

“ALONE ON THE RANGE”: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE LIVED
EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS AT COMMUNITY
COLLEGES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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AUTHORIZATION OF SUBMIT DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Bethani Stellene Studebaker submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Education and titled “Alone on the Range: A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of Female Board of Trustee Members at Community Colleges in the Pacific Northwest” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest, and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. This exploration focused specifically on existing female community college Board of Trustee members to understand how they perceived their leadership roles and responsibilities. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?
2. Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?
3. In addition to representing the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community colleges feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?
4. To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

The review of literature was based upon four distinct sections: (a) the historical and socio-cultural context of leaders in education, (b) the role of Board of Trustees at community colleges, (c) leadership behaviors of women in education, and (d) women as elected leaders. Multiple in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to collect narrative data from seven identified participants. After completion of the first interview, the raw data was read several times to identify emergent themes.

An analysis of the data gathered revealed seven emergent themes: (1) Institutional Leaders, (2) Commitment to Community and College, (3) Leadership for Learning, (4) Competing in the Race, (5) Champions for Woman, (6) The Female Presence, and (7)

Insecurities and Challenges. Key findings from the study suggest that female Board of Trustee members have a strong shared understanding of their role and responsibilities within their college and community. Additionally, female Board members place a high priority on ensuring rigorous academia, quality learning, and serving as mentors for future women leaders. The majority of the women expressed that challenges based on gender roles and stereotypes still exist. The females confirmed that the Board was a politically charged entity. The investigation concludes with recommendations for action and further research.

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DEDICATION

To my daughters Sophi Amira and Phoebe Rae- the next generation of great female leaders

“I will not die an unlived life. I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise. I choose to risk my significance, to live so that which came to me as seed goes to the next as blossom, and that which came to me as blossom, goes on as fruit.”

-Dawna Markova

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CHAPTER ONE

“It is now our generation’s task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts.”

– President Barak Obama, Inaugural Address January 21, 2013

A leader can be defined as an individual who contributes significantly to the “development and maintenance of role structure and goal direction necessary for effective group performance” (Snowden & Gorton, 2002, p. 69). Moreover, an effective leader possesses qualities of honesty, consistency, respect, knowledge, and integrity (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). In the ancient world, Plato’s depiction of a wise leader was dependent, first and foremost, on knowledge. The position of leadership, as captured by Gillett-Karam and Rocueche (1991), was attained by one’s capability to examine life, become just, and be thoroughly educated. Growe and Montgomery (2000) expanded the description of leaders as people “who provide vision and meaning for an institution and embody the ideals toward which the organization strives (p. 1). From these perspectives, leadership was not viewed as a gender role but rather an opportunity of pure ability (Curry, 2000; Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991; Growe & Montgomery, 2000).

For centuries women were seen as “different, inexact, or deficient in the characteristics that described leaders” (Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991, p. 48). Eminent philosophers Freud, Rousseau, and Aristotle regarded females as “defective males” or “the other”, believing that procreation was the sole function of a woman (Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991, p. 51). In ancient times, women lived in a world where strict gender

roles were prescribed and status devoted to them was minimal (Curry, 2000). Aristotle maintained that, “the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying” (Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991). Good leadership was, essentially, masculine (Curry, 2000; Growe & Montgomery, 2000).

Historically, females have been mostly excluded from leadership positions (Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991). While external barriers affected the representation of women in leadership roles, internal barriers also played a significant role. Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) expressed that women “socialized to be followers” and “developed self-limiting beliefs about their roles and abilities. Such beliefs have caused them to restrict their professional choices to roles viewed as ‘gender appropriate’” (p. 6).

Female roles within educational systems are a growing phenomenon. Recent figures from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2013) reveal that women currently comprise the majority (approximately 71%) of all teaching staff in elementary and secondary schools. Additionally, research conducted over the last 30 years depicts an evolving trend of female representation in specific educational leadership roles (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Mertz, 2006). Women have surpassed their male counterparts as elementary school principals- representing 58.9% of the population in 2008 (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 28).

The representation of female leaders within the venue of America’s higher education systems has also increased in the 21st century (Chun & Evans, 2009; Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), enrollment in graduate level educational leadership programs has been equal or greater for female students than male students. An analysis

of doctoral degrees in education by gender indicates women earn more (67.5%) doctoral degrees than men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Likewise, examining the percentage of education degrees from United States institutions shows female dominance at all levels. Women received 78.7% of Bachelor Degrees and 77.3% of Masters Degrees in 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It is projected by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) that the number of females receiving education degrees will increase 38% between the year 2012 and 2022.

Despite the female dominance in both experience and formal education, the male population continues to attain educational leadership roles at a substantially faster pace (Chliwniak, 1997; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The latest statistics released from the American Association of School Administrators (2011) list male representation of superintendents at 75.9% (AASA, 2013). Another study conducted in 2012 reported only 25% of presidential positions at post-secondary institutions were held by females, with more than a third leading community colleges (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2012). These numbers indicate that although the representation of women in school leadership and post-secondary education is present, females are still disproportionately underutilized in top leadership roles.

In a 1964 speech given at the University of Michigan, United States President Lyndon B. Johnson voiced that “[our society] would not be great until every mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination” (p. 3). Johnson would later state that, “We are still far from that goal” (Johnson, 1964, p. 3). Four decades later, President Barack Obama (2013) emulated similar concerns to the American people. In

his second inaugural address, Obama challenged each citizen to carry out the responsibilities that the generations before had started:

What makes us exceptional...is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal"... Today we continue a never-ending journey to bridge the meaning of those words with the realities of our time. For history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they've never been self-executing... It is now our generation's task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts... That is our generation's task -- to make these words, these rights, these values- of Life, and Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness- real for every American. (para. 2, 3, 4, 20, 21)

Today, with the representation of women educational leaders well below that of their male counterparts, America is still far from that goal (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Chun & Evans, 2009; National Education Association, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Background of the Study

Since the initiation of women into the venue of America's higher education in the early 1850s, the representation of females as students, faculty, and staff members has continued to rise radically throughout the centuries (Chun & Evans, 2009; Chilwniak, 1997). Currently, women represent the majority of undergraduate students on college campuses, they achieve the majority of undergraduate and graduate degrees, and are more likely to graduate from college than that of the male population (American Council on

Education, 2007; Bilen-Green et al., 2008; National Education Association, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). However, as agreed upon by Bilen-Green et al. (2008), Chun & Evans (2009), Chliwniak (1997), and Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011), women continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in academic leadership positions within institutions of higher education. In fact, according to the Shriver Report (2009), the number of female presidents on college campuses did not change during the ten year span between 1999 and 2009. Recent statistics also disclose that women account for only 16% of the higher education leadership positions and represent less than 30% of the Board members on college and university campuses (Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Recently, extensive research has been conducted focusing on educational leadership. Numerous authors, including Chliwniak (1997), Curry (2000), Deaux & Kite (1993), Collard & Reynolds (2005), Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011), and Growe & Montgomery (2000), have written on the qualities and traits characterized by exceptional leader. Collectively they defined successful leaders possessing attributes of resiliency, sensitivity, empathy, shared decision-making, intuitiveness and the ability to compromise, nurture, accommodate, encourage, and protect. Such characteristics are often stereotypically viewed as natural feminine tendencies (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Growe & Montgomery, 2000). Historically, the primary female responsibility has been as wives and mothers (Rosaldo, 1974). According to Rosaldo, wifeness and motherhood were regarded as a woman's most significant professions. A female's "natural" traits, as a wife and mother, were to be cooperative, supportive, understanding, nurturing, gentle, and sensitive (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Rosaldo, 1974).

Educational leaders Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) contend:

Women often describe power as something that increases as it is shared.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in order for many women to be comfortable with the notion of holding power, power needs to be conceptualized as something that is shared with others and that is not power over but, rather, power with. (p. 7)

The approach of shared power lends interest in evaluating why females are disproportionately underrepresented in specific leadership roles such as college and university Board of Trustee membership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). By definition, a Board is “an appointive or elective body that is the responsible controlling agency of an institution” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2013). Boards are comprised of a group of people that deliberate with many voices but govern under one (Smith, 2000). Therefore, Board of Trustee members represent a team that has shared power, shared influence, and shared importance in carrying out the mission set forth by the institution (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). Shared leadership strategies are emblematic of female educational leaders (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Research shows women hold the makings of successful leaders in education (Chliwniak, 1997; Curry, 2000; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 2000).

If females receive the majority of undergraduate and graduate degrees, represent the bulk of elementary and secondary teachers, and possess the traits used to define excellent educational leaders, then why do they continue to be underutilized in leadership and decision-making roles in post-secondary institutions?

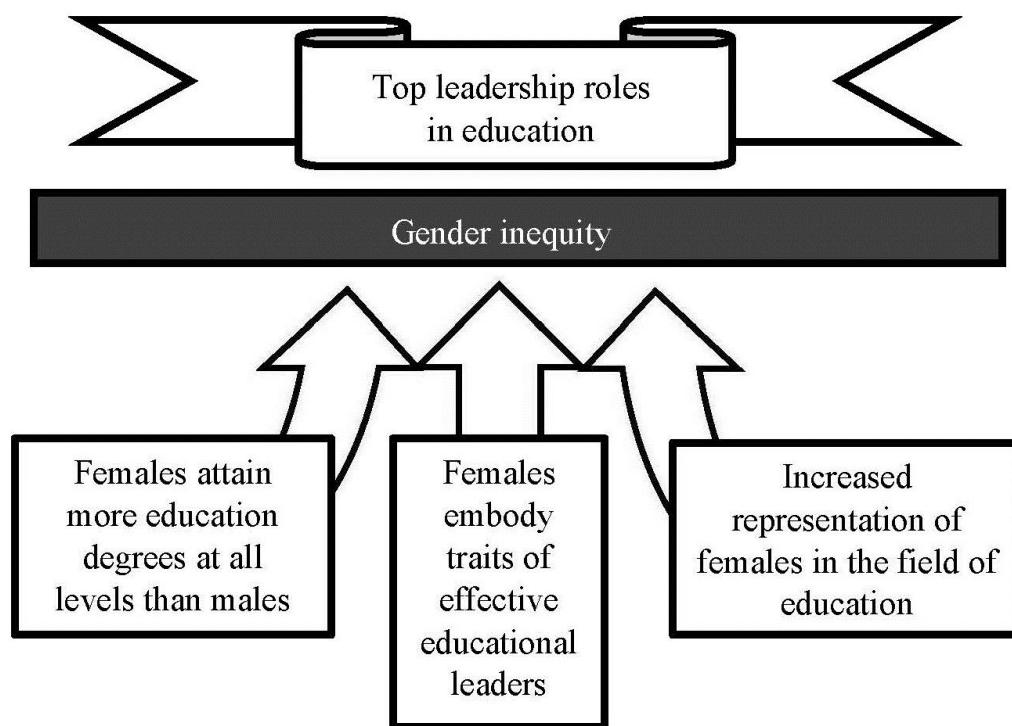


Figure 1. Gender Inequity in Education (created by author)

French historian and political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville spoke of the American female leader in 1835:

If I were asked to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of the Americans ought to be attributed, I should reply, “To the superiority of their women.” (as cited in Gillett-Karam & Roueche, 1991, p. 69)

Over one hundred and fifty years later, with a vast disparity existing between female and male educational leaders, college campuses across the nation have failed to capitalize on the potentials of the female leader (Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Studies focusing on how women intellectualize power define leadership in terms of horizontal rather than hierarchical. Women seek to accomplish initiative with and through others (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The leadership role of a community college Board of Trustee member complements the behaviors and styles emphasized as common practice amongst female leaders in education (Curry, 2000). However, research confirms women account for less than 30% of the Board members on college and university campuses nationwide (Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The representation of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest mirrors the national standard. Data analyzed from the 49 community colleges located in the Pacific Northwest discloses that 71% of Board members are male and 84% of the colleges are governed by a male dominant Board (U.S. Community Colleges, 2013). Understanding the roles and responsibilities females have when serving as a community college Board of Trustee member and their beliefs about the extent to which gender affects such perceptions may allow researchers to better understand gender influences on Board composition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. This exploration focused specifically on existing female community college Board of Trustee members to understand how they perceived their leadership roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the researcher identified the reasons behind the

decision to serve in such leadership positions. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?
2. Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?
3. In addition to representing the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community colleges feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?
4. To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

A qualitative phenomenological approach was selected because this research strategy allows for the researcher to capture a deep understanding of a phenomenon as it was directly experienced, firsthand, by a group of individuals (Creswell, 2007; Heidegger, 2005; Maxwell, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 1990). As agreed upon by Creswell (2007), Moustakas (1994), and Patton (2002), a phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences and internal perceptions of a small group of people.

Significance of the Study

The literature focusing on women as leaders in education is more extensive; however research isolating specific leadership positions, such as Board of Trustees membership at community colleges, remains scarce. Locating concepts that support the decision to serve on a Board of Trustees and understanding women's perceptions of their leadership roles and responsibilities on the Board will help identify the positions women choose to take within educational leadership.

The findings presented in this investigation are influential in comprehending why an underrepresentation of females within specific leadership roles exists. With this knowledge, the number of females within selected educational leadership positions may improve. The revealed phenomenon contributes to the empirical body of knowledge and has the potential of yielding a better grasp of the roles and responsibilities that females believe they have when holding such positions.

Definition of Terms

Board of Trustees: This term refers to the governing body of individuals, typically elected, to direct, implement, and evaluate the mission put in place by the educational institution. The Board governs on behalf of the citizens in the community. The role of the Board is to establish policies which define the mission, vision, and core values of the community college, adopt strategic goals and hold the College President responsible for meeting such goals, hire and evaluate the President, assure fiscal health and stability, and advocate for the needs of the community (Board of Trustees- Policies and Procedures, 2010).

Community College: A community college is a post-secondary institution of higher education. As defined by Gale Encyclopedia of Education (2002), a community college can be characterized by a two-year curriculum that leads to either an associate degree, technical degree, or transfer to a four-year college. Community colleges are public institutions that also offer community education, business development, and courses in professional and technical areas that prepare individuals for direct entrance into occupation.

Glass Ceiling Phenomenon: The glass ceiling phenomenon refers to the transparent or “artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions” (Begun, 2000, p. 30). The phrase describes that which keeps females from achieving power and success equal to men (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1992). The term has subsequently been used to describe the barrier women face in attaining leadership positions.

Phenomenology: This term is described as a qualitative research approach that focuses on “exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). This research strategy allows for the researcher to capture a deep understanding of a phenomenon as it was directly experienced, firsthand, by a group of individuals.

Qualitative Research: As defined by Creswell (2007), “Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15).

Underrepresentation: Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2013) defines underrepresentation as being “inadequately represented.” In terms of this specific study, underrepresentation will refer to the inadequate representation of female leaders on the campuses of institutions of higher education. The term underutilization will be used concurrently with underrepresentation.

Voice: This term refers to the “expression or utterance” of a person’s choice or position (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2013). In this investigation, voice refers to the opinions and perspective of the female.

Conceptual Framework

As defined by Merriam (2009), the conceptual framework is that which comprises “The structure, the scaffolding, the frame of your study...and [it] is derived from the orientation or stance that you bring to your study” (p. 45). The main factors and concepts of the design are noted as the conceptual framework of the study. Maxwell (2006) indicates the conceptual framework, the main part of the research design, as the “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research” (p. 33).

The review of literature refers to the “need to review the literature so that one can provide the rationale for the problem and position one’s study within the ongoing literature about the topic” (Creswell, 2007, p. 102). The literature review provides the foundation for the conceptual framework (Lunenberg and Irby, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Anfara and Mertz (2006) capture the importance of the literature review, as it relates to the conceptual framework, defining it “as any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes... that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena” (p. xxvii).

The review of literature for this study focuses on the theories of four distinct sections: (a) The historical and socio-cultural context of women in higher education, (b) The role of the Board of Trustees at Community Colleges, (c) Leadership behaviors of

women in education, and (d) Women as Elected Leaders. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework that frames this investigation.

