

2014

Leaders, Listeners, and Learners: American Women Who Have 'Shattered the Glass Ceiling' of Corporate America and the American Academy

Leah Sams
lsams@wellesley.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection>

Recommended Citation

Sams, Leah, "Leaders, Listeners, and Learners: American Women Who Have 'Shattered the Glass Ceiling' of Corporate America and the American Academy" (2014). *Honors Thesis Collection*. 169.
<https://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection/169>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. For more information, please contact ir@wellesley.edu.

**Leaders, Listeners, and Learners:
American Women Who Have ‘Shattered the Glass Ceiling’ of
Corporate America and the American Academy**

Leah Rachelle Wenzel Sams
Advised by Rosanna Hertz, Women’s and Gender Studies

Presented by the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies
in Fulfillment of the Prerequisite for a
Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honors

Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts
April 25, 2014

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Chapter One.....	25
Chapter Two.....	46
Chapter Three.....	70
Chapter Four.....	95
Conclusion.....	108
Appendix.....	114
Methodology.....	114
Sample Charts and Codes.....	117
In-depth Interview Guide.....	119
Works Cited.....	123

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis project to the 20 extraordinary women leaders who have opened their hearts and minds to a wide-eyed undergraduate. Your stories encourage me to become a 'Woman Who Will' reach higher, dream bigger, and lean in. I am overjoyed with the prospect of one day following in your footsteps.

To my remarkable Wellesley siblings past and present it has been a pleasure to get to know over the last five years. Walking amongst you inspires and pushes me every day to be the best version of myself, and for this I am forever grateful!

To my advisor, Rosanna Hertz, whose teaching and guidance the past three years has allowed me to walk down the path that would soon become the most rewarding academic journey of my lifetime. To Andrea Matthews who encourages me to 'be brave' week after week!

To Kathy Kruse, Paul Joas, Jim and Elaine Wolfensohn, and Eric Ball and Sheryl Axline, who have been remarkably influential in facilitating my career pursuits and giving me additional confidence and vigor to take on my greatest challenge to date.

To Sonya Smith, Hermie Chaney, Karen Talbot, and Megan Eddy for recognizing the potential in sixteen-year-old me, and encouraging my application to Wellesley College!

To Billie Wenzel- behind the blue eyes lives a spirit who has never stopped believing, and believing in me. And first and foremost to my wonderful mom and dad, Drs. Lari Wenzel and Timothy Sams, whose love and support has sustained me over the past 22 years and provided me the opportunities that have made me the woman I am today.

Thank you!

Introduction

“Freedom is not merely the opportunity to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them -- and then, the opportunity to choose.” –C. Wright Mills

It has been widely written that women in America still hold remarkably few leadership positions in comparison to their male counterparts-11.9% of executive leadership positions in corporate America’s Fortune 500 companies¹ according to Catalyst data, and 23% of college presidencies in the American Academy² according to the American Council on Education. Furthermore, “women of color occupy only 11.9 percent of managerial and professional positions. And of those women, 5.3 percent are African American, 2.7 percent are Asian American, and 3.9 percent are Latina”³ (*American Progress* 2014). While scholars and leadership theorists alike continue to research reasons women still remain so impeded in their efforts to ‘shatter the glass ceiling’, this study takes a different approach in an aim to discover just *who* these women are who have indeed ‘made it,’ and how they specifically have come to lead; why have these women in particular who have attained top leadership positions in corporate America and in the American Academy made it to the top, and what do their experiences tell us about what it takes to be a high powered woman in the 21st century? In the following pages I answer critical questions about women and leadership, analyzing the

¹ <http://www.catalyst.org/media/catalyst-census-posts-solid-gains-percentage-women-corporate-officers-americas-largest-500>

² <http://www.forbes.com/2009/10/06/female-college-presidents-forbes-woman-power-women-tenure.html>

³ Women of color are even less represented in positions of leadership
<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/report/2014/03/07/85457/fact-sheet-the-womens-leadership-gap/>

relationship between gender, social-psychological issues, and cultural background in determining what makes a leader. I investigate a number of significant questions in order to go about determining how women in top leadership positions have gained access to the top of their fields. In conducting this study, I find it is the experiences the women undergo- as determined by history and biography- that motivate decisions which catapult them towards positions of power. I note the attainment of these positions is not due to an individual's personality characteristics, but an ability to take difficult life experiences and use them to your advantage; the women in this study turn these experiences into lessons in leadership that accelerate their own advancement. I find women in positions of power traditionally held by men often share in common with other women the historical, cultural, and gendered impacts of their 'experienced struggles.' The structural and cultural systems American women still live in hampers their pursuit of leadership positions as well as their confidence that they can fill the role; so, while understanding leadership is at the core of this project, I will also discuss issues surrounding work-family balance, as it is consistently cited as a top reason more women do not consider top positions during career succession. By interviewing women in top administrative positions in the Academy and comparing them to women in top executive leadership positions in corporate America, I compare the differing paths and expectations of women in these two sectors in order to assess which seems to be more welcoming to women rising in the ranks. I find that women in the Academy have more recently assimilated into top leadership positions (such as administrative positions like President, Provost, and Dean) than women in business, more likely to be found towards the top of the ranks as they are not usually 'firsts' to hold the position. By virtue of this finding, women in these

two fields tend to rise to the top for vastly different reasons; where women in the Academy are often at the top because they fill a desired niche role within an institution, those in business have accumulated specific skill sets needed by the company at the time of their hiring or promotion. Ironically, women who are presidents of universities or colleges are often experts in a *specialty* field (usually borne out of their Ph.D. research), yet their specialty is not necessarily cited as the reason for their selection for the position. Women in business, by contrast, acquire a *broad* range of skills over the course of their trajectory that are in fact cited as the reason they were the best candidate for their top position.

To better understand these critical questions and their implications, in-depth interviews with 20 high-profile women in upper level business management, and academic administrative positions were conducted. I analyze these interviews to discover how and why these 20 women in particular have overcome the significant barriers presented to them on their journeys to the top. Of the 20 women interviewed, I note there was an even split between executive business leaders and academic administrators, with exactly ten women interviewed in top executive management positions (referred to by business insiders as “C-Suite” leadership positions- i.e. CEO, CFO, COO, etc.), and ten women at the upper levels of academic administration from colleges or universities. The women in business selected for interviews all hold “C-Suite” executive leadership roles in a Fortune 500 company (Fortune 500 companies for each year are determined by CNN and Forbes), and the majority of women on the academic side are either President or President Emeritus of an elite institution. Those who were not current or former college or university presidents hold Deanship positions, and one participant is currently

President of a large system of institutions. Five women out of the twenty total are women of color; four are African American and one is Latina. Of these, two are in business and three are in academia.

The women in my study range in age from 36 to 74, though there is only one participant in her thirties and one participant in her seventies. All are presently located on either the East Coast or West Coast, and I pursued these two coasts deliberately in order to most easily interview as many participants in person as possible. As I was unable to travel for some interviews, approximately half were conducted over the phone. I deliberately tried to locate a number of women of color to prove that discussing ‘gender’ alone in regards to these issues is no longer enough- it is also important to represent the experiences of minorities in such dialogues. The sample is approximately 20% women of color, seemingly small, however it is important to understand that this number is even greater than percentage of women represented proportionally in each of the sectors I discuss. And because of the very reason there are so few women of color at the top, locating them proved difficult.⁴ Ironically, because of the very barriers I will discuss in the literature review, it was extremely difficult to find women (and especially women of color) in top leadership positions to participate in my study. Since this is a qualitative in-depth interview study, the data and analysis allows for this number as an acceptable sample size.

The in-depth interview (serving as the basis for my analysis) consists of three different sections- demographic information, leadership, and work-family balance- and lasts approximately 45 minutes to an hour (*in-depth interview guide can be found in the*

⁴ While 20 qualitative interviews with leaders at the top is within the range of sheer numbers of interviewees in published research, I can only present tentative findings about women of color (and the intersection of gender and race).

appendix). In the three sections of the interview, I primarily asked participants questions revolving around two sets of themes – one drawn from the work of Robert J. Thomas in which he asks respondents to use a timeline to pick the “turning points” in their lives. This is an effective way to get people to focus on moments that matter with hindsight (while thinking back on their lives). It is also a way for people who are often in the public eye to avoid providing standard, politicized responses to well-rehearsed questions about “how [they] became a leader.” The second theme revolved around pointed questions about childhood and young adulthood, often a time in the lives of leaders when their potential for success is first recognized. Each in-depth interview questionnaire was tailored to the individual to make for a more personalized, and efficient interview; because the participants are high profile, many have extensive biographies online I was able to use to shape each interview guide. I was also able to use some of these bios to fill in the gaps of participant narratives and timeline, as well as to confirm the clarity and accuracy of details.

The Intersection of History and Biography

For the women in my study, there is a distinct sense history and biography intersect to create unique life experiences that have made them the leaders they are today. In *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills asserts “the problems of our time- which now include the problem of man’s very nature- cannot be stated adequately without consistent practice of the view that history is the shank of social study, and recognition of the need to develop further a psychology of man that is sociologically grounded and historically relevant” (1959:143). I ground the narratives of each of my study’s participants in historical relevance, especially as many came of age during

women's liberation and/or the civil rights movement- these two moments in time shape the lives of each of the women in my sample who by definition have taken on historically non-traditional roles for women in the workplace. More specifically, Mills notes "the biography and the character of the individual cannot be understood merely in terms of milieu, and certainly not entirely in terms of the early environments- those of the infant and the child. Adequate understanding requires that we grasp the interplay of these intimate settings with their larger structural framework, and that we take into account the transformations of this framework, and the consequent effects upon milieu" (161). This is to say that in my sample of twenty women leaders, I think of their stories not just in the context of how one's 'milieu' influences childhood and early adulthood, but within a larger structural framework in the context of how gender and race relations affect experiences in childhood, adulthood, and within the organizational structure of the workplace.

The American Academy and the College Presidency

To be successful and respected, leaders in prominent positions in society must possess a set of abilities which set them apart from the rest of the pack; most important are the abilities to bring a group of people together for a common goal, and to suggest creative initiatives to drive an enterprise forward. A challenging feat in itself, these necessary components of leadership become even more difficult when met with barriers like gender and race, usually intersecting with a set of characteristics stereotypically associated with each. The role of a college president serves as an exemplary occupation displaying the intersection of these struggles, as college presidents typically make important decisions on behalf of their institution all the while managing the intricacies of

a shared governance. As the CEO of an educational institution, college presidents typically serve on a board of trustees and often continue projects started earlier in their careers. Research shows women in these and similar positions of power struggle to break “the glass ceiling” in order to make it to the top, and evidence suggests once at the top, they are surrounded primarily by male voices which ultimately become the dominant ones. A wide body of research on the American College President also suggests the role of the College President [and academic administrators] has changed significantly over time, primarily because challenges for institutions of higher education have shifted based on the need for America to compete in a global market. The “unprecedented challenges institutions face in achieving their missions” (Cook 2012: 1) bring unprecedented challenges to those running the institutions, perhaps one of the reasons “the American College President in 2011 was 58% likely to be over 60, as opposed to the mere 13% of presidents likely to be over 60 in just 1986” (1). While traits and characteristics of successful and well-respected presidents have remained consistent over time, in earlier years college presidents were principally figureheads. In the 21st century the drive for the college President to be the major institutional fundraiser increased (in turn giving them more responsibility), likely because the need for fundraising in general has increased over the years⁵. The new landscape has given way an academic social culture no longer dependent on the Christian religion like it once was (Schmidt 1930), but one with a shift in youth culture on the heels of the technological revolution. More notably, we send a trend with a changing organizational structure of the institution itself (Prator 1963).

⁵ This includes the transformation of the Academy from an elite “club” of white individuals to a more diverse faculty and student body. This transformation includes changes in curricular offerings to expected onsite technology, to infrastructural support to worries about environmental sustainability. There is a general understanding that an increase in the numbers of academic administrators in the 21st century requires a similar increase of funds.

This new role of College President requires an immense amount of leadership in a wide array of academic and administrative activities, and across many departments and divisions. Not only are university presidents expected to work with administrative faculty, trustees, and teaching faculty/faculty organizations, they must do so in a specific manner and exhibit a particular set of characteristics (Prator 1963). To be an effective leader, especially in as high an administrative a position as this one, one must demonstrate thoughtful judgment and foresight, superb interpersonal skills, an ability to be a good listener, and a high level of emotional intelligence; leaders who possess these qualities and use them in the tasks mentioned above are more likely to garner transformative results because of their service. In her insightful book, *Thinking about Leadership*, former Duke University and Wellesley College President Nannerl Keohane outlines both what it takes to be a leader and the importance of good judgment in the decision making process. She details the primary tasks of a leader; to make decisions, devise and implement strategies to achieve their goals, use strategy and foresight to think ahead, and to effectively listen to others. Goals have been “collaboratively determined” (Keohane 2010: 33), and must be collaborative, with at least some of the individuals sharing the same interest (35). Keohane explains the question of ‘what determines who becomes a leader and which leaders succeed?’, bringing up the common belief that some are ‘born into leadership’ because they simply display traits of a leader (79); this is a view in distinct contrast to Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas. This belief in particular then begs the question, ‘what are the traits of a leader?’ The traditional view is that leaders typically display traits associated with masculinity, like persistence and self-confidence, one of the reasons why women struggle to break the glass ceiling of the

corporate world; women seeking top leadership positions are expected to display traits often more 'masculine' in nature, and are likely to experience the 'double-bind' when they do. However, Keohane's analysis of leadership is unique and significant- she makes clear that the most successful leaders are able to display traits opposite of the stereotypically 'masculine' ones described above, as these traits are most necessary to successfully navigating a wide range of interpersonal circumstances in an administrative office requiring significant emotional labor.

Corporate America and Women Executive Leaders

Another prominent writer on the field of leadership, Warren Bennis, writes one of the most important characteristics of a good leader is the ability to accept responsibility and blame no one (Bennis 1989). A sentiment also echoed by Nan Keohane, he believes that "true understanding comes from reflecting on your experience" (Bennis 1989:79), requiring the same reflective characteristics involved in taking the time to make "good judgment calls." Bennis also counters the idea society holds that leaders are simply 'born to lead,' contending they instead learn a great deal on a wide array of subjects to become superb leaders in a field, and that they work hard to use their innate strengths to get people on their side. He feels "through their abilities to get people on their side, leaders are able to effect necessary changes in the culture of their organizations and make real their guiding visions" (153). This draws a parallel to Keohane's description of a need for 'followership' to occur in order for there to be leadership, as she quotes Bruce Miroff in saying "if any single characteristic is the hallmark of leadership, it is interaction: there are no leaders without followers" (Keohane 2010: 50).

According to the Wall Street Journal as of 2014, “women currently hold the top (CEO) job at 4.6% of 500 and Fortune 1000 companies. They held just 14.6% of executive officer positions at those firms last year, according to *Catalyst*, a nonprofit that tracks women in business” (Molla 2014). *Catalyst* Vice President Brande Stelling asserts that while these figures are rising (in 1995 no Fortune 500 companies employed a female CEO), change has been extremely slow (2014). Individuals in ‘C-Suite’ leadership positions often sit on their company’s board of directors as a part of their position, and research suggests because there is a leadership gap in upper-level management positions, there is also a corresponding leadership gap for women on boards. According to the 2013 *Catalyst Census*, women held only 16.9 percent of board seats of Fortune 500 companies (*Catalyst* 2013). Though this number is rising slowly over time, it is still considered catastrophically low given the number of women receiving higher educations and involved in the work force. In terms of demographics, *Catalyst* data find over 98% of women board directors in the US are over 40 years of age, and the majority are between ages 50 and 59 (Cook 2012). Approximately 90% of women directors in the US were found to hold at least an undergraduate degree (2012), but this is perhaps a level of education lower than one would expect for positions deemed so prestigious.

Approximately 70% of American female board directors were said to be married with children (2010), a statistic indicating troubles with a work-family balance are not the primary ones when analyzing reasons women struggle to reach the top of the corporate ladder (*this finding is affirmed in my study as well*). Especially given the knowledge most American female board directors are between their 50s and 60s with children who are no longer “dependent,” it would seem many of the barriers are institutional rather than

personal. Judith Oakley's work on gender-based barriers to senior management positions provides further insight to understanding the institutional barriers holding women back, such as "inadequate career opportunities, gender differences in linguistic styles and socialization, gender-based stereotypes, the 'old boys network' at the top, and alternative explanations like the difference between [traditionally] female leadership styles and the leadership style expected" (Oakley 2000: 321). It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason women make up almost half the American work force, but hold an average of 16 percent of top-executive positions (Arfken 2004; Bellar and Helms 2004), but it is only logical to believe the barriers they face as mentioned above are faced at every level as they move up the ranks, making it more challenging to ultimately reach the top. Recent research suggests, however, that the corporate world is beginning to recognize the problematic nature of the lack of female representation in top positions, identifying the growing need for unique talents and ideas women bring to the table (*Zenger-Folkman* 2012). Still though, "the lack of progress shows that just 'giving it time' is not sufficient. Change starts at the top with action – including setting goals for progress and holding leaders accountable" (Molla 2014).

Shattering 'The Glass Ceiling'

Women are systematically blocked from corporate career succession, vanishing dramatically at each level in the higher ranks of organizations (Barsh, Yee 2012), and become even further 'weeded out' the closer to the top they come. It has been hotly debated for some time exactly why this occurs, but journals such as the *Harvard Business Review* have provided a comprehensive list for top reasons women managers have such trouble rising in the ranks. A collection of articles from *HBR* entitled *Women in the*

Workplace: A Research Roundup summarizes the top reasons for this ‘ceiling’. First, men receive critical assignments that lead to career advancements that women do not “according to a recent *Catalyst* study of 1,660 business school graduates, which examined the nature of projects given to high potential employees” (Silva 2012; Carter, Beninger 2012). The 2012 study found that “while more than a third of the *men* reported that their assignments garnered them a great deal of attention from the C-suite, only about a quarter of the women could say the same” (*Harvard Business Review* 3). Secondly, men receive more promotions and hires thanks to the ‘old boys network’, and women tend to receive less due to an implicit bias against them and a lack of sponsorship within mentoring relationships. The *Research Roundup* explains even when women receive more positive comments than the men, still only 6% of the women (as opposed to 15% of the men) were mentioned as potential [upper level] partner material, reflecting the application of lower standards to the women (King et. al. 2012). Furthermore, though women come into as many or more mentor-mentee relationships as men do (Ibarra et. al; 2013: 1), this does not necessarily translate to promotion (2013). “Among participants [in the study] who had active mentoring relationships in 2008, fully 72% of the men had received one or more promotions by 2010, compared with 65% of the women” (1). The study also finds that not only do most women receive mentorship from lower-level managers than their male counterparts, but that “not all mentorship is created equal.” “There is a special kind of relationship- called sponsorship- in which the mentor goes beyond giving feedback and advice and uses his or her influence with senior executives to advocate for the mentee” (1), hopefully translating to promotion. Women in my sample who have made it strongly suggest they received this sponsorship, especially as

their mentors were often those who pushed them into their eventual leadership position. Additionally, many of the women also describe the importance of mentorship by another woman, who can understand their unique struggles and experiences. Thirdly, the well-known absence of workplace flexibility in American institutions, leads women (who are traditionally the primary caregivers) to ‘lean out’ from their career, continuing the ever-persistent struggle with work family balance. “A new study by one multinational corporation shows that the rate of turnover in management positions is two and a half times higher among top-performing women than it is among men [because of work-family related issues]...one half of the women who take maternity leave return to their jobs late or not at all. And we know that women also have a greater tendency to plateau or to interrupt their careers in ways that limit their growth and development” (Schwartz 1989: 1). Lastly, the ‘persistent motherhood penalty’ means that mothers are viewed as less competent and committed (Correll 2013). According to Shelley Correll’s (2013: 4) study in *Gender and Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom* (also summarized in the *Harvard Business review* (2013:4), “when being considered for the same job, mothers were significantly less likely to be recommended for hire, and when they were, they were offered \$11,000 less in starting salary, on average, than childless women” (2013:4). These persistent structural and cultural barriers consistently affect the pay and promotion of women managers and leaders, despite the fact we are seeing more women executives than ever before.

The Impact on ‘Intersectionalities’

“Women of color are 36.3 percent of our nation’s female population and approximately 18 percent of the entire U.S. population. They make up about one-third of

the female workforce... Yet women of color occupy only 11.9 percent of managerial and professional positions” (Warner 2014: 1). In discussing why this is often the case Joan Acker sheds light on the complex nature of the roles of gender, race, and sexuality in the workplace (Acker 2006: 441) addressing two feminist issues: first “how to conceptualize ‘intersectionality’, the mutual reproduction of class, gender, and racial relations of inequality, and second, how to identify barriers to creating equality in work organizations” (441). She asserts that societal inequalities originate in work organizations, and organizations both facilitate and illustrate societal challenges (especially in terms of women in the workplace). “Most studies of the production of class, gender, and racial inequalities in organizations,” she reasons, “have focused on one or another of these categories, rarely attempting to study them as complex, mutually reinforcing or contradicting processes” (442). But the analysis should indeed occur through the lens of viewing all these factors as inexplicably tied, as they are in fact ‘mutually reinforcing.’ Acker’s theory is supported by the personal and professional narratives of the women in my sample, as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are inexplicably tied and cannot be removed from one another. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, whom two decades earlier had written the classic book, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977), also offers a deeply influential perspective that sheds light on this topic of minority women in traditionally (white) male dominated fields, discussing tokenism and visibility. She asserts that “tokens” get more attention, and individually they have higher visibility than “dominants” when looked at alone; essentially, they capture a larger share of public awareness (Kanter 1989: 383). This becomes prevalent in my sample as well, as the minority women consistently comment on being “onlys” in the workplace, which in

many ways gives them a unique visibility so they might be seen for potential leadership characteristics or academic/corporate accomplishments. While minority women in academia are not necessarily “onlys,” they are usually “firsts.” In *These Hallowed Halls: African American Women College and University Presidents*, Gerri Bates also acknowledges that “the data suggest that African American women have made tremendous strides in presidential appointments since the beginning of the twentieth century, but more appointments of women are needed to close the racial and gender gap at the helm of higher education institutions” (Bates 2007: 373).

