Considerable research has been done on women and leadership styles, and while most have found very little to no difference in leadership style between men and women, there has been conflict with individual gender roles and organizational roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Kanter, 1997). These studies on gendered organizations led to more questions regarding women’s leadership behaviors once in presidency roles. Are women a product of their gendered organization, meaning that their leadership behavior represents a stereotypic male? The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which gender has had an impact on women community college presidents. With the impending retirement of community college leaders, the need to evaluate current female presidents’ respective leadership behaviors can add to understanding of the individual women in these roles, but also to their institutions’ cultures of gender and leadership behaviors.
Utilizing critical feminist theory, this qualitative narrative analysis examined how gender has impacted the leadership behaviors of current female community college presidents in the Pacific Northwest. The methods used included 90-minute, face-to-face interviews with eight current female community college presidents in the Pacific Northwest.

The findings from the study suggest that gender, among other aspects of identity, has affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents. The study found that five themes emerged as a result of the data analysis: 1) intersectionality, 2) image, 3) preserving integrity, 4) credibility, 5) authenticity. This study also attempted to understand through research the institutional and society barriers women community college presidents face in order to create positive change for more women to succeed.
Gendered Leadership? Female Community College Presidents and their Leadership Behaviors

by
Lida Rafia

A DISSERTATION

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APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Education

Dean of the College of Education

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Lida Rafia, Author
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Chapter I: Focus and Significance

Title IX was enacted in 1972 as a response to growing concern about the problem of sex discrimination in education. Since then, there has been significant progress for women in education. Women have achieved administrative-level positions in higher education. Furthermore, female leaders have begun to emerge.

The American Council on Education (ACE) reported that between 1986 and 2001 the proportion of female presidents rose from 9.5% to 21.1% (Switzer, 2006). More than one-quarter of these women (26.8%) were at two-year institutions. In 2006, 29% of community college presidents were women (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). Although the women’s movement has had a significant impact on shaping their future, today women are still facing issues of inequity in community colleges. Women constitute 91% of all full-time clerical and secretarial staff and 64% of all other professionals, including positions within student services (AACC, 2013). These statistics reveal the scarcity of women who are presidents of their community colleges, at only 28% (AACC, 2013).

Community colleges are unique in serving the community’s needs. “Reflecting the democratic ideals of our nation, community colleges have broken with higher education tradition. Their services are shaped by the core values of open access, community responsiveness, resourcefulness, and a clear focus on teaching and learning” (Boggs, 2003, p. 16).

Community colleges have evolved to respond to the changing needs of their diverse communities. Community colleges also enroll the most diverse student body in the history of higher education (Boggs, 2003), yet, when examining the demographics of
administrators, there is still an alarming disproportion of women community college presidents at 26% (ACE, 2006).

Eddy and Cox (2008) concluded that community colleges are “gendered organizations despite espoused values of being democratic institutions” (p. 77). The hierarchical male-dominated norms are still prevalent in community colleges. Eddy and Cox further stated, “The experiences of these women leaders showcase the types of behaviors that were rewarded as they ascended to the presidency” (p. 72).

The question driving this study is how gender has affected female community college presidents’ leadership behaviors as they have advanced their careers in higher education administration.

**Purpose of the Study**

Considerable research has been done on women and leadership styles, and while most studies have found very little to no difference in leadership style between men and women, there has been a conflict with individual gender roles and organizational roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Kanter, 1997). These studies on gendered organizations led to more questions regarding women’s leadership behaviors once in a presidency role. Are women a product of their gendered organization, meaning that their leadership behavior represents a stereotypic male?

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which gender has had an impact on women community college presidents.

**Research Questions**

Three research questions, based on critical feminist theory, focused this study on female community college presidents’ leadership behaviors:
1. How has gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents?

2. Were certain leadership behaviors rewarded more than others?

3. Did female community college presidents have to adopt a new leadership behavior in order to advance their careers to the presidency role?

The approach to this research study was to understand the leadership behavior development of female community college presidents through in-depth narratives involving current female presidents in the Pacific Northwest. According to Merriam (2009), “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world” (p. 22). Narrative meanings are contextualized within larger social and cultural structures and also may shed light on how an individual’s experiences may be undermined in power relations.

The research questions are linked to the critical feminist theory because the participants’ experiences are at the forefront of the study. Feminist analysis believes in looking at women separately rather than comparatively to men. Looking at them in comparison to men will, “distort their unique experiences. . . . The failure to look at women separately imposes severe limitations on the understanding of leadership if we assume that gender play a critical role in issues of power and decision” (Bensimone, 1989, p. 144). This study used critical feminist theory as a lens to analyze the data. Critical theory is a philosophy that challenges the prevailing view of our society. Brookfield (2005) explains:

The categories that we use to make sense of our experiences are shaped by dominant ideologies . . . within the critical theory tradition the predominate
understanding of ideology has very distinct connotations of oppression and domination, of it’s being used to subject and hoodwink people into accepting as normal and justifiable an artificially created and permanent state of inequity. (p. 40).

Critical feminist theorist bell hooks (1989) explains feminism as “a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination” (p. 24). According to both Brookfield (2005) and hooks, because domination involves a mix of class, racial, and gender oppression, one cannot confront gender oppression without also confronting racism and classism. “All forms of oppression are linked in our society because they are supported by similar institutional and social structures” (hooks, 1989, p. 35). Because women’s identities are fundamentally affected by all three systems, this study uses critical feminist theory to understand the ways in which gender has impacted the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents.

**Significance**

This study is significant for several reasons. These reasons include: understanding the experiences of women in higher education leadership; contribution to the literature; contribution to leadership programs, including graduate-level programs focusing on developing community college leaders; and support for women seeking leadership roles. The following sections discuss each of these points.

**Women in higher education leadership.** The significance of this study is to better understand the unique experiences of women in higher education leadership roles, specifically, understanding the ways in which gender impacted or influenced the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents. This research is of
importance to women not only interested in becoming presidents within community
colleges but for everyone working in these institutions. Hooks (2000) noted that, without
male involvement, the feminist movement can never fully realize its potential: “Feminist
consciousness-raising for males is as essential to revolutionary movement as female
groups” (p. 11). As more women aspire to leadership positions, it is important to know
through research what institutional barriers they may face in order to create positive
change for women to succeed.

**Contribution to the literature.** Few studies specifically focus on female
community college leadership behaviors. With the increasing number of presidential
vacancies in community colleges, it is imperative to gain insight into the ways in which
women lead their two-year institutions. The anticipated wave of retirements among
college presidents is of great concern (Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007; Cook &
Young, 2012) and presents challenges to what Campbell (2006) calls a “critical
leadership gap.” According to ACE’s 2012 report, 65% of women in chief academic
officer (CAO) positions are either hesitant or do not want to seek presidency due to the
nature of the work. With the impending retirement of community college leaders, the
need to evaluate current female presidents’ respective leadership styles can add to
understanding of the individual women in these roles, but also to their institutions’
cultures of gender and leadership behaviors.

**Contribution to leadership programs.** This research can also have great
significance for future women’s leadership programs. Understanding the ways in which
women community college presidents developed and/or changed their leadership styles
will give insight to leadership programs to promote equitable and inclusive leadership
styles to allow more women to become college presidents. In addition, this may assist in understanding the progression and path of women administrators to become community college presidents.

**Support for women seeking leadership roles.** It is important to study female community college presidents in order to improve the potential for more women to seek these leadership roles. For young female professionals in higher education, this study may inspire them to seek administrative and presidency roles. Understanding the various leadership behaviors and hearing firsthand accounts from female community college presidents may serve as inspiration and motivation for other young women.

This research may also be useful to other women in community colleges who aspire to become community college presidents in the future. More specifically, the research may also provide insight into looking at institutions to create environments that support women with their career aspirations for leadership and advancement. It may be possible that more women in community colleges would seek leadership positions if they saw norms of institutional recognition of the intersectionality of gender and work.

**Summary**

The introductory chapter has provided background information on female community college presidents and the statistical data that reflect the continued existence of gender inequity. Using critical feminist theory, the purpose of the study is to understand the ways in which gender has influenced or impacted women community college presidents’ leadership behaviors. It is important to understand the experiences of women in higher education leadership so that more women are encouraged to seek leadership positions. The insights gained from the participants will inform not only other
women in higher education but also leadership programs, and contribute to knowledge about gender and leadership.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The research focused on how gender has affected female community college presidents’ leadership behavior. This literature review illustrates the path women have taken toward the presidency and the obstacles they have had to overcome and continue to encounter.

A search was conducted of research and scholarly articles published from computerized databases from the Oregon State University online library service. The focus on the literature was on female community college presidents and their leadership styles. The following keywords and phrases, both individually and in combination, were used to search for relevant materials: female community college presidents, women community college presidents, administrative leadership, leadership styles or behaviors. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were examined and reviewed. Only studies from the United States were included in this research.

Organization

The literature review is organized into three major themes that emerged. The first section details a history of women in education. It will contribute to some background knowledge on the topic. The second section focuses on the background and context to community colleges and women in leadership. The third section is primarily focused on gendered organizations. Acker (1990) described the term “gendered organization” to emphasize the advantage of the male power structures. These gender inequalities can be seen by the “relative scarcity of women in most top level positions and the existence of large job categories filled almost entirely with low-wage women workers with little power and autonomy” (Acker, 2006, p. 111). Community colleges, like many
organizations in the United States, are characterized by their bureaucratic structures. More than a few scholars have described these organizations as instrumental or relational (Amey, 1999; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). “Instrumentalism is a functionalist doctrine stressing rational thoughts and strategic action. Relational organizational constructs seek to include diverse groups, share power, build coalitions as well as advance the individual and community development” (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999, p. 2).

History of Women in Education

During the 1600s there seemed no reason for any woman to acquire a formal education. A woman’s role was set from birth. A woman’s identity derived from family membership—as daughter, wife, and mother. A woman did not question her place; it was assumed that women had smaller brains and weaker minds than men. Women acquired knowledge and learning only as it related to their domestic duties (Solomon, 1985).