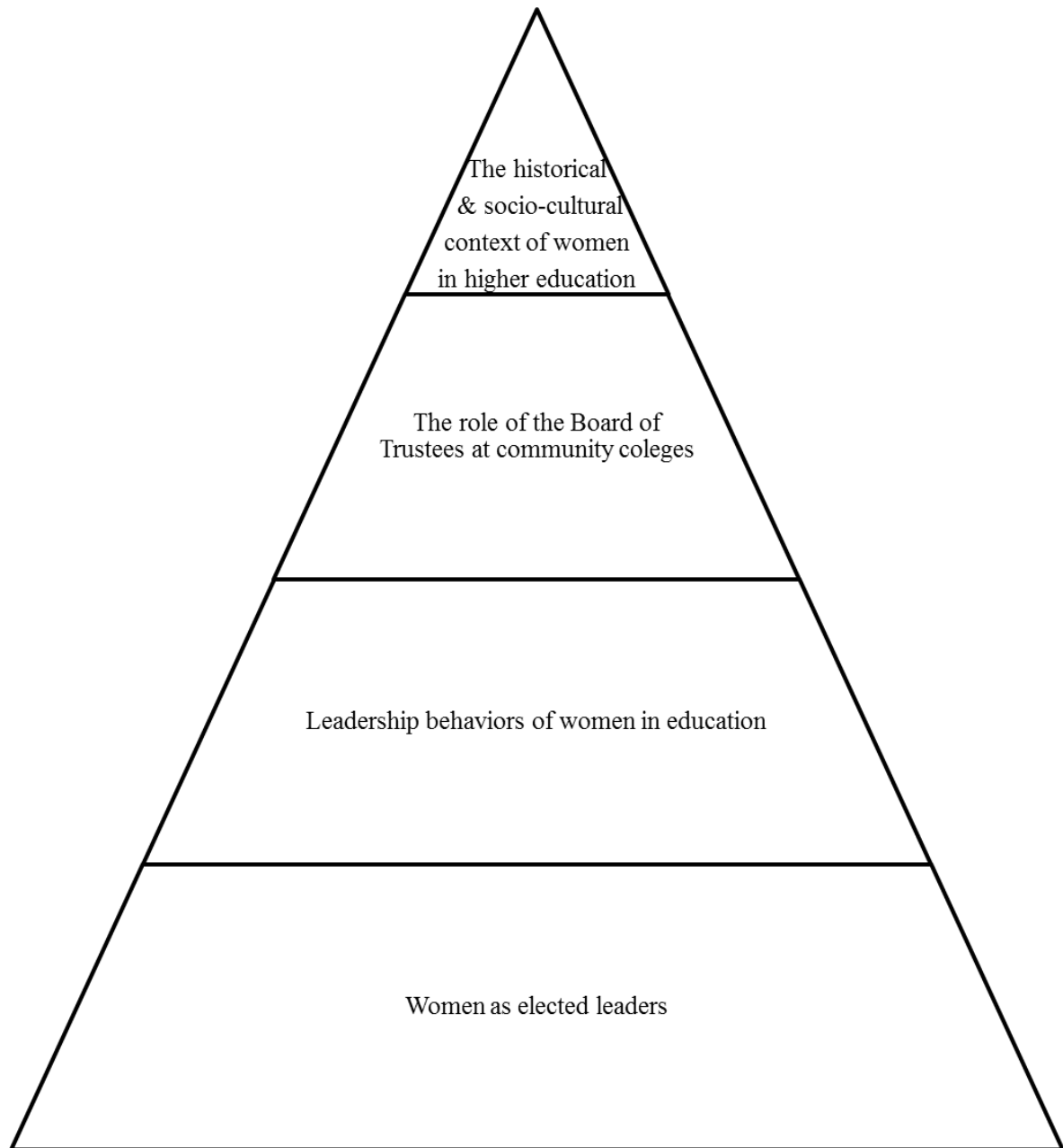


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework (created by author)

The conceptual framework for this phenomenological study focuses on the impact of gender representation in leadership positions, such as the Board of Trustees at community colleges. This topic must be examined before clearly understanding the specific roles and responsibilities that female leaders assume when serving in such a position. Research confirms the number of women making their way into educational leadership positions is greater than ever before. However the representation of female leaders on college campuses is still disproportionately represented when compared to their male counterpart (Chliwniak, 1997; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Limitations

Creswell (2007) notes, “limitations identify potential weaknesses in the study” (p. 148). The limitations of a study can be defined in terms of those restrictions that the researcher has no control over (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). As explained by Marshall (2006), “There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs” (p. 42). In this phenomenological study, the limitations include:

- The willing participation of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges to be candid in expressing their lived experiences while serving as female members of the Boards. The study was limited to information contained in the stories told by these women.
- The disparity of experience and length of time in serving as a Board of Trustee member for the participants may produce accounts that vary widely in some respects.

- It was assumed that all participants were forthright and honest when responding to questions regarding their beliefs and experiences as a female Board of Trustee member.
- As with all qualitative research, the findings are subject to personal and multiple interpretations. The richness of the results relied on the interview skills of the researcher and the participants' willingness to disclose and reflect on their experiences as female Board of Trustee members at community colleges.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a study can be defined as a deliberate narrowing, by the researcher, of the study (Creswell, 2007; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). As stated by Creswell (2007), "The scope may focus on specific variables or a central phenomenon delimited to specific participants or sites, or narrowed to one type of research design" (p. 148). The following delimitations were identified as being present in this phenomenological study:

- The results were isolated to specific locations and therefore any information coming from this study is not directly applicable to other situations.
- This study focuses on the personal perception and lived experiences of the roles and responsibilities of the Board members themselves.
- In addition, this specific research study was isolated to a small cohort of identified participants. The findings and outcomes cannot be generalized to females serving in other positions within higher education or all female leaders in education. This may be seen as a delimitation but is directly tied to the methodological approach in use.

Organization of the Study

This phenomenological study is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter begins with an introduction and background to the study. Successive sections within Chapter one are comprised of the research context, the statement of the problem, the purpose for the study, the significance of the study, the definitions of terms, an overview of the conceptual framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and the organization of the study.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature on the historical and socio-cultural context of women in higher education, the role of the Board of Trustees at Community Colleges, women as elected leaders, and the leadership behaviors of women in education. The chosen methodology, research design, data collection methods, site and participation selection, data analysis plan, and reliability and validity issues of the study are discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four captures the results of the data and provides an analysis of the research. A summary of the findings with conclusions and recommendations for future research concludes this study.

Summary

The representation of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest is low. This phenomenological study sought to identify the specific roles and responsibilities that females ensue when serving as a member on the Board of Trustees at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and the reasoning behind the decision to serve in such educational leadership positions. In addition, this study aimed at understanding women's perception of their leadership roles and responsibilities on the Board. Moreover, this phenomenological study examined the

impact gender has on Board members roles and responsibilities. The research questions solicited information from female Board of Trustee members about the nature of them being Board members and their insight into the roles and responsibilities they have when serving in such capacity.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Education over the past two centuries has changed the contours of the American woman's life (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Chliwniak, 1997; McClland, 1992; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Solomon, 1985). Despite the dramatic revolution to the landscape of America's higher education system and the radical implications that woman's education has had for the whole society, females continue to be sorely underrepresented in leadership roles within the post-secondary venue (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Chun & Evans, 2009; National Education Association, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Although women have come a long way in some fields, equality in academic higher education leadership positions has not been achieved.

Recent statistics illustrate women accounted for only 16% of the higher education leadership positions and occupied only 25% of the college presidencies (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2012; Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Harvard scholar Deborah Rhode (1997) remarked:

American's most common response to gender inequity is to deny its dimensions.

A widespread perception is that once upon a time, women suffered serious discrimination, but those days are over. Barriers have been coming down, women have been moving up, and full equality is just around the corner. (p. 3)

Despite widespread efforts to ensure female representation exists at all levels in the American higher education system, women are still inadequately represented in positions of power and leadership (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Chun & Evans, 2009; National Education Association, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature that serves as a foundation for this study. The first section focuses on an overview of *the historical and socio-cultural context of women in higher education*. The second section covers a brief history of the *role of the Board of Trustees at community colleges*. The third section provides a discussion and description of *women as leaders in education and leadership behaviors of women*. The final section gives a review on *women as elected leaders*. A summation of the literature review concludes this chapter.

The Historical and Socio-Cultural Context of Women in Higher Education

The system of American higher education began with the founding of its first institution, Harvard College, in 1636 (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Chliwniak, 1997). Adopted from the European university model, the American system was established by men who were educated in Britain's Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The primary purpose for the college was to train young men in the ministry and future governmental positions (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Chilwniak, 1997; McClelland, 1992). Clerical or civil leadership positions were restricted to males, ultimately excluding females from higher education until the mid-1800s (Chliwniak, 1997; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

Regardless of the continued expansion of formal education, opinions on academia for women have historically been negative (Chliwniak, 1997; Gillett-Karam & Roueche, 1991; McClelland, 1992). From the time of the early Greeks, women were perceived as intellectually inferior to men. Socrates speaks of this categorical structure stating, "All of the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them a woman is inferior to a man" (as cited in McClelland, 1992, p. 11). Erasmus concurred, writing "I do not know the reason, but just as a saddle is not suitable for an ox, so learning is unsuitable for

women” (as cited in Clabaugh, 1986, p. 128). During the colonial period, the role of women was plainly defined: in the home, where intellectual learning was not entirely necessary (Aleman & Renn, 1992; McClelland, 1992; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Solomon, 1985).

The early history of the American college became clearly defined by the 18th century, however access to higher education continued to be segregated to the male population (Thelin, 2011). The exclusion of women in higher education, once again, was framed around the middle and upper class white males’ definition of womanhood (Aleman & Renn, 1992; Solomon, 1985). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe captured such conviction stating, “We love things other than the intellect in a young woman. We love her character, her faults, her whims, and God knows what other undefinable things, but we do not love her intellect” (McClelland, 1992, p. 12). Furthermore, the Protestant heritage on which the country was founded was the cornerstone of resistance to higher education for women (Aleman & Renn, 2002; McClelland, 1992; Thelin, 2011). The socio-cultural norms of the time required women to be subservient daughters, wives, and mothers (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Gillett-Karam & Roueche, 1991). As the needs of society slowly changed, so did the opposition of having women in higher education.

The American Revolutionary era, fueled by intellectual growth, introduced new ideas to educational reformers. Influential males, including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush, began fighting for an expansion of the current classic curriculum, requesting all courses be instructed in English rather than Latin and the addition of more “modern” and “practical” subjects, influenced by the European Enlightenment, be taught (Aleman & Renn, 2002; McClelland, 1992; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2011). Likewise,

women such as Abigail Adams wanted access to higher education for all females. As conveyed in a letter she wrote to her husband:

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. With regards to the Education of my own children, I find myself soon out of my depth, and destitute and deficient in every part of Education. I most sincerely wish that some more liberal plan might be laid and executed for the benefit of the rising generation... If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women. The world perhaps would laugh at me, and accuse me of vanity, but you I know have a mind too enlarged and liberal to disregard the sentiment. If much depends as is allowed upon the early Education of youth and the first principals which are instilled take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishment in women. (as cited in Solomon, 1985, p. 1)

Colleges began slowly transforming to meet society's needs in the early 1800s. For example, the teachings of a "practical" curriculum began to take shape and the English language was prevalent throughout many of the lecture halls. Regardless, higher education, in general, remained solely for the male population until the mid-1800s (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Gillett-Karam & Roueche, 1991; Sexton, 1976; Solomon, 1985).

Educating women existed in two forms by the mid nineteenth century: women's colleges or single-sex institutions and coeducation facilities. The first colleges, founded by reformers in New England, were single-sex institutions (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Nidiffer, 2002). Initially, many women's colleges simulated the academic rigor of a high school, focusing primarily on the teachings of basic literacy training and domestic studies

(Aleman & Renn, 2002; Rudolph, 1968; Sexton, 1976). At the time, the American female was “recognized as capable of being educated - up to a point” (Rudolph, 1968, p. 310). Eventually, as the level of common schooling improved, the curricula of the women’s college began to resemble a collegiate-level education (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Rudolph, 1968; Solomon, 1985).

In 1837, Oberlin College became the first coeducational institution of higher education, and twenty years later Antioch College followed (Nidiffer, 2002; Rudolph, 1968; Sexton, 1976; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2011). Although these early efforts were pivotal in ultimately gaining full access to higher education for woman, much of America continued to have adverse outlooks toward women’s education. Despite the changing times, the major social responsibility for a woman remained as caretaker of house and child. As referenced by McClelland (1992) from an 1848 Philadelphia Editorial:

A woman is nobody. A wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to ten thousand men, and a mother is, next to God, all powerful... [The ladies] are resolved to maintain their rights as Wives, Belles, Virgins, and Mothers, and not as Woman.
(p. 147)

Even after the commencement of women onto college campuses, many still subscribed to the belief that a man and woman’s social life should be exclusively divided (McClelland, 1992). The idea of higher education for women was grudgingly accepted as long as it met specific and pragmatic needs (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Glazer-Raymo, 2002; McClelland, 1992; Solomon, 1985). According to early records of Oberlin, women were not allowed to pursue the same courses of the male students. In fact, the roles and responsibilities of the woman were determined by socio-cultural norms (Sexton, 1976).

Articulated by Glazer-Raymo (2002), “Sex-roles were maintained at Oberlin, and as young men earned their education by doing unpaid farm labor...their female classmates provided them with unpaid housekeeping” (p. 699). The education intended to train the rational minds of men was believed to be too forward-thinking for most women (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Glazer-Raymo, 2002).

The passing of the Morrill Act in 1862 brought change to American colleges. The most significant change was the development of a public sector of higher education (Aleman & Renn, 2002; McClelland, 1992; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2011). Funding of land-grant institutions became available, which subsequently expanded women’s access to higher education. By the late 1860s more than forty-five institutions offered degrees to women (Sexton, 1976; Thelin, 2011). Rapid growth of women’s education in America occurred between 1870 and 1900, when the decrease of male students during the Civil War forced institutions to consider tuition-paying women as well (Graham, 1978). During this 30 year span the representation of females on college campuses increased 35 percent (Gillett-Karam & Roueche, 1991; Sexton, 1976; Solomon, 1985). By 1880 half of all of the colleges in the country were coeducational (Sexton, 1976; Thelin, 2011). The acceptance of women into institutions of higher education did not occur without difficulties and turmoil. Solomon (1985) reports:

Within one decade of the opening of the doors of the University of Chicago to women, the percentage of women rose from 24 to 52 percent, and between 1892 and 1902 women received a majority (56.3%) of the Phi Beta Kappa awards. An alarmed President Harper began to segregate undergraduate classes and cut back on full coeducation for women. Although faculty liberals, including John Dewey,

fought for the reinstatement of full coeducation for women, they lost their fight, as separate classes for freshmen and sophomores in the so-called junior college were established in Chicago in 1902. (p. 58, 59)

The increased college enrollment of women led to unparalleled religious, social, and intellectual attacks. Debates surfaced from male scholars suggesting women's brains were biologically, physically, and intellectually different than those of men (Chiliwniak, 1997; Rudolph, 1968; Solomon, 1985). Adversaries of women's education expressed a fear of masculating or unsexing women, making them unfit for marriage (Aleman & Renn, 2002). Critics moved beyond the panic of masculinization and ruined health, yet argued academic success of women directly caused low birth rates of college coeds (Rudolph, 1968; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2011). As the nineteenth century closed, opportunities for women within the higher education sphere had improved. However, many Americans still viewed coeducation detrimental to the larger society (Aleman & Renn, 2002).

At the turn of the twentieth century, an educated woman was more widely accepted. Enrollment of female students at coeducational institutions had increased 438% and women were represented on over 60% of college campuses nationwide (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Glazer-Raymo, 2002). The American male was, once again, drawn to the battlefield during World War I and II, providing more access and opportunities for women's continued education. By the mid-1900s, females comprised 47% of the student body population (Aleman & Renn, 2002). However, a minor setback in female enrollment occurred in the late 1950s, when priority to higher education was given to returning veterans (Chliwniak, 1997; Glazer-Raymo, 2002).

Access to higher education for women steadily increased in the 1970s after the enactment of the Title IX of the Education Codes of the Higher Education Act Amendments. This legislation prohibited gender discrimination by federally funded institutions, thereby providing equal opportunity for learning (Chliwniak, 1997; Thelin, 2011). Within the span of one generation, the American higher education system had been transformed. By the 1980s, women represented the majority gender on college campuses (Aleman & Renn, 2002).

Since the initiation of women into the venue of America's higher education, the representation of females as students, faculty, and staff members has continued to rise radically (Chun & Evans, 2009; Chilwniak, 1997). Females on college campuses increased dramatically throughout the 21st century, and women are now represented in every discipline of higher education (Chun & Evans, 2009; Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Currently, women represent the majority of undergraduate students on college campuses, they achieve the majority of undergraduate and graduate degrees, and are more likely to graduate from college than that of the male population (American Council on Education, 2007; Bilen-Green et al., 2008; National Education Association, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

In the same ways, enrollment in graduate level educational leadership programs has been equal or greater for female students than male students. An analysis of doctoral degrees in education by gender indicates women earn more (67.5%) doctoral degrees than men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Moreover, examining the percentage of education degrees from United States institutions shows female dominance at all levels. Women received 78.7% of Bachelor Degrees and 77.3%

of Masters Degrees in 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It is projected by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) the number of females receiving education degrees will grow 38% between the year 2012 and 2022. Although few disagree access to higher education for women has expanded over the past three centuries, gender equality in leadership positions has yet to be achieved (Chliwniak, 1997; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In 2007, women comprised 48% of college and university assistant professors, yet only 26% of full professors (Allen, 2011). Additionally, a study conducted in 2006 reported that only 13.5% of top administrative positions at post-secondary institutions were held by females (Bilen-Green, Froelich & Jacobson, 2008).

Table 1.

