from Mexico and a handful of white males.”

Dorey’s identity has influenced her leadership practice:

I think the outlook of looking for the good of the whole has been really my outlook for how I lead the department and how I look at the institution. [It] probably made me successful as a leader because I’m able to look at the whole rather than the individual needs per myself or specific people. As a department chair, looking out for the whole department rather than one individual or specific individuals has made me effective because I don’t treat people (they’re of course unique and special), but I don’t treat them in a privileged way. It’s really looking at what helps students in the department not my sculpture teacher get what he wants.

Dorey acknowledged that her sexual orientation was a more salient part of her identity than her feminism.

I think there’s a lot more room to make change there. I’m not saying there’s not room for feminist change but I think there’s more change to be made in terms of

gay and lesbian issues and acceptance and not just in higher education, it's more of a national kind of thing. More states are allowing same sex marriage, and some are still adamantly against, and it's a little bit more of a polarizing issue than even in feminism [where] there are certainly those that don't believe that women should be carrying out certain roles and should be barefoot and in the kitchen. Some of those attitudes still exist but I don't think it's as polarizing viewpoint as agreeing or opposing same sex marriage. I think as a woman I'm still accepted as a woman and I can vote and do all these things but as a lesbian there are things I can't do. Protections that don't exist. In that way that has more potential to become discriminatory on a more extreme level and more personally harmful. And if I look at just the thought of applying for jobs, if I look for a job somewhere else where they don't know I'm a lesbian, at what point in the interview process do you say something? How do you figure out whether or not you will fit there? That's less of an issue as a woman because I can probably make it work and they'll see I'm a woman and they hire me. I don't have to out myself as a woman but I do as a lesbian and that becomes more of a worry when looking at moving somewhere else than finding a role for myself as a leader and a woman I think I can make that happen. But whether being a lesbian will be accepted, that's more questionable.

Obstacles or Challenges to Holding onto Feminist Identity in Higher Education

In terms of challenges to holding onto a feminist identity, the first she shared came before her time in higher education. She talked about working in a book printing plant where, for the most part, only men go to work the camera. "It was something that irks you and when I hear my own students say 'feminism is dead, everything's fine now' it's not the case."

In her higher education experience as an undergraduate, most of her professors were men, especially the full-time, tenured professors. "I think there were only two women [in a] department of probably 40–50 faculty and then there were a handful of adjuncts that were women. You can't help but notice those things and be bothered by them."

Making Change in Higher Education

Dorey's change strategies include involving people in discussions in order to get buy-in for change. She avoids change that feels like a top-down mandate. From her mentor, she learned that having meetings with students once-a-month is a way to stay connected. The meetings aren't "a rip roaring success yet," but she thinks in time they could be. "I'm trying to make an effort to get out and talk to people and try and make email a less crucial part of work communication." She expected some resistance in her new role since there was some feedback following her title change. "There was a furor that I was appointed and they didn't do an outside search ... so I had a little trepidation coming in." She said it has gone surprisingly smoothly and she credits her strong communication with chairs and others as the reason for this successful transition.

Dorey said that the change challenges she has faced is more technical than anything. She also identifies longevity at the institution as being a strength for navigating:

I think to some degree the reason I'm not encountering that kind of push back is that I've been here so long and I have enough of a track record and there's a fair amount of trust that I'm not going to do something stupid. And if I move to a different position or institution that would be some political capital that I would have to take some time building but I've been here 18 years and chair for 10 and most of the upper administration around me have been around a fair amount of time too so they know me and know how I work so they're not afraid I'm going to move into territory that they don't want me to enter.

Generational Differences

"Not all feminists are good people," Dorey said. This comment was made in reference to a situation she had to manage with two ardent feminists, who were Baby Boomers. They accused a male faculty member of being sexist. The accusation was not founded, according to Dorey, and the institution concluded the same. Unfortunately,

those types of tensions are really difficult to deal with, especially with differing generational frames.

Dorey's core values are honesty and fairness, and if these are questioned, she takes great personal offense. More than being influenced by generation, though, she believes that these values are a product of her upbringing. These values were "embedded in me growing up in the Mennonite community and the additional thing that would go along with that is an outlook that looks out for the good of the whole rather than the individual."

Gender Inequality in Higher Education/Most Pressing Issues

Dorey identified inequity in faculty as a major issue.

I've heard some faculty complain that that too many full professors are men but some of that has to do with the timeline that it has to do to get through the whole tenure process. I think there are women in the pipeline but I'm not sure they are necessarily doing enough to provide leadership opportunities and identify women ... especially in those upper roles.

Her current institution has been supportive of the advancement of women, but there is work to do.

When I first came there [were] maybe two women that were department chairs out of thirteen. Now we're about split but the leadership has not gone much above that chair level. In the position I'm in now, [I] am the most senior ranking woman in terms of the administrative tiers. We've had some people in for short terms but nobody that stayed, so we're a very male centric environment. I'm very able to work in it, they're not bad people by any means, but [there's] also a push to change it.

Advocacy/Activism

In terms of advocacy, Dorey said that for over "18 years there's a group of us working on an LGBT Affinity group under our diversity tent and we finally have the

critical mass that we can actually do it ... if there's only 2 or 3 people there's no point.

We actually have some numbers now so we're moving forward.”

Dorey has been involved in a campus group focused on inclusive leadership. The group hosts monthly lunches and a variety of workshops focused on diversity issues. She said, “I've been attending some of those ... but in a more participatory level.” She said the group is also looking at creating an affinity Group for LGBT issues

Generation X

When asked about her identification with Generation X, Dorey said,

I find the whole generational thing really complicated. I look at your timeline and I fit at the very beginning of Gen X, like the very first year, so I never really felt very Gen X. I feel like I'm more of a lost generation. I don't really feel [like I'm a] Baby Boomer either. I'm not really sure how to answer that because I don't identify with a generation so broadly. There's certain key things I remember, like ... the 1976 Olympics in Montreal and Nadia Comaneci winning all these gold medals ... it's a big thing in my generation, but it doesn't have anything to do with my feminist identity.

As a generational milestone, she does remember the NAFTA Free Trade Agreement, for interesting reason. As a Canadian citizen, it allowed her to work in the U.S. In 2012, she became an American Citizen which she said it was personally “a big deal.”

When asked what she thinks the dominant narrative is about Generation X, Dorey said, “I really don't because I haven't thought about it that much.” She did talk about being in graduate school at a time when Gen Xers were entering.

There was a guy that was a couple years younger than I and he was really Gen X'er in my mind in terms of being more self-centered and selfish. He was “all about me” and I didn't feel I was that way, [I didn't connect] with his generation which was probably five years younger than me. So I guess that's where I fit, but I don't feel like I'm a Gen X'er by that definition.

She went on to share that, generally, Generation X might be considered pretty creative and innovative, in addition to being more self-reliant and a little more diplomatic than the generation following.

Multigenerational Spaces and Mentors

As a college student, Dorey said that a lot of her trajectory has subsequently evolved because of other people and their suggestions and guidance. This has influenced her to also want to assist others.

Dorey had the good fortune of being in a leadership program that took her to another institution. The experience involved working closely with the Chancellor and she was specific to pick an institution that had a woman in this leadership role. “And that was a very intentional decision ... I really wanted to work with a woman because I hadn’t had the opportunity here.” This person became a mentor, someone that Dorey considered an expert in organizational communication, and stressed to her the importance of relationships with a variety of constituents, as a cornerstone to leadership. She admired that her mentor demonstrated diplomacy and not just an attitude of “I’m the one in charge.” What struck her from the beginning was how much this person cared about how others felt.

She would meet with everyone; she would have breakfast with the custodians twice a year just to see what they thought. So I think that inclusionary approach is really an important part of being a leader. It wasn’t direct advice but it was something I observed.

Besides her, Dorey mentioned another woman that she met at a women’s leadership institute that she still keeps in touch with and seeks out for good counsel. “Broadly the whole [women’s leadership institute] HERS experience would be in some ways mentoring.” Both of these women are older than her, but Dorey has no opinion

about whether or not their generational placement influences or limits their leadership abilities since she isn't at that level yet. Because observing them in their roles is so different she said, "I wouldn't even notice if there were any kind of restrictions or hindrances as a result of that generation."

The biggest piece of advice the Boomers she has interacted with have given is this: "You have to be who you are. You have to be genuine and you can't put on an act to be a leader; you are who you are. Be the best you that you can be." She also mentioned some strictly practical advice around knowing budgets. She has been told "budgets are everything." In addition to the importance of relationships and communication.

When asked about how often she is in multigenerational spaces, Dorey said, "I think I'm probably more likely to be in situations with Millennials than Baby Boomers. There's a handful at my institution, women that are older than me but not huge numbers. Most are my generation or Millennials." In terms of giving Millennials advice, Dorey said this:

I think the Millennials could do a little more research into the whole truth before they jump to conclusions. My observation with the Millennial faculty is that they hear something and they say "this is outrageous we have to do something about it" without really looking at the reasons for things and doing the broader research their full fact finding and maybe thinking a little less about personal impact and impact on the institution.

Leadership in Higher Education

Dorey said that she thinks there are three things essential to good leadership: relationship building, communication, and planning. "Without any of those it's going to fail." She indicated that building relationships is the one that comes least naturally for her.

I can plan till the cows come home. I'm so good at planning, but I have to work harder at the other pieces. And so I'm really trying, as I'm moving forward, to work on very consciously building those relationships and very consciously communicating what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. I'm trying to ... assess which people like to communicate which way because some like email and some don't so trying to tailor my interactions with what they're comfortable with.

Dorey sees power and politics infiltrating higher education at the state and national levels due to the increase in legislative influence through mandates. At the institutional level, she sees senior administrative leadership as having far more power than staff and faculty. She did a project on shared governance and the role of faculty.

What she found is that

there is a misperception of who should have power of what. Historically faculty are the power force in terms of the academic agenda and in some degree they still are, but here ... they feel like they want power on all fronts without understanding necessarily what that means in terms of responsibility with budget, government relations, fundraising and recruitment all those sorts of things. That's where better communication and explanation to faculty of what administrators are doing can be useful. There's a little too much isolation between those groups that makes faculty feel like they have no power when maybe they wouldn't want it. And administrators feel like faculty don't understand and then on a more individual level I see all kinds of internal politics where one person is negotiating with another.

Dorey acknowledges that she also uses her role power to get certain things done. But she is careful to refrain from demanding that things happen in a dictatorial way. Instead, she uses a more collaborative style and thinks this is the most effective kind of leadership.

In terms of the kind of leadership that is needed to make higher education successful in the future, Dorey said, "I think the other key thing is to really not be bound by what we've always done. At all levels, whether faculty, students, administrators, we are so comfortable in how we do things that we don't look for alternatives." She gave the

example of potentially moving classes out of their Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Tuesday, Thursday model to something very different.

When asked if the current leadership in higher education is working, she said,

I don't know that the leadership needs to change, the structure or even the individuals, but they could stand to make more effort to talk about why change might be necessary and to be willing to go out on the limb and maybe do things that [not] everybody else is doing.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter IV, I created in-depth narratives of the seven participants interviewed in this study. The information the women shared differentiated them from one another, as well united them in thought. The next chapter makes meaning of the narratives, when taken together, and highlights emerging themes and sub-themes.

CHAPTER V

EMERGENT THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The purpose of this study is to explore how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education. It examines the experiences of women who identify as feminists, who were born into “Generation X,” and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions and how they make meaning of their feminism and generational membership as leaders and change agents in higher education. Chapter IV drew on a feminist methodological framework of in-depth reflexive interviews that allowed participants to be the experts of their own experiences. This chapter summarizes how, taken together, these narratives shaped emergent themes and sub-themes.

While it is easy to honor the fact that the women are experts of their own lives, it is less easy to deliver the content. As I embark on this chapter, I recognize that I too have been on a journey. This point in the research process seems to pick up exponentially in importance. I now need to translate what I heard and make collective meaning. This disclosure raises the question posed by Zeni (2001), and echoed by Rosser (2003) in her research process: “How will you handle the temptation to see what you hope to see?” (p. 8). The answer to this question rests solidly in my analysis procedures and my now deep relationship to what was spoken in the interviews and captured in the transcripts.

The women in this study illuminate standpoints shared by seemingly common frames, such as their feminist identity, generational membership, and professional roles in

higher education. In interrogating the lived experience of each participant, however, it is clear that the meaning they make of these identities differs widely in some areas, and reflects more similarity in others. Taken together, they helped me to understand how *who* they are shaped how they made meaning of their feminist and Gen X identities and their practice of leadership, recognizing that this is a fluid process, rather than a fixed point or essence (Haraway, 1988). Haraway's notion of situated knowledges is useful here because it reminds us that understanding cannot be universal; depending on one's standpoint, meaning may look and feel different. While standpoint theory does recognize the individual experience within socially constructed groups, it emphasizes the social conditions that construct such groups (Collins, 1997a).

Feminism Defined

Prior to discussing themes, I thought it important to foreground the answer to the question "How do you define feminism?" The participants in this study defined their feminism in a variety of ways, setting the foundation for their subsequent responses to how they make meaning of their feminist identity. The variety in their definitions highlights the fact that women cannot be reduced to some monolithic descriptor or understanding. All of the women in this study self-identified as feminists and yet their definitions were wide-ranging. This, perhaps, shouldn't be a surprise since the diversity within feminism has been well established (Squires & Kemp, 1988).