By mid-18th century “shifts in religion and science, as well as demography and the economy, converged with religious currents to make female education a matter of increasing interest at the upper levels of colonial societies” (Solomon, 1985). Because most men turned to money making and politics, the church became a place for women to find personal development opportunities and support for their lives. The church thus became an approach to indirect education. “Newtonian scientific rationale which placed God at a distance and gave human beings greater responsibility for their lives” (p.11) began to be discussed among churches and in colleges. Education thus emerged as central in the shaping of human beings of either sex. However, talented women were always reminded of the societal restraints on their learning, whether by their fathers, husbands, or the community (Solomon, 1985).
In one of the seminal articles on leadership and gender, Hartman (2011) argued that it was not until 1963, when Betty Friedan wrote the book *The Feminine Mystique*, that women, who were usually white, middle class, and educated, began to listen to a different voice. The “feminine mystique” is what women have been told all their lives, that they must find primary identity and fulfillment in marriage, home, and family. Friedan’s message to women was “simple and bracing: Wake up. You are being hoodwinked by people determined to keep you in the comfortable concentration camp of your house” (p. 11). Many women listened to Friedan’s message and became activists in the second wave of the women’s rights movement.

In the 1970s, women of several generations initiated demands for female equality and challenged educational institutions to fulfill the promises of liberal education. Elite universities like Yale, Princeton, and the University of Virginia, although reluctant, admitted women in the early 1970s. By 1983 Columbia University opened its doors to women undergraduates. Most women’s colleges, like Vassar, also started to admit men. The feminist movement affected the education of both men and women in all institutions. As a result of federal legislation and affirmative action regulations, public efforts to reduce and eliminate discrimination against women in academia, as well as in the workplace, helped individuals to assert themselves and reject age-old prejudices (Solomon, 1985).

Title IX was enacted in 1972 as a response to growing concern about the problem of sex discrimination in education. Since then, women have progressed in education in terms of administrative and leadership positions (Madsen, 2012).
While more women have entered the workforce and have higher educational degrees, women full-time workers in 2009 earned 78% of every dollar men earned. (Hartman, 2011). In a 2014 article in The New York Times, “The Motherhood Penalty vs. Fatherhood Bonus,” author Claire Cain Miller cited a study that explained that the pay gap seems to arise after women have children. Budig and Boeckmann’s 2011 study, based on the Longitudinal Survey of Youth, found that on average men’s earnings increased more than 6% when they had children while women’s decreased by 4% for each child they had. This pay gap persisted even after factors such as education, experience, and hours worked were controlled. This research suggests that there is still discrimination and a cultural bias against mothers.

For men, meanwhile, having a child is good for their careers. They are more likely to be hired than childless men, and tend to be paid more after they have children. . . . The data about motherhood penalty and fatherhood bonus present a clear-cut look at American culture’s ambiguous feelings about gender and work. (Miller, 2014)

This bias and discrimination toward mothers is not new. In 2003, Lisa Blekin, writer for The New York Times, coined the term “opt-out revolution” in reference to the phenomenon that many young professional women were choosing to leave mid-level and executive-level positions to go home. Hartman (2011) argues that women are not choosing to leave: “Rather than opting out, most are being pushed out by workplace inflexibility, failure of public policy, and workplace bias against mothers. Rarely is it mentioned that returnees pay a price. For every 2 years out, salaries fall by 10%—the so-called mommy penalty” (p. 14). Hartman believes that in order for a new women’s
movement to occur, “We need a clearer consensus about the extent to which problems in our current domestic, work, and leisure arrangements actually do rest upon a continuing gender inequality, spoken or unspoken” (p. 15).

In summary, this section provided a brief historical overview of women’s roles from the 1600s as one-dimensional to today’s dynamic and complex identity that women have acquired. Much of this is due to the women’s rights movement that paved the way for the rising numbers of females in college and aspiring to have careers. With all of this progress, however, women still face challenges of gender inequalities today.

**Background**

Community colleges have consistently been described as the ideal setting for women presidents to have a positive impact on their institutions and higher education. “Community colleges offered the ideal setting for women presidents to redefine leadership, to have a positive impact on their institutions, in higher education, and society as a whole” (Dicroce, 1995, pp. 80–81). According to Weisman and Vaughan (2007), women occupied approximately 28% of all presidencies. More recently, women represent 33% of community college presidents (Cook & Young, 2012) and hold 65% of senior academic positions at two-year public institutions (King & Gomez, 2008). These numbers suggest that it might be assumed that more women will be leading community colleges, as the pathway to presidency is through senior academic affairs administrator positions such as the dean of instruction and CAO (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). While serving as the CAO has increasingly shown to be a path toward a presidency, Dean (2008) and ACE (2006) both reported that 63% of women CAOs do not desire a presidency.
While the community college may seem to be the ideal setting for women to redefine their leadership, their traditional bureaucratic structures and instrumental leadership conceptions serve as a significant counterbalance that often works against women (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). “If the proportion of women who serve as senior administrators and full-time faculty provides a standard for equity, then women, as presidents, remain underrepresented” (Cook & Young, 2012, p. 14).

The pathway to community college presidency for women has been challenging, in that they must cope with personal and institutional barriers (Moore, 2000). Furthermore, Buddemeier (1998) found that 81% of all female presidents had experienced sex discrimination. Women leaders spend considerable time and energy addressing stereotypes and misconceptions about the way they lead (Eagly, 2007). There is considerable tension between the qualities that people prefer and expect in women leaders, and this produces cross pressures on female leaders. Eagly stated that “women often experience disapproval for their more masculine behaviors, such as asserting clear-cut authority over others, as well as for their more feminine behaviors such as being especially supportive” (Eagly, 2007, p. 4). These cross pressures place women in a double bind, and often these women choose to opt for a “leadership style with which male managers are comfortable” (Catalyst, 2001).

A question that is not explored in the literature is how gender has affected women’s formative experiences, key developmental experiences, multiple role challenges, and career achievement experiences and how these factors have influenced the development of their leadership styles. Limited research has been done on common leadership styles of women community college presidents. In addition, women’s
leadership patterns in the past have been debated concerning whether women leaders behave and lead in the same way as their male counterparts (Tedrow, 2001).

**Gendered Organizations**

Different organizations tend to display somewhat different organizational characteristics or styles. In instrumental organizations, people and ideas are often situated as tools for organizational leaders to use in working toward increased efficiency. In contrast, relational organizations seek to include diverse groups, share power, and build coalitions, as well as advance individual and community development (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999).

Furthermore, studies (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Tedrow and Rhoads, 1999) have shown that these two organizational styles are associated with gender roles. Men have been found to be associated more closely with the instrumental organizational tools, while women tend to use the relational organizational tools. Women may have difficulty reaching upper levels of administration because of their leadership styles. These differences may be due in part to men seeing leadership as leading, and women seeing leadership as facilitating. Women embrace relationships, process, and sharing, while men focus on completing tasks, achieving goals, and winning (Growe & Montgomery, 2000).

Community colleges are gendered organizations because of their reliance on hierarchy and positional power (Eddy and Cox, 2008). From a critical theory perspective, society “[has] historically situated the male individual at the center of theoretical, public discourse” (Luke, 1992, p. 29). Knowing that the typical president of an American institution of higher education is Caucasian, male, and 54 years of age (Phelps & Taber,
and that the research indicates that community colleges are in support of instrumental leadership styles, what implications does this have on women in administrative leadership?

Women are now compelled to lead in the leadership style that is considered the norm—the instrumental style. This style of leadership is defined as a “functionalist doctrine stressing rational thoughts and strategic action. Implicitly people and ideas are often situated as tools for organizational leaders to use in working toward increased efficiency” (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999 p. 1). Instrumentalism has been found to be most associated with masculine ways of leading rather than feminine ways. Feminine traits are distinguished by collaboration, empathy, and cooperation, while masculine traits are characterized by dominance, competitiveness, and hierarchical authority (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Johnson 1990; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Rosner, 1990; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). More than 20 years ago, utilizing this method of leadership was the easiest way for a woman to be hired for administrative positions or any positions of leadership, especially because this approach to leadership had repeatedly been established as acceptable to the public and successful in attracting promotion and recognition (Porat, 1991). It can be argued that this can still hold true today. A recent meta-analysis (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, Ristikari, 2011) on the extent to which stereotypes of leaders are culturally masculine found that stereotyping continues to contribute as one of the bigger challenges that women face when attaining roles that have power and authority. “Men fit cultural construals of leadership better than women do and thus have better access to leader roles and face fewer challenges in becoming successful in them” (p. 637).
According to Tedrow and Rhoads (1999), women who used adaptation strategies by utilizing the instrumental leadership style found themselves in a “double bind.” Women who adapted to the traditional leadership style were isolated from other women, and although they adapted to their male counterparts’ ways of leadership, they were also never fully accepted by men simply because they were women (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). These women placed value on their ability to succeed in their professional roles using the traditional leadership behaviors, but by doing so they were viewed as “outsiders because they were women, thereby isolating themselves from men and women” (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999, p. 9).

Unless key members of the institution are willing to critically examine the college’s culture, women will continue to face barriers in leadership positions (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan, 2000; Eddy & Cox, 2008). Findings from a phenomenological study in which six women community college presidents were interviewed uncovered organizational structures in community colleges that were still based on male norms (Eddy & Cox, 2008). This study further indicated that the role of hierarchy “and its corresponding reporting structure were present” (p. 72). Eddy and Cox (2008) found that the experiences of these community college presidents “showcase the types of behaviors that were rewarded as they ascended to the presidency with links to the disembodied worker inherent in these descriptions” (p. 72).

Eddy and Cox’s (2008) study was influenced by Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations. According to Acker, gender in organizations occurs in at least five interacting processes: (a) the construction of divisions along gender lines; (b) the construction of symbols and images that explain, reinforce, or oppose those divisions; (c)
the interactions between women and men, women and women, and men and men that enact dominance and submission; (d) the production of gendered components of individual identity; and (e) the ongoing processes of creating and conceptualizing social structures. Eddy and Cox (2008) argued that gender inequalities in community colleges are apparent because of the lack of women in leadership roles, particularly in the presidency role.