Comparison of Male and Female enrollment in American degree granting institutions, 1979-2012

	Males	Females	% Females
1979	5,682,877	5,887,022	50.9%
1990	6,283,909	7,534,728	54.5%
2004	7,987,262	9,884,782	57.2%
2007	7,815,914	10,432,214	57.2%
2009	8,769,504	11,658,207	57.1%
2012	9,026,499	11,967,614	57.0%

(U.S. Department of Education, 2013)

Perhaps best summarized by Geiger (1999), “Two powerful reasons exist for the serious study of the history of higher education: because things change and because some things do not change” (p. 38). An overview of the historical and socio-cultural contexts for women in higher education portrays that while the American higher education system

has expanded over the centuries the presence of women in post-secondary leadership roles is underrepresented (Chliwniak, 1997; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

The Role of the Board of Trustees at Community Colleges

A history of the American Community College

The presence of community colleges in America dates back to the early years of the twentieth century. The abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century set the stage for the American Civil War (Cain, 1999; Witt et al, 1994). Throughout the century following the War, America refined and expanded the concept of equal rights and equal opportunities. The civil rights and women's right movements provided the means for all Americans to rise to their greatest potential (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Sullivan, 2001; Witt et al, 1994). The establishment of public high schools in every state at the end of the nineteenth century provided mandatory regulations for the education of all children through age 16. Meanwhile, the expansion of universities throughout the nation was prevalent (Cain, 1999; Hillway, 1958; Sullivan, 2001; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). America's new view of democracy allowed for the educational system to rapidly grow from the top and bottom yet left a void in the middle (Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

In a time when the United States was faced with increasing economic challenges, national and local leaders recognized, in order to maintain the country's continued economic strength and success, a more skilled workforce was needed (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Witt et al, 1994). This necessity would ultimately call for a dramatic increase in attendance in post-secondary schooling (Cain, 1999; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Hillway, 1958). At the time, the majority of high school graduates (75%) were choosing to not

enroll in a post-secondary institution, in large part, because of the reluctance to relocate to fulfill this need (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013). In an attempt to address the growing challenges of accessibility to higher education, Congress passed the Morrill Act of 1862 (Cain, 1999; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Hillway, 1958; Vaughn, 2006; Witt et al., 1994). Despite the fact this Act provided the gifting of federal land that could be sold to fund new state universities or support already existing institutions, few Americans were served due to lack of money or absence of knowledge (Witt et al, 1994). Simultaneously, America's public high schools continued to expand and to seek new ways of serving their communities (Cain, 1999; Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The growing number of high school graduates called for more access to higher education. This increased demand led to the creation of two new types of institutions: the six-year high school and the two-year college (Sullivan, 2001; Vaughn, 2006; Witt et al, 1994). The six-year high school extended the curriculum of the traditional secondary school to include the first two years of college. Likewise, the two-year college removed the final two years of the university curriculum. Both institutions met the needs of the high school graduates and universities (Townsend & Twombly, 2001; Witt et al, 1994).

By the turn of the century, the six-year high schools and two-year colleges were commonly referred to as junior colleges (AACC, 2013; Witt et al, 1994). This term would later evolve after an article, written in 1936 by the president of a junior college in Pennsylvania, emphasized that the college should be "meeting community needs...it should serve to promote a greater social and civic intelligence...provide opportunities for increased adult education....provide educational, recreational and vocational opportunities for young people...and that the work of the community college should be

closely integrated with the work of the high school and the work of other community institutions” (Baker, 1994, p.18).

This initial concept of community college was later incorporated by President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education in 1947. As reported by Witt et al (1994):

Many commissions and agencies have studied America’s junior college movement, but none of their reports has had a wider impact than that of the President’s Commission on Higher Education, better known as the Truman Commission. The commissions’ six-volume report, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, has become one of the best-known documents in educational history. (p. 129,130)

The Commission outlined a mission for the establishment of publicly funded two-year institutions, resulting in higher education being accessible to all high school graduates. The Commission used the term “community colleges” in referring to these future institutions (Witt et al, 1994). Thus, the name community colleges evolved and the primary initiative of the college grew to include the educational needs of the greater community (Baker, 1994).

Since the initial introduction into the venue of America’s post-secondary education in 1901, community colleges remain an integral part of, not only the communities they serve, but also the social, economic, and intellectual development of the United States (AACC, 2013; Sullivan, 2001). A cornerstone of the community college mission centers on an open enrollment policy where institutions accept all students. Mellow & Heelan (2008) state:

The community college is the only distinctively American form of higher education. It is uniquely American in its ideals, welcoming anyone with a high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate (such as the GED credential). It is committed to trying to create success for all manner of students who enter its doors, with systems of developmental education for students who have a high school diploma in name but who do not have high school-level skills, and with multiple levels of job skills development programs. (p. 10)

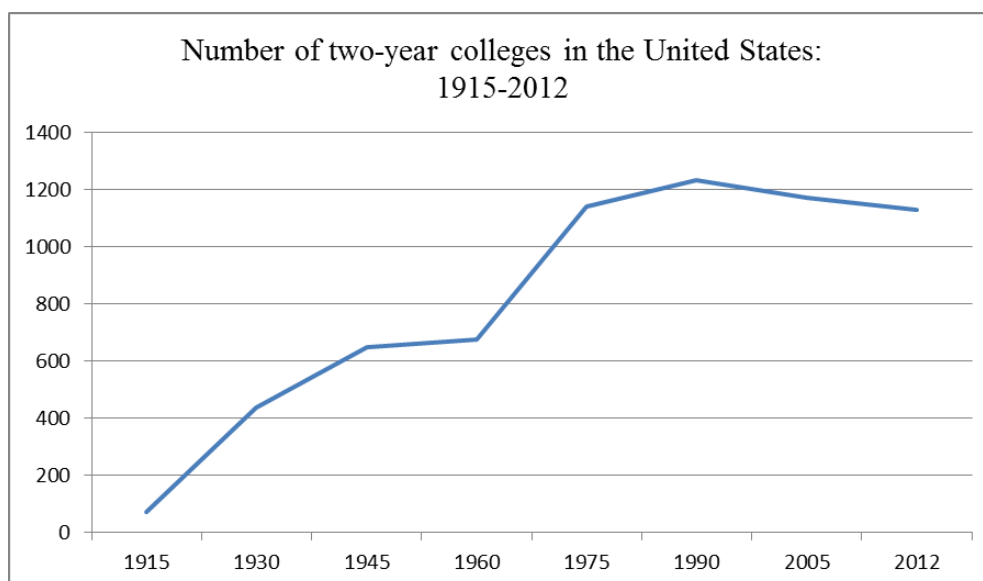


Figure 3. The expansion of community colleges in the United States: 1915-2012 (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; AACC, 2013)

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the community college was the access for women (AACC, 2013; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Since 1985, more than half of all community college students have been female (AACC, 2013). Resulting from from the growing demands and challenges faced by the nation in the early 20th century, community colleges provided open-access points for education and acted as a catalyst for economic development (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). These institutions became the

gateway to postsecondary schooling for the majority of racial minorities, women, low-income and nontraditional students (AACC, 2013).

Community College Enrollment by age, gender, and ethnicity: Fall 2013					
Age		Gender		Ethnicity	
Average	28	Women	57%	White	51%
Median	24	Men	43%	Hispanic	19%
≤ 21	30%			Black	14%
22-39	57%			Asian/Pacific Islander	6%
40+	14%			Native American	1%
				Other/Unknown	8%

Figure 4. Enrollment data in community colleges by age, gender and ethnicity of students: 2013 (AACC, 2014)

Today, a community college can be found within a short distance to almost all Americans (Townsend & Twombly, 2001; Witt et al, 1994). Every state in the nation is home to one or more of the 1,132 two-year institutions (AACC, 2013). Community colleges have developed to the extent that they are now considered a vital part of the higher education system, serving almost half (13 million) of the undergraduate student population in the Fall 2012 (AACC, 2013; AAUW, 2013; Witt et al, 1994). As Cain (1991) articulated:

One thing is certain; the community college resists easy definition because it is something brand new in American education. Almost without recognizing what we were doing, we created a truly unique institution, one that follow no pre-existing models...the community college has become the Wal-Mart of American education. Conveniently located, with lots of parking, offering something for everyone, maintaining good quality at low prices, with hours that allow for flexible shopping, and a commitment to personal service, the community college, like the discount chain, seeks to make itself indispensable to the neighborhood.

(p.2)

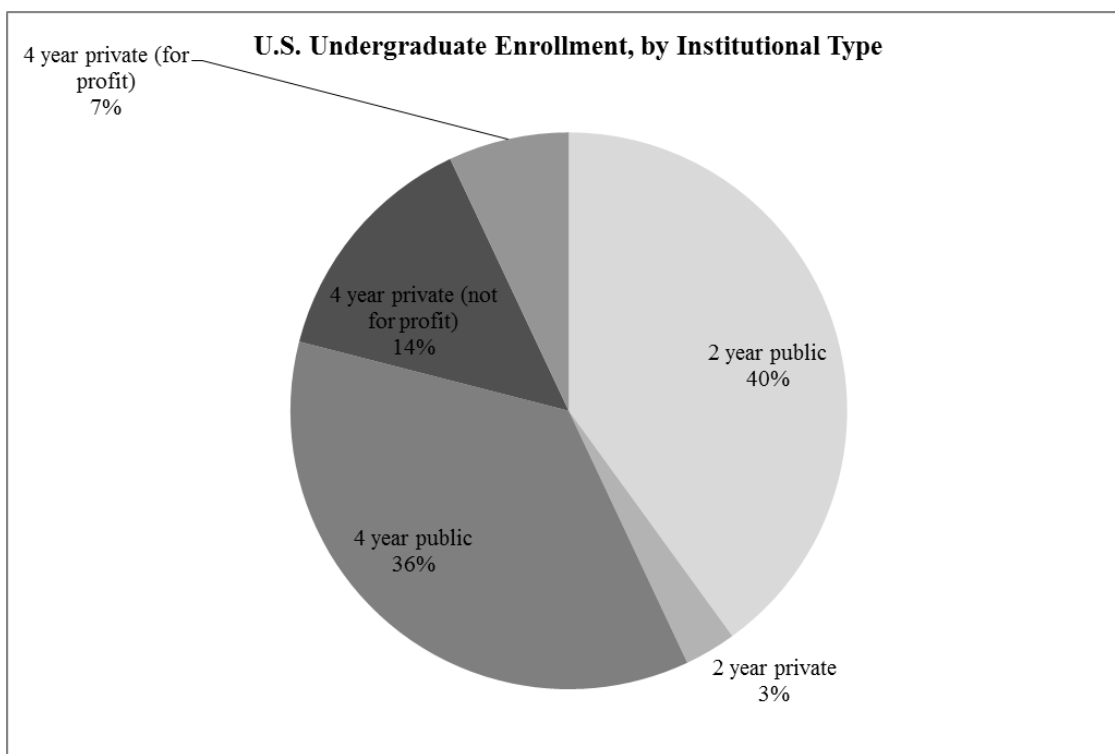


Figure 5. U.S. Undergraduate Enrollment, by Institutional Type: Fall 2012 (AAUW, 2013)

Since the founding of the two-year college, the United States has been more dedicated to providing the opportunity for every American to rise to their greatest potential (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The Governance System of Community Colleges

The majority of colleges and universities in the United States are directed fundamentally by a board which has been given authority to govern all aspects of the institution (Cain, 1999; Martorana, 1963; Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). The board is a structure that is solidly rooted in American culture. Ingram (1995) expressed, “We [Americans] enjoy a form of institutional governance whereby the American people entrust control of their academic institutions to citizen boards rather than to elected legislators, governors, or bureaucracies” (p. 3). Higher education boards are most commonly comprised of elected or governmentally appointed lay citizens and are referred to by a variety of titles, the most common being the “Board of Trustees” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Martorana, 1963; Sullivan, 2001; Vaughn, 2006).

The governing boards are the responsible controlling agency for the institution and sanctioned as a single body (Baker, 1994; Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1991; Martorana, 1963). By definition, a Board of Trustees deliberates with many voices and governs with one (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Vaughn, 2006). Boards must operate as a collective unit, no single member or group of members can assume the rights of the total board (Martorana, 1963; Smith, 2000).

The growth of community colleges in the late 20th century, combined with the effort to separate these institutions from the public school districts, led to the creation of local and state-level community college governing boards (Martorana, 1963; Townsend

& Twombly, 2001). Community college governance has evolved from the public university model and the local school board model. Though the system varies by state, the primary role of the community college board, as outlined by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), is to serve as stewards of the public trust (ACCT, 2013). Community college Trustees have a dual obligation to represent the community's interests as well as the welfare of the institution they serve.

As the entity legally responsible for the college affairs, the Board sets policies that meet the community's needs, carries out the legal fiduciary mandates for the college, advocates student success, approves the mission and strategic goals of the institution, and employs and advises the college president (ACCT, 2013; Baker, 1994; Choen & Brawer, 2008). Additionally, the Board of Trustees serves as the liaison between the college and the community (ACCT, 2013; Choen & Brawer, 2008).

The demographics of community college governing boards mirrors that at a university (Choen & Brawer, 2008). The community college board consists of five to nine members elected or appointed from the district to serve a four-year term. As reported by Cohen and Brawer (2008), "whether elected or appointed, the [community college] board members are predominantly white male, college graduate, high-income, middle-aged people" (p. 138).

In general, governance of 2-year institutions is the purview of the Board of Trustees. The governing model emulates a top-down structure with persons at the top in the greatest of authority (Choen & Brawer, 2008). Using a traditional organizational model, the community college Board of Trustees represents the highest level. Figure 6 provides a visual demonstration of the community college organizational chart.

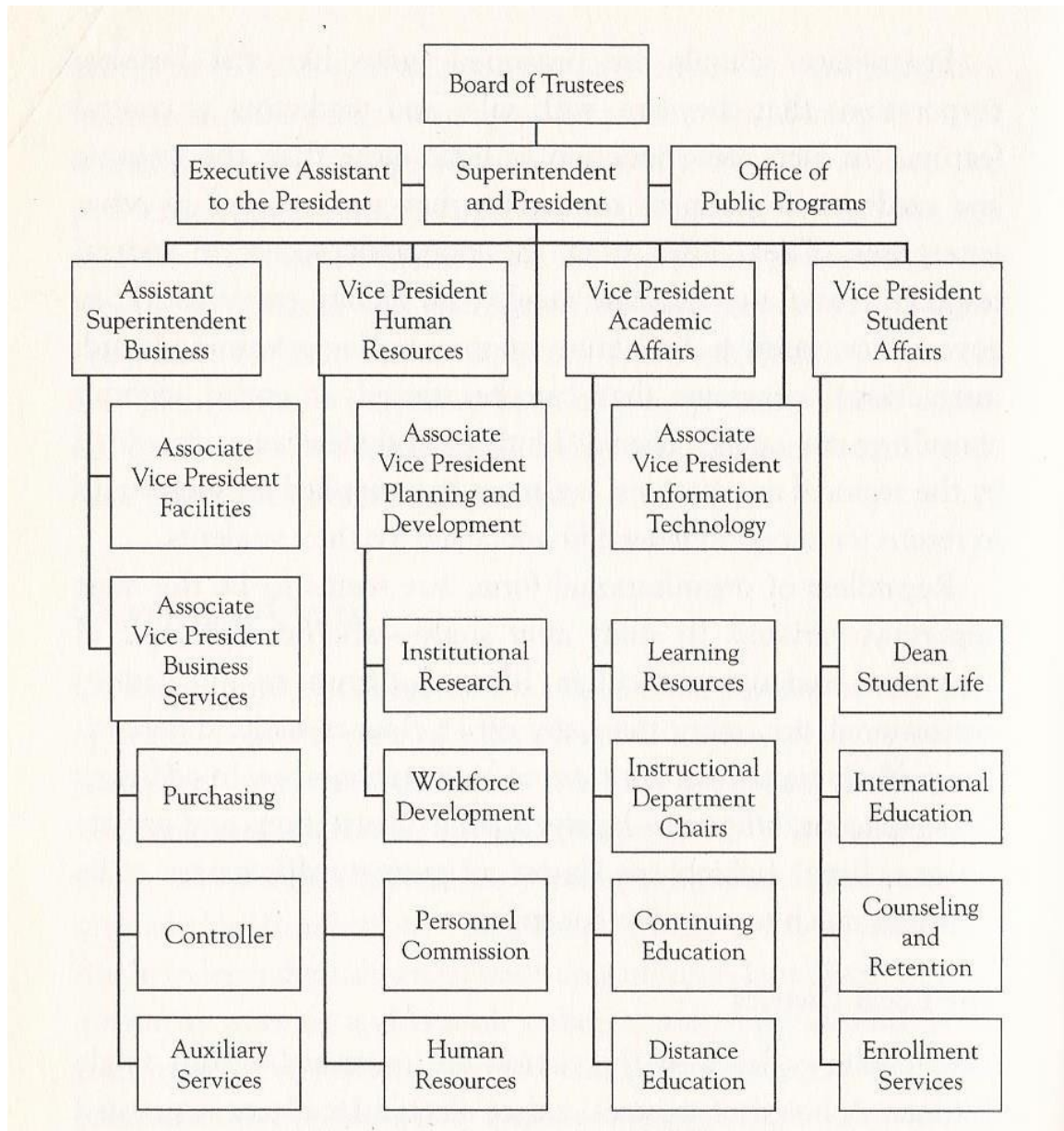


Figure 6. Traditional Organization Chart for a Large Community College (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 118)

Community colleges are a vital constituent in America's higher education system. The evolution of the American community college has satisfied several voids historically prevalent in post-secondary education, namely, access to affordable, quality post-secondary education for minorities, females, and non-traditional students (AACC, 2013;

Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Effective leadership and governance plays an essential role in the continued success of these institutions. Wallin (2009) contended, “Nothing is more important to the success of community colleges than quality leadership. It influences student outcomes, faculty success, and financial stability at all levels of the institution” (p. 31). In other words, members of the Board of Trustees, acting as institutional leaders, need to develop the leadership skills and abilities necessary to lead community colleges effectively today and in the future (Wallin, 2009).

