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Reflections of Undergraduate Business Education Alumnae: Shifting Perspectives on Gender and Work

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REFLECTIONS OF
UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION ALUMNAE:
SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER AND WORK

BY
AIMÉE DUVALL PHELPS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
AND
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

2015

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

OF

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2015

ABSTRACT

Women are entering higher education at the greatest rate in history (NCES, 2012). They are succeeding and graduating with degrees relevant to leadership and business and are entering the workforce in record numbers (Catalyst, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). But then women seemingly stall out (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Catalyst, 2013; Soares, Cobb, et al., 2011). The further up the ladder women climb – the fewer their numbers. Numerous literature streams document the potential causes and effects of this phenomenon. This qualitative study sought to augment the current literature that has ignored the impact of undergraduate business education on that phenomenon.

A narrative study provided the opportunity to document stories from women in undergraduate business education, a group that has until now been rendered silent by the prevailing positivistic approaches to research privileged in the discipline and a lack of focus on this population. The study employed semi-structured interviews and electronic communications to allow ten undergraduate business alumnae to share stories about their college and professional experience and their perceptions about the impact of those experiences on their aspirations and life choices. Thematic narrative analysis rendered eight emergent themes about women's experiences before and after college. The findings suggest ambivalence and denial about gender inequality while in college. They also point to significant shifts in the perceptions of gender, the gender gap and its personal implications once women enter the work world. Additionally, women reflected on the sometimes unrealistic, minimal, and even negative impact of their college experiences on their perceptions of the importance of gender in their future careers. Participant observations and reflections point to

opportunities that business undergraduate education has to better prepare women students for the realities of a corporate work world still dominated by men.

Recommendations for curriculum and pedagogical revisions in undergraduate business education are included.

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How can you adequately thank all the people who helped you accomplish your dream? Particularly when it took 14 years, two disciplines, three houses, two babies and countless other challenges to get here.

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To John: You supported me, loved me, made me laugh, fed me and took care of the herd while I was locked in my office or away at class. I would not and could not have done this without you.

Thank you Mom, for stepping in and stepping up to help to juggle the boys and all of our schedules. Super-Nana!

And to my boys, Davis and Nate: You are the reasons I get up each day and work so hard to model what is possible. I have time to snuggle and play now. You are WONDERFUL. I love you bunches, no backs. No matter what....

DEDICATION

“I love you when it’s raining.”

Bernard F. Phelps, Ph.D.

September 8, 1921 - April 24, 2015

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My Background and Interest in the Topic

Women are entering higher education at the greatest rate in history (NCES, 2012). They are succeeding and graduating with degrees relevant to leadership and business and are entering the workforce in record numbers (Catalyst, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). But then women seemingly stall out (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Catalyst, 2013; Soares, Cobb, et al., 2011). The further up the ladder women climb – the fewer their numbers. The number of women at the top of the Fortune 500 is far from representative of 50% of the population (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Catalyst, 2013; Soares, Cobb, et al., 2011). This is a problem: for women, men, organizations and global economic growth. Many have researched the causes behind this problem. So in trying to understand why more women are not reaching top leadership roles, I wanted to start by researching one input to the pipeline of women talent in which I currently had a stake—undergraduate business education. This group has largely been ignored in the literature.

In 1987, as a Navy Midshipman on a Fourth Class cruise, I discovered that numbers and timing matter. Among the first and few women to board ships in the U.S. Navy as officers in training, I found myself overwhelmed with the prospect of forging the way for women in the U.S. Navy, despite high academic achievement, an assertive personality and a feminist upbringing. After an agonizing summer weighing my options – to stay or walk away from my dream of being a marine pilot and leader

as well as the financial support—I gave up my 4-year scholarship to pursue other careers where I perceived greater gender equity and opportunity.

Fast-forward to 1995 and my entry into corporate America. After graduating as one of the 20% women graduates from an elite Ivy League MBA program with multiple competing offers, I chose to join General Electric (GE) because of the opportunities I believed I would have for leadership. Once I started, I did not lack support from my superiors or my family. I was given huge, highly visible assignments at which I excelled. However, a sense of déjà vu quickly overwhelmed my optimism. I was one of few women in a heavily industrial, masculine organization—there were even fewer women in leadership roles at GE than there had been in the Navy. I was once again a pioneer in a world defined by men. Observing other women in the organization, I realized that in order to succeed in this environment, I would have to make clear statements about who I was, consider how I talked and dressed, and avoid behaviors that would emphasize my gender or interest in someday having a family. Unwilling to compromise my core identity, after a few years, I eventually chose to leave the organization, but continued to work with GE, on my terms, as a consultant for more than ten years.

In 2013, given the numbers of women graduating college and in the workforce, I hoped that things had evolved, that more women would be staying and climbing the ladder to the top of corporate America. However, while progress has been made, women are still the overwhelming minority in corporate leadership.

As a faculty member in an undergraduate business school, I am frustrated with the numbers of women undergraduates, faculty and graduates as compared to

university enrollments. Critiques of higher education (HE) argue that the climate of HE is not supportive of diverse students, and even more so for women in highly masculinized majors such as business and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) (AAUW, 1994, 1999; Bertrand, Goldin, & Katz, 2010; Brainard & Carlin, 1997; Turner & Bowen, 1998). My own experience supports these critiques. The numbers of women in business schools, while not as dire as in STEM, are still disappointing in relation to gender equity. As I talk to women juniors and seniors in the business school, I am baffled; they speak of low aspirations, unrealistic or no expectations. Few have developed a feminist worldview seeing gender equality as a admirable goal. This led me to investigate the following research questions:

1. How, if at all, do business school alumnae make meaning of the gendered climate of the business profession?
2. What role, if any, do alumnae believe their college experiences played in shaping their understanding of, preparation for, and aspirations in the traditionally masculine professional world of work?

Statement of the Problem

While there appear to be a large number of qualified women in the pipeline to business leadership, they are still failing to reach the top. The impact of this phenomenon has individual, organizational and global effects. The World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* (2013) quantifies the magnitude of existing gender-based inequalities across health, education, economic and political measures worldwide and explores the subsequent impact of those inequalities on national GDP and international competitiveness. Despite near perfect gender equity in education

(equity in literacy rates, enrollment at all levels of education) and health (equity in birth rates and life expectancy), the United States ranks 23rd because of the continued disparities in political and economic power for women (WEF, 2013). American women continue to have less access to political and economic power despite increasing participation in the workforce. They are underrepresented in national elected office and higher levels of management (WEF, 2013). The report concludes that education plays a key role in empowering women and engaging men in changing the playing field across all measures.

Significance of the Study

While research has explored the role of structural barriers for women in non-traditional fields, women's career development in general, and the experiences of women in STEM careers and degree programs, little research has been conducted about business school alumnae. Davis and Geyfman (2012) found that in Pennsylvania, women were significantly statistically underrepresented in undergraduate colleges of business. A study in Canada found gender segregation in business major/specialization choice as well (Hunt & Song, 2013). While choice of major has a direct impact on first job out of school (NACE, 2012) and on subsequent opportunities for growth in large organizations, in isolation, it tells us little about the experience of women who *do* major in business.

Critics of management and business education have long argued the need for change in faculty gender composition, curriculum, and pedagogy to address the reported gender bias that shapes the business school experience (Mavin & Bryans, 1999; Mavin, Bryans, & Waring, 2004; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Simpson, 2006; Smith,

1997, 1998, 2000), but little change has been achieved. Most empirical work done recently is largely from a positivistic framework (Crawford & Mills, 2011; Davis & Geyfman, 2012; Hunt & Song, 2013). Little is understood about the rich and complex reality of how the business school experience shapes women's identities, aspirations and capacities for achieving their career goals. This study seeks to provide insight into the rich and complex reality.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women are underrepresented in corporate settings in general and leadership roles in particular (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Catalyst, 2013). This underrepresentation has wide ranging individual, organizational and economic implications. The workplace climate continues to be dominated by men and masculine belief systems or discourse(s)—ideologies that privilege masculine identity (Billing, 2011; Curtis, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Discourses “are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them” (Weedon, 1997, p. 105). As used in this study, the masculine discourse of organizations is defined as a formative context (Crawford & Mills, 2011)—a social framework of widely accepted formed routines, gendered work practices and norms that privilege the life situations and interests of men and are systematically biased against women (Billing, 2011; Crawford & Mills, 2011; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). This masculine discourse is particularly evident and persistent in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and some business fields (AAUW, 1994; Eagan, 2013; NSF, 2013). Literature shows that the underrepresentation of women in work settings has educational roots (AAUW, 1994; Eagan, 2013; NSF, 2013). Women continue to be significantly underrepresented in some STEM and business majors despite their majority enrollment in post-secondary education (AAUW, 1994; NCES 2012). Women students in men dominated disciplines and majors like business face many challenges.

In the following sections, I review the empirical literature related to the masculine discourse in organizational and educational settings and its impact on women, their educations and their careers. First, I describe the extent of underrepresentation of women in masculine fields of work and education and organizational gender inequality. Next, I summarize the literature related to the foundations and features of climate in business organizations and education including: gender stereotypes and discrimination and microaggressions, the balancing act between work and family and women's responses to gender inequality and the masculine discourse. Third, I consider research about the impacts of gendered organizational climates and the masculine discourse on women, their behavior and their life choices related to work and leadership. Fourth, I examine research about educational programs and other interventions aimed at changing the underrepresentation of women in traditionally masculine fields including business leadership. Fifth, I discuss the literature related to women's identity development in the context of a masculine discourse. Finally, I review the literature related to the feminist theoretical framework that shaped my view of this topic and informed my choice of research method.

Gender Inequality in Business and Education: The Realities

Despite gains, women continue to be underrepresented in the masculine world of corporate business leadership (Catalyst, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). In 2010, following three decades of steady increases, women earned 58% of all undergraduate degrees (NCES, 2012). During this same period, women entered the workforce in record numbers—48% of the overall workforce and 53% of new hires in corporate

America (Barsh & Yee, 2011). Yet, women were estimated to hold only 37% of first line manager roles (first leadership role after individual contributor role), 26% of vice president roles, 14% of executive committee (c-suite) positions—largely in less promotable staff roles—and only 3-4% of Chief Executive Officers (CEO) in the Fortune 500 (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Catalyst, 2013; Soares, Cobb, et al., 2011). The value of having women in organizational leadership has been well established, particularly during the most recent global financial crisis (Ferrary, 2013; Soares, Cobb, et al., 2011). Companies with the highest representation of women leaders outperformed companies with the lowest (Soares, Marquis, & Lee, 2011).

Parallel to women's growing participation in the workplace, women's participation in post-secondary education has increased significantly in the last 20 years. The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) reported that in 2013, approximately 56% of incoming college freshman nationally were women (Eagan, Lozano, Hurtado, & Case, 2013). Studies show that women are more likely to persist in college and obtain degrees (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; NCES, 2012). In fact, women reported having higher educational aspirations than their men peers (NCES, 2012). Women reportedly value and desire undergraduate and graduate degrees and have higher academic achievement (NCES, 2012). While their overall participation in post-secondary education has increased, women are still significantly underrepresented in non-traditional, men-dominated majors such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and business (AAUW, 1994, 1999; Bertrand et al., 2010; Brainard & Carlin, 1997; Turner & Bowen, 1998).

In 2010, women earned 58% of all undergraduate degrees (NCES, 2012), but only 34-37% of all business degrees. In 2013, 14.8 % of incoming freshman indicated an intention to major in business, but only 39% of declared business majors were women (Eagan et al., 2013). Thirty-four percent of business majors at the University in this study were women and large disparities existed within business major specialties; for example, Marketing had a 57% women enrollment, while Finance had only 18% women enrollment. These statistics are in agreement with national studies of gender segregation across fields of study (Barone, 2011). Studies in both Pennsylvania and Canada found gender segregation in business major/specialization choice as well (Hunt & Song, 2013).

Choice of major has a direct impact on first job out of school (Jacobs, 1996; NACE, 2012) and on subsequent opportunities for career growth. Employers have voiced a preference for Finance and other quantitative majors as a background for the corporate leadership pipeline (Bertrand et al., 2010; NACE, 2012). Careers in these areas are more highly paid (Davies & Guppy, 1997) and these are the majors that enroll a higher percentage of men students.

Studies of structural gender inequity have revealed that persistent gender discrimination has led to, among other less quantifiable things, a gender gap in pay nationally (Evers & Sieverding, 2013) which persists despite legal and policy changes (Liang, 2008). In 2012, women earned on average 77% of what men in the same positions earned (AAUW, 2013).

The literature provides myriad reasons explaining and illuminating the phenomenon of underrepresentation of women in the workplace (Burke & Major,

2014; Devillard, Graven, Lawson, Paradise, & Sancier-Sultan, 2012; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Germain, Herzog, & Hamilton, 2012; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Johns, 2013; Maranto & Griffin, 2010; Watt & Eccles, 2008). The U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) first named and confirmed the existence of a glass ceiling (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986) for women that prevents them from reaching the top leadership roles in organizations. This invisible, but solid, barrier was described as being constructed of widely held beliefs about women that relied on traditional female stereotypes and implied that investment in women employees was risky. Women were widely viewed as likely to leave to raise a family as they lacked commitment to careers. Organizations believed that clients (men) would not want to work with them. It has since been argued that the glass ceiling has been shattered, as there are some examples of women who have broken through and are successfully leading in corporate positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, anecdotal and empirical evidence indicates that there are still significant challenges (Catalyst, 1993, 2011, 2013; Johns, 2013). Eagly and Carli (2007) argued that while there may be openings in the glass ceiling, the ceiling has been replaced with a labyrinth—where not everyone finds the path to the top through the subtle and not so subtle barriers that still exist.

Next, I review the various streams of literature that have sought to describe and explain the persistence of a gender inequality in organizations, the barriers that impede women's participation and advancement and the impact of these phenomena on women. These include: persistent gender stereotypes and discrimination; the double bind; tokenism; impact of role models and access to social and organizational norms;

challenges of balancing work and family; coping mechanisms (i.e., tempered aspirations, adoption of masculine behaviors); stereotype threat and low self-efficacy; and the pervasive impacts of all of these on women's aspirations and life choices.

Gender Stereotypes and Discrimination

Overt gender discrimination in education and employment, while legally prohibited for more than a half of a century (Title IX of the Education Act of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1963 and 1991), still exists and has led to characterizations of a “chilly climate” for women across organizational contexts (Blickenstaff, 2005; Curtis, 2013; Fouad & Singh, 2011; Germain et al., 2012; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Hill, Corbett, & St. Rose, 2010; Maranto & Griffin, 2010). Women in diverse men-dominated fields continue to report structural, cultural and organizational barriers to achievement (Devillard et al., 2012; Germain et al., 2012; Johns, 2013). These studies point to traditional sex-role and gender stereotypes held by both men and women that form the foundation of barriers for women (e.g., contradictory gender based expectations for behavior, unequal treatment by peers and organizations, lack of role models, social stigma). Researchers argue that these barriers have a direct impact on life choices such as major, career, and advancement (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Powell & Butterfield, 1979, 1981, 2003, 2013; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009).

For example, views of the ideal employee, manager and leader continue to be associated with men and masculine identities (Alvesson, 1998; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Powell & Butterfield, 1981, 2013). Scholars have argued that the workplace climate continues to be dominated by the masculine discourse—an ideology that privileges masculine identity (Billing, 2011; Curtis, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). This

climate is evidenced by: sexual harassment; hidden discrimination in the form of devaluation; marginalization; exclusion from powerful social and professional networks; and lack of appreciation for greater family responsibilities for women (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Probert, 2005; Samble, 2008; Sheppard & Westphal, 1992). The masculine discourse drives behavior founded on deeply rooted assumptions about gender (stereotypes) embedded in the culture of our society and leading to differential behaviors toward men and women (Carnes et al., 2012).

Catalyst (2007) research found significant evidence for a continued “double-bind” for women in organizational leadership that is related to the masculine discourse. Because the norm is that men are seen as the default leaders and masculine behaviors are seen as leadership behaviors, when women enter leadership roles they are perceived as not competent and going against the norms of leadership. If women attempt to adopt more masculine ways of behaving and leading, they are perceived as going against the norms of femininity and stereotypes of women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Other research highlighted the delicate balancing act that women in leadership roles need to perform to succeed (Haber-Curran, 2013). Women and men leaders are positioned differently; women are not seen as being natural leaders of people, where men are (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). Studies have found that stereotypical feminine traits (warm, kind) were not associated with success in leadership while stereotypical masculine traits (assertive, competent) were (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Research supporting the value of feminine and androgynous approaches to leadership by men and women (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012; Schein, 1973, 1975) has had little impact on behavior.

Schools, like organizations, are vulnerable to perpetuating a masculine discourse and gendered climate. Schools, as cultural mediators, reproduce and affirm the norms and values of the dominant culture through language, curriculum, pedagogy and structure (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Kozulin, 1994). It is argued that, given this power, schools are “fundamentally tied to a struggle for a qualitatively better life for all through the construction of a society based on non-exploitative relations and social justice” (McLaren, 2003, pp. 70-71). Students bring existing stereotypes, identities and beliefs developed over years of exposure to attitudes to the classroom. Stalker and Prentice (1998) argue that “if they leave ... unaltered, the university is not doing its job of encouraging students to consider the full range of avenues open to them” (p. 62). Unfortunately, educational institutions have been criticized for employing a hidden curriculum that seeks to reproduce existing oppressive systems of relations in society and indoctrinating the privileges of the dominant groups (Anyon, 1980).

In the classroom, gender bias is expressed as a series of micro-inequities with cumulative impact. Women (and their experiences) are excluded from the content of classroom discussions and qualities viewed as feminine are described as deficient (Banks, 1988; Irigaray, 1977; Martin, 1985). The exposure of girls to a positive women’s history is rare (Martin, 1994; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). “Gender stereotypes and the lack of women characters contribute negatively to children’s development, limit their career aspirations, frame their attitudes about their future roles as parents, and even influence personality characteristics” (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009, p. 92). Education that emphasizes gender differences of students, belittles or elevates students based on gender stereotypes and reproduces hegemonic views of

men and heterosexual superiority has contributed to gendered career choices and professional success, the wage gap, teenage pregnancy, school violence and bullying, depression, anorexia and low self-esteem (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009).

The mediators of women's experiences in higher education (faculty, pedagogy and curriculum) transfer the dominant narrative about what is of value, who matters, and how women should behave and participate (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). In post-secondary education, women across men-dominated majors reported a chilly climate similar to that found in men-dominated industries (Morris & Daniel, 2007; Nixon, Meikle, & Borman, 2007). *Science* magazine recently highlighted the situation for women in STEM fields arguing that "most of us are biased" and called for increased interventions to change persistent gender stereotypes in STEM fields and education (Raymond, 2013). Students' gender-type attitudes toward occupations were reported in one study: students preferred gender-stereotyped occupations for themselves, gender-stereotyped occupations for men and non-stereotyped occupations for women (DiDonato & Strough, 2013).