Findings from the Eddy and Cox (2008) study suggested that the organizational structure in community colleges is still based on male norms. Similarly, Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) conducted a national survey of community college leaders and found slight differences in how men and women defined leadership. However, they did find stereotypical differences based on perceptions of male leadership as more directive and autocratic and female leadership as more participatory. Community college administrators, faculty, and staff need to better understand how traditional organizations have framed women’s working lives through masculine instrumental conceptions. “Such an understanding should take into account both institutional and individual assumptions” (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999, p. 15).

In a study by Ebbers et al. (2000), the majority of the women surveyed believed that their biggest hurdle to advancement was the mindset of their community colleges’ boards of trustees. In their views, the boards of trustees tended to favor candidates that are like-minded and fit their male-dominated environment. Ebbers et al. (2000) claimed that it is imperative to have more assertive women serve as members of community colleges’ boards of trustees. “It is at the board level that the attitudes and hiring policies regarding women and minorities can be changed” (Ebbers et al., 2000, p. 380). Moreover,
the board of trustees will also set an example for the college administration that they are in favor of providing opportunities for more diverse leadership.

In *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg (2013) argued that internal obstacles hold women back. She cited the Howard/Heidi case study that demonstrated how we evaluate people based on stereotypes. Frank Flynn from Columbia Business School and Cameron Anderson, a New York University professor, created a case study in 2003 about a real-life venture capitalist named Heidi Roizen. The case study mentioned how Roizen’s success was attributed to her professional network and outgoing personality. Flynn and Anderson give this case study to half of the students to read Heidi’s story, and for the other half, they changed Heidi’s name to Howard. This experiment concluded that: “Success and likeability are positively correlated for men and negatively for women. When a man is successful, he is liked by both men and women. When a woman is successful, people of both genders like her less” (p. 40).

Sandberg further explained that “this truth is both shocking and unsurprising: shocking because no one would ever admit to stereotyping on the basis of gender and unsurprising because we clearly do” (p. 40). Professional achievement, therefore, is always placed “in the male column” because we characterize men and women in opposition to each other. Sandberg urged women to overcome the Howard/Heidi stereotype and advocate on their own behalf.

What Sandberg fails to capture in *Lean In* is the systemic structures (sex, race, and class) within organizations that impede women from succeeding. These structures fundamentally affect women’s identities. According to hooks (1989), “Feminist thought must continually emphasize the importance of sex, race, and class as factors which
together determine the social construction of femaleness” (p. 23). Because we cannot separate multiple oppressions, we must look at intersectionality as a framework that recognizes the multiple aspects of identity.

Critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality in 1989. While her focus was on the intersections of race and gender, Crenshaw (1993) highlighted “the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (p. 10). Brah and Phoenix (2004) highlighted a broader range of ways in which social constructs and various makers intersect and interact through gender, race, class, physical ability, sexuality, and age.

Margaret Wheatley (1999) mentioned that we change only if we decide that the change is meaningful to who we are. If the work of change is at the level of an entire organization or community, then the search for new meaning must be done as a collective inquiry. She further explained that unlike traditional organizational charts, we must look at organizational roles as focal points for interactions and energy exchanges. Therefore, according to Wheatley, the instrumental leadership style then limits an organization from using process and relationships. “Hierarchy and defined power are not what is important; what’s critical is the availability of places for the exchange of energy” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 72).

Summary

The review of the literature revealed that community college cultures have the potential of either supporting or discouraging women on their path to the community college presidency. As long as “power structures still form the basis of hierarchy, women [will] continue to be judged by male models of leadership, and gendered stereotypes”
(Eddy & Cox, 2008, p. 78). The existence of traditional hierarchies coupled with the appeal for presidents to maintain positional power encumbered women’s ability to lead authentically. Understanding how gender plays out in the workplace has the potential to enrich the work and family lives of all people in organizations.
Chapter III: Design and Methods

While the community college may seem to be the ideal setting for women to redefine leadership, the traditional bureaucratic structures are a significant counterbalance that work against women. A question that is not well explored in the literature is how women’s formative experience, key developmental experiences, multiple role challenges, and career achievement experiences have affected female community college presidents’ leadership behaviors.

This study will provide an understanding of how gender has impacted women’s leadership behaviors in the community college presidency role. The results of this study may serve as a guide to aspiring female community college presidents. In addition, this study may provide insight and direction for institutions that strive to offer leadership development and organizational change within higher education institutions.

Positionality

I am a female educator in the community college system. Having a leadership position at the college has given me an understanding and insight into the different ways in which other female leaders at the community college lead. I have observed many of my mentors as they advanced through the ranks of community college leadership positions and have witnessed the changing leadership styles these women have had to adopt in order to succeed in their new roles.

Philosophical Approach

The philosophical approach used for this study was critical research. Based on Merriam (2009), “Critical research goes beyond uncovering the interpretation of people’s understandings of their world. In critical inquiry the goal is to critique and challenge, to
transform and empower” (p. 10). This study sought to understand and illuminate how female community college presidents have come into their roles as presidents in a system that has inherently been male dominated (Richman, vanDellen, & Wood, 2011).

There are many barriers in the gendered organization. Thomas, Bierema, and Landau (2004) explained the “hidden curriculum” that women face, where they have no choice but to assimilate into the male culture by downplaying or hiding their characteristics that may seem feminine. Stereotypical perceptions create a multitude of challenges for women. Because men are seen as “prototypical leaders, women’s leadership behaviors are evaluated against the masculine leadership norm” (Catalyst, 2007). This, of course, is a catch 22 for women, where they must prove themselves more than men in order to advance. It is, thus, logical for this study to have its philosophical approach in critical research, as it focuses on the individuals (the women community college presidents) and also questions the power dynamics—in this case, the academic organization. “Questions are asked about who has the power, how it’s negotiated, what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power” (Merriam, 2009, p. 35). Critical research also draws from feminist theory as it relates to issues of power and oppression in terms of gender, which is also central to this study.

**Data Sources and Description of Data**

There are approximately 17 current female community college presidents in the Pacific Northwest. Retired female community college presidents were not selected to prevent inaccurate or exaggerated recollections and memories of specific moments when they led. All participants had a minimum of five years of executive-level leadership, meaning that they would have had at least one year of experience in the presidency role,
and at least four years of a senior-level administrative role in postsecondary education. The minimum five administrative years could be a combination of community college and four-year university experience. I invited all 17 of the current community college presidents to participate, with the expectation that at least half of them would agree to be in the study.

Convenience sampling seemed the most appropriate here because of the regional focus and because most presidents within the region may know each other. Because I am from the Northwest and also work at a community college in Oregon, I was able to establish trust with potential participants by networking. Email and personal invitations with a few female presidents started the snowball effect. To ensure minimum sample size, invitations were sent to all current female community college presidents within the region at the time of the study.

The primary source of data collection was a 90-minute, semi-structured, face-to-face interview, followed by member check with feedback for clarification. Timing was important to accommodate the busy schedules of college presidents. Interviews began early in the spring term to ensure the availability of participants. Follow-up interviews and feedback were conducted by the end of the spring term.

Interview questions from “Female Community College Presidents’ Career Development Processes: A Qualitative Analysis” by Vanhook-Morrissey (2003) were modified to ask open-ended questions to the participants to reveal their leadership paths. In her study, Vanhook-Morrissey was able to capture in-depth interviews from community college presidents. Her interview questions provided a good foundation for
participants to share their experiences in their paths to the presidency. For example, interview questions included:

1. Tell me about your career path to the community college presidency. What was the journey for you?

2. How has your experience as a woman in a leadership position affected your leadership behavior as you shifted into new roles?

3. Seventy-two percent of community college presidents are male; how has this impacted your leadership behavior as a female president?

Analysis

This study was conducted using a qualitative methodology. According to Merriam (2009), “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 22). Narrative analysis is an approach within the qualitative paradigm that involves researchers describing the lives of individuals, collecting and telling stories about people’s lives, and writing narratives of individuals’ experiences. By using a narrative approach, the information gathered from the female community college presidents was used to examine how the participants’ leadership developed over the course of their leadership roles in higher education. Narrative meanings are contextualized within larger social and cultural structures and also may shed light on how an individual’s experiences may be undermined in power relations. The narrative accounts in this study are directly linked to the participants’ experiences as female community college presidents. This narrative analysis is linked to feminist research because their experiences may be tied to the way in which their gender may or may not
have affected their leadership. Feminist researchers consider their own subjectivity with the power dynamic in the research process and the inherent complexities in representing another person’s voice (Chase, 2005).

Qualitative narrative design codes the data of the stories to identify themes. Once the narratives from each participant were collected, thematic analysis was used for interpreting. Thematic analysis is used as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns that can “unravel the surface of reality” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). The narrative accounts of the participants were collected by listening to, recording, and transcribing their leadership experiences and how they have developed over the course of their careers.

**Ensuring Trustworthiness**

In order to establish trustworthiness in the data collection and analysis, detailed reports from the study were given to participants, as well as interpretations and assessments of themes. Creswell (2008) suggested a set of techniques for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, clarifying researcher bias, member checks, thick descriptions, and external audits. Furthermore, he suggested that “qualitative researchers engage in at least two of them in any given study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 203). This study used thick description, member checking, and clarifying researcher bias.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

To ensure the protection of participants in this study, the researcher completed the Oregon State University’s Institutional Research Board (IRB) CITI training and exam on Human Subjects. This initial course provided a general overview of the protection of
human subjects within research settings. The researcher also followed appropriate guidelines set by OSU. The information provided by the participants was used exclusively for the purposes of this study. This study followed all of the requirements of the OSU IRB review process.

Summary

This qualitative narrative study focused on female community college presidents and how their leadership developed throughout their careers. The underlying research question was: How have female community college presidents developed the way they lead over the course of their leadership careers? Critical feminist theory served as a framework for this study of female community college presidents. By using a feminist approach to examine the leadership behaviors of women in the community college presidency role, this broader societal perspective tries to make visible what is invisible in organizations.