The Changing Face of Leadership Today

Amazingly, new research from *Zenger-Folkman* suggests women are rated higher than men (in categories on competence and ability in various sectors) at every level of management, yet the higher the management level, the wider the gap in number of women proportional to men (*Zenger-Folkman* 2012). Though the numbers of women decrease the further up the ranks you look, a new study from *Zenger Folkman: Strength Based Leadership Development* has garnered international attention, finding a “clear and shocking” result: Though men tend to have a higher percent of leaders in top management positions, women display substantially more ‘leadership effectiveness’ overall as determined by 16 criteria for competency in 15 various business functions (*Zenger Folkman* 2012). The study finds “the implications of this research are quite profound.” Explains Jack Zenger, CEO and Co-Founder of top leadership development firm, *Zenger Folkman*, “it is a well-known fact that women are underrepresented at senior levels of management. Yet the data suggests that by adding more women the overall effectiveness of the leadership team would go up.” The study states “organizations go

outside to recruit effective leaders when in many cases they may well have internal people who could rise to fill the position that is vacant”—my data suggests this is what about half of the women in the business sample have done, rising to the top internally after proving leadership effectiveness. This finding alone does not mean the institutional barriers that keep women out of these upper-level management positions will dissipate, however these data fly in the face of everything we accept as true when it comes to the most effective leadership characteristics and therefore who effective leaders ‘should’ be. It seems more now than ever before that dialogues surrounding these issues are percolating the American consciousness; these are the types of dialogues that will in time hopefully influence institutional change just as significantly as Sandberg’s plea for personal change. Both are a step in the right direction. Such conversations however- and the reasons women have such trouble ‘shattering the glass ceiling’- are admittedly varied by field, industry, and sector. The following pages serve as a way to make sense of these differences, so each sector may be analyzed from an organizational perspective in order to discover the unique challenges presented to women and how these challenges have been overcome at the individual level. Though the reasons outlined above for a lack of women at the top fits the experience of women in business more fully, academia also presents similar but distinctly unique experiences to be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter One

Numerous shared life lessons serve as themes consistent across the sample in both childhood and adulthood, and perhaps the most prevalent to the individuals’ early narratives, are the acquisition of leadership positions often held throughout grade school.

Class presidents, treasurers, and student council members, a majority of participants demonstrate leadership capability at a young age, but also demonstrate significant *likeability* as often evidenced through selection by both peers and adults. A gendered socialization also occurs in childhood, as participants are often encouraged to “play like the boys” unlike many of their peers. The skillsets acquired from this encouragement is carried through young adulthood and eventual career succession, contributing to leadership success. Interviews suggest participants also demonstrated leadership traits in the home as children with leadership roles taken on in the home very early on; participants especially from working class or lower middle class families would become caretakers of siblings while parents were at work, gaining leadership skills like management, delegation, and caretaking. At young ages, African American women in the sample reveal they see the world from the margins, often as the only women of color navigating between their home world and school life with predominantly white peers.

Chapter One also discusses the idea that women across both sectors have been elected or encouraged into leadership positions by peers and superiors while moving up; they have formed close allegiances and relationships with certain individuals over the years, something many women fail to do during the early stages of career succession. Furthermore, the data reveals their trajectories may also be assisted positively, by a heightened perception and application of desirable leadership characteristics with an intense awareness of leadership stereotypes, though this awareness of perceived gender barriers does not inhibit action and succession. This chapter provides a shift in focus from traditional discourse on leadership by dissecting common themes in the lives of leaders who have already proven themselves as such.

Chapter Two

Over half the women in the sample could be considered to have had a ‘linear’ career trajectory, ‘linear’ for these purposes as broadly interpreted to be an uninterrupted and often predictable career path traditionally planned early in life and executed in such a way the result matches the initial plan. In analyzing demographics and movement of women in the sample in Chapter Two, it becomes apparent almost all but a select few of the sample’s academic careers fit this uninterrupted and predictable career path (especially as I find the majority were tenure-tracked faculty). In this chapter I begin to discuss how trajectories between women in business and academia differ, as qualitative interviews demonstrate academicians walk consistently down clear-cut paths while executives have the freedom to create their own paths that may prove *either* linear or non-linear. The women interviewed who remained for the most part within one or a few ‘home’ institutions over the course of their career fall into the traditional or ‘linear’ trajectory category. While this is the case for a majority of the academic administrators in my sample, this also appears to be the case for approximately half the corporate executives. The career trajectories of corporate executives rather neatly fall into two distinct categories, the linear trajectory (also referenced here as Trajectory #1 in Figure 1 from Chapter Three) and the non-linear trajectory (also referenced here as Trajectory #2 in Figure 2 from Chapter Three). Furthermore, desires to pursue academic careers tend to be inherently less personal than that of business because academic interests rather than early childhood experiences of adversity prove more directly impactful on the future career field. While women thin out systematically at every level while moving up the

ladder, this experience proves drastically heightened for women of color who are in this context the minority of the minority.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three discusses specifically how women in the sample have come into their position, offering an in-depth comparison between the different paths within business and academia. Tenure-tracked faculty tend to follow a relatively distinct path: Most commonly, during their time on faculty, they take on a leadership position of note (such as serving internally on campus as a dean, provost, faculty senate president, etc.), which eventually exposes these faculty members to greater leadership roles. There is a moment in time that sets them apart from other academics, though it initially remains linked to their professional identity as faculty members- this is the ‘crucible moment’ in which they decide to take on their biggest administrative leadership role. With many similar professional narratives across the academic sample, family proves less prevalent in the ‘crucible moments’ of academicians, as personal events and family circumstance is not cited in the professional narratives of scholars as particularly influential in leading them to take on their present administrative role like it is in business. The nature of the career trajectory in business is structured differently than for the academics, and the professional narrative in business is broken down into two types of paths: a relatively linear path in which the individual works her way up within one company and is subsequently tapped to her top leadership role either within that ‘home’ company or another, or a non-linear path in which the individual works her way up the corporate ladder in various companies and hired externally to new positions. There is a consistent theme that links the professional narratives of those on trajectory #1- the linear path- their

experience and expertise within the company over a long period of time, and therefore usually during times of dramatic change or expansion of the company's profile makes them an invaluable and indispensable resource. For those on career trajectory #2 who are recruited from the outside (on the non-linear path), the theme consistent with their professional narratives is one of visibility attained through prior success in a large and highly reputable company, or through production of a product or project that gives them significant stature. Personal and professional narratives reveal race and gender are also inextricably tied to the moments leading up to when the women in the sample ultimately are tapped- and accept- their top leadership role.

Chapter Four

Discovering the implications for women leaders of attempting to balance work and family becomes clear upon asking participants about significant life turning points. Chapter Four discussion on work-family balance finds that to a person, almost all participants cite the most important moments in their lives as those related to romances, children, spouses, and family life. Tenure tracked-faculty (prior to being tapped for a top administrative leadership position) have the ability to select which hours to work to do necessary research, and reading, but as they move up into administration, their hours are more likely to be determined by other demands like fundraising, meetings which follow the more traditional business hours; for the most part, however, children are out of the home by the time this position has been acquired. For businesswomen, the timeline of marriage, motherhood, and career is often more capricious because of an often very non-linear and unpredictable career trajectory. For business women, workplace flexibility is harder to come by as they must fit their personal schedule to that of the company's while

moving up in the ranks, and the 'balance' becomes particularly difficult as the kids are growing up during the point in their careers they take on their top (and usually most demanding) leadership role. For women who do not at any point opt out, but choose to continue on an upward trajectory towards the top of their field which will likely entail even less job flexibility, this affirms the decision not to be the primary caregiver, and therefore delegate the care work to someone else like a private nanny or live-in caregiver. sacrifices are made in order to maintain work-family balance, but not necessarily in terms of going about starting a family. For instance, some women in the sample (especially those with limited workplace flexibility in the non-linear category) report non-traditional divisions of labor within the home, with spouses taking on half, or more than half of the household burden. Women in both the academic and business samples overwhelmingly report the need to 'act like a man,' part of which includes the exclusion of conversations regarding children and spouses. Based on the narratives described, women in high-powered positions cope with these traditional expectations through choosing certain sacrifices either at work or in the home, with an overarching refusal never to 'lean out' from their career either before or after having children, and often through reworking the home-life in a non-traditional way.

Chapter One

Life Lessons to a Life of Leadership: *If Not Me, Whom? If Not Now, When*

“Some leaders are born women.” –Geraldine Ferraro

Leadership theorist Nan Keohane argues the single most defining characteristic of leadership is ‘good judgment’ explaining “Aristotle says that men who possess this faculty ‘have the capacity of seeing what is good for themselves and for mankind, and these are, we believe, the qualities of men capable of managing households and states” (Keohane 2010: 83-84). ‘Judgment’ is one of many qualities considered by scholars to be an essential leadership characteristic. However, just as thoughts on crucial leadership characteristics have changed over the years, so too has the focus and scope of the debate itself. Moving away from simply defining essential characteristics, authors like Betsy Myers now move the leadership debate forward with a more progressive, but ambiguous stance, asserting “genuine leadership is not about trying to imitate another leader or striving to fit into a certain box or definition. Genuine leadership is what emerges when we are fully and freely ourselves” (Myers, Mann 2011: 59). In her book *Take the Lead*, Myers, the former Deputy Assistant to President Clinton and executive at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government notes Warren Bennis also capitalizes on this concept, saying “people begin to be leaders at that moment when they decide for themselves how to be” (58). Foremost leadership scholar Warren Bennis follows the argument that leaders are not born, but made, outlining the most paramount elements of good leadership as demonstrated by his 1990 research subjects. Similarly, Robert Thomas explores the notion that leaders are defined by their ‘crucibles’ (2008), a life event often inspiring the moments in time an individual discovers that they can and should lead (explored in depth

with my sample in chapter 4). While I use Bennis' model to discuss general leadership characteristics and shared experiences, I create my own set of themes to describe shared experiences particular to women, many of which did in fact often intersect with Bennis' themes. It is important however to analyze these themes in the context of gender especially; given structural and attitudinal barriers present in organizations, the succession of women leaders who have in fact 'shattered the glass ceiling' is extraordinary. While themes in these works and many others are certainly prevalent to all leaders, a few of those books discuss gender specifically and become more applicable in this context.

The fourth chapter of Nan Keohane's *Thinking about Leadership* explores the relationship between gender and leadership, and discusses issues such as the various reasons women do not make it through the 'leaky pipeline,' differences in male and female leadership "styles", and ramifications of the assertion women may lead differently than men. But what do common themes and shared experiences in the lives of women leaders who have made it through the 'leaky' pipeline say about these potential 'differences,' and how women come to lead? I expand on Keohane's ideas to answer this critical question. Two points in particular stand out as posing instant challenges to women. First, "women leaders across history stand out as visible exceptions to the close linkage between leadership and masculinity" (Keohane 2010: 112), and secondly, that "women often lead movements where women's interests are held to be especially involved" (112). So what then does this mean for women who lead in primarily and traditionally male-dominated environments and industries, such as at the top of the 'pipeline' I speak of in corporate America and the Academy? With women systematically

blocked from succession at every level while moving up the ladder, I argue women who have made it have done so by turning ‘growing up gendered’ into shared experiences and lessons they have used to their advantage in order to propel themselves to the top of the ladder and through the glass ceiling. With women impeded by institutional and attitudinal barriers while moving up, women who have in fact shattered the glass ceiling tend to share the following themes in common. The women demonstrate a heightened sense of important leadership characteristics, implicitly exhibiting both stereotypically male and female leadership characteristics with a greater intensity. This occurs through an ability to cope with gender barriers in young adulthood and during career succession through an early development of leadership skills, by being socialized to act like (or no different than) their male counterparts, and through a perception of gender barriers that ultimately does not affect action (essentially, no psychological glass ceiling). The focus of this chapter is to delineate how race and gender have contributed to life lessons participants utilize in shaping leadership skills inside and outside the workplace, first as children and young adults, and then moving forward as rising executive-level business managers and academic administrators. In order to address the pairing of gender and leadership specifically, this chapter focuses on what the women in my sample have taken from life experiences and lessons that have most impacted their lives in leadership. First I discuss how participants came into their eventual discovery of this leadership potential by outlining prevalent shared themes in the lives of women leaders.

From Life Lessons to Leadership in Childhood and Young Adulthood

Encouraged to “play like the boys”

Through “a large body of empirical data, it is suggested that play and games contribute to the preservation of traditional sex-role divisions in society by equipping boys with the social skills needed for occupational careers while equipping girls with the social skills better suited for family careers (Lever 1977: 478).” Even today, little girls and little boys are encouraged to play differently. These differences often encourage and facilitate traditional gender stereotypes still considered as favorable preconceptions of how children should behave. In *Sex Differences in Games Children Play*, Janet Lever stresses the belief that “the differences in leisure patterns of boys and girls lead to the development of particular social skills and capacities. These skills, in turn, are important for the performance of different adult roles... [While] boys’ games may help prepare their players for successful performance in a wide range of work settings in modern society, girls’ games may help prepare their players for the private sphere of the home and their future roles as wives and mothers” (484). While only a few participants described childhood games and their upbringings in these terms, I stress the idea that being encouraged by parents and siblings to “play like the boys” in childhood allowed some participants to develop skill like ‘independence training,’ organizational skills,’ and ‘adjudication of disputes’ needed for eventual leadership careers that other promising female counterparts may not have. These skills are those most generally attributed to successful leadership practices and tied to a certain set of characteristics we typically view as more masculine (Eagly, Carli 2007).

It seems this non-traditional gendered socialization is carried through every step of the way throughout childhood and young adulthood (to be discussed in the following subsection), proving a determining factor of eventual leadership as numerous women in

the sample were encouraged to “play like the boys” through interactions with fathers and brothers. Nita, President of a small college specializing in the STEM fields, is a quintessential example, attributing early leadership skills to playing intellectual and physical games with her dad and brother growing up. She explains “both my parents were academics, and both my parents were interested in letting me do things that were not traditional for girls. Part of that is because they had four daughters, but they had intended to have just two, so when I was born, I literally became like my father’s son. And part of it was natural inclination, I was naturally interested in boy’s things, and I was into carpentry and working the garden and stuff like that, but I had a lot of support from my parents for my interest in math and other activities at a time when girls were ‘quote-on-quote’ not ‘good’ at such things. I chose a lot of things explicitly because girls didn’t do them: girls didn’t learn the trumpet so I learned the trumpet.” Nita’s childhood illustrates how this helps women overcome their prescribed gender roles in a way that will serve them well later on when faced with structural barriers during career succession. The women recall a few significant moments in childhood when they related most to activities with their fathers and brothers, suggesting the families of some of these women may have been raised in homes where parents did not enforce traditional gender roles divisions. However, it is also possible that in hindsight activities that reinforce masculine leadership traits they participated in as girls, giving them a sense they were always allowed to participate alongside males. Though to this end, Lever’s research affirms the positive effects of these childhood experiences on my participants, as the narratives provide distinct instances of being socialized without sex differences in children’s activities in the home. While the one participant in the sample (and also the only Latina woman in the

sample) who noted her childhood socialization within her family unit as particularly gendered also overcame the odds just like the rest, it should be taken into account that her path rising in the ranks of academia seemed more institutionally gendered than most; she held various positions in the health care industry, as a nurse and administrative assistant, while most who have reached her stature did not. Interestingly enough, she cites her early childhood and young adulthood experiences as particularly gendered because of the intersection of gender and race within her family's cultural history, as female children were not to be the focus of the family's monetary resources.

Early elected leadership positions and academic excellence

Numerous shared life lessons serve as themes consistent across the sample in both childhood and adulthood, and perhaps the most prevalent to the individuals' early narratives are one's acquisition of leadership positions in grade school. Class presidents, treasurers, and student council members, a majority of participants demonstrate notable leadership capability at a young age, but also demonstrate significant *likeability* through election by both peers and adults. Some women leaders often come across the problem of being viewed as unlikeable by peers or superiors for asserting leadership traits usually associated with masculinity and traditionally seen as unflattering in women. This *likeability* therefore becomes an important component to current and future leadership, as early likeability paired with capability become a winning combination the women can take with them into future careers riddled with even stronger stereotypes and pressures. Monica, Treasurer of a Fortune 500 insurance company- who described herself as one of the 'quietest', most 'introverted' executive leaders she knows- explains she "always got the best grades in the school, but didn't think she would ever be chosen for anything

creative.” But she then reflects that when she “went into actuarial science, similarly, [she] felt [she] wasn’t as good as all the guys in the class as the only girl, but was actually asked to become President of the club.” She notes her teacher said she was “a true leader in watching [her] interact the other students,” and goes on to comment that she “never thought of herself that way.” Despite her reserved nature, like most in the sample she was well liked, a hard worker, and was trusted by people of all age ranges as demonstrated by her election. This early narrative in particular holds significance as it serves to illustrate the important point that success in this sample is not inherently linked to personality. Also noted in Monica’s story, she excels academically like many of the other participants who similarly participated in Gifted and Talented programs as children (regardless of socioeconomic background). Wendy, currently director of a boutique consulting firm, but former CFO for a prominent non-profit, speaks of being the only African American child in her school’s Gifted and Talented classroom, and one of the only African American children to attend the southern public school intended to be the school in town “for white children only.” She recalls taking the bus across town to attend her high school classes, as she comments her side of town was the “wrong side of the tracks.” She demonstrates extraordinary academic achievement, especially overcoming barriers presented by her race as the only African American girl who must move into a ‘white world’ to pursue her passions. With hindsight she sees her childhood home as “less than” the other side of town, but her comments speak volumes about her narrative as it relates to the complex nature of the intersection of history and biography I will discuss throughout the paper.⁶ She cites this experience as giving her an early resolve to overcome barriers of her race

⁶ See *The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills, to be covered in depth in subsequent chapters.

from growing up in the rural South to eventually actualize her full potential as a business leader. Participants usually demonstrate both early leadership skills and academic prowess at young ages in school, and apply these skills to early leadership positions that they carry with them and site as influential later on. .

Early leadership roles in the home

Interviews suggest participants also acquired leadership traits in the home at young ages by often becoming a default ‘head of the house.’ Women from working class or lower middle class families would help out at home with siblings while parents were at work, gaining leadership skills like management, delegation, and caretaking. I note these traits are developed at very young ages in women coming from lower socioeconomic statuses especially (approximately half the women in my sample), and also yield a fierce sense of independence and “go-getter” attitude. This is even more apparent and exaggerated in single-mother households, where it is essential children pitch in to support the family’s well being (and sometimes even livelihood after age 16). As children in these households, some worked service industry jobs, attended school, and took care of siblings while mom was at work; these female children and teenagers in single mother households took on a tremendous amount of responsibility very early on. Marcia, an Executive Vice President with a C-Suite position in a Fortune 500 insurance company, speaks of early leadership skills and independence gained from growing up the daughter of a single mom, noting matter-of-factly she was often “responsible for her little brother.” As the daughter of a single mom at age nine, Sherrie, President of a leading company in the service industry and the youngest in the sample, becomes self-serving at an incredibly tender age with a mom working multiple jobs, taking on her first waitressing job at the

age of sixteen. By 19, Sherrie will have moved up to become the restaurant's manager, the same age at which she spreads her wings to open up more of the restaurant's chains overseas. Monica notes a similar experience in a single-mother household, implying she became extra driven academically in the hopes of one day being able to contribute to supporting her family financially. (Amazingly, now she does.) These women, often facing times growing up of great adversity come into the ability to invent themselves as people and leaders through lessons learned from circumstance. Warren Bennis explains "by the time we reach puberty, the world has reached us and shaped us to a greater extent than we realize.... our family, friends, school, and society in general have told us how to be. But people begin to become leaders at the moment when they decide for themselves how to be. For some leaders, this happens early" (Bennis 1989: 68). The narratives of the women in my sample affirm this statement- I believe this 'early learned leadership' to be a direct result of lessons learned through early experiences of adversity described above often in tandem with experiences 'growing up gendered'. For many of the participants- who demonstrated leadership skills and academic excellence- but in a socioeconomic situation or historical moment that would seem to make an eventual leadership position unlikely, I find history intersects with biography in a way that provides potential leaders the platform to become the women they are today.