Leadership Behaviors of Women in Education

“You hire people who have capacity; you help them build that capacity and you let them shine. And I get the residual effect of that all the time, but I no longer need to be in the limelight as...the person who made all of this happen because that’s not what makes me feel successful. When I have other people who feel empowered, who have a feeling of purpose and desire and direction and want to make things happen with the direction we set as a team, then I feel I’ve done my job.” (Grogan, 1996, p. 143).

Northouse (2012) defines leadership as a “process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 6). The qualities and personality exhibited by a person are central to discussions on successful leadership. For centuries, educational scholars have often associated the image of an exceptional leader with masculine characteristics (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1989). Burns (1978) suggests:

[Over the centuries], femininity has been stereotyped as dependent, submissive, and conforming, and hence women have been seen as lacking in leadership qualities. In some cultures, in consequence, women are cut off from power

positions as well as from the stepping stones and access routes that reach toward leadership...The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control. (p. 50)

Despite historical gender views on power and leadership, many women have managed to become effective educational leaders in part because they are women (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

That women would lead differently than men is not a new idea. Research proposes that men and women have different leadership styles (see Table 2) (Chliwniak, 1997; Curry, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Wren, 1995). However, the variances do not suggest that one gender has dominance over the other (Grove & Montgomery, 1999). The dissimilarities between leadership styles may be in large part, because men see leadership as leading while women see leadership as facilitating (Grove & Montgomery, 1999). Men in educational leadership positions tend to utilize the traditional top-down administrative style, lead from the front, and attempt to provide all of the answers themselves. Men focus on task accomplishments and stress organizational matters, achieving goals, hoarding information, and winning (Chliwniak, 1997; Grove & Montgomery, 1999). Conversely, women lean toward engaging others in leadership, seek to expand everyone's power, support shared decision making, enhance others' self-worth, and make needed changes (Chliwniak, 1997; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Grove & Montgomery, 1999). Because women place a great deal of importance on relationships, they are described as "forming webs, rather than pyramids, in their institutions" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 43).

Table 2.*Leadership Styles of Women and Men*

Women	Men
Engage others in leadership	Utilize top-down administrative style
Support shared decision making	Lead from the front
Seek to expand everyone's power	Attempt to provide all of the answers themselves
Place importance on relationships	Focus on task accomplishments
Aim to enhance others' self-worth and make needed changes	Stress organizational matters, achieving goals, hoarding information, and winning
See leadership as leading	See leadership as facilitating

(Chliwniak, 1997; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Grole & Montgomery, 1999)

Over the last few decades, research seeking to identify how women lead indicates females embrace relationships, collaboration, and change while males focus on completing tasks, reaching goals, and being successful (Chliwniak, 1997; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Wren, 1995). Further, the literature has shown women often describe power as something that increases with and through others. Authors Chliwniak (1997), Curry (2000), Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011), Grole & Montgomery (2000), Reynolds, White, Brayman, & Moore (2008), and Wren (1995) have written on the leadership traits, attitudes, and behaviors that are characteristic of female leaders. Generally, females in educational leadership positions are more socially intuitive, collaborative, collegial, and consultative, as well as emotionally responsive, nurturing, and motherly (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Many studies suggest that women's conception of power is closely connected to the importance they place on relationships (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Grole &

Montgomery, 1999). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), Reagan and Brooks (1995), and others, define female leadership as power *with* rather than power *over*. “Women enjoy the collaborative power to do things differently that comes from developing strong relationships with others, particularly with others who bring skills and knowledge different from their own (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 47).

This horizontal leadership approach interchangeably referred to as relational leadership, collective leadership, and *power with*, places precedence on the involvement of the whole group in institutional activities (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Horizontal leadership refers to collaboratively facilitating a direction for the organization and “being at the center of the spokes of a wheel rather than out in front pulling the wagon” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 46). Benham and colleagues (2005) capture the behavioral traits of female leaders stating that [for women]:

Leadership is relational: the group as a whole is a leader just as members within the group can be leaders within the group. Leadership emerges out of specific situations: the process of defining vision and setting direction, as well as exercising influence over other people and organizations, becomes a shared function of the group (p. 4).

The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon

Despite the extensive research conducted on the attributes of female leaders, women continue to be underutilized in educational leadership and decision-making roles (Gillett-Karam & Rocueche, 1991; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). One theory for such absence is often referred to as the glass ceiling phenomena (Hoyt, 2007; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1992). Introduced to society in 1986, the glass ceiling refers to the

transparent or “artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions” (Begun, 2000, p. 30). The phrase describes that which keeps females from achieving power and success equal to men (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1992). The term has subsequently been used to describe the barrier women face in attaining leadership positions. Primarily, the invisible barricade is created by stereotypes, bias, and the ‘good old boy’s club’ (Begun, 2000).

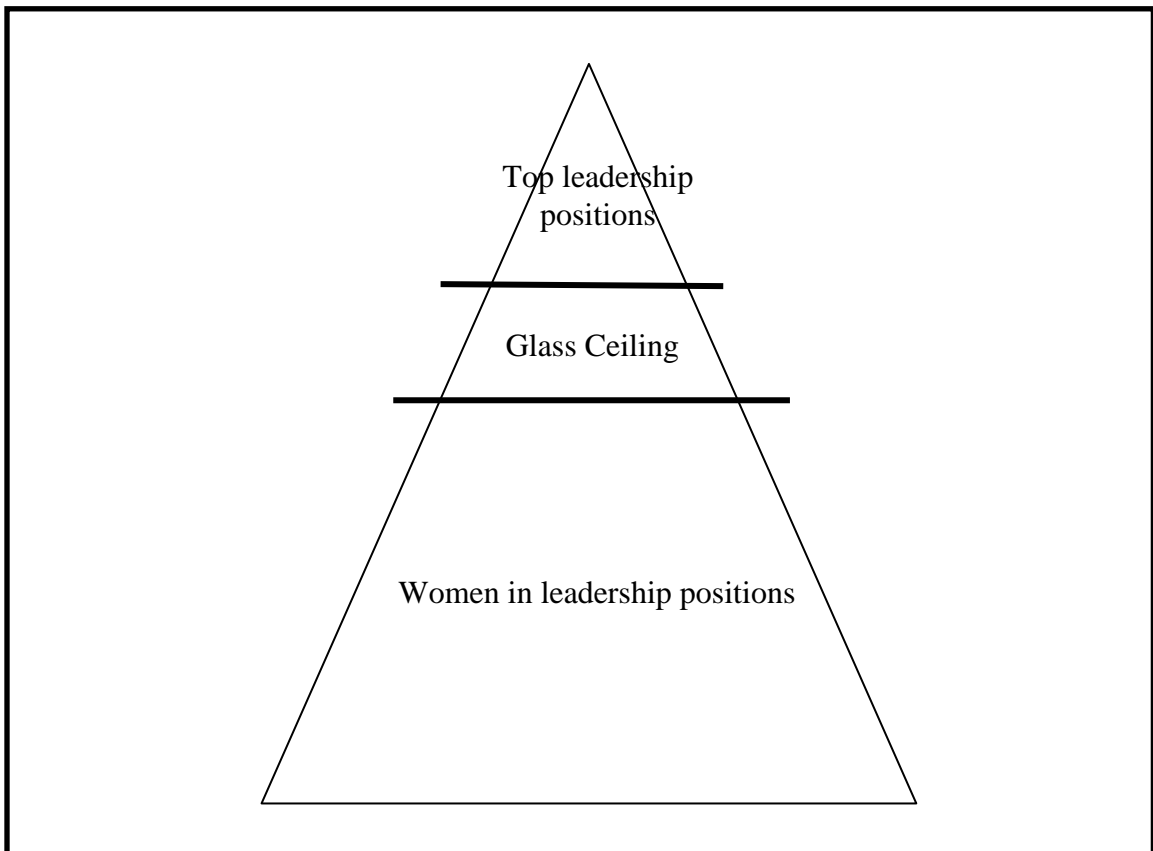


Figure 7. The Glass Ceiling (Hoyt, 2007, p. 269)

Cotter et al. (2001) identified a four-prong empirical test that must be present in order for the glass ceiling phenomena to exist:

A glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial difference (a) that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee... (b) that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels... (c) in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those levels..., and (d) that increases over the course of a career. (p. 657-659)

It is these four criteria which suggest that impediments and barriers for advancement remains a current reality for females (Cotter, 2001).

The veracity that the glass ceiling effect continues to exist for women, despite widespread efforts to ensure equal gender representation, was more recently conveyed in Hilary Clinton's 2008 concession speech:

And I will continue to stand strong with you every time, every place, in every way that I can. The dreams we share are worth fighting for... This isn't just an issue for me. It is a passion and a cause, and it is a fight I will continue... We all want an America defined by deep and meaningful equality... Now, the journey ahead will not be easy. Some will say we can't do it, that it's too hard, we're just not up to the task. But for as long as America has existed, it has been the American way to reject can't-do claims and to choose instead to stretch the boundaries of the possible through hard work, determination, and a pioneering spirit... I am a woman and, like millions of women, I know there are still barriers and biases out there, often unconscious, and I want to build an America that respects and embraces the potential of every last one of us.

To build that future I see, we must make sure that women and men alike understand the struggles of their grandmothers and their mothers, and that women enjoy equal opportunities, equal pay, and equal respect. Let us resolve and work toward achieving very simple propositions: There are no acceptable limits, and there are no acceptable prejudices in the 21st century in our country. Always aim high, work hard and care deeply about what you believe in. And, when you stumble, keep faith. And, when you're knocked down, get right back up and never listen to anyone who says you can't or shouldn't go on.

Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you, it's got about 18 million cracks in it, and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time.

The changes we're working for are changes that we can only accomplish together. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are rights that belong to us as individuals. But our lives, our freedom, our happiness are best enjoyed, best protected, and best advanced when we do work together.

There is nothing more American than that. (p. 1- 3)

Evidence suggests that men and women approach educational leadership positions differently. Although research does not propose all women lead in a particular way it does recommend certain preferences and approaches which characterize the leadership of many women (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 2000). In general, educational researchers unanimously agree that women possess the traits and characteristics to be excellent educational leaders (Chliwniak, 1997; Curry, 2000; Grogan

& Shakeshaft, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Reagan & Brooks, 1995; Reynolds et al., 2008; Wren, 1995).

Women as Elected Leaders

Despite the gains made by women over the course of history, females continue to be underrepresented in elected office positions all across the nation (CAWP, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). Several reports discussing the percentage of females serving in elected positions have been released over the last decade. The most recent figures from the Center for American Women and Politics (2014) indicate that when the 113th Congress convened in January 2013, 81.5% of its members were men. Furthermore, only 20 (20%) of the 100 seats in the Senate, and 79 (18.2%) of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives were represented by females (CAWP, 2014).

The underrepresentation of women is not only at the federal level (CAWP, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). Vast gender disparities are also evident at the state and local level. Historically, only thirty-six women have served as Governor across the nation. In 2014, six out of fifty states (12%) had a female Governor (CAWP, 2014; Dawn, 2012). Women currently constitute 54% of the American voters yet make up only 24.2% of state legislators (CAWP, 2014). Overall, five times as many men hold elected office positions in the United States than women.

Table 3.*Women Office Holders in the United States Office, 2013*

Office	Percent Women
U.S. Senators	20.0
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives	18.2
State Governors	12.0
Statewide Elected Officials	22.6
State Legislators	24.2
Mayors of the 100 Largest Cities	8.0

(CAWP, 2014; Hill, 2014; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014)

The gender gap in politics is more alarming when placed in context (Hill, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012). Currently, 97 nations now surpass the U.S. in the percentage of women serving in the national legislature, down from 59th in 1998 (CAWP, 2014; Dawn, 2012; Hill, 2014; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). In the decade span between 1980 and the early 1990s, women began to crack the political glass ceiling and the number of females serving in elected positions surged nationwide (Hill, 2014; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). The momentum toward closing the gender difference was not sustained and subsequent election cycles indicate minimal gains in the representation of females in elected positions (CAWP, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012). In fact, the 2010 congressional election resulted in the first decrease in the percentage of women serving in the U.S. House of Representatives since the 1978 elections.

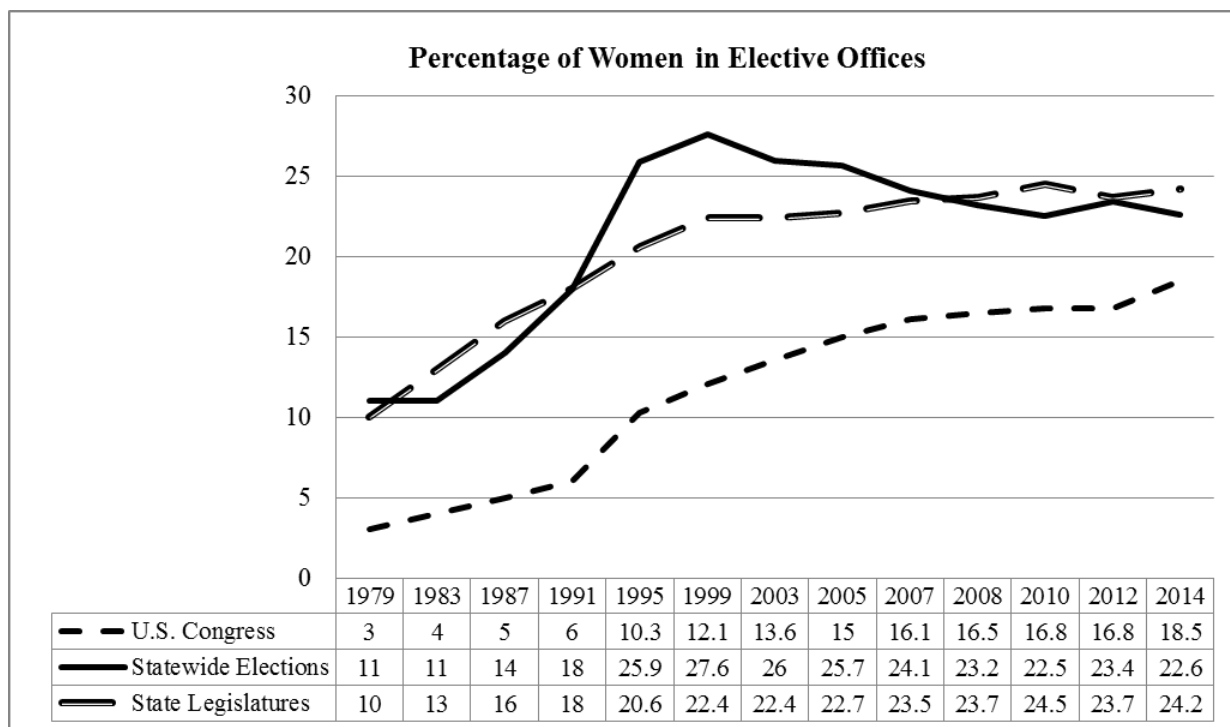


Figure 8. Percentages of Women in Elective Offices: 1979-2014 (CAWP, 2014).

Table 4.

Worldwide Rankings of Women in the National Legislature, 2014

Rank and Country	Percent Women
1. Rwanda	63.8
2. Andorra	50
3. Cuba	48.9
4. Sweden	45
5. Seychelles	43.8
6. Senegal	42.7
7. Finland	42.5
8. South Africa	42.3
9. Nicaragua	40.3

10. Iceland	39.7
11. Norway	39.6
12. Mozambique	39.2
13. Denmark	39.1
14. Ecuador	38.7
15. Netherlands	38.7
16. Costa Rica	38.6
17. Timor-Leste	38.5
18. Belgium	38
19. Mexico	36.8
20. Argentina	36.6
98. United States of America	17.8

(Hill, 2014)

Women’s underrepresentation in American politics raises concerns regarding the democratic values of “fairness” and “political representation” in the United States (Hill, 2014). Numerous studies have found that the presence of more females in elected positions significantly impacts what type of policies are passed (Hill, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012). Likewise, female legislatures tend to give higher priority to policies relating to education, healthcare, civil rights and liberties, and safety (Doyle, 2012; Hill, 2014).