Elle, for example, doesn't see feminism as one particular thing. She acknowledges that there are a multiplicity of "feminisms" that exist and thinks feminism motivates one to understand power dynamics. She goes on to clarify that, as a feminist, "I am not interested in gender dynamics, but rather power and how it is engaged on the

interpersonal level and in systems.” Torie, Hannah, and Dorey focused their definition on women and the ability to navigate freely. Torie said that feminism is, “understanding and supporting the value of women in society, ensuring that there are not barriers.” Hannah stressed a similar theme in that she talked about feminism creating the space for “choices,” while Dorey said that feminism is “trying to enable women to pursue whatever their dreams and aspirations are at any level, whatever they may be, and having equal opportunity to do that.” Bernadette and Mia focused more on women being equal in relation to men. Bernadette shared, “I think it’s as simple as equal rights for men and women and making sure that women have equal opportunities.” And Mia echoed this sentiment by saying it’s the “idea or belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities.”

Contrasting these definitions was the notion that feminism connects sexism to other isms. This connection was made by Hannah, Elle and Mary. Hannah stated, “You can’t really talk about being a woman and having full freedoms ... you need other people’s freedoms to be just as important or just as acceptable or honored.” Mary said that feminism relates to

ensuring that women have access to opportunities and education without [concern] for any of the “isms” associated with our world; so racism, sexism, heterosexism, all of those things but obviously focused on women in this context. Making sure that I’m doing my part to advocate for access for women in all contexts.

For most of these women, feminism was viewed as an “ideology of equality” (Aronson, 2003, p. 913) concerned with issues of fairness. Others, however, saw the connection between women’s rights and the rights of other marginalized people, highlighting one of the contributions of Black feminist thought. Black feminist thought

“fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift that rejects additive approaches to oppression” (Collins, 1990, p. 222). Instead, it requires an intersectional understanding of oppression and the systems in which it manifests (Crenshaw, 1991). Like Strachan (1999), some of the women demonstrated broader interests beyond just gender inequality to include race, class, sexuality, and disabilities.

Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes

With the personal definitions of feminism as a starting point, what follows are the most salient themes and sub-themes that emerged from the narratives, followed by how the women’s perspectives connect or contradict what has been found in the literature. They include: (a) understanding feminist influences, (b) leading toward gender inequity, (c) little generational consciousness, (d) generational context for feminism, (e) navigating multigenerational spaces, (f) acknowledging gender inequity in higher education, and (g) understanding at the intersections. Each theme and sub-theme is illustrated in Table 3.

Theme One: Understanding Feminist Influences

Theme one highlights how participants described a variety of factors that influenced their feminist identity. Some were able to articulate salient moments that shaped them, while others described a variety of smaller instances that brought them to this place of identification. These influencers included what they have been taught, or came to know through their lived experiences and are identified by the sub-themes of feminist label, family of origin and education, and higher education environment.

Table 3

Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
Theme One: Understanding feminist influences	Feminist label Family of origin Education Higher education environment
Theme Two: Leading toward gender equity	Advocacy/Activism Power Courageous acts Change strategies
Theme Three: Little generational consciousness	Struggling to see Narratives about Generation X
Theme Four: Generational context for feminism	Historical influences Gendered limitations
Theme Five: Navigating multigenerational spaces	Baby Boomers Honored advice from Baby Boomers Baby Boomer advice to leave behind Millenials Connecting to peers
Theme Six: Acknowledging gender inequity in higher education	Tenure Adjuncts Family friendly needs Pipeline and representation Patriarchy
Theme Seven: Understanding at the intersections	Religion and the intersections Race/ethnicity and the intersections Class and the intersections Ability and the intersections Sexual orientation and the intersections Privilege and the intersections Navigating the intersections

Sub-theme: Feminist label. Like many women who identify as feminists, the women in my study expressed great discomfort with the label. Elle stated emphatically “Feminism is a bad word now in case you didn’t know, and I say that as someone who’s been deeply entrenched in second and third way feminism.” She believes people see feminism as a little off, not grounded in reality. Add the word *radical* to the mix and she thinks people are really intimidated by feminism. Mary agreed, “I wouldn’t say I’m a radical feminist by any means.” Torie said, “I ... think we grew up with this disgust against the word ‘feminist’ and so a good portion [of Generation X] doesn’t use the word ... I definitely call myself a feminist but I don’t [evangelize] about it.” Mia finds the word *feminist* challenging based on how people understand it. “I actually don’t like the word because it sounds like it’s a preference for women to have more power than men or power over men.” She added:

I hesitate to identify myself as a feminist to others because of that issue, that it’s a misunderstanding of the term. I don’t proclaim myself as a feminist at work or anywhere else because I think that using the labels politicizes it which causes divisiveness.

Four of the women in this study raised concerns about “how” feminist they can or want to be in certain settings. Hannah communicated her concern that being outspoken, and perhaps labeling herself as a feminist, can be isolating and marginalizing. Mia, for example, said this about calling out inequality: “At times, if I have the opportunity, I’ll point out the inequality to other people, but not in any kind of forceful way.” Mary said that when she is in a meeting and something sexist or inappropriate comes out she tries to “address it in a nonthreatening way in the meeting” in the location where it is happening, but then also follow-up afterwards. “It’s not always easy to do that and, particularly in my role here, I am one of very few women in leadership and there are still a lot of older

men.” Torie added to the dialogue of restraint, “While I still think there is work to do, it is not necessarily a fighting situation in the way it once was.”

In the above examples, some of the women are heard offering explanations for why they were hesitant or downright opposed to using the feminist label, citing barriers to being heard and/or their willingness to cope with negative stereotypes, backlash, or misunderstandings about the word. While not true for everyone in this study, a majority of women engaged in this exercise of hiding or suppressing feminist identity. Keeping feminist identity hidden is supported by research done by Zucker (2004), who found that “many women, even as they embrace feminist principles, are loath to be labeled feminists” (p. 423). Unlike some of the other identities that the participants discussed (e.g., race), feminism is an identity that can be concealed and, when given a choice, many of them chose to keep it invisible.

Sub-theme: Family of origin. Six out of the seven women I interviewed identified a family member as a stimulus in the development of their feminist identity (e.g., a mother, father, aunt, and/or grandmother), though not all of the family members themselves identified as feminists. Both Torie and Mary said their mothers were extremely influential, but also shared that they didn’t believe their mothers would have called themselves feminists. Motherly influence could be felt in what the participants said they observed by way of behavior. Dorey said she saw her mother and her three aunts as role models. “I saw ... professional women that were educated and pursuing careers, even though [they were] nursing and teaching [which] are more typical careers [for women].” About her mom she shared:

My mother was very supportive of her children pursuing whatever they wanted to do, whether it seemed like it made sense or not. I had a very, very smart brother

who decided to be an auto mechanic and mom encouraged him rather than telling him to be an engineer because that's what he wanted to do. We were always supported in pursuing our own dreams. That kind of becomes the seeds of later world views. I think those are the seeds of my grounding in pursuing a feminist approach.

Hannah shared that her mother and grandmother worked outside the home when she was growing up and that modeled a certain kind of independence. Hannah also said that her parents' circle of friends had an influence:

So, we had ... a lot of gay friends ... folks who weren't married or were in long-standing relationships but chose not to be married. I think that helped me have the sense that there were a lot of different ways to be in the world.

Actually being a mother had a profound influence on the two women in the study who indicated they had children. Bernadette said this about feminism and mothering, "I'm raising two sons. So as a mom [it's] just very important to raise socially responsible, open minded boys who are respectful of women and see that everyone can have the same opportunities." For Hannah, she said being a feminist mother, "Challenges you to think about what it is that you want to teach your son about the world."

Torie and Bernadette mentioned their fathers, but these descriptions were more dissonant. Bernadette described having a father who, while older than the Baby Boomer generation, aligned with some aspects of feminism. Bernadette said he wanted his daughters to have access to choices, but he also expected them to adhere to traditional gender roles. "It was this interesting mix of having traditional expectations but at the same time wanting us to have opportunities." Torie said her Dad "stayed home with me until I was in kindergarten." But she also named seeing inequality in her parents' relationship as motivation for seeking a more egalitarian marriage herself.

Hirsch and Keller (1990) believed there could be no understanding of women's oppression without taking into account women's role as mother and as daughter of mother. Glickman (1993) conducted a study to look at how daughters whose mothers were involved in the women's movement, and found that it did influence their own feminism. While the participants said the matriarchal figures they named would not necessarily call themselves feminists, they influenced their feminism. Gen Xers have more female role models who work outside the home and they are one of the first to watch "the dramatic gender role transformation that began with women entering the workforce and higher education institutions in large numbers" (Kezar & Lester, 2008, p. 56). The mothers, aunts, and grandmothers referenced in these interviews sent messages to their daughters about careers and possibility, while sometimes creating dissonance between their actions and their choices. The tensions between feminism and mothering have a long history (May, 2011). Like the women in this study who identified as feminist mothers, Torie and Bernadette struggled with raising children in a gendered world and noted a particular tension around raising boys. The question of what fatherhood has to do with feminism (Ruddick, 1997) continues to be examined through the study of men and masculinities (Kimmel, 2000). The women in this study noted the times when their fathers stepped outside of perceived masculine gender roles, while also holding onto the contradicting messages they received from these men about their own gender expectations.

Sub-theme: Education. For Dorey and Elle, exposure to feminism came through educational settings prior to college—for Dorey, a Center for the Arts, and for Elle, a

single-sex high school. At the Arts Center, Dorey met people from around the world and said,

I think [this] was pivotal to me in some ways just because it gave me a lot more exposure to different beliefs systems, and cultures and experiences than I had had in my hometown ... so it pushed me to expand my horizons a bit.

For Elle, she was in single sex educational settings through high school. Then she faced a hard reality. “In my 17 year old wisdom, I wanted to go to a co-educational college. I did that and upon entry I realized that the world as I knew it was very different.”

Elle went to college at a place that she said didn't have a Women's Center, so she learned about feminism directly from the classroom. She said the work of past feminist change-makers continues to be important to her as she draws strength from reading and understanding their work. Bernadette earned a Women's Studies minor in college that was extremely influential in how she viewed herself as a feminist:

I think at that time feminism was losing some of its appeal but that didn't bother me, I thought that was really important. Being a Women's Studies minor gave me confidence knowing that there are other people out there who think that the world should be different too. So I attribute that to my giving myself permission that things can be done differently.

Likewise Mary recalls the impact of course content in her master's program in college:

Specifically, I remember presenting on Ruth Ellen Josselson and Carol Gilligan. I remember being in graduate school and I wrote my paper on some of Carol Gilligan's work for my lit review. I think it's always been part of my consciousness. Not necessarily at the forefront, but I'd say that I've always identified in that way.

Much has been written about what might predict identification as a feminist and education bears a strong connection. The influence of educational context, that is, learning about feminism through women and gender studies courses (Aronson, 2003; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994) and reading feminist texts (Findlen, 2001; Horne et

al., 2001), came up as influences for Elle, Hannah, Bernadette, Mary and Dorey. This finding supports the purpose of Women's Studies as outlined by the constitution of the National Women's Studies Association (1982, cited in Bargard & Shibley Hyde, 1991), which says that "Women's Studies is the educational strategy of a breakthrough in consciousness and knowledge" (Bargard & Shibley Hyde, 1991, p. 181). Women's Studies pairs education with exposure to feminist ideologies and perspectives that are legitimized (Aronson, 2003).

Sub-theme: Higher education environment. The higher education environments that these women work in seem to also influence how closely they hold onto their feminism. Dorey, Mary, Bernadette, and Mia found that factors within higher education were positive influencers in them holding close to their feminism. Dorey said that, as an art faculty member in higher education, "It would be more odd if I didn't consider myself a feminist." Mary indicated that being in student affairs has supported her feminist development. "In student affairs we tend to be more accepting of diverse view points and of diversity just in general. And there tend to be more women, at least at the entry to mid-level." She thinks that the environment in student affairs is more accepting because of the close connection to students versus other administrators and/or faculty. Bernadette has been at ease holding onto her feminist identity in higher education "because I work in an institution where we've had a female president for more than 20 years. There's a lot of female leadership." She is at a community college, which she attributes being more supportive of women's leadership.

We are at the bottom of the hierarchy of prestige in higher education. [So] I think there's more opportunity for female leadership and more opportunities for being innovative and entrepreneurial and being focused on social justice issues because

we're not focused on prestige. We're focused on our mission, which is to provide access and opportunities to students.

Mia said that higher education poses no real challenges to her holding onto her feminist identity. "As far as environments go I think higher education is relatively progressive and accepting." Elle, on the other hand, sees feminism and its theoretical frames as helpful in understanding higher education since she does not necessarily see it as egalitarian.

The relationship between feminism and higher education is not straightforward. In higher education literature, Women's Centers are notably discussed as physical spaces which offer women room to explore and nurture their feminist identity (Nicolazzo & Harris, 2014; Zaytoun Byrne, 2000). While these women didn't describe physical spaces where they felt nurtured to be feminists, they did describe aspects of higher education that gave them room to do this. Examples included their role/disciplinary background (art faculty member), institutional mission (community college), critical mass (number of women in leadership), and profession of choice (student affairs). Interesting was the fact that few women spoke explicitly about the love-hate relationship that feminists often have with higher education as being a place of both emancipation and oppression (hooks, 1984).