The role of race in early leadership lessons

Wendy, the former non-profit CFO who opens this chapter (African American), points to historical moments steeped in race relations and lived experiences that white women could have never known. When African American women in the sample regardless of field are asked about historical moments that shaped their coming of age,

they all note that from an early age they were some of the “only” women of color who navigated between their ‘home’ worlds and the Caucasian world where they attended middle school, high school, or college. In her book *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, Patricia Hill Collins emphasizes the importance of self-determined knowledge for group empowerment through personal action, experience as a source of wisdom and empowerment, and a type of feminist discourse that gives a sort of power to those on the margins (1991). By her account, when these high-potential feminist women see the world from the margins, they will not only use their experiences to identify a need for change, but discover a kind of empowerment and wisdom to help propel them forward. Caucasian women in this sample undoubtedly act similarly when in positions as “onlys,” but this occurs to a much more extreme degree for African American women who are historically and culturally much more marginalized.

Furthermore, historical moments pointed to as influential to coming of age are distinctly different for minority women; minority women cite growing up with racial segregation as the defining historical factor of their eventual leadership. While some Caucasian women cited a shared influential ‘historical moment’- women’s liberation- these responses were variable whereas to a person, African American women in the sample cite the Civil Rights Movement. This is also cited as fueling the desire to create further social change, and become successful within a changing cultural landscape. Minority women in this age range were personally impacted by racial segregation, and are motivated to see a positive change for their own lives and the lives of their families. A

few directly mention they channel this desire into academic pursuits, leadership skills, and eventual leadership careers (true for both fields).

From Early Life lessons to Leadership in Adulthood

Short-term goals, long-term outlook

Warren Bennis believes excellent managers have a keen ability to complete short-term goals successfully, but that excellent leaders have the ability to look into the future and think long-term (1989). The consistency of narrative themes across my sample also reveal that successful leaders complete short-term goals quickly and efficiently with long-term perspective in mind for the organization; essentially, the women who have ‘made it,’ can do both. This combination contributes to speedy and consistent promotions. When speaking on these two bullets, respondents attribute this to an intrinsic motivation that comes from the development of a clear sense of passion and purpose relatively early in life, usually young adulthood. Bennis might call this the ‘guiding vision,’ cited in *On Becoming a Leader* as what he called the first basic ingredient for leadership. Consistent with the leaders in my sample, he believes “the leader has a clear idea of what he or she wants to do- professionally and personally- and [has] the strength to persist in the face of setbacks” (Bennis 1989: 55). Leaders press on in this way to complete short-term goals, driving their career forward quickly and efficiently. Short-term goals, however, define criteria for managers by Bennis’ definition in their top roles within a company or administration, while long-term goals define criteria for true leadership (Bennis 1989: 61). He explains that “the manager has a short-range view, the leader has a long-range perspective” (61). Women in my sample demonstrate true leadership with unconscious foresight into long-terms goals of the company or institution

as demonstrated by interview discussions on vision for the organization or plans for institutional change. As will be discussed in-depth in Chapter Two, this foresight provides a kind of guiding vision for mid-level corporate managers to follow through with big plans and large-scale projects for the company's future. (Many times, it is this demonstration of follow-through on a 'guiding vision' that is also responsible for getting the participant promoted to her highest leadership role.)

Election to top leadership positions by superiors and mentors

Also notably, women across both sectors (though it seems more drastic and noticeable in business), have been elected or encouraged into leadership positions by peers and superiors. Often, this even results in taking a position higher up than said superior. Marcia, C-Suite executive of a Fortune 500 insurance company is promoted to a position higher than her mentor and superior through election by peers in her division, commenting with humor that, "the promotion by my boss quickly resulted in my becoming his boss!" Similarly, Monica, Treasurer of another Fortune 500 insurance company, is given a major promotion via peer election during her consulting career. "Peers" in this case being both subordinates and company partners. Sherrie, President of a leading service-industry chain, is taken under the wing of the CEO from her previous job, and is given immense responsibility through this mentor-mentee relationship with an opportunity to expand the business overseas. In each of these instances we see there is no 'psychological glass ceiling' for the women while moving up despite any relative lack of superiority in the food chain; I stress the idea they are uninhibited and allow themselves to make use of every opportunity provided by co-workers. In many ways, they learn from those above them regardless of current stature, and this works in their favor as they are

often promoted by individuals in those positions and quickly become higher ranked than the individual or group who promoted them. Regardless of time or place in their journey, they “can (and will) learn anything they want to learn” (Bennis 1989: 73). This type of learning involves “seeing the world simultaneously as it is and as it can be, understanding what you see, and acting on your understanding” (73)- the true makings of a leader. This is exhibited time and time again as their actions demonstrate their ‘understanding’, and this ‘understanding’ then inspires action. In these cases, peers and superiors take a chance on capable, likeable workers they believe in, seemingly “paying it forward” in a way that ultimately pays off for the good of the organization.

No psychological glass ceiling

While most compensate for their gender by setting goals to ensure they are the best at their craft, the women in my sample do not take into account the institutional barriers of their gender when moving up the ladder: This is to say that they set and complete short-term goals without a psychological impediment limiting their progress based on perceived gender barriers. Participant and motivational speaker Sherrie asks a profound question of herself during a keynote address that rings true for the purposes of these data. In assessing whether or not she should take a new job, she asks herself “if not me then who, if not now then when?” In the context of Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg’s new book *Lean In*, these women have not “leaned out” from the table at any point while climbing the ladder. (See chapter 4 for further detail on work-family and ‘leaning in’.) Other “barriers” may come in the form of various professional decisions, like a decision to transition industry or organization, but I assert these women who have ‘made it’ are unafraid of jobs considered masculine or in fields particularly

dominated by men. *Do Women Choose Different Jobs from Men? Mechanisms of Application Segregation in the Market for Managerial Workers* from *Organization Science* suggests women tend to choose more ‘feminized’ jobs than men (Barbulescu, Bidwell 2013), but for women at the top of the top, not only are there very few positions or office environments that are truly feminized, but many of the business women in the sample have come to their leadership position from a strong background in finance, consistently known to be dominated by men. (It is similarly known the tenure-tracked Academy is also historically male-dominated.) The consequences of their gendered socialization result in an ability to hone in on essential leadership characteristics, and a will to become the best at their craft- two of driving factors in this subcategory that propel these individuals forward. Much like the phenomenon discussed earlier by Patricia Hill Collins, women leaders use experience as relative minorities for wisdom and vision.

This theme is significant because in interviewing these highly successful women, I discovered not only that the women seemed highly aware of institutional and organizational barriers, but also that this awareness lead to significant feelings of ‘imposter syndrome’⁷ at some point in the career. But despite having these feelings that many successful women do, they do not let these feelings define them, and they do not let this define ‘their place’ despite feelings of inadequacy associated with their own success. Essentially, despite these feelings, women at the top operate as if attitudinal barriers and the resulting ‘imposter syndrome’ are not present. Nita, President of the small, STEM-focused college, comments “if you take on anything that’s hard to do- and there’s not

⁷ ‘Imposter syndrome’ is described by psychologists as “the internal experience of a group of high-achieving women who have a secret sense they were not as capable as others thought.” Researchers have also documented such fears in adults of all ages, as well as adolescents- it is most commonly found among those in transition like many of the women in my sample who have been recently rewarded or promoted ([New York Times](#)).

much sense in doing things that aren't hard to do because then somebody else could do it- you're going to have a lot of failures... And you're going to doubt yourself a lot- most of the successful women I know in science and engineering have the 'imposter syndrome.' So they feel like a failure a lot of the time, even though by every external measure they're incredibly successful. You have to recognize that that's a very common way to feel about yourself, and not let it stop you from taking on major challenges." While many of the women experience this at some point in their career, it is important to make the distinction that in this sample, the ramifications of 'imposter syndrome' do not hold them back from reaching their leadership potential (which in others might fuel lack of motivation, unwillingness to accept promotion, an inability to take credit, etc.). Rather, in prompting participants to think of themselves as leaders, they look back with hindsight and realize that despite proven successes and consistent election to leadership roles, they were surprised and unsuspecting of accolades at one time or another. I note that though they are not impeded by perceptions of gender barriers which would most certainly otherwise work against them, a few participants do suggest that they have at some point forsaken small professional advances benefitting their individual career for the good of their company. In their chapter on *Women and Leadership* in *The Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, scholars Eagly and Carli explain "many women also internalize stereotypes [about their leadership], which creates a psychological glass ceiling" (Eagly, Carli 2007: 387). But this in fact reflects how the women in my sample have made it. In ignoring the psychological glass ceiling- at least from a behavioral standpoint- as their narratives clearly prove they have not internalized these stereotypes while moving up.

The best at their craft

Participants also develop a high motivation to be the best at their craft, driven by a clear sense of passion and purpose often developed in young adulthood through early life experiences. This also aligns with Warren Bennis' understanding of the leadership 'basics,' as he finds the second most prevalent ingredient for leadership is "the underlying passion for the promises of life, combined with a very particular passion for a vocation, a profession, or course of action" (Bennis 1989: 55). Sherrie's story, briefly mentioned earlier, serves as a quintessential example of just how far passion and purpose can take someone when combined with other skills acquired by the best leaders. Discovering her passion for international business at a young age subsequent to expanding her employer's business overseas, Sherrie discovers this particular 'passion' she would later parlay into her life-long 'vocation' and 'guiding vision.' Ensuring they are the best at their craft is also often to compensate for negative ramifications of gender stereotypes in the workplace, such as indicated by the infamous phrase 'women work twice as hard to get half the credit.' Interestingly enough, many participants do not point to this phenomenon themselves, however those who did speak openly on this topic were the women of color in the sample who discussed feelings of having to particularly 'prove themselves'. Francine, Executive VP and Director of Government Affairs for a prominent Fortune 500 media company echoes these sentiments, not only that she must prove herself as an "only" as the African American woman partner in her firm, but that this is also particularly "isolating." Research from the *Women and Leadership Chapter* in *The Handbook* (2010) sheds light on what I consider to be a 'shared experience' among minority women in the sample, noting "when women perform consistently and

substantially above expectations in male-dominated contexts, their effectiveness may carry special positive weight. This effect is particularly true of women of color, who routinely encounter lower expectations of competence” (Eagly, Carli 2007: 387).

Socialized to “play like the boys” in the workplace

The little girls who were once encouraged to play like their male peers as children exhibit a similar willingness to play like the boys in the workplace. I believe this is multifaceted. To be taken seriously, women in high-powered positions often use stereotypically masculine leadership traits in their leadership style, but these traits also may be similar to those they picked up as children and carried with them through adulthood, especially as these traits are reproduced and encouraged at work. This may have both negative and positive implications. Though this may be another contributor to their success, the women point to frustrations of the double bind this masculinized desirability brings. Their trajectories may also be assisted positively, however, by a heightened perception and application of desirable leadership characteristics acquired through balancing on the two tightropes of capability and likeability. Though this assertion is largely speculative, there is a correlation between women who “played like boys” growing up and now prove successful in doing so again in male-dominated fields. The ways that this “play” unfolds is varied: Monica describes a conscious effort not to wear loud clothing or nail polish to best draw attention away from gender, trying to neutralize her appearance and control reactions about her place as a woman in a position of authority. Jean describes an effort to try to remain un-fazed by the verbal horseplay of male colleagues that quickly ceases before she walks in a room, playfully mentioning she will begin to take part but then drop it. Mary subscribes to many of the same topics of

conversation as the men, and notes she works diligently to project a hardened and unwavering persona around men in the office. (She even mentions she did not tell colleagues about her significant hearing impediment for years after getting the job for fear of pointing to even greater ‘difference.’) I have found this gendered socialization, or a need to ‘act like the boys’ in male-dominated environments has carried through adulthood. Most interestingly, I found this consistently the most sensitive subject covered in interviews. Participants across the board admitted this phenomenon indeed occurs, but show embarrassment and hesitation in their discussion of this issue. One even asks I not associate this particular topic with her individual narrative. I believe this unexpectedly personal subject reveals our society’s still deeply rooted perceptions of gender stereotypes and the accompanying hardships for those who deviate from them. Even in 2014, these experiences remain substantiated by Keohane’s point that “women leaders across history stand out as visible exceptions to the close linkage between leadership and masculinity” (Keohane 2010: 12). Though “women are becoming more like men in their career aspirations and achievements and are more willing to see themselves as having characteristics associated with authority” (12), my interviews suggest this ‘association’ does not necessarily mean the practice itself is accepted. According to Catalyst data and the work of Eagly and Carli in *Overcoming Resistance to Women Leaders* from *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*, “women [senior business leaders] who conform to traditional feminine stereotypes are often liked but not respected” (Eagly, Carli 2007: 385). My findings also report consistently similar narratives of how women perform gender in a room dominated by men in order to effectively balance likeability and respectability. Concurrently, “women who adopt more

masculine traits are often respected but not liked” (385). Catalyst data also note “African American women are especially vulnerable to such stereotypes, and risk being seen as overly aggressive and confrontational” (385). These narratives also confirm the infamous ‘double-bind’ faced by women in positions of power that “helps account for why women continue to be rated lower than men on most of the qualities associated with leadership” (386) despite *Zenger-Folkman*’s recent finding on capability.

Though the ‘double-bind’ persists, women in this sample have not only beaten the odds, but have used the very barriers that work to impede them through a heightened sense of the most critical characteristics to career succession. This perception and application of ‘crucial leadership characteristics’ is not necessarily an increase in stereotypically male leadership characteristics, but rather a type of “ramping up” of quintessential leadership qualities as often the only woman in the room. This “ramped up” leadership is not therefore about an increase in the performance of masculine traits, but rather an increase of traits of successful upper level managers, but also powerfully coupled with an ideal balance of respectability and likeability with both traditionally feminine and masculine leadership qualities. In a study also appearing in the *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice* (2010), it is found that there is often a strong link between personal identity and leadership as a rule, and the way in which leadership functions within one’s identity changes the more ‘expert’ the individual becomes in an upper-level management position (Lord and Hall, 2005: 392). The great significance behind this finding is what the individual’s presentation style reveals about which styles are successful, and, in turn, what this then reveals about how the leadership identity was formed. Based on previous themes outlined in childhood experiences, I note that in my sample, the leadership

identity is formed early on in life through early life lessons, and carried on in the workplace as the participant moves up the ladder regardless of their own characterization of themselves as a “leader”.

Research also shows another challenge for women moving up is “a difference in self-presentation styles, [where men are seen as] more acquisitive, aggressively seeking to signal credibility by displaying behaviors that conformed to their firm’s norms, while women engaged in ‘protective’ self-presentation, modestly asserting more neutral, uncertain, or qualified images in an effort to avoid disapproval” (393). This second piece of the puzzle reveals lessons learned in adulthood most salient to attaining eventual leadership positions. Based on my sample, I argue this is not about personality differences or even traits, but about actions. The women conform to the firms’ or institution’s values like the men, as demonstrated by conversations surrounding the importance of closely aligning personal values with the company’s ideals (under almost any circumstance). This conformity signals they have what it takes to be a good leader for the company, however, they retain the “free” quality that Bennis describes in the opening of this chapter that makes for the best combination. They do not solely imitate men but also exhibit action that result in risk taking, described by Bennis as crucial to good leadership (Bennis 1989). Bennis’ themes prove prevalent throughout the professional narratives of women in the sample who have made it to the top. For instance, another quintessential ‘basic’ leadership ingredient as described by Bennis, as a demonstration of “curiosity and daring” through a willingness to “take risks, experiment, try new things” (Bennis 1989: 56).

Risk taking proves a consistent example of an action that propels these women upwards in organizations (as opposed to other women for whom this strategy was either not implemented or who were not rewarded for doing so.) Put differently, achievement is not reached due to personality- or even a certain set of inherited leadership traits- but determined by actions that demonstrate a fundamental non-admission of the psychological glass ceiling. To conclude, not only do these individuals have outstanding leadership characteristics gained through professional experiences, but I believe that their childhood and adulthood socialization has in fact had a positive impact on their career succession because of what they have done with it.

A large body of research has been conducted over the course of our country's history attempting to uncover the mysteries of the leadership field- what makes a good leader, who should lead, and who does lead. But this chapter provides a shift in focus from popular discourse on leadership, by dissecting common themes in the lives of leaders who have already proven themselves as such. In discussing the consistently shared themes in the lives of women leaders (even those in different fields), I reveal who these women are who have made it- answering the 'who should lead' question- but more importantly, how these women have come to lead. I believe these data indicate larger trends surrounding how women in executive level management and top academic administrative positions have come to gain leadership and what they have done to do so.

Chapter Two

Career Succession and the 'Leaky Pipeline': Breaking Down Trajectories of Corporate and Academic Success Stories

“Define success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life you’re proud to live.” – Anne Sweeney, President, The Walt Disney Company

Of her losing bid for the Presidency in 2008, Hillary Clinton proclaims, “though we were not able to shatter that highest and hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you it has 18 million cracks in it, and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time, and we are going to keep working to make it so” (*Hillary Clinton Endorses Barack Obama 2008*)⁸. Similar to Hillary Clinton’s experience, women of all races and backgrounds have also yet to shatter the ‘glass ceiling,’ even despite the millions of cracks left by those in the highest ranks of government, business, and the Academy. Since the publication of Rosabeth Kanter’s *Men and Women of the Corporation* in 1977, scholars have continued to write on the gender dynamics in the workplace, covering occupations that run the gamut between the Clinton-world of public service to blue-collar occupations in civil service. As of today, scholars have amassed a large body of literature on women’s integration into male dominated occupations, but more importantly these articles also play an important role in pointing out the gap between the number of qualified women entering the work force proportionally to the amount of women who will go on to climb the ladder all the way to the ceiling of the corporation.⁹ Corporations themselves have

⁸ http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/us/politics/07text-clinton.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

⁹ <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/us-women-business-0>

even proven of late to be taking this issue on themselves, researching ways to ensure women move up the ladder in order to create organizational change. Vikram Malhotra, senior partner at McKinsey & Company explains this dilemma in terms now accessible to a wider audience, saying “our talent pipeline is leaky, and it is blocked. Qualified women enter the work force in sufficient numbers, but they begin to drop off at the very first sorting of talent, when they’re eligible for their very first management positions” (*Wall Street Journal* 2011). He characterizes familiar structural barriers scholars and sociologists have previously popularized in the field as primarily, “a lack of women role models, exclusion from informal networks where connections are made, and the absence of sponsorship,” in addition to “lifestyle issues” present for any upper-level manager (*Harvard Business Review* 2012).¹⁰ Though for these reasons the numbers of women at the top remain small, some women, even despite ‘structural’ and ‘lifestyle’ issues, have indeed made it to the top in both corporate America (as executive level managers) and the Academy (as university or college presidents).

While chapter one discusses why superstar women have made it and what they have in common, in the following chapter I will discuss specific career trajectories in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of their stories. Heavy sex segregation still exists in the US labor force, and often times any one particular industry or job may be dominated by one sex (Bose, Whaley 2001); the ‘leaky pipeline’ proves this phenomenon even heightened in the upper levels of that job, as women are even more likely to disappear in a workplace dominated by their male counterparts as they move up.

While it is tempting to posit that the presence of women in such positions must therefore

¹⁰ Almost all occupations have been subject to integration by scholars in the last 30 years. A few examples include Christine L. Williams’ *Gender Differences at Work* (1989), Jennifer L. Pierce’s *Gender Trials* (1996), Jennifer M. Silva’s *Coming up Short* (2013), and Rosanna Hertz’s *Guarding Against Women* (1996).

be held up as examples of the shattering of this ‘glass ceiling’ (or at least the ‘cracking’ of the glass ceiling as Hillary Clinton put it), we cannot fully understand the struggles of ‘shattering’ the glass ceiling in a particular field without first gaining an in-depth understanding of how trajectories commonly unfold within these fields. For this reason, I examine the differences in struggles and experiences of women in business and academia who have made it to the top. Interestingly enough, it appears in sheer numbers there may be many more women in business careers who have reached top positions, as women in the Academy prove highly visible and more likely to have their decisions closely ‘watched’; this ultimately means they are more likely to be ‘firsts’ in their role. *Catalyst* data shows women’s integration to top business positions as having occurred long before that of women’s integration into the upper levels of academic administration, yet it is clear women in business reaching ‘C-Suite’ executive leadership positions are also viewed as exceptions and out of the ordinary despite a greater rise in the ranks in a shorter time. To this end, I assert that though struggles to the top may be similarly shared, trajectories look distinctly different and career succession is unmistakably contrasting in the two categories I focus on.

Lastly, despite women’s entry into traditionally male dominated occupations, the slow climb up the career ladder has not drastically changed. This pattern can be likened to the shape of a pyramid: while many women may enter the workforce in entry-level positions (forming the bottom of the pyramid), they decrease systematically as the pyramid comes to a tip- the numbers are smallest at the very tip. To this extent, while some women in the workplace appear to be weeded out as they climb the ladder, some

may be what McKinsey's Malhotra calls "water-walkers," who shoot quickly through the 'leaky pipeline' while others may paddle more slowly. Though today women are now integrated into the workforce (and male-dominated industries) in larger numbers, they cannot now be expected to climb to the top significantly more easily than before: despite recent gains, career ladders have remained fixed and institutionally entrenched.

'Dominant' Career Trajectories: What Do Traditional and Non-Traditional Career Trajectories Look Like?