The participants were drawn from current community college presidents in the Pacific Northwest. In-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted. Braun & Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis was used for interpreting the data.
Chapter IV: Findings

Participants in the Study

The participants in this study were a sample of women community college presidents in the Pacific Northwest. Requests to participate in the study were sent via email to all current women community college presidents from the region. Seventeen presidents were invited to be interviewed—10 responded with their interest. Out of the 10, two presidents who expressed interest had schedules that could not accommodate scheduling of an interview. Eight interviews were scheduled and conducted between April and May 2015. All eight of the female community college presidents served in institutions within the Pacific Northwest. Because of the regional focus of this study, great care was taken to preserve the identity of the presidents and their respective community colleges. To maintain confidentiality, participants were given pseudonyms. Additionally, any identifiable data that could disclose the participants’ identity was removed and replaced with a line indicating that a name was mentioned.

Five presidents came up through student services into administrative leadership roles, two came from faculty, and one was from workforce development. Seven out of the eight presidents interviewed started their careers in their community colleges in part-time positions.

Interviews

Six interviews took place in the presidents’ offices. One of the interviews took place outside of the president’s college, in a hotel where the president was attending a conference, and another interview was via video chat. On average, the interviews were 65
minutes in duration. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The transcripts were then sent to participants for their review to correct and assess for accuracy.

**Thematic Analysis**

As presented in chapter 3, the interview questions were designed to examine the ways in which gender has had an impact on women community college presidents. Thematic analysis was used as a method to identify, analyze, and report patterns that can “unravel the surface of reality” (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 81). A flexible six recursive process was used to analyze the data: 1) familiarizing yourself with the data, taking notes or marking ideas for coding; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; 6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Data Analysis**

The themes emerged by interpreting the participant interviews and making observations. The themes were categorized based on the number of times a thread of codes or information appeared in each interview. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from participant interviews. Five themes were identified based on the three research questions. Table 1 shows a preview of the data organization and emerging themes.

Table 1

*Data Organization by Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) How has gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college</td>
<td>1) Intersectionality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2) Image</td>
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<td>Research Question 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>How has gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents? When asked specific questions about how gender influenced their choice to pursue presidency and their leadership behaviors, the majority of the participants talked about the intersectionality of their identities.</td>
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**Intersectionality.** Intersectionality refers to the view that women experience privilege and oppression in varying ways and degrees of intensity. Within this study, the women participants indicated that their identities were shaped and influenced by a multitude of factors, such as race, class, age, culture, and the intersection of these systems in society. Feminist scholars argue that gender, race, and class are interconnected as “intersecting oppressions” (Crenshaw, 1989). Participants in this study listed several factors that affected either the way in which they viewed themselves or how others perceived them.

Elisa described how for her, deciding to pursue the presidency was not only about being a female but more importantly, impacted her identity as a mother:
I think when I applied, being a female has had more to do with when I applied, the timing of applying, rather than what I applied for. . . . So there was about 10 years of my career when I was working in part-time jobs or combining part-time jobs in order to balance being a mom and supporting, you know, time for my family. I don’t see men making the same decision when their children are young. When I’ve looked back on my career, several times, a feeling like I am 10 years behind where I would have been had I been full-time all along. . . . As my children were young, it was OK for me to work part-time. Yet, those years of being part-time did not help me move up through any positions or be promotable for anything.

Similarly, Leslie described how being a mother affected her decision to pursue the presidency more so than being a female:

At that time, my kids were in high school and I really didn’t want to move them again. I am not sure that it was as much being a woman as being a parent, that I was concerned about what it would mean to my kids to move them again, especially being in high school.

Leslie further explained how she had to overcome a huge obstacle when she became a mother:

The first barrier I had to overcome had to do with family. If I hadn’t been a mom, it wouldn’t have been an issue. . . . [The birth] . . . was premature. I was in bed for 10 weeks. I had a supervisor that was a woman and she wanted me back to work. I had already had an agreement with her to take time off, and I guess she wasn’t able to find someone to come in and fill in for me. I ended up having to go to the
state attorney general’s office, a huge barrier. I came back and it was very difficult to work with her then. She sort of never let me forget it. Sometimes it is a woman-to-woman thing. The family thing was difficult. I learned there to be very understanding and also to teach people that if they have challenges they need to make sure they have the appropriate documentation in place and not to make assumptions.

For Shauna, when asked how her experience as a woman in a leadership position affected her leadership behavior, she described her identity in a leadership role as having to do more with her age than her gender:

For me, it is a little bit different because early on in my career, I started working in education—I was 19 or 20 and got my first job in education when I was 21 as a classified staff member and worked full-time and went to school part-time, a lot of shift occurred when a lot of the feedback I got was less about being a woman and more about being so young. So, it was a function of being young. I think where that tempers it is that, over time, the experiential piece I was having didn’t correlate to what was the “norm” in education progression.

Shauna further explained that, as she progressed through different leadership roles, her age was a factor but also her culture and her background, particularly as they related to class, affected the way in which she led but also how others perceived her.

Nisha explained that her choice to pursue the presidency had more to do with class and gender than being a woman:

. . . I knew that the opportunity [to become a president was]—I won’t say great—but greater in a community college than it was, you know, pursuing a [a president
position at a four-year college or university. It has, for long, been white men leading institutions, so that is why I thought so much change is needed because that perspective is still there. For me, I don’t know that it was so much gender, but was class and race. And how do you—that’s the intersectionality, right? Like, probably for me, a combination of all three. It would be good for me to be in this position, for young women to see, for [people of my background] to see and for, you know, people who come from a poor path to see that there is hope and there is a possibility that you can make it.

**Image.** A majority of the participants described how their image impacted the way they were perceived by others. They stated more than once how they had to pay close attention to how they dressed, how they wore their hair, whether or not they chose to wear heels, and their tone of voice. Most of this was described when participants were asked what barriers and obstacles they had to overcome or what compromises they had to make in order to advance their careers.

Jill explained in detail an incident she noticed regarding her height:

I have realized that if I don’t wear heels, I have less impact with men. See these heels? This is my normal heel. I am about 5’10” in these heels. This is how I am all the time. I am always at this height. Every now and then, I wear flats and I am 5’7”. I had a guy, I was supervising two levels down, I was wearing flats and I was always taller than him. This time I wasn’t. He came up to me and goes, “this is cool,” because he was taller than me.
Jill then went on to describe a woman who is very successful in academia, and she contributed part of her success to the way she looks, more specifically because she is not seen as “feminine” but comes across as genderless:

She is so successful because she comes across as genderless. I am convinced of it. She is older and she had her little gray [hairs]. Nobody is looking at her because they think she is attractive. No one is threatened by her. . . . She is somehow [a] genderless, extremely knowledgeable person. So people—men—are able to deal with her just as a person who is talking. I have never seen anything like it. After a while, I think it is because of her size. She is not an object of desire, she is not cute. She is not young, right? The way she comes across is very matter-of-fact, that she is a grandmother, a person you need to listen to. Her age was probably part of that. I was struck by that. You know you can’t be too distracting in terms of how you look. You know you are in a man’s world, no doubt about it. There are peculiarities depending on the city and the industry and all kinds of things. . . . So how do you dress? Do you put your hair up? Maybe you put it up more often?

You know. I think it is a big part of it and how aware women are about it.

Jill also described how certain vocal ranges and circular reasoning, which are seen as more feminine traits, have a negative impact with men in a room. She described that during an important presentational meeting, another female leader had a very sound and logical statement in response to the presentation but the way in which she came across was very circular:

[This woman] in the group is incredibly competent . . . [but she decided to] pull out their Post-It notes, and they are doing the writing on the board. I will look
around the room and the guys are—I mean, this is NOT their language. This is like a school marm going off on them. It is SO circular and we literally spend tons and tons of time with this, and I will look over and go “aaaaaaahhhhh” and . . . that is behavior I cannot imagine a man doing in that scenario, where it is much more about appearing smart and competent. And being linear and not wasting time. . . .

The thing that is such a shame is that this woman knows her stuff. Everything she said was completely accurate. She lost him. Her style was maddingly circular and it was hysterical in the sense of getting more and MORE AND MORE. Yeah, gender, your awareness of it, when to turn it more this way or that way, depending on your audience—women have to know how to do that. I don’t know that men ever have to know how to do that.

Lindsey described how she was often told to change the way her hair looked, and this was confirmed during a training she went to on how to become a president:

They train you how to work . . . [how you] should dress . . . how to sit in an interview . . . where to put your hands, and body language in an interview. All of that was wonderful. But, the one thing that they said to me that I have felt very challenged by, and still to this day feel very challenged by—and frankly I was told it again—is as a woman, you need to pull your hair back. You need to pull it back. It needs to be in a barrette or in a rubber band or something very classy. . . . I said, “What?” We don’t tell men how to wear their hair. For whatever reason, that one thing seems, while they are trying to be helpful, which I know the reason now, but it seemed like so, “Are you going to tell me that I need to wear a dress too?” Well, they didn’t. No, no, no. Here’s the reason why. Most boards are still
predominantly male. You want to look professional. You don’t want messy hair kind of flying around. So you just need to tie it back. It just never sat well with me. . . . Pull your hair back or don’t pull it back? It is those things that nag me. So you know what I did? I pulled it back, because that is what they told me, and I got the job.

Lindsey further described the trouble women have to go through with more than just their hair:

There is a rule of seven. You know, never wear more than seven pieces of jewelry. Earrings count, necklaces, watches, rings. I know, if you paint your nails that counts as one. Because it is distracting. . . . Men don’t have to worry much about any of that, right? I just think those are differences in gender that men don’t really have to worry about all those things. Women do. And women judge other women more harshly. So, if you are a female and you are going for an interview and there are a lot of females on the board, that is a different story. It is all that balancing, you know, do you wear a suit or dress that shows your figure or do you cover that up? You want to be hired because [of what] you know and what you are capable of doing as a leader. You don’t want people judging you by how you look, what you are wearing, necessarily. Honestly, men pretty much . . . wear a suit, a nice pressed shirt, and probably a tie, and they are good to go.