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, recent research suggests the gender disparity is not a result of discrimination against female candidates (Lawless & Fox, 2012; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). When women run for office, they perform equal to their male counterparts. According to Lawless and Fox (2012) the absence of female presence in

elected office positions is in “political ambition; men tend to have it, and women don’t” (p. 3). Generally, women have made up a small percentage of the candidates running in elections (Dawn, 2014; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). Findings from the Citizen Political Ambition Study (2012) identified seven factors that contribute to the gender gap in elected office positions:

1. Women are substantially more likely than men to perceive the electoral environment as highly competitive and biased against female candidates.
2. Past female candidacies aggravated women’s perceptions of gender bias in the electoral arena.
3. Women are much less likely than men to think they are qualified to run for office.
4. Female potential candidates are less competitive, less confident, and more risk averse than their male counterparts.
5. Women react more negatively than men to many aspects of modern campaigns.
6. Women are less likely than men to receive the suggestion to run for office from anyone.
7. Women are still responsible for the majority of childcare and household tasks (Lawless & Fox, 2012, p. 7-15).

In an additional survey that interviewed more than 3,700 male and females working in professions typically preceding candidacy, researchers found that the desire to hold an elective office was significantly lower in women (Martinek, 2007). Two key factors were identified to explain the gender gap: 1) women are far less likely than men to be encouraged to run for office, and 2) women are significantly less likely than men to

view themselves as qualified to run (Martinek, 2007). Lawless and Fox (2012) expressed, “Women’s full inclusion in electoral politics depends on closing the gender gap in political ambition...Given the persistent gender gap in political ambition, we are a long way from a political reality in which women and men are equally likely to aspire to attain high-level elective office” (p. 16).

Summary

A review of previous literature presented evidence in the areas of 1) historical and socio-cultural context of women in higher education, 2) role of the Board of Trustees at community colleges, 3) leadership behaviors of women in education, and 4) women as elected leaders. Examined literature supported the purpose for this study: to explore the role of the female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation in terms of female influence on Board performance. In addition, this study aimed at understanding women’s perceptions of their leadership roles and responsibilities on the Board. This study complements current understandings of female educational leadership and is influential in comprehending why an underrepresentation of females within specific leadership roles exists. With this knowledge, the number of females within selected educational leadership positions may improve.

Chapter Three describes the methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study. Descriptions include the reasoning for the chosen research design, data collection methods, site and participation selection, data analysis plan, and the reliability and validity issues of the investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. This investigation focused specifically on current female community college Board of Trustee members to understand how they perceived their leadership roles and responsibilities on the Board. Additionally, the researcher identified the reasons behind the decision to serve in such leadership positions. This exploration was performed using a qualitative, phenomenological research approach. Chapter Three provides further detail and explanation on the chosen methodology, research design, data collection methods, site and participation selection, data analysis plan, and reliability and validity issues of the study.

Research Questions

The following was used to guide this inquiry:

1. How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?
2. Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?
3. In addition to representing the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community colleges feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?
4. To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

Research Design

A study's research design is the action plan that "guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations. It is a *logical model of proof* allowing the research to draw inferences concerning causal relations among the variables under investigation" (Yin, 2009). Every type of research has an implied, if not clearly defined, research design. The research design can be looked at in terms of the "blueprint" used to ensure that the study clearly addresses the research questions (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). In a qualitative inquiry, the design of the study is an ongoing process that must be continually assessed during the research (Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). As Maxwell (2006) stated, "Design in qualitative research is an ongoing process that involves "tacking" back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing the implications of goals, theories, research questions, methods, and validity threats for one another" (p. 3). The design of a qualitative study should be a reflexive, interconnected, and flexible process (Bodgen & Taylor, 2005; Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2007) provides the following definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Additionally, Maxwell (2006) presents an "interactive" model of research design that identifies five components that are especially important in qualitative research:

- (1) *Goals*. Why is your study worth doing?
- (2) *Conceptual Framework*. What do you think is going on with the issues, settings, or people you plan to study?
- (3) *Research Questions*. What, specifically, do you want to understand by doing this study?
- (4) *Methods*. What will you actually do in conducting this study?
- (5) *Validity*. How might your results and conclusions be wrong? (p. 4)

This research study was performed using a qualitative phenomenological research design (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moustakes, 1994; Sokolowski, 2007; van Manen, 1990). A phenomenological study is described as a qualitative research approach that focuses on “exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Phenomenology, as defined by van Manen (1990):

Aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences...Anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest of phenomenology, whether the object is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt. Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world. Thus all we can ever know must present itself to consciousness...A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience....Thus, phenomenological reflection is not introspective but retrospective. Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through. (p. 9, 10)

This research strategy allows for the researcher to capture a deep understanding of a phenomenon as it was directly experienced, firsthand, by a group of individuals (Creswell, 2007; Heidegger, 2005; Maxwell, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 1990). The ultimate goal in a phenomenological study is to present the *essence* of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990).

As suggested by Moustakas (1994), seven qualities, common amongst all human science research, guided this phenomenology:

1. Recognizing the value of qualitative designs and methodologies, studies of human experiences that are not approachable through quantitative approaches.
2. Focusing on the wholeness of experience rather than measurements and explanations.
3. Searching for meanings and essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations.
4. Obtaining descriptions of experience through first-person accounts in informal and formal conversations and interviews.
5. Regarding the data of experience as imperative in understanding human behavior and as evidence for scientific investigations.
6. Formulating questions and problems that reflect interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher.
7. Viewing experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object and of parts and whole. (p. 21)

Participant Selection and Setting

Research confirms women account for less than 30% of the Board members on college and university campuses nationwide (Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The representation of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho) emulates the national standard. Data collected from the 49 community colleges located in the Pacific Northwest discloses that 71% of Board members are male and 84% of the colleges are governed by a male dominant Board (U.S. Community Colleges, 2013). Understanding the roles and responsibilities females have when serving as a community college Board of Trustees member and their beliefs about the extent to which gender affects such perceptions may allow researchers to better understand gender influences in Board composition.

The targeted participants for this research study were existing female community college Board of Trustee members serving in the Pacific Northwest. The selection of the female participants in this study followed purposeful selection strategies (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994, Patton, 2002). As explained by Merriam (2009), “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77). The concept of purposeful sampling in a qualitative study allows the researcher to select individuals and sites based off the questions and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers tend to work with small samples of participants that are purposefully selected and directly connect to the context being investigated (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Given

the nature of a phenomenological study, the researcher employed a criterion sampling strategy to identify potential participants for the study (Heidegger, 2005; Moustakes, 1994; Sokolowski, 2007; van Manen, 1990). Criterion sampling, as addressed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Patton (2002), requires all participants meet a predetermined criterion of importance. In phenomenological research it is essential that the individuals studied represent a group of people that have experienced a common event (Creswell, 2007; Moustakes, 1994; Patton, 2002). The predetermined criterion characteristics for this study included; (a) a female currently serving as a member of the Board of Trustees and, (b) such membership is held at a community college in the Pacific Northwest.

The researcher performed a multi-step process to find potential participants for this study (Bogden & Taylor, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). To achieve purposeful sampling, the researcher first identified all female Board members currently serving at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest states (Oregon, Washington, and Idaho). Thirteen potential individuals from seven community colleges in the Pacific Northwest were identified. Participants were selected based on the predetermined criterion and geographic proximity to the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Before the process of individual interviews was initiated, the researcher collected background information about each individual Board member and her institution through Internet searches. After approval from the University of Idaho's Institutional Review Board (Appendix I), individuals who met the criteria were contacted and asked to participate in the research study. For the majority of the potential participants, direct contact information was available on their institutions website. The researcher worked

with the college personnel acting as gatekeepers to gain access to the remaining identified female Board members. Contact information for all thirteen potential participants was easily attained. The initial contact with potential participants occurred by telephone or email from the compiled list of thirteen prospective female Board members. Eight potential participants responded to the researcher's initial request. One newly elected Board member declined participation in the study due to her lack of experience serving in the position. One female was unable to commit the time to be interviewed. A referral from one participant led to communication with an additional female Board member. Four individuals did not respond to multiple requests made by the researcher. In all, seven female Board of Trustee members participated in the interviews.

Once permission was granted, an invitation letter (Appendix II) and an Informed Consent Form (Appendix III) was sent to each participant. Upon receiving the signed Informed Consent Forms, follow-up contact via phone was made with participants to schedule interviews. Additionally, each female Board member received an electronic copy of the Interview Guide (Appendix IV) prior to the interview. Before personal interviews took place, the researcher examined all available and relevant information to become more familiar with each participant, as well as her institution.

Interviews

Qualitative researchers often rely extensively on the use of in-depth interviews to gather rich and useful data (Bogdan & Taylor, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Yin, 2009). In-depth interviews are "much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). The purpose of interviews in qualitative research is to inquire about the ideas the interviewee

has on the subject of interest (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Marshall and Rossman (2006) explain that:

Interviews have particular strengths. An interview yields data in quantity quickly.

When more than one person participates, the process takes in a wider variety of information than if there were fewer participants - the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth. Immediate follow-up and clarification are possible.

Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people. (p. 101,102)

This research study was performed using a qualitative phenomenological research process (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In a phenomenological investigation one-on-one interviewing is an appropriate method for collecting data (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas describes the phenomenological interview as a process that is “informal, interactive and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (p. 114). A semi-structured, in-depth interview protocol was used to collect narrative data from identified participants. As suggested by Moustakas (1994), the participants were asked two broad, general questions: What have you experienced in terms of being a female Board of Trustee member at a community college? What situations or contexts have typically influenced or affected your experiences as a female Board of Trustee member? (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Moustakes, 1994; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).

The researcher acted as the key research instrument to collect data through open-ended interview questions (Creswell, 2007; Seidmann, 2006). Open-ended questions were developed based on the review of literature and were used to set parameters and encourage participants to share more insight and details during the interviews (Patton,

2002; Seidman, 2006). The main goal in open-ended questioning is for the researcher to build upon and explore participants' responses and to have the participants reconstruct their experience with the topic (Seidman, 1998). To ensure the appropriateness and clarity of the interview questions, the research pilot-tested the research instrument with three female educational leaders before conducting any formal interviews (Seidman, 1998). The researcher refined the interview guide based on the recommendations obtained from pilot interviews.

The researcher was mindful to the possible impacts associated when interviewing females. During interviews some women may discover her own thoughts or learn who she is (Reinharz & Chase, 2003). Others may feel powerless and with little to say.

Reinharz and Chase (2003) explain:

Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words, rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because this way of learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women. (p. 74).

The interviews were conducted in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As recommended by Marshall and Rossman (1990) and Patton (2002), an interactive and flexible method of interviewing was applied to ensure quality data was collected. Throughout the entire investigation, the anonymity of the participants and their institution was protected through the use of pseudonyms (Seidman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Additionally, all direct responses captured from the lived experiences of the female Board members were protected by code numbers (Seidman, 2006). Due to the isolated

population being investigated and the unique roles that the female participants hold within the communities they serve, the researcher took every precaution to ensure that the reader could not inadvertently connect individuals to direct responses.

Each interview lasted approximately ninety minutes and examined the interviewee, her experiences as a female Board of Trustee member, her perception of the roles and responsibilities ensued in the position, and her beliefs on the extent to which gender affects such understandings and perceptions (Seidman, 2006). All interviews were conducted one-on-one and in person. The interviews were digitally recorded and the results were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Maxwell, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). Each interview was transcribed in its entirety by the researcher. “By transcribing at this level, interpretive categories emerge, ambiguities in language are heard on the tape, and the oral record- the way the story is told- provides clues and meaning” (Riessman, 1993, p. 53).

As suggested by Maxwell (2006) and Seidman (2006), the researcher conducted subsequent interviews by email and in person, for the purpose of gathering additional data. Member checking, the process of providing participants the opportunity to review all transcribed data to confirm the accuracy of the information, was accomplished through the use of email (Merriam, 2009). Two of the seven interviews were returned with minor modifications and additions. Interview guides, audio tapes, and transcripts were kept in a locked file cabinet.

A complete interview guide is provided in Appendix IV.

Data Analysis Plan

Maxwell (2006) states that “any qualitative study requires decisions about how the analysis will be done, and these decisions should inform, and be informed by, the rest of the design” (p. 95). This study employed a qualitative research method, and a phenomenological analysis design was used (Creswell, 2007; Maxell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moustakes, 1994; Sokolowski, 2007; van Manen, 1990). van Manen (1990) instructed “the project of phenomenological reflection and explication is to effect a more direct contact with the experience as lived” (p. 78). Therefore, the nature of phenomenology was reflected rather than a prescribed sequence of interpretation. Multiple in-depth interviews were used to collect narrative data from the identified participant. Moustakas (1994) modified version of van Kaam’s (1966) method of analysis provided a guide for data to be analyzed in this study. After the interviews were transcribed and verified for accuracy, the raw data from the developed research questions was read, and then re-read to identify emergent themes (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 2006). Miles and Huberman (1994) claimed that the preferred method of creating themes “helps the researcher elaborate a cognitive map, an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions” (p. 69). Since the targeted participants were female, the researcher was attentive and mindful when examining and interpreting the transcribed interviews. Reinharz and Chase noted:

Feminist researchers face a particular challenge when we interpret the words of women who reject feminism or other aggressive movements. In such cases, it is tempting to attribute an interviewee’s ideas to ‘false consciousness’ and to

discount what she says. The idea of false consciousness suggests that a person misunderstands his or her own situation, particularly with regard to self-interest. (as cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 2001)

As recommended by van Manen (1990) and Patton (2002), the participants' experiences were bracketed to identify the essence of the phenomenon. Bracketing, in phenomenological research, is a fundamental methodological principle in which the researcher suspends judgment, preconceptions, and assumptions in order to examine and analyze the phenomenon in its purity (Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2006). Moustakas (1994) refers to this process as *epoche*, meaning to abstain or stay away from. *Epoche* requires the researcher to "be alert, to look with care, to see what is really there and to stay away from everyday habits of knowing things, people, and events" (p. 85). As Moustakas (1994) further explains:

...whatever or whoever appears in our consciousness is approached with an openness, seeing just what is there and allowing what is there to linger. This is a difficult task and requires that we allow a phenomenon or experience to be just what it is and to come to know it as it presents itself. (p. 85-86)

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) recommend that a researcher "should never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously" (p. 2). The data was categorized and response codes created. In qualitative research, "the goal of coding is not to count things, but to fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts" (Maxwell, 2006, p. 96). As commonalities begin to emerge from the rich data, a visual diagram was created to represent potential themes and subthemes.

A checklist matrix was used to keep track of identified recurring similarities among the cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher used color to code the frequency with which the concepts were mentioned by each participant (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As suggested by Stake (1995), “Sometimes, we find significance in a single instance, but usually the meanings will come from reappearance over and over” (p. 78).

Validity Issues

Maxwell (2006) refers to the validity of a study as the “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p. 106). The concept of validity threats on a research study is a fundamental issue in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Although validity cannot be guaranteed through the implementation of methods, such procedures are essential in eliminating validity threats and adding credibility to the research study (Maxwell, 2006). In phenomenological studies it is recommended that validity be demonstrated through repetition and redundancy across cases (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Moustakes, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Merriam (2009) reinforced that “if others can see the integrity of the process and the ability to explain competing findings you [the researcher] have demonstrated validity from a phenomenological perspective” (p. 141).

To establish validity for this study, data was collected in a thorough and authentic manner, the analysis was rigorous, and the researcher showed the steps taken to develop the findings (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This process, often referred to as an audit trail in qualitative research, was utilized to ensure validity (Creswell, 2007). “Rich” and

full data was collected through verbatim transcripts of the interviews. While it is impossible to completely eliminate the researcher's influence on the interviewer and the interview situation, potential issues of researcher reflexivity were minimized through the careful construction of the interview protocol and continuous respondent validation of the data and conclusions. For internal validity, member check was used (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Researcher as Instrument

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the credibility of qualitative methods relies on the researcher's abilities, competence, and rigor, as well as the outside distractions that may be present in their life (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (1981) described this aspect of qualitative research:

Fatigue, shifts in knowledge, and cooptation, as well as variations resulting from differences in training, skills, and experience among different "instruments," easily occur. But this loss in rigor is more than offset by the flexibility, insight, and ability to build on tacit knowledge that is the peculiar province of the human instrument. (p. 113)

According to Patton (2002), "the perspective that the researcher brings to a qualitative inquiry is part of the context for the findings. A human being is the instrument of qualitative methods...Developing appropriate self-awareness can be a form of 'sharpening the instrument'" (p. 64).

To generally define the researcher one might make the statements that: She is a mother. She is a wife. She is an educator. She is a leader. She is a woman. The researcher has worked in education for over ten years, primarily as the Director or head

of an educational institution. While exploring the topic of women in educational leadership positions, more specifically females serving as Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest, the researcher wondered if such descriptions could be a direct result of the subsequent. Could one be an effective educational leader in part because they are a woman? What defines a truly effective leader? And what defines an effective female leader? How does gender affect the roles and responsibilities that females ensue when placed in a leadership role? How do female leaders understand their roles and responsibilities as a leader? These questions led the researcher to focus of this study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest; and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. This exploration focused specifically on current female community college Board of Trustee members to understand how they perceived their leadership roles and responsibilities on the Board. This study also aimed to identify the reasons behind the decision to serve in such leadership positions.