To begin defining the major distinctions between career paths of women in my sample, I look closely at the similarities of trajectories within each of the two groups. Of the twenty individuals interviewed, slightly over half could be considered to have had a 'linear' career trajectory, 'linear' for these purposes as broadly interpreted to mean an uninterrupted and often predictable career path; this is one traditionally planned early in life and executed in such a way the result matches this early plan. In analyzing demographics and movement of women in the sample, it becomes apparent almost all but a select few of the sample's academic careers fit this uninterrupted and predictable pattern. I note that because I am specifically studying 'superstar' women, this skews my sample to successful individuals who must look back with hindsight while answering career questions. More interestingly, all but a select few of the sample's business careers do not. This exercise though broad in scope, demonstrates how one might begin to distinguish the differences between career trajectories in business and the Academy, as this becomes the biggest distinction between the two groups: Many academic careers follow a linear (and somewhat predictable) career trajectory, while in business the trajectories are a mixture of predictable and unpredictable. This framework provides a

platform to discover where trajectories between women in business and the Academy begin to differ, as qualitative interviews demonstrate academicians walk consistently down clear-cut paths as faculty while executives have the freedom to create their own paths that may prove either linear or non-linear. This framework reveals differences between career paths of the two fields as primarily determined by early life experiences and goals (as discussed in Chapter One), and later on by the nature of the career itself; more specifically how an individual's reputation becomes embedded within it.

The women interviewed who generally remained for the most part within one or a few 'home' institutions over the course of their career, whose paths might be considered pre-planned and uninterrupted, here fall into the traditional or 'linear' trajectory category. While this is the case for a majority of the academic administrators in my sample and appears a larger trend among college presidents, this also seems to be the case for about half the corporate executives in my study as well. While this will be further examined in Chapter Three, it should be noted the majority of academicians in my sample (and those considered to have a 'linear' trajectory) were women who have entered the Academy in tenure-tracked positions; those few academic administrators with a 'non-linear' trajectory comparatively, were either contract employees moving to various positions to remain in the Academy, or individuals recruited from the outside with a specific skill set needed for the top position. These data reveal the types of women most likely to ascend to the top of the Academy, with the most traditional path as through tenured-track faculty positions. Interestingly enough, both women who were contract employees moving to various positions while climbing the ranks of Academy, both without prior teaching experience in academia (and distinct from those recruited directly to their top leadership position) were

women of color- Mary, Associate Dean of Administration and Finance in a large public university, and Denise, current President of a historically Black college. These two women account for two of the three of the minority women in the academic sample. These data suggest a significant majority of women overall come into their success through previously establishing themselves in their field and gaining a significant reputation in their chosen discipline or specialty- this happens within a career that may not have required as much movement as those who were ‘weeded out’ and did not continue to move up within a single ‘home’ institution. The two other non-traditional administrators in the sample have had long and illustrious careers in politics, both serving at the highest echelons of the federal government and coming into their administrative position as their very first foray into the Academy. In analyzing the sample overall, a significant group (about 75%) of the women adhere to fairly traditional career trajectories, while those who do not, seem to have reached the top for entirely different reasons related to skillset, expertise, timing, and exposure.

Corporate career trajectories

The career trajectories of corporate executives rather neatly fall into two distinct categories, the linear trajectory (also referenced here as Trajectory #1 in Figure 1 at the end of Chapter Three) and the non-linear trajectory (also referenced here as Trajectory #2 in Figure 2 at the end of Chapter Three). I argue trajectories of women in business can largely be broken up into these two categories, and analyzed within this context as the two categories become distinct due to an individual’s movement- or lack thereof- between companies and/or industry. In trajectory #1, following approximately half the women in the corporate executive sample, the individual remains within a single company for the majority of the time period she moves up the ladder to C-Suite

leadership. This often happens relatively quickly in comparison to academia, as women in C-Suite leadership have generally spent a shorter period of time reaching the top than the academic administrators. While business women have the ability to steadily work their way up within the same company, this is established early on as a goal that can be worked towards, whereas academicians rarely have planned early on to one day become provosts and presidents. Interviews suggest because academic administrators never had upper level leadership as a goal in mind, the time in which they spend in one spot on the ladder is often longer, as they were never necessarily on a path with the intention of moving up further from a tenured faculty position.

Erika, CFO of one of the world's leading supply retailers and highly-ranked Fortune 500 companies, proves a quintessential illustration of the often quickly moving path to C-Suite leadership through the linear trajectory. Now in only her mid-forties, Erika's career has been spent in the same city she would find her first consulting job in as a post-grad, her time subsequent to which has been spent rising quickly in the ranks of the retail giant, all the while gaining invaluable experience in a wide array of sectors and divisions within the company. She cites prevalent life turning points as each new transition within the company, most notably those that would call on a different skillset or require a drastic change in her specialization. Ashley, CFO of a leading Fortune 500 entertainment company, has a career that proves illustrative in the same way but within a different industry. Also only in her mid-forties, Willard remains with a single company subsequent to her first job as an audit manager after undergrad, leading the corporation through major acquisitions and label changes during a time of economic turmoil and eventually sitting at the helm of the operation as the company's CFO. Interestingly

enough, a bachelor's degree is the highest degree held by both of these highly successful (and relatively young) women. Marcia, C-Suite executive of one of the world's leading Fortune 500 insurance vendors, also remains with the same company since post-grad. Corrine, late-fifties, puts her name into the hat for a prestigious treasury position with one of the world's leading entertainment companies- also on the 500 list- after an illustrative career in banking, while Sherrie, mid-thirties, works her way up to executive level management within one service industry company before a recent transition to another in the role of President.

The second of the two career trajectories (non-linear, trajectory #2) requires movement to multiple different companies while working up the corporate ladder to eventually reach C-Suite or executive-level leadership. Here the non-linear trajectory is characterized by numerous company (or industry) transitions, in turn requiring numerous moves and giving way to a journey creating a zig-zag-like pattern exemplified in Chapter Three's Figure 2. Francine, EVP and Head of Government Affairs for a premier media company, has a particularly interesting non-linear trajectory because she did not make her foray into corporate America until recently. Previously involved in public service, the themes of her professional narrative are not entirely similar to what is typical for business (proving even further that people can come to be in business from many different angles). With a law degree and experience in communications law and as a senior Capitol Hill staff member, she acquires a superb skillset applicable to a government affairs role within a large business, but notes she becomes visible nationally due to her work as senior staff in the senate and in communications law- two very niche work environments where there are very few women (and women of color). Wendy- the only other African American

woman in the business sample- has a similarly unique trajectory to Francine's. She starts in finance and business early, but subsequent to transitioning out of her Fortune 500 CFO role, she would spend the rest of her career in management consulting and talent management. Not only are these two women the only two minority women in the business sample and both in the non-linear category, but they both have distinctly *unpredictable* non-linear trajectories as well. Diane's career is always in business, but she explains it was scattered because she worked in numerous industries and in various European countries during the course of her trajectory with four different companies. She works her way up the corporate ladder during transitions to various companies, but always in the retail or service industries. She eventually comes into a VP role in a company and historical moment that demands attention, and gains visibility enough to even move up to the treasury role. And Jennifer's non-linear trajectory, eventually moving her to New England with her husband and company branch co-founder, starts her off in academia as a mathematics professor and eventually leads her towards corporate technology.

Academic career trajectories

While two clear-cut, but distinct groups can be easily observed for paths taken in business, paths to success in academic careers are perhaps less clear-cut but also less distinct; this is to say that while trajectories in this field do not fall as neatly into two distinct categories, trajectories in academia appear more likely to be similar to each other (and more predictable) than those of business. I assert this is in large part to do with the often linear trajectory taken to the top of the ladder in the American Academy, as many come out of the ranks of faculty. Though it is possible for academic administrators to come into their position from multiple different angles- either through traditional tenure-tracked scholarship, through recruitment from an outside discipline, or from outside

administrative positions as employees- traditional tenure-tracked scholarship in this instance is both most prevalent and predictable.¹¹ It seems the Academy overall continues to tap those for the top that are proven scholars as the main criteria for Presidencies. The overall trend follows the notion the proven scholar at the top of their craft usually leave behind their research to take on this leadership role. In Chapter Three's Figure 3, the trajectory's pattern is a straight line to demonstrate the often linear nature of the academic path, as an often predictable route to top leadership in academic administration includes an initial rise to preliminary administrative work through tokenism or visibility, an expansion of visibility or exposure as a result of type of expertise not commonly held by women, and a 'crucible moment'¹² in which they are tapped over others and become a "first" to hold the role. I expand on the lives and trajectories of those fitting the 'linear' academic model primarily in the following chapters, as I believe these stories are most indicative of women academicians who go on to be tapped for top leadership roles. As noted earlier, exceptions to this rule also exist and should be taken into consideration because their careers as exceptions prove illustrative of the most important qualities necessary to be topped for top positions in the absence of prior experience. The four women recruited wholly outside of academia also undergo linear trajectories, two with long and distinguished public service careers. Two other slight exceptions to the rule are those who managed to work their way up in academic administration despite never having previously been on tenure-track, Mary (now Associate Dean of Administration and Finance at a large university), whose prior experience included health care and social work, and Denise (now President, at a historically Black college), whose prior experience included both law and public service before she became a senior staff-assistant in the Academy.

¹¹ Some universities are looking to people with other new and distinct kinds of backgrounds to bring a type of leadership re-branding to the institution-- like entrepreneur Adam Weinberg (Berklee College of Music) and Dale Knobel (Denison University) who recently left his Presidency for global community building.

¹² Robert Thomas (*Crucibles of Leadership*, 2008) defines a 'crucible moment' as a pivotal event or transition in one's life when they decide they can and should lead.

Here I note a trend similar to the career trajectories of the few minority women in my business sample mentioned earlier; the two women mentioned above who might be considered contract employees before reaching their top status, also with non-linear trajectories proving to be exceptions to the rule, are also both minority women- Mary is Latina and Denise is African American. Ilene and Deborah, the other two ‘non-traditional’ administrators who are coming off of well-known political careers comment they arrive at the decision to start something new and exciting because the institutional mission appealed to them on a personal level. Deborah (now President of a small business school) notes she took the Presidential post only at a business school because of her passion for economic reform, and Ilene (now President of one of the largest educational systems in the world) notes she has always had a passion for expanding higher education opportunities to students. From an organizational standpoint, not only do these women fit niche roles with their unique expertise in policy and political negotiations, but their visibility and fame is undoubtedly appealing to any system or institution looking to bolster its reputation.

Gender’s Professional Role in Influencing Career Trajectory

Socio-cultural factors with particular regard to gender play a large part in the personal and professional narratives of women leaders in their fields, and such factors frequently intersect with personal and professional decisions the women make as they work their way up the ladder. As it is widely regarded women are systematically blocked from career succession at every level through ‘the leaky pipeline’, it begs the question, what have these twenty women in particular done differently than others, and how does this difference intersect with gender?

First, while women must constantly make personal and professional decisions that prove inextricably tied with the influence of family and children on their schedules, the women in my sample have not let decisions to have children affect their educational timeline or career trajectory. Essentially, they do not ‘lean out from the table’¹³ prematurely, and decisions that come with sacrifice do not enter the picture until after the women have become established.

Secondly, while issues of gender are constantly at play in the workplace (delineated in the Introduction)- often working to exclude women in their ascension to the top- I argue the women used these shared experiences to their advantage to develop qualities which further propelled them up the ladder and through the pipeline. In her article *Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations*, Joan Acker uses the term ‘inequality regimes’ as “an analytic approach to understanding inequalities in work organizations,” by examining “interlocked practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities at work” (Acker 2006: 441). I assert, however, for the women in my sample, the very inequality regimes that work to keep women blocked from succession have seemingly provided a heightened sense of essential leadership characteristics needed to succeed in their male dominated organizations (especially towards the top), an idea in line with overwhelming sentiments and consensus the participants have been socialized to ‘act like men’ in the workplace. Acker finds women in a high-level professional computer development firm view the culture of their work group as “highly masculine, aggressive, competitive, and self-promoting. The women had invented ways to cope with this work culture, but they felt that they were partly outsiders who did not belong (Acker 2006: 446)”.

¹³ Sandberg, Sheryl. (*Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, 2013)

These ‘inequality regimes’ within organizations facilitate a culture in which women do not receive equal access to opportunities or resources, however the women who have beaten the odds have done so in spite of these ‘regimes’, even using characteristics seen as ideal in the male-dominated organizations to an extreme in order to get themselves heard over the systematic oppression. The women in my sample also indicate the need to be highly masculine and aggressive. We see this play out both in terms of acquired leadership characteristics and how they conduct themselves in the office. Monica comments that from the color of her nails to the style of her pantsuits, she remains motivated to behave in such a “masculinized” way that most closely identifies her with her male colleagues. Another woman in the business sample (who preferred I not identify her even by her pseudonym when speaking on this issue) claims she left her leadership role within her Fortune 500 company in large part for this very reason- she explained the culture as overtly aggressive and negatively competitive. Though the reasons behind their masculinized socializations are certainly not directly positive, and in many ways facilitate the ‘inequality regimes’ Acker speaks of, the women in my sample have adapted and obtained productive leadership qualities as a result. The women most commonly cited qualities such as directness, assertiveness, and an ability to take credit where credit is due- another potential reason they have been able to reach the top over others. Thirdly, the women strive to be the best at their craft, which they do even more intensely because of-and in spite of- the ‘intersectionalities’ of gender, race, and sexuality. As the stories above indicate, the motivation to ‘act like men’ in the workplace intensifies the further up they move in the ranks. Though the women in my sample have

managed to overcome institutional barriers in their quest to the top, this pressure to act a certain way is affirmed by Kanter's work in *The Impact of Hierarchical Structures on the Work Behavior of Women and Men*, where she asserts that "the structures of opportunity and power, along with the proportional representation of a person's social type, define and shape the ways that organization members respond to their jobs and to each other" (Kanter 1976: 415).

Though experiences are highly varied, women in the sample regardless of industry share significant common personal narratives I analyze through a gendered lens to accurately shed light on the experiences of those who are "firsts" and "tokens". First and foremost, a notable parallel to the notion these powerful women are socialized to 'act like men' in the workplace, they do not perceive barriers around them on their quest to the top. McKinsey & Company's *Centered leadership: How talented women thrive*, sees this phenomena as an example of "positive framing, [a way in which women leaders] adopt a more constructive way to view their world, expand their horizons, and gain the resilience to move ahead even when bad things happen" (Barsh et. al 2008: 1). This proves them not only as exceptional, but extraordinary. Whether it be focus, determination, or an unwillingness to let 'lifestyle issues' hinder them, the women prove extraordinarily unaffected by society's perception of gender, and to this extent, they do not place limitations inhibitory to action on what they can and cannot do.

Gender becomes inextricably tied to the professional narrative the higher up on the ladder women climb, especially as the two business trajectories prove heavily

influenced by informal networks (like the ‘old boys network’) that often exclude women. Monica jokingly comments her male colleagues get substantial business done without her because she is not with them on the golf course after hours. A prominent part of most professional narratives of those who have reached the top, women usually look to women mentors or prominent females who have gone before them for guidance, or are pulled into the system by a mentor; the literature also affirms this finding, noting men receive more promotions than women because they do not receive as much ‘sponsorship’ within mentoring relationships that greatly assist in advancing one’s career (Ibarra et al. 2010). The women in my sample were in many cases advanced by a female mentor at some point in their career, or a particularly good male mentor open to advancing women. Due to the ‘lifestyle issues’ mentioned earlier by McKinsey senior partner Malhotra when addressing dilemmas of the ‘leaky pipeline,’ companies with greater workplace flexibility become a bigger draw than those without since many of the women are working their way up while still raising children. While business women are more likely to have the less flexible 9-5 schedule of normal business hours while working their way up the ladder during childrearing years, academicians do not come into their highly regimented administrative hours until childrearing years are over. This will be explored in-depth in chapters three and four. But the women in my sample reach the top while working for companies with and without superior workplace flexibility. They therefore compensate by making sacrifices in other areas, and this begins to directly intersect with the personal narrative as it affects the household division of labor (*See chapter 4.*). Similarly, regardless of the company’s policy on maternity leave, women with children almost to a person have come back to work quickly and lean on their spouse or partner to help them

do this. The woman in the sample who made a point to note during the interview that she took a longer maternity leave and then returned part-time had the luxury to do so because she was no longer in her Fortune 500 executive leadership position at the time of her pregnancy, but was instead self-employed after starting her consulting business. If others were to take this luxury during the time they are in their executive leadership role, it would be considered to be ‘stepping off the ladder.’

The Personal Role of Gender in Influencing Career Trajectory

Because of the persistence and escalation of the ideology of motherhood (Blair-Loy 2004), women even today remain the primary caretakers in the household. Motherhood, and the tasks assigned to “good” mothers as prescribed by society, influence how women make work decisions like transitions to new jobs and cities. In this sense, the current “state of the family” becomes important to women especially while deciding when and where to transition to new companies or locations. This finding is also affirmed by literature such as Blair-Loys *Competing Devotions* (2004), and *Cultural Constructions of Family Schemas: The Case of Women Finance Executives* (2001). When asked if their personal/home life had any bearing on their work transition, those with children describe a scenario in which they either felt comfortable or uncomfortable with a potential career move given certain ages of the children as correlated to the completion of the child’s primary and secondary education. Multiple participants comment this transition occurred in part because it was “a good time for the family,” implying the majority of the child-rearing years had already been completed at that point in time. Additionally, it should be noted women tend to take family planning into consideration at younger ages than ever before when making career decisions, however, the women in my sample did not seem to

“lean out” (Sandberg 2012) from the table prematurely in preparation for one day having a family. Because none of the women in my sample took a potential family into consideration while working up the ladder, I assert not only that this decision is crucial to career succession, but also that this is likely a primary reason this group has made it to the top.

Race and the ‘Leaky Pipeline’: How Has the Role of Race Affected Participant Career Paths?

As mentioned in Chapter One, not only do women thin out towards the top of the corporate pyramid, but they also seem to thin out well before making middle to upper level management. While women thin out systematically at every level while moving up the ladder, this experience proves drastically heightened for women of color who are in this context the minority of the minority. Acker notes “inequality regimes are highly various; they can also tend to be fluid and changing. These regimes are linked to inequality in the surrounding society, its politics, history, and culture” (Acker 2006: 443). While the ‘surrounding culture’ has made great strides, with “women now holding a substantial share of jobs in high-status professions” (Cohen 2003: 1), minorities are slower to make these great strides comparatively to what is now seen in top fields [like medical school], and institutions of higher education that have also seen a great influx in the number of women in recent years (Cohen 2003).

As for the three academic minority women in my sample in particular, they have either taken a non-traditional route- that is, one not derived through a tenure-tracked faculty position- or taken on a leadership role often created for them courtesy of expertise

in past positions working on behalf of minorities.¹⁴ To be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three, former Dean Denelle (African American) takes a traditional scholarly path as tenure-tracked faculty, serving as chair of the President's diversity committee which would give her the exposure and expertise to be tapped for her eventual role as Dean of the College. Mary (Latina), and Denise (also African American), both took non-traditional paths towards academic administration as neither of them were tenure-tracked faculty. Additionally, all three minority women in the academic sample have worked on issues pertaining to minorities in a formal capacity, with focus on development and promotion of either women of color or racial minorities in general. As noted, Denelle chaired the President's committee on diversity at her 'home' university, Denise served as Assistant Director of Minority Affairs at one of her universities, and Mary works on minority faculty promotion in her role as Assistant Dean before being promoted to Associate Dean at her university. These three women have risen in the ranks either through non-traditional means away from the Academy, or through formal work on diversity initiatives that give them exposure and expertise in a noticeable realm: I believe this is a significant indicator of an institutional piece of this puzzle as it relates to race. Both African American women in business are in the non-linear category, and reach their prestigious executive leadership position at completely different times in their career, on opposite ends of the spectrum. While Wendy, former CFO of a prominent, 500-list non-profit organization comes into her C-Suite position immediately after graduating from college, Francine, Global Head of Government Affairs for a 500-list media company

¹⁴ Hochschild (1997) in *The Time-Bind* found in his study that the only man he observed to take parental leave was African American. He is also the only Black manager in her book. However, his decision to take paternity leave is noticed because he is a black man.

Hochschild uses this man to illustrate a type of 'path breaker'. While small in number, these women might be considered similarly.

comes into hers quite recently after building a noticeable presence in communications law and on the Hill. Here I note a trend similar to the career trajectories of the women of color in my business sample. The two women mentioned above, also with non-traditional trajectories and proving themselves as notable exceptions, are both women of color- Associate Dean Mary is Latina, and President Denise is African American.