Theme Two: Leading Toward Gender Equity

Change in higher education requires the rethinking of assumptions and has the ability to be transformational (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Some of the gender equity changes participants worked to achieve required addressing large systems, but most were on a smaller scale, yet meaningful. The sub-themes in this section include advocacy/activism, power, courageous acts, and change strategies.

Sub-theme: Advocacy/Activism. Three of the seven women verbalized a belief that feminism is more than just a philosophy, but rather requires some type of action. And those that didn't express this direct connection demonstrated it through their descriptions. For Hannah, as an example, she sees her role as restructuring communication, bringing in voices that may not be heard. Elle, for example, makes sure that an understanding of gender equality is present in how she coaches and mentors those that she supervises. "Feminism is in small acts and in large," Torie said. "I've made it my personal goal to make sure that all the other women that are new to the organization, I invite them to anything I see coming, and if they don't want to come that's fine." She went on to say that feminism is "really putting some stake in the ground or being willing to call out things that I feel are unfair or are biased."

When asked about advocacy and activism, the women's comments varied in interesting ways. For some, engaging in this manner was seen as a responsibility. Mary said, "It's my job to advocate for other women to...ensure that I'm bringing along the next generation of people." Mia agreed, saying she feels "compelled to mentor younger women." Both think there are equity issues educators are called to address. "I do think my overarching goal in being a feminist is to ensure that women and girls have access to education in a way that helps them achieve whatever it is that they want to achieve," Mary said. She described a setting in which she vocalized the oppression and inequity she experienced during a meeting about sexual violence and vowed not to let that happen in the future. The meeting included four other attendees who were all male.

It was everything I could do in the meeting to just to hold it together and not just scream or become emotional. Afterwards I said to ... my supervisor, "I won't be in this situation again, where I'm the only woman around a table when we're

talking about issues of sexual violence. Because what just happened in there to me was harassment.”

Many of the women were involved in advocacy groups that were directly tied to women’s issues. For example, Mary serves as the president of her AAUW chapter. She appreciates that AAUW makes it easy for people to be involved. “Online they have the two minute activist and ... a system [where you can] send an email to your legislator directly, you senator, your congressman or woman. It’s awesome.” Elle has been part of national organizations like the Victim Assistance Project, the National Organization for Women (NOW), Planned Parenthood, and Black Women’s Health Collective. She also worked at a women’s health clinic for years where she handled rape, battered women, and suicide hotlines. Bernadette served on the board for a girl-centered organization and connected with the Women’s Center on her campus to organize around supporting reproductive rights when she was in college; she helped organize buses to Washington. Her current advocacy is to help women who are running for public office to get elected.

For some women, the advocacy they described was about equity, but not for women exclusively. Dorey’s advocacy has included her work on creating an LGBT affinity group at her institution and the persistence it took to stay the course after 18 years of waiting to have enough critical mass to create this kind of space. “I think [feminism] connects to being an environmentalist,” Bernadette said about her engagement in advocacy to protect the earth.

Bernadette and Torie both said that finding the time to engage in advocacy/activism is a challenge. “There’s time where I’ve been much more politically active and I don’t feel like I’m politically active right now,” Torie said. She thinks that women who are younger, and have no children, hear her say she has a lack of time and think “that’s no

excuse.” She says this pressure is something that should be discussed among intergenerational feminist women leaders. There was only one participant who was not able to identify with any examples of advocacy/activism.

Advocacy and activism are tied to our understanding of feminist leadership. Strachan’s (1999) research on feminist educational leadership highlighted the importance of resistance and struggle in educational settings. This supports the research of Blackmore (1996a) which talked about the “doing of feminism” in feminist educational leadership. These women did see their role as drawing attention to and advocating for change on issues important to the feminist struggle (Marine, 2011), though they never called it the feminist struggle. Like the women in Rosser’s (2003) study, these women could be found challenging the status quo on a variety of equity issues (beyond just gender), building networks and community and creating free spaces, walking the talk, talking truth to power, and lifting as they climbed.

Sub-theme: Power. Elle shared that feminism motivates a person to be interested in how power operates in relation to the objection or objectification of women socially, politically, historically, etc. These women seemed largely comfortable talking about power, recognizing that it is simply a part of the higher education environment. Mary said, “You have to be astute, aware of what’s happening and who’s connected to what, where, and then deciding if you need to exert some sort of influence to get something to happen.” Torie, Mia and Bernadette talked about being careful not to wield power, but nonetheless using it. Bernadette said,

My power is my position but it’s also my ability to work with people so that they want to work with me and get these things done. It’s definitely a collaborative approach and communicating what the benefits are to whatever we’re doing.

To this sentiment Dori added, “That’s where those relationships become important ... you can do that in a way that’s dictatorial or do it in a way that’s more collaborative and I think [collaborative is] a more functional way of [leading].” In terms of higher education being able to look at itself and how power is used, Hannah said,

I think what’s hard is that higher education likes to think of itself as very egalitarian. We’re like “we’re all equal” but it’d be a lot easier if we could name the fact that we are not all equal; that faculty have more power than staff, professional staff have more power than our union or non-exempt employees.

There is a wide variety of perspectives on power in the larger literature. With regard to using power, women in the past have often been viewed as hesitant to use it, lacking an awareness of its role (Kolodny, 1998). This perspective exposed a shortcoming of early generations of women leaders in higher education. The women in this study, however, have not missed the concept of power as one of expanding the pie in order to influence change (Valverde, 2003). Rather than power-over, as a masculine imposition, they talked about power in the same way as Wartenberg (1990), as power-to, as empowering those they worked with. This supports the research which suggests “there is enormous validity in women’s not wanting to use power as it is presently conceived and used. Rather, women may want to be powerful in ways that simultaneously enhance, rather than diminish, the power of others” (Miller, 1992, p. 247). The study participants also expressed feminist conceptualizations of power as a critique about inequity in a number of spheres including the unequal distribution of resources and unequal access, as examples (Allen, 2014).

Sub-theme: Courageous acts. I wanted to honor the courageous acts with which women engaged to address gender inequity in higher education, even though they weren’t viewed by many of the participants as noble acts of advocacy/activism. They gave ample

evidence of times they disrupted the status quo. Hannah, for example, said she wasn't involved in advocacy/activism in any "big ways," but what she described certainly took risk. She was selected to be on the search team for a peer position. As the search went on, however, she felt that there were arbitrary decisions being made about who did and did not meet the "required" aspects of the job as posted. She viewed this as an equity issue and went to Human Resources to take her concern to a senior person. She said "it was a hard moment to call out people and say you're being discriminatory." She prides herself in being able to bring things to the table for others who feel less empowered and exposing elephants in the room when they are impeding fairness.

I saw Torie's commitment to an ADA project as part of her advocacy/activism. She said that, at times throughout college, she became frustrated with "sitting in the classroom talking about things and not actually doing." From her place in higher education, she tries to do all she can within her constraints of time and role. An example was the ownership she took for a project around consistent implementation of ADA requirements. She was proud of the commitment she made to effecting change that would create more equity.

Torie has also had to step off a project that didn't align with her values—even though serving on the project was good for her career.

Last year I stepped off [which] was highly political and a power play. I was responsible to be the project manager during the org change ... and it involved people's jobs. I felt like I could do it and do it right [but] I realized very quickly that there were games being played on a much higher level than me and I would not be able to.

In the end, after she quit, the project was reorganized with principles of integrity intact.

"I lost some career momentum with that but I know it was the right decision."

A feminist belief system gave Torie the courage to pursue male-dominated fields and spaces. It also has motivated her to go out of her way to make sure that other women who are new to the institution are invited to women-centered events. Elle thinks that feminism has made her a more reflective leader, quick to act and able to move from theory to practice. It has also made her a more compassionate leader, and not specifically in a gendered way. She describes herself as “a leader who attempts to balance the needs of a variety of different constituencies” whether they be Republicans or Democrats, folks holding a variety of perspectives. She makes sure that people who don’t necessarily have something official in their job description care and “have an understanding of the gender issues and how ... dynamics [are] happening on campus.”

In her book *Faith and Fearless*, Katzenstein (1988) emphasized the feminist actions that women engage in daily to make change within institutions. With the military and the Catholic Church as her backdrop, she acknowledges that there is a great deal of feminist engagement, though it may not be labeled that way. Rosser (2003) used this lens of disruption in her study of feminist student affairs administrators and concludes that her participants are “disrupting women” (p. 332). Like them, some of the women in this study refused to “conform to accustomed institutional roles” (Katzenstein, 1988, p. 8). On these occasions, they disrupted and took on risks that could have been avoided by not speaking out or remaining unengaged.

Sub-theme: Change strategies. The participants in this study were comfortable citing strategies for how they enact change in their leadership role. The two primary tools that participants shared for achieving buy-in for change were leading with transparency and fostering partnerships/relationships. “I increased the transparency and

everybody knew what was going on ... I demystified a lot of different things and tried to educate people on the whole process,” Bernadette said. Mary’s strategy to change was similar:

I ... hosted a series of [events] to open dialogues where we invited faculty, staff and students to come and sit around and have conversations around these directed questions that I came up with. And once we did that, we used that as a division to develop a strategic plan. And so once we developed the strategic plan we once again hosted another set of conversations to say “this is what we heard you say” and “this how we think it should be implemented or operationalized.” “Is this what you think we should be doing as an institution?”

Finding others who can assist was another change strategy mentioned often. “I try to find a partner or partners who are influencers,” Elle said. She thinks there are many entities in higher education that should be collaborative partners, but that don’t talk to one another. Mary said that this has always been her approach to change, trying to bring together people who are interested and invested. Hannah echoed this and gave an example of connecting with allies through outreach to others; she created a liaison group to overcome resistance and said this about the process:

I had made a lot of allies in that process [by] really working through this and saying “we all know we need to do this.” At the start of the process people hated it and were like “can’t do this, no way.”

In the end, Hannah believes the outreach to others was critical and that kind of connecting has become a standard in her approach to other large scale projects.

Mary is clear that regardless of the position one holds in higher education, knowing how to navigate systems is a required skill. “It’s not [necessarily] about picking your battles ... it’s about recognizing [when] I can assert this position or viewpoint and it’ll be successful or well received” versus a situation where one concludes that this is not

what will happen. “That doesn’t mean that I’ve abandoned my feminist identity ... it’s that I’m making the right decision politically, ethically, in that particular moment.”

I think it’s naïve [of me] to think I can walk into every meeting and try to advocate for a specific perspective ... because the reality is that you still have to navigate within the systems that are present and it’s really hard. There are lots of well-meaning people who just say and do ridiculous things, and it’s hard to continually advocate for women, for equality in those contexts.

Bernadette thinks this generation of feminists is out to create change, but not just any kind, systems change.

The tie between leadership and the process of change has been documented (Astin & Astin, 2000), as has the opinion that change is not easy (Yukl, 2006). Change is a necessary requirement to attempting new approaches (Kotter, 1995) but it is often fraught with challenges. I specifically asked about change projects broadly so the participants could reveal those that were most important to them. While the projects they identified in answering this question were usually not specific to addressing gender inequity, the manner in which they tackled the change was closely connected to their feminism. These women led change by developing relationships/connections with allies (or creating them where they don’t exist) and leading with transparency. Both strategies have been highlighted in feminist circles; Carol Gilligan (1982) emphasized the ways in which women operate in the world through webs of connectedness and relationships, and Suzy D’Enbeau (2011) highlighted how transparency has been discussed as a valuable tool in feminist organizing.

Theme Three: Little Generational Consciousness

Participants largely reflected a lack of connection to Generation X. Four of the participants felt no sense of connection, only one felt a strong connection, and the rest

were in-between. They shared few common narratives about their generation, but one could certainly see how historical influences shaped these views. The two sub-themes in this section are struggling to see and narratives about Generation X.

Sub-theme: Struggling to see. Mary appreciates the diversity of thought amid this generation and thinks “that we should respect and recognize that we all come from different places as a product of Generation X.” Mia couldn't think of narratives for Generation X and said that it was hard to see herself within it. While she understands that generational membership ties her to a common history and to others in a group, she finds no deep personal meaning. She said, “Because I’m an insider it’s hard for me to get outside and see the narratives that other people are telling about me.”

Bernadette agreed with this sentiment and said she was having “a difficult time ... describing the narrative that may exist for this generation. I’m sure there is [one] but because I work in higher education, I’m focused on the Millennials.” Mary doesn’t identify with being a Generation Xer in the same way she identifies with being a feminist. “I just don’t think about my generational identity. I recognize myself as a younger administrator.” When I asked Dorey what she thinks the dominant narrative is about Generation X, she said, “I really don’t [have one] because I haven’t thought about it that much.”

Mary’s explanation for the lack of common understanding about Generation X is that “since the faculty and staff that are largely managing higher education are between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, they aren’t viewed as subjects in the same way.” She also thinks that, largely, people reject their “generational label unless they’re the positive ones. I’m sure that as the Millennials come into leadership we’ll look back and

have a better perspective on what our own approaches were.” Hannah indicated she finds herself being more aware of her generational history the more she is around Millennials. She said, “It’s like ‘your reality, your Millennial reality, looks very different than mine.’” Hannah’s perspective is similar in that she doesn’t believe there is “as much of a narrative about Gen X as there is for Millennials.”