Studies have demonstrated that business education (as compared to other educational programs) largely reproduced traditional gendered and classed understandings of identity and business success (Hall, 2013) and perpetuated preferences for the masculine managerial stereotypes and occupations (Fernandes & Carbral-Cardosa, 2003; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Paris & Decker, 2012). Mavin and Bryans (1999, 2004) found a distinct masculine bias in management education and a failure to incorporate women's experiences in business, rendering women invisible. Another study faulted management education with failing to develop the "soft" skills

considered feminine and in high demand in today's economy (Simpson, 2006). In another study, women MBA students reported feeling disconnected and disempowered, leading them to devise coping strategies such as denial of their experience, censoring and negatively self-stereotyping (Sinclair, 1995).

A national study of business school curricula (Herrington & Arnold, 2013) suggested that little in the content or approach has changed since the 1950s, prior to women's entry into professional corporate positions. Additionally, MBA students reported accepting the status quo of sexism as the way things are and actively asserted that gender did not matter (Kelan & Jones, 2010). Recent press has continued to highlight the persistent issue of gender discrimination and a chilly climate for women at business schools (Kantor, 2013; Mojtehdzaheh, 2014; Scott, 2014a).

While considerable progress has been made to reduce explicit gender discriminatory practices, critics argue that "second generation" discrimination is still very much a reality in traditionally masculine environments and fields (Hill et al., 2010; Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Sturm, 2006). One study indicated that sexual harassment occurs frequently in academia in both athletic and academic settings and occurs more often for women and in academic relationships despite the belief that sports is a more gendered environment (Volkwein-Caplan, Schnell, Devlin, Mitchell, & Sutura, 2002).

The second-generation discrimination described above in the STEM and business/leadership literature has similarities with what the social justice literature has termed microaggressions (Sue, 2010).

Microaggressions are the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative...gender...slights and insults to the target person or group. (p. 5)

The constant experiences of micro-insults and micro-invalidation for marginalized groups have a myriad of consequences for the individual including lower self-esteem and feelings of worthiness, ultimately denying access and opportunity to education and employment (Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2013; Sue, 2010).

Microaggressions most relevant to women's experiences are delivered verbally, non-verbally and environmentally (Nadal, 2010; Sue, 2010; Sue & Capodilupo, 2008) and include: sexual objectification; ascription of intelligence and leadership ability to men—assumption of inferiority; relegation to second-class citizenship in organizations; devaluation of women's values and ways of communicating and interacting; sexist language and jokes; restrictive gender roles; denial of the existence of gender inequity or discounting the impact of gender on life success; and denial of individual sexism.

Sue (2010) also outlines the process of microaggressions for the target. Once a microaggression occurs, the individual's perception and reaction are complicated and often thwarted, by the subtlety of the episode and the motivational attributions made about the agent. Women may check perceptions with other women to validate experiences or shift fault to the agent. However, they often rescue the offender by giving them a pass (Sue, 2010). Women's interpretation and meaning making of the microaggression may include developing beliefs that they do not belong, are

abnormal, inferior or untrustworthy (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008). The possible consequences of this process on the individual include feelings of powerlessness, invisibility and mental/emotional exhaustion and the sense that in order to survive or succeed that they must comply or internalize the fundamental beliefs driving the microaggression (Sue, 2010).

One type of overt microaggression is referred to as a microassault and includes overt acts including harassment (Sue, 2010). Gender harassment has a universally negative impact for women, but may not be handled the same way as sexual harassment. Babaria et al (2012) found that women medical students became quickly acculturated and resigned to unprofessional gender harassing behavior and that the events quickly become part of their professional identity and accepted as just part of the job. Holland and Cortina (2013) found that women were more likely to identify sexual advances as sexual harassment and inappropriate, but less likely to see gender harassment the same way. Sue and Capodilupo's (2008) aforementioned findings about the impact of microaggressions (e.g. powerlessness, invisibility, exhaustion) may explain these findings.

Effects of Underrepresentation

In addition to the literature about the gendered climate of men-dominated fields and related gender microaggressions on women, there is significant literature on the effects the underrepresentation of women has on women including tokenism, lack of role models and limited access to social and organizational norms.

Kanter (1977) theorized, that due to social group dynamics, when there is a low proportion of diverse members in a group, those diverse members become tokens

and this instigates multiple phenomena and consequences. The phenomena include: polarization (exaggerated differences) leads dominants to heighten group boundaries; assimilation (token attributes are distorted to fit stereotypes) leads to token's role entrapment; and visibility (tokens capturing disproportionate awareness) generates disproportionate performance pressures for the token.

Even as women break into traditionally masculine environments, their minority numbers matter and have a direct impact on identity, advancement and perceptions. So long as women are the minority in any organizational context, their behavior, attitudes and identity will be affected. Kanter's (1977) research suggested that the negative effects of tokenism would only begin to diminish when the proportion of the minority exceeded 35% of the group membership. Research has partially confirmed the importance of a critical mass in changing gendered organizational climates and structures (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2005). In education, there is similar evidence of these phenomena. Decades of research has indicated that students in single-sex educational environments (particularly women) have less polarization of sex-type stereotypes, higher levels of achievement after graduation and are more likely to choose non-traditional majors and/or occupations (Harper, 2006; Mael, 1998). Other research has confirmed the negative impact of continuing underrepresentation of women on firm performance and harassment charges in the organization (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequiera, 2002) and suggested that it is unlikely that things will change until there are more women in leadership roles.

Exposure to same-sex role models, mentors and supportive peers is important for women's success in masculine fields and leadership (Carter & Silva, 2010;

Catalyst, 1993; Parker & Welch, 2013; Ragsdale, 2013; Ramsey, Betz, & Sekaquaptewa, 2013; Riebe, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Enke, 2010; Settles, Cortina, Malley & Stewart, 2006; A. Smith, 2012; C. Smith, 1997, 1998, 2000; Westring et al., 2012; Whitehead, 2010; Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007). “Discourses are mastered through acquisition...by enculturation into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse” (Gee, 1996). Role models who have mastered the masculine dominated organizational discourse can help newcomers learn how to operate in the discourse. Studies have supported the crucial function of role models and mentors for professional women’s career aspirations and professional identity development (Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova, 2012; Douvan, 1976; Levine, Mechaber, Reddy, Cayea, & Harrison, 2013; McDonald & Westphal, 2013). Research has shown that role models may also be able to reduce gender bias in non-traditional fields (Mazerolle, Borland, & Burton, 2012). Studies of single-sex education models clearly show the importance of women role models and faculty in women student identity construction (Levine et al., 2013 Cayea & Harrison, 2013; Riebe, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Enke, 2010)

However, as illustrated earlier, women role models are scarce in leadership and men-dominated fields. The situation in post-secondary education is equally out of balance. Women make up only a small percentage of higher-level administration. While the numbers are better than in the Fortune 500, only 26% of university presidents are women and much of higher administration is heavily men (Lapovkey, 2014). In addition, amongst those regularly interacting with students, fewer women rise to the level of Full Professor than do men—only 24% on average across all

disciplines (Warner, 2014) and only 20% in Colleges of Business (Scott, 2014b). It is challenging, if not impossible for women students in men-dominated fields and women leaders to find women as role models.

In addition to a lack of role models, research has clearly shown that due to embedded gender stereotypes, many organizational practices are gendered and discriminatory toward women, including general attitudes, pay and promotion processes, and access to development opportunities (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Devillard et al., 2012; Germain et al., 2012; Johns, 2013). There is also evidence that women have less access to the experiences and social capital necessary to persist in masculine fields, assume leadership roles and develop leadership identities (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Simmons, 1996). Women are given fewer opportunities for training and advancement (Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994) and may receive biased performance evaluations. Hoobler, Lemmon and Wayne (2011) found that women's aspirations were more a product of manager's biased evaluations than of their abilities. Similarly, Jonnergård, Stafssudd and Elg (2010) found that performance evaluations for auditors were based on comparing women to the masculine norm and may explain lower career ambitions and expectation for women as well as a greater intention to leave. In fact, women are required to work harder for recognition (Muhr, 2011) and feminine traits lead to lower performance evaluations (Heilman & Welle, 2006). Due to these practices, women are given fewer opportunities to prove they have what it takes to be successful and have fewer opportunities for advancement.

Women without same sex role models and mentors may not learn the unwritten rules in organizations. Some women are unaware of the importance of factors beyond

performance or time for career advancement such as visibility and relationship building (Catalyst, 2008). In fact, working hard (working long hours and achieving objectives) may not be enough. Lack of awareness of these “unwritten rules” and lack of access to informal networks through which to learn these norms may severely impede women’s advancement (Catalyst, 2008, 2010). Recent research has also suggested that women underestimate the role informal criteria play in hiring decisions (ability to sell yourself, knowing the right people) and therefore only apply for jobs for which they fit the formal requirements, while men apply for jobs they think they can get through informal methods (Mohr, 2014).

The Balancing Act of Work and Family

Within the context of the gender inequality described in the prior sections, women must also negotiate complex work and home responsibilities and roles. Women report experiencing devaluation and delegitimization of their professional skills and contributions in the workplace (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Moya, 2002) due to a masculine construction of work, particularly once they start families (Cates, 2014). The work-family literature has explored the affect on women and their careers of the “balancing act” between work and home and multiple role negotiation. Men’s gender roles have evolved and men are taking on a greater role in the home. However, for the most part, traditional gender roles persist, requiring women to make difficult choices, negotiate tradeoffs and develop specific skills to balance multiple roles while remaining resilient to stress and challenges that arise in both domains (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2011).

In the 1990s, Tharenou, Latimer and Conroy (1994) found evidence of a mommy tax—women with families had decreased chances for advancement. More recently Hoobler, Lemmon and Wayne (2011) confirmed that family-work conflict bias (belief that women, whether or not they are married or have children, are less ambitious and capable than men) keeps men and women managers from hiring, providing accurate performance ratings for or promoting women. In parallel, Lobel and St.Clair (1992) found that perceived orientation toward family or career had an impact on merit increases for women. Career-oriented men received higher merit increases than both family-oriented men and family- or career-oriented women.

Women make career decisions based on their perceptions of work-life issues. Liff and Ward (2001) described women's career decision making as being differentially impacted by the perceived incompatibility between active parenting and senior leadership roles. Women in one study were found to place greater importance on work life balance and cultural fit than men when considering jobs (Sallop & Kirby, 2007), which may lead women to opt out of career progression or at least give less time to building the networks necessary for advancement (Xu & Martin, 2011). Anderson, Vinnicombe and Singh (2010) found that women's choice to leave consulting partnerships was driven by the hours required of high level leaders and the anticipated impact of these requirements on the ability of women to balance work and life, rendering them, essentially, without a real choice. Similarly, Walsh (2012) found that high achieving women lawyers perceived their opportunities for promotion were relatively constrained due to the work-family culture at their firms. Bajdo (2001) found that organizational cultural practices related to gender equity were the most

important predictor of the disproportionately low numbers of women in management and masculine fields.

Women's Responses to Gender Inequality and the Masculine Discourse

Women struggle to integrate the conflicting gendered identities required for leaders and for women. Sex-role identity has been directly linked to leadership aspirations in a number of studies, (Powell & Butterfield, 1981) as has gender (Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007) and self-held gender stereotypes (Gadassi & Gati, 2009). Ross-Smith and Chesterman (2009) coined the term “girl disease” to describe the ambivalence and reticence that their study participants reported about organizational advancement caused by the struggle to negotiate between gender and managerial identities. Participants who more strongly identified with the managerial domain reported higher aspirations (Ross-Smith & Chesterman, 2009). Women's reported expectations for gender equality were directly related to holding high level positions and not having a family (Ross-Smith & Chesterman, 2009).

Ross-Brannan and Priola (2012) explored the experience of women in middle management and documented the pressure women feel for enacting masculinities at work in order to succeed. Kerfoot and Knights (1998) documented the increasing pressures on both men and women to adopt more masculine behavior and the privileging of masculine work culture. Alvesson (1998) had similar findings for men in advertising as did McDonald (2013) in nursing, where men reported pressures to adopt the more feminine behaviors privileged by those occupations. Bryans and Mavin (2003) found that women managers face multiple contradictions, whether to learn to fit in to the masculine paradigm of management or play a different game. In a

study by Devine, Grummell and Lynch (2011) women reported having to develop what the authors called an “elastic self” to negotiate the demands of masculinist management cultures. Stead (2013) further described the processes women leaders use as they experience and strategically deploy (in)visibility to attempt to fit into masculine roles and discourses. Not so long ago, *Fortune* magazine even advised women to “Look like a lady, act like a man; work like a dog” (Fierman, 1990) in order to make it to the top.

Women employees and students in men-dominated fields face similar challenges to women leaders and employ a host of coping strategies to respond. Hatmaker (2013) found that women engineers used impression management and coping tactics to negotiate the identity conflict between gender and professional identities. In a study by Erickson (2012), women Ph.D. engineers reported having to make difficult decisions about avoiding and revealing gender. Similarly, Power, Bagilhole and Dainty (2009) found that women in engineering performed gender to gain men’s acceptance by using coping strategies: acting like one of the boys, accepting gender discrimination, achieving a reputation, seeing advantages over disadvantages, and adopting an “anti-woman” approach. Another study recommended that women seeking to enter traditionally masculine fields or positions describe themselves in interviews in agentic terms and avoid acknowledging their gender (Wessel, Hagiwara, Ryan, & Kermond, 2014).

As described earlier, stereotype threat is another powerful intrapersonal factor that limits women’s success in men-dominated fields. Stereotype threat theory suggests that people’s internalized stereotypes about themselves shape intellectual

identity and performance (Steele, 1997). Studies on stereotype threat have found that students who are members of stereotyped minorities (i.e., women in business) expect to be stereotyped by others. These individuals are more stigma conscious and therefore less likely to seek opportunities to invalidate that stereotype. They will perform more poorly when the stigma is made salient. In fact, they will choose to avoid the situation altogether if possible (Kanter, 1977; Pinel, 1999). Sex role reinforcement puts pressures and constraints on behavior placed on those in minority status (e.g., women in finance, women in STEM). This leads to systematically distorted perceptions held by the dominant group (women are not good at math), self-limiting adaptive behavior by women and exit from the situation to a field with less pressure (Kanter, 1977). Ultimately, this results in the continued underrepresentation of women and other minorities in traditionally white men-dominated fields.

Additionally, in educational contexts, studies have shown that when students are made aware of negative stereotype expectations (e.g., women perform poorly on this math test) or simply reminded of their membership in a marginalized group, students fear proving the stereotype and subsequently perform more poorly on the test (Steele, 1997). In one study, social cues from the setting, including numbers of women participating and their roles, caused women to become more vulnerable to identity threat and experience a lower sense of belonging (Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007). It has been shown that stereotype lift (providing a positive stereotype awareness) can have the opposite effect (Johnson, Barnard-Brak, Saxon, & Johnson, 2012) when coupled with other interventions to reduce the aversive impact of the

negative stereotype (Tomasetto & Appoloni, 2013), but this must be manufactured intentionally in men-dominated fields.

Subsequent research has focused attention on the role of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Brown, Eisenberg, & Sawilowsky, 1997; Lent, Lopez, Lopez, & Sheu, 2008; Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008; Yeagley, Subich, & Tokar, 2010) and confidence (Dweck, 2006; Dweck, Mangels, & Good, 2004; Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012; Mangels, Butterfield, Lamb, Good, & Dweck, 2006; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Research has illustrated significant differences in self-efficacy between men and women in men-dominated contexts. Women in these contexts may have decreased individual self-perceptions of skills and abilities and negative beliefs about the likelihood of successful performance (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2001; Wood & Bandura, 1989). High self-efficacy has been tied to likelihood of choice to pursue and persist on a task. Women traditionally have lower self-efficacy related to men-dominated domains and careers (typically masculine careers) than do men (Bandura, 2001; Eccles, 1994; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Wilson et al., 2007). For instance, studies have shown that women have lower self-efficacy than men in areas related to math, finance, decision-making and problem-solving and other domains stereotypically defined as “male” (Bandura, 2001; Eccles, 1994; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Wilson et al., 2007).

Women may be more likely than men to limit career aspirations and interests because they believe they lack the necessary capabilities to succeed. Therefore, women are more likely to choose careers with the greater perceived likelihood of success due to both internal and external factors (Bandura, 2001; Eccles, 1994; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Wilson et al., 2007). Kay and Shipman (2014) reported that women,

in general, appear to suffer from a crisis of confidence, leading them not to act on their ideas and subsequently hold themselves back from achievement. To further complicate matters, Pomerantz, Altermatt and Saxon (2002) found that despite outperforming boys across academic subjects, girls were more vulnerable than boys to internal distress. Girls evaluated themselves more negatively (except in traditionally feminine subjects), and experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression than boys. This potentially led them to make major life choices about college major and career in order to minimize stress. Other research has suggested that women may view competitive situations differently than men (Pomerantz et al., 2002). Women are more likely to be socialized to please adults, may generalize failure beyond the specific situation, and worry about disappointing others should they perform poorly. In this study, the potential of failure appeared to be more salient for women than men and led them to avoid the situation altogether.

A study of gender differences in achievement-related beliefs and emotional responses to success and failure in mathematics courses found that women students rated their ability lower, expected to do less well, were more likely to attribute failure to low ability (Stipek & Gralinski, 1996). Women also were more likely to report believing that success was related to effort, had less pride in their success and exhibited a stronger desire to hide failures from others (Stipek & Gralinski, 1996). In a decade worth of research on mindset, Dweck (2006) found that the higher a woman's IQ, the worse she coped with confusion and frustration when learning a new task, to the point of being unable to learn the material after experiencing confusion or a challenge (e.g., calling their ability into question, undermining their confidence).

Viewing intellectual ability as a gift (fixed entity) led students to question that ability and lose motivation when faced with challenges in a particular area of study.

Alternately, students who viewed intellectual ability as a quality that could be developed and expanded through practice and dedication sought active remedies in the face of difficulty. Women students tend to believe that if they struggle, then they did not have the “gift” (Mangels et al., 2006). Katz, Allbritton, Aronis, Wilson and Soffa (2006) found support for the impact of mindset. Women who received a B or below in entry level computer science courses (major dominated by men) were more likely than men to change majors to a less man-dominated major. Yeager and Dweck (2012) posit that a growth mindset promotes resilience in the face of challenge. Growth mindset is the belief that intellectual abilities are not an innate gift and can be developed and taught. Fostering this mindset is crucial to increasing women’s persistence in non-traditional majors.