Elisa similarly illustrated how appearance and image are so important for a woman pursuing a college presidency:

[How we apply for a job, there] is always a committee process and the committee defines someone who can . . . walk on water. They just have these unrealistic
images of who that ideal candidate is. And, we perpetuate that here at [this institution] too, who that ideal candidate is. I think that often women who are competing for jobs are not often seen as fit for the job. Some of the presidencies that I applied for have never had a women president. Things like appearance become so much more important than what I think a male would ever be held accountable for. As I was going through about a two-year period, applying for jobs and being able to interview, I kept my hair [dyed]. I kept it up—I made sure I showed up for my regular trims, you know, had the professional wardrobe to be able to look presidential. I think that image—women are held to a much higher standard, even in the news. Look at all the airtime that was given to Hilary’s haircut. . . . You never hear men being held to the same expectation—that they don’t look the part or how they look that day.

For Shauna, her age had been an issue since she entered into a leadership role at a young age. She stated that one of her compromises—along with not dying her hair because she “needed to get her hair cut to show gray streaks so I can show myself as wizened?”—was the way in which she showed her passion.

The other compromise is that I do have a tendency—and this is one that I share regularly—I am passionate about why we are here. Other people don’t have that level of urgency or level of passion about why—it is not that they don’t care, it is that it manifests itself differently. I had to tone down sometimes my passion and temper. . . . I could hear myself getting, I’ll say, “keyed up.” . . . I think that because of age, I remember this clearly, “You exhibit a lot of youthful enthusiasm.” I remember that being written down by colleagues that were older
than me. “Oh [when] you get wound up we just know that you are exhibiting youthful enthusiasm.” Vocal patterns are important. So, my projection, my enthusiasm, as I got older and had more positional authority, wasn’t serving the usefulness, and I could see that by sometimes watching others.

It seems that Shauna’s age was a significant factor for how others perceived her not only because of the way she looked, but also her tone of voice, and that often getting excited or feeling passionate about an issue was discounted because of her age. As she was telling her story, there was a rather condescending tone when she recalled getting her feedback of “You exhibit a lot of youthful enthusiasm,” further indicating that her age was a barrier in the way in which she was perceived.

Early in her career, Nisha was told that she was too soft spoken. She explained:

One of my very first presidents that I worked for would recognize “that you’ve got something [Nisha], but you are very soft spoken and people probably won’t take you seriously, you know, you need to toughen up, you need to be more than what you are.” He wouldn’t say it, but you know, me, being me just wasn’t going to be enough to be a president. That you have to eat gun powder or something. Get brazen, or whatever. You know, I thought that I am who I am and that doesn’t take away from the fact that I couldn’t be a good leader, that there is some level of intelligence here and that this is my passion, so I don’t know that I want to steer away from it. And, his words for me, though I don’t know that he would have actually told a man “You talk too softly” or that “You need to toughen up if you want to make it in this game” kind of thing. So, I think for other people, things that have been said or spoken over me have been about me or the kind of person I
am, could have kind of dissuaded me—you know, that is not me—and kind of look for some other choice, to make some other career path.

The findings from the first research question revealed the themes of intersectionality and how the participants viewed themselves in more than one way. Participants shared stories of how motherhood, their age, race, and class also affected their leadership behavior. The second theme of image also emerged from the interviews, and it confirmed the ways in which females are stereotyped and the sexism that still exists today.

**Research Question 2**

*Were certain leadership behaviors rewarded more than others?* The second research question sought to analyze whether or not there were commonalities in the ways leadership behaviors were rewarded across community colleges. There were no consistent themes that emerged in regard to the leadership behaviors that were rewarded. However, what emerged out of the interviews were the strikingly similar experiences of the participants’ having a president or supervisor who had a top-down, authoritarian-style leadership that drove the participants to leave their institutions. This finding reinforces the gendered organizations theory (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Tedrow and Rhoads, 1999) discussed in the literature review.

**Preserving integrity.** The theme of preserving integrity emerged most often from Interview Questions 6–8, when asked about what compromises the participants had to make or sacrifice in order to advance their careers and when asked if they had any negative experiences along their paths to the presidency. For each of the president participants, “politics” always played a major role within their work and their institutions.
The participants used the term “politics” on numerous occasions to describe the foundation of relationships, personal authority, and elements of power. Because of the “politics” and power play, the participants believed they had no choice but to leave their institutions in order to preserve their morals, ethics, and integrity.

Jill and Nisha both described how politics played out within their decision-making and often within realms of work relationships. Jill explained:

Even if they are someone you think is not great, you are going to see them again. So how do you do good work without compromising them, you know? You just can’t blast anybody at this level—you just can’t—it doesn’t matter how horrible they are. (Laughs) So what you have to do is to take your wins when you get them, extricate yourself when you really can’t be in the room anymore. . . . What is amazing to me—the politics are so unbelievable, to the small little levels that we talked about, [to] things that are far more obvious. . . . That is why it is so tricky—your personal integrity sits right in the middle of it all.

Nisha recalled that often she found herself wanting to champion a certain cause because she was so strongly passionate about it, yet there may be certain people in the group who would not be receptive to the idea.

. . . Sometimes there are repercussions for you being vocal or not going along with the crowd. That all of a sudden, there is this retaliatory behavior that you have to endure, and that is not fun. No, not at all. I am conscious of that. I feel as though I need to seriously pick and choose my battles. All of them are not worth fighting because some of them, the consequences may end up here, having to deal
with that behavior, here where everybody else got funded, but yours didn’t, those kinds of things.

For Jill, Lindsey, Elisa, Shauna, Vida, and Leslie, preserving integrity meant they had to make the ultimate decision to leave their institution. Jill described her negative experience:

The biggest negative in my prior institution was that we had a chancellor come in who was just incredibly top-down, who didn’t validate faculty at all, anybody really. It was his way or the highway. We did a lot of good work, but everybody hated doing it. The morale was incredibly bad. It was hard because I was trying to help. In the middle of all of that, I had a colleague who was (long pause) sort of sabotaging me, a guy. Once I realized that wasn’t going to stop and that my president was starting to become receptive to him because he was always very, very supportive to me, he was a mentor to me. But then, all of a sudden, this guy started ingratiating himself with him in a way that I thought was horrible. [The president] started getting really receptive to this guy, and it just made no sense to me at all. I was wondering what was going on and I realized that it was like a male bonding thing and he was needing to lean on someone and that guy seemed to fit that role better than I did for him. That is what it boiled down to. So, I thought that the writing was on the wall. I needed to leave.

As Lindsey recalled her negative experience when she made the decision to leave her institution, her body language and tone of voice told a story of pain and sadness:

Based on my position, my leadership style certainly took, I would say, kind of a step back. I was more hesitant when the new male president came in and said
basically we are going to rule with an iron fist and it is going to be like this and there will be no fraternizing. I pulled back and almost physically felt myself pulling back and saying, “I don’t know how to operate that way.” I felt like a fish out of water. I tried. That is when I tried, those really uncomfortable times. . . . I really refused to compromise my leadership style, and I left. It is something that I can’t—I don’t know how to change that. I can’t even describe as eloquently as I would like, how much of a difference that made for me. When I was forced to make decisions without consulting people, I just knew I couldn’t do it.

Lindsey’s experience affirmed the gendered organizational theory, in that she was being compelled to lead in an instrumental way (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999), which in the literature has been associated with the masculine ways of leading. Lindsey’s approach to leadership, as was expressed by the rest of the participants, was more empathetic, cooperative, and collaborative (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Rosner, 1990). Elisa also shared a similar experience, how she felt that her leadership style was forced to shift because of her president’s top-down, authoritarian style:

I had to make a decision that if I were to survive in that job, I had to do what he wanted me to do, and what he wanted me to do was ignore the faculty contract and require faculty to do things that were in violation of the contract. But also, just mean-spirited and unprofessional. I think my own ethics and values told me that if I were to stay in this position, that I can’t be true to who I am. That in order for me to survive I need to step away from [it]. I couldn’t figure out a way to work for him and maintain my own dignity or ethics.
Shauna reflected on her situation in detail. On why she left her institution, she explained that it had to do more with her values and beliefs than her supervisor’s leadership style. It is important to note her experience within the theme of preserving integrity, because her decision to leave her institution was due to her belief that she was compromising her integrity in terms of what she valued the most:

There was a situation [that] some people would find very non-problematic. It was distressing to begin with based on what I had done to try to create a situation that got us to a place, this wasn’t as a president, that caused me—even to this day, in retrospect—causes me such deep distress that I ended up back in church, in the back row, crying every Sunday. I couldn’t influence it. I would go back and try to influence the change. Most people, it would be a very minor thing. And in fact, for the people who made the decision without my involvement and without my perspective, it was probably the most comfortable decision they had made in their life. It was fundamentally immoral to me. Unethical. It did not feel good. After about six months of trying to reconcile it, I needed to just leave.

Again, this affirms the gendered organizational theory because here, Shauna’s struggle is the lack of collaboration, cooperation, and empathy she saw by her peers that resulted in a decision that she felt was unethical.

Vida recalled a time when she left her institution not because her values were compromised but because she felt personally diminished:

I did have a job that I didn’t like at all. It only lasted for about six months because I said that I couldn’t do this. It is not that it felt unethical to me, but I felt minimized and so I made the choice to look for another position.
Similar to Lindsey’s and Elisa’s very distressing encounters with their presidents, Leslie also explained her unpleasant memories of her former president:

[He] was a bully. He was a yeller and a screamer, and he liked to humiliate people. It happened to me on more than one occasion. He was inappropriate in some of his interaction with me. I had to make a decision to stay and wait him out, as people say they will do, or whether I was going to leave [the institution]. That was the catalyst for me to leave, without question. Those interactions with him. And, you know, I am a very planful person, very outcomes-driven person. He was “don’t do plans” and would throw the enrollment management plan in the garbage. “I don’t do plans.” When you are in those kinds of situations, you have to make a decision on what you are going to as a leader—stay or move. If you stay, how are you going to survive and protect who you are as a leader? It is very hard—when your boss is saying that you WILL fire somebody, and you stand up and say, “No I won’t.”