This research study was performed using a qualitative phenomenological research design. The review of literature for this study focused on the theories of four distinct sections: (a) The historical and socio-cultural context of leaders in education, (b) The role of the Board of Trustees at Community Colleges, (c) Leadership behaviors of women in education, and (d) Women as elected leaders. A semi-structured, in-depth interview protocol was used to collect narrative data from the identified participants. Questions

were developed based on the review of literature and evolved according to participant response. The selection of the female participants in this study followed a purposeful sampling strategy. The participants were asked a series of questions relating to their personal perceptions of their role and responsibility as a female Board member. After completion of the first interview, the raw data from the developed research questions and observation were read, and then re-read to identify emergent themes. Data was analyzed continuously throughout the research study.

Chapter Four provides an analysis of the research data and captures the results. A summary of the findings with conclusions and recommendations for future research will conclude in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation and Synthesis of the Data

This phenomenological study explored the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and examined the impact of gender representation in terms of female influence on Board performance. This exploration focused specifically on existing female community college Board of Trustee members to understand how they perceived their leadership roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the researcher examined the reasons behind the decision to serve in such leadership positions. The investigation was driven by the following research questions:

1. How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?
2. Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?
3. In addition to representing the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community colleges feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?
4. To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

This research study was performed using a qualitative phenomenological research design (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moustakes, 1994; Sokolowski, 2007; van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology allows the researcher to capture a deep understanding of the phenomenon as it was directly experienced, firsthand, by a group of individuals (Creswell, 2007; Heidegger, 2005; Maxwell, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 1990). As agreed upon by Creswell (2007), Moustakas (1994), Patton (2002), and Sokolowski (2000), a phenomenological

study investigates the lived experiences and internal perceptions of a small group of people. The ultimate goal in a phenomenological study is to present the *essence* of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Utilizing Moustakas' (1994) modified version of van Kaam's (1966) method of analysis, a "composite description of the meaning and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (p. 121) emerged from the structured inquiry.

Chapter Four presents the key findings and support evidence obtained from the seven female community college Board of Trustee members who participated in this investigation. The use of a semi-structured interview protocol yielded in-depth responses that could be interpreted within the context of the female Board of Trustees' experiences. The chapter begins with a composite profile of the participants' demographic information; interesting commonalities and differences as well as personal and professional attributes will be described. A comprehensive interpretation of the interview responses is organized according to the research questions. Additionally, the seven themes that emerged from the one-on-one interviews conducted for this study will be presented. These seven themes reflect the lived experiences and narratives of the females in their role as Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest. To protect the anonymity of informants, easily identifiable information has been purposefully excluded, modified, or replaced with pseudonyms. The chapter culminates with a short summary.

Composite Profile

Seven individuals representing the three Pacific Northwest states took part in this study. In all, the participants are identified as females currently serving on a Board of

Trustees at community colleges. Of the seven women, two presently hold the position of Board Chairman and one serves as Vice Chairman. Additionally, three of the seven (43%) have previously held the Board Chairman position. The seven interview volunteers represented 54% of the total targeted population of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest.

While a few of the women are still adjusting to their reasonably new leadership positions, almost three-fourths (71%) have served on the Board of Trustees for more than five years. The average length of years on the Board for all research participants is seven and a half years. All seven of the females are deeply rooted in their community. Three of the participants are active members of their area Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, three others have held past positions with their local K-12 School Board. Two of the seven participants have lived their entire life in the same area. The average years lived in the community for all participants is 33 years. Two of the seven women have very unique attachments to the colleges they serve because of their previous employee/student status.

Six of the seven (86%) female participants have achieved post-secondary degrees with three receiving Bachelor's degrees and three receiving Master's degrees. Four majored in Education whereas three specialized in disciplines ranging from business to criminal justice. All four participants who majored in Education had an emphasis in physical education. Of the three Master's degree recipients all studied areas in the field of Education.

Ages of these successful female leaders range from late-forties to early-seventies with their average age being 56 ½ years old. Four (57%) of the women currently hold

full time jobs whereas three (43%) are retired. All of the participants are Caucasian. Of all of the participants, five (71%) are currently married. Among the five married Board members, all are married with adult children. As for the other two women, one remains single and one is divorced with adult children.

Female Leaders Alone on the Range

“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Perhaps no other time in America’s history is as saturated in a world of cowboys and Indians, sheriffs and outlaws, gunslingers and ranchers as the pioneering age known as the “Wild, Wild West” (The Old Wild West, 2014). In the day when the West was ruled by the gun, it took a woman of great character, unfaltering determination, and strength to survive (Riley, 1994). Despite being steeped in a man’s world, a few independent and brave females blazed their way through the rugged terrain and changed America forever (Riley, 1994).

Like the brave heroines of the Old West, female Board of Trustee members have broken through the gender barriers to become natural leaders in education. They have taken risks and have shot down what society defined acceptable roles and behaviors for women. They are female trailblazers creating new opportunities, alone, on the range.

Emergent Themes

The participants spoke about their experiences as a female Board of Trustee member, their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities ensued in the position, and their beliefs on the extent to which gender affects such understandings and perceptions.

An analysis of the data gathered from the seven in-depth interviews revealed seven emergent themes: (1) Institutional Leaders, (2) Commitment to Community and College, (3) Leadership for Learning, (4) Competing in the Race, (5) Champions for Woman, (6) The Female Presence, and (7) Insecurities and Challenges. These seven themes reflect the lived experiences and narratives of the female participants in their roles as Board of Trustee members at community colleges. The emergent themes were categorized under the four research questions. Figure 9 represents the salient themes and subthemes that emerged from the rich data.

Question #1	Question #2	Question #3	Question #4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Leader • student outcomes • faculty success • financial stability • community needs • promoter of President 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to community & college • Leadership for learning • Competing in the race • Electoral environment • Balancing roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The female presence • need for females • leadership styles of females • Insecurities & challenges

Figure 9. Emergent themes and subthemes categorized under the research questions (created by author)

The research questions will be addressed with vivid descriptive narrative passages delineated to elucidate the participants' responses.

How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?

One major theme emerged from this investigation that focused on the roles and responsibilities females ensue when serving as a Board of Trustee member at a community college.

Institutional Leaders

Consistently, all of the women interviewed expressed that a primary role of their position on the Board of Trustees was to represent the institution and the community that they serve. Encompassed in this critical responsibility was a focus on student outcomes, staff and faculty success, and institutional financial stability. Additionally, an emphasis on fulfilling the needs of the community was communicated. As articulated by one participant, a member of a community college Board of Trustees must have “a passion for the mission of the community college and a dedication to making a difference within the community as a servant” (#001, p. 3).

As the seven females reflected on what they perceived as their roles and responsibilities on the Board, phrases such as “supporting the college President,” “liaison between the college and community,” “giving back to the community,” “ensuring faculty and staff success,” “fiduciary responsibilities,” “defining policy,” and “proving the value of the community college,” were emulated. One of the female Board members explained:

As a Board member you always have to put the needs of the college first...I try to always focus on what the needs are...I try to not be directed into any kind of rabbit hole that doesn't have the college's best interest in mind...My role

includes, of course, budget, policy, long-term planning, and facility planning- which is huge...but I try to stay focused on the college and what is best. That is my role. (#020, p. 2)

Another Board member added:

I think that the first responsibility of the Board is to understand and uphold the mission of the college...The board also defines policy on an administrative and governance side but does not go deeper than that. Another very important thing is that the Board needs to know the people, their community, which elected them....You have to listen to the voice of the community and use what you know on the broader scale to make the best decisions...Everything needs to be tied back to the mission. This is important. (#007, p. 6)

The roles and responsibilities of the Board were defined by one of the female Trustees to include the college's faculty and staff:

As a member of this Board you are entrenched in a process that influences a lot of people. You have a responsibility to learn what's going on in various fields and know what's going on in the community. You need to know what is going to be needed for jobs, what kind of training would be important for faculty and staff. That is actually one thing that I'm very strongly connected to- the faculty and staff. (#001, p. 8)

One of the other females agreed that when making decisions as a Board the needs of the faculty and staff members must be considered. "As a five member Board we carry the heavy responsibility to be the voice for many. This includes the college's administrative team, the faculty and staff, the students, and the community. We represent each of these

entities. It's important to make sound decisions and consider everything and everyone that could be affected" (#291, p. 5).

In addition to meeting the college and community needs, the Board employs and advises the college President. As one female Board member put it:

We have one employee [the President] and it's important to not micromanage.

We have the back of the President and it is our job to make sure that [the

President] has all the resources that he/she needs. We stand behind the decision

of the President and hold her/him accountable when good decisions are not being

made. (#113, p. 4)

Equally, another participant expressed, "My job as a board member is to support the president and supporting means guiding and watching out for things....setting the President up for success" (#102, p. 8). Another female reinforced the Boards' responsibility to the President stating, "One of the key things that the Board does is choose the college President but it's more than just selecting...actually supporting the President is the key thing. We need to support him and help him be successful" (#001, p. 1).

While all seven female participants agreed that they had a responsibility to represent the community's interests as well as the welfare of the institution they serve, the majority of them expressed an obligation and commitment to student outcomes and improvement of learning. "The Board supports the mission of the college. Therefore, we [the Board] are committed to academic achievement, student success, and lifelong learning" (#291, p. 3). When asked to describe what was believed to be the most important quality of a successful and effective Board, one female member stated:

Shared governance with the students is most important. I always want our students' input and I want someone that doesn't forget that piece. The best part of the board meeting is the student report- without a doubt. We [the Board] are finally brought back down to Earth. We have been over here fighting for about some political thing and then turn and look at the students. This [the students] is what we are fighting for. Maybe it's a former student or a former faculty or staff member. The education piece is so important. (#020, p. 10).

Similarly, another female participant expresses the importance of being student focused while serving as a member of the Board of Trustee:

I am very passionate about the students. I really do feel this and I really do care...The community college and the students are never out of my mind...When I talk to students and tell them that they've done a good job I am not doing it because I am a Board of Trustee member. I'm doing it because I want to connect with them and I want to help them. (#007, p. 5)

For many of the females, their past experiences working in educational institutions inculcated a pledge to ensure academic advancement and student success:

Promoting education is a very important piece of being a Trustee...Let people know that you can go to college and you can change your life. I talk to students frequently. Just asking them what they are interested in is important. Making those connections make a difference. Whether they are going to this community college or another educational entity, I think it is important when you are in a role like this to stop and say "Do you realize these opportunities are here? Do you know that you can do this with your life?" It's important to promote a higher

level beyond high school. It's important to be advocate for college. A lot of these kids need a really good role model. They need a connection with someone...My mission is to provide the best programs possible for students, at any age, whether they are just coming out of high school or if they are nontraditional students. I look at it from the perspective of "What can we [Board] do to provide the best possible programs and sustain financial integrity at the same time?" There are a lot of pieces and parts to that. (#401, p. 14)

As one Board member concluded, "...the bottom line is we [the Board] have an obligation to provide the people of this community access to education beyond high school...we have a responsibility to the students and their success" (#291, p. 12).

Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?

The following three major themes emerged in response to asking participants why they decided to run for the Board of Trustees: (1) Commitment to Community and College, (2) Leadership for Learning, and (3) Competing in the Race.

Commitment to Community and College

Unanimously, making the decision to run in a Board of Trustee election was motivated by a solid commitment to the college and the community. One recalls the reasoning behind wanting to serve on the Board of Trustees:

...so when I retired it was very hard to do because I loved the community college and the opportunity to impact life at every stage. I loved the people and I loved the program. I loved the mission of the college. It's about second chances and giving an opportunity to people who wouldn't have an opportunity otherwise. It's [the community college] the component of being responsive to a community. I

think it's magical. I've often said I think that the college in this community is the best thing that has happened here since irrigation because it is so imperative to so many people. After I retired I felt that a way to still be connected with the community college was to run for the Board of Trustees. I really felt strongly about the mission. I knew the culture and I knew where some of the holes were. I thought I would be a good candidate. I also thought about what was important for me. I did not expect to retire and then just move to the sidelines. I expected to reengineer myself and be active in a number of things as a community volunteer. I wanted to provide support for something I felt strongly about. And, for me, it was the community college. (#001, p. 2, 3)

Another female participant elaborated:

I've always been very interested in education and the college is the heart of our community. I do believe that if we didn't have the community college here we wouldn't have anything going for us. The educational opportunities, the social opportunities...It just really is the pulse that keeps the community going. And I feel I can contribute to the community in this [Board of Trustees] position. (#113, p. 4)

Many of the female Board members were motivated by their past professional and personal experiences. One of the Board members articulated:

My feeling has always been that when I retired I wanted to give back to my community and give back to the people that had helped and supported me in my career. I look at the Board as a service to my community. (#401, p. 14)

For several of the woman the Board provided the venue to serve the community in a much grander capacity. The majority of the females interviewed described their position on the Board as a “service to their community” (#291, p. 7). One member stated, “I’ve never felt like I’ve been on there [the Board] because I bring a lot of expertise with me. I’m not an attorney. I’m not a former teacher or principal. But I do feel I know the people that the community college serves. I know my community and I want to serve my community” (#007, p. 6). One female participant described her motivation to run for a position on the Board of Trustees in a much similar manner:

The reason I was able to be successful was because other folks shared with me. That’s the way I think things go. What goes around comes around...one of my hopes for legacies is to raise a generation that is responsible and good global citizens. If I can help make that available to others than why not? So I began doing that by volunteering on service community boards. And then the college came along...I realized more and more what it provided to the people in the community, particularly in rural areas...The concept is what can I do in this community to help it be economically viable, sustainable, flourish and be a place where people want to live. It’s the circle that goes around and around and around. So that’s how I really became interested in the community college Board. (#102, p. 12)

One female participant summed up her commitment to the community and college in this way:

We [the college] play such a dominant role in so many areas within the community- in the economic development, development of arts and culture, and

the educational process at all levels. The college not only feeds students into a university system but also provides short-term workforce training. The college has been a major force in the community's economic development. I am committed to being a part of this whole process (#001, p. 7)

Leadership for Learning

Several of the female participants expressed that their motivation to run for a position on the Board of Trustees was driven by the value they place on education and learning. For example, one Board member stated, "When you are in the schools you begin to recognize that there is a huge unmet need that exists in education. You grow to care for the students and you work harder to give them the advantage they need in order to be successful" (#007, p. 5). Another described her decision to serve as an opportunity to be an "active contributor in changing education." She expressed, "It is important for me, as a past educator, to be directly involved in the community college and be active in ensuring quality education is taking place in my community. That is how you make things better. You get involved" (#291, p. 17). In the same way, one participant shared:

We are in a State that is delayed when it comes to education. I hear people talk about how great this institution is and I agree. But there are some things that need to happen. We need to increase our rates of completion and rates of more successful remediation. Many of our students come unprepared and that means that things are not happening at the secondary level. There are a lot of things in this process that need to shift and I thought that I could be a part of that shift. It's painful. It's hard. It's not necessarily fun. But this is where we are and we need to be doing something about it. (#001, p. 4, 5)

Another female Board member put it this way:

I loved being a part of the education community. When my son was younger I was elected to the local school board. I had also worked in the public school system. I was immersed in the culture of education and I loved it...As a student at the college I really liked everything they did for me. There was an opening on the Board of Trustee so I ran and was elected. (#020, p. 1, 2)

Competing in the Race: Prepared and Ready

With the request of the researcher during the interviews, many of the female participants shared unpleasant and challenging experiences while campaigning for a position or serving as a newly elected Board member. Two sub-themes addressing the difficulties or barriers emerged from the responses. These two themes depict the trials with which the female Board of Trustee members had to deal: (1) the challenges and obstacles in the electoral environment and (2) balancing the roles.

The Challenges and Obstacles in the electoral environment

All participants universally affirmed that the Board of Trustees at community colleges is a politically charged entity. ‘Politics play a huge role’, stated one female participant. “I do feel that within the community college that many people have the same philosophy as I do- they are there to make a difference for others. But the political side of it is very difficult for me. And I struggle with this” (#020, p. 1, 7). One participant with widespread experience serving in the local school system disclosed that when she decided to run for election she “thought that it would just be something fun to do.” She realized quickly that “it was actually a whole different ball game serving on a community college board.” The female Board member added:

I know that it will only get more political in the future. I'm not sure if I am up for that. My background just isn't that. I was there to help children learn and to help their parents in many situations- good, bad, or otherwise. And that's what my background is. I am there to guide students and advocate for education. (#401, p. 12)

When making the decision to run for a position on the Board, many of the participants thought the election would be much less political, but over time the campaigning process "became more vituperative" (#102, p. 4). One of the females noted assertively:

...it [the campaigning process] was very disappointing. That was the very first things that I thought. It was mean. This is a nonpartisan position. I love the idea of serving without having to be a part of a political system that I think is extremely dysfunctional and not responsive to people- too polarized and self-serving- as opposed to what might be good for the people in general. This was a way for me to serve and not be attached to a political party, yet here it was leaking in. So that was a disappointment...I wasn't expecting to be faced with that kind of controversy in a nonpartisan race. I loved the institution, I had time to serve, I was willing to learn, and I was willing to put in the time. I thought that was all it took. (#001, p. 6)

One woman spoke openly on her initial experiences serving as a female on the Board:

I wasn't aware of any of the strife or issues at the college level because it all seemed like roses to me. I loved being there as a student. I had just finished being a student and I really didn't think that there would be any of the politics. I

wanted to take my background as a K-12 school board member and see if I could apply that same level of commitment. But it was a whole different world...There were a lot of very political issues and I was a female Board member serving with a female President. And we would rub people the wrong way. There were women in leadership positions speaking on behalf of the college and this caused some political grudges that impacted the college. It was a real political time and I really thought a lot of it was unfair. The Board was caught up in the politics and people were going out of their way to be harmful toward the college. It was pretty obvious and pretty clear what was going on. It was a trying time. (#020, p. 2, 4)

Despite the overall challenges created by the electoral environment, many of the female participants voiced that their position as a Board of Trustee member provided the opportunity to have a positive influence on the college and the community. "I feel that it is important that I guide and give to the college what I can. To me it's not about political speeches or the politics of it, even though that's there. But it's about changing people's lives" (#401, p. 8).