Early Childhood Influence on Eventual Career Path

Early career decisions in the lives of leaders are often influenced by childhood or young adulthood goals that can provide significant influence on ultimate career goals. Goals and desires in early life among women in business are varied- some did and some did not express early desires to be corporate executives- but they all share the goal of moving up once they begin to climb the corporate ladder. This shared expectation significantly shapes how careers in business and academia start to look different, as this difference in ultimate goal reveals differing natures of the two fields. While a good number of businesswomen said they expressed an early desire to eventually become high-level executives, not a single academician expressed early desires to become high-level academic administrators. Though this difference distinguishes the main difference between the two groups early on, numerous common threads run throughout the childhood experiences of women leaders in both sectors, the shared themes demonstrating paths to potential success in business and academia as largely indistinguishable at an early age. Common childhood experiences include natural academic inclination, and early leadership skills as demonstrated by instances of care taking, high performance in leadership roles, and nomination to such roles by peers and adults. These data suggest the leaders share common experiences and goals during

childhood, and that these early life experiences generally inspire a sense of altruism and feeling of “wanting to make a difference” that is ultimately carried with them into adulthood and becomes a driving factor later in life. *Centered leadership: How talented women thrive* from *The McKinsey Quarterly* mentions this theme key in their leadership model for women, as they explain “though the specifics of their lives vary, each one shares the goal of making a difference in the wider world” (Barsh et al. 2008: 1). The desire to “make a difference” is in large part fueled by personal experiences as dictated by family background, and they apply the way in which they want to make a difference to their eventual career. This application of their goals, as driven by how they wish to make a difference in the world, is where the distinction between business and the Academy starts; these goals eventually align with adult interests and experiences. Differences begin to develop in women who would ‘crack the ceiling’ of the two fields in young adulthood, based on early goals and life experiences in high school and college.

Early Goals as Determining Future Leadership and Field

In discussing early goals and interests, academicians in my sample chiefly expressed passions surrounding teaching and specific academic subjects. This was wholly consistently across the sample, as was a shared sentiment there was never any desire or inclination to move up to the administrative level. Early life interests for academics particularly shape academic pursuits that will primarily go on to define goals based on a specific academic focus. Of her adolescence, President Dana comments, “I couldn’t imagine being anything other than a teacher,” speaking to her early interests but also proving significantly influenced by her upbringing- she was one of few academic administrators in this sample from a working class background, and the first in her family

to go to college.¹⁵ For other academics I characterize as following ‘traditional’ paths based on tenure-tracked scholarship, their biography similarly meets history in this way. For President Emerita Jean, former Dean Denelle, President Elizabeth, and President Emerita Dorris, goals begin to differ as early as young adulthood and college when a desire to pursue a Ph.D. develops. President Emerita Dorris comments, “by the time I was a senior [in college], academics were very clearly where my interests were.” For academicians this inclination is based on an early passion for academia and thirst for knowledge, and for businesswomen the inclination towards certain career goals are often more emotionally based on early experiences of adversity.

Early life experiences in particular shape opportunities and interests at a young age that will later dictate career goals- often even with a specific industrial focus- for women who will go on to become top corporate executives. These experiences usually carry with them a very personal component, as elements of one’s upbringing manifest into specific interests that lead to an industrial focus that eventually drives the goal forward. Growing up in working class households without insurance, Monica and Marcia (both Fortune 500 insurance executives) each speak of how negative experiences they watched their family struggle through sparked a very early desire to work with money. They wanted to get on a path that would enable them to help other families in financial crises, in addition to one day helping with their own. Wendy’s experience growing up on “the wrong side of the tracks” also drew her to finance at an early age which she studied

¹⁵ In *Hard Choices* Kathleen Gerson (1986) writes about the various paths women’s lives take, and argues that early goals might be reversed. Women who dreamed of becoming stay at home mom’s find that their careers are all-important, and vice versa. It is hard to predict, she argues, how childhood might influence career paths, but here I see a clear and consistent trend among women in business. The “teacher” eventually became a university professor, so their aspirations developed from this initial root. In my study, childhood influences are always pointed to as relevant.

in college, though she found the work unfulfilling and would shortly thereafter transition to the non-profit world because she identified with the company's service-driven mission. Sherrie, having grown up the oldest of four children in a single-mother household, took on a waitressing job at sixteen to help support her family financially. Amazingly, this would be the launching pad that sparks her particularly speedy career succession. While they all share an apparent desire to "make a difference" or "change the world" through their chosen industry, they each come into an early discovery of passion and purpose that helps them reach their goals.

While childhood experiences undoubtedly vary according to race and class, it is important to note career paths are not predetermined based on their family's household income. To this end, I assert early household income is not indicative of career success in business or academia, though this proves more prevalent in business than academia because many academicians come from middle-class households. Institutional barriers to success for women are always at play, but analysis of my sample suggests women raised in any income bracket can achieve success; essentially, early socioeconomic status does not by any means tie future leaders to the fate of that particular income bracket. In fact, the sense of "working their way up and out" through education and hard work becomes a prevalent theme amongst women from lower-income families like those mentioned above. This comparison of the demographic information notes more women in business came from lower income families than did women in academia, suggesting it may be easier to "make your own luck" initially in the business world, whereas a majority of women in academia tend to come from middle-upper middle class backgrounds, some even the children of successful academicians. Though, early socioeconomic status is not

indicative of how the paths end up becoming different. Through this analysis, I tentatively assert these data illustrate it may be easier for women to begin careers with an upward trajectory in the business sector, though this is not an indication of which sector is more welcoming to women overall.

The Nature of Career Reputation as Determining Adult Career Paths

The two fields represented in this sample are uniquely distinct, as the success in either is linked to the nature of the individual's reputation based on the organizational structure of the career itself. The 'nature of one's reputation' within their field therefore has everything to do with goals developed earlier in life, built accordingly into the structure of the career path and facilitated by the organizational structure of the institution. As mentioned above, academics do not express desires to become administrators as children or even throughout the course of their careers, and this has to do with the 'nature of the reputation' itself. The 'reputation' and 'prestige' for academicians is in the individual's research: the passion is for the individual research agenda and interests, proving that for academics their level of desire for higher ranked positions reaches a ceiling that for businesspeople it does not. Due to the nature of the 'reputation' in business- 'reputation' and 'prestige' as in the work produced for one's *company*- passion seems to surround a body of work produced for the good of the company, and a hope for a promotion that might allow for even greater influence. President Emerita, Dorris, echoes this sentiment through her comment "I never wanted to be an administrator- it had been no part of my passion or my purpose. I was happy doing teaching and research...I had a standard sentence I would give back saying I was not interested." Former Dean Denelle concurs, explaining that "it wasn't a goal I had"- her

goals were always tied to her research and social science publications. Experiences of the academicians interviewed confirms hypothesis that most long term goals of those in the Academy stem from a lifelong passion for knowledge research, confirming it is the *nature* of the individual's 'reputation' that is different. These data also show that women who have climbed the ladder in both fields have significantly differing expectations of career goals and leadership positions from childhood through adulthood, despite similar patterns of dramatic movement to various locations and posts along the way.

Chapter Three

The Path to Leadership:

'Crucible Moments' and 'Turning Points' in the Lives of High-Potential Women

"When you stumble, keep faith. And when you're knocked down, get right back up and never listen to anyone who says you can't or shouldn't go on." -Hillary Rodham Clinton

While people become proficient leaders through experience, “two people can have the same experience and come away with profoundly different reactions” (Thomas 2008: 16). In *Crucible Moments*, Robert Thomas discusses important moments in the lives of leaders that most greatly influence their eventual decision to lead, usually through transformative personal or professional events. Thomas describes a ‘crucible moment’ as the most formative event in one’s career when they come into their true leadership (2008). For these reasons, the women who have made it become important to study because their narratives (and the turning points they describe) reveal how they came to lead. To discover how this process unfolds, this chapter focuses on how and why women interviewed are tapped for top executive or administrative roles. Thomas notes transformative leadership events often occur outside of professional lives, explaining “the most profound among those experiences- the *crucibles* that led to a new or an altered sense of identity- [and in his study] were nested in family life, wartime trauma, athletic competition, and/or personal loss far more often than in work assignments” (16). Participants in my sample most commonly cite events nested in family life first, with instances of personal loss trailing slightly behind. Many human beings experience love and loss, suggesting most of us have the potential to experience events like those mentioned above. The difference lies in what leaders make of these trying experiences, how they pick themselves up and use these events as learning experiences to propel their

professional lives forward. “While experience matters, what matters more is what one makes of experience: how a person comes to recognize in a crucible experience that something new or important is happening, to see beyond the discomfort, perhaps even the pain, of new and unexpected information and to incorporate that information as useful knowledge, not just about the world but, as likely, about oneself” (Thomas, 2008:17).¹⁶

The life stories and experiences of the women in my sample suggest women in business and academia make it to their leadership posts for vastly different reasons. Given the differing nature of career trajectories in the two sectors, the interviews reveal a significant difference in meaning between life turning points for academicians and business executives. I assert these differences (in the nature of career trajectories and in personal and professional turning points) create a distinction between prevalent themes in the lives of academic administrators and corporate executives, proving crucible moments in the lives of these leaders as differentiated by personal and professional narratives. While I use Thomas’ ‘crucible moments’ theme as a model to discuss how individuals use life experience to bring them to a decision to lead, it should be noted Thomas did not include academic administrators in his work. Additionally, while he interviewed female as well as male leaders, gender is not a focus in *Crucibles of Leadership*.

Traditional and Non-Traditional Academic Administrators

As discussed in Chapter Two, the interviews reveal academic administrators have followed either a traditional, or non-traditional career trajectory in order to achieve their highest administrative status. Here I analyze more closely those in my sample who have

¹⁴In *Crucibles of Leadership*, Thomas asks his respondents for significant turning points in their lives; I use a similar strategy in a section of my interview guide to speak with respondents about their experiences as leaders.

followed the more traditional route- usually as tenure-tracked faculty members- as these women comprise the largest majority of the academic sample. This group tends to follow a relatively distinct path: Most commonly, during their time on faculty, they take on a leadership position of note (such as serving internally on campus as a dean, provost, faculty senate president, etc.), which eventually exposes these faculty members to even greater leadership roles. As they look back on their careers it is often these periods that serve as professional turning points that most greatly influence eventual leadership. In many ways, this serves as a turning point that participants acknowledge in present day as the first sign they have what it takes to be a leader. While it is unclear that this is enough, it proves a significant correlation and it occurs in each respondent's narrative. Subsequent to this initial leadership position, I also note there is a moment in time that sets them apart from other academics, though it initially remains linked to their professional identity as faculty members. Elizabeth, current President of a women's college, maintained her research lab at her large, elite "home" university for some time while holding a leadership role of note internally. Elizabeth is tapped for internal leadership at her home institution, but continues to teach as Professor at this university during the time she is in her role as Director of a prominent scientific department and as chair of another department in the School of Medicine. Her narrative illustrates the common finding that scholars don't always break with their faculty sense of self until a more substantial offer comes along they believe can allow them to have the greatest impact or influence substantial institutional or social change. Based on these data and other similar findings, I argue participants make a reputation as national scholars of note while juggling initial leadership positions- this is how they differ from other prominent tenure-tracked faculty

members. The ‘sign’ for the individual that this first position could lead elsewhere is critical to an eventual decision to leave behind her lab or independent research agenda. In other cases similar to Elizabeth’s described earlier, academics tapped for the top administrative posts leave their “home” institution to pursue this new position elsewhere. Nita, President of a small STEM-focused college, leaves her initial leadership position at an Ivy League university to become President at a smaller liberal arts college. In similar cases to Nita’s, future opportunities to become President of a liberal arts college may also hold meaning to them for an ability to have greater influence over a smaller playing field or for intrinsic interest in the college’s mission. For President Emeritus Dorris and President Dana, they too would leave positions at larger universities (one as President, one as Dean). For others, however, this move to the top of a university may be a university similar to the one they just left. Also exemplified in Thomas’ *Crucibles*, participants in this category interpret these often ‘shared’ experiences as an indicator they can and should move forward in ‘grander’ administrative positions. Here the ‘shared experience’ is a decision to leave faculty positions and shut down research agendas to become administrators, usually paired with an appealing incentive to influence greater social change such as working on behalf of the advancement of women minorities or women in STEM. While the decision requires a certain amount of back and forth before it is finalized, the individual will come to the realization they have made significant scholarly impact that has given them substantial national visibility.

While mostly university or college presidents come out of the ranks of faculty, those even in faculty ranks that are tapped for administrative positions usually have research expertise that is considered desirable; often it is only with hindsight that they

realize they were developing leadership skills- like team work and mentoring- while still primarily faculty members or scholars. If tapped from their home institution, I found it is because they have already demonstrated substantial, high-profile leadership at that institution, or have experienced a type of ‘big bang’ in their research agenda that makes them a good pick for the school. Essentially, because of their specific skillset, they will come to serve a specific function at the university, bringing something to the table others cannot. While this might also be true of those recruited externally and tapped by a different institution, it seems this is more due to heightened visibility due to national statute and acclaim. These women who are (or have been) presidents of the most elite institutions noted that their academic achievements at the national level, often in STEM fields, lead to a visibility. They were the only women to be tapped to serve on a national committee related to their research. Jean, President Emeritus of a large, elite institution notes she "was asked to do things at a national level". She comments that a groundbreaking scientific project was proposed, and “because it would be a huge bio project, the national research council formed a very high blue ribbon panel to study the question, and then if the answer was ‘we should do it,’ then the next question would be ‘how do you do it’. The committee was composed of very senior scientists, and I was asked to be on the committee.” In the case of Denelle, former Dean of a similarly elite institution, she notes she comes on board in part to solve an institutional dilemma created by the remarks of a top senior leader; Denelle explains she believes this incident led to the president tapping her to serve on a commission for diversity initiatives which would become the leadership role and expertise needed to be tapped for the Deanship. Her expertise as a scholar and also earlier employment outside the Academy prior to her

Ph.D. made her an ideal candidate for chairing this committee. Here Denelle follows the same pattern as the other ‘traditional-track’ academics: First there is back and forth in the decision-making process, and then the individual realizes that she has made scholarly impact that has given her national visibility. She comments that “one of the recommendations made by both task forces was the creation of this office for faculty development and diversity within the provost’s office. So I was asked to be the first head of that office, and that is how I came to be in administration. It wasn’t a plan, it was really a moment where I had done this work and a lot of people felt it would be a good idea that I would get it off the ground.” Denelle is tapped for internal leadership at her home institution after five years at the university, and carries expertise in both the STEM fields (something the current President was pushing for) and in the History of Science (with knowledge of multicultural affairs, issues of diversity and access, and leadership development among minorities). This would be the theme of the task force Denelle would chair. Here it also becomes evident that gender and race are critical factors to being selected for the President's task force, because research interests and outside work experiences were perfectly suited to the role.

I found one exception amongst tenure-tracked faculty members, as Dorris (President Emeritus of *two* institutions) does not adhere to the traditional trajectory I have laid out for tenure-tracked faculty. Dorris would leave her faculty position significantly before achieving her high-profile academic stature. She becomes an example of an individual who could see the impact she might make by returning to her alma matter, especially as her wish to work on behalf of women was a part of her scholarly agenda. She notes “...people would reach out to and say ‘would you like to apply to be Dean of

this, and Provost of that, etc...’ And I literally had a standard sentence I would give back saying I was not interested, until my alma matter’s search committee called, and I started firing back my typical response, but then I thought ‘wait a minute. I think this college is missing a chance to be a truly feminist institution.” She cites reasons linked to institutional loyalty and furthering eventual academic pursuits as inspiring her desire to take on the position of the presidency at the liberal arts college at a relatively young age, tuning in to her “feminist commitment and desire to do something with [one of] the best women’s colleges in the world.” She explains the second most important reason was her “loyalty to her former school- and even independent to that- the nostalgia [she] felt when [she] got back on campus for the first time in many years.” Also interestingly, she notes she “wanted to know as a political scientist what it’s like to have power. And I figured I would be a better political scientist eventually if I knew that from the inside.” She is also unique in that she is the only woman in this study to become a President of two different academic institutions. This narrative serves as an example of an atypical trajectory of a ‘traditional, tenure-tracked’ faculty member, especially as she retired from her administrative career relatively early to resume her research agenda- almost a reverse from faculty whose national reputations are established as young scholars.

With many similar professional narratives across the academic sample, family proves less prevalent in the crucible moments of academicians, as personal events and family circumstance are not cited in the professional narratives of scholars as particularly influential in leading them to take on their present administrative role. Elizabeth, President of a well-known women’s college, is an exception. A time of personal adversity with the death of her first husband forces her to re-evaluate her life. She was in the role of

Provost at her 'home' institution (in what I call the 'initial leadership position') at the time she experienced her greatest personal loss, and comments she leaves one high post for another as a direct result of her husband's passing. She muses, "I didn't make the transition I might have made to become a President or become a Provost as soon as some might have, because I needed to care of him...I couldn't really leave, because he was really sick for eight years before he passed. So I could make it work at [my home institution] because I was already there, and I was connected. So when he passed it freed me in a way to be able to say I could then pursue my career interests in a fuller way." Elizabeth decided to pursue a Presidency in a different institution of a different type and permanently shut down her lab at her home institution.

Data from the academic sample also reveals academicians become tapped at older ages for their top administrative role than corporate executives, usually after age 50 and after over 20 years in the ranks of faculty when children are no longer in the home. This is a likely reason decisions regarding family may not be as prevalent in crucible moments leading up to the selection of ultimate leadership roles for academicians. Presidents Elizabeth, and Dana and President Emeriti Dorris and Jean are all in a very similar age range, and share similar stories of being presented with opportunities as 'token' (Kanter 1989) women in their time. President Nita, and former Dean Denelle are the next oldest, followed by the youngest group which includes President Deborah, Dean Mary, President Ilene, and President Denise. As the women get younger, we see their careers less influenced by tokenism and institutions as less likely to take women on for reasons surrounding gender. The younger women in the academic sample also took less

traditional paths in reaching their top administrative role, and prove less likely to do so through the more traditional, tenure-tracked faculty positions.

Here there is a clear pattern for the older women in the academic sample. The administration or institution in question consistently demonstrates a certain degree of tokenism that may bring them into an initial leadership position within an administrative department or committee. In this activity, their visibility expands through experience with diversity initiatives (such as the advancement of minorities) or expertise in the STEM fields. The individual's history and biography intersect (Mills 1959) and become inexplicably tied in this way. Even more importantly however, I argue in this section the significant common 'crucible moments' lie in the institutional search for women experts in the STEM fields or Multicultural Affairs, similar across institutions and generations. While the 'moment' that serves as the impetus for acquiring their top leadership position may be different for different people, the Academy broadly seeks to advance women already in smaller positions of leadership; in this sense, those who are chosen have positioned themselves through leadership experiences on a smaller administrative scale as "sure bets" to be tapped and to succeed on a grander scale; They are then watched by superiors in their positions.

While all leaders share their inertia in common- essentially, "they don't become stuck," for business people, the crucible moment is often one "that is a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity" (Thomas 2008: 27). This 'new or altered sense of identity' has a different impact for women in business than it does for women in academia, as businesswomen were already on the path to executive leadership when the 'crucible moment' occurred. Therefore the

moment in itself does not have to be the sole impetus to take on the leadership role because their career expectations often demonstrate intent to continue moving up the ranks. To this end, I assert the crucible moment is not as definite for women in business, as they are not suddenly tapped to take on their greatest administrative role like women in the academy. These crucibles do still however, “disrupt the status quo” (28), becoming lessons that provide some of life’s greatest learning experiences that the leaders use to their advantage to propel themselves up the corporate ladder. Because in business the reputation is dependent on the product produced for the company (and inherently demands a specific quality of work to be produced quickly and creatively), the themes leading up to the moment they are tapped for senior executive leadership positions are significantly different than those of the academicians. While business people are naturally inclined (and expecting) to move up the leadership ladder in a way that academics are not, for women in particular it becomes increasingly unlikely they will break the glass ceiling the higher up they move- upward movement on a certain trajectory does not guarantee ascension to the top of the rung. Expertise in the field is again critically important, as the women who are selected for certain positions are the best in their craft in the field of said positions. However, there appears a distinction even in the *type* of expertise. While this is one of the only themes shared between academicians and executives in the professional narrative, the businesswomen tend to become desirable due to diversity of skill and talent from years of work in many different divisions, while the academicians become desirable for expertise within a specific field (essentially, business is breadth, Academy is depth). These themes then become the crucible moments that serve as the impetus for movement to various positions. The impetus for moving, which

then allows them to be tapped to a higher position, occurs in correlation with specific personal experiences- either personal loss or family-related decisions- that allow them to kick up their career.

Reasons women leaders are eventually tapped for their most prominent positions include both a personal and professional narrative. But in business, ‘crucible moments’ become defined by both personal and professional narratives in a way they do not for the academicians. As discussed in Chapter Two, the nature of the career trajectory in business is structured differently, and the professional narrative in business is broken down into two types of paths: a relatively linear path in which the individual works her way up within one company and is subsequently tapped to her top leadership role either within that ‘home’ company or another, or a non-linear path in which the individual works her way up the corporate ladder in various companies and is hired externally to each new position. Because of the significant difference in these two types of career trajectories, the crucible moments that become important for the women attaining their top executive leadership position therefore vary based on the type of trajectory they have had (either linear or non-linear, moving up through one company or moving up in many).