Yasuhara (2005) in a review of the gender gap in post-secondary education found consistent evidence that lack of self-confidence in women may be to blame for the gender gap in non-traditional majors. Women were more likely to have higher levels of self-doubt, leading to difficulty persevering through setbacks and making women students hesitant to seek out help. Women also reported being more dependent on external encouragement than men. Women felt worse about their achievement than men about similar course performance and blamed poor performance on lack of personal ability (Yasuhara, 2005). Beyer (1997) also found that women were more likely than men to blame poor academic performance on ability.

Impacts of Masculine Discourse on Women

As described above, exposure to discrimination and microaggressions has a cumulative impact on targets (Sue, 2010). Sadker and Sadker (2009) spent decades chronicling the impact of gender bias and oppression on women and men students in K-16 education. They found that “Women who have spent years learning the lessons of silence in elementary, secondary, and college classrooms have trouble regaining their voices” (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009, p. 10). In a gendered educational environment, boys fail to develop emotional and communication skills and girls fail to develop agency, tending instead toward passivity and voicelessness (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Recently, Hosaka (2013) found that women undergraduate engineering students in Japan were unwilling to ask professors questions unless they already had a very good understanding of the material and did not really need the help.

The undergraduate experience influences perceptions of work and family (Murray & Cutcher, 2012; Stone & McKee, 2000) and may narrow or magnify perceptions of gender differences as they relate to academic self-confidence and engagement, choice of undergraduate major and career aspirations (Curtis, 2013; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Paris & Decker, 2012; Sax & Arms, 2009; Sax & Bryant, 2006; Sax & Harper, 2007). One line of research has examined the role of undergraduate education as it relates to STEM alumnae aspirations and career persistence and found that sex atypical majors (women in traditionally masculine majors) and departments reinforced traditional sex role stereotypes and marginalizing interactions negatively influenced career identity construction for women (Fernandes & Carbral-Cardosa, 2003; Hatmaker, 2013; Katila & Eriksson, 2013).

Women often report feeling that they do not “fit in” in men-dominated fields and leadership (Probert, 2005). Women are opting out of career paths early in their educational careers due to their gendered beliefs about those fields (Baird, 2012; Good et al., 2012) and lack a “sense of belonging” in non-traditional fields (Denyszyn, 2013). *Why So Few*, the AAUW report on the continued underrepresentation of women in STEM fields, reviews the impact of sociocultural beliefs (versus biological/genetic explanations) as the basis for continued differences. The report specifically emphasizes the importance of the undergraduate experience in building atypical career self-confidence, self-efficacy and aspirations (Hill et al., 2010). Men and women are less likely to choose majors and career paths considered gendered atypical or “inappropriate,” have very gendered views of future abilities to balance work and family (Murray & Cutcher, 2012), and are more likely to act on sexist beliefs (Gervais & Hoffman, 2012). Additionally, women’s choices related to work, family and career are viewed as the cause of lack of gender diversity in masculine-dominated fields (McClelland & Holland, 2014).

Studies suggest women’s aspirations are tempered by the gendered context of some organizations, gendered social expectations and their own self-efficacy for leadership (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998; van Vianen & Keizer, 1996). The persistent sex-role stereotypes reinforced in academic environments may lead to decreasing persistence of women in non-traditional majors. Subsequently, aspirations for and identification with atypical careers (via internalization of these stereotypes, lower assessment of cognitive skills, and lack of exposure to atypical examples) for women undergraduates may persist (Baird, 2012; Gadassi & Gati, 2009; Hill et al., 2010; G.

Powell & Butterfield, 1979; Seymour & Hewitt, 1994; Siann & Callaghan, 2001; Soldner, Rowan-Kenyon, Inkelas, Garvey, & Robbins, 2012; Wyer, 2003). For example, Baird (2012) found that women high school students with traditional gender beliefs and lesser quantitative skills (considered masculine skill) are more likely to choose gender-typical career paths and majors. Even women with better quantitative skills, but traditional gender beliefs, were unlikely to choose atypical career paths (as are men with better verbal skills) (Baird, 2012).

The next section will review literature related to the content, process and efficacy of educational programs and interventions and program aimed at increasing women's representation and success in traditionally masculine fields including business leadership.

Interventions To Increase Women's Representation

The literature catalogues significant intervention efforts focused at increasing the representation of women in STEM and leadership. Intentional educational interventions aimed at decreasing gender stereotypes and employing a consciousness raising approach have been shown to change attitudes of students toward traditional sex role stereotypes (Bierema, 2010; Gervais & Hoffman, 2012). Educational interventions focused on dispelling negative gender stereotypes can have a positive impact on women students' performance and identification with sex atypical careers (Steele, 1997).

In an effort to improve STEM leadership self-efficacy in women undergraduates, researchers developed a semester-long intervention to build critical stereotype awareness, develop bias awareness, expose women to multiple counter-

stereotypical women role models, participate in critical reflection and incorporate course concepts into lived experiences (Betz & Schifano, 2000; Isaac, Kaatz, Lee, & Carnes, 2012). The study provided compelling evidence of a long-lasting increase in leadership self-efficacy, empowerment of women students, and identification with STEM careers as a result of participation in the class. Other studies of similar interventions with women in business and other non-traditional careers provided equally positive results (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010; Pool & Qualter, 2012).

Another intervention providing an increased number of positive atypical messages about women in STEM and highlighting women's contributions to the field resulted in an increase in positive identification with STEM fields and decreased concerns for stereotyping (Ramsey et al., 2013). It has also been suggested that incorporating positive representations of women scientists in fiction (science fiction text and film) into the curriculum challenges implicit gender bias and reduces sex role stereotyping (Merrick, 2012). These practices, while hopeful, are not commonly a part of the curriculum in most men-dominated disciplines and majors.

Other critical elements found in single-sex environments that could be intentionally created in co-education environments include exposure to women role models, women peer support for atypical aspirations, opportunity for academic achievement without social pressure, and abundant leadership opportunities (Mael, 1998). Similarly, women-only leadership development programs have shown promise in supporting women's advancement and persistence (Anderson, Vinnicombe, & Singh, 2008; Anderson et al., 2010; Ely et al., 2011; Vinnicombe, 2011; Vinnicombe

& Singh, 2002). Exposure to women leaders and role models raises aspirations and sex atypical career identification for girls (Beaman et al., 2012; Ramsey et al., 2013), and providing women with a “space of their own” living-learning communities or discussion groups enhances their persistence and success in non-traditional fields (Riebe, 2012; Szelenyi, Denson, & Inkelas, 2012). Participation in a women-only leadership program showed evidence of maintaining self-esteem in the face of situations that would cause its decline (Henneberger, Deutsch, Lawrence, & Sovik-Johnston, 2012). Other research highlighted the key role of network development in supporting women in leadership roles (Parker & Welch, 2013; Xu & Martin, 2011).

Women’s Gender Identity and Literacy Development

Women use multiple strategies in the face of the masculine discourse and to resist and manage positioning of their professional identities (Katila & Merilainen, 2002). These strategies are intricately related to psychosocial identity development. While this study is not about women’s gender or feminist identity development, I review the literature here because it serves as an important backdrop for my study of women alumnae. As a part of identity development, individuals must develop the ability to understand and adapt to new discourses. Blackburn (2002) defined literacy performances as

patterns of behavior over time and across locations, locating action within sociocultural context and in identity. Each performance of a given identity strengthens and destabilizes that identity and any others in play undergoing constant revision and evolution—confirming and disrupting. Each series of

performances of a given identity can reinforce or destabilize—evolve identities—interact in and with their contexts to conduct identity work (p. 313).

This is the process of identity development that women go through when trying to succeed in dominant masculine environments.

Hardiman and Jackson (1997) propose a model of social identity development to describe the common process that all members of target and agent groups go through as they develop social identities (gender, race, sexuality, etc.). All children start as naïve; they operate selfishly, purely from their own needs and curiosity as they interact with the world around them and attempt to figure out their own place in it. As they grow, children begin to learn and adopt ideologies and attitudes about their own and other social groups, recognize social rules, and question inconsistencies and contradictions.

Next, individuals begin to internalize the dominant discourse, status structure, rules and logic, and their place in it and either passively or actively depending on the relative consciousness with which they hold to the dominant discourse. So, for example, women as targets in passive acceptance are unaware of their collusion with the oppressive discourse, may assert their preference to work for men and their belief that women are not cut out for leadership roles. Women in active acceptance will argue against the need for feminism (for example: #womenagainstfeminism) and attempt to defend their stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about women. Women may describe their work experiences as gender-neutral, argue that gender does not matter or did not impact their own experience (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998) in an attempt to

reconcile the demands of gender and work identities and explain their willing participation.

Women's development is impacted by exposure to influential role models (for example: Sheryl Sandberg or a feminist professor) or an experience of blatant discrimination that could not be rationalized away. With increasing awareness of oppression, women may begin to question the "truths" of the dominant discourse. As targets, they may develop an oppositional stance (anti-men) or may take a more passive approach by adopting prototypically white man behavior (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998) in hopes of maintaining status in the dominant discourse while philosophically rejecting oppression as acceptable (Bierema, 2010; Jacques & Radtke, 2012; Quinn & Radtke, 2006; Rosell & Hartman, 2001).

A redefinition of social group identity independent of the dominant culture and engagement comes with members of the their same social group who share the same experiences. They may be labeled troublemakers or rabble-rousers at this point by agent groups and other targets who have not themselves independently defined their social identity (Holland & Cortina, 2013). They often seek to learn as much as possible about their group, for example studying feminism or gender, and ultimately adopt this new identity. Finally, targets will enter Internalization and incorporate their new identity into all facets of their lives. Their newly expanded consciousness may lead them to further self-exploration and growth (see for example LeSavoy & Bergeron, 2011).

This model of development can be particularly helpful in understanding the role undergraduate education may have in facilitating feminist identity development

for undergraduate women. It is similar to a model proposed by Downing & Roush (1984) focused specifically at the development of a feminist social identity, operationalized and validated by Bargad & Hyde (1991). This model seeks to describe the common processes that women go through as they develop a consciousness of women's oppression. The Downing and Roush model closely parallels the Social Identity Development model: passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis and active commitment. In one study, Mayhew & Fernandez (2007) found that colleges can create conditions to facilitate social justice outcomes and personal growth. And, in fact, The Association of American Colleges and Universities (aacu.org) calls for educational institutions to foster intellectual honesty and social justice and drive students to develop a deep understanding of one's own and other's complex identities and cultures. Women's identity development plays a significant role in their negotiation of masculine discourses.

Research suggests improved outcomes for women with fully internalized gender identities. For example, Worell, Stilwell, Oakley & Robinson (1999) found support for exposure to gender and women's issues effecting positive outcomes for students. Additionally, Eisele and Stake (2008) found that feminist identity mediates the relationship between feminist attitudes and self-efficacy and that in support of other studies: feminism improves self-evaluations (self-efficacy) in women and other measures of well-being (Carter & Spitzack, 1990; Colbeck, Cabrera, & Terenzini, 2001; McNamara & Rickard, 1989; Miner-Rubino, Settles, & Stewart, 2009; Moradi, 2012; Moradi, Martin, & Brewster, 2012; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Morley, 1993; Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992; Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006).

Despite the reality of sexism, one study found that undergraduate students perceive gender discrimination as being of little consequence and believe that they will enter a gender-neutral workplace (Sipe, Johnson, & Fisher, 2009). Such beliefs lead to potential job dissatisfaction, decreased aspirations in the face of reality and turnover once these women enter the workforce. Building awareness of the realities of gender discrimination for undergraduates would have benefits for all stakeholders.

Based on Foucauldian foundations (1972), Gee (1996) defines Discourses as

...saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations...ways of being in the world...that integrate works, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities...a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk...so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize. (p. 127).

Lankshear (1991) suggested that some have the ability to see a discourse for what it is, critique it, and seek to change it; others simply live within it unaware. Blackburn (2002) suggests that literacy performances within multiple discourses empower individuals, facilitate their identity work and allow them to see the discourse for what it is. Identity and literacy performances are bound and regulated by the discourses (and inherent norms and values) in which they are defined and performed as well as the reactions, recognition and responses of those who witness the performance (Fellabaum, 2011). For women in undergraduate business education, their identity development is tempered by what has been described in prior sections as a chilly and gendered climate with norms and values oppressive for women.

As identity development models suggest (Downing & Roush, 1984; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997), it is a challenge for individuals to decipher the rules of new discourses, develop literacies, manage presenting conflicts between discourses and maintain desired identities in the face of negative reactions. Women seeking to enter the dominantly masculine discourse of business leadership must actively manage these challenges in order to succeed. Exposure to critical feminist paradigms has been shown to help women strengthen their gender identities and literacies, and manage challenges to those identities (Fisher, 2001; Rogers & Garrett, 2002).

The feminist practice of consciousness-raising is absolutely essential to women's education as it provides a structure for critical analysis by sharing experiences, reflecting on feelings, critically evaluating theories and envisioning actions for social change (Fisher, 2001; Rogers & Garrett, 2002). Lewis (1992) argues that these practices are crucial in the development of critical literacies and identities for women, providing them with an understanding of their figured worlds, positionality, space for authoring and facilitating the making of new worlds (Blackburn, 2002). Executive development research supports the value of consciousness-raising experiences. Feminist approaches enable women to locate themselves in the dominant discourse and to critically examine their position and actively author their identities (Fisher, 2001; Lewis, 1992).

It is essential for women entering gendered climates to develop knowledge and literacies in order to succeed. Hines and Johnson (2007) propose a specific taxonomy of critical literacies. Two of these literacies are particularly relevant to the current study: systems literacies (understanding how a discourse works—ability to read,

interpret and criticize socio-historical-cultural structures) and resilience literacies (knowing what you believe, but also knowing when to fight and when to step back and regroup or redirect energy covertly until the spotlight is off). Research has found that women who are given opportunity to participate in consciousness raising practices may begin to develop these literacies through reflection and have the opportunity for voice and authoring of a new world view and positively impact professional confidence and persistence (Colbeck et al., 2001; Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010). Women in undergraduate business who are exposed to the feminist paradigm may have a greater opportunity to develop critical literacies and face challenge with resilience and develop a more resilient social identity. Jaques and Radtke (2012) identified the tendency “of young women to privilege the ideal of women as wives and mothers, yet position[ing] themselves as autonomous individual making free choices and, thereby, responsible for managing the problems in their lives...ignor[ing] gender politics” (p. 433).

As discussed in prior sections, in business, women’s professional development courses have historically sought to provide women with the skills to become leaders in the image of the dominant masculine discourse. In early work on leadership development, women were seen as a “special case,” an anomaly (Wexley, 1986). For those women who did seek leadership roles, they received the same basic training as men. Any supplemental training offered was targeted to help them deal with their internal conflict between traditional sex roles (woman role vs. manager role) and facilitate responding to potential discrimination. While there was awareness of

potential discrimination, there was no suggested training to reduce it or to empower women in dealing with it.

More recent research (Debebe, 2011; Edwards, Elliott, Iszatt-White, & Schedlitzki, 2013; Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2007) has suggested that leadership development for women should be designed to:

- expose participants to masculine discourses or the “realities of the work world” for women;
- develop skills aiding students to choose and attain a professional position after graduation and succeed in their careers and life; and
- help students develop literacies and self-confidence to ultimately author their own figured world of business leadership.

Making all students aware of gender-based discrimination, bias and its impacts can provide them with literacies necessary to succeed in the face of discrimination and/or have the strength to confront it and ultimately change the reality of that discourse (Ossana et al., 1992). For women students, this literacy can provide them with an identity resilient to conflict, discrimination and stereotype threat and promote higher levels of self-esteem (Ossana et al., 1992). Other research has found that women who are given opportunity to participate in consciousness raising practices (awareness, reflection, discussion, challenge) may begin to develop literacies through reflection and the opportunity for voice and authoring of a new world view (Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010) that will help them more successfully navigate sex atypical career paths and balance conflicting ideologies.

Feminist Theoretical Framework

In this section, I review literature related to the feminist theoretical framework used in this project. Feminist paradigms place gender at the center of analysis, with a worldview that attends to systematic injustices related to gender (Lay & Daley, 2007) as a “primary organizing characteristic in our society” (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011, p. 667). Feminist research problematizes the subordination and oppression of women. It explores how and where gender-based oppression began and how it is perpetuated (Acker, 1987).

Downs (2010) provided a detailed account of gender history and the roots of the feminist movement using social history and literature to explore the development of the modern feminist and gender movements. Over the course of the Industrial Revolution, women and their lives became more visible as they left the private sphere of work at home and entered the public economy. As women entered these new public spaces of production in factories and in the service of the wealthy, their social positions, family structures and that of the society at large were changed irrevocably and revealed women as socio-historical actors and entered them into the variable pool for socio-economic study. The ensuing decades saw a public battle for women’s rights resulting in an increase in women receiving educations, working outside of the home, and achieving voting rights. These public political rights were soon seen as not enough.

Second wave feminism revived feminist activism amidst the social, cultural and political movements in the late 1960s and resulted in feminism becoming a mainstream intellectual movement. Women, many now with university educations,

made acutely aware of their powerlessness and second-class status by the social movements of the times, sought explanations and redress for male domination of their private and public lives. Not only were women questioning why their stories were not valued, they were refusing to accept gender role divisions as a natural state of the world. In parallel with the constructivist and post-modern paradigm shifts across academic scholarship, feminist researchers argued that gender was socially constructed and arbitrarily dichotomized, with the male gender arbitrarily established as the standard and the female gender occupying the place of “other” (Bem, 1993). Feminist researchers further argued that androcentric ideologies and masculine narratives, not nature, determined which rights and privileges women and men should and could possess (Bem, 1993). This argument came directly out of lived experience and led to the call for an accounting of women’s history that did not simply add women to the story, but questioned the very plot of the story itself and demanded a revision of social theory and social science foundations. Feminist standpoint theory (Hartsock, 1981) was one codification of this revisionist epistemology, borne in part of Marxism, proposing that knowledge and truth are situated, that there are multiple truths and standpoints from which knowledge is produced, and that experience creates reality. The theory further argued that the dominant group in society would define what is real, subsequently rejecting the validity of all other experiences (Hekman, 1997).

In the face of criticisms from women of color, academic post-feminists, and non-academic activists, third wave feminism continues the transformation of feminism. Third wave feminism centered on discussions of gender and the

intersecting, multiple identities that form out of diverse social contexts and experiences (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011) for both men and women in light of the progress made during the second wave movement and the historical circumstances shaping their lives. hooks (2000) and others (Downs, 2010), while espousing certain tenets of second wave feminism, vehemently criticized second wave feminism as essentializing and not descriptive for *all* women, particularly *not* women of color. Third wave feminism has been fragmented by its demand for plurality, refusing to accept white mainstream feminism's failure to address or acknowledge other forms of oppression (racism, classism) (Orr, 1997; Pinterics, 2001). Some suggest that third wave feminism has moved from the personal to the individual and has shifted the emphasis to embracing complexities, ambiguities and multiple locations (Orr, 1997; Pinterics, 2001) in reflection of the lived experiences of contemporary women. As has been shown in this brief history, there are a number of feminist waves and perspectives. Each has its own challenges and critiques.