Sub-theme: Narratives about Gen X. When pressed, the participants did come up with some common narratives for defining Generation X around advances in technology, a sense of being lost, changing/challenging systems, diversity/inclusion, consumerism, and entitlement. Elle, Hannah, and Bernadette all mentioned that Gen Xers “came of age” at a time when technology growth was really starting to boom. Bernadette attributes “the whole technology area with our generation. That may not be accurate but I think a lot people who are creating new technology are within that age group.” She also adds “we’re definitely innovative and entrepreneurial.”

Elle and Dorey added “lost” to the short list of Gen X descriptors. Elle elaborated by saying,

We’re not the 1960s generation; not the baby boomers. We are sort of the beginning of innovation and technology but we’re not the people who take it to the whole new height; we’re not credited for it. I don’t say we’re lost, like I don’t mean ... personally ... lost. I’m saying [it’s] the generation that sometimes people gloss over.

Dorey said, “I feel like I’m more of a lost generation. I don’t really feel [like I’m a] Baby Boomer either. I’m not really sure how to answer that because I don’t identify with a generation so broadly.”

Torie thinks Gen Xers are challenging norms and constraints and are calling out for individuality, but not in a selfish way. Bernadette added that she believes this group

is the most educated and, while Gen Xers are not against leaders, “I think we’re interested in changing systems ... not just the person at the top.” Elle said,

I think our generation has attempted to challenge the status quo. So things like work schedules. In many ways we’re the first generation to say this whole 9 to 5 really isn’t working out, and we need to work in the evenings or whatever. I think also ... we’re the first generation to challenge the very specific gender roles (e.g., maternity leave) that are happening in higher education because we’re in the position to do so.

Mary thinks that the Gen Xers are “one of the first generations that was faced with a more diverse population and certainly the gay rights movement came to life in our generation. Certainly an awareness of diversity in a different way than our parents’ generation” Torie, Dorey, Elle and Hannah also talked about the exposure to people of differing sexual orientations, classes, races, and abilities as being very different than the experience of their parents as adolescents and young adults.

Finally, consumerism and entitlement were also thought to shape the Gen X group. Torie thinks Generation X is shaped by the financial boom and, as a result, believes this generation operates on the assumption that they “should” and “will” have cars, houses, families, careers and jobs. And Bernadette thinks Gen X was responsible for the “everybody gets a trophy mentality.” Historical markers that were mentioned by the group include the Challenger Explosion, the Reagan Administration, iconic 80s movies, and the concept of taking care of the earth.

Mannheim (1952) postulated decades ago that all people, whether they acknowledge it or not, belong to a particular generational location (as cited in McMullin, Comeau, & Jovic, 2007). He also acknowledged that individuals do not necessarily possess generational consciousness just because they are born during a particular timeframe. Sociologists theorizing the conceptual framework for looking at “generation”

have often looked to major historical events (e.g., war) as well as cultural elements (e.g., technology) to examine how affinities are formed during the “coming of age” portion of life (McMullin et al., 2007). No surprise, then, that technology was mentioned as prominent since these women grew up amidst the increasing presence of information and communication technologies as part of daily life (McMullin et al., 2007). And, the comments about diversity/inclusion support the fact that Gen X is said to be more multiracial and comfortable with race, gender and sexuality as a result of being born into a more fully integrated society, in concept, anyway (Shugart, 2001).

Theme Four: Generational Context for Feminism

In order to understand the meaning participants made of their feminism, it is necessary to comprehend the generational context in which this meaning was made. Generational cohorts are a result of differing historical contexts that can influence personal development and professional practice. The sub-themes in this section include historical influences and gendered limitations.

Sub-theme: Historical influences. When asked what historical instances/events related to the feminist struggle they recall, five of the seven participants mentioned events tied to first and second wave feminism, but only tangentially. They mentioned first wave events (1848 to 1925): women’s right to vote, proposed equal rights amendment, and suffragists (e.g., Susan B. Anthony), as well as second wave events (1960s to 1980s): *Roe v. Wade*, Eleanor Roosevelt, civil rights movement, marches on Washington, Gloria Steinem, and Judy Chicago. These important socio-historical events were not watershed moments for these women, but rather things that they expressed learning about distantly.

The significant incidences and experiences that they shared shaped them were: the Reagan era/backlash against feminism, HIV/AIDS, the proliferation of technological advances, Lily Ledbetter and equal pay issues, and threats to women's reproductive rights. Also routinely mentioned were iconic movies in the 1980s about working moms: *Baby Boom* and *Working Girl*, and these coincided with the production of the working girl Barbie. While it has been documented that politics are much less influential among third wave feminists (who are covered in the same timeframe as Gen X), notably, over half of the participants mentioned women politicians as markers of feminist influence. In particular, Geraldine Ferraro and Hillary Clinton stood out as women who made breakthroughs in leadership. "I thought that was so awesome to see a woman in that kind of leadership," Mary said. What they have had to endure as leaders, however, was also critiqued. Mia spoke about the media's ongoing treatment of women and said this about Ferraro, Clinton, and Sarah Palin:

Their opponents were quick to pull out the cards related to their gender and use them against them. For example, the media would focus on their looks, their hair, their attire, things they would never say about their male candidates. They would write about it and focus on the female candidates. It was about the issues but they would also pull out the other things related to being a female or woman.

Seeing how women continue to be treated, not just as politicians, but also as corporate CEOs (as was mentioned by Bernadette) seemed to take a toll on them. It was a reminder that things haven't totally changed.

I did want to note that Hannah mentioned feminist contemporaries who are part of third wave/millennial feminist thinking. She mentioned bell hooks, Rebecca Walker, and the book *Feminista* (authors Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards).

The relationship that women have to feminism is likely to differ by birth cohort. A variety of authors have labeled the most recent approach to feminism as “third wave” and connected it with Generation X (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Craigo-Snell, 2005). Stewart and Healy (1989) argued that similar events like the women’s movement have differing influences on generational cohorts depending on the stage of development at the time of the event. Zucker and Stewart (2007) found that “generational differences among feminists may be illuminated, in part, by the different impact of social and historical events on people of different ages” (p. 141). They provided research which showed that women who were raised in the setting of second-wave feminism can remember having feminist beliefs and expectations as children; “they recalled fundamental expectations about the world that were consistent with that historical moment” (Zucker & Stewart, 2007, p. 144). As Zucker and Stewart (2007) found, whatever coincided with the period of their identity-forming young adulthood was most salient. Second wave feminist recollections of “I have always been a feminist” (Zucker & Stewart, 2007, p. 142) were not reflected in the Generation X (third wave) participant interviews that I conducted.

Sub-theme: Gendered limitations. The women in this study still experienced many contradictions in terms of gender roles. Elle identified the mantra that women can and are “doing it all” as a challenge for feminism. She said that “feminists are saying ... we can do it all” but women cannot. While she understands that feminism has helped women see themselves in ways they had not previously—creating room for them to enter arenas otherwise off limits, she also sees that women are struggling with trying to “do it all.” They are expected to be stellar professionals, caregivers, and other things (as

needed), but structures have not changed to help women keep these in balance. “I had sort of a glamorized view of what life as a feminist, mother, and career woman was going to be like,” Torie said. Mia elaborated on the difference in treatment and expectations:

I realized that there were unspoken rules for leadership in the workplace that enable men ... and at the same time these rules to disfavor or even to disempower women. When I realized this is when I adopted a feminist viewpoint. Before I started my research I really didn't think gender was a factor in the workplace, and of course it was based on my own experience ... I thought you worked hard or you didn't. And if you worked hard you'd be rewarded and if you didn't you wouldn't be rewarded. But it doesn't always work that way for women.

The participants in this study grew up in the context of changes made in the second wave, believing in theory that women could have equity in the home, workplace, and public arenas such as athletics and politics (Zucker & Stewart, 2007), but find that they do not. “The ability to choose is patterned by the social structure” (Risman, 2004, p. 432). In this case, when looking at the structure of U.S., higher education, and gender expectations, GenXers in this study feel like their choices are limited (Everingham, Stevenson, & Warner-Smith, 2007). While they weren't exposed to strict gender roles that showed women only in the private sphere (Reed, 1997 as cited in Kezer & Lester, 2008), they still can't navigate with the ease they expected to have. And, they identify different stressors than their feminist foremothers had (e.g., expectations that they have to do everything, increased levels of job stress, dual roles) (Everingham et al., 2007).

Theme Five: Navigating Multigenerational Spaces

The women in this study are constantly navigating multigenerational spaces. The sub-themes in this section include: Baby Boomers, honored advice, advice to leave behind, Millennials, and connecting to peers.

Elle quantified her time, expressing that she spends about 40% of her time with Boomers, 35% with Gen Xers, and 25% with Millennials. Mia said, “I’m almost always in multigenerational spaces” and Bernadette echoed that sentiment by also adding that she thinks these spaces are “great.” “I’m 43 and we’re hiring people that are in their 20’s ... and it’s wonderful.” She said that her administrative peers are within 10 years of her, older or younger, and that she views the diversity in opinion and perspective that multiple generations brings really rich.

While everyone in the study had something positive to say about multigenerational spaces, not everyone found them easy to navigate. Elle believes there are some “translational difficulties” when talking among women who identify as feminists in higher education, but who are from different generations. As an example, she said that Baby Boomers say to Generation Xers, “You didn’t do anything. What are you doing? You need to be more political.” And then the Millennials say to the Generation Xers, “Well, who are you? We knew about the 60s [but we don’t know about you].”

Hannah is required to understand and educate on generational differences in the workplace as part of her job in development. About Gen Xers in the workplace, Hannah described them as:

wanting or needing some sense of personal satisfaction from work in a way that was very different from the generation ahead of us and different than the generation behind us. If I think of the Boomers, there wasn’t the same sense of “I’m seeking personal satisfaction from work,” it was “I need a good job and it should have a certain amount of prestige or make a certain amount of money or demonstrate a certain skill or knowledge.” And then the Millennials, I think it’s more “I want to have fun, I want to do something interesting, I want to do something creative.”

Torie acknowledged large generational differences when it comes to how women's issues are now viewed. "Having the conversations with one another has been challenging" but necessary. She said she may not be the first, but she does feel like she has high expectations to fulfill due to the level of work and the amount of angst earlier women endured. She spoke about the fact that, as feminists, the frames are different. She is around women who have broken the glass ceiling without the protection of anti-discrimination laws. She, on the other hand, grew up with the icon of "Working Girl" and a host of other movies that were really about women coming into the work force.

Kezar and Lester (2008) cautioned that a lack of knowledge about generational differences can create tremendous challenges, which they called "fault lines" and noted the intense generational differences that have been discussed within feminism (p. 58). While differences in viewpoint and tensions were acknowledged among the participants in this study, the overall feeling was one of wanting to sit down with women in other generations more consistently and purposefully.

Sub-theme: Baby Boomers. I specifically asked about perceptions of Baby Boomers in terms of mentorship and advice. Elle, Torie, Hannah, Bernadette, Mary, and Dorey were all able to identify women Baby Boomers who served in mentor roles for them. How these women came to be in these mentor relationships varied widely and Hannah's comments seemed to sum up the impact, regardless of how the connection was made. She said she benefited from "accidental mentors" and ones "purposely sought out." She also said that some of her mentors have moved beyond advocates to "champion status."

Hannah indicated it has been really helpful to have women who have more senior roles “offer me some different perspectives on ‘here are some things to think about’ or areas to pursue.” Mary agreed that there are a lot of benefits “to [hearing about] the experiences of the women who have come before you. Not that their experiences are going to be exactly the same ... but to be able to learn from those experiences, to hear their stories and find meaning in them.” Bernadette described an ideal Baby Boomer mentor:

I was 25 years old. I was a year out of my master’s program and she just guided me in terms of everything at work. She would, because we developed a trusting relationship, she would explain to me the politics that was going on or we would process meetings and discuss things. She’d provide feedback. She’d sing my praises to other people and she would provide opportunities. She was amazing.

Mia stood out as a participant that largely had all male Baby Boomer mentors.

Until the HERS institute, when she was required to interview women at her institution in higher education, her mentors were her male supervisors. Mary, too, had all male supervisors and she talked about the intentionality of stepping outside of supervision to find women mentors.

Sub-theme: Honored advice. “I’m always impressed with what I learn from women 15-20 years older than me, what they’re doing, what they remember; different ways of looking at things,” Hannah said about the advice received from Baby Boomers. Mary concurred that the wisdom, in general, has resonated with her. “They haven’t asked me to abandon feminist principles” and have been encouraging. She said their advice has been centered on finding opportunities to expand knowledge, not limiting oneself to what is known. One of her mentors said to her, “Always be looking out for

something outside your normal frame of reference or comfort zone because that's the thing that's going to get you to the next job, to the next opportunity."