Linear Career Trajectories (Trajectory #1)

There is a consistent theme that links the professional narratives of those on trajectory #1- the linear path- their experience and expertise within the company over a long period of time, and usually as a result during times of dramatic change or expansion of the company’s profile. Their experience seeing the company through such a time makes them an invaluable and indispensable resource. Because they have moved up the ladder in the same company and experienced the company’s growth and development in

a way other employees have not, their knowledge of the company's needs make it impossible for those above them to envision anyone else in that role. In many cases, they have accumulated an incredibly diverse profile of job experiences, usually across many branches and departments within the company. Ashley, CFO of a leading entertainment Fortune 500, serves as a quintessential example of the linear trajectory predominantly within a single company, as prevalent themes in her career demonstrate how she eventually reaches the 'crucible moment' in which she is hired to lead to lead as CFO. Most notably, Ashley gains significant experience over many years with the company, brought on board initially as a result of a merger between two companies that would later become her future employer. Ashley proves instrumental in all of these successful transitions during the economic recession with the music industry in financial free fall. These numerous and significant transitions with Ashley, and her prior experience as an audit manager get her hired to the CFO role she takes on shortly thereafter. She would then see her career's biggest acquisition yet- a merger between her company and a major ticket broker that she would eventually spearhead. She comments she "grew up with" the company and came to know its needs inside and out, proving especially vital during the company's times of change and growth. Erika, CFO of one of the world's largest supply stores shares similar experiences. Around the time Erika is hired by the company as a corporate accounting manager, the company starts looking to create a major online (.com) venture as a separate spinoff. Erika is hired as CFO of this .com spinoff, and proves herself an invaluable team member in shifting the new company's focus. As a creator of the spinoff, she would gain experience with finance, IT, marketing, and merchandising, giving her a breadth of experiences in all aspects of the company, as well as operational

experience in seeing the dot-com from a customer perspective. Similar to Ashley's experience with her 'home' company during the economic recession, Erika's .com site also falters during this economic downturn and must be folded into the larger business. This leads her to gain an even more diverse array of experiences in retail as general merchandise manager in an unrelated division, proving to be another new dimension of work experience that would contribute to her diverse career path within the company. Though the impact of the site was hit by the recession, Erika successfully starts a new business for the company and leads them through a time of substantial change during a time of grave economic uncertainty for a large business. New ventures with the company and leadership during a period of change and economic uncertainty, in conjunction with an acquisition of diverse job training ultimately makes her breadth of knowledge within the company and unique skillset invaluable.

Though I do generally categorize her as 'linear,' during the time in which Fortune 500 online retailer was also in jeopardy during the economic recession, Diane worked for her 'home' institution at the time as VP of Finance and steered them through a similar .com bust that would lead to her election as the company's Treasurer. Similarly, Sherrie also acquires a breadth of knowledge within a single company that contribute to her external hiring for her second executive leadership position, as President of one of the largest up-and-coming service-industry chains. Sherrie works her way up within her home company (a restaurant in the service industry), gaining experience in every aspect of the business: First from waitressing, to lower and middle-level management positions, to chief developer of businesses overseas, and eventually in the role of Vice President reporting directly to the CEO at the tender age of 26. Through this diverse range of experience, Sherrie demonstrates an

understanding of the changing needs of the company during a time of rapid growth and expansion. This quick success and national (and international) gives her increased visibility, and she is eventually recruited to her current place of work as President.

During the time each individual works their way up the corporate ladder within one company, we see clear patterns of shared experiences while they climb: Themes include assistance with a major acquisition of a new business, leading the company through a period of significant growth or expansion, work during an economic recession that makes new moves in the company feel unstable, or new professional experiences within multiple departments. In leading a company through a major acquisition, a time of economic turmoil, or a period of major growth or expansion, and many times with experience in various departments, the ‘linear’ leader demonstrates significant breadth of experience, making it impossible for those above her to envision anyone else in a potential open C-Suite or executive leadership role. Her great breadth of experience throughout her career within the same company makes her an ideal candidate to eventually take on a top leadership role, giving her a distinct advantage over other candidates in the pool potentially being considered externally. In essence, she demonstrates a diversity of talent gained through a diverse range of experiences within the company that the corporation finds essential to their success at a particular moment in time. She is promoted to her top leadership role because a diverse range of skillsets and knowledge over many years and in many positions makes her invaluable when the corporation goes through a time of major change, growth, acquisition, or economic turmoil. In this linear category as determined by a few of the narratives described, gender appears a less salient and less likely reason for hiring. It is important to note that while

these themes may not hold for all women in business in a random sample, these themes proved consistent across my sample regardless of industry (finance, service, entertainment, and tech).

The profiles of linear businesswomen appear comparable to women with traditional trajectories in academia, as their family unit has spent a majority of their lives in a single city. Women in business who have followed a non-linear career trajectory usually move between cities to take new positions. This entails a level of sacrifices for the woman's family who have to follow suit, making her career a priority. Though this is indeed a small sample, participants who chose turning points having to do with family do so because their non-linear career path involves personal decisions about family life (see Chapter Four for more on work-family issues).

Non-Linear Career Trajectories (Trajectory #2)

For those on career trajectory #2 who are recruited from the outside (on the non-linear path), the theme consistent with their professional narratives is one of visibility attained through prior success in a large and highly reputable company, or through production of a product or project that gives them significant stature (similar to the 'big bang' idea described for academicians as the research that ultimately gives them visibility). Corrine, Treasurer of another one of the world's leading entertainment Fortune 500s, is recruited to the treasury role for experience within a large and reputable bank, as her career in finance is shaken drastically when a hostile takeover of her employer results in her displacement. When a friend from business school puts her name in the pool for candidacy for a Senior Vice President role in the place she now calls her 'home', this opportunity is presented at an ideal time for her professionally. Once on the linear path

within the corporation, she quickly becomes a top contender for the Treasury role with a depth of experience from finance, and invaluable skills from previously leading the company through the economic recession as Senior Vice President. Also demonstrating different themes prevalent to the quickly climbing non-linear career trajectory, Monica, Treasurer of a Fortune 500 insurance company, is recruited thanks to a product she patented in a previous position at another Fortune 500 insurance company that assists in giving her significant national stature and visibility. She had an enormous breadth of experience- in consulting, private insurance, management, accounting, and even teaching- a combination that gets her recruited to the current company as Senior Vice President in Finance only a year prior to joining the corporate division in 2006. Most notably and most impactful on her eventual promotion to the company's treasury role, she becomes CEO of an offshoot of the company as a direct result of the product she patented in her previous job, which she would go on to use as a model for the product this offshoot is centered around.

Unlike those on the linear business trajectory who demonstrate extraordinary breadth of experience throughout their move up the corporate ladder within the 'home' company, those whose careers fall within the non-linear category demonstrate depth of experience over breadth as they move to various institutions throughout the course of their career. I liken the process to the external hiring process described for academicians, as women in this category often fill a specific niche role needed at the time with a particular skillset. Distinct from the linear category, women with a non-linear business career demonstrate significant expertise or substantial depth of knowledge within a certain role or industry that makes them a desirable candidate in a transition from small to

big companies or between industries; the role they will go on to fill in a new company demands their specific skillset and expertise, giving them an advantage over other candidates.

As with the linear trajectory, four common themes prove most salient for reasons non-linear women ultimately become tapped for their leadership role. At some point, seeing a company through a big change or acquisition may set a transition in motion, as employee displacement or company downsizing may serve as an impetus for a career move. A majority of ‘non-linear’ participants show previous experience with a highly reputable bank, firm, or company that demonstrates industry expertise and knowledge, and also gives the individual national visibility. Thirdly, numerous ‘non-linear’ participants expressed involvement with a product, project, or patent as its creator, greatly contributing to the company’s success and propelling their career forward. With their name attached to the product, they receive national stature and develop a reputation and a name that also might contribute to increased visibility. (Monica was called “the mother” of the product she patented, a term of endearment she continues to reap rewards from.) Perhaps most importantly, however, career transitions in this category can often be linked to decisions tied to personal life, as reasons for transitions prove correlated to personal loss, a bump or hindrance in family planning, or scheduling demands related to work-life balance. These personal ‘crucibles’ become prevalent for non-linear individuals in business in a way they are not for linear individuals in business, as career moves must be taken into consideration in conjunction with the age of the children relative to their current status on the ladder, and the length of the commute to work with children still in the home. Not surprisingly, given factors that affect women in the non-linear trajectory,

these are the women in the business sample who do not have children. In essence, crucial decisions regarding work-family issues are not pointed to for business people in the linear trajectory (much like with the non-traditional academicians, but are pointed to for non-linear women in business).

While these narratives work to delineate reasons the women come into their highest leadership position from an institutional perspective, it becomes evident through these professional experiences that gender does not play a direct role in the women coming in to their top leadership position either within one 'home' company or in being recruited from the outside. From a professional standpoint as mentioned above, the women in this non-linear category are likely to be hired for a specific skillset they will go on to fill (i.e. asset management during a financial crisis). This skillset or knowledge base is predominantly responsible for propelling them to executive leadership, it is not related to diversity initiatives or gendered factors as it is with academicians. Still, the women in this category consistently report noticing very small numbers of women in their organization, and demographic profiles of the executive leadership/management teams within the organizations these women lead substantiate these claims.

Gender and Race: Institutional Barriers

Building upon institutional barriers for women rising in the ranks more generally as described in Chapter Two, race and gender are also inextricably tied to the moments leading up to when the women in the sample ultimately are tapped- and accept- their top leadership role. As discussed previously, gender and race prove more salient in the non-linear business category from an institutional perspective than for those in the linear

business category. Furthermore, though the sample is small, both African American businesswomen interviewed fall in the non-linear category, and both take on significant career responsibilities at a young age. Issues of gender and race intersect substantially in the professional life, but for these two women in particular, these moments occur at vastly different career points on either end of the professional timeline. Francine, Executive Vice President and Global Head of Government Affairs for a Fortune 500 media company, notes she was always a “first” as she works her way up the ranks within the field of communications law, and still holds this status in her current executive leadership position in business. Wendy, former CFO for a Fortune 500 non-profit, was the youngest in the sample at the age she took on her executive leadership position, taking on her first ‘C-Suite’ leadership role only a few years out of college. Wendy’s trajectory is not only non-linear because of the time in her life she took on this position, but because she would transition out of the corporate sector completely to pursue a career in management consulting. The narratives demonstrate race and gender intersect consistently throughout the professional and personal lives of the two minority women in the sample, but it is important to note these few factors prove distinct from the rest of the women in the sample and set them apart institutionally.

For women in the Academy, there appears a consistent link between gender and the organizational nature of the workplace (through tokenism, gendered fields of expertise, and visibility). These gendered ties to the organizational nature of work in the Academy- as demonstrated by the professional narratives of women in this group- are exemplified through either instances of tokenism, or due to substantial professional involvement with issues prevalent to minorities or the promotion of women in STEM.

Surprisingly, but not unexpectedly based on the demographics of academic administrators in the sample, *personal* crucible moments leading up to the decision to take on a high-profile administrative post turn out far less likely to have to do with decisions linked to work-family balance than those of their business counterparts. Based on the ages in which women in this sample most commonly step into their administrative post, I ascertain the reasons decisions pertaining to work-family balance become less prevalent in this category are so for two reasons: the organizational structure of the work itself in allowing for greater workplace flexibility, and the life stage common to the age women are often tapped to lead which lends itself to the life of an ‘empty-nester’ without children in the home (See Chapter 4). Personal and professional narratives of academic administrators in the sample also reveal significant findings about women who have climbed to the top of the ranks in the Academy from an institutional perspective. Interestingly enough, all women in the sample who hold the highest-powered positions in their institution’s administrations are ‘firsts,’ with the exception of the two Presidents leading women’s colleges in the sample. From an institutional perspective, academics are tapped to positions of leadership in many cases for reasons having to do with issues of diversity, inclusion, race, and gender- if they are not they are less likely to become “firsts” at all.

Slower Acceptance of Women into the Academy

Business women are not tokens, and are also not ‘firsts’ even though they may be ‘onlys.’¹⁷ Despite very slim and extremely slowly growing numbers of businesswomen in

¹⁷ Minority women interviewed in the academic sample included two Deans and a college president. While it is difficult to draw conclusions because there are too few minority women, it is important to note this college president is not a ‘first’ because she is the president of a historically Black college. The few women of color who have been presidents of universities (such as Brown’s former president – Ruth

C-Suite leadership positions, but with a status as ‘onlys’ rather than ‘firsts,’ I assert this means the academy has been slower to accept women. While women today are accepted into the Academy as faculty, academia has been slower to accept women into top positions of power. There are simply fewer women at the top in the Academy, and the majority remain as faculty (Cook 2012). Institutionally, businesswomen do not claim a gendered experience of the workplace in the same way academicians do, however (they do not tend to be ‘tokens’ as Kanter discovered in the 1970s). In 2014 women are entrenched in larger numbers in the business sector, but still bear the brunt of family life and take on burdens of the family-devotion schema (Blair-Loy 2004). From an institutional perspective, corporate executives in the sample are not tapped for reasons directly related to their experiences with gender and race (though we know *personal* decisions to take on the role have likely been impacted by family life). They do not tend to be ‘tokens’ like peers of the same generation in the Academy, but corporate executives overwhelmingly remain ‘onlys’ as often the only woman in an executive, upper-level management position in their Fortune 500. It is important to understand, though, that being ‘onlys’ does not necessarily make them ‘firsts.’ Those who *are* ‘firsts’ in the company are women of racial minorities, particularly African American women as it relates to this sample group. (Perhaps this may also mean that African Americans are the only racial minorities who have yet to assimilate into these business positions at this point in time.)

Simmons, the first African American Ivy League President, are almost always ‘firsts’. Therefore, minority women who are firsts in either business or the Academy would look the same as visible “tokens.” The women of color who are Deans are “onlys,” and within the institutions employing women in my sample, these women of color are still rare.

As noted earlier, both women of color in the business sector fall in the non-linear (trajectory #2) category, and while I note the number of African American women in the sample is small comparatively, both women shared in common a substantial amount of responsibility at incredibly young ages, not necessarily true of the profiles of Caucasian women in the sample. Additionally, both African American women reach their executive leadership positions at drastically different points in their careers. While Wendy reaches hers right out of college as CFO, Francine has just recently transitioned to hers in the position she currently holds. Wendy takes on the role of CFO for one of the world's most powerful and popular Fortune 500 non-profits immediately after the company's conception at the age of 23, while Francine becomes the only black woman lawyer she knows after completing her J.D. immediately after college. In contrast to their Caucasian peers, these two women did not seem to gradually 'work their way up,' but rather quickly acquired great responsibility and leadership within roles that would lead them down distinctly non-linear paths in multiple fields and sectors. Because women in business are 'onlys' but usually not 'firsts' or 'tokens,' the racial component from an institutional perspective is subtle. However, as much as women in business are not tapped for factors including gender and race, minority women in business remain the most visible as 'onlys', as they are in the minority of an already miniscule pool of women. To this end, minority women, as 'onlys' become 'tokens' whose increased visibility makes them more conscious of race in the workplace (Kanter 1977). Caucasian colleagues do not feel (and did not point out) their sense of being 'visible' to the same extent. As the only African American woman to make partner in her law firm- like in most law firms at the time- an individual like Francine may have gained a kind of visibility in her long career as a

communications lawyer *prior* to being tapped by the media company for her executive leadership position. There is a significant difference in the time at which her visibility becomes noticeable comparatively to her Caucasian peers. Based on these instances, I found that the new “tokens” are women of color at the top of the corporate chain, perhaps African American women even more specifically. In conclusion, while corporate America may be more open to the acceptance of women leaders, this does not necessarily apply to minority women; and while the Academy may be less hospitable to the acceptance of women leaders [than corporate America], it may be more in need of minority women because minority women fill essential niche positions specifically related to race and gender.

Figure 1: Linear Business Trajectory

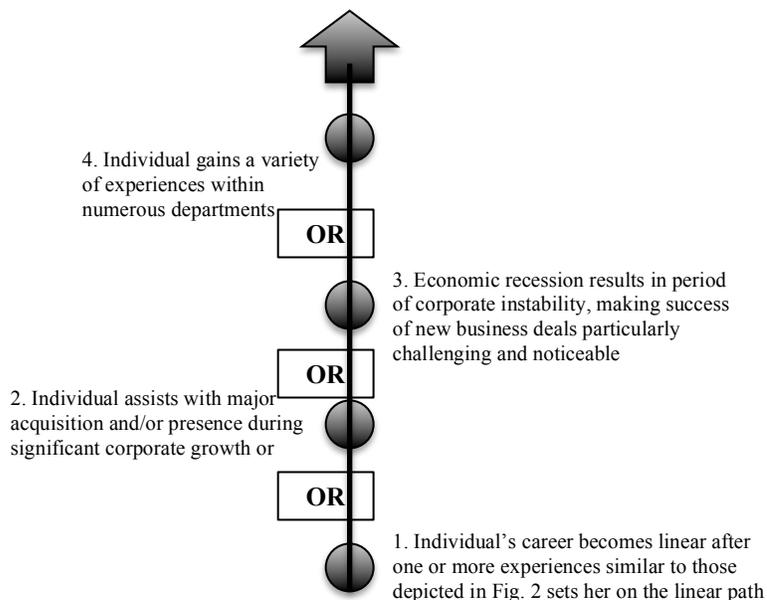


Figure 2: Non-Linear Business Trajectory

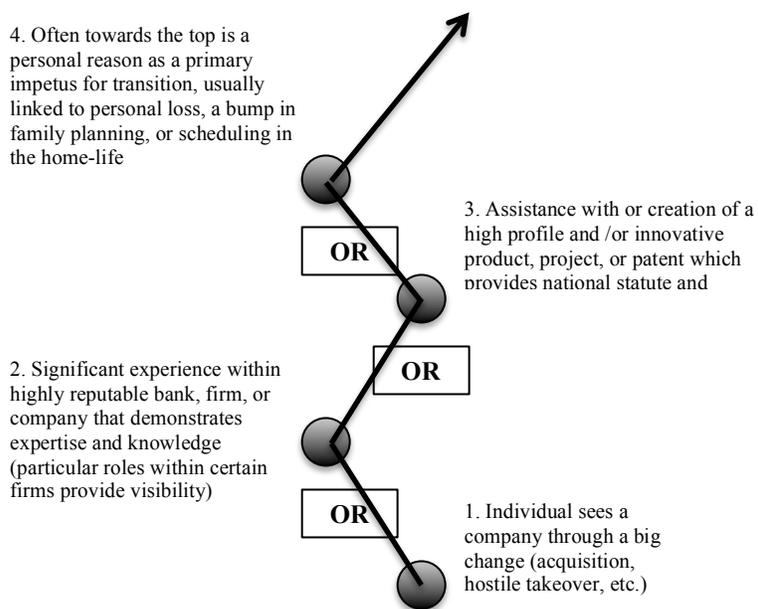
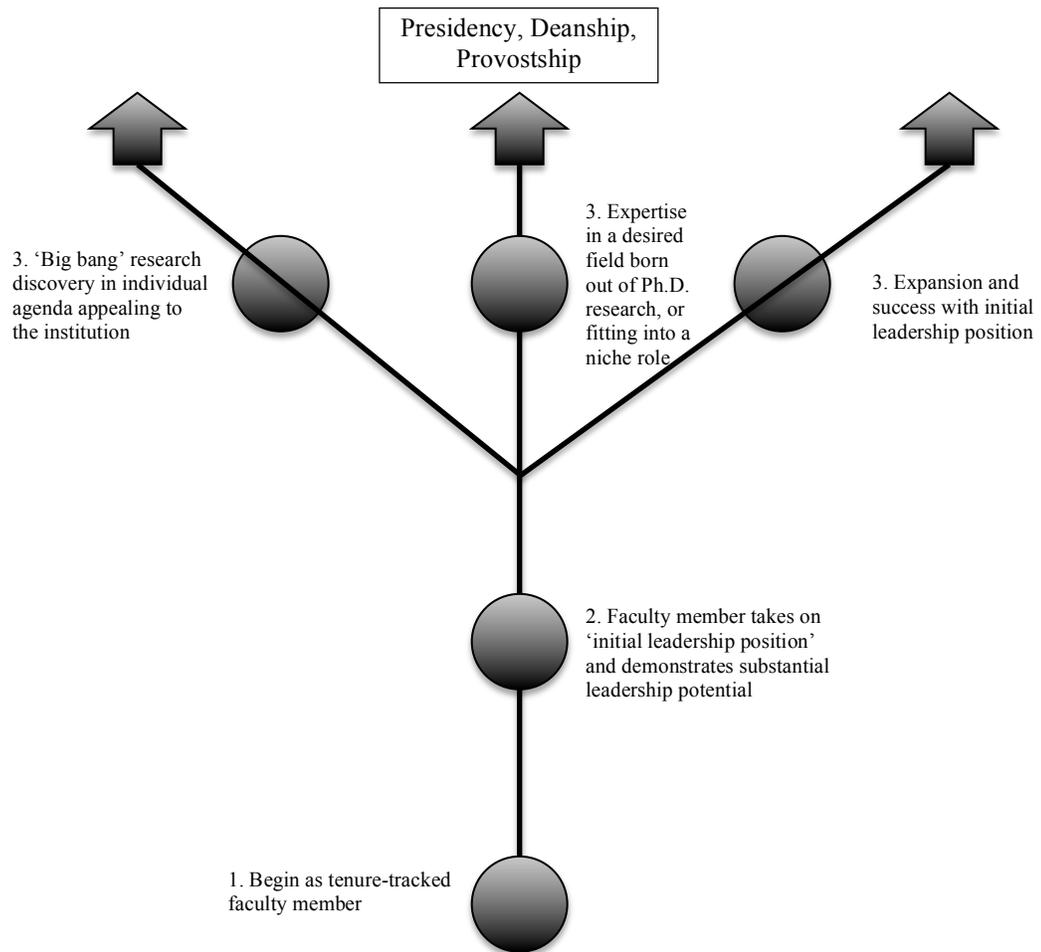