Feminist scholarship has ridden these waves and evolved. As a paradigm or epistemology, feminism has many shared tenets that guide both methodology and activism (Bem, 1993; Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Jackson, 1997; Lay & Daley, 2007; Luke, 1996; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Niskode-Dossett, Pasque, & Nicholson, 2011; Renegar & Sowards, 2003; M. Rogers & Garrett, 2002; Romero & Stewart, 1999; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). A synthesis of tenets found in feminist literature include:

1. Everything is culturally situated and constructed. Theory and knowledge are a political practice. What counts as knowledge or truth

is power-related (Rogers & Garrett, 2002). Feminists seek to demystify power and hierarchy and make oppression visible. How knowledge is constructed affects research and what is known (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011).

2. Gender is socially constructed. Identities are both chosen and ascribed by the dominant narrative (Bem, 1993; Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004).
3. Difference is at the core of human experience. Men and women have different experiences. Feminist theory is launched from the researcher's own experience and focuses on women's lived experiences as a way to tell the "whole" story and give voice to the unheard, make the invisible, visible. What participants think is important, is important. There is no one right answer. Seek and celebrate multiplicity and complexity in methods and disciplines, seek the extraordinary not the normal, seek to expand and describe not reduce and generalize (Niskode-Dossett, Pasque, & Nicholson, 2011; Rogers & Garrett, 2002; Romero & Stewart, 1999; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011).
4. The practice of research cannot be both descriptive and purely objective. Criticism of a paradigm must be continual, reflexive and come from within. Researcher and participant are empowered by the research outcomes, engaged in a relationship that affects the outcome (Bem, 1993; Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004).

5. Research should be focused on change, on action, not just on creating knowledge. It should both recognize difference and work to break down structures sustaining oppression. It should be accessible. Feminism seeks to change the social realities for women and men by exploring their lives and shedding light on “normal” (hooks, 1994, 2000).

Three uses of feminist thought are of particular interest to higher education applications: as epistemology—a paradigm or lens through which to explain or critique a particular social/cultural event or phenomenon; as a methodology to guide exploration and description of that phenomena and choices about what to look at and how to look at it; and finally as a pedagogy (Fisher, 2001; Noddings, 2006). In this study, I approach this topic with consideration for the first two. First, I am approaching this exploration of undergraduate business alumnae using a feminist lens. Second, I am incorporating elements of feminist methodology into my study, as I will discuss further in the next chapter. These foundational tenets of feminism shaped every aspect of my dissertation process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to explore the experiences of alumnae of undergraduate business education. To achieve this, the study employed narrative inquiry and analysis guided by two research questions:

1. How, if at all, do business school alumnae make meaning of the gendered climate of the business profession?
2. What role, if any, do alumnae believe their college experiences played in shaping their understanding of, preparation for, and aspirations in the traditionally masculine professional world of work?

In this chapter, I review the narrative and feminist methodology used for this dissertation. I also describe the setting of the study as well as the procedures used for sampling, narrative collection, and narrative analysis. Finally I provide support for the trustworthiness of the study and explore the limitations of this study and the methodology.

Critics of management and business education (primarily at the graduate level) have long argued for the need for change in faculty gender composition, curriculum and pedagogy to address the reported gender bias that shapes the business school experience (Mavin & Bryans, 1999; Mavin et al., 2004; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Simpson, 2006; Smith, 1997, 1998, 2000), but little change has been achieved. Most empirical work done recently is largely from a positivistic framework (Crawford & Mills, 2011; Davis & Geyfman, 2012; Hunt & Song, 2013) and little is understood about the rich and complex reality of how the business school experience shapes women's identities,

aspirations and capacities for achieving their career and life goals. This qualitative dissertation using narrative inquiry, informed by feminist methodology to delve deeply into the rich and complex experiences of undergraduate business alumnae, begins to address this gap.

Methodological Theory

The choice of method should be informed by the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions guiding the study. The study employed a qualitative methodology to counter existing positivistic business education research and provide a rich, feminist, critical voice to women business alumnae and their experiences.

Education in general, and business education in particular, has been criticized for privileging a positivist and masculinized world-view shaped by men's perceptions and experiences (Gilligan, 1982; Mavin & Bryans, 1999; Mavin et al., 2004; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Simpson, 2006; Smith, 1997, 1998, 2000). Subsequently, the picture of business education is incomplete and largely ignores 50% of the population (Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Martin, 1985).

Quantitative research continues to be given preference in business disciplines (Crawford & Mills, 2011; Davis & Geyfman, 2012; Hunt & Song, 2013) despite an increasing recognition of the importance of more fully understanding human behavior and the drawbacks of quantitative research for exploring the human experience.

Narrative inquiry, the qualitative approach that was employed in this study, emphasizes the complexity, multiplicity, richness and meaning of a person's everyday life (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, 1998b; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2011). This emphasis is greatly needed to balance and inform business education research.

Narrative Inquiry and Feminist Methods

The “narrative” has been a subject of, and method for, analysis since Aristotle’s study of Greek tragedy (Riessman, 2008). The study of narrative developed out of the examination of literary works, with the identification of classic story structures and elements (Bruner, 1991; Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Since then, it has been suggested that many forms of text could be viewed through a narrative lens as representations of experience, bounded by a criterion of contingent sequences linking events and ideas (Bruner, 1991; Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Narratives structure experience, create order, and construct meaning. Narrative inquiry is a continuum—a family of methods for interpreting storied texts (Riessman, 2008). Approaches range from examining text at the micro level, as discrete units of discourse (i.e., the word, the utterance) to examining complete life stories as a whole (i.e., rape survivor, baby boomer). Narrative inquiry is often used in social science as a method for conducting case-based research—the cases being the individual or the group of interest. The stories of the study participants accumulate to form a fuller picture of their experiences (Riessman, 2008).

Narrative inquiry finds its roots in symbolic interaction, Deweyian philosophy, and literary criticism. The emergence of narrative inquiry in social science research can be traced back to Chicago School of Sociology and the epistemological shift from realism toward symbolic interaction in the early to mid twentieth century (Riessman, 2008). Symbolic interactionists “assume that individuals’ experiences are mediated by their own interpretations of experience...humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings those objects have for them...meanings arise through social interaction with

others” (Jacob, 1987, p. 27). Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience, shaped by symbolic interaction, is at the foundation of modern narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). Dewey’s two criteria of experience—interaction and continuity—provide a basis for narrative inquiry through the dimensions of temporality, place and sociality.

Narrative inquiry, guided by Deweyian pragmatism, recognizes that representation of reality, independent of the knower, is impossible and should not be the goal in social research. Instead, the inquiry itself is action-oriented in collaboratively helping the knower shape and reshape the experience (Clandinin, 2013). It is a relational, continuous and social approach to the study of human lives while simultaneously honoring lived experience as a source of knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative inquirers situate themselves in direct relation to their participants, with no pretense of positivistic views of objectivism. The process of gathering the narrative is honored as part of the process, method and narrative itself.

Narrative inquiry can refer to either the practice of storytelling or a methodology for finding, collecting and analyzing these stories (Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Clandinin (2013) defines a particular ontological and epistemological approach to narrative inquiry, studying an individual’s experience in the world as well as the nature of the social, cultural and institutional narratives continuously interacting with those experiences, shaping and reshaping them. “Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience...situated in relationships and in community and it attends to notions of expertise and knowing in relational and participatory ways” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). It is a co-relational

process, between researcher and participant, where stories are told and retold and the stories and people are changed in the process, unpacking and repacking lived experience.

Experience-centered narrative research defines personal narratives as different from other sets of symbols because they involve movement, succession, progress or sequence—usually, temporal sequences—and the articulation or development of meaning. (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013, pp. 1297-1298)

Narrative inquiry revolves around living, telling, retelling and reliving of stories (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative inquiry has the potential to encourage the sharing of both the satisfying confirmatory stories that allow positive self-representation relative to the master discourse and the less satisfying disequilibrating stories allowing growth and the ability to see oneself outside the dominant ideology (Merriam, 2002). Narrative inquiry explores how people position themselves relative to a discourse and illuminates their changing responses to different situations. Narrative analysis acknowledges both the immediate social context (the interview) and the broader, conflicting ideological context (life). When narrating past events, speakers attempt to negotiate ideological tensions and make identity claims (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Gee, 1996, 2000). “Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 38).

This study explores narratives of the past and present and the interaction of these stories. Clandinin (2013) argues that the use of narrative inquiry must be personally, practically, and socially justified. This study satisfies her requirements. Personally, I have a vested interest in the inquiry. As described in the introduction, I considered my own experiences as a business school alumna (graduate school), as an instructor in an undergraduate business program, as a past corporate employee and leader, and as a woman. I carefully examined my own positioning to the phenomena and how it interacts with participant stories. Practically, in the process of participating, alumnae could deepen and evolve their own understandings of their professional aspirations and identities—a form of consciousness-raising and confirmation/disconfirmation. Socially, narrative inquiry will make visible and give voice to the experiences of undergraduate business alumnae whose stories are absent from the business literature. This study also adds to the disciplinary knowledge about undergraduate business education and women's leadership development, ultimately providing guidance for future research and curricular reforms.

For all of these reasons, narrative inquiry provides the best model for exploring the “stories” business alumnae have about their undergraduate experiences and transitions to work. Narrative inquiry and feminist methodologies embrace many of the same assumptions: lived experience as central, multiple, dynamic ways of knowing; reflexivity of researcher and participant; recognition of the impact of social dynamics on the research process; and focus on expansion not reduction (Belenky, Clinchy, & Tarule, 1997 1997; Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). A feminist perspective focuses attention on the power and identity struggles within an

oppressive system privileging a masculine master narrative (Creswell, 2013; Gildersleeve, Kuntz, Pasque, & Carducci, 2010; Rogers & Garrett, 2002; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). Ultimately, feminist methodology answers questions women have about their own lives (Merriam, 2002). A qualitative narrative study has the power to contribute significant insights into the experience of an oppressed group (women) in the dominant discourse (masculine business) (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2011). The tradition of story-telling as consciousness-raising has a long history in the feminist perspective (Downs, 2010; Fisher, 2001) founded on exploring non-unitary subjectivity, shifting identity positioning and working on the borders of multiple discourses (Yin, 2011).

Acker (1987) summarized feminist theoretical frameworks as questioning women's subordination to men, its history, its process and examining how it might be changed. Bem (1993) followed with a similar proposition. Feminist frameworks seek to both understand gender inequality and provide an action plan for change. This approach recognizes the existence of structures defined by the dominant hegemonic narrative and oppression as part of the way the world is organized (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). Because Narrative Inquiry is in direct alignment with a feminist perspective, it will provide the opportunity to document stories from a group that has until now been rendered silent by the prevailing positivistic approaches to research privileged in the discipline.

Research Questions

This study explored the lived experiences of business school alumnae and studied how their experience in college informed their navigation of the transition

from college to the work world and subsequent career moves. Research questions included:

1. How, if at all, do business school alumnae make meaning of the gendered climate of the business profession?
2. What role, if any, do alumnae believe their college experiences played in shaping their understanding of, preparation for, and aspirations in the traditionally masculine professional world of work?

Setting

The setting for this study was a college of business (COB) at a rural state university in the Northeast United States. The University is located forty-five miles from an urban center and offers more than 80 majors across eight colleges. The COB is the third largest college at the University and is nationally accredited, offering undergraduate majors in Accounting, Marketing, Finance, Supply Chain, Entrepreneurial Management, International and General Business. It also offers full and part time MBA programs and a PhD program. Total average undergraduate enrollment at the University during the period in which the alumnae interviewed were matriculated was 13,090 with approximately 55% of the students being women. During that same period, the COB enrolled approximately 12% of all undergraduates and approximately 36% of students were women (Table 1). The COB gender ratios are similar to other comparable business undergraduate programs (Davis & Geyfman, 2012).

Table 1: *Study Setting Demographics (Source: University of XX Common Data Set, 2014)*

STUDENT BODY 2007, 2011, 2014								
2007	COB Fem	COB ALL	% COB FEM	% COB DIV	UG ALL	UG FEM	% UG FEM	% UG DIV
General Business Admin - BS	76	241	32					
Mgmt- BS	68	192	35					
Accounting - BS	137	328	42					
Finance - BS	50	195	26					
Financial Services	1	5	20					
International Business- BS	43	92	47					
Mgt Sci & Info Systems - BS	4	17	24					
Productions & Oper Mgt - BS	0	1	0					
Marketing - BS	100	198	51					
TOTALS	479	1269	38	24	13086	7352	56.20	27.80
2011								
General Business Admin - BS	86	217	40					
Mgmt- BS	47	130	36					
Productions & Oper Mgt - BS	16	75	21					
Accounting - BS	155	364	43					
Finance - BS	35	164	21					
International Business - BS	33	60	55					
Marketing - BS	91	174	52					
TOTALS	463	1184	39	23	13094	7181	54.80	28.00
2014								
General Business Admin - BS	60	194	31					
Management - BS	29	116	25					
Productions & Oper Mgt - BS	31	123	25					
Accounting - BS	151	399	38					
Finance - BS	51	229	22					
International Business - BS	39	83	47					
Marketing - BS	142	282	50					
TOTALS	503	1426	35	26	13589	7306	53.80	30.80
COB FACULTY 2014								
	COB Tenured Faculty	% FEM	COB FT Lecturers	% FEM	COB TOTAL Faculty	% FEM	Tot COB Admin	% FEM
	46	26%	17	53%	63	33%	19	16%

The COB curriculum is very structured and quantitatively focused. In addition to general education requirements, all business majors take a common lower core of courses worth 18 credits. For all but the general business major, liberal (outside the college) and professional (inside the college) electives are limited or not possible. When the study participants were at the COB, there was no career management course requirement and one designated career services advisor—this has since changed. See APPENDIX A for a full curriculum listing of core courses. Diversity is a key curriculum expectation for accreditation (<http://www.aacsb.edu/en/accreditation/standards/>). According to the course descriptions, two COB required courses directly address issues of diversity but no specific courses are designed as social justice courses, nor do any course descriptions, as listed in the catalog, focus on gender inequality or feminism.

Sampling Procedures

Once I received IRB approval, I contacted the Alumni Office at the University and requested an email list for alumnae who graduated with a business major between 2006 and 2011. The list they provided had 420 undergraduate alumnae with email addresses. I sent an email to this list (Appendix B) that asked for their participation in the study and directed them to contact me for initial screening and explanation of the study if they were interested in participating. Nineteen women responded to the email. By email, I confirmed their interest and directed them to a confidential online questionnaire (Appendix C) to capture key demographics and to determine if they met the sample criteria described in the next paragraph.

Sampling for experience-centered narrative research is aimed at developing a full and rich description of a particular experience and collecting a diverse collection of narratives about that experience (Andrews et al., 2013). The process is less about sampling people and more about sampling stories. With this in mind, I selected my sample of ten alumnae purposefully (Creswell, 2013) to maximize variability in experiences across the context, while acknowledging and maintaining that context (Daiute, 2014). I sought “information rich cases” (Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan, & Patton, 2010, p. 46) to intentionally diversify my sample by: time since graduation (3-8 years); past and present life experiences (family, life experience); demographics; and majors. I was intentionally seeking out women working in large for-profit businesses across diverse industries. These businesses are the largest employers and contributors to the monetary economy and social landscape of business in general. Due to this constraint, I eliminated several volunteers who were employed in small or not for profit businesses. I also excluded women who had had significant absences (more than six months) from the workforce or who were non-traditional undergraduate students (in terms of age) as their experiences were likely very different than traditional age students.

I had originally intended to exclude participants who had completed graduate work—as I feared the graduate experience might be difficult to separate from the undergraduate experience in their narratives. However, the majority of volunteers had already received Masters degrees from the COB (7 of 10) directly following their undergraduate graduation. I conferred with my major professor and decided that since the context for undergraduate and graduate programs at the COB are nearly identical,

as are the curricular goals and content, I would include volunteers who had attended graduate school at the COB without interruption.

Three of the ten participants in the final sample had me as an instructor for one or more classes. I carefully considered my role as a faculty member in the COB while analyzing transcripts. I intentionally reflected on the possible impact of my interaction with the alumnae during interviews and how that might contribute to the narrative produced. I also considered the possible effects of the feminist/social justice pedagogy I employ in class on the experiences of those students who took my classes. See Table 2 for a summary of final participant demographics. Full demographics of the sample can be found in Appendix D. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect the anonymity of participants. For the same reason, employer information is generalized to industry only. The final selected group of 10 women was between 25 and 31 years old and represented all of the majors available in the COB when they attended. Three of the women were married and one had a child.

Table 2: *Study Participant Summary Characteristics*

PSEUDO	HOME	AGE	GRAD DATE	MAJOR	INDUSTRY	RELAT STATUS
Ada	RI	28	2008	Accounting & Finance	Financial Services	Married No children
Bess	MA	29	2007	International Business	Pharmaceuticals	Single No children
Cece	MA	25	2011	Accounting	Financial Services	In a relationship
Dawn	MA	26	2010	International Business & Spanish	Financial Services	Married One child
Ella	RI	31	2006	Finance	Financial Services	Engaged
Faith	CT	28	2009	Marketing	Professional Services	Engaged
Grace	RI	30	2006	Accounting	Food & Beverage	Divorced No children
Hope	RI	25	2011	Accounting	Business Services	Married No children
Ivy	RI	29	2007	Management	Financial Services	In a relationship
Joy	CT	25	2011	General Business	Hospitality	In a relationship

Collection of Narratives

As opposed to traditional social science interviewing techniques, narrative collection acknowledges, accounts for, and even requires two-way interaction between interviewer and participant (Mishler, 1986). Both interviewer and participants are partner participants, telling, retelling, and reliving the experiences being narrated (Clandinin, 2013). To encourage this two-way conversational model, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix E) informed by the literature and my professional experiences. Both my committee and critical friends reviewed the protocol to ensure that the questions were not leading or structured to force answers within my preconceived expectations (Clandinin, 2013). Based on feedback, the first draft of questions was modified.

I planned to conduct two interviews with each participant. The first interview would cover their experiences while at the COB; the second would focus on their professional experiences since graduation. I also planned to begin my analysis after the first round of interviews, share the preliminary themes with participants and then use their feedback to inform and focus the second interview. This process would allow me to more actively include the participants in the process of creating the narrative and applying meaning to their experiences. However, the procedure was slightly modified to reflect the needs and schedules of study participants as discussed below.