Like Mary, Torie has heeded advice around "being in control of my own career, following what I am passionate about, getting the continuous development that I want, building a network, and not being ashamed and just doing it." Mia too heard a message about personal development: "Learn as much as you can about the University culture and all parts of the institution ... serve on committees outside of one's functional area to establish a larger network." The advice Elle was given was less about experiences to gain and more about how to be a professional. She was told "do the best that you can and make people's lives around you the best they can be."

As Mary thinks about the differences in generations, she recalls times in her life when she thought that Boomers were really different than her. Times when she thought "Well, that's not going to happen to me because things are different now." She went on to say that, while she didn't think she was discounting their experience, "I assumed that the environment had changed significantly enough that I wouldn't have that experience." She thinks differently now and said, "They were right."

Mia recognized that some advice, while seemingly dated, was reflective of the Baby Boomer experience and needed to be respected. For example, she didn't agree with the advice that women needed to be over-prepared since the environment doesn't expect them to succeed, but she understood the experiences from where it came. While gender roles have evolved over time, Torie was surprised, and yet took comfort in knowing that some Boomers are also stressed with balancing a personal career trajectory with committed relationships. "It's nice to know that everyone is struggling with this." "The

whole subject of finding balance is a continuing conversation among women of all ages,” Bernadette said.

Sub-theme: Advice to leave behind. While not overwhelming, most of the women were able to identify at least one message from a Baby Boomer that didn’t resonate. Mia found the continual discussion about appropriate dress (e.g., the need to wear a dress) to be useless advice. “I’m just going to be the person who I’m going to be.” Bernadette received similar advice about using her femininity when she was told to just “use her feminine wiles.” Her response was, “I don’t have those and if I did I wouldn’t know how to use them.”

The notion of paying dues came up for a couple of the women. Torie was impatient with this type of message, saying, “Baby Boomers seem to have resentment sometimes ... like we need to put you through more fire because of what we went through.” Elle said she also sometimes felt pressure, from the Baby Boomer women that were mentoring her, to be just like them. They communicated to her, “It was harder in my day”; “You don’t know how hard it is”; and “Women need to be less soft—be harder ... suck it up.”

Hannah’s frustration came from the perspective she has gotten from Baby Boomers that there is one way to advance and that advancement is most important. She was told, “You have to always be aspiring to the next level and you should be aspiring to a senior level position [and] do whatever you need to advance.” She added that the only time for exceptions seemed to be when children were involved. Hannah also didn’t follow this advice:

Occasionally I’ve had folks suggest to me that I need to throw my elbows out more but that’s not my style. I’m pretty outspoken, I’m willing to do a lot of stuff,

[but] I can't do that. Even with people I do not like and I'd love to take them down at work, I just can't be the person. I'd rather win on my own merit than making someone appear less.

It is clear that Generation X women recognize they are part of a distinct generational group in comparison to Baby Boomers (Yu & Miller, 2005). Despite the comments that highlight differing values, aspirations and experiences, I didn't detect a large chasm. Instead, they seemed quite comfortable recognizing both the reason for their differing perspectives and the value, in some cases, in having those.

Sub-theme: Millennials. While I didn't ask about Millennials as a part of the interview questions, most of the participants spoke about them. Dorey said, "I think I'm probably more likely to be in situations with Millennials [rather than] Baby Boomers. There's a handful at my institution, women that are older than me but not huge numbers. Most are my generation or Millennials." Mary thinks there is a lot of awareness of Millennials, and the stereotypes associated with them, since this generation is reflected in the students currently on campus. Hannah said that Millennials see institutional rhetoric as just that. They want proof—they are asking more questions and want to know how their limited resources are being put to use. She also raised the idea that they have more skepticism than Gen X and need to know "What's in it for me?" Elle seems to see this questioning as healthy and believes the Millennial generation can take changes that Gen X started and push them further. Dorey did contrast these views, however, and shared her opinion that Millennials jump to conclusions. She thinks they need to spend more time understanding the "reasons for things" and think "a little less about personal impact and [more about] impact on the institution."

Torie and Hannah talked about their work with Millennials as enhancing their own self-awareness. Torie said she enjoys connecting with Millennials “a lot” and said that working with them has made her more aware of how she might be perceived as the older generation to them. She loves their frankness when asking questions like this: “I’m considering going back to school, should I do this before I have a family or after?” or when making statements like this: “Here’s what I’m thinking about”. Their directness, she thinks, is a bit different than Generation X. Hannah shared a similar viewpoint:

I love working with ... young professionals. It’s interesting and I think sometimes I’m so old. It forces me to check myself. When I hear younger women talking about things or having a certain experience, I have to stop and think if that’s my experience. I had a very different experience growing up, I have more working experience. Their experience working will be different than mine but I hope by the time they’re my age that their working experience is different in really significant ways. Culturally and nationally [I hope] that we’re in a different place.

Some participants shared advice for Millennials. Mary suggested that Gen Xers have a responsibility to them.

I think it’s important to share with them what our experiences are, not in the context of telling a war story, but how to navigate and find resources in ways that are informative for them not so they follow our same path, but so the path may be a little bit easier.

Just like the Baby Boomers have shaped the political, intellectual, and social experience for Generation X, so have Gen Xers done this for Millennials. Henseler (2012) posits that the influence that Generation X has had is deeply underestimated. In response, he has created a web presence to actually make the contributions more broadly, and globally, understood. As such, it makes sense that the group that is currently learning to shape leadership in higher education organizations would see, as part of their purpose,

mentoring and sharing knowledge with up-and-coming women leaders who are in the Millennial generation.

Sub-theme: Connecting to peers. “It’s always been important for me to have people who I can be in conversation with around feminism and feminist ideals,” Elle said. Bernadette said that she has benefitted greatly from having a network of all women peers who have helped keep her from feeling isolated.

Creating a network ... that I can trust and have honest conversations with but also to call and ask “What’s going on?” Having that network is really important for my own personal sanity but also to bounce things off of them and process and be strategic and figure out how I’m going to deal with this.

Dorey and a few others indicated that the HERS (Higher Education Resource Services) Institute, which all of the participants attended, also provided significant mentoring.

Torie’s motivation for participating in this study actually came, in part, from the benefit she derived from connecting to peers who are mothers and professionals to talk about career paths and choices.

Theme Six: Acknowledging Gender Inequity in Higher Education

According to the women that I interviewed, despite generational and feminist progress, higher education has challenges. The gender inequity issues that they raised are summarized in the following sub-themes: tenure, adjuncts, family friendly needs, pipeline and representation, and patriarchy.

Torie expressed profound dismay at this reality during her interview, “How do all of these brilliantly smart people in higher education not see gender inequality?” Elle believes that a barrier to making gender equity changes in higher education is that a majority of people are looking at gender inequality as purely an academic exercise, not something that is influencing systems and the environment. She believes feminism flips

that paradigm and takes it out of the theoretical to the practical; it makes her care about issues like compensation and gender. Mia talked about how conducting her own research on gender inequality helped to normalize her own experiences. What she initially viewed as individual challenges she came to better understand as systemic issues. The areas of concern around gender inequity fell easily into six sub-themes that resonated among the participants.

Sub-theme: Tenure. Elle, Dorey and Mia all see the tenure process as problematic. Elle said, “When we look at [leadership] even now, who becomes full professors, how tenure is set in most institutions, who is with or without tenure leave” it’s a problem. “Women make up the higher proportions of the non-tenure track lecturer and the temporary adjunct” she added. Dorey said that during her higher education experience as an undergraduate, most of her professors were men, especially the full-time, tenured professors. “I think there were only two women [in a] department of probably 40–50 faculty and then there were a handful of adjuncts that were women. You can’t help but notice those things and be bothered by them.”

Sub-theme: Adjuncts. Mia pointed out the gap between tenured professors and adjuncts. “Women make up the higher proportions of the non-tenure track lecturer and the temporary adjunct.” Bernadette thinks that higher education needs to stop “taking advantage of people by having so many adjuncts without benefits.” Torie talked about her concerns that adjuncts are mostly women who lack rights:

There are so many issues with women adjuncts ... and they have no rights whatsoever. They have no access to maternity leave and it would never happen to a man. We have an incredibly talented population of people who are being undervalued and underpaid, and over worked.

Sub-theme: Family friendly needs. Torie said emphatically that higher education is “not family friendly.” Elle sort of laughed at the transition higher education made from maternity leave to paternity leave since she believes that system now benefits men, leaving them more time to produce scholarship. Torie had a woman come up to her at a leadership development workshop and say to her, “Do you have a kid?” When Torie replied “Yes,” the woman said, “I’m just so proud of you. I decided I could never have kids because of my job and I’m so happy that you made that decision.” Torie thought it was heartbreaking to hear and she was stunned by it. This was a moment when she realized women still do not have full freedom to make personal choices in a system that is not friendly to child-bearing age women. Hannah agreed:

I don’t have children, I’m childless by choice, but I think until we really figure out how to create policies and practices and figure out the affordability issue to allow both men and women to stay home part-time or have flexible schedules, it’s not ever going to be equal for women to show up in the same way.

Sub-theme: Pipeline and representation. According to Torie, the pipeline continues to be a problem. She talked about women dropping out of the pipeline in master’s and Ph.D. programs and went on to say:

[What] mystifies me is that the criteria for hiring is so loose ... it’s so obvious that people are hiring not [using] consistent criteria. We like this person, they look like us, they act like us. We’re losing great leaders in higher education because of these things and we’re allowing them to exist. I think we lose women in higher education ... and nobody does anything about it.

Hannah believes that higher education continues to be non-attentive to the pipeline conversation and the fact that it isn't working. She described how in the 70s attention was drawn to the paucity of women in higher education and the need for their development. In the 80s and 90s this grew to include programs for people of color at the

institutional and national level. She feels like we have moved away from giving these things full attention and yet there is still a problem.

Mia noted that, “Even though there’s more females than males enrolled in college in general there’s a huge gap in the technology majors.” Bernadette talked about the need for higher education to get more creative and flexible. She thinks corporate America gets many more talented women since we only operate in a “publish or perish” model. Mia thinks “there’s a large gender gap for presidents and their senior leadership teams. And the gap is more pronounced at the more prestigious institutions like doctoral granting institutions.” There needs “to be more women in all levels of leadership in higher education, including the presidency,” Bernadette said.

Sub-theme: Patriarchy. Mary was not alone in thinking that leadership in higher education is often unfair to women when it comes to navigating politics. In similar situations, “men can be called savvy and women ... called bitches.” Mia talked about how often she sees systemic inequality in how men are regarded differently. “I sort of have this lens where I notice inequality that exists for women in different situations.”

What is challenging for these women is that patriarchy reflects sexist assumptions that are not easily seen by others since they are so ingrained. By definition, patriarchy elevates male-centered norms and makes them the standard for behavior (Witz, 1992). In some ways, all of the examples of inequality could fall under the heading of “patriarchy” since it is so pervasive in nature.

Theme Seven: Understanding at the Intersections

The participants in this study had a lot to say about how their lived experiences and identities shaped them and their feminism. In some cases, these identities and lived

experiences support a personal connection to feminism and in others they create dissonance. Largely, the participants shared how these social identity constructions created the conditions for them to experience privilege or marginalization. Discussed in this section are the sub-themes of religion, race/ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation, and privilege.

While everyone who holds a privileged identity can find themselves in a position of feeling “other” on occasion (e.g., a person who is white, male, cisgender, Christian, able-bodied, rich), these are not statuses undergirded by larger systems that maintain subjugation. The larger systems I am referencing include white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism, and Christian hegemony.

Intersectionality focuses on the importance of understanding multiple identities, uncovering where marginalization and oppression occur and are connected (Mann & Grimes, 2001). The participants offered numerous insights into how the identity of “woman” would not be enough to accurately represent their person. Of importance is how they referenced equally important aspects of themselves. They included these descriptors so I could better understand who they are as women and feminists, since who they are is inextricably linked to other categories of identity that impact how they experience and navigate the world, including how they lead in higher education.

Sub-theme: Religion. Bernadette noted, “Growing up Catholic, I remember that there got to be a point in high school where I was not interested in what the Catholic faith had to offer in terms of women.” Elle indicated that being spiritual, but not going to a place of worship on a regular basis, gave people pause to think and her cause to question the overwhelming influence of Christian hegemony on women. “There’s a lot of

emphasis on Christianity, on the roles that women play, that then get sort of played out through Christianity.” She referenced the problem with labels such as “bad women, good women.” Dorey identifies as a Mennonite which she jokingly said “is not a hot bed of feminism.” As a result of the ironies between what religion and feminism teach, she said, “I sometimes think of myself as an accidental feminist.”

Sub-theme: Race/ethnicity. The three women of color in this study are clear—their race/ethnicity is tied to all other discussions about who they are as women. “For me the two really can’t be separated. I always think of myself as being a black woman” Hannah said. Due to her African American identity, Elle shared that people constantly question her capability, credentials, and effectiveness.

Race and gender are pretty much inseparable. A lot has to do with the way in which African American or women of color women get coded differently than white women but also get coded differently than men.

Hannah indicated that she is also cognizant that, as a black woman in any room, there are certain topics it would be best for others to bring up, so allies are incredibly important. Torie talked about her ethnicity through the influence of immigrant grandparents and the dominant male-centered cultures of being Greek and Puerto Rican. Feminism helped Elle cope with the white supremacy that exists in higher education by making her tough to the criticism she gets for being a black woman. “There is something about being a woman of color leader where people constantly question your capability, your credentials, and your effectiveness. I’m tougher than I was, say 20 years ago.”