Figure 3: 'Traditional' Academic Administrator Trajectory



Chapter Four

The 'Partial Truth Problem': How Women Leaders Cope with the Outdated Notion 'Women Can Have it All, They Just Can't Have it All at Once'

"Toleration is the greatest gift of the mind; it requires the same effort of the brain that it takes to balance oneself on a bicycle." -Helen Keller

In explaining the section of my in-depth interviews on work-life balance to participants, the description is almost always met with hesitation by respondents. *'Work-family balance,'* the participant inquires with apprehension and discomfort. Based on their inflection, it becomes apparent the participants' apprehension occurs for two reasons: Their tone seems to imply 'she would not be asking these questions if I were a man,' or 'there is no such thing as work-family balance.' The very mention of this dialogue proves the ever-present 'double-bind' women face, a term often mentioned in scholarly and popular literature with regards to women in the workplace. When women hold top leadership positions (like those in this study within business and the Academy) where women are scarcely represented historically, traditional and stereotypically masculine standards of leadership and prescribed gender roles remain in place. And despite the pressure on women to prescribe to this particular performance of gender in the workplace, the 'double-bind' women today face also includes equal pressure to perform in a way that meets societal definitions of 'good mothering' regardless of how they may be penalized for mention of this 'mothering' in the workplace. Even with flexible partners-- some who are willing to share the majority of home life burdens -- the importance of motherhood and emphasis on mothering persists. Despite participant discomfort in this section of the interview, I went on to explain that conversations pertaining to work-family balance and the study of organizational work-life issues are

crucial to breaking down the very stereotypes fueled by this controversial conversation piece. Fortunately, popular literature as of late has ushered in a new kind of rapport in the workplace regarding gender prescriptions previously reserved for academicians and social scientists. Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, takes an optimistic approach to the subject, asserting women can ‘have it all’ if they face their fears and ‘lean in to the table’ describing a sort of ‘ambition gap’ among women with the potential to reach upper-level management positions. Anne-Marie Slaughter, former director of policy planning for the Department of State takes a different approach in her now infamous piece *Why Women Still Can’t Have it All*, appearing recently in *The Atlantic* (2012). She asserts Millennial and Generation X women leaders cannot ‘have it all’ (even if work-family sequencing occurs in reasonable plot points on the life timeline), because institutional barriers are too great for any woman leader to overcome in order to ‘have it all’ (even if not all at once).¹⁸ She encourages women to examine what she calls the ‘partial truths’ we tell ourselves, “clichés that many [older] women typically fall back on when young women ask how [they] have managed to ‘have it all’”(Slaughter 2012: 6-7). The ‘partial truth’ is the notion that Generation X and Generation Y women can in fact ‘have it all,’ they just can’t have it all at once. This notion is only ‘partially true’ however, because even if work-family sequencing happens on a reasonable timeline, sacrifices still have to be made. The

¹⁸ There is a large body of academic literature on this topic, including Lotte Bailyn’s *Breaking the Mold: Women, Men, and Time in the New Corporate World* (1993), Leslie Perlow’s *Making Time Off Predictable* (2009), and Jacobs and Gerson’s *The Time Divide: Work, Family and Gender Inequality* (2004). However, Sheryl Sandberg has received more attention on this topic for means of empowering women than academic scholars. The concerns of academic scholars are often over issues of recommending structural changes to the workplace: that is, job flexibility or working from home. Sandberg’s popularized version encourages individual improvement (and in effect accuses women of ‘leaning out’) than advocating for workplace structural changes. Sandberg’s rhetoric is in keeping with the ideas of ‘self-help’ and ‘self-improvement’ but generally does not target the institutional issues. This is beyond the scope of my thesis. Jen Silva’s *Coming Up Short* (2013) is on a similar topic, but for working-class youth who blame an ambition gap on lack of success.

‘sacrifice’ Slaughter makes is leaving her demanding job at the State Department in favor of spending more time with her teenage sons, though still working full time in a different career. The notion that ‘women can have it all, they just can’t have it all at once’ may be outdated and unrealistic for women in top leadership positions at the upper echelons of male-dominated fields. Therefore, significant sacrifices must be made regardless of sequencing- for Slaughter, this means finding a new career path, but for others with similar dilemmas, this may mean delegating a significant amount of care work on their children’s behalf to others. My sample affirms Slaughter’s assertions that sacrifices are made in order to maintain work-family balance, but interestingly enough, not necessarily in terms of going about *starting* a family. As noted in previous chapters, workplace flexibility for high-powered academic administrators is hard to come by at the top, as the workday revolves around administrative business hours. As the academic administrators must adhere to these business hours, they tend to take on this type of role later in life when children have long since left the nest. The corporate executives also must adhere to the rigorous schedule of the business day, often taking them away from the family during child-raising years while they work their way up the ladder. I note that fewer women in business have children (six out of ten, as opposed to nine out of ten in academia), an interesting finding with consideration of correlation to this notion; it is possible this has in part to do with the period of time in their lives they are working particularly long hours while making their way up the corporate ladder. In summary, significant sacrifices are made in both categories in order to ‘have it all’ regardless of sequencing. To use Sheryl Sandberg’s dictum, those who have managed to have it all never ‘lean out’ from the table

either before or after having children, a crucial factor in determining who makes it to the top.

Significant Life Turning Points as Related to Family Life

The consequences for women leaders when attempting to balance work and family become clear upon asking participants about significant life turning points. To a person, almost all participants cite the most important moments in their lives as those related to romances, children, spouses, and family life. Additionally, as earlier implied in chapters two and three, marital status at given points in ones life leads to certain career decisions or career moves that ultimately significantly affect career trajectory. Nita, current President of a liberal arts college specializing in STEM, references the marriage to her husband as her major turning point, pointing to the significance of not only finding a partner in life and love, but also a partner whose career was instrumental to her trajectory as well- they became somewhat of a “package deal” power couple in the sciences in their moves to various institutions and companies. (Interestingly enough, numerous women work closely with their husbands in a professional capacity, and though this number is small, I imagine this might be more common to women at the top than for your average American household.) As noted in Chapter Three, Elizabeth, current President of an elite women’s college, cites the death of her first husband as a turning point, one that would greatly influence her decision to leave her lab in Connecticut where they lived to pursue a college presidency in a new state. Lori, Director of a well-known branch of a Fortune 500 tech company, cites the divorce from her first husband as a major tuning point that affected her both personally and professionally, as well as the subsequent marriage to her second husband whom she would go on to work with in the co-founding of the

company's new branch. Not only were these women's lives and careers affected by personal and professional turning points having to do with family, but these narratives also indicate working with a spouse in some capacity serves as an example of an unexpected way to balance the demands of work and family.

The Academy and Work Family Balance

For academics, workplace flexibility is common. This means that faculty can choose which 60 hours they work with hard and fast commitments to only certain scheduled events with mandatory attendance (such as teaching). Prior to being tapped for a top administrative leadership position, tenure-tracked faculty have the ability to select which hours they will work to conduct necessary research. As they move up into administration, their hours are more likely to be determined by other demands (such as fundraising and mandatory meetings, that follow the more traditional business hours); by the time this has occurred however, for most, children are already out of the home. As noted in chapters two and three, not only do academics who assume administrative leadership positions tend to be of an older generation, they accept their top leadership positions at older ages than women in business, making them more likely to have children who have left the nest once this position is acquired. Those few in the academic sample (three total) who have reached their post at younger ages when children are still being raised tend to utilize the aforementioned daycare options. I have determined a possible reason academic women may be having children at younger ages than women in business: The older women in this study who are now in their sixties or older, married younger, but had children with no clear pattern. The timeline of child-rearing is dispersed among those who had children as assistant professors and those who had them after being

tenured. Affirming the literature, the younger women in this sample married later and often postponed children until they were “older” (mid-thirties),¹⁹ and this is the group most likely to utilize daycare options while children are being raised. This is not to say the older women in the group did not also utilize daycare or nanny services, but rather that there are both older and younger women in the sample from varying generations, which, as Slaughter suggests, means there is a generational shift for Baby Boomers through younger generations. Academicians more so than the corporate executives, comment on how the hardest part of the personal journey was in finding a partner and spouse, and seemed to concentrate less on a particular sequencing of work-family events. In conducting this research, I fully expected very few of the women in the sample to have children. But “while trends [of increasing work demands] have been accompanied by increases in the proportions of women who are not married and by decreases in the number of children born to the average woman” (Madden, *HBR* 2012: 2), my sample proves that it is possible even for women on the ‘fast track’ to make it work. For these women, child-rearing is colored by the organizational structure of the workplace in the Academy and a push towards starting a family at older ages.

Corporate America and Work Family Balance

For businesswomen, the timeline of marriage, motherhood, and career is often more capricious because of very non-linear and unpredictable career trajectory. For this sample, workplace flexibility is harder to come by as corporate executives must fit their

¹⁹ The academics in this study are an older group so it is difficult to compare marital patterns to those in business. However, the older women in the Academy were among the first to have tenure-track jobs, did not have guaranteed maternity leaves, but seemed to have children on a more flexible timeline. Younger academic women did not focus on the “traditional” sequencing that followed age expectations to have children under 35.

personal schedule to that of the company's while moving up in the ranks, and the 'balance' becomes particularly difficult as the kids are growing up during the point in their careers they take on their top (and usually most demanding) leadership role.

According to Pamela Stone's (2013) *Opting Out: Challenging Stereotypes and Creating Real Options for Women in the Professions*, the high potential women in her study pursued their careers an average of 11 years; 60% worked well past the birth of their second child. Fully 90% left not to care for their families but because of workplace problems, chiefly frustration and long hours (Stone 2013). These 'long hours,' especially common in corporate careers, explain why "if high potential women are leaving their careers to care for their families, they're not doing it on purpose" (Stone 2013: 4). The frustration associated with these especially long hours may shed light on reasons business women in the sample are less likely to have children. Ironically, unlike the narratives of the sample's academic administrators, personal crucible moments leading up to the decision to take on a high-profile, C-Suite or executive leadership position, turns out far more likely to have to do with decisions linked to work-family balance than depicted in experiences of academicians- this is despite the fact more businesswomen were either unable to have children or chose not to. As depicted in Figures 1 and 2 in Chapter Three, gendered turning points in the personal narratives leading to the individual's most significant transition prove prevalent to the non-linear business trajectory (Figure 2) in a way it does not for the linear trajectory (Figure 1). Decisions to transition to a new location may come at great personal cost, as narratives demonstrate these decisions to transition to a different company, usually at a higher corporate level, are often taken into consideration with what will be best (or least difficult) for the family. By the same token,

women in business with linear career trajectories do not have to move their family around, as the nature of their trajectory means they will stay in one place for a substantial amount of time. “Work that is overwhelming and unpredictable can exacerbate conflict” (Blair-Loy, Wharton 2004: 151). “In work-family conflict among parents with young children at home, concerns about jobs draining too much time from family may be most pressing for mothers since employed women generally take on more responsibility for family caregiving and domestic work than do employed men (154). This is not to say that women with linear career trajectories do not also have high-levels of work family conflict, but rather that women building up their careers while in the same place may find it easier to structure their family’s lives around a more ‘predictable’ plot.

Significant Sacrifice and the Impact of Work-Family ‘Sequencing’

In *Mommies and Daddies on the Fast-Track: Success of Parents in Demanding Professions*, Jerry Jacobs and Janice Madden argue “stories about the workplace-family issues faced by highly educated women who have also been highly successful in the workplace, that is, ‘fast trackers,’ have been appearing with increasing frequency in the popular media, although many incorrectly imply that fast-track women are increasingly choosing family over work” (Jacobs, Madden 2004: 3). These “fast trackers,” who also could be considered the ‘opt-out generation’ by popular media, are mothers who left their jobs due to lack of workplace flexibility, usually for a different form of employment—much like Anne-Marie Slaughter’s narrative described earlier. What do these ‘fast-trackers,’ who opt out of the workforce entirely, or find a different job more conducive to spending time with children reveal about the women in this study who have done neither? For women who do not at any point opt out, but choose to continue on an upward

trajectory towards the top of their field (which likely entails even less job flexibility), this affirms the decision not to be the primary caregiver. Therefore, care work is delegated to someone else, usually at the upper levels in the form of a private nanny or live-in caregiver. My sample also affirms Slaughter's assertions that sacrifices are made in order to maintain work-family balance, but not necessarily in terms of going about starting a family. This is to say that women are not choosing not to have children²⁰, but rather once they have children they make a conscious decision not to be the primary nurturer/caregiver during long business hours. Often this care work is delegated to another person or daycare center. It is also important to note it is crucial to their success that despite decisions to start a family, the women in the sample 'leaned in,' before and after having children, and do not 'lean out' or 'opt out' once they have had them. As noted in *Lean In*, it appears crucial to their success they do not 'lean out' from the table prematurely in anticipation of one day having children, unconsciously sacrificing future promotions which work to quickly propel them up the career ladder.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the women in my sample reach the top while working for companies with and without superior workplace flexibility; they compensate by making sacrifices in other areas, and this therefore directly intersects with the personal narrative as it affects the household division of labor. For instance, some women in the sample (especially those with limited workplace flexibility and usually in the non-linear

²⁰ Mary Blair-Loy (2004) argues that the "family devotion schema" is so powerful with the escalation of mothering demands that some women with high-powered managerial careers are deciding not to have children. These women are doing so because they cannot envision being exceptional mothers and also outstanding employees. They elect to devote themselves fully to their jobs and forgo motherhood demands during the long business hours rather than half-heartedly doing both. As discussed above, women in this sample who do not have children did not say they sacrificed children for jobs. Those with children are generally an older cohort or part of the linear-trajectory for whom the fear surrounding the escalation of motherhood demands was not expressed as part of their generation's concerns.

category) report non-traditional divisions of labor within the home, with spouses taking on half, or more than half of the household burden. Slaughter, however, is critical of the notion that we can use the example of a helpful life partner as a way to prove ‘women can have it all.’ While this critique is valid, it remains a consistent and important theme in the personal narratives of women today working long hours, who must depend on spouses in a way that may tip the household burden more towards the man.²¹ Similarly, regardless of the company’s policy on maternity leave, the women with children, for the most part, have come back to work quickly and depend on their spouse/partner to help them do this. Those who stay at home longer after the birth of their child did so because at that point in their career they had gained the flexibility and credibility to be able to work from home. Flexible households, non-traditional divisions of household labor, and assistance through kinship networks are instrumental to helping with work-life conflicts during the time in her career the woman is away from home the most. However, as much as spousal contribution and an equal division of labor might resolve the problem for an individual couple, the issue remains that workplace rigidity continues unabated and assumes a “traditional” stay-at-home spouse at the highest echelons; for these families, this is simply not the case.

The ‘Double Bind’ and the ‘Motherhood Bias’

Minimizing the Motherhood Penalty (2013) by Shelley Correll suggests there is a persistent motherhood bias amidst American culture, meaning companies and employers often hold a bias against the competence of mothers at the upper echelons of business.

²¹ This assumes a heteronormative model. However, research suggests that even in gay and lesbian couples with children, one partner also tends to present the more stereotypical gender performance in the home as well (Carrington 1999).

Women in my study have overcome the ‘motherhood bias’²² by demonstrating competence and commitment to the work as indicated by career trajectories in which they are quickly promoted and entrusted to the duties of leadership positions that establish they are capable of handling responsibilities of a top leadership position. In this study Correll finds “...when being considered for the same job, mothers were significantly less likely to be recommended for hire... respondents assumed the mothers to be inherently less competent and less committed,” that is, unless the raters were given copies of a performance review showing that a mother had demonstrated a heroic level of commitment to a previous job” (Correll 2013: 4). Perhaps the women in my study have overcome the ‘persistent motherhood penalty’ by demonstrating this fierce level of competence and commitment, as exemplified by their quick promotions and ascension to the top. My sample suggests, more accurately though, that the motherhood penalty also exists structurally within the workplace well after getting the top job. Women in both the academic and business samples comment on this phenomenon, explaining it plays out in a way culminating in an intense pressure to ‘act like a man.’ In one particularly poignant case, this includes the exclusion of conversations revolving around children and spouses. Mary, Associate Dean of a major university department within a larger system, exclaims “my male colleagues in the boardroom talk about their wives and how they contribute to managing the kids’ lives at home- well, I’m married, but I don’t have a wife! I’ve always said ‘I sure wish I too, had a wife!’” Here there is not only proof that pressure to uphold a household with a stereotypically acceptable division of household labor and gender

²² Phrases like ‘the motherhood penalty’ and ‘motherhood bias’ are commonly used when discussing wage discrimination, but in this chapter I use it to discuss perceived competence – a bias against mothers in relation to single women. I am unaware of a wage penalty with this sample because I did not learn about salaries and comparable men were not interviewed.

performance in the home, but that the high-profile academic administrator in this case is both unwilling and unable to discuss her spouse's role in sharing the home-life burden with male colleagues like they can with each other. As implied in Shelley Correll's study on motherhood bias discussed earlier, Mary would be penalized in the workplace for discussing such a topic, and must cope by avoiding the subject in order to ensure she continues to be taken seriously by her male peers. The 'motherhood penalty' means that women in these positions must be careful not to diminish their professional strength through taking part in such conversations.

Traditional expectations of women's roles in the home and broader implications surrounding their place in American culture as primary caretaker prove still deeply rooted in American values. When women break these expectations with high-powered careers traditionally reserved for the man as primary breadwinner, issues surrounding motherhood and the household division of labor must then be addressed in the home in order to accommodate for the spouse's work schedule. This is in no small part because "elite managers and professionals have seen work hours increased in recent years, and they are expected to demonstrate commitment by making work the central focus of their lives" (Blair-Loy, Wharton 2004: 151). Based on the narratives described, women in high-powered positions cope with these traditional expectations through choosing certain sacrifices either at work or in the home, with an overarching refusal never to 'lean out' from their career either before or after having children, and often through reworking the home-life in a non-traditional way. High-powered women with children discover certain sacrifices and accommodations must be made, and the ways in which these women arrange home and work lives illustrate these sacrifices and accommodations. More

specifically, though all women leaders must make sacrifices, those in the sample make it work by coping with the ‘partial truths’ Slaughter describes, - this results in a refusal never to ‘lean out’ from the table in preparation for one day having children. Slaughter implies that women can’t have it all (or at least she couldn’t have it all in government, which in many ways has more flexible hours than business), as she tried to sequence time of having her children to fit her career aspirations but still had to leave her job as policy advisor in the State Department when her own children were teenagers. It is possible that had she had her children younger, like the older women in my study, she may have been able to fulfill this position when her children were out of the home- however, as women today often get married after their careers take off or after they are completely finished with schooling, this is no longer ideal. And postponing children exposes the fact that the male expectations for career structures have not changed. But this exposure leads her to argue that women can’t have it all (even if not all at once), as somehow her tenured position at Princeton was the equivalent of returning to the “homemaker” role without a career). Her story and the narratives of the women leaders in my sample illustrate that while there may not be an ideal time to ever have children, 15 of the 20 women in my study have managed to have both children and leadership careers. They were not better planners but were either tapped for leadership positions once children left the home, or decided that many of the duties of motherhood could be delegated to others. Though it should be noted that this is certainly not without its dilemmas, especially since the structure of the workplace at the top has changed little to accommodate families. In summary, popular advice-givers like Sandberg are arguing that the problem is on an individual basis, and use this argument to explain the lack of women at the top; with a

catchy phrase she suggests some women can and should behave differently. She makes little suggestion that the work structures need to change or that family policies in the workplace should be less stigmatized and more greatly encouraged. Slaughter makes it clear that the government is a tough place to be a woman with children, and she settles for an academic job almost denying its importance. She claims that women can't succeed with children in certain fields, and while it is undoubtedly quite tough, my sample proves it is possible even today. Though the notion that 'women can have it all, they just can't have it all at once,' may today prove unrealistic and outdated, my sample demonstrates that simply '*having it all*' is not.

Conclusion

Leaning In to Life as a Leader, Listener, and Learner

“There is no perfect fit when you're looking for the next big thing to do. You have to take opportunities and make an opportunity fit for you, rather than the other way around. The ability to learn is the most important quality a leader can have.” -Sheryl Sandberg

These women leaders remain a unique but important part of the labor force. As argued in the previous pages, they are important to study because their extraordinary narratives are a poignant reminder that women are still experiencing gendered and racial inequalities. Additionally, the organizations that employ them also remain highly gendered and stratified. The twenty-two qualitative interviews comparing experiences and expectations of women in top academic administrative and corporate executive leadership positions demonstrate how women leaders today might go about succeeding in a slowly changing, but continuously unfriendly landscape. Experiences, expectations, and paths to success differ greatly, however, by sector, institution, and industry. While goals and reputations prove linked to individual scholarship for academicians, goals and reputations of corporate executives prove embedded in the institution itself. Though personal and professional narratives delineate reasons an individual might be tapped for leadership, personal narratives in the lives of corporate executives prove more likely to directly influence the ultimate decision to take on their highest leadership role. Despite the impact of the intersection of gender, race, sexuality, and social class on one's life story, demographic information of women in the sample firmly demonstrate women from all backgrounds and walks of life can make it to the top. As a majority of corporate executives were raised in working class to lower-middle class households, I notice a

significant and encouraging trend: Women leaders from both disadvantaged and privileged backgrounds have managed to use factors traditionally working against them as motivation to propel themselves up the ladder, leading them to a ‘crucible moment’ in which they decide they can and should lead.