Once my sample was finalized, I contacted each volunteer by email or phone to schedule the first in-person, in-depth, semi-structured interview. I arranged to meet participants at times and locations of their choice near their work or home, in coffee shops or restaurants. These interviews took place over a period of three months during summer. Interviews were digitally recorded with participant permission. Each interview took between 60 and 120 minutes. During the interviews, I made note of specific words and phrases that stood out to me and my most used follow-up questions were: “Can you give me an example of that?” “Tell me more about that...” and “Can you tell me about a time when that happened?” My main focus was to engage in a conversation with my participants and listen to what they said and what they did not say (Mishler, 1986). The interview recordings were professionally transcribed.

Narrative inquiry is an iterative process, weaving collection/co-creation and analysis during, between and after interviews (Clandinin, 2013). Immediately after each interview, I reflected on the conversation, captured my thoughts about both the

content and the process in a personal journal and made slight changes to my protocol to improve the flow of the conversation. During this process, I also began to analyze and interpret the transcripts and my field notes.

After the first two participant interviews, I realized that my initial plan to ask about college experiences in a first interview and post-college experiences in a second interview was not realistic. hooks (2000) posits that people's lived lives are not linear. Similarly, Clandinin (2013) argued that in narrative space, events do not follow a chronological sequence and represent simultaneously where the person is now, has been and will be. The first two participant interviews naturally covered all of the study topics in a non-linear way. I realized that the division I had planned was an artificial one. So, I removed it for the eight remaining interviews. During interviews with participants 3-10, I asked about both college and post-college experiences and planned to use subsequent interactions to follow up with clarifying questions to explore the experiences in greater depth.

Once I had completed the first round of interviews with all participants, I spent time reading and listening to the transcripts and also revisited my field notes about each interview. From this review, I drafted interim research texts, seeking coherence and contradiction across themes and experiences (Clandinin, 2013).

We must, in the composing, co-composing, and negotiation of interim and final research texts, make visible the multiplicity, as well as the narrative coherence and lack of narrative coherence, of our lives, the lives of participants, and the lives we co-compose in the midst of our narrative inquiries. (Clandinin, 2013, p.49)

To improve validity of my findings and reduce personal bias, I invited my two critical friends (peer Ph.D. students approved by IRB) to review three random transcripts and my draft interim research texts. I asked them to read the transcripts for key themes, contradictions and questions and asked if they would add anything to my preliminary analysis. The friends provided some valuable feedback on phrasing of themes and clarity of meaning but were in general agreement about the themes and follow-up questions I proposed.

In early fall, several weeks after the completing the first round of interviews, I provided participants with evolving themes and findings drafted as interim research texts (Clandinin, 2013) via email (Appendix F). I asked them to provide feedback on my themes and share additional reflections, stories, clarifications, questions and revisions. I did this to allow opportunities to co-interpret and negotiate the multiplicity of meaning as a form of member-checking and to ensure that I was not dissembling participant experiences (Clandinin, 2013).

Based on input from the participants during the first interviews about the difficulty of finding time to physically meet, I offered them the choice to hold the second interview either electronically or in person. In the email, I also asked a number of follow-up questions developed from my preliminary analysis. I formulated these questions to seek a better understanding of specific things individual participants had said and to test agreement across the participants on certain themes. Specifically, I asked questions about work experiences while in college and the role of advice and role models in their experience. Both of these topics were inconsistently discussed during the first round of interviews.

All ten participants requested that the second interview be conducted via email in lieu of an in person interview due to the very busy nature of their professional and personal lives. Self-authored narrative as field texts are a well supported model of narrative inquiry and provide an alternative view of the experience and well as an alternative method for participants to tell their story (Andrews et al., 2013; Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Research has shown that the written text-based environment of online discussion boards may support and promote individual self-reflection, learning and identity development (Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010).

In their e-mails, participants provided additional stories about their experiences at COB and general thoughts about women in business that had occurred to them since our first interview. They also used written word to more fully emphasize elements of their experience and provided comments on how the interview experience affected them. Some of the emails were several pages long, some shorter and more direct. Many of their email responses were different in tone from the face-to-face interview. Some participants who had been reticent and unsure of their opinions during the first interview were more expansive and responsive in their email responses. This is consistent with research on the benefits of written discourse (Sutherland et al., 2010).

Analysis of Narratives

Narrative analysis interrogates what the story tells as well as, how and why the story is told the way it is—it reads both the lines and in between the lines (Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) provides a useful typology of narrative analytical strategies: thematic (what), structural (how) and dialogic/performance (identity performances) and suggests that they can be used together or separately depending on the nature of

the narrative. For this study, due to the nature of the participants' narratives, I used the thematic lens.

For the thematic lens, data analysis and interpretation is similar to the process outlined in Creswell (2013) and Miles and Huberman (1994) including coding for themes and descriptions and identifying interrelated themes. Data analysis also includes interpreting meaning and exploring points of tension or disequilibrium with specific attention to the cultural context. Thematic analysis reveals “the ideological, motivational, idiosyncratic meanings which individuals and groups attach to words, relationships, symbols and institutions” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p.225) and results in a codified set of categories generated inductively. Themes can then be compared to existing theories and literature.

The dialogic/performance lens employs “Positioning analysis...designed as an empirically grounded analysis of how subjects construct themselves by analyzing the positions that are actively and agentively taken in their narratives vis-à-vis normative discourse” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. 153). This approach incorporates both broad thematic analyses with some attention to language by attending to the discursive nature of the narrative as described above (Cameron, 2001; Carspecken & Cordeiro, 1995; Erickson & Schultz, 1981; Fitch, 2005; Gee, 2004; Kress, 2005; Maybin, 2005; Mishler, 1986).

Time spent immersed in the data led me to focus on an analytical approach exploring themes. I decided not to focus on dialogic/identity performances or narrative structures to the level of critical discourse analysts, pragmatics or linguistics (Cameron, 2001; Carspecken & Cordeiro, 1995; Gee, 2011; Gee & Green, 1998). I

made a conscious effort to honor the local context of narrative production, but, after several readings, felt thematic lens would provide a richer understanding of the women's experiences.

For the thematic lens, I used the data analysis and interpretation process outlined in Creswell (2013), Miles & Huberman (1994) and Reissman (2008) including coding for themes and descriptions, naming and grouping themes, identifying interrelated themes and interpreting meaning and particularly points of tension or disequilibrium. I compared themes across cases and with existing theories and accounts of women's experiences in business education and the corporate workplace for commonalities and differences. This resulted in a codified set of categories generated inductively bringing prior theory to bear on the cases (Reissman, 2008) but still firmly rooted in the participant narratives. I organized the resulting themes temporally to illustrate reflections on experiences during college and experiences after college. During college themes were: gender matters?; faculty and coursework influence; COB as a "bubble" (Dawn); perceived rules of the game; and I can have it all. After college themes were: "it's really not equal" (Ivy); the real rules of the game; and can't have it all. These will be described in detail in the next chapter.

In sum, Reissman (2008) suggested that "narrative analysts interrogate intention and language—how and why incidents are storied" (p. 11) and reflect the narrator's reality and priorities at a point in time. I used a thematic narrative analysis approach to ensure that I achieved this goal, illuminating and identifying common and uncommon themes of experience.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are approached differently than in more positivistic approaches. Scholars of qualitative methodology have recommended that attempting to apply positivistic language (validity, reliability) and verification methods to qualitative approaches is incongruous (Creswell, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend different terms and methods for evaluation of qualitative work: credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; and prolonged engagement, triangulation of data sources, thick description, process auditing. Similarly, Creswell (2013) presents a taxonomy of eight strategies: prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation of data; peer review or debriefing; negative case analysis; clarified research bias; member checking; rich, thick description; and external auditors. In evaluating the quality of narrative inquiry specifically, Creswell (2013) highlights the importance of respecting both the researcher's perspective (reflexivity) and thick description of the participant to illuminate the phenomena. In this study, I attended to a number of these criteria, described below in detail.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation. I have prolonged engagement in the larger context of this study. I am a woman who has been an employee and leader in corporate America. I have been a student in graduate business school. I have had the opportunity for persistent observation as a graduate student and faculty member in the college of business for the last 13 years—including the dates during which the participants attended the college of business. I spent significant time

engaged with the participants of this study, in interviews and online over the course of six months. I immersed myself in their narratives.

Rich and thick descriptions. Narrative analysis is based, first, on the creation of narrative. In an effort to provide thick descriptions, I collected data through multiple methods to constitute field texts (Clandinin, 2013). During my analysis, I intentionally sampled stories across space, time, and themes (Daiute, 2014) to further approach narrative saturation.

I also kept a personal journal as a field text so that I could provide transparent documentation and description of my procedures and evolving perceptions and develop a reflexive, methodic process (Yin, 2011). In the journal, I captured my experiences, both autobiographical and in the context of the study, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, problems and concerns with the study. This practice was intended to facilitate maintaining the recursive (Yin, 2011) and interactive, continual design, collection and analysis of narrative. The journal facilitated honoring the way each story informs future and past stories, taken as a whole and individually.

Triangulation of data. I analyzed multiple sources of data including: transcripts of 10 in-depth, semi-structured face to face interviews; emails from participants, electronic responses to inquiries, and spontaneous messages about the study topics; descriptive statistics and curriculum data about the COB context; and my journaled memos about the study and interview process.

Peer review and debriefing. I sought the feedback of two critical friends as auditors of both my process and findings (Creswell, 2013). These two women (peers from my doctoral program) were familiar with both my topic, the context, qualitative

research and the feminist literature. They played a devil's advocate role during development of interview questions and study themes. They both questioned and supported my assumptions, interpretations and development of voice throughout the process.

Negative case analysis. I viewed each individual narrative as a case, isolating and ordering relevant episodes temporally or spatially, zooming in to identify underlying assumptions and processes and naming and selecting particular cases to demonstrate patterns or contradictions (Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008). I actively sought negative cases and note these in the next chapter.

Clarifying researcher bias. I identify myself as a white, heterosexual woman, socialized in a middle class, Catholic family by an educator and news reporter/publisher and the public school system in a predominately white community in the Northeast United States. As an undergraduate, I attended a conservative, predominantly white, state college and attended an Ivy League university for graduate business school. I have many privileges based on these traits and experiences.

As a woman student in high school, college and graduate school(s) and as an employee in all types of organizations, I have experienced gender harassment and have often felt oppressed or devalued by the culture and climate. I have struggled to *belong* and maintain my identity as a feminist and social justice ally in the face of messages preaching the need to *become* someone else to *fit in*. I am passionate about the topic of my dissertation. So, it has been important to own my privilege and my biases and attempt to recognize when they are getting in the way of telling participant stories.

For example, several times during the interviews, I stopped myself from entering the educator role and teaching about feminism and gender inequity. I had to manage my frustration with hearing experiences of gender microaggressions. I also had to control my reaction upon hearing participant stories of exclusion perpetuated by my COB colleagues. I was open to emergent themes that did not fit the existing literature and which lacked coherence with both my own experience and the experiences of other study participants. I also revised a theme or two at my advisor's recommendation because despite what I had heard and held on to, there was not sufficient data.

Member checking. After I had conducted the first round of thematic analysis, I shared my findings and interpretations with the participants via email and asked for their feedback. All participants responded and nearly unanimously agreed with my initial analysis. Two participants did respond about two themes that they did not feel represented their experience, but agreed that other women at the school likely had had those experiences. In the findings chapter, I note these negative cases (Creswell, 2010). I also invited participants to provide additional information about the themes and to answer follow-up questions seeking clarification and further detail about certain themes and ideas.

I believe my findings are a trustworthy and credible representation of my participants lived experiences and perceptions. From a postmodern, interpretive framework for evaluating qualitative research (Creswell, 2013), I also believe that I am making a substantive contribution to our understanding of society, giving voice to a marginalized population and thus promoting social justice.

Ultimately, my analysis sought to actively acknowledge the lived context of the participants and its impact on their perceptions. The resulting narrative portrays identities as ways of making sense of experience, defining and reshaping values, commitments and ultimately futures (Mohanty, 1993; Moya, 2002), and attempts to expose the challenges women face in the masculine discourse of undergraduate business education and work.

Limitations

The focus of the interviews and electronic communication focused on the participants' subjective experience. A brief demographic questionnaire was used to capture information about age, race, sex, degree(s) attained, employer(s) and marital and parental status. This information was self-reported and was not verified through the University's academic record system or any other external information source.

In hindsight, I would improve the phrasing I used in questions and ask additional questions, including more pointed follow-up questions. My phrasing and probes over the course of the interviews did improve as I learned from mistakes, and was able to follow up during the online interview, but it was not fully evident where I had left questions unasked or information incomplete until I had completed analysis.

The nature of historical interviews presents another limitation. Many of the participants struggled to remember details of their college experience during interviews. I believe that use of electronic follow-up improved the chances of participants remembering key information accurately, as it gave them time to think about it. Still, the interviews relied only on participant memory of their college experiences.

The sampling procedures represent an additional limitation. The email list that the alumni office provided resulted in a large number of email “bounce-backs” and email addresses no longer in use. As a mass email, it is possible that the participation request was classified as “junk” by some of the recipients’ servers and never reached them. Those who did successfully receive the email then self-selected to respond and participate in the study. High-performing (GPA) students and highly involved students (members of the Student Advisory Board) were overrepresented in the sample (as discovered during the interviews). The participants also all reported having very positive experiences at the COB. This could be due in part to their continued relationship with the COB or their awareness of my current employment there and a desire to provide a positive review of their experience.

Conducting research on the college where I teach is a double-edged sword. I am very familiar with the college, its student body and faculty. However, due to that familiarity, I, no doubt, entered the study with certain preconceptions and beliefs. Knowledge of my position and relationships with other faculty may also have influenced how the students answered questions and what information they chose to share. Three of the participants had me as an instructor while at the COB. I expected this to happen. However, these participants were recruited through the same methods as all other participants and self-selected to respond to my initial email and ultimately participate in the study. I was very aware of this possibility and its possible implications and so was very careful to be methodical in my sampling procedures and carefully noted the impact of past relationships on interviews and interactions in my

journal. All of these elements limit the applicability of the study findings to the population of women who attended the COB during the target years.

Conclusion

Through the close reading and rereading of the interviews and other information, I was able to interpret and translate the stories of women who attended the COB as undergraduates. Narrative inquiry paired with the feminist paradigm provided the best model for exploring the “stories” business alumnae have about their undergraduate experiences and transitions to work. It provided the opportunity to document stories from a group that has until now been rendered silent by the prevailing positivistic approaches to research privileged in the discipline and provided information to guide future research and institutional practices.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Eight themes emerged from the data analysis and fell into two time frames: during college and after college. I introduce both temporal frames and corresponding themes here and then provide detail and evidence in the following sections.

During college themes were: 1) gender matters?; 2) faculty and coursework influence; 3) COB as a “bubble” (Dawn); 4) perceived rules of the game; and 5) I can have it all. The first theme centers around participants’ experiences related to gender and their perceptions of how those experiences affected them. Participants shared varying levels of awareness of gender and gender based issues and their narratives reflected a strong sense of ambivalence and numerous contradictions about whether gender mattered or not for their experiences at COB. The second theme describes the enormous impact and influence that faculty and course work have on women students’ decisions, aspirations and beliefs about their abilities. The third theme summarizes the participants’ unanimous view of COB, and undergraduate education in general, as being a bubble with little exposure to the realities of business or the skills necessary to succeed. The fourth theme revolves around the perceived “rules of the game” that participants believed would apply to them once they joined the workforce after graduation; career and employment success was based on merit. Finally, the fifth theme summarizes the aspirations participants had during college and at graduation.

After college themes were: 1) “it’s really not equal” (Ivy); 2) the real rules of the game; and 3) can’t have it all. The themes after college reflect most participants’ changed perceptions of the real world of work since leaving COB and subsequent

tempered aspirations. The first theme revolves around the perceptions of the broad impact gender has had on work experiences (“it’s really not equal” (Ivy)). In the second theme, participants also report new understandings of the “real” rules of the game for women to succeed as leaders: be friendly and act like a man; and “career success equals sacrifices” (Faith). The third theme titled *can’t have it all*, reflects how some participants have become discouraged by what they see women leaders experiencing, their treatment in the workplace and subsequently how these have led to their own refined career and life aspirations.

During College

The Context

In analyzing participant reflections on their experiences during college, it was clear they all enjoyed their undergraduate experiences. While the next paragraphs are not emergent themes, they are meant to offer a context to the women’s narratives about college. Narrative is rooted in context and must examine an individual’s experience in the world as well as the nature of the social, cultural and institutional narratives shaping those experiences (Clandinin, 2013). During the interviews, the women spoke fondly of friends, faculty and their time at the COB. However, not all felt they “belonged.” Participants, who did not live on campus, transferred from another college or worked full time all reported varying levels of feelings of belonging in the COB. Hope explained,

I didn’t feel that I belonged at the COB at the time. I think this was primarily because I lived off campus and didn’t spend a lot of time at University aside from attending class, so I felt like a little bit of an outsider. Because I was

working full-time and had an internship, I typically came for class and left immediately after unless I had a group project to work on or some free time between classes to study at the library.

Grace concurred,

I always felt a little out of place at the COB. There are no business people in my family at all, I grew up around fishermen and artists and teachers, and with little money. I always felt kind of awkward because businesspeople seemed foreign and stuffy.

As a transfer student, Joy never really got involved, saying,

I transferred into the University so I never really felt part of the community and I think that is by choice. I didn't have the desire to participate in a number of things that a typical undergrad would.

In contrast, others felt they did belong, particularly if they were a member of the college student advisory board or participated in Greek life. Cece said, "I absolutely felt a part, but I'm not sure if many other students did other than student advisory board students." Ivy said that Greek life dominated her experience and helped her feel like she belonged,

So I thought my classes were very interesting because when you looked around, COB is mostly Greek life. So I've noticed that a lot of people who are in Greek life... they tend to be in the COB, and they wanna be leaders, so it was comfortable for me because I knew everybody, and you kinda know their style, and you see them all the time outside of class, so I at least had that familiarity with them. But I can imagine the people that weren't in Greek life,

the very few of them—that must've been even more challenging for them cuz you also form little pack...

These varying experiences with belonging set the stage for the five emergent themes under the category of during college.

Gender Matters?

The first during-college theme was titled “gender matters?.” There is a gender gap in enrollment at the COB and employment of faculty as described in earlier chapters. While most participants reported being aware of the gap, some struggled to express the impact of the gap on their experience and had varying perceptions (hence, the question mark in the theme title). Three participants, two of whom had me as an instructor (Cece and Dawn), shared the most negative perceptions of the gender gap and experiences of gender-related treatment by peers and faculty. This is possibly due in part to their greater comfort in talking to me, or their desire to please me, but could also be due to the fact that in my classes gender was discussed at length. All in all, gender mattered for some, while others perceived it did not matter at all.