Sub-theme: Class. While Elle grew up with class privilege, she was assumed not to have it due to the intersection of race and class. “I’m from an extremely privileged background, [but] I’ve also been read because of my African Americanism and my

gender as [a] poor black woman.” As a grandchild of immigrants, Torie talked about how her Greek and Puerto Rican background was connected to her first generation status. She described finding her way to and through college based on the advice she could find in guide books. Hannah named her privilege around education and class. She compared herself to those that are first generation and said, “We often forget about how being degreed or credentialed gives you power in different places.” In terms of her class status, Hannah said she became much more aware of the limitations others faced through her work at a public institution.

Sub-theme: Ability. Hannah thinks about aspects of being able-bodied because her mother has a disability and acknowledges that people don’t generally engage in this type of thinking unless it touches them personally. Elle echoed this sentiment. She is an able-bodied person that has overseen disability services for years and speaks sign language. She emphasized that despite this deep connection, it is not the same as having a lived identity that cannot be separated from the person. As someone with a disability, Torie wove examples of how her disability impacts her life throughout her interview. For example, her disability motivated her to take classes in Disability Studies (a positive), but has also influenced her career trajectory (a challenge). The higher education environment is fast-paced and lacks nurturing and, to the contrary, Torie has had to learn to slow down and focus attention on personal well-being. This type of behavior is not always the most highly rewarded and it has impacted job choices, the timeline for doctoral pursuits, and (at times) her personal self-satisfaction as a partner and mother.

Sub-theme: Sexual orientation. Dorey identifies as a lesbian, which she says “very much shapes my feminism.” She describes the process of holding onto these two

marginalized identities (woman and lesbian) as almost “fighting two battles at once, because many of the things that have advanced for women are still not rights that gays and lesbians have.” She said that her sexual orientation status has a place of more salience due her lack of basic rights, but she doesn’t view this as mutually exclusive from being a woman. Based on her remarks, it is clear that heterosexism has affected her life and those she cares about since resources and services (e.g., the right to be married) have not been equitably distributed.

Sub-theme: Privilege. Very interesting is the fact that Elle and Hannah, the two African American women in the study, talked about their privilege in the most explicit ways during the interview. Elle said:

I think growing up privileged blinded me to some things. And so there are still blind spots that I have, but in terms of people who are disenfranchised dramatically ... it’s really important for me to remember that I am only able to do what I am able to do on the backs of other people. And therefore I have to not just make people’s lives better but make those people who are at the very bottom of the world lives better.

Black women are arguably marginalized the most in society, especially when paired with another minority status. How ironic it is that the two women that might have the most to say about enumerating their own subjugation created the space to talk about their own privilege.

What I notice in all of these disclosures around intersectionality is what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) described as navigating the borderlands. She has described these spaces, where one is invisible, marginalized or underrepresented, as walking along the fault line, being on the border, and being in two places. Navigating multiple marginalized identities and systems of oppression does indeed drain otherwise available time, energy, and thought.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the major emergent themes and sub-themes that came from the narratives and their connection to the literature. Chapter VI provides a discussion on how my study answered the research questions, unique research contributions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how women who identify as feminists, who were born into Generation X, and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions make meaning of their feminism and generational membership as leaders and change agents in higher education. The three main research questions were: (a) How does a feminist identity and Generation X membership shape a woman academic administrator's leadership practice? (b) How does a feminist identity and Generation X membership predispose the kind of change initiatives a woman academic administrator seeks and engages in? and (c) What personal, organizational, and/or cultural conditions have influenced how they lead?

Answers to the research questions cannot be derived by addressing each question separately and in a linear fashion. Feminist research often calls into question the utility of neat positions and categories, especially with topics as complex as identity and leadership. Therefore, I'm borrowing a phrase from feminist scholar and activist Richa Nagar to name my process of discussing my findings: "muddying the waters." Nagar described "muddying" during a recent talk about her forthcoming book on coauthoring feminisms across scholarship and activism. She shared that it is important that we draw upon a variety of disciplinary perspectives and connections in making meaning, while also being certain not to "betray the logic and investments emanating from our own locations" (Nagar, 2014).

Thus, as I enter this discussion about my findings, I again am obliged to disclose my positionality as outsider-within. Who I am, and the meaning that I make of my interviews with these seven women, is shaped by these parallel statuses. I hold my within status, closely identifying with the women that I interviewed; I am a feminist, administrator in higher education, at the mid-level aspiring to senior-level, and part of Generation X. I also hold outsider status, striving to be a feminist scholar, committed to drawing on a variety of perspectives to offer new insights, make connections, and challenge current ways of thinking.

Discussion

The discussion of findings presents challenges to what was expected, while at the same time offering new insights. From my literature review, both feminism and generational frame were thought to be places of deep meaning, both separately and together. These identities, and the meaning participants made of them, were also thought to be tied to their practice of leadership and how they make change. Indeed, participants had much to say about how they made meaning of their feminist identity and how it shapes their leadership practice. They struggled, however, in communicating a connection to their Generation X identity. To begin to unpack the “why” of this, I look at how these differing identities may be explained within an understanding of group identity and social identity theories and group consciousness.

Group Identity, Social Identity Theory, and Group Consciousness

There are a number of constructs related to the concept of group identity. Group identification signifies the degree to which people see themselves as being similar to others in their group (Gurin & Townsend, 1986). Likewise, social identity theory tells us

that people's self-concept includes both a personal identity and a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). "Social identity refers to the knowledge that individuals have of their membership in a particular social group and the emotional significance they attached to the group" (Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2007, p. 146). Group consciousness reflects aspects of group identification, but importantly includes opinions of injustice against the group and the belief that collective action can affirmatively change the group's position in society (Gurin & Townsend, 1986). In distinguishing between group identification and group consciousness, it is clear that consciousness is separate from identity.

Because the participants in my study indicated strong group and social identification and some group consciousness for feminist identity, but only mild group identification and little distinguishable social or group consciousness for generational identity, it was incredibly difficult to capture an understanding of if and how the participants made meaning of these two identities, together. That is not to say, however, that feminism and generational frame were disconnected and that they didn't influence the participants' practice of leadership. The following pages will weave together multiple meanings that were derived from looking at feminist identity, Gen X identity and leadership through a variety of connections. In doing so, I will connect my discussion with prior research and conclude with directions for the future.

The Significance of the Feminist Label

In the case of the participants in this study, feminist identity was strongly present, according to their own self-report, although they largely struggled with the label of "feminist." Despite the distance many of the women in this study placed between themselves and the feminist label, there was extensive acceptance of feminist attitudes

toward gender issues, which is supported by past research (Rich, 2005; Zucker, 2004). Studies show that it is not uncommon for women to have pro-feminist attitudes and beliefs, but steer clear of the feminist label (Alexander & Ryan, 1997; Aronson, 2003; Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000). Like women in other studies, these participants seemed wary of the social stigma attached to the label (Alexander & Ryan, 1997; Burn et al., 2000). This lack of identification with the feminist label raises natural questions about whether or not the label matters and how it impacts their actions as feminist leaders. Roy et al (2007) shared the belief that “because having a feminist identity may help women confront sexism, it is unfortunate that many women are reluctant to self-identify as feminists” (p. 147).

The women in this study provided examples of confronting gender inequity within the context of higher education. In terms of action, they shared that their feminist beliefs did indeed guide their decision-making as leaders in these situations. While they didn't see their reluctance to use the feminist label as a problem, it can have significant implications. As accomplished leaders in higher education at the mid-level aspiring to senior level or in senior level positions, their use of the feminist label might make room for articulating and teaching about feminism as a location for understanding and exercising leadership. Using the feminist label makes the feminist frame explicit and may engender positive regard for a term so consistently misunderstood, potentially increasing others' curiosity of or commitment to feminist action. In the absence of the label, and subsequent enunciation of the feminist frame, I do believe an opportunity for teaching and learning from an egalitarian perspective is missed.

Feminist Identity and the Practice of Leadership

Barton's research (2006) on feminist administrators found that because feminism has a specific value system, it most certainly affects the leaders' disposition toward leadership. "The ideology of feminism certainly has an effect on...leadership action or behavior" (Barton, 2006, p. 3). For the purpose of this research, I asked questions about how the participants approached leadership, change and their involvement in advocacy/activism. The women in this study articulated how their feminist identity influenced their leadership as well as their ability to name and respond to instances of inequity in higher education. They named large problems that require systems solutions (e.g., tenure process, role of adjuncts, paucity of women in leadership, family-friendly policy needs). Most often, however, they acknowledged personal instances where they enacted change in their position as being the result of tremendous aptitude, rather than social movements (Arsenault, 2004; Kezar & Lester 2008). When it came to change related to achieving gender equality, patriarchy did make them question whether or not their own leadership experience was tainted by sexism. Activism has been defined as small acts, individual acts, and political acts that address social inequality (Hodgson & Brooks, 2007). They seldom mentioned operating in a "political fashion," however, which entails "mobilizing women collectively across campus to empower a group of women and create a network" (Kezar & Lester, 2008, p. 99).

Unlike the "fence-sitters" described in Aronson's (2003) research, these women acted as agents of change (p. 912). I was able to hear how participants exercised leadership through advocacy and activism in their workplace. Their acts constituted resistance from inside, a strategy often necessary within bureaucracies (Collins, 2000).

Few had much to say to the direct question “Have you been involved in feminist activism/collective action?” Despite this, I found multiple instances woven throughout the interviews. Feminism helped one participant muster the nerve necessary to navigate predominantly male spaces in her fields of study. For another couple participants, it served as the impetus to go the extra mile to make sure that all women felt invited and included in events designed to support them. Still others talked about brave acts of stepping out of positions of power due to confronting those with authority over ethical conflicts. Most talked about mentoring others. Some put themselves in professional peril by challenging inequity directly, while others used a much more nuanced and less direct approach.

Getting Lost in the Comparison

No matter the degree of risk, many of the participants hesitated to view their actions as notable. In the process of explaining the advocacy/activism they did engage in, the reason many gave for not doing more included time constraints and disgust with the political process. A few compared their activism to that of the suffragists or the marches on Washington and branded it as not being as important. Others articulated shame or guilt for not doing more. Few were really confident about the difference they were making.

With so many examples, I was left to wonder why these instances were not characterized as being brave or of great significance? And, if I’m honest, I had to ask myself why I made the same initial assessment. To understand this, I turned to the research of sociologists who suggest that how we frame messages by generation matters. “By comparing the worldviews of young women coming of age before and after the

women's movement" we set up misunderstanding (Everingham et al., 2007, p. 421). I understood, first-hand, the challenges that come from applying the progress narrative of the women's movement to women in Generation X.

On one hand, Generation X liberation "is taken for granted" (Everingham et al., 2007, p. 432), so the freedom to advocate for certain change is often not welcome, seen as over-stepping, or worse, whining. After all, at a time when women seemingly have more freedoms—they are the majority of college students, they can utilize sexual harassment policies, and have options when it comes to children and work—what could possibly be wrong? As the women in this study articulated in their interviews, there are limits on their life choices. However, these are not broadly recognized or understood through the narratives of the women's movement (Everingham et al., 2007). At a time when gender inequity language is so seldom used, especially in the public (non-classroom) spaces of the academy, this is not completely surprising.

There are widely held views that women are "now in a position to make their own life choices" (Everingham et al., 2007, p. 420). The women in this study, however, challenged that view, and talked about the problems related to this contemporary position. The belief that the women's movement significantly changed the cultural and structural barriers for women to achieve full equity is, in evidence by my interviews, not true. Researchers have well documented how cultural barriers in organizations and gender expectations make it difficult to take advantage of the very provisions put in place to create equity (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). For the women in my study, the ability to make choices was constrained by: gendered marital roles, yet they communicated privilege of having a dual career; pressure to be a mother, yet the lack of family-friendly

workplace support; career opportunities in male dominated leadership roles, yet the remaining bias against women leaders; the option to be childless, yet the expectation of being a mother. These examples expose the ongoing discrepancies between the expectations of women and their lived experience, emphasizing the problem with the progress narrative of the second wave women's movement when applied to or self-applied by women in Generation X/third wave feminists. I agree with Kezar and Lester (2008) that these more subtle norms and practices make it difficult to name and explain sexism explicitly and may be a reason for the challenges associated with analyzing and changing structures.

Advocacy/Activism as Individual Action Rather than Collective Action

Younger women tend “to view feminist activism as a personal issue rather than a collective women's movement” (Harris & Bulbeck, 2008, p. 226). In the interviews with the Gen X participants in this study, this trend was evident. While a couple of women mentioned involvement in outside groups to create change (e.g., AAUW, Planned Parenthood, the National Organization for Women), only a few mentioned involvement in on-campus groups—the two examples included mentoring and LGBT advocacy. More often than not, in the higher education environment, these women addressed inequity as individuals. Several participants also talked about the necessity of scaling back their desired feminist response in order to navigate within the system of higher education, suggesting that a direct feminist approach was generally not welcome and they thought it more important to be heard. As a result, as LeSavoy and Bergeron (2011) reminded us, women often “seek out alternatives quietly and in segments rather than blatantly and in wholes” (p. 158).