Though the data provides numerous encouraging and unexpected trends, Corporate America and the Academy as two distinct sectors prove unmistakably unforgiving in entirely different ways. While the Academy may have been slower to accept women into top leadership positions institutionally- in turn giving women in the Academy a more gendered experience in the workplace- women in business prove more adversely affected by the personal ties of their gender in bearing the brunt of family life decisions, also more likely to come at either a deeply personal or professional cost. Though I reiterate this is a small sample size, and tentatively assert women in business tend to make greater personal and professional sacrifices in their efforts to rise to the top, these data seemingly suggest the Academy proves less hospitable to women holding positions of leadership with regards to available opportunities and gendered experiences in the workplace.

While the numbers of women reaching executive leadership positions in business continues to slowly rise, women in business and in particular minority women still remain gravely underrepresented. To this end, while the Academy has been historically slower in accepting women into the ranks, it seems corporate America has been slower to accept women of color; experience with issues of diversity and expertise in niche research fields do not factor into the hiring process in business the same way they do in academia. I tentatively assert based on these results that while corporate America may be

more open to the acceptance of women leaders, this does not necessarily apply to minority women-- While the Academy may be less hospitable to the acceptance of women leaders [than corporate America], it may be more hospitable to minority women due to evidence provided surrounding the types of crucible moments most salient to women tapped for their highest leadership positions.

While conducting interviews and carrying out research, I observed that some women in the sample appeared more comfortable discussing their lives and work than others. I discovered quickly that these conversations are not easy for American women at the top to discuss openly. I noted in Chapter Four that issues surrounding work-life balance were often the most anxiety-inducing subject matter, and that even personal moments instrumental to career transitions are difficult to discuss. It seems our culture communicates to women these conversations imply weakness and reveal struggle, but they represent the strength and impact of conversations crucial to women's advancement. We will not create change without first opening a space to discuss it. It is up to citizens on an individual level to use such dialogue to facilitate institutional change from the top down, and I challenge women of all ages to accept this change they so deserve.

Leaders, Listeners, and Learners demonstrates professional women can successfully overcome institutional hurdles that work to deter them in achievement of short term and long term goals. The women in this sample use the byproducts of these hurdles to their advantage through the development of key leadership skills and a laser-focused work ethic. At the start of her keynote speech on her *Lean In* book tour, Sheryl Sandberg asks audience members to raise their hands if they ever thought or dreamed about becoming the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, to which only a few of the all-

female audience members raise their hands. Even women who are in the more privileged section of the labor force are socialized to believe they “can’t,” and therefore, many “don’t.” I hope the findings in these pages increase the number of hands raised in the future by proving this lofty goal can be achieved. Though the message is inspiring, Sandberg’s popular message has also galvanized women in a way that has not existed among young people in the U.S for quite some time. While she is writing a popular book geared towards aspiring women with a “will to lead,” an individual message often discredited by scholars, perhaps we can instead accept her book for its positive impact on opening conversations among women in ways similar to consciousness raising groups among women in the 1970s. This type of consciousness raising may be a good thing for young women today who are deeply conflicted about identifying with a feminist message, in turn belaboring the progress of women’s advancement. I believe Sandberg is right about one major thing, though, that we socialize young girls to take a seat behind their male peers rather than next to them, a message similarly presented by Janet Lever in the scholarly community years previously. Presidential participant Nita put it best: “We raise young women to be less ambitious than they should be.” She tells me that she “says yes to almost every request like this because we are not going to change the world unless we empower more people to change the world. No single person can do that, but networks of people can leverage each other and increase the impact.” Even Hillary Clinton herself preached a similar message after the loss of her historic bid for the Presidency, musing “the light is shining through like never before,” urging heartbroken supporters “to keep going to make it so.” With the next Presidential race upon us, we cannot help but wonder if this time the ceiling will give way and allow the light to burst

through, illuminating possibilities for the future of a country's future we can only dream of.

Appendix

Methodology

1. Twenty women leaders were interviewed in-depth. Of those, there was an even split between business and academia, with ten participants in each category. Those in top corporate positions, who hold (or held) executive-level management roles in Fortune 500 companies are often referred to by business insiders as ‘C-Suite’ leaders, meaning those who hold ‘C-Suite’ positions such as CEO, CFO, COO, etc. Those from the Academy are either presently in (or were previously in) top academic administrative posts at elite and well-known colleges and universities, and were chosen based on their status either as President, President Emeritus, Dean, Associate Dean, or Provost. The majority of women in the Academy are current college Presidents of elite institutions. Five women in the sample are women of color (four are African American and one is Latina); of these, two are in business and the other three are in academia.
2. They range in age from 36 to 73, and are presently located in either the East or West coast. I found these participants deliberately by location so I could best arrange to meet as many in person as possible. About half of the interviews were conducted by phone.
3. I located women to interview in business by searching Fortune 500 company headquarters by city and state through the CNN Business search engine, and subsequently researched executive management teams at nearby Fortune 500’s to discover if the company employed potential interviewees. I used the company list of names and biographies to determine and discover email address so I could then

go about contacting women at the top. I wrote to women in regions from my home state of California and nearby Boston, Massachusetts. However, this is not entirely a random sample, as I selected people who I thought would be likely to participate. Therefore, I did not interview the 20 token women CEO's of Fortune 500 companies, as they are simply unattainable. I did however have success with women just a few tiers down, still in 'C-Suite' positions. At the end of a few interviews I would delicately ask for contact information on any individuals the participant might recommend for participation; so for a small portion of interviews, this was somewhat of a 'snowball sample.' While contacts were slow to pick up on my own, I was ultimately surprised that so many of those I emailed at random agreed to be interviewed (I was only turned down a few times, and sent dozens of emails). On the Academic side I successfully interviewed 8 college or university presidents, one former Dean of a College, and one Associate Dean of a university. These I strategically selected similarly through random emails, networking, and personal contacts. Again, I was rarely turned down, though there was generally less of a response overall from academicians. I deliberately tried to locate some women of color, and the sample turned out to be 20%. Since this is a qualitative in-depth interview study, the numbers of minority women are small (and the actual numbers of women of color in these positions are similarly small).

4. In-depth interview: The qualitative interviews took around 45 minutes to an hour, all the time that could be taken out of busy participant schedules. One interview was only scheduled for 35 minutes because this was the most well-known individual in my sample. (In-depth interview guide can be found at the back of the

Appendix.) I asked them two sets of questions – one set is drawn from the work of Robert J. Thomas which asks participants to use a timeline to pick the “turning points” in their lives. This is an effective way to get people to focus on moments that matter with hindsight (or thinking back on their lives). It is also a way for people who are often in the limelight not to give me standard responses to well-rehearsed questions about “how I became a leader.” I also asked pointed questions about childhoods and young adulthoods where they were first recognized as having leadership potential. Before interviewing them I read many profiles because they are well-known leaders. I also used some of these bios to fill in the gaps in their narratives and timeline and to check clarify of what I had written down. I guaranteed each person anonymity and outlined their ‘rights’ in a consent form. To protect each person’s identity, I refer to them in the Honors Thesis only by first name, and each first name is a pseudonym (it does not resemble the real first name of the person.) I also worked to mask identifying clues about their affiliated institution, using phrases like “private elite college” and “large fortune 500 company in X industry.” It is difficult to write about well-known leaders, and I told them I would mask their identities as best I could. However, because some are quite well-known, they acknowledged potential identity discovery almost comes with the territory. As long as I did not use real names, this prospect was accepted. Each interview was recorded for my own transcription purposes, which participants were also aware of.

Sample Organization of Demographic Information

	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name
Title	President of ____	CFO of ____					
Institution Type	Small liberal arts college	Fortune 500 insurance company					
Education	BA, PhD	BS					
Race	Caucasian	African American					
Age	65	55					
Married/Partnered	Married	Single					
Children	Yes	No					
Early Life Socioeconomic Status (SES)	Middle Class	Working Class					
Movement							
Other Notes							

Turning Points and Crucible Moments Codes

Routes to Present Position				
Turning Points from Interview				
Why the decision to leave (personal narrative), and why tapped to move (institutional narrative)				
Themes in Personal Narratives and Career				
Gender/Race in Crucible Moments				

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Thesis Survey Instrument

Open: *The honors thesis will seek to answer critical questions about women and leadership, analyzing the relationship between gender, social-psychological issues, and cultural background in determining what makes a leader. The goal of the project is to determine from these interviews why women have such trouble rising to the top (or "breaking the glass ceiling"), but more importantly how experiences and paths to success differ between women at the top in business and academia. Interview questions will cover demographic information, leadership, and work-family balance.*

**(Presentation of consent form, ask about recording device)*

Background:

1. Birthplace and home region
2. Marital status, and family- do you have children, and if so, how old?
3. Education- degrees and years of study?
4. Present work/occupation- title and what it entails?
5. A vocational interests/hobbies
6. Historical moments in American society that come to mind when thinking of your young adulthood/coming of age?

Leadership:

1. So according to my research you were, until recently, (*previous position*) and previously worked at (*former institution or company, usually prior to the previous position inquired about above*). Could you describe for me the path you've taken that has allowed you to achieve the position you're in right now as (*current position*)?
2. I understand you became (*President/Dean/CFO, etc.*) of (*institution or company*) recently in the year of (*year*). Could you tell me a bit about what your workday looks like on a day-to-day basis, and how you might compare this to your previous positions in (*either previous position in academic administration, position as faculty as opposed to administration, middle level management position as opposed to upper, field different than what they are in now, etc.*)?
3. You are considered a leader not just for the position you hold now, but for your extraordinary body of work at other (*universities and/or companies*). To this end, I'm interested in learning of the career trajectories of women leaders in their field, and I wonder if you might tell me a little bit about how you came to make the decision to transition to your various roles, in particular the (*role prior to their top leadership role*)? How did you then come to make the decision to transition to (*institution and/or company in which they held their top leadership role*)? Was there a particular impetus that fueled your desire to begin work in academic

administration/business? (*This last question in Question 3 is for those who have taken a non-traditional path, as determined prior to the interview based on their biography.*)

4. I wonder if you might tell me a bit about your childhood and early adulthood experiences. I understand you have family members who were involved in _____ (*ask about this if information is found prior to interview. If not, ask what field parents were in as a follow-up question.*) How do you think any early experiences might have contributed to the development of your leadership style and work ethic?
5. What would you cite as one of the first instances you and others first recognized your leadership potential? Could you give me a few instances in which you felt you were first recognized as a leader-even at a young age- and then a time when you thought you advanced yourself as a leader?
6. Have there been other experiences when you felt you demonstrated leadership and it was not recognized?
 - a. Why do you think this leadership was not recognized?
7. I wonder if, as you have moved forward in your career, you've felt there have been any major rules and practices of the business that have defined your leadership and success? Do any prevalent main themes come to mind you attribute to your success?
8. Reflecting back to your mentality in your early 20's and/or when you think back to your mentality when you graduated from college, what were your career goals then? If that changed, how did it change over time and why?
9. Could you elaborate on when you might say was the time in your life when you found your driving passion, or perhaps discovered your purpose?
10. Over the past few years, I've studied the impact of personal or professional 'turning points' in the lives of leaders. These 'turning points' tend to be important moments in one's life that lead them to a major decision which may have, in retrospect, changed their course, or lead them in a new direction or down a different path, and they often have both a personal and professional component. Could you tell me a bit about any major 'turning points' in your life that have most influenced you and your career? How have those turning points contributed to the development of your leadership style, or any particular personal or professional decisions you may have made?
11. What experiences can you point to- *within* the roles you've held over the course of your career- that you think made you a leader? Are there particular experiences you can reflect on that you believe made you a *better* leader?

12. In my classes as a Women's and Gender Studies and Public Policy major, I've learned quite a bit in my studies about how gender interacts with race, class, and sexual identity, especially how all three intersect and become inexplicably tied. In the work I've done so far on my thesis, I've learned some very illuminating things, both encouraging and discouraging, about the roles gender and race have played in the personal and professional narratives in the lives of women leaders. I wonder if you might be willing to speak to this in the context of your own life, or tell me a bit about how gender and race have been a factor in your life, either positive or negative, in the institutions you've been a part of or in personal career decisions? (*Wording of question is phrased ever so slightly differently, with more of a focus on race for the minority women, and more of a focus on gender for the Caucasian women.*)
- a. How have you perceived gender and race as factors in any of the institutions you've been a part of?
13. Can you summarize what you have found to be the role gender plays in one's ability to attain power? To wield power? Do you think it differs between women and men?
- a. Do you consider women to be institutionally blocked from career succession?
14. Can you think of specific instances in which you felt your gender or race to be a hindrance? If not, a time in your career while moving up the ladder in which you noticed differential experiences as a result of your gender or race?
15. Have you found women and men you have worked with have different leadership styles?
16. How have the men you know or work with had a different experience in the same institution, or in a similar role at a different institution?
17. At this point in your career, who you turn to for advice? How have mentors shaped your career in the past, or have they?
18. What have you considered to be your greatest failures, and greatest rewards?

Work-Family Balance:

- If single without children:
 - How has your educational timeline and career trajectory affected your decision to have, or not have children?
 - How have (or haven't) extended family members influenced your career decisions?

- If married (or single) with children:
 - How have/did you manage to arrange your family life and your work life?
 - How have children transformed your career, or haven't they?
 - How has your extended family influenced your career decisions?
 - What sorts of adjustments have you made because of your family, or a desire to have a family?
 - What kind of decisions have you made regarding childcare?
 - How has your educational timeline and career trajectory affected your decision to have, or not have children?

- If married without children:
 - How has your spouse or extended family influenced your career decisions?
 - How has your educational timeline and career trajectory affected your decision to have, or not have children?
 - What sorts of adjustments have you made because of your family and/or a desire to have a family?

Conclusion:

1. What advice would you give to young women leaders today?

Works Cited

- Acker, Joan. "Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations." *Gender & Society* 20.441 (2006): n. pag. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Arfken, Deborah E., Stephanie L. Bellar, and Marilyn M. Helms. "The Ultimate Glass Ceiling Revisited: The Presence of Women on Corporate Boards." *Journal of Business Ethics* 50.2 (2004): 177-86. Print.
- Barbulescu, Roxana, and Matthew Bidwell. "Do Women Choose Different Jobs from Men? Mechanisms of Application Segregation in the Market for Managerial Workers." *Organization Science* 24.3 (2013): 737-56. Print.
- Barsh, Joanna, and Lareina Yee. "Unlocking the Full Potential of Women at Work." *McKinsey & Company*. McKinsey & Company, 2012. Web.
<<http://www.mckinsey.com/careers/women/~media/Reports/Women2012%20WSJ%20Women%20in%20the%20Economy%20white%20paper%20FINAL.ashx>>.
- Barsh, Joanna, Susie Cranston, and Rebecca Craske. "Centered Leadership: How Talented Women Thrive." *McKinsey & Company*. McKinsey Quarterly, 2008. Web.
- Bates, Gerri. "These Hallowed Halls: African American Women College and University Presidents." *The Journal of Negro Education* 76.3 (2007): 373-90. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Bennis, Warren G. *On Becoming a Leader*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1989. Print.
- Blair-Loy, Mary, and Amy S. Wharton. "Mothers in Finance: Surviving and Thriving." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 596 (2004): 151-

71. JSTOR. Web.
- Bluedorn, Allen, and Rosabeth Moss Kanter. "Men and Women of the Corporation." *The British Journal of Sociology* 31.1 (1980): n. pag. Web.
- Clark, Nicola. "For Women in the Workplace, an 'Upgrade Problem'" *NYTimes.com*. The New York Times, 2011. Web.
- Cohen, Sarah, and D'Vera Cohn. "Minorities, Women Gain Professionally." *Washington Post* [Washington, DC] 30 Dec. 2003: 1-4. Print.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Cook, Bryan J. "The American College President Study: Key Findings and Takeaways." *The American College President Study: Key Findings and Takeaways*. American Council on Education, 2012. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Correll, Shelley J. "MINIMIZING THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY: What Works, What Doesn't and Why?" *Harvard Business School* (2013): n. pag. Harvard Business School, 2013. Web.
- Eagly, Alice Hendrickson., and Linda Lorene Carli. *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, 2007. JSTOR. Web.
- "Fact Sheet: The Women's Leadership Gap." *American Progress*. N.p., 7 Mar. 2014. Web. Apr. 2014.
- "Fortune 500 2013: Annual Ranking of America's Largest Corporations from Fortune Magazine." *CNNMoney*. Cable News Network, n.d. Web. Apr. 2014.
- "Gender-Based Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Understanding the Scarcity of

- Female CEOs." *Journal of Business Ethics* 27.4 (2000): 321-34. *JSTOR*. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Glenn, Evelyn. "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor." *Chicago Journals* 18.1 (1992): 1-43. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*. New York: Metropolitan, 1997. Print.
- Ibarra, Herminia, Nancy M. Carter, and Christine Silva. "Why Men Still Get More Promotions Than Women." *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Review, 2010. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Jacobs, Jerry A., and Janice Madden. "Mommies and Daddies on the Fast Track: Success of Parents in Demanding Professions: The Long Road to the Fast Track: Career and Family." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 596.1 (2004): 246-47. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. "The Impact of Hierarchical Structures on the Work Behavior of Women and Men." *Social Problems* 23.4 (1976): 415-30. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic, 1977. Print.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic, 1993. Print.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. "Symbolic Interactionism and Politics in Systemic Perspective." *Sociological Inquiry* 42.3-4 (1972): 77-92. Web.
- Keohane, Nannerl O. *Thinking about Leadership*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2010. Print.
- King, E. B., W. Botsford, M. R. Hebl, S. Kazama, J. F. Dawson, and A. Perkins.

- "Benevolent Sexism at Work: Gender Differences in the Distribution of Challenging Developmental Experiences." *Journal of Management* 38.6 (2012): 1835-866. Print.
- "Knowledge Center." *Catalyst*. Catalyst, Dec. 2013. Web. Apr. 2014.
- "Knowledge Center." *Catalyst*. N.p., n.d. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Lever, Janet. "Sex Differences in the Games Children Play." *Social Problems* 23.4 (1976): 478-87. *JSTOR*. Web.
- "Media Announcements." *Catalyst*. N.p., n.d. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Miller, Jody. "The Real Women's Issue." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 2013. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford UP, 1959. Electronic.
- Molla, Rani. "Meet the Women CEOs of the Fortune 500 - At Work - WSJ." *At Work: Management*. The Wall Street Journal, 7 Mar. 2014. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Myers, Betsy, and John David. Mann. *Take the Lead: Motivate, Inspire, and Bring out the Best in Yourself and Everyone around You*. New York: Atria, 2011. Electronic.
- "A New College President." *The North American Review* 234.1 (1932): 1-3. *JSTOR*. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Nohria, Nitin, and Rakesh Khurana. *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: An HBS Centennial Colloquium on Advancing Leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business, 2010. Print.
- Porter, Eduardo. "To Address Gender Gap, Is It Enough to Lean In?" *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 24 Sept. 2013. Web. Apr. 2014.

- Prator, Ralph. *The College President*. Washington: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1963. Print.
- Sandberg, Sheryl. *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. N.p.: n.p., 2012. Print.
- Schmidt, George P. *The Old Time College President*. New York: Columbia UP, 1930. Print.
- Schwartz, Felice N. "Management Women and the New Facts of Life." *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Review, 1989. Web.
- Silva, Christine, Nancy M. Carter, and Anna Beninger. "Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution? Women Get Fewer of the "Hot Jobs" Needed to Advance." *Catalyst*. Harvard Business Review, 2012. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "Why Women Still Can't Have It All." *The Atlantic* 2012: n. pag. *The Atlantic*. 2012. Web.
- "Spotlight on Women in Leadership." *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing, Sept. 2013. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Stone, Pamela. "Opting-Out': Challenging Stereotypes and Creating Real Options for Women in the Professions." *Gender & Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom* (2013): n. pag. *Harvard Business Review*. Web.
- "A Study in Leadership: Women Do It Better than Men." *Zenger-Folkman*. Zenger-Fokman, 2012. Web. Apr. 2014.
- Thinking about Leadership*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2010. Electronic.
- Thomas, Robert J. *Crucibles of Leadership: How to Learn from Experience to Become a Great Leader*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business, 2008. Print.
- Vagianos, Alanna. "There Are Still Few Women At The Top Of Fortune 500 Companies,

Says Report." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 11 Dec. 2013. Web. Apr. 2014.

Wallace, Kelly. "No Movement for Women at the Top in Corporate America." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 11 Dec. 2013. Web. Apr. 2014.

"Where Are All the Senior-level Women?" *Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 2013. Web.

"Women College Presidents' Tough Test." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 2009. Web. Apr. 2014.