In reflecting on their perceptions of the student body at the COB, nearly all of the women recognized that the COB had a higher percentage of men than women students and faculty:

I noticed there happened to be significantly more men in the COB but I didn't feel at a disadvantage in any way. I didn't go into class thinking, like, "Oh, man, I'm one of a handful of women." I was never the only girl in class, but I definitely was on the minority. (Ivy)

Ivy went on to clarify,

I loved my college classes, and I loved being in groups with the—I mean mostly with the guys, and I'm still friends with a bunch of 'em now, but it was definitely, you know, harder sometimes, being a woman.

Bess was more specific about her perceptions and said, “Women were the minority, and there was never a class that focused on gender at all.” Joy was equally direct, “I think that’s a lot of men. It is a lot of men.” Dawn reflected, “Looking back at like who my classmates were, you don’t realize—especially those accounting and finance classes. You’re surrounded by guys. They—there’s a lot of m-male dominance [*laughter*] in those classes.”

During the first interviews, most of the women were reticent to describe the gender gap in negative terms and generally did not recall feeling disadvantaged. However, some women did share a number of experiences with peers that could be classified as microaggressions (Sue, 2010) including some frustration over a lack of respect in team activities. Dawn shared, “And that was frustrating, like being a female. What was tough in that school, looking back, was that I think when you’re put on those group projects, you weren’t always respected.” Others described being asked to take administrative roles which resembles Sue’s microaggression of second-class citizenship:

I mean sometimes when you're in the group work—I don't necessarily think it's because you're a woman. It may be because you have people who are more motivated and take class more seriously than others. So, you know, there was

a couple of times where, like, "Oh, you're a good typer. Right?"

[Laughter](Ivy)

Similarly, Joy said,

I think in a sense of like group work, it definitely did. I always found myself—and I don't know if it's because I'm a woman or it's just because of who I am, but, um, traditionally taking like the organizational leader role.

Participants also shared their perceptions of the impact of the gender gap on classroom interactions. Hope explained,

Having significantly more male teachers and classmates around you can be intimidating (especially coming from an all-girls high school, in my case). I think women can sometimes feel out of their comfort zone when they are in the minority which could lead to participating in class less or asking fewer questions for fear of being judged. In other departments (nursing and education come to mind) where there are more women, you might feel more empowered or confident in expressing yourself. But I think it definitely made me more, like, quiet in class and, like, less likely to speak up just because the guys in the class were dominating, I guess, or more talkative.

When asked about the impact of the majority of men faculty members on their experience, two participants clearly expressed remembering difficulty relating to male faculty members. Dawn said, "The faculty...They're all old, white guys! And like, come on! It's tough to relate to them. They don't relate to these young girls." Ivy explained how men professors were incapable of teaching the realities of gender for women in the world of work, "I mean, uh, college professors are great, but it's a little

different. I mean, especially if you're in corporate America. But he doesn't have a lot of experience—as a female in a business.” Faith shared that the gender composition of faculty was not a surprise to her, “Um, but the funny thing is when I went, I didn’t have expectations of having female professors. I didn’t—I didn’t—It didn’t even occur. I just—I just thought, no, I’m probably not gonna have any.”

Several stories described microaggressions bordering on microassaults in the classroom, perpetuated by male faculty members. Again, the participants expressed ambivalence and concern about calling the experience “harassment.” One was even willing to talk to the faculty member again and “give him a pass” due to his status in the COB and his intelligence, despite her definition of him as a womanizer. Cece explained,

Without a doubt [Male Professor] is the biggest womanizer ever. He’s completely awful. Like I, I still would go to him and talk to him because he’s a smart guy, but, he was, he’s the worst person with girls I’ve ever seen. The girls would tell me, and they noticed like when [other woman student] would wear just like yoga pants to class, he would not talk to her. Cuz like she didn’t like hold herself to that level. But when she was dressed nicely, he would talk to her. It’s always, always a girl. It’s, it’s kind, it’s an awful feeling, right? Like to just be like, I mean, I don’t know. It’s, it’s demoralizing. It’s, it’s, I don’t know. You almost feel like you’re being like um, like not, I, I don’t wanna say like harassed, but like, I don’t know the word. But like, you almost feel like sexually harassed but not physically, you know what I mean?

Ivy also described experiences that could be defined as microaggressions,

You take it, and you get through it, and— I did have one (male teacher). He may have slightly favored, uh, men, more, No. Just like constantly call on men if you raise your hand or—you know, he would have people up at—he was very theatrical, so he would have people, like, come down. It was one of the big lecture halls—and they were always guys, and unless it was—every once in a while, to make sure, like, people were paying attention, he would have—he would pull someone ahead of time, uh, before class and tell them to do something. And if it was something, like, silly or something, like, it was always a girl.

Dawn suggested that it was a normal occurrence, but still unwelcome,

I mean, I think you find that anywhere. He was an asshole. I dreaded going to his class. We all did. There was a group of us (women students). We didn't feel supported. He would talk down to us all day long, and it was like, how are you motivating your students? I'm taking this class cuz I have to. I think some men you can say it's endearing. Then it's—you're exhausting.

Some of the participants appear to have internalized the restrictive and essential gender beliefs that sustain sexism (Sue, 2010) and ascribed particular characteristics to particular genders: men are more straightforward and demanding; women relate best to other women and are “fluffier.” For instance, Bess said, “I think that it's natural for like the females to connect with the other females and the males to connect.” Ada also explained,

I've always preferred male professors over female professors. So, like working—I think they're like more, like, straightforward. Like, I don't care about like the fluffy stuff. Teach me what I need to know, then I don't—then I wanna leave and be done. But still like while I was in the class, like, teach it to me on the board. I'll go home and think about it. If I don't know it, I'll get an idea myself and then I'm done. I'll come to you if I have questions type thing. So I just feel like—I feel like sometimes, and I also feel like some of the professors that were also male also expected more.

These gendered beliefs were closely related to participants' beliefs about majors, fields of study and industries as being better suited to women or men. Sex-role stereotypes reinforced in academic settings impact persistence of women in non-traditional majors and affect their beliefs about the value of women's contributions. Faith shared, "I do feel sometimes marketing is the 'easy way out' in business vs. 'real' business." She then reflected by email a short time later,

I don't know why the COB just negated it [marketing], because the funny thing is most of them are women...the classes and spaces felt predominantly female and yes I had a bias of "what male wants to go into marketing, seems girly" I won't lie, that was a thought. Marketing takes a different mindset of openness and creativity and I felt this was female driven.

Beliefs about the value of certain fields and how these beliefs shaped participants' aspirations will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. Overall, the reflections of the participants show a significant amount of ambivalence about the impact of gender on their COB experience. They also reveal evidence of microaggressions. As

is often the case in narrative inquiry, participant perceptions shifted throughout the interview process and the participants increasingly questioned the impact of gender as they considered the question. They wrestled with whether gender mattered, or not.

Faculty and Course Work Influence

Faculty feedback, including support or a perceived lack of support had a tremendous impact on participants and their feelings of belonging to a major or discipline and clearly strengthened or changed career aspirations. Relationship with faculty was an important variable in staying in or changing a major, as Dawn explained,

The good classes outweighed the bad classes, but they do shape you to like prepare yourself. When it came to classes that were important to me, I felt like I had support by those professors. When it came to the classes that I hated and didn't do well in, I didn't feel like I had support. Accounting made me cry. Finance made me cry. I hated those classes and I never felt like I had support in those cuz—for those-those professors, it was always almost like, why don't you get this? I didn't do well in that. And I didn't like it, and it's different when you aren't good at something, it's frustrating. And you wanna feel like you have really good support, and I felt like with those classes I didn't have the same support that I had with like an HR class, international business, supply—like I loved supply chain and org behavior. And that's why I'm here.

Because of her experiences, Dawn changed her major from accounting to international business. Joy pointed out the impact of teaching styles that she felt empowered women and thus strengthened aspirations,

But once I took your strat class and realized like HR is something that I really liked to pursue, I think my—and I don't know if it was the fact that it was HR, or just because you are so into empowering women, that it was probably strengthened. The COB was where I found HR and found what I wanted to do. Ada shared, "It wasn't necessarily so much the classes that I enjoyed. I mean, they're accounting classes, like, they're not the most exciting things. It was more the professors."

Faculty reportedly communicated a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006) to the participants, privileging natural talent for a field or ability. Participants perceived the faculty as being the authority so they adjusted their aspirations according to whether or not they perceived that they had a natural talent. Ada provided a poignant example,

I had one tax professor, the one tax professor that I did not like one time tell me. Cuz like, I'm not someone that like talks if I don't have something to say. Like, I'm, have no problem talking to you, but like I'm gonna talk about the question. I'll tell you if I have an answer, but not gonna just talk. And one day, after an exam, he handed it back to me and I had done really well. He goes, "Great job, but if your personality stays like this, you're never gonna make it in public."

Cece stated, "Professor X encouraged me to go into accounting at the end ACC2XX, which he taught. He said accounting seemed to come naturally to me compared to my peers. It hadn't occurred to me before he said that." Conversely, Joy shared, "I originally went into the COB pursuing an accounting degree and Professor Z made the

comment that there are a number of people that think they can be accountants. When he said that, I realized that it wasn't for me and pursued general business.”

Additionally, a woman's performance in gateway (gender non-traditional) classes at the COB (statistics, finance and accounting) encouraged or discouraged continuing in a major, despite past beliefs about skills. Joy reflected, “I had always been good at math. I took like Calculus 4 or something and totally blew my mind. And then I also had a general accounting class, I wasn't grasping the concepts the way that I thought that I should be.” Bess shared a similar experience,

[Academically,] I had a hard time. I had a finance professor tell me that if I don't know what my problem is, she doesn't know how to help me. And I failed the class, and I had to take it over. And it was the most demoralizing experience because I know I needed help, I know I needed a tutor, and I was asking for help and I never got it.

Dawn echoed,

It was just—I like think about this accounting class. I don't even remember his name. And I remember him just looking at me. He used to call me—I don't remember. He had like a nickname for me. And I remember he said to me one day, like, “I just don't know [*laughter*] why you don't get this.” And I-I remember saying, “I don't know why I don't [*laughter*] get it.” And it's like that's why I'm here. That's why I'm here every day after class, cuz I don't wanna get a C in your class. I need to—get at least a B. Um, I just didn't have that support. (Dawn)

Students clearly viewed faculty as experts in their fields and take to heart faculty assessments of student skill and potential. Even off-hand comments have impact: both to strengthen, weaken, or even destroy, aspirations. The participant comments reflect internalization of the beliefs heard from faculty about a fixed (versus growth) philosophy, an assumption of inferiority (microaggression, Sue, 2010) and showed that the women were relatively quick to withdraw from situations of potential failure.

COB as a Bubble

Participants unanimously described COB (and undergraduate education in general) as being based on theory only and presenting an ideal worldview, not exposing students to the reality of business and the world of work. Dawn described how she felt when she entered the workforce, “It’s a culture shock. You’ve lived in this little bubble for four years. Um, I think you need that experience and that exposure outside of the university bubble.” Faculty with no industry experience, textbook based curricula, non-experiential pedagogy, and little exposure to diversity and the soft skills essential to business were all issues cited by participants as contributing to the “bubble.” Bess expressed, “I don’t think I was prepared at all. It’s hard when you only—when you come from all theory and no practice.”

First, participants perceived that faculty without work experience were not as effective as those who had worked in industry prior to academia. Faith reflected, “I’ve had some professors who never worked. And I’m like it’s-it’s like going to a doctor who doesn’t have a body. Yeah. I’m like great, so you go by the book. You don’t go by experience.” Ivy described her preference for adjuncts with work experience, “He was there, and he was, like, ‘Listen. Like, I’m a lawyer. Like, let me tell you about a

case I worked on one time.’ So it was so much more interactive because you could feel that, like—you could relate with him in a way”. Joy also argued,

I think having real-world experience is always really, like really beneficial, because it’s not just, “We’re going to teach you this.” It’s, “We’re gonna say this is what we’ve witnessed or experienced,” or something like that. So it can tie into like what you actually might experience.

Participants also cited the reliance of many faculty on textbook and theory as not as effective pedagogically as experiential methods might have been. Ivy shared, “I didn’t feel there was, like, any real-world experience as far as—within the classes. I mean it’s very, like, textbook.” Faith agreed, “I think it was more by the book than integration.” Joy further made the point,

I think that what you learn in college is so much like the fluffy shit. Yeah, we do it the textbook style. HR is all people. Yeah. Nobody is textbook, and every experience is going to be different. And every experience is going to require a different answer. And—I don’t think I got it from college.

Hope went so far as to say, “Sometimes I felt like the class was a waste of time...I- I need hands-on stuff. I need to do things. I don’t wanna just sit in a classroom and be talked to for hours.” Dawn agreed,

It’s so classroom oriented, and that’s not what happens when you graduate.

Like, you don’t learn to—even just interacting with like coworkers and colleagues. It’s not the same as with your buddies at school and like—It takes a little bit to get used to building relationships. You need that experience and that exposure to see like really what goes on.

When asked about internships as experiential education, some students felt these were helpful experiences to add to their resumes, but didn't feel they were "100% accurate depiction of how real life working would be" (Bess). Conversely, Grace expressed that internships that exposed them to women role models helped define and strengthen aspirations and identities:

[My internship coordinator] was totally in charge and ran a tight ship - she had high expectations for quality and things were always very black and white to her, and was obsessed with being in shape and dressed well. She was very much in charge and could see right through nonsense. I had never really met someone like her before. It really solidified my choice to go into accounting, and also made me feel better about being considered "intense" by my family—because [my internship coordinator] was way more intense than me.

Other participants recalled that the COB curriculum did not focus on people or "soft" skills like communication or conflict management, which they found to be the most important upon entering the workforce. None recalled talking about specific business leaders in class or introducing women role models. Grace pointed out,

There is so much that goes into being successful. You have to understand accounting and be able to apply knowledge well enough to get by, but there are a lot more intangibles that make people successful. Such as being able to work well with a huge variety of people, be somewhat independent and a problem solver, taking initiative, etc. I think in college you learn a lot of technical skills, but you don't necessarily learn soft skills—at least not in the classroom.

Faith reflected similarly, “It was all about brands and businesses. In my mind it was all—it’s all about the product or the organization, it was not about the people.” Hope agreed,

I think that I probably could have used more help. I guess, like, professionalism and stuff like that. I feel like there wasn’t a lot of that...Like how to handle yourself in meetings and how to approach people. I think—when you actually get into a business, I think it’s very different. I think when you’re in school and you’re learning, everything is very general.

Ivy shared that she felt classes at the COB presented only the ideal version of the business world without discussion of conflict, diversity or specifically gender-based challenges,

I think that they prepare you for, ideally, how the world is set up, both government and corporate, but not necessarily actually how everything is run. When I was working at XYZ Corp. I did not feel prepared at all. It was nothing like what I had learned about in schools, and it seemed like everything was backwards! ...I’m fortunate enough now—the company I’m in now, I think, is very unique where it kinda does align with the College of Business. They hire tons of women, and they promote women, which is very—the ratio of women to men managers are probably equal. I mean we have so many women managers, which is uncommon, but I think a company like this is ideally what they hope that is out there for everybody as well.

Hope shared a similar perception, “I don’t think that I ever felt like University was catering to women necessarily in any way or, like, helpful, I guess, in pointing out, I guess, the obstacles in the business world and stuff for a woman.”

Several of the participants did not recall ever discussing gender-based workplace challenges. Those that did perceived the challenges to be mostly outdated, irrelevant or not applicable to them personally. For example, Ella shared,

I remember specifically her one time mentioning, um, when she was with [company] there was a golf outing that she went to and they didn't let her on the golf course because she wasn't a man. And I can't remember how the story ended, but, like, that kind of stuck. I was like, "Well, that's not fair." It wouldn't happen nowadays.

Ivy shared a similar experience, “And, you know, they talk about women in the workforce and the challenges, but you don't really get an idea. You know?”

Other participants reported being turned off by discussions of potential challenges and realities of the workforce for women and discounted the veracity of the information. Specifically, Bess remembered,

The only time that we ever talked about it was in the human resources class. I was respectful of the fact that she was the professor, but that was one class where I felt like, “Wow, you’re really gonna clobber the fact that I’m a girl.” Just talking about women in the workplace. I feel like there was no—may- eh- even if it was the reality that, you know, women are gonna hit all these issues, I think her delivery could have been a little better. It was always in a very derogatory way from what I—sort of like anti-guy. I haven’t encountered any

of what I remember her saying, but I don't remember specifically what she said. I just remember feeling emotionally irritated by the whole class by the end of it.

This type of resistance is a typical response to information that does not fit with your current belief system and identity (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Joy reiterated the importance of faculty industry experience in providing effective examples of challenges and successes, "I think you do it through story telling. I think that you kind of show your—like through your work at XYZ and stuff, those experiences that you share, um, basically just showcase like how badass a woman could be." This illustrates the perceived value of consciousness-raising and positive role models for women in learning about the real world.

Perceived Rules of the Game

Systems literacies are essential for navigating new discourses (Hines & Johnson, 2007) as they allow a person to understand how a discourse works and facilitates reading and interpreting the "rules of the game" that must be followed in order to succeed.

When asked about their perceptions of the rules of the game in the work world when they were in college, nearly unanimously, participants reported that when they graduated, they believed that performance and evaluation related processes would be fair. Hope "assumed that promotions, feedback, and salaries were determined by performance, dedication to the job, and career goals." They believed they would participate in a standardized, predictable and controllable process. For example, Ada believed "you do your, like, your three years here, you get promoted. Your three years

here, you get promoted.” Faith, “assumed it was based on time spent at a job.” Ivy shared her belief that hard work would lead to success, “I thought the keys to success all came down to being a hard worker with good work ethic and working well with your coworkers.” Essentially, while in college all of the women assumed that employment decisions would be fair and merit-based and that if they worked hard they would be rewarded.

Participants also asserted their beliefs that society was post-sexism in the workplace, so being a woman would not effect their evaluation or aspirations. Organizations and their processes, in their minds, were gender neutral. Bess said confidently,

I think as baby boomers continue to exit the workforce and all these- these new people are coming in, the millennials are starting to work and the opportunity for new ideas and fresh ideas are coming to fruition more often, it'll continue to change cuz I think my generation forward, we've all been taught a very different way.

Ivy agreed, “But I think a lot of it is an older thing and hopefully being phased out, and hopefully the younger generation...”

Additionally, none of the participants reported having thought deeply about work life issues during college or remembered discussing it with their peers. They generally had predicted that life was “gonna all be the same way it always was, never get harder” (Cece). Beliefs about the rules of the game clearly aligned with the women’s work life aspirations when they graduated.