The findings in the second research question indicated that there were no consistencies to the way in which leadership behaviors were rewarded. The theme that emerged from the interview questions was that, through any negative experience or challenge that arose, preserving integrity for each of the participants was of great importance, even if this meant leaving their institutions.

Research Question 3

Did female community college presidents have to adopt a new leadership behavior in order to advance their careers to the presidency role? The last research question sought to find out whether or not participants had to adopt a new leadership
style or behavior to reach the presidency. Two themes emerged from this research question: credibility and authenticity. From the interviews, participants did not state whether or not their leadership style or behavior shifted. What they did mention frequently was the consistent presence of barriers of credibility they had to endure throughout their career and how they continued to remain authentic.

**Credibility.** This refers to the ways in which women are perceived and the need to constantly compete in order to be seen as credible. This is seen early in their careers with regard to their work ethic. Each of the participants described her struggle with always having to be better and smarter and position herself in order to be seen and heard. Each participant recalled an incident in which she realized she needed to have credibility in order to advance her career. Based on their combined stories, it can be said that all of these women felt they needed credibility because, as women, they were not seen as equals. All of them acknowledged that they needed to earn doctorates to earn credibility, but they also alluded to the ways in which they needed to earn credibility based on how they looked and spoke and on their leadership behaviors.

Jill started her career teaching within the humanities part-time. She holds a PhD within the humanities from an elite institution, and she believed that her credibility is often devalued when, particularly, men find out her subject, as often the humanities is not seen as “credible.” She stated:

I need to have credibility, and I need to not have to fight unnecessary battles with men who might not think that I am that good or something, and I have had to do that, so emphasizing the credential helps me . . . because you know, sexism is alive and well . . . having the credentials on the academic side is critical.
Jill went on to describe a situation in which she overheard some of her male colleagues making comments about the subject in which she earned her PhD. As a result of this, Jill stated that she will now make a change in her biography to reflect only her degree and institution and not the subject in which she earned her degree. She elaborated further that she overworked, overcommitted, and was overinvolved not only because she loved the work but because it also got people to notice her.

I mean, I am doing it for the work, but what ends up happening is that I am in the game, I see the opportunities, and I am a logical choice when people say “who is going to be the next blah, blah, blah.” So part of this is, it is not like I haven’t thought about it, I use the word “ascending,” taking the steps. I do think about that. I probably have always thought about that somewhere. . . . I have read articles where if a woman will apply for a job, if she doesn’t think that she has 95% of the qualifications and a man can do it and he has 30% and he is totally cool with it, he’s feeling great, generalizing of course. For me, because I try too hard, I am at 95 percent. I feel pretty OK, if the opportunity comes, to put my name in and say “look at all the stuff I am doing!” So that is how I stay ready for the opportunity—I am at 95 percent. If I were a man, I betcha that I wouldn’t be doing it, I wouldn’t have to maybe.

What Jill is referring to here is the article “The Confidence Gap” in The Atlantic. A few years ago there was a study conducted by Hewlett-Packard (HP) that wanted to see why more women were not at the top management positions. What they found was that women at HP would not apply for a promotion unless they met 100% of the
qualifications listed for the jobs, whereas the men at HP would apply when they thought they could meet 60% of the job requirements.

Elisa also mentioned the differences in gender as well as issues of credibility as it relates to applying for jobs:

I think as women, we look at “What are the requirements for the job and do we have those?” And we try to match those. I describe it as women get all their ducks in order before they will take a shot, where men will just shoot. I have seen that my whole career of men colleagues [saying], “Well, I can do that.” Maybe they have never done it or had experience, but there is a sense of privilege: “Well, of course I can do it! I can just step up into it and do it.” Whereas women . . . I look at positions and if there is a part of that position that I don’t feel comfortable with or not had experience in, then I find a way to gain that experience, or I find somebody who has the expertise that I can talk to and learn from. Because I don’t want to have any gaps in that body of knowledge . . . as I observe the men around me . . . they are comfortable with having gaps because they will have somebody else do it or they will just kind of float though.

Elisa further explained how women are held to a different standard:

We not only have to have all those ducks in order, we also have to look good for the part and look young and look like we have enough energy to be able to do the job successfully. . . . Those hidden rules or those unsaid things . . . I think that as women have moved into chief executive offices, we often want to look at it as an even playing field, and as these are the rules of the game, and this is how we do
that. But, there is a lot of hidden culture, hidden expectation and hidden rules that you don’t learn until you have been through it.

Lindsay echoed the same notions of credibility and making sure you had enough to consider applying for a presidency. She described her own rationale:

I felt like I had to get that doctoral degree done to somehow be seen as being presidential. Maybe that had to do with being female because certainly I had worked for a male president before, my very first president, [who] didn’t have a doctoral degree. …But it just seemed like I had to prove myself more. I had to have more years of experience, I had to have a higher degree.

Heather reflected on the gender-based barriers within the presidency role that she had to endure: “They come up in how you are perceived, how you get into the position and once you are in the position, you know. Again, you have to be better, smarter, take slights and not react to those.” Heather described a specific moment to illustrate these “slights.” She was asked to speak at a public town hall session where two well-known male officials were also speaking that night. She recalled:

I get up because I was up next to speak and one of the [male officials] stands up and proceeds to speak for 20 minutes and kind of off agenda and off topic—he had to leave early [for a personal matter], so he wants to take the time and he is sort of singing praises of what the [other high-powered official] wanted. It was extremely awkward and very public. I am now standing—and we had 40 or 50 people in the audience, and this particular [high-powered official] has a sort of reputation of not being particularly respectful of women. Those kinds of things come up, and you cannot react to those things. You have to be incredibly graceful,
and if you react you are perceived as being strident or, you know, the things that I am saying in this interview, you could never be publically saying that because you would be perceived as playing the gender card, that type of thing.

Heather further illustrated the “slights” to credibility that occur in work meetings:

... the countless meetings I have been in where there are people in the room and you speak up and you offer an idea and the conversation moves on and later in the conversation... your idea is re-voiced by a male in the room and it is acknowledged. This happens repeatedly to the extent that I have lost count. It is the kind of thing that is so common that when I mention it to other women they [say], “Oh yeah. It happens all the time.”

Other “slights” are also very common but not as subtle. Leslie recalled the time when she was announced as the first female president at her institution after “40 years of very strong authoritarian, male... leadership” at the first chamber of commerce event:

The individuals came and welcomed me, male, white individuals.

“Congratulations! We have to tell you that we did not support the hiring of a woman for the president. We were not sure a woman could do this job.” My response was “Well, I guess I just have to prove you wrong.” I did, but it wasn’t me, it was the team of people I worked with who were all of a sudden empowered to make their own decisions.

She goes on to further illustrate that those harsh criticisms did not end there:

Even after that, there was still, you know hyper-criticism of me. How much money I made. All the other presidents before me had had retention agreements
and had had this and that and the other thing. Yet, when I got there, it was, “Look at the board, they are wasting the money.”

Even before she became a president, Leslie faced similar insults:

I think credibility sometimes had been challenging for me. . . . My male counterparts always stood tall for me. But I remember the board at the time, they were always trying to trip me up. The thing that struck in my mind more than anything—there were four vice presidents Dr. _____, Dr._____, Dr._____, the former was not a doctor, but they addressed him as Dr.____. And there was me. I was not Dr.______, I was [Leslie]. At that point, my vice president colleagues would remind them that I was Dr.______, but [our president at the time] never did. That was interesting because it was like he was so blatantly sexist, then to have to fight credibility.

Vida was not the first female president at her institution, yet she received harsh criticism and judgment because of the preconceived notions the institution had from their first female president.

What I have seen are that people have preconceived notions, and the obstacle is overcoming those. I think some people thought “a weak woman.” “A woman who can’t balance the budget.” There are faculty here—because I had never been a faculty member—[who say,] “Oh, we will be able to snow over these things.”

Shauna experienced the same fight for credibility but outside of her institution.

Partly because of my age and being a woman, in the external world, depending on where you are, there will be different reactions to you. Those are both male and female. I will still be in a meeting and someone will say “What do you do at
“College?” I will say “I am the president.” They will say “Are you the president of the foundation? . . . No, I am the president and CEO of the college.” They will say “Really?! You are far too young for that.” They won’t say “You are a woman.” . . . Then I get to say, “Next year I will be 55.” I think these are some of those things which are up there still.

Nisha’s fight for credibility always had to do with her decision-making process. She pointed out:

People would always say to me “have you verified it with someone?” “Did you check with somebody?” I am often wondering “Why?” Did I need to do that? Are you asking everybody else to get the supporting evidence that makes sense?” . . . I just felt that there were times when you were asked to do a little bit extra to kind of prove that, you know, you are making the right decision or you are doing the right thing or that you feel like your decisions are challenged, when it seems really clear that, you know, to me. . . . You just wonder why you are getting asked to go back and rethink or get somebody else to agree with you that this is the right way to go.

**Authenticity.** The theme of authenticity was one that was very apparent and emerged in all of the participant interviews. Authenticity is critical to note because, for all of the participants, leading authentically and staying true to who they were was more important than being a president. For many of the participants, as stated earlier within the preserving integrity theme, if they did not feel like they could lead authentically, they chose to leave their institutions. The terms “authentic” and “authenticity” came up most
frequently in Question 3 of the interview when asked how their experience as women in leadership positions affected their leadership behavior as they shifted into these roles.