Balancing the Roles

Balancing the demands of the Board and life was another common challenge expressed by the seven participants. Several of the women acknowledged struggling to fulfill their leadership role while, juggling their personal responsibilities. The females shared that the position involved more than what they had originally expected. One admitted, "You do have to give a lot of time. I had no idea the amount of time that it was going to take. But I have enjoyed the time. I find it really interesting and challenging, at

times. It challenges your patience and you have to learn to keep a cool and open mind” (#401, p. 7). Another female concurred, “There is a learning curve when you serve on this Board. I was pretty lost the first few years” (#113, p. 2). Many agreed that being a part of the board “demanded a great deal of time and energy” from its members (#291, p. 3). One female participant spoke out about her challenges:

There is so much more happening than what you can know when you fill out the paperwork to run [for election]. But the realm of influence is enormous. So stepping back and getting a huge global perspective while, simultaneously, being able to lead without micromanaging or interfering with the operational day-to-day life is a real skill- maybe even an art form. It’s the continual juggling to try and get the right act because things come up and you’re not sure what to do...There is just so much more than showing up for one monthly meeting. You go to events and you talk to people. If people have complaints they come talk to you...So there’s all these new skills as you learn about how big the mission is, how inclusive it is, and how it is much more business orientated than one might think.

She continued by stating:

We don’t get it all. We need to be balanced. And that is so hard for women because we expect to be perfect- perfect mothers, perfect wives, and perfect employees. We [women] think we have to do it all but we can’t. I feel that having a childlike curiosity and not being afraid to fail is important. That is tough. It’s tough for me because I want to be so good at everything I do and I’m always so disappointed. And that’s what women do. We put these unrealistic

expectations on ourselves because we expect to be perfect. And that's not real.

(#001, p. 4, 15)

Ultimately, all of the women interviewed commented on the time commitment involved when serving as a member on the Board of Trustees. Several of the participants spoke of how they feel this challenge is escalated because they are female:

The barriers right now are work, child rearing, and time commitment...men don't have these same pressures. We [women] feel that we have to be everything to everybody. Women internalize everything. (#020, p. 7)

Another female Board member particularized:

The logistics are intimidating. Generally the home fires get tended more by the women. If you have a single parent then you have changed the rules completely in terms of what's available for them. And then again that training process to learn about leadership is harder to come by when you are taking care of children. I am optimistic as the next generation comes along and understands that we should have, could have, need to have more women in this leadership role...There is a voicelessness for women. It's really up to women to make this happen. I'm optimistic. I have to be. I would love to see more women in this [the Board] leadership role because it brings another perspective- a softer, tender, more gentle and more humane perspective. We can probably stand to have a little bit more of that on the Board. But to do that we, as a society, need to have a way for women to have balance and support. (#102, p. 12).

Concluding thoughts about campaigning for a position or serving as a newly elected Board member can be summed up in the following comment:

I love the community and I love the college...it [serving on the Board] is a big job with a lot of time and strings attached. And you are going to have to give the time and put up with the politics if you're going to be good. And I plan to. I plan to be exceptionally fine. (#001, p. 11)

In addition to representing the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community colleges feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?

The theme that emerged in answer to the third research question fell into one category: Champions for Women.

Champions for Women

Six of the seven female Board of Trustee members interviewed indicated that in addition to representing the general community population they felt that they had an obligation to also represent the female voice. Several of the participants saw the need to reflect the gender composition of their college and to represent the interests of females on the campus and in the community. One of the women explained her rationale in making the decision to serve on the Board:

60% of our student population is female and we don't have a female representative on our Board. What is that saying about our institution? It is not okay. There were a lot of women who felt strongly that there needed to be better representation for women on the Board...It [representing the female voice] was one of the key reasons that I ran. There were no women. So essentially we were telling our students that they can go anywhere and do anything yet need to avoid certain leadership positions because they are only for the white male. It's really

not okay. I don't think I have to be a liberal bra burning kind of feminist to say "Hey, we need to have more representation for women instead of so many middle-aged white males." (#001, p. 5, 11)

Another Board of Trustee member voiced similar sentiments regarding feeling a personal responsibility toward representing the female voice, as shown in this quotation:

I believe I should and I could [represent the female voice], hopefully, in a constructive manner. I think that's always the challenge. Also, I feel it important to help the whole community become comfortable with any women leaders that we have and to respect and validate their efforts. This will be different and viewed differently by different folks at different times but never denigrated. So yes, at this point of my life that is one of my major efforts- to be sure that I help any woman I can along the way. What do they say? Pay it forward to other females. As women we are fortunate enough to do that. (#102, p. 6)

A third female stated briefly:

There is no question - absolutely and yes. This institution has been around for many years and there have been less than a handful of women on the Board. It was important for me to have gender representation on the Board. I feel that it is natural for my voice to be the voice for females. And I want to be that voice for the females on our campus and in our community. I really hope that I do just that. (#291, p. 13)

In addition to being a voice for females, the majority of the Board members echoed an internal drive to encourage, support, and champion other women leaders. One female participant voiced, "I hope that I can be a part of something that helps other

women. Women have tremendous stories and women are the best supporters for other women. We need to be there for each other” (#007, p. 8, 9).

As one Board member clearly articulated, “As a woman and as a Board member I feel that one of my jobs is to, in fact, champion other women who haven’t had the same opportunity as I. I want to be sure to help do whatever is helpful; because why else do it?” (#102, p. 6).

To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

Two major themes with strong subthemes emerged from this study that focused on how females believe gender affects their role on Board of Trustees.

The Female Presence

Collectively, the female participants communicated the need for gender representation in Board of Trustees structure. Of the females interviewed, 71% of them believed that gender affected, either positively or negatively, their roles and responsibilities as a Board of Trustees. Interview responses captured the importance of gender representation on leadership Boards. One female voiced, “I do think we need people from both genders on the Board. A more evenly divided Board would be a good thing. I really do think that” (#007, p. 6). Another concurred with this thought stating, “I think it is important to have both genders represented on the Board- especially with other female leaders within the college. As females we can gather around [the leaders] and back them” (#113, p. 8). The belief that “gender should play a role because that’s why we have two genders” was repeated numerous times by several of the women (#102, p. 6).

One of the participants recalled previous situations while serving on the Board that she believed gender played a large part:

Regardless of where you are it's about building relationships- in a school, a corporation, anywhere. It's the handwritten notes, it's the "thank you, I really appreciate what you're doing", it's asking questions, or just showing up to an event... As a female Board member I *am* writing notes to people who are getting their PhDs or because they have done something excellent. I send them a note. I want them to know we [the Board] are affirming what they are doing and appreciating what they have done... I think it is very important that the people know that the Board appreciates what they are doing. So I do those things and my male colleagues would never give it a second thought. But I think that what we do is all about building relationships... It is all about a give-and-take and I don't know if the men on the Board would, first of all, take the time and secondly even value the time it takes to have this interchange and commitment of doing something significant. (#001, p. 10)

Additionally, one female noted:

As women we are more sensitive to what we are asking for and we recognize the burden that it puts on others. Women are just like this. It is indigenous in them. I know I am more hesitant to ask for something. I don't ask unless I think it's really important. (#007, p. 6)

When asked what she felt her greatest contribution to the Board of Trustees is, phrases such as "collaboration," "partnership," "global perspective," and "active listening

skills” were openly expressed. Many of the women referenced gender when speaking of their attributes. One woman stated:

I’m always trying to strive to be better. If someone came up and said, “Do you think you’re a good Board member?” I would say, “No, but I’m really working on it.” If you were to go to the male Board members they would say, “We are fabulous. Nothing has ever been better than what we are doing right now.” (#001, p. 9)

Another assertively revealed:

As women we come to a topic and have our own thoughts about it. We want to discuss things and talk them through. After it’s discussed and we all go a different direction, I feel like I can accept that. Sometimes the men are so angry and can’t let it go. I don’t know where that comes. I don’t know. Caveman stuff...I don’t think the men have the desire to support the rest of the board. It’s more I didn’t get my way. (#020, p. 5)

Many of the females believed their greatest contribution to the Board was their ability to look at the “bigger picture and make informed decisions for the great community” (#401, p. 7). One female Board member asserted:

I offer a different perspective for the males to consider. I look at things from all directions and I assess before deciding. I am not here [on the Board] to make quick and uneducated decisions. I do my homework, I look at the options, I ask questions- lots of questions, and then I make informed decisions. I just want all the facts. This is hard for some of them [male Board members] to understand. Sometimes they think I ask too many questions and just want to move on to the

next agenda item so they can go home. But that's not why I am on the Board.

Someone has to ask the questions. It might as well be me because I actually do want to know the answers. (#291, p.18).

Another participant's story echoed a similar theme. "I process information differently than my male colleagues. I like to process more. I like to collect more information before I speak up" (#020, p. 7).

As one women Board member simply stated, gender representation in Board of Trustee composition is needed because "Females add another flavor" (#102, p. 7).

Insecurities and Challenges

The majority (71%) of the participants freely described the personal challenges and insecurities they have experienced while serving as a female Board of Trustee member. Such barriers are illustrated by the following stories from the interviews:

I'm not afraid. They [the men] don't intimidate me. I've had one Board member who has called me up at night and has said, on two different occasions in the last year, "Well, I don't want to tell you how to vote BUT..." He doesn't realize that it comes across as very authoritarian, somewhat condescending, and in my mind inappropriate. I try not to take it personally but if you want to know the truth, it pisses me off. I just think it is inappropriate. And there are some men who think that they are just a little bit better than women. They think that their attitude and their view point are just a little bit more superior to the woman on the board- that they know best. And I do feel this on this Board. I just have to be really focused on the characteristics that I really like about those men otherwise I think it could be a very frustrating experience. They [the men] don't even realize it. They don't

even realize that they enjoy this white male privilege. They have no concept of it. They operate without putting themselves in other people's shoes, without the empathy that women would bring to the position. (#001, p. 8, 9)

Sometimes when I'm asked to serve on a Board, especially if it's a more powerful or influential Board, I have to wonder if I'm getting asked because there's not the depth of the pool that they can pull from or is it to even the playing field? I hope that's not the case but it always crosses my mind. Because when you sit on a Board and you are one of the only women you think that maybe you were chosen because they need to diversify. I always think it might just be part of the diversity. I wonder, did they ask because I bring something important to the table or do they just need to show diversity? (#007, p. 8)

I have been able to serve on the Board for many years, so through this I have aged. I am now not just a women on the Board; I am an older woman on the Board...As I have aged I would like to think that I have more wisdom, a more gentle approach, and less judgmental but I also wonder if I have as much voice because I am old and gray. (#102, p. 5)

I'm not afraid to ask questions and there are some difficult questions...I know I have members on the Board that think I talk too much and ask far too many questions. (#291, p. 3)

Sometimes I think that the perception is that women should be more passive, more ladylike- like raise your hand and wait to be called on- it's not as common for women to interrupt as it is for men to interrupt. We [women] tend to sit back and passively review what we want to say over and over in our own minds. I have

found that when you do that as a woman you will never talk because by the time you have something to say the men are on to another subject. Men are just much more comfortable in that kind of dialogue. I think women are more apt to put riders on to things. We say things like “it’s just my opinion” or “This may just be my perception but...”- men would never say things like that. (#007, p. 9)

Generally, the struggles experienced by the female participants were directly connected to gender. Concluding thoughts on the challenges and insecurities experienced by women Board of Trustee members can be best captured in the following comment:

It would be very helpful to have a second woman on the Board because that does bring some different perspectives. I think the men would hear things better if they heard it more than once and from more than one person. As women, we need to listen to make sure we hear the men’s perception. By gender issues the nature of women is to watch and listen- to figure it out and pay more attention. The gender issue for the men, whether he’s a hunter, gather, businessmen, is to go and conquer the world. We need both perspectives. We need someone at the campfire stirring the pot and holding the child in one arm and doing the multitasking....we are born with these characteristics because we need them. How we use them now is the challenge. Yet the fact is the glass ceiling still has glass. (#102, p. 7)

Summary

Chapter Four presented a holistic view of the significant data that composed the phenomenon of this study. A comprehensive interpretation of the interview responses captured the lived experiences from the seven female community college Board of

Trustee members who participated in this investigation. The seven themes, which reflected the first-hand narratives of the woman participants, were presented and organized according to the research questions. A full summary and discussion of the revealed phenomenon will be presented in Chapter Five. Further dialogue of major findings drawn from this research endeavor and recommendations for future research will complete this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Education, over the past two centuries, has changed the contours of the American woman's life (Aleman & Renn, 2002; Chliwniak, 1997; McClland, 1992; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Solomon, 1985). Despite the dramatic revolution to the landscape of America's higher education system and the radical implications that woman's education has had for the whole society, females continue to be sorely underrepresented in leadership roles within the post-secondary venue (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Chun & Evans, 2009; National Education Association, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). While women have come a long way in some fields, equality in academic higher education leadership positions has not been achieved.

Studies focusing on how women intellectualize power define leadership in terms of horizontal rather than hierarchical. Women seek to accomplish initiative with and through others (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The leadership role of a community college Board of Trustee member complements the behaviors and styles emphasized as common practice amongst female leaders in education (Curry, 2000). However, research confirms women account for less than 30% of the Board members on college and university campuses nationwide (Shriver Report, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The representation of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest mirrors the national standard. Data analyzed from the 49 community colleges located in the Pacific Northwest discloses that 71% of Board members are male and 84% of the colleges are governed by a male dominant Board (U.S. Community Colleges, 2013). Understanding the roles and responsibilities females have

when serving as a community college Board of Trustee member and their beliefs about the extent to which gender affects such perceptions may allow researchers to better understand gender influences on Board composition.

In this final chapter, the researcher will present a brief summary of the study. Interpretations of major findings with a discourse integrating existing literature and conclusions will follow. The last section of the chapter contains recommendations for action and further study.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. This exploration focused specifically on existing female community college Board of Trustee members to understand how they perceived their leadership roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the researcher identified the reasons behind the decision to serve in such leadership positions. The investigation was driven by the following research questions:

1. How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?
2. Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?
3. In addition to representing the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community colleges feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?
4. To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

This research study was performed using a qualitative phenomenological research design. The review of literature for this study focused on the theories of four distinct sections: (a) The historical and socio-cultural context of leaders in education, (b) The role of the Board of Trustees at Community Colleges, (c) Leadership behaviors of women in education, and (d) Women as elected leaders.

A semi-structured, in-depth interview protocol was used to collect narrative data from the seven identified participants. Questions were developed based on the review of literature and evolved according to participant response. The selection of the female participants in this study followed a purposeful sampling strategy. The women were asked a series of questions relating to their personal perceptions of their role and responsibility as a female Board member.

After extensive analysis of the raw data, seven major themes emerged. These seven themes reflect the lived experiences and narrative of the female participants in their role as Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest.

Summary of Results

How do female Board of Trustee members understand their leadership roles and responsibilities?

The female participants interviewed in this study consistently described that the primary role of their position on the Board of Trustees was to represent the institution and the community that they serve. For the female Board members, understanding and upholding the community college's mission, serving the community, and supporting the President were most often emulated when describing their responsibilities as Board of Trustees. The majority of the women also felt that advocating for student success and

representing the faculty and staff fell within the Board's roles and responsibilities.

Unanimously, the female Board members agreed that one of the most important roles of the Board of Trustees was fulfilling the community's needs.

Why do female Board of Trustee members choose to run for election?

The women interviewed for this study ran for a position on the Board of Trustees because of their commitment and passion to serve the college and community.

Additionally, several women described that their motivation to serve on the Board was driven by the value they placed on education and learning. Many of the females viewed serving on the Board as an opportunity to promote academic advancement and student success. Of the seven women interviewed, four were asked to run for a position by others who recognized their leadership abilities. All of the females ran a successful campaign and were elected by majority vote. Six of the seven Board members have gone through the election process more than once.

While reflecting on past elections, the female participants shared some of the challenges they experienced while campaigning for a position or serving as a newly elected Board member. Two sub-themes addressing the difficulties and barriers emerged from the responses: (1) the challenges and obstacles in the electoral environment and (2) balancing the roles.

In addition to representation the general community population, do women serving on the Board of Trustees at community college feel they have an obligation to represent the female voice?