I Can Have It All

When asked about their aspirations at the time they graduated, the participants reported that leadership roles and status were tantamount. Ada believed that the COB experience strengthened her aspiration to become a partner at a large accounting firm. Cece reported that her aspirations were the same as when she started college: to be a “VP or CEO of a big, global company.” Faith was less specific, but remembered being committed to having a leadership role in corporate America. Hope clearly remembered wanting to work for a big company but reflected sex-role stereotypes about leaders to explain her reluctance to seek a leadership role. She said, “probably not CFO or CEO status. But I don’t know. I think I have more of a quieter, introverted personality, so I think I don’t have maybe the personality for one of those big roles.”

Interestingly, both Hope and Faith also reflected on their major and job choices and shared that they both had transferred to business from other majors which they believed to have less earning and career potential – art and textile design. Practicality won out over passion.

In terms of aspirations related to family and life, the women reported diverse and contradictory goals and plans. Ada clearly did not respect women who chose motherhood over career and saw that path as a “settling.” She said,

If you knew me...you would know that like I wouldn’t settle for just being nobody, I guess. Like, I mean, it’s probably annoying to some people, I’m sure. Like, I was very involved. Like I always did well in the class. I wasn’t just gonna sit there and be happy [without a successful career].

Cece echoed this sentiment; “I never wanted to be a stay-at-home mom, right? I was like, I’ll never do that. Like, I wanna work.” This view was strengthened, she said, by her exposure to leaders/working moms during an internship: “so kinda seeing them, I guess, two big like, good, like decent leadership roles for women, I always thought it was like very attainable.” (Cece).

In contrast both Ella and Hope reflected an intention to put family first and were prepared to sacrifice their careers for family and quality of life. Ella said,

I guess I knew I would always put family first if—If it came down to that but, like, I also didn't think that that would be an issue when I originally got in, I didn't think I would want to make partner only because of the hours and I knew that going in. I knew that I'd probably leave. Probab-, I don't know, four or five years, possibly for a better-paying job and a less stressful job.

Hope concurred,

Yes. That, that was kind of one of the things that drove me away from the CPA lifestyle. I think it was because I knew that I wanted to get married within a few years after college, and I wanted to have kids relatively young. I don't have any kids yet, but—

The other participants didn't recall considering work family when defining their career goals and aspirations.

To summarize, the participants shared memories of their experiences at the COB and their perceptions of the impact of those experiences. They reported ambivalence over the impact of the gender gap at the COB, emphasized the impact of faculty on their choices of major and career path as well as their beliefs about their

own abilities and potential in particular fields. In retrospect, the participants described the COB as a “bubble” providing little exposure to the realities of the work world. The participants graduated believing that they were entering a fair and gender-neutral workplace and that they could potentially “have it all.” Next, I will review the findings related to the participants’ experiences after college and how they perceived that their undergraduate experience impacted that.

After College

The three emergent themes after college reflect the shift in participant perceptions of the gendered nature of the workplace and the rules of the game and subsequent tempered aspirations. Those themes are: 1) “It’s really not equal;” 2) The real rules of the game; and 3) Can’t have it all.

“It’s Really Not Equal”

When asked about their perceptions of gender in the workplace now, some of the participants’ answers were in stark contrast to the neutral or ambivalent perceptions during college. Based on their experiences since graduation, participants reflected perceptions of a workplace that is unfair and unequal and where women are subject to discrimination and harassment.

First, the women talked about the unfairness of employment practices and procedures, including criteria for work assignments and opportunity for advancement based on their experiences. Ivy said,

Women are not treated the same as men. At my first job, when recruiting I was the only female employee. My manager gave me all the administrator positions while my male counterparts had the "big ticket" IS positions to hire for. This

was extremely unfair especially because our compensation was effected by the types of positions we place. I was not allowed to work on all types of jobs because I "connected better" with the administrators than my male coworkers.

Hope suggested that women are not given the same chances as men,

I think just because it's such a big company, and I felt, like, so small and, like, unprepared and, like, I didn't know how to do anything. I think men think they're better at it. I think that's the perception. I don't know. Maybe just because there aren't as many women CEOs, and I think that they think that they've been doing it perfectly fine for the last however many years, and they should continue to be in those positions. But they don't really give women a chance to prove themselves.

Cece agreed that the opportunities are not equal for everyone,

And they tell you, you know, well, somebody else—this is after my first year—somebody else that was in your boat, like, he had opportunities, he fell into these roles where he was like, um, lead senior in his first year. And I was like, well, nobody gave me the opportunity. Like, I couldn't walk—if I walked into a partner's office and said, "Can I—Can I be a lead senior this year?" in my first year, they would laugh in my face. Like, that doesn't happen. Like, it's basically that that person was on a job where the senior left and he had to fill his shoes. You shouldn't rate people against that—if you don't give us all the same opportunity, how can you compare us all the same? (Cece)

Next, they reflected on the unequal expectations for and treatment of women in their workplaces. Hope said,

I think because the business world is so male-dominated already, I think it's easier for men, I guess. Maybe that's just an assumption, but it seems like it's easier for them to get into the roles that they're getting into and maybe harder for women to get into, especially the leadership roles—because there's already so few women in those positions. Um, just that I think the business world is very, like, harsh and—and difficult for women.

Cece shared her experience with one peer who was a man,

He's a male from ABC College and we kind of were always compared very like one to one, and he got promoted early. So it's so funny, but I do think he deserved it a little bit more than me, and that's like an honest opinion. Well, but it's—he got the opportunities and they [human resources and supervisors] always say like, "Oh, well."

Despite first identifying the incident as a perceived inequity, Cece was unwilling to call the experience discrimination but instead minimized her own performance.

In line with these observations, Ivy highlighted the pervasive traditional sex role stereotypes that exist in corporate organizations.

You know, you really need to realize that, like, it's really not equal. And it's hard, too, because you still have these old-fashioned mentalities of, like, the woman stays home and does this, and it's your responsibility, and, like, "Why can't you go to work and then take care of the kids and then cook dinner and do this?" And it's, like, "Okay. I can only do so much in a day."

Hope echoed this observation and pointed out that while things may have improved over the years, these stereotypes are still holding women back.

I think that companies and management are less likely to consider women for high profile positions because of the possibility that they could have children which would require time off and that they might want to leave, work part time, or be generally less available. I think there is a perception that women are less likely to be dedicated to their careers/companies and might focus more on family at a certain point in their lives. There is less of a fear of this with men.

Faith expressed her uncertainty about the situation she expects to face in her future.

And sometimes it's easier for us to get out. I mean my fiancé is an electrical engineer. And my mom will say—she goes, “When your kids—you have kids, they start school,” she goes, “You probably don't have to work if you don't want to.” But do I want to?

Here, Faith is exposing a well-documented contributing factor leading to women opting out of the workforce: the pay gap. Her fiancé makes more than she does, and she will not *need* to work. But does she want to, in the face of traditional stereotypes?

In addition to describing structural inequities and gendered stereotypes, the women also shared experiences of co-workers consistently showing greater respect for men. Ella shared, “I work with a partner who would rather listen to a guy with 2 years of experience rather than me, who has seven years of experience. The partner is completely oblivious to this.” Hope shared a similar perception, “In my experience, at least with some cultures, men seem to respect input from other men over input from women. This is based on my experience with upper management at two different companies.” Faith talked about how this inequity may impact women, “I think it would take a very strong person, a female to be shot down a few times and to walk

into that room that's all males that's in those suits and to hold their own until she breaks ground.”

Some participants recognized the danger of asking for special treatment or accommodations for family or work life balance. Faith shared that she was afraid to talk about plans to have a family or to ask for a flexible schedule, “you're afraid to push—because you're afraid because you say that they're—you're not gonna get the promotion.”

In contrast to their perceptions of gender harassment at the COB, the participants now readily recognized and reported gender-based harassment and microaggressions, microinsults and invalidations in the workplace including: sexual objectification, relegation to second-class citizenship and ascription of intelligence and leadership ability to men (Sue, 2010). Dawn described an example of the objectification she has faced, “We have a lot of older sales managers that just say like stupid shit, like, ‘You are so sweet. You look so cute today,’ and it's like, don't...” Joy described the discriminatory dress code applied to women,

Females at my company are required to wear heels, black, with a defined heel of at least one inch. When you are running around, interviewing, parking cars or cleaning rooms, it can be very painful at the end of the day. The men have it a lot easier when it comes to handling the workload on their bodies.

Ivy described relegation to second-class citizenship,

At one job because I was significantly younger than the client I supported he treated me more like a daughter than a coworker. He was a nice guy, but he was very inappropriate. He knew no personal boundaries. He would feel that

it is OK to make comments about my personal life (comments regarding living with my boyfriend, why are we not married yet, etc).

Similarly, Hope described being mistaken for administrative staff,

[Visiting businessmen] who come around, they just assume that I'm an admin for somebody whose office that I sit nearby, and they'll ask me, like, where, where this person is, when are they coming back, stuff like that. And they just assume that I'm, like, their secretary because I happen to sit outside their office. But really, I'm— an analyst role. I usually just—you know, I try to answer the question if it's just like, "Oh. Where's so-and-so?" I'll, I'll be polite and say, "Oh. She's on vacation. She'll be back on Monday." And I just—I try not to, you know—give in and act like a secretary, but...

Grace shared a similar experience,

I was his backup and he treated me like his secretary, and he sat downstairs. There was, like, this upstairs, downstairs thing, and he for sure hated that I sat upstairs and that I had a CPA, and you know, was a woman. He once dictated a letter to me to type for him.

Reactions to gender discrimination were varied. Joy expressed resignation about the pay gap and whether she expected to be paid less than men "I don't like it, but yeah. I think it's almost engrained in you, between learning about the glass ceiling and gender differences and all that stuff that it's something that [existed]." Dawn suggested that the harassment experiences have some value in that "they toughen you up."

From a different perspective, Faith questioned the existence of sexism and suggested it might be based on real genetic differences between men and women and therefore possibly defensible and explains why men are given certain opportunities over women,

Go back to a psychology aspect and say women are more creative and men are more black and white. Women multitask more. Men are straight lined. Is it more of your composition of your brain rather than the social [influence].

Similarly, Grace described the numerical gender inequity in public accounting but denied that it may be caused by gender discrimination,

I guess public accounting is probably where it was most prominent. There's women everywhere. I mean, at my firm below partner level it was I think more women in my firm than men. I—I didn't think about it. I—you know, I think it's, like, the baby thing. Like at the manager level, okay, audit only had two managers and there was one of each. So I'm trying to think of the tax department. There was three managers that were women and a couple, three or four that were men. I want to say it was pretty even. But then the partners were 100 percent men. (Grace)

Cece supplemented this view “[I] did not have any expectations of being treated poorly. But I would say I am in some circumstances, but I am unaware if it is female/male differentiated.”

Both Bess and Joy denied the impact of sexism or gender discrimination on their careers and asserted their personal agency in the situation. Bess said, “My gender has had no effect on anything for my career growth.” Joy also shared, “I—I'm

sure at some point in my life I will have to deal with it. Um, but I also think that I'm very much—I'd like to believe that I'm very much in control of that.”

About being faced with serious harassment in the workplace, one of the women shared a discouraging experience of reporting harassment and gender-based bullying. After reporting the situation, the organization did not address the situation with the perpetrator, but instead made her job more difficult by limiting her direct contact with him despite the intrinsic need for contact to complete the job. Bess explained, “It was ridiculous.” The fear of this kind of victim-blaming creates a psychological barrier for women to report harassment in the workplace, despite organizational policy or training to the contrary.

For women, in the minority, there is a greater cost for speaking up. Hope reflected, “I think that women are also less likely to speak their minds for fear of how people will perceive them or their input.” This is the case even when facing obvious sexual harassment in the form of sexting by a supervisor. Cece shared,

Cuz you're scared that like you're gonna get—I feel like they always ... And you just feel like, I feel like you can never report, you never wanna like report those cases cuz you're like, they're gonna, they're gonna like turn to me and say like I was wearing a shirt that was too low, or—you know what I mean?

Yeah. It's like more trouble than it's worth, sort of, to report stuff like that.

Ella echoed this sentiment from the opposite perspective. She shared a belief that playing the victim held women back from leadership,

I think with women there's a lot of things that are preventing us from being better leaders. And, um, one thing that, like, I think specifically—and this is

not coming from me. This is not my opinion. I just heard it somewhere.

Women, when they come at a problem in the workforce, or like, when somebody's treating them unfairly, they automatically think of themselves as victims.

This view may contribute to the reticence of women to report legitimate harassment for fear of being viewed negatively and face organizational repercussions. In summary, the women shared a view of the work world that was rife with inequity and discrimination for women.

The Real Rules of the Game

These experiences in the work world led all of the women to revise the simple, straightforward rules that they originally believed would lead to professional success. As noted earlier, in college the women believed that if you worked hard, you would be recognized. After college, participants recognized that being friendly and likeable and adopting masculine behaviors were the new rules of the game.

Participants expressed surprise at the importance of being friendly and likeable for achieving success, Ada explained, “if you wanna move up at [company name], like, they have to like you.” Ella described this as something possibly holding her back from advancement, “The only surprise is the difference a personality makes. The more ‘likable’ you are, the more likely you are to get ahead ... expect that you would have to be that way to... And I just—not my personality.” Likeability is also related to the importance of building relationships and finding sponsors in getting ahead. Dawn emphasized the need to “build that relationship... build that trust which you need to succeed.” Ada admitted that there was “more politics involved than I realized

(it mattered who you had good relationships with, what team you were on, if you'd upset anyone, etc.).” Cece had discovered,

... how do they like get these opportunities maybe more than me? It's literally kind of who you know. If you have a manager or a partner, you make that connection early and they give you all those awesome opportunities cuz they trust you. That's it, really. That's the only way to succeed at [company name], is like to hope that like one person that's up there picks you out and like runs with you, because if not, I don't think there's a way, really, to raise the ranks quickly.

Unfortunately, Joy also identified the possible double bind of being “friendly” with coworkers of the opposite sex. Joy shared,

[Coworker name] is so reliable and always helps me out, and I—we're getting to be like friendly. And I always say, I'm like, “I love [Coworker name]. Like he's wonderful.” Because he is. He's always helped me out in a pinch. He's always reliable. And I—my boss is asking me if I am like having a relationship with him.

The message Joy received was “be friendly, but not too friendly.”

From the women's perspective, the rules of the game also included adopting more stereotypical masculine behaviors such as being unemotional, tough, decisive and outgoing. The women privileged these more masculine qualities and asserted they were essential for leadership and professional success. In some cases, they learned these rules from observation, other times from direct advice or feedback. Dawn recalled what her father told her when she started her first job,

“Don't ever cry at work. Don't ever let anyone see your weakness. Women work so hard, you know, and they—you've worked so hard to like build this life for yourself, but don't cry [*laughter*] at work.” And I know this sounds awful, but he's [*laughter*] right! “Just hold it together because you've worked so hard to build this reputation for yourself that men will judge you.” And it's true. They do. They judge you. And you don't want them to see that weak side.

Joy questioned her ability to lead because she didn't think she had the qualities that her current leader (a man) possessed. The following excerpt highlights this:

- Joy: Like I—like I look at my president right now, and I don't know that I could do his job.
- Me: Why?
- Joy: 'Cause he is like—he's a badass.
- Me: In what way?
- Joy: Like he—
- Me: You couldn't be a badass?
- Joy: I think I could, but I don't know that I'd—I don't know that I'd want to be that in his role. Maybe it's not that I couldn't.
- Me: Would you have to be just like him, do you think, to be as successful?
- Joy: Probably, yeah.
- Me: You think so?

Joy: Yeah, because I think the concept that he drives is so incredibly successful that—

Me: And it can only be attained through his style of leadership?

Joy: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. But I think—I mean, I think his style—
leadership style is great.

Joy also thought her communication style wasn't a fit for leadership,

I think [men] are a lot better at selling their ideas than a woman might be...I know I personally get like really hung up on like my ideas and—like my boss now, she always says, “Just facts. Bullet points. That's all I need. That's all [leader] wants to hear.” And me, I'm like soft and fluffy and really wordy. And so I think that men are better at it.

Ella has a recipe for success and thinks she is missing two of the three key ingredients:

My view is that in order to make it in the business world, you need to have 3 qualities: (1) Smart, (2) personable (i.e. shmoozer), and (3) ruthlessness (both, at home and at work). I only have the first, lack of the other two always get in the way. BUT - I absolutely love my job, so it is a conundrum. I knew I was gonna have a problem with my personality. I'm a very nice person by default. So I knew, like, getting into that managerial work, uh, role would be a little bit difficult. I just don't think I have the personality for...They're just, like—they're tough. And I'm very, very, um, what's the word I'm looking for. I'm very, like, easy on the people that are under me. I don't like conflict. Most leaders are men, so—They're better equipped in terms of emotion, I think. But

the way our brains are built. Like, men are very, like, "This is the problem I need to solve. I'm going to solve this." Women are, "This is the problem. I need to solve this, but let me solve this, this, this and that in the meantime," so I guess men are more focused maybe.

The double-bind of being friendly and ruthless is clearly a problem here. In addition, both women were expressing some internalized misogyny by devaluing women's ways of communicating and interacting and ascribing leadership ability men. Ada said, "I feel like it's very difficult for a woman to move up at [company name] because they have to like you but at the same time you have to kind of be a bitch. Cuz otherwise you're not gonna survive."

Sacrifice was also a common theme for the real rules of the game. To succeed in the corporate world, the women reported it was expected that they would live to work and that "career success equals sacrifices" (Faith). Hope also explained that success required, "Long hours. Lots of traveling...Not having a life." Similarly, she shared that you "have to give up [your] entire life to be successful." Dawn explained how success required being 100% accessible all the time, "they don't give me a cell phone and laptop just to be nice."

Undivided commitment to work is required for success and split commitments (to family or life) are viewed negatively. As shown in Appendix D, most of the participants were in a relationship, engaged or married, but only one had a child. Ada lamented how commitment "isn't leaving [work] all the time for family things. Like, at work, like the one that does that, like, I don't think she's as strong of a, of a person there." Ella recognized what she has observed, "for those with a work/life balance

issue, it is a challenge. I have encountered many women that handle this very well and, unfortunately, others speak of them as if they abandon their children at home.”

Dawn suggested that those with children face a different level of scrutiny,

As a working mom, I feel like some people don't have a true understanding of the balance that is needed to make everything work! I've had comments - well when can you get that done? Do you have to get the baby today, should I have someone else do it?...and it's like, what do you care? It's like it's my life. I'm gonna balance it, and I have.