Lindsey recalled the time when she first began her presidency:

In the role I am in now, as the president, I followed several top-down leaders. Again, they were all male—that doesn’t mean that all top-down leaders are male, but in this case, these men had all just basically ruled the roost, people were used to that and they were, “OK, that is what we are doing.” So when they told me that they were looking for a collaborative, open, transparent leader, I believed them because they were ready for change. I said, “This is great! I am so excited!” Well, I got there and I started being open and collaborative, and the very first thing I was accused of was that “she can’t make a decision.” . . . I tested it and said, “You asked for open, you asked for collaborative, you asked for transparent, here is everything.” They [said], “Yeah, well, what we meant was, this wasn’t necessarily what we were asking for.” I said, “This is how I am, and this is how we are going to need to run things.”

Lindsey described further that, during her first few years of presidency, there was a lot of pushback, and it was rocky because her leadership style was not something that this institution, with a long history of former male presidents, was used to. It took almost four years, but she was able to create meaningful change through a collaborative process that was truly authentic to her style of leadership.

Leslie also portrayed a very similar situation when she was in her first year as president in an institution that was previously led by male authoritative-style presidents. She described a time when particular faculty were not used to her collaborative approach:
I think I could have been tempted to shift my behavior. When I was at ______, one of the things that the faculty association asked for was regular meetings with the president. I go, “Sure.” They wanted to have more of the ability to talk with me in informal situations. OK. So we opened it up, and what ended up happening was the first couple of times we had chats there were probably 20 people there, then 10, then four, then one. It was interesting—I asked the faculty president at the time “What’s going on?” She said, “We are schizophrenic. We are so used to being told what to do—you are asking us what we would like to do, and you are asking us for ideas. You are asking us for input. That is a lot of work! We are not sure we are up for that work. It was easy to be told what to do.” Now, I could have become a very authoritarian type of president and said “OK! The cabinet will make the decisions, and you will be told what to do.” . . . But that was not the kind of president I was and that was not—I used to go back to the job announcement and share with people and say, “That is not what you hired.” So, I think you can be tempted. I think you can be—maybe even an expectation can be placed upon you to do something that you are not. . . . That position description did not change between when [the former male president] was hired and when I was hired. But the actions that were taken, were they real? Were they authentic? If I found myself in a situation where I couldn’t be authentic, I would leave. So, yeah, there is always pressure.

Other participants acknowledged the importance of authenticity. Nisha, the soft-spoken president, confidently said,
Stay true to who you are. I didn’t eat gun powder. I don’t know that I became any more forceful or anything, but I am a president now. I don’t know how successful I would have been trying to change my personality or [trying] to be somebody who I am not genuinely.

The final research question was “Did female community college presidents have to adopt a new leadership behavior in order to advance their careers to the presidency role?” The two themes that emerged from this research question were credibility and authenticity. The participants indicated the constant need to fight the battle of credibility, whether it was preparing for a job interview and meeting all of the qualifications listed in the job description in order to apply, or being questioned about their decision-making processes. The findings further indicated that authenticity was held in the highest regard and that if any of the participants felt that they needed to shift their leadership behavior in order to survive their institution, they would choose to leave.

**Summary**

The themes that emerged were identified through exploring the codes that developed from the transcripts. I analyzed the transcripts using the six recursive process to analyze the data: 1) familiarizing yourself with the data, taking notes or marking ideas for coding; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; 6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analysis and findings were developed from investigating the three research questions through semi-structured interviews from eight Pacific Northwest community college presidents. The three research questions were 1) How has gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents? 2) Were certain leadership
behaviors rewarded more than others? 3) Did female community college presidents have to adopt a new leadership behavior in order to advance their careers to the presidency role? These three research questions framed the interview questions and served as a guide to analyzing and finding the emerging themes. The five themes that emerged were: (a) intersectionality, (b) image, (c) preserving integrity, (d) credibility, and (e) authenticity. The following chapter provides an analysis of the findings, the participants’/researcher’s conclusion, and recommendations.
Chapter V: Discussion & Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate how gender has affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents. The study provided in-depth narratives of the ways in which the participants viewed their leadership behaviors and how their multiple identities affected the way others perceived them in their executive leadership roles. The president participants shared their stories and experiences on their journeys to presidency as well as the unique compromises and barriers they faced along their paths. The final chapter provides a discussion of the study findings in relation to the review of literature and speaks to implications for practice and future research.

Discussion

The themes that emerged from the data directly correlated with the research questions and provided a response for each of the research questions. The research questions of the study were:

1) How has gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents?
2) Were certain leadership behaviors rewarded more than others?
3) Did female community college presidents have to adopt a new leadership behavior in order to advance their careers to the presidency?

In regard to the research questions, the discussion of the findings explains how this study addresses the gaps identified in the literature review. The methodology of critical feminist theory was applied to examine the ways in which gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents. The data collection and analysis included face-to-face participant interviews from eight different community
college presidents in the Pacific Northwest. Oregon is unique in that 83% of community college presidents are female. This is much higher than the 33% of women in community college presidencies nationally (Cook & Young, 2012).

**Research Question 1. How has gender affected the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents?**

The data analysis from the interviews revealed that gender has had an impact on the way in which all of the participant presidents were perceived, however they drew from the intersectionality of their multiple identities. The premise of intersectionality is that people live in multiple layered identities derived from social relationships and structured power. All of the participants expressed more than one category or social group that they simultaneously experience and said that all of those categories, (e.g., race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) experience advantages and disadvantages related to those different social groups. Within the findings it was evident that the participants who identified with one or more of the following—mothers, different race or ethnicity, and/or were younger females in administrative roles—faced unique barriers and, in some instances, faced blatant discrimination at their institutions. These barriers consisted of putting their careers on hold to raise their children and having limited options to advance when working part-time to balance family life. One of the participants explained in depth her struggle of coming back to work after maternity leave and having a dispute about her schedule with her female supervisor upon her return. Within these findings the participants with children were more likely to see family responsibility as a significant barrier, either because of the lack of support their institutional policies provided or the
rigid nature of their supervisors, who did not value work–life balance. However, this also depicts a systemic issue within our society as not valuing family life balanced with work.

The literature review in chapter 2 provided an understanding of the term “gendered organizations” (Acker, 1990) and how the structures of community colleges are still based on male norms. The findings in chapter 4 are consistent with the research of Eddy and Cox (2008) and Tedrow and Rhoads (1999). This is further evident in the findings in chapter 4, as the themes of image and credibility emerged. A study by Koenig et al. (2011) found that stereotyping continues to be a barrier that women face when trying to ascend to higher positions of authority and power. Participants further supported this claim when they expressed how their image as women was critical to how others perceived them. Everything from type of shoes to jewelry, hair, and makeup were mentioned as factors when they were interviewing and in their day-to-day work. Furthermore, their age and tone of voice also reflected their leadership behaviors and how others perceived them negatively if they did what one participant recalled as “exhibiting youthful enthusiasm.”

**Research Question 2.** *Were certain leadership behaviors rewarded more than others?*

The rationale for this research question was to provide further critical analysis of the factors, particularly as they relate to gendered organizations that impacted the leadership behaviors of female community college presidents. Findings from Tedrow & Rhoads (1999) indicated the types of behaviors—such as enforcing rules in an unbiased manner, setting limits and standards, gatekeeping, and managing impressions—that were among those instrumental behaviors that women duplicated in order to adapt to their
institutional environments. These “adaptors,” as Tedrow and Rhoads (1999) called them, were also women who denied or minimized gender issues at their institutions. The women in Tedrow and Rhoads’s study indicated that gender issues did not exist “because they had more trouble with women colleagues. None of the women who used an adaptive framework [those instrumental behaviors] considered how their college’s organizational culture created a competitive, independent environment and thus pitted one woman against another” (p. 8). The findings in this study were similar to Tedrow and Rhoads’s findings in that the majority of the participants, when asked whether gender had impacted their path to the presidency, stated that it either did not impact it at all or they never had encountered gender issues. However, through the participants’ stories, the findings indicated the contrary. There were significant gender issues, inequalities, and women who disrupted other women because they were conforming to the male norms of leadership. Eagly and Cox (2008) emphasized the power of male-dominated structures within community colleges, and thus this study sought to examine whether or not certain leadership behaviors were rewarded and whether they were inherently gender based. The findings did not reveal consistencies to specific leadership behaviors, however the findings did indicate that six out of the eight female presidents experienced a male, top-down hierarchical leader whose style ultimately drove them out of their institution or their positions within the institution. The interview findings confirmed (Amey, 1999; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999) instrumental versus relational leadership behaviors of men and women. The instrumental ways of leading were described as authoritarian, top-down, directional, and linear in all cases exhibited by a male superior. What the participants uncovered were the hardships, discrimination, and emotional pain in recalling their
stories of negative experiences with former male top-down superiors. What was striking was that all participants chose to leave their institutions or positions in order to preserve their own integrity. These stories are telling of women’s oppression in the workforce that still exists today. It is evident from the experiences of these participants and through their journeys to a presidency that even today, our work culture has not yet embraced women leaders.

**Research Question 3.** *Did female community college presidents have to adopt a new leadership behavior in order to advance their careers to the presidency role?*

The research findings clearly indicated that participants valued authenticity over adopting a new leadership behavior. There were times that some of the presidents indicated that they did try to adopt a more male-oriented authoritative approach to their leadership behavior, particularly when they had a male supervisor who was also exhibiting those same leadership behaviors. In these cases the participants explained that they felt their leadership behavior had to shift in order for them to survive. These examples again confirm the theory of gendered organizations.

Along with the findings of authenticity, the theme of credibility emerged from the interviews. As stated in chapter 3, Thomas et al. (2004) explained the “hidden curriculum” that women face as leaders, in which they must prove themselves to be credible and thus have no other option than to assimilate to the male norms while hiding their feminine leadership traits. The interviews revealed that all participants struggled with credibility in their career paths to the presidency. From their tone of voice to their word choice and how they wear their hair, the participants explained in depth how they would hear what they needed to do and how they needed to look in order to be seen as
credible. Furthermore, the president participants also spoke about the constant need to have strength and determination and, as one president mentioned, have “tough skin” in their positions because women still have to work hard to prove themselves. Phrases such as “sexism is alive and well” and “we are definitely still in a man’s world” were mentioned enough in the findings to indicate that participant presidents were used to being held to a different standard than their male counterparts and had encountered some form of gender-based barriers, including various forms of overt sexism. The findings also highlighted that the participants in this study were passionate about what they do, were very committed to the work, and felt a true sense of obligation to work hard and prove to others they could be successful. The participants noted that throughout their careers in higher education, at every level they were willing to challenge themselves to move to the next higher position in pursuit of increased responsibilities and new avenues to learn and grow. Most participants noted the importance of mentors who had encouraged them along the way to take risks and nurture their growth within their institutions. Others may not have had formal mentors but did mention that seeing other female leaders alone blazed the path for them.