The majority of the female Board members in this study (six out of seven) believed that in addition to representing the general community population they also had

an obligation to represent the female voice. Many saw the need to reflect the interests of the females on the campus and in the community. Several expressed that female representation was important on the Board of Trustees at community colleges. Additionally, the females felt an internal commitment to mentor, support, encourage, and champion other women leaders.

To what extent does gender affect their role as a Board of Trustee member?

The women interviewed felt gender representation in Board of Trustee structure was important. The majority of the females acknowledged that gender affected, either positively or negatively, their roles and responsibilities as a Board member. Several credited their greatest attributes to being female. Many spoke of building relationships and working collaboratively. Additionally, most of the women believed that the challenges and insecurities experienced while serving on the Board were a result of their gender.

Interpretation of Major Findings

Research examining females as leaders in education is more extensive. Yet few studies isolating elected leadership positions within the educational system currently exist. The review of literature focusing on the leadership behaviors of women in education and women as elected leaders was influential in comprehending why there is an underrepresentation of female Board of Trustees at community colleges.

While many findings are worth mentioning, the following conclusions drawn from this study are most important from the researcher's standpoint:

Female Board of Trustee members have a strong shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the college and the community. Women Board members are institutional leaders that serve the college, the community, and the people. Additionally,

female members of the Board are advocates for student success and academic advancement.

Such findings are supported in the following passages conveyed by female Board of Trustee members serving community colleges:

“You have to listen to the voice of the community” (#007, p. 6).

“As a Board member you always have to put the needs of the college first” (#020, p. 2).

“The first responsibility of the Board is to understand and uphold the mission of the college” (#007, p. 6).

“As a five member Board we carry the heavy responsibility to be the voice for many...the college’s administrative team, the faculty and staff, the students, and the community” (#291, p. 5).

“We stand behind the decisions of the President and hold him/her accountable...”(#113, p. 4).

“My job is to support the President” (#102, p. 8).

“Shared governance with the students is most important” (#020, p. 10).

“Promoting education is a very important piece of being a Trustee” (#401, p. 14).

“...the bottom line is we have an obligation to provide the people of the community access to education beyond high school...we have a responsibility to the students and their success” (#291, p. 12).

Female Board members are passionate supporters of education. They place high priority on ensuring rigorous academia and quality learning. They are committed to being a part

of the educational growth that is occurring within the college and the community they serve.

The research that examines the leadership styles and behaviors of women in education supports this conclusion (Chliwniak, 1997; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Grow & Montgomery, 1999). Likewise, women in elected office positions tend to give a higher priority to policies relation to education (Doyle, 2012; Hill, 2014).

Responses from the female Board of Trustee members give added justification to the above suggestion:

“I am very passionate about the students...the community college and the students are never out of my mind” (#007, p. 5).

“It’s important for me to be active in ensuring quality education is taking place I my community” (#291, p. 17).

“We are in a state that is delayed when it comes to education...We need to increase our rates of completion and rates of more successful remediation” (#001, p. 4).

“This is my opportunity to be an active contributor in changing education” (#291, p. 17).

The Board of Trustees at community colleges is a politically charged entity. Despite being a nonpartisan position, Board members affirmed that, “politics play a huge role” while campaigning and serving on Board of Trustees (#020, p. 1).

The following data resonates the analysis:

“The political side of it [the Board] is very difficult for me. And I struggle with this” (#020, p. 1).

“The campaigning process was very disappointing...it was mean” (#001, p. 6).

“I know it will only get more political in the future. I’m not sure if I am up for that” (#401, p. 12).

“There were a lot of very political issues” (#020, p. 2)

“I love the idea of serving without having to be a part of a political system... This was a way for me to serve and not be attached to a political party, yet here it was leaking in” (#001, p. 6).

Literature provided by Hill (2014), Lawless and Fox (2012), and Thomas and Wilcox (2014) support this finding and shed light on why gender disparity in Board of Trustee composition exists. Females continue to be underrepresented in elected office positions all across the nation (CAWP, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2012; Thomas & Wilcox, 2014). Research suggests that the absence of female presence in elected office positions is a lack of political ambition (Lawless & Fox, 2012).

The glass ceiling may have cracks yet has not been shattered. Many of the female Board members experienced challenges based on gender roles and stereotypes.

Scholars like Curry (2000), Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), Growe and Montgomery (1999), Begun (2000), Hoyt (2007), and Cotter et al. (2001) confirmed that gender biases and stereotypes prevent women from attaining leadership positions at the same rate of their male counterparts. While women have come a long way in some fields, equality in academic and elected leadership positions has not been achieved.

Additionally, the lived experiences of the female Board of Trustee members support this conclusion:

Female Board of Trustee members are mentors and champions for future women leaders

Female Board of Trustee members are supporters and advocates for women leaders. As leaders in education, they offer valuable insight and advice to women wanting to pursue leadership roles in higher education. Additionally, they are willing and interesting in serving as mentors and champions for future female leaders. This result is drawn from the following responses:

If I were to give advice to women wanting to attain a leadership position in higher education it would be to visit with previous leaders, both men and women, then integrate their technique with your own as you look to the future. All the while being true to yourself, accessible & persistent. From you I receive, to you I give, together we share, by this we live. (#102).

My advice to future women leadership is to stick your neck out and reach for leadership opportunities. Focus on the mission statement of the institution. Come to every meeting prepared to advance that mission and eventually your due diligence will prevail. (#020)

My advice in one sentence is to know your personal strengths, know when to listen and keep your mouth shut, choose mentors (both men and women) who will assist your quest for excellence in serving, and be willing to mentor others (#001).

Recommendations for Action

Harvard scholar Rhode (1997) contended:

Despite these [gender discrimination] patterns, most Americans do not perceive gender inequity as a serious problem. The topic is an unwelcome intruder in most conversations. When speaking of sex, we like to discuss sexual relationships, sexual deviance, and sexual difference; we prefer to avoid sexual inequality and

the patterns that sustain it. Even those who share the basic goals of the women's movement fail to give them priority personally, politically, or financially. (p. 2)

Given the persistent gender gap in leadership positions within the American higher education system, such as Board of Trustees membership at community colleges, equality for women is not yet a reality. Consequently, the researcher recommends that the following leadership actions be taken:

- Provide more assistance and mentoring for female candidates and new Board members. Current and past female Board of Trustee members should create and maintain formal mentoring programs for women aspiring to serve or those currently serving on the Board.
- The data reveals that although females are less likely than men to consider running for elected leadership positions, they are equally responsive to recruitment (Lawless & Fox, 2012). The intentional and purposeful recruitment of female candidates is vital in helping close the gender gap present in elected office positions. Additionally, colleges and universities should continue to support affirmative action initiatives by hiring more female leaders. By establishing a robust pipeline of women leaders, the candidate pool for recruitment will be more gender diverse.
- A Local Call for Action- National initiatives have been created to provide women opportunities for leadership development and support. Projects such as *She Should Run* and *Elect Her*, help young professional women build the skills and confidence needed to serve in top executive positions. The researcher suggests that such initiatives should be established within

elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, and the local community. The establishment of such initiatives will not only bring awareness to this issue but will also provide the necessary mentoring and support needed for young American women to become world leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study provided rich information and topics that are worth further examination. Based on the research findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the researcher suggests the following threads of inquiry for additional investigation:

- Conduct a similar qualitative study with male Board of Trustee members at community colleges to compare and contrast men and women's experiences while serving on the Board. Investigate the similarities and differences between how women and men perceive their leadership roles and responsibilities and the impact of gender representation on Board performance.
- Replicate the same study using a larger sample size and different regional locations. Do similarities or differences occur in the Board's gender representation when researching Board's in rural versus urban areas? Are the perceptions and experiences similar? How about the challenges and obstacles?
- Conduct a qualitative study to examine the impact of ethnicity representation, if present, in terms of influence on Board performance. Similarly, researchers could investigate age representation amongst Board of Trustee members.

- Conduct a qualitative study to examine if Board of Trustees nationwide are politically charged entities. Compare and contrast how politics play into Boards when members are appointed versus elected to their positions.
- Conduct a qualitative study with male and female Board of Trustee members at community to explore the leadership relationships of males and females serving on Board of Trustees, how well they work together, how well they collaborate, differences in leadership styles, campaign strategies, and Board behavior could be influential in further understanding of this topic.
- Reproduce a similar study from the perspective of the males who are serving with the female Board of Trustee members. How do men understand the women's roles and responsibilities on the Board? How do men feel the female gender affects the Board? Moreover, approaching the research from the outlook of the female community and college population and considering how gender representation on the Board of Trustees affects them may produce data that helps researchers further understand gender inequity in educational leadership positions.
- Identify and research gender-balanced and/or female dominated Board of Trustees. In situations where there are multiple females on the same Board, exploring how well the women work and support one and other could yield influential results. Similarly, researchers could look at the differences between how female and male community college Presidents interact and relate to female Board members.

- Another aspect that merits further research is expanding this study, as well as the above mentioned recommendations, beyond community college Board of Trustees. To better understand and identify gender inequity within leadership positions, additional research on females serving in elected positions is warranted. Areas of interest may include City Council and local governance positions, K-12 School Boards, and Board of Trustees at Universities.

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APPENDIX I

Institutional Review Board Approval

University of Idaho

Office of Research Assurances Institutional Review Board

875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010
Moscow ID 83844-3010

Phone: 208-885-6162

Fax: 208-885-5752

irb@uidaho.edu

October 23, 2013

To: Kathy Canfield-Davis
Cc: Bethani S. Studebaker

From: Traci Craig, PhD
Chair, University of Idaho Institutional Review Board
University Research Office
Moscow, ID 83844-3010

Title: "ALONE ON THE RANGE": AN EXPLORATION OF FEMALE
BOARD OF TRUSTEE REPRESENTATION AT COMMUNITY
COLLEGES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'

Project: 13-244

Approved: 10/23/13

Expires: 10/22/14

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the above-named research project is approved as offering no significant risk to human subjects.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of this memo. Should there be significant changes in the protocol for this project, it will be necessary for you to resubmit the protocol for review by the Committee.



Traci Craig

APPENDIX II

Invitation Letter to Potential Participants

Dear <<Name >>,

My name is Bethani Studebaker and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Administration program at the University of Idaho. I am very interested in understanding the roles and responsibilities females have when serving as a community college Board of Trustee members. The purpose of my research effort is to explore the role of female Board members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation in terms of female influence on Board performance.

It is with hope that you will help me complete my dissertation research by participating in an in-depth personal interview. During the interview you will be invited to reflect on the roles and responsibilities that you believe you have on the Board and your reasons behind the decision to serve in such leadership position. Please be assured that all information provided will be confidential and anonymous. Your identity and your institution will be protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Having secured the endorsement of the University of Idaho, I hope you will feel comfortable participating in this study. Having the opportunity to interview and learn from you would be an honor for me and also would allow future generations of women to benefit from your wisdom and guidance.

Attached for your review is a copy of the Informed Consent Form and Interview Guide. If you have any questions, please contact me at (208) 404-1554 or at bethanistudebaker@boisestate.edu. I hope to hear back from you soon to discuss the possibility of scheduling an interview with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Bethani Studebaker

APPENDIX III

Participant Informed Consent Form

Participant Informed Consent Form
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Title: “Alone on the range”: A phenomenological study on the lived experiences of female Board of Trustee members at Community Colleges in the Pacific Northwest

Directions: Carefully review each state below and initial that you have read the statement. Please sign on the reverse side if you understand and agree to the contents in the form and are consenting to participate in this study.

1. _____ The **University of Idaho Institutional Review Board** has approved this project.
2. _____ The purpose of this study is to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. This study will also identify the reasons behind the decisions to serve in such leadership positions.
3. _____ You will be asked to participate in a series of one to three interviews in your local setting of choice. Each interview will last approximately ninety minutes. Interviews will be digitally recorded and the right is reserved for you to turn off the recorder at any time during the interview. Once the data has been transcribed the recordings will be permanently erased.
4. _____ Your time as a professional is valued. The time spent in interviews will be pre-arranged according to your schedule and will stay within the scheduled time frame. In case the researcher is unable to keep the assigned meeting time, all efforts will be made to contact you in advance.
5. _____ Your identity and your institution will be protected through the use of pseudonyms to maximize confidentiality. Once the interviews are transcribed and you, as the participant, have reviewed and checked the accuracy of the transcripts all links to identify you or your institution will be severed (approximately 3 weeks after the interview). All attempts will be made to protect your information and maintain confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.
6. _____ Interview questions will be related to your experience as a female Board of Trustee member, your perception of the roles and responsibilities ensued in the position, and your beliefs on the extent to which gender affects such understandings and perceptions. Some questions may cause you to feel uncomfortable.
7. _____ The findings presented in this investigation will be influential in comprehending why an underrepresentation of females within specific leadership roles exists. Locating concepts that support the decision to serve on a Board of Trustee and understanding a

woman's perceptions of their leadership roles and responsibilities on the Board will help identify the positions women choose to take within educational leadership. The revealed phenomenon will contribute to the empirical body of knowledge and has the potential of yielding a better grasp of the roles and responsibilities that females believe they have when holding such positions

8. ____ Your participation in this study is voluntary and, at any time during the interview process, you may withdraw from the study. If you choose to discontinue participation all information previously collected will not be used for the study. All recordings and/or documents will be destroyed.

9. ____ If you have any questions or concerns at any time throughout the process about the study, the researcher, or your participation, please contact the researcher or the major professor through the following contacts.

<u>Contact Information</u>	
<u>Investigator/Researcher</u>	<u>Major Professor</u>
Bethani Studebaker	Dr. Kathy Canfield-Davis
7020 Pet Haven Lane	University of Idaho-CDA Center
Boise, Idaho 83716	1031 N. Academic Way, Suite 242
Phone: 208.404.1554	Coeur d' Alene, Idaho 83814
Email: bethanistudebaker@boisestate.edu	Phone: 208.667.2588
	Email: canfield@uidaho.edu

I have reviewed this consent form and understand and agree to its contents. By completing and signing this document I agree to willingly participate in this study

Participant Name _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Phone Number _____

Please send me a copy of this study.

Address: _____

Thank you, but I do not wish to receive a copy of this study.

Researcher Name: Bethani Studebaker

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for your agreement to participate!

APPENDIX IV

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Title: “Alone on the range”: A phenomenological study on the lived experiences of female Board of Trustee members at Community Colleges in the Pacific Northwest

Investigator: Bethani Studebaker

Participants Name _____ Institution: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Introduction

Thank you very much for making this dissertation study possible. As you know, the purpose of this research effort is to explore the role of female Board of Trustee members at community colleges in the Pacific Northwest and to examine the impact of gender representation, if present, in terms of female influence on Board performance. You will be invited to reflect on the roles and responsibilities that you believe you have on the Board and your reasons behind the decision to serve in such leadership positions. I hope you find this interview process reflective and meaningful.

Before beginning the interview, please be assured again that all information provided will be confidential and anonymous. Your identity and your institution will be protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Please interrupt me during the interview if you need clarification. For any questions that are not relevant or make you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to comment briefly choose not to comment. You are encouraged to focus on questions that you consider important, meaningful, and interesting to you. Please feel free to add additional insights or comments at any time.

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask before we begin?

Demographic and Biography:

1. Tell me about yourself? (age, educational level and major, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, hobbies, etc.)
2. How long have you served as a Board of Trustee member?
 - a. Why did you decide to run for the Board of Trustees?
 - i. Was this the first time you had run for a seat on the Board?
 - ii. What campaign promises do you have to keep?
 - b. What is the gender composition of the current Board?

- i. Has there ever been any other female representation on the Board?
Please give a brief history to explain.

c. What offices and special responsibilities have you had on the Board?

3. What is your current/prior work experience in education?
4. What other community organizations and leadership roles have you held or currently hold?

Interview Guide

1. In general, what is the overall role and responsibility of the Board of Trustees at your institution?

- a. In which ways do you contribute to ensuring that this role and responsibility is met?
- b. In general, what do you believe is your role and responsibility on the Board?
- b. What do you believe is your greatest contribution to the Board?

2. What would you describe as qualities of a successful and effective Board of Trustees at a community college?

3. Do you think you are as successful and effective as you want to be? Why or why not?

4. Have you had difficulty getting needed resources or support to get things done effectively? If so, why? What strategies have helped you overcome these barriers to achieve desired goals? If not, why not?

5. Have you encountered any barriers while serving as a female Board of Trustee member? If so, what barriers have you experienced? What did you do to overcome them? If not, why not?

6. Do you think gender has affected your role on the Board of Trustees?

7. What do you think are the general advantages and/or disadvantages to being a female Board of Trustee member?

8. From your perception, do you see a difference in how females and males operate on the Board?

9. As a Board of Trustee member, who do you feel you represent?

- a. What other groups do you feel responsible to?

10. What insight have you gained about women in leadership positions while serving as a Board member?
11. What skills, strategies, or support are most critical if women are to succeed as a member of a Board of Trustees?
 - a. How can aspiring women leaders better prepare themselves to be members on a Board?
12. What advice would you give to women who want to run for a position on a Board of Trustee at a community college?
13. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as a female Board member?
14. Do you have any questions?
15. Would you mind if I contact you for more information or classification if needed?

Thank you very much for your participation.