Resigned, Ivy pointed out the double bind of the balancing act for women when she said:

I believe that women face more challenges in the workplace than men. Overall we are statistically not paid the same as men. We have more of a family obligation than men. In today's society it's still expected of woman to be the primary parent and be more flexible with work. Unfortunately with today's economy woman are not able to stay home as much as in the past and are forced to go back to work sooner. I know a few people that were criticized for placing their child in daycare because they have to go back to work. They might have wanted to stay home but were unable to live on one salary.

Ada described the challenges she saw in her workplace: “most women in high positions didn't have children until later in life or don't have any, comments are often made about who leave early a lot for kids' events.” The perception that women are likely to have children and have limited commitment to work is another issue holding women back from Hope's perspective. She shared,

While I think this has improved over the years, it is still challenging. I think that companies and management are less likely to consider women for high profile positions because of the possibility that they could have children which would require time off and that they might want to leave, work part time, or be generally less available. I think there is a perception that women are less likely to be dedicated to their careers/companies and might focus more on family at a certain point in their lives. There is less of a fear of this with men.

Bess described the stereotypes she has experienced,

Think that you almost have to prove yourself more, maybe, because—I don't know. Because people look at you and think that, like, you should be in the maybe traditional, like the teacher roles and the nursing roles and stuff like that. So when you have a woman in—the business world. Yeah. And especially if you're going for the leadership-type roles and you wanna be a manager and stuff like that, I think they think—I don't know. That they—people think that maybe you're less motivated or you're gonna at some point want to be more focused on your family or something like that.

Just doing a good job is not enough for women to succeed. The need to “overperform,” “put in the time” and “prove yourself” were other new rules that the women described. For example, Joy said,

I even just said this to my co-worker. I was just like—I don't know what she said to me, but I said, “Like I see how hard [supervisor] works and how hard [supervisor] works, and they're so successful.” So I feel like I need to put in as much time.

Hope concurred,

There is also an element of over-performing that I've found is required. It is also extremely important to go above and beyond your job duties as much as possible. Staying late and working from home on weekends is often necessary to show your dedication even when you are not paid overtime. Offering to help out, learn new tasks, and cross train to cover when others are not available shows that you are flexible and valuable to the team.

Cece described being exhausted from trying to follow all the rules and is not seeing the result she hoped for,

...like you went to high school, you worked hard, right? For everything. Went to college, worked really hard. You go to the real world, you work hard, but then you don't get any reward for it, so you kind of just like are worn out.

The participants acknowledged the difficulty in managing the double bind that all of these rules sometimes created for women. Dawn observed that the rules for women were sometimes applied differently to men and women:

Dawn: Um, so I have talked about my boss being such a great leader, but her boss, [male leader name], is another great leader. Um, but it's in a really different way. So, [female leader name] has—that's my boss. She's done a really good job. She's very professional. Um, she's a different person, you know, behind—closed doors or when it's just the two of you, but she carries herself very differently than he does. She's like a perfect package of what you would expect a

boss *[laughter]* to look like. Dressed to the nines. She is very well-spoken.

Me: Do you think she feels a lot of pressure to be that way?

Dawn: Oh yeah. Wicked. She's always dressed. She's just always poppin' blood pressure medication. Um, whereas [male leader name], her boss, is still a really great leader. But he leads very differently. He's really unprofessional *[laughter]* sometimes. He's always droppin' the F bomb. Like, he has a horrible mouth. He's still very relatable, but he—it's just funny to see these two. So it—

Me: Could she get away with being the kind of leader he is?

Dawn: No. I—oh, I don't think so.

Me: Could he be the kind of leader she is?

Dawn: Uh, he should be, but *[laughter]* he's not.

Bess has witnessed the same phenomenon,

I think that a lot of times when you have an assertive female boss, she's a bitch. She can't do anything. A guy does the same things, "Nice work." Tap on the tush and you move on with your day. But if a woman does it, sometimes it's viewed negatively or like she's—she's a bitch.

Similarly, Grace has received performance feedback about being "difficult" and was told that she "shouldn't talk back so much."

The women all expressed feeling pressure to internalize the rules of the game to succeed at work. Adoption and internalization of the rules of game can be evidence of what Gee (1996) calls a liberating literacy. A literacy that can allow individuals to

get along and survive in the dominant discourse through “mushfake” or adopting the dress, speech, behavior of the dominant discourse without fully accepting all elements of that discourse. Ivy went so far to suggest, “Everyone feels like they have to play the game.” Faith concurred,

I think I can be myself—at least the professional me. I have made friends at work as well that I talk to outside the office & on social media. I try to find a balance between work and life...which I know I sometimes hide and alter my behavior with that.

Ada described feeling like she had to project a certain attitude at work regardless of reality. She learned this strategy in college and now uses it in the world of work. Ada said,

I think I keep it to myself when I don't like something, try to appear positive and happy even when I'm frustrated with something or someone. I think I did this to an extent at COB. You learn you do better in classes if you're a happy person and the professor likes you. Not worth it to complain when things most likely won't change...some people have very big personalities that they are who they are no matter what. But like I'm like, if you don't like me to talk, I'm a keep my mouth shut...you can just more learn what they like. I'm willing to more adapt and kind of give them what they want.

Cece shared a similar approach, “I've always taken the approach to be quiet and respectful first before showing my true colors and personality.” Ada described the double standard for men and women at her organization,

I feel like especially with accounting, just like personality-wise, like there's a lot of very outgoing guys in that, but the girls aren't. But I feel like, like you just realize how—like you realized quickly to like be an equal you can't be a, like a bimbo. So, so the guys might be spouting off whatever, and I'm not....you have to learn how to behave a certain way.

Not all the women were comfortable agreeing that they changed their behavior to fit in and couldn't be “themselves.” For example, Grace asserted by email.

I definitely act more professionally at work, through language, clothing, etc. I choose which stories I tell with co-workers who aren't my age – When a partner asks how my weekend was, I won't tell them that I really partied it up that weekend for my friend's birthday, I'll tell them instead about a family thing I did. I think that's probably just tailoring myself to my audience? But I don't know that that equates to not being myself, it's just tailoring to my audience, which is an important skill as an [job title]. I did consider learning how to play golf, but I never ended up doing it. All the guys played in a Saturday golf league together, and I don't think women played. I know some other girls took golf lessons in their first couple of years in public. So I learned to refine my approach.

Cece has observed both the double-bind and mushfaking that one of the leaders at work employs:

This female partner that I have is in the office like, no one is like— everybody's scared of her. Like she walks into the, like a meeting or whatever. Like when she came in to talk to us as first years, she just like drops the F

bomb all the time. Like, she was like, “When I um got promoted to partner and I did this like two year”—rotation over in Japan, or wherever she went. She’s like, “I told my husband like he needs to quit his job and move, like”—I mean, she’s just like a very like strong, powered woman. So now I’m like so scared to like speak—it’s hard for me to communicate with her, though, like. When I wanna talk about like raises, how I’m not really happy with it, I just feel like I can never justify myself enough cuz I’m not like as much of a powerful woman as her. It’s like really—The only reason why people respect is cuz she has to act that way. Like, it’s like outrageous the way she acts. To like get recognized, yeah. You kind of have to be quirky, you know?

Cece then lamented the unfairness of the situation, “ [Men] can just pick and choose how they wanna act and nobody questions it ever.”

Can’t Have It All

When discussing their current aspirations for leadership, most women shared that they were largely discouraged by what they were seeing in the workplace. Nearly all of the women had refined or tempered their aspirations: developed new definitions of success and begun to scale back or redefine their career goals. The conversations highlighted the importance of positive women role models and supportive organizational climates in supporting aspirations for women.

What the women have observed at work in terms of work-life balance has been discouraging. Faith recalled,

My boss when I first started was the career. She wasn’t married. She worked in China for two years. She moved to Chicago. She’s traveling every other

day. And then I'm looking, I'm like, "Mm, now I don't wanna be in leadership...all the women in the leadership position, most of them aren't married and they don't have children. And most of the men are married with young kids, because their wives are home."

Similarly, Cece described being discouraged after watching a mentor try to balance work and family,

I think that she had to put a huge focus on work, and um, I could just see like they [mentor and spouse] couldn't manage that [children and work] and like their—like they couldn't manage. They couldn't. And so that was a little bit scary, I guess, to see like someone in a huge role, but like couldn't really manage her, like life.

Joy sees,

challenges in my current workplace regarding the work life balance of managers. There is virtually no work life balance in the hospitality industry so I imagine that for someone that has a family, it could be very difficult to hold a job at my company.

In public accounting, the situation was not much better for Ada, she explained,

When you look above to partner, like, there's very few women. So the higher you looked up, there, you knew that there weren't as many. Just like so there's not nowhere near as many women, and I think I realized quickly that if you want like, in any business, especially accounting, if you wanna make it up there, you can't have children at least until you're well into your careers. So I think that that automatically just knocks the majority of women off. I think

once I started sitting in partners' offices and you would see the pictures of their children, and they were all really young. The partners will be around my father's age, but they'd have seven-year-olds. Cuz they worked like crazy for 20 years and they could finally have a kid.

Thus, their aspirations have changed. They have broadened their definitions of success. Cece said,

It's, it's almost like not even a career thing anymore for me, like just to be happy and have enough money to get by and have my family and—I wanna give back. And I wanna wake up one day and be like, "I'm excited to go to work!"

Ivy still wants to move up, "I wanna do more, and I wanna learn more, and I wanna be responsible for more."

Dawn reflected on her identity as a career woman, "There's a lot of me working cuz I enjoy it. And I think it defines a lot of who I am. I like doing something that *[laughter]* I'm good at." Bess is also still extremely committed to her identity as a career woman, "I hope to be in a career position, in a management role. I hope to be married with at least two kids, and an all around, great mom and career woman." Conversely, Cece's identification with her career has really been shaken,

In college, I wanted to have a family, but I had no interest in being a stay-at-home mom. Like, I wanted to be busy, busy, busy. But now, all of a sudden, like I literally, if my boyfriend would make enough money, like, I wouldn't work. And I would be a stay-at-home mom and I wouldn't care about work anymore.

Faith reflected on a changed definition of success,

You could be a successful vice-president and have three kids and never see them, and financially, yes, you're more successful, but I don't think success is defined by money. But I think it's defined by the choice—of what you wanted to do, and if you support it and your spouse supports it or your family and you're happy with it, that's what it is.

Several of the women had redefined or expanded their definition of leadership as well. Faith said she was satisfied with her accomplishments,

I think I define [a leader] more as a role model, a mentor at a director's level. I don't think I need to be an executive vice-president. I don't think I need to be the CMO of a company. I think being a director and managing five people and having still that responsibility and ownership. I have—I'm managing one person, and I'm already—think I've accomplished being a leader.

Ivy felt similarly,

I know this isn't technically leadership, but in your career, you know, you become valuable not because you're the only one who knows how to do what you do, but you know how to do it well and you're willing to work with your teammates and your coworkers. And you're willing to take the time out, and you want them to do well even if you're not formally a leader. So I'm technically not a leader in my position, but I do leadership qualities. I'm—I have seniority over the three of us that do what I do, so I may not be a manager or a leader, but I delegate work.

Different than while in college, nearly everyone's aspirations included considerations for life/family and balance. Ada, who was very ambitious when she graduated, still believes she *could* be leader but "I wouldn't necessarily want the path to get to the end result" which would include delaying starting a family as she sees it. Similarly, Bess asserted, "I will never live to work. I will always work to live. Um, I think it's really important to be able to detach and shut off your phone and have you time or us time or family time or whatever the case is." Cece was shifting focus away from corporate leadership to "getting that job that's like attainable and like reasonable, because if you wanna have a family." Dawn was clear that, "a successful woman today, for me, is balancing."

Some of the women did express hope for the future. Exposure to positive role models and seeing other women successfully balancing had helped. Bess, said about one of her coworkers, "You know what, if she can do this, I can do it." Faith concurred, "I'm getting it. I'm-I'm getting other role models, and they don't take no for an answer. Like, you know, she has kids. She's like, 'I wanna work home for one day'." Faith actually seemed to become more confident about her ability to do the same as she talked about it during the interview. Ivy predicted a long career with her current employer, who was supportive of families,

I envision myself in a Lead/Manager role within my current company and department that I just transferred to, and in my personal life have a family. I have a fantastic company that is flexible for parents so I am confident that I will be able to make home and work life both successful. Maybe for a couple of years, work schedule may be a little different, but ultimately, I mean I still

want the same things. I think that they are very flexible, and they do wanna work with you, and they wanna keep you in the long run. So I would think that I would have very good odds of obtaining both and just figuring out a way to make it work.

When asked if she thought she would continue to progress at her current company, Hope said,

I think it's possible to do, I guess, part time. You can—I know there's a lot of people at ABC Corp. who, like, work part time, or they work from home a couple of days a week. They telecommute. So I think it's possible.

Interestingly, she is now considering pursuing previously “impractical” career goals as part of her plan to balance work and life,

If and when children enter the picture, I think I will shift my focus and become less of a “business woman” and spend more time at home or working on my art. If I could afford it, my dream would be to one day stay at home with my kids, make art in my free time, and start a business selling prints and paintings of my work (I can dream, right?).

Summary

Analysis of the 10 interviews and emails from the participants resulted in the development of eight themes, five that included information related to the participants' experiences while at COB and three related to the participants' experiences since they graduated from COB. While at COB, the participants revealed ambivalence about the impact of the gender gap on their experiences and aspirations. They recognized its existence, but were unsure of the impact and nothing at COB highlighted or discussed

it. They also described the significant influence of faculty and coursework on major choices and subsequent functional aspirations but not on leadership aspirations. Participants went on to describe the COB as a “bubble” that prepared them technically but failed to expose them to the realities of the work world and build necessary soft skills. The fourth theme centered on the rules of the game that participants perceived were the keys to success: work hard and you will be recognized. Finally, the last theme explored the aspirations for leadership, work and family that the women had at graduation. These revolved around leadership roles and status and participants reported not anticipating any challenges balancing work and life.

After college, the participants’ expressed the realization that, “it’s really not equal.” They also summarized what they now believed to be the *real* rules of the game: be friendly and act masculine to succeed. These experiences and new understandings of the world of work resulted in what they described as tempered aspirations for work. They were now seeking balance with reference to newly discovered life and family goals. The significance of these findings, as well as their implications for research and practice, are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Study

Women have become the majority in higher education participation (HERI, 2013) and represent nearly half of the workforce in the United States (Barsh & Yee, 2011). However, women continue to be grossly underrepresented in corporate business leadership (Catalyst, 2013) and other traditionally masculine fields of study and career paths (AAUW, 1999; Barone, 2011). A thorough literature review of decades of research investigating the causes and effects of this phenomenon revealed numerous research streams, including: persistent gender stereotypes and discrimination; the double-bind; tokenism; impact of role models and access to social and organizational norms; challenges of balancing work and family; coping mechanisms (i.e., tempered aspirations, adoption of masculine behaviors); stereotype threat and low self-efficacy; and the pervasive impacts of all of these on women's aspirations and life choices. Despite the breadth of existing research, some focusing on women's experiences in STEM disciplines and educational contexts, I found little research about the experiences of women undergraduate business students.

This gap in the literature, combined with my own experiences as a woman professor in a college of business, led me to design a study aimed at giving a qualitative voice to women business undergraduates. The study was conducted at a college of business at a rural state university in the Northeast United States. Using a narrative analytic methodology, I interviewed 10 participants and then reviewed and augmented the interview data with email communication with all 10 participants.

Using a thematic narrative analysis, I identified emergent themes and categories from the narrative texts and eight themes emerged in two overarching temporal categories. During college themes were: gender matters?; faculty and coursework influence; COB as a “bubble” (Dawn); perceived rules of the game; and I can have it all. After college themes were: “it’s really not equal” (Ivy); the real rules of the game; and can’t have it all.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

In this section I will discuss how the emergent themes discussed in the findings chapter provided insight into the guiding research questions and aligned with existing literature. I will also address implications of the findings for practice in colleges of business.

Shifting Meaning Making about Gender

The first research question asked: How, if at all, do business school alumnae make meaning of the gendered climate of the business profession? Prior research has focused on a number of issues: a continued chilly climate for women driven by underrepresentation of women in traditionally masculine fields of study and career paths; persistent gender stereotypes of leaders; discrimination and microaggressions; and a continuing double bind for women in the masculine discourse (Billing, 2011; Curtis, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). The findings of the present study generally align with all of these topics. However, my findings add to the literature by suggesting some significant shifts in participant attitudes from meaning making during college to meaning making after graduation.

During college, participants expressed ambivalence about the relevance of gender for their experiences (gender matters?, perceived rules of the game, I can have it all). The first emergent theme, gender matters?, centers around participants' experiences related to gender and their perceptions of how those experiences affected them while at COB. Participants shared varying levels of awareness of gender underrepresentation and gender-based issues while at the COB. Their narratives reflected a strong sense of ambivalence about gender and surfaced numerous contradictions about whether gender mattered or not for their experiences at COB. This closely aligns with the literature, as discussed in Chapter 2: despite the documented reality of sexism, one study found that undergraduate students perceive gender discrimination as being of little consequence and that they will enter a gender-neutral workplace (Sipe, Johnson, & Fisher, 2009). Such beliefs lead to potential job dissatisfaction, decreased aspirations in the face of reality and turnover once these women once they enter the workforce.

A particular tension emerged between the recognition that there were “a lot of men” (Joy) at the COB and a denial of the existence of gender discrimination or any individual impact of the gender imbalance. Most of the women described experiences while at COB that could be defined as microaggressions but they were reticent to describe this as harassment, “I don't know it's because I'm a woman...” (Ivy). Several dismissed gender discrimination as a thing of the past. They dismissed cautionary stories and warnings from women faculty. They simply did not believe gender discrimination applied to them, had affected them to date or would affect them in any way in the future. Joy shared, “I'd like to believe that I'm very much in

control of that.” The tendency of the participants to minimize the possible impact of gender discrimination on their own experiences and second-guessing their perceptions of the situation are typical responses to gender microaggressions as described by Sue (2010).

In alignment with the perceptions that gender would have little to no impact on them or their experiences in the future work place, the women asserted their personal agency to control their future performance and careers (perceived rules of the game). Hope summed up the beliefs of nearly all of the participants, “I assumed that promotions, feedback, and salaries were determined by performance, dedication to the job, and career goals.” Additionally, the women all expressed high confidence in their abilities to attain their aspirations (mostly focused on money, security, independence). The participants shared a unanimous belief that, once in the workplace, if they worked hard, they would be rewarded. They expected the rules of the game related to professional success to be objective, fair and gender-neutral.

Related to work-life issues, the women shared having given it little thought while in college (I can have it all). They did not anticipate having any issues balancing work and life in the future. Cece believed that life was “gonna all be the same way it always was, never get harder.” Some of the women held somewhat contradictory gender stereotypes about work