Sarachild's (1970) original concept of consciousness raising involved women sharing personal experiences through story telling in order to relate to one another and generalize experience. While not developed for the women's movement, second wave feminists used it as a tool to allow women to share personal stories of gender discrimination and to come together around collective action. In support of Kamen's (1991) research, during my interviews, I saw a need for women to build self-esteem, have their experiences named, and discover they were not alone. More than one participant articulated the journey of feeling like their challenges were individual until they were able to connect with others. Consciousness raising has been called the foundation for social activism and movement (Gring-Pemble, 1998) and I see a continued need for creating these types of spaces in higher education. While second wave feminists have continued to adapt and evolve this strategy through blogs, anthologies, and feminist magazines (Sowards & Renegar, 2004), these women did not talk about engaging in this way. Having the space to think about inequity issues within feminism may well be a luxury that many women, in the fast paced environment of higher education, don't seem to be able to afford. My findings support Aronson (2000) that a new wave of political organizing might in turn lead to new personal understandings of feminism. This intimacy of connection and storytelling has the ability to move the advocacy/activism of Generation X feminists from largely individual acts to collective action that is better equipped to address systems change.

Feminism and Transformational Leadership

The current conception of transformational leadership stresses the need for empowered, motivational, team-oriented, and participative processes that focus on

collective goals (Bass, 1985). Throughout the interviews, the women in this study consistently emphasized followership and empowerment and supported the flattening of organizational hierarchies (Fondas, 1997). They talked about how their feminism influenced their leadership, in line with what Safarik (2003) described as the practice of empowering others.

Specifically, the two primary tools that participants shared for leading to achieve change were transparency and fostering partnerships/relationships. Increasing transparency allowed these women to make others feel a part of the change they were trying to enact. In some cases this meant being explicit about messaging, in others it meant actually bringing colleagues to the table to dialogue and give input. Bringing people together to increase transparency also worked to build relationships. Other strategies for fostering partnerships included identifying allies and creating liaison groups, and hosting listening sessions.

This study further supports research that suggests that feminist leadership is closely tied to transformational leadership (Chin et al., 2007; Kark, 2004; Ronit, 2004). As a result, it stands to reason that women who identify as feminists may be just the type of higher education leaders needed to guide the future. How does their readiness get broadly communicated in higher education to those recruiting and promoting administrators to the most senior level positions? How does their competence as transformational leaders change the dialogue around “who” is prime for leadership, despite prevailing gender myths and acknowledge entrenched patriarchy in higher education?

Generation X Identity

When I designed the study, I considered Generation X identity a standpoint.

Mannheim (1952) suggested that

a generation represents a unique type of social location based on the dynamic interplay between being born in a particular year and the socio-political events that occur throughout the life course of the birth cohort, particularly while that cohort comes of age. (McMullin et al., 2007)

In his essay *The Problem of Generations*, Mannheim (1952) suggested that the concept of *generation* can be considered in the same way as that of *class*. The term itself is a passive descriptor applied to people who share a history. “To become an agent of change, a generation must become aware of itself as a generation ... capable of bringing about change” (Stevenson, Everingham, & Robinson, 2011, p. 131). While it is true that each person is part of a generational cohort, it is not true that each person has “generational consciousness” (McMullin et al., 2007, p. 300). To deal with this distinction, Mannheim developed the concept of “generation as actuality” and links that concept to two things; objective generational location and the subjective experience of being part of a generation.

The women in my study shared similar themes related to generational location (e.g., the technology boom), but struggled with identifying the subjective experience of being part of Generation X. They stretched to articulate a collective memory for their generation and lacked examples of how their generational identity influenced them personally. They had little to say about how their generational identity influences their leadership practice. It is perhaps no surprise that they could talk about technology in contrast to leadership. Technology was found to be a touchstone for generational bonds, an evident “generation connection” (Cavalli, 2004, p. 157). For a generation that grew up

with Reagan as President, a leader who was several generations away from them (which two of the participants mentioned), and few other non-political role models, making a generational connection to leadership was not easy.

Baby Boomer Connections

Feminism does not hold the same meaning for all women, and so feminist researchers have set out to document the subtle differences in consciousness as opportunities to better understand one another and build coalitions across generations (Beechey, 2005; Zucker & Stewart, 2007). Like Astin and Leland's (1991) research, my study highlights how differing historical influencers appear to have shaped the choices and actions of feminist women leaders in higher education. The perceived distance that I anticipated finding between Generation X and Baby Boomers was small, however. For example, Gen X women articulated the importance of many of the historical events and people central to the formative years of Baby Boomers, even though they didn't experience them firsthand. They mentioned the suffragists, Susan B. Anthony, Eleanor Roosevelt, *Roe v. Wade*, and Civil Rights. And while the gendered experience of higher education, while still inequitable, was dissimilar, none of the women I studied felt the need to distinguish themselves from Boomers in a negative way (Drake, 1997), a finding that challenges contemporary understandings of generational conflict (Janus, 2013).

Feminist debates around waves of feminism have produced conflict between so-called mothers and daughters (Drake, 1997; Henry, 2004) in which "the second wave necessarily becomes the bad mother and the third wave the bad child" (Siegel, 1997, p. 65). Henry (2004) described third wave attempts to repel the teaching of mother and create a different identity. This dichotomy was largely not present in the way the Gen X

women in higher education in this study talked about the Baby Boomers who came before them. In fact, there was general respect for the fact that Baby Boomer women have had to traverse higher education in a different manner, often being the first in their settings. While they did note some Baby Boomer advice they would leave behind, there was generally understanding regarding the motivation for the advice and respect for the place from where it came. The Baby Boomers that they discussed were determined to be mentors, but not necessarily screened as feminists, which may also have influenced their perspective.

Opportunities for Feminist Education

A factor that seemed to influence strong identification as a feminist and feminist advocacy/activism was exposure to feminist teachings through a course in women's studies (Aronson, 2003). Even though Gen Xers "grew up after the women's movement had made numerous gains for women, and their adulthoods coincided with the conservative Reagan presidency and backlash against feminism" (Duncan, 2010, p. 499), yet they were also the first to benefit from Women's Studies courses in college. It seems useful, therefore, to consider how such educational opportunities are afforded women after they acquire administrative leadership roles, and especially if they didn't have access to these teachings through college study.

If we want higher education to be able to identify and address systems of gender inequity, and develop leaders who can recognize and confront patriarchy, as well as other systems of oppression, this type of theory to practice teaching/training offers a path to change. This type of education might also assist in developing a more rigorous conceptual framework for exercising feminist leadership (Batliwala, 2010). Batliwala

(2010) states that creating more clarity around leadership is important because “leadership is a means and not an end. We build leadership capacity and skills *for* something, to *do* something or *change* something, and not because leadership is a product or service for consumption” (p. 13). In my interviews, I picked up on participants’ ease and willingness to name gender inequality, generally. Equipping them with the skills to talk about gender justice more specifically, however, on both the individual or micro-level and societal or macro-level, is necessary for enacting a transformational agenda (Barton, 2006). The ability to do this is not innate, but rather taught through an understanding of historical and contemporary applications and critiques. In extremely busy administrative lives, it is difficult to find the time to do this type of deep reflecting and translating to action.

The Contribution of Intersectionality to Leadership Studies

In the interviews with the participants in my study, I heard women make significant meaning of their feminist identity and leadership practice through their connection to various other marginalized identity categories and, subsequently, their lived experiences. Importantly, I heard how these categories, taken together, influenced how they understand and navigate the academy. Stories about disability, religion, race, sexual orientation and gender further illuminated who these women are and how they practice leadership. In conclusion, the way they intersected was more important than just looking at feminist identity and Gen X identity alone. When given the chance to talk about identity, these other aspects of self were equal to, or more significant, than feminist identity. As Taunya Lovell Banks (1997) wrote, “My life stories influence my

perspective, a perspective unable to function within a single paradigm because I am too many things at one time” (p. 99).

In educational leadership theory and practice, some of the most common models are transactional leadership (Burns, 1979), transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1979), and situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988), as well as some focus on leadership for social change (Astin & Leland, 1991; Komives & Wagner, 2009) and social justice (Diaz, 2011; Rusch & Horsford, 2008). In the past, diverse voices have found their way into our collective understanding through the storytelling narratives of individuals facing oppression (Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993), rather than through the study of leadership (Santamaria, 2014). We know, however, that when we take into account multiple identities and the experience of marginalization, the understanding of leadership practices, and the understanding of organizations, is substantially and qualitatively changed (Santamaria, 2014).

What an intersectional lens brings is a necessary contribution to the higher education leadership literature because it requires us to more deeply think about *who* both leaders and followers are. In our descriptions of leading, we highlight the experience of identity and oppression as additives to a general leadership experience that is still unnamed, and so assumed to be white, male, hetero-normative, and non-poor. With intersectionality as the frame, we have the potential to learn from the leadership experience of women who, from multiple identity lenses, can help us see organizations differently. Transformational leadership theory requires a focus on garnering trust and displaying respect and admiration for followers (Bass, 1985), but does not make explicit

our need to achieve this through an understanding of followers' identity and interaction with systems of oppression.

When striving to put intersectional thinking into practice, we quickly see that identities have generally been described in essentialist, fixed ways (e.g., gay and lesbian identity development and black identity development). Recent identity development theory, however, highlights the work that has been done to help educators see an integrated multiple social identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). How then do we take this outside of the identity development realm and connect it to the leadership realm? Florence Guido (2011) recently wrote about how gender, ethnicity, culture, and class intertwined in order for her to tell her story as an Italian American Feminist in higher education. If we agree that Guido's story, and the stories of the women in this study, matter, then how do we infuse intersectionality into our leadership practice to make sure they are known and not simply valued if happened upon? How do we teach leaders to take risks and tell their own stories? And how do we teach them to ask and listen to the stories of followers to honor what is learned at the intersections and use that to change systems? Our interactions with each other, and the ways in which we value each in higher education environments, can have dramatic effects.

A recent publication, *Intersectionality and Higher Education: Theory Research and Practice* (2014), while comprehensive, leaves room to explore the application of intersectionality to leadership practice. Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, and Tomlinson (2013) advised that understandings of intersectionality are constantly developing and that it is important, as we move forward, "to assess what intersectionality does" rather than what intersectionality is (p. 304). What does an understanding of intersectionality do to

leadership praxis? Intersectionality is gathering the attention of both scholars and practitioners in higher education, stimulating them to apply it in various contexts (Jones, 2014). Based on my findings, I am confident there is much to be gained from the exploration of intersectionality theory and leadership practice.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research project, there are limitations. For this study they center on how I determined the study group. Utilizing the HERS (Higher Education Resource Services) leadership institute as the location for recruitment of participants helped me identify women who were excelling in leadership at their institutions at the mid-level aspiring to senior level or newly in senior level positions, but it may not have prompted the strongest draw in terms of self-identified feminists. While women-centered spaces are certainly meaningful and encouraging of women's leadership, they are not necessarily feminist spaces. If I had chosen other mechanisms for seeking participants, I might very well have heard from different types of women administrators who identify as feminists. The meaning that these women might make of their experiences would most likely be different.

The study may also be limited by the way in which I determined the generational frame I would use, the specific years of 1965-1982. I used a definition by a popular Generation X author (Coupland, 1991). However, I now know that there are many of ways of distinguishing generational frames. Since there is failure to determine generational frames neatly, choosing a different set of women with slightly modified frames could have had an impact on findings.

Finally, the study may be limited by how I determined feminist identity and membership in Generation X. In determining the participants for the study, I used a scale to determine the degree to which feminist identity was a standpoint for women who replied to my inquiry. I didn't, however, use this same scale for identification as a part of Generation X, nor did I seek participants who identified as part of "third wave" feminism. What effect, if any, these determinations had on my findings is impossible to discern without additional research.

Future Research

The need to talk about feminism and/or generational identity seems to be of ongoing importance. In response to my inquiry, I had over 60 women who indicated interest in the study, but who were Baby Boomers. This suggests that the Baby Boomer generation of women feminist administrators in higher education may need its own attention through research and more story-telling. This generation, building on the pioneering work of women from 1900-1960, broke more barriers in 30 years than would have been predicted. Their lived experience deserves and needs to be fully explored.

An interesting and useful study would be to actually have women administrators in higher education, who identify as feminists from the Millennial, Gen X, and Baby Boomer generations, in a room for a sustained period of time, or over time, talking about feminism and leadership. The setting would allow for a unique and authentic interchange that could be recorded and analyzed for themes and meaning. It seems that much of the research on feminism and generational frames has participants from one generation sharing opinions about the other. Feminist research elevates that importance of dialogue from a variety of perspectives; exposing tensions, contradictions, as well as connections

and relationships. I believe this type of interplay would be dynamic, authentic, and insightful.

A unique contribution that this study made to the research was around the significance of intersectionality in understanding how feminist administrators make sense of their leadership experience. While intersectionality is a frame used in other disciplines, it has not been readily used as a frame in the leadership studies. As such, a subsequent study should look at how an understanding and application of intersectionality relates to leadership competence.

Within this study, there is still more to unpack! There was so much depth of information as a result of the interviews and subsequent narratives that more can certainly be discussed in relation to new literature.