**Implications for Practice**

The lessons that may be drawn from this study also have implications for aspiring future female community college leaders. The findings from the interviews revealed that none of the participants intentionally sought a presidency or a career in the community college until they were employed on campus. The findings from this study present opportunities to highlight the experiences of community college presidents in the Pacific Northwest so that more female leaders will aspire to become community college
presidents. The study also raises critical questions for further research in the area of developing future female leaders in community colleges. Over the next few years, as current presidents and senior administrators retire, community colleges may be faced with smaller pools of qualified and interested applicants to fill those positions. Further research should continue into gender issues that women community college leaders face, how those barriers are diminished, and why some colleges are more responsive and affirming of women in leadership positions.

I believe it is the institution’s role to support its employees’ leadership training and development. College leadership teams and boards will need to strategically find innovative ways to solidify internal leadership development for both full-time and part-time employees, through succession planning and mentoring at all levels of the organization. All of the participants in this study identified the impact a mentor or colleague had had on their pathways to the presidency. Mentoring and job-shadowing experiences could provide opportunities that focus on relationship building, collaboration, and college advocacy. Participants also spoke about addressing stereotypical male-dominated behaviors. Specifically, when asked about a negative experience they had had, they confronted what they considered disrespectful, rude, and often sexist behaviors (yelling, demeaning, and/or belittling of women’s perspectives, swearing, inappropriate sexist comments or gestures) and competitiveness among some of the men who were in leadership roles at the time. These women presidents often told stories of relying on their mentors (both female and male) and how through mentoring they were able to sometimes navigate and use management strategies in dealing with these types of challenging behaviors. However, as mentioned previously, most women
who encountered such behaviors that jeopardized their values and beliefs had no other choice but to leave their institutions. This type of camaraderie to collaborate with other mentors in times of need should have implications for practice within institutions. Creating communities that foster safe environments that will not tolerate sexism, racism, heterosexism, ageism, and ableism should be cultivated.

Furthermore, an in-depth look at policies and practices or lack thereof needs to take place to ensure that employment contracts, maternity leave, flextime, job-share, and salary placements are equitable and inclusive. It will be important to effectively integrate work and family responsibility successfully. Finally, institutional cultures either promote a female to become a college president or only see that job as a “man’s role.” These institutional cultures are geographically dependent and politically driven. This study suggests that there needs be a fundamental shift in the direction of the conversation away from how women need to change in order to become presidents, and more in the direction of a shift in culture of the institutions to promote women to lead. We need to educate our educational institutions regarding how sexism and the inherent internalized oppression that women still face today continue to contaminate our institutions of higher education.

**Personal Reflection**

As a young woman of color in higher education, I find this research has significant meaning for me on multiple levels. As a new mom, I am now able to reflect and see a very different perspective on the challenges of work–life balance many other women who are mothers face. Prior to conducting my interviews for this research, I felt the pressure to resign from my job once I became a mother due to the lack of flexibility with my work schedule and the new demands of balancing work, school, and family.
relationship with my former female supervisor, who also served as a mentor for me, quickly changed once I returned from maternity leave, and this ultimately led to my resignation. Listening to the stories of these courageous female presidents, I was shocked to hear that some of them had similar experiences once they became mothers and went back to work. The most disheartening was that my experience was not unusual. Some of the presidents shared with me that often times it was their female supervisors who treated them poorly. My hope is that this research will encourage readers to think about what messages we are sending to our future female leaders in higher education and how can we give positive messages and models of camaraderie, empowerment, advocacy, and mentorship.
References


Appendix A:

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your career path to the presidency. What was the journey for you?

2. How did being female influence your choice to pursue presidency?

3. How has your experience as a woman in a leadership position, affected your leadership behavior as you shifted into new roles?

4. Were certain leadership behaviors rewarded more than others?

5. How would you describe your leadership behavior in your role as a president?

6. Do you feel that you had to make any compromises in order to become a college president?

7. Were there compromises within your decision making/leadership style you had to make in order to advance your career?

8. Did you have any negative experiences along your path to the presidency that impacted your leadership behavior?

9. What barriers or obstacles as a woman did you have to overcome with the institution as you progressed through your career from ___ to presidency?

   How did you overcome these obstacles?

10. What were the most important factors that led to your becoming a president?

11. What advice would you give to a future female leader in higher education?
Appendix B:

Email Invitation for Interviews

Dear ,

My name is Lida Rafia and I am a doctoral candidate in Oregon State University’s Community College Leadership Program. As part of my dissertation research, I will be conducting interviews with current female community college presidents in Oregon and Washington. The study’s formal title is: Gendered Leadership? Female Community College Presidents and their Leadership Behaviors.

While considerable research has been done on women and leadership styles, there has been conflict with individual gender roles and organizational roles. Are women a product of their gendered organizations? The purpose of this study is to understand and examine the ways in which gender has impacted or influenced the leadership behaviors of women community college presidents. Dr. Shelley Dubkin-Lee, in the College of Education at OSU, is my primary advisor and the principal investigator of this study.

I would like to ask if you would consider being a participant in this study, which requires a 90 minute face-to-face-interview followed by a phone interview for clarification. I would conduct the interview a place most convenient to you of your choosing. In order to aid data analysis, I am asking that you allow us to audio record the interview. Approximately two weeks following the interview, I will send a typed transcript of the interview. Upon receipt, I will contact you by telephone to clarify, verify or expand upon transcribed information from the face-to-face interview.

If you are willing and able to participate in this study, please review and sign the attached informed consent form and return to me by email. I will contact you to set dates and times for the interview within the next 3 weeks.

As more women aspire to leadership positions it is important to know what institutional barriers they may face through research in order to create positive change for women to succeed. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Lida Rafia
Appendix C:

Consent Form

Project Title: Gendered Leadership? Female Community College Presidents and their Leadership

Principal Investigator: Dr. Shelley Dubkin-Lee, School of Education

Co-Investigator: Lida Rafia, Student Researcher

Version Date: February 23, 2015

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

The purpose of the consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Considerable research has been done on women and leadership styles and while most have found very little to no difference in leadership style between men and women, there has been a conflict with individual gender roles and organizational roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Kanter, 1997). These studies on gendered organizations led to more questions regarding women’s leadership behaviors once at the presidency role. Are women a product of their gendered organization, meaning that their leadership behavior represents a stereotypic male? The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which gender has had an impact on women community college presidents’ leadership behaviors. Understanding the ways in which gender has had an impact on women community college leaders will give insight to leadership programs, organizational structures and institutions to promote equitable and inclusive leadership styles to allow more women to become college presidents. This study is being conducted in fulfillment of the student researcher’s doctoral degree.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you have been identified as a current female president at a community college in Oregon or Washington.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will be approximately 3 hours total. This will involve an initial private interview with the researcher that will last
approximately 90 minutes in which you will describe your experiences and perspectives on how gender affected or influenced your leadership behavior. Your interview will be audio-recorded. If you do not consent to audio recording, you will not be able to participate in this study. The researcher will transcribe the audio recording and analyze it for themes. Any quotations used in the study will be returned to you for your review before they are included in the dissertation. Once you receive the transcribed initial interview, you will be invited to correct any inaccuracies or misinterpretations and delete any text you do not want to appear in the written report of the interview. With your prior permission, a 30- to 60-minute telephone interview with the researcher will be conducted at a later time for further clarification and validation. In the event that participants may choose not to participate in the follow-up interview or do not respond within 30 days after requesting the follow-up interview, information gathered in the first round of interviews will be used. If you and the researcher mutually decide a second in-person interview is needed, that will be scheduled.

[ ] I agree to be audio recorded
Initials

[ ] I do not agree to be audio recorded
Initials

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?

Participants may have discomfort with audio recording of the interviews. The risk of identification is heightened due to small sample population and the limited geographical area. It is possible that these records could contain information that personally identifies you. The assignment of pseudonyms will be given to each participant of the study. The primary investigator and student researcher are the only individuals who will have access to the list. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed.

Keeping the names of participants and their institutions confidential will minimize risk. Pseudonyms will be given to each participant and the names of institutions, locations, and organizations directly linked to participants will be changed.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You may not directly benefit from this study. You may benefit from reflecting on your own experience of this period of time and learning of the experiences of your colleagues after the report is completed. The results of this study may benefit others exploring a leadership role in higher education.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for participating in this study.
WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies involving human subjects) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. It is possible that these records could contain information that personally identifies you. The assignment of pseudonyms will be given to each participant of the study. The primary investigator and student researcher are the only individuals who will have access to the list. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that you cannot be identified. Participants will be identified on audio recording by their pseudonym. All audio recordings will be transcribed by Lida Rafia (student researcher).

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. During interview sessions, you are free to skip any questions that you would prefer not to answer. If you decide not to take part, or if you stop participating at any time, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected prior to your withdrawal may be included in the study results.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:

Lida Rafia by Email at lida.rafia@pcc.edu or Dr. Shelley Dubkin-Lee, College of Education, (541) 737-5963; Email: shelley.dubkin-lee@oregonstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

WHAT DOES MY SIGNATURE ON THIS CONSENT FORM MEAN?

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

_________________________________________________

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

_________________________________________________________________

(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent) (Date)
I agree to be audio recorded:________________________________________________
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

I do not agree to be audio recorded:_________________________________________
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

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OSU IRB Study # 6653 Expiration Date: 02/22/2016