Recommendations

As higher education seeks to encourage women, who identify as feminists and who are part of Gen X, to aspire to senior level positions, the following recommendations guide thought and/or action for higher education:

1. If we want feminist leadership to flourish and be modeled then it likely needs to benefit from having feminists and their leadership named. Feminist leaders need to be encouraged to use the feminist label and reclaim the positive characteristics associated with feminist leadership.
2. Feminist identity inspires courage in enacting leadership for change in higher education that impacts gender equity and other social change. All approaches, big or small, matter and should be celebrated.

3. The progress narrative of the women's movement has the potential to overshadow the limited life choices that women still experience. These limits need to be more broadly explained to be better understood so the systems that create them can be addressed.
4. While all advocacy/activism matters, large systems change is best achieved through collective action. Consciousness raising groups need to be facilitated among feminist administrators in higher education to foster deeper learning and strategy for how to make large systems change.
5. The values of feminism align with the values of transformational leadership. Since feminist leaders are, by evidence, transformational, they should be hired into senior leadership with ease. So why aren't they? I recommend that higher education leaders engage in their own internal answering of the questions, (a) Do we want transformational leadership in higher education (rather than leadership that supports the status quo)? And if so, (b) Is there room for women to be regarded as transformational leaders as readily as men?
6. Generation X identity is a location in history that shapes experiences, but the women in this study did not find it personally meaningful. As such, I think future generational research should be done, but with caution about not over-assigning generational meaning to all feminists.
7. Multigenerational spaces, though complicated, were expressed with positive regard by the women in this study. There is a need to foster discussions around the tensions, pressures, and miscommunication among generations, but

also to celebrate the rich opportunities for growth all around afforded by these spaces.

8. Exposure to feminist studies has a strong influence on feminist identification and engagement in advocacy/activism. This type of teaching/training should be built into leadership development opportunities, a reality that won't largely be possible until the emancipatory nature of feminist studies is seen as a positive influence on the change needed for higher education to thrive in the future.
9. An intersectional lens brings a necessary contribution to the study of leadership by connecting leadership competence to an understanding of multiple identities and systems of oppression. Intersectionality, as a theoretical framework, should be woven into leadership studies to significantly shape professional practice.

Conclusions

The participants in this study articulated a great deal of personal meaning for their feminist identity and little connection to their Generation X identity. Despite their proximity or distance to these identities, however, they demonstrated a variety of ways in which both frames influenced their leadership practice as women administrators in higher education. Participants spoke extensively about their engagement with change efforts and named numerous personal, organizational, and cultural influences that shaped their experiences. Although most women didn't name gender equity efforts among the most salient change projects they were involved in, they ultimately offered several examples of engagement in advocacy/activism.

The most notable finding was the emphasis that participants placed on other aspects of identity that shaped them, beyond feminism and Gen X membership. This emphasis calls into question the extent to which leadership studies inspire leaders to value intersectionality as a theoretical framework for understanding followers. If the influence of identities, within the interplay of systems in higher education, shapes the experience of empowerment and/or oppression, it seems that understanding this should be part of leadership competence. This intersectionality frame also has the potential for offering tremendous insights into leaders themselves, as well as motivating continued social justice work in higher education.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Western Michigan University
 Department of Educational Leadership
 Principal Investigator: Andrea Beach, Associate Professor
 Student Investigator: Marlene Kowalski-Braun

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “AN EXAMINATION OF HOW FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES INFLUENCE THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION”. This study is being conducted by Marlene Kowalski-Braun, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Director of the Women’s Center at Grand Valley State University, and a doctoral student in Higher Education Leadership at Western Michigan University, under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Beach.

The study I am conducting is qualitative in nature. As a participant, you will be asked to partake in one private session, 90 to 120 minutes in length. The interview will be conducted via telephone. The first part of the session will involve providing biographical information on a data sheet such as your birthdate, race/ethnicity, level of education, employment status, number of years in the profession, and confirmation that you identify as a feminist. The second part of the session will involve an interview during which you will be asked questions regarding how your gender, feminist identity, and generational membership influence your leadership and how you make change.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of women higher education administrators and how their feminist identity and membership in Generation X influence their leadership. If you decide to participate you will be asked to partake in an interview lasting approximately 90 - 120 minutes. *To help in your preparation, you will be then be given three questions for you to reflect upon prior to the interview.* These interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected information and all interviews will be transcribed into a written record. You would be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at anytime during the interview.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or while the research is taking place. I will be happy to share the results with you at the completion of the study. *Ensuring the confidentiality of data is the norm in research. Neither your name or institution will not be used in the dissertation dissemination process;* rather it will only be known to me. Pseudonyms will be used for participants (i.e., Administrator 1, Administrator 2, and so on) and general terms will be used in reporting results (i.e., “Five of the administrators commented...;” “Two administrators reported that...;” etc.). On a separate master I will keep a list with the names of all participants and the corresponding code numbers. After the interview is transcribed, I will also give you a hard copy of the transcript, as well as my narration, so you can review and determine if anything needs to be clarified or changed. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. At the end of the study, materials will be stored in a faculty office of Western Michigan University on a password protected server space for a three-year period.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to you as a participant. You may benefit from this activity by having the chance to talk about your leadership experience and how you create change, your identity as a feminist, and the influence of your generational cohort. On the other hand, you may find the reflection upsetting. Whatever the outcome, research suggests that reflection is beneficial to helping people analyze, understand, and gain meaning from their experiences. Other feminist women administrators who are part of Generation X, who identify as feminists and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level may benefit from this research, as well as institutions of higher education across the country.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Marlene Kowalski-Braun, the student investigator at (office) 616-331-2748 or (cell) 616-915-0111 or via email at kowalskm@gvsu.edu . You may also contact the Chair, The Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269) 387-8293 or via email at hsirb@wmich.edu , or the Vice President for Research (269) 387-8298 if any questions or issues arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) and by Western Michigan's Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in the study if the stamped date is older than one year. Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate.

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records.

Signature: _____
(participant)

Date: _____

Signature: _____
(researcher)

Date: _____

Thank you.

Marlene Kowalski-Braun, Researcher, 616-915-0111, kowalskm@gvsu.edu

Appendix B

Initial Email to Potential Participants

Initial Email to Potential Participants

(Sample e-mail announcement sent out from HERS)

I am conducting dissertation research on how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education who are in mid-level, aspiring to senior-level or in senior level positions.

I am a doctoral student in Higher Education Leadership at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan. The study I am conducting is qualitative in nature. As a participant, you will be asked to partake in one private session, 90 to 120 minutes in length. The interview will be conducted via telephone. The first part of the session will involve providing biographical information on a data sheet such as your birthdate, race/ethnicity, level of education, employment status, number of years in the profession, and confirmation that you identify as a feminist. The second part of the session will involve an interview during which you will be asked questions regarding how your gender, feminist identity, and generational membership influence your leadership and how you make change.

The study emphasizes the value of women's voices, lives and experiences as central to the discussion; viewing women as partners in the process of understanding as opposed to being simply "subjects" or "respondents". In particular, this research will focus on how your feminist identity and generational cohort impact your leadership experience.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me, Marlene Kowalski-Braun, at kowalskm@gvsu.edu or (616) 915-0111.

Thank you for your assistance!

Appendix C
Data Collection Sheet

Data Collection Sheet

Western Michigan University
 Department of Educational Leadership
 Principal Investigator: Andrea Beach, Associate Professor
 Student Investigator: Marlene Kowalski-Braun

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project entitled “AN EXAMINATION OF HOW FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES INFLUENCE THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION”. As indicated in the in the email invitation, this study is being conducted by myself - Marlene Kowalski-Braun, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs at Grand Valley State University and a doctoral student in Higher Education Leadership at Western Michigan University. My study is under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Beach.

This data sheet is being used to create the most diverse pool of participants possible. If you fill out the data sheet indicating a desire to participate, but are not selected, I am still happy to share the results of the study with you. Thank you for your assistance.

First Name

Last Name

Title of Current Position

Number of years in Current Position

Based on your professional path, how do you describe yourself? *(Please check one)*

- Mid-level aspiring to senior level
- Senior level
- None of the above

For the purpose of this study, I am seeking women that fall in the “Generation X” timeframe – between 1965 – 1982.

- Were you born in this time frame? YES or NO

If yes, specifically, what year were you born? _____

On the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you identify as a feminist.

Do Not Identify as a Feminist	Moderately Identify as a Feminist	Closely Identify as a Feminist
1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9

Please check which sentence most describes the extent to which you have engaged in conscious reflection about your feminist identity:

- I have not thought much about this aspect of my identity and don't share my feminist identity with many people.
- I have moderately thought about my feminist identity and share this aspect of my identity with some key people.
- I have thought about this aspect of my identity often, claim it publicly, and can identify what has influenced my feminist beliefs.

Level of Education (*check all that apply*)

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree (Ph.D. or Ed.D.)
- JD

Number of years in a professional position in Higher Education

- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-24

How do you describe your race/ethnicity? _____

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please return this sheet as an email attachment to:
 Marlene Kowalski-Braun at kowalskm@gvsu.edu.
 Questions: Marlene can be reached at 616-915-0111

Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Project: A look at how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education

Time of interview: _____

Date of interview: _____

Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to remind you that I am recording the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request, however, that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the interview.

The purpose of this study is to explore how feminist perspectives and generational differences influence the leadership practice of women administrators in higher education. It examines the experiences of women like you who identify as feminists, who were born into “Generation X”, and who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions and how they make meaning of their feminism and generational membership as leaders and change agents in higher education.

The research questions guiding this study are: (a) How does a feminist identity and Generation X membership shape a woman academic administrator’s leadership practice? (b) How does a feminist identity and Generation X membership predispose the kind of change initiatives a woman academic administrator seeks and engages in? (c) What personal, organizational and/or cultural conditions have influenced how they lead?

Appendix E
Interview Questions

Interview Questions

I. You have identified as a feminist.

1. How do you define feminism? What does being a feminist mean to you?
2. What conditions contributed positively toward your adopting a feminist identity?
3. What experiences or other aspects of your identity have shaped your feminism?
4. How have you consciously reflected on your experiences and political understanding as a feminist?

II. Historical influences.

1. What historical instances/events, related to the feminist struggle, do you recall?
2. Which happened before you were born? After you were born?
3. Did these events influence your leadership practice? Which? How?

III. Gender equity in higher education.

1. Do you believe we have achieved gender equity in higher education?
2. What issues do you think are the most pressing to be addressed in the future?

IV. You have identified as a leader.

1. What is your approach to leadership? How do you enact that?
2. What are your greatest achievements?
3. What are your aspirations?
4. Think of a change project that you are particularly proud of, immersed in. Walk me through it?

5. Please describe the ways you have tried to make change in your everyday work life?

6. Has your position limited the kind of change you can make?

V. Power

1. What do you see as is the role of power and politics in higher education?

2. Do you utilize power in your leadership? How?

VI. Collective Action

1. Have you been involved in feminist activism/collective action?

2. If you have, has this happened inside or outside higher education?

VII. Generational influences (You have identified as a person who was born between 1965-1982).

1. How would you define Generation X (personal definition)?

2. What values are most important to you?

3. Are these values shaped by your generation?

4. How or do these values influence how you lead? Create change?

5. Do you think the generational differences influence leadership in higher education?

6. What are the narratives that you believe are told about you and those in your generation (Generation X)?

VIII. Mentors

1. Have you had a woman mentor(s) in higher education that have influenced your leadership?

2. Does this woman/do these women fall into the same generation that you do (born 1965-1982)?

IX. Advice

1. What kind of advice have you received from women in the baby boomer generation about being a woman leader in higher education?
2. Is this advice that you have heeded and/or would pass along?

X. Higher education as a gendered organization

1. From your perspective, what are the behaviors you think are necessary to lead in colleges and universities?
2. How closely do your behaviors align with what is expected versus what you think is necessary to lead in higher education?

What influence (if any) do you think gender has on the organizational culture of higher education?

XI. Intersectionality

1. As you think about the questions I asked you regarding your feminist identity and your membership in Generation X, and how these influence your leadership, is there particular meaning that you make of these two identities?
2. Are there aspects of your identity that are more salient or important to you than your feminist identity and your membership in Generation X? Do they influence how you lead?

Appendix F
Thank You Letter

Thank You Letter

Date

Name

Dear:

I wanted to formally thank you for your help with my dissertation research. I enjoyed our conversation about your higher education experience; specifically how your feminist identity and generational membership influence your leadership. Each interview I conduct offers fresh perspectives on this topic and I am eager to review the tape and transcript of our conversation.

As I mentioned to you, expect that this transcription and review process will take a month or more to complete. When I have finished with the proofs, I will forward to you a copy of the transcription so you may review it for accuracy. At the completion of the study, I will also forward you an executive summary of findings.

Once again, thank you for relating your experiences and thoughts and for sharing your time with me.

Appendix G

**Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval**

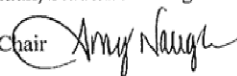
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: August 6, 2013

To: Andrea Beach, Principal Investigator
Marlene Kowalski-Braun, Student Investigator

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair 

Re: HSIRB Project Number 13-07-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "A Look at How Feminist Perspectives and Generational Differences Influence the Leadership Practice of Women Administrators in Higher Education" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., ***you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study."*** Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 6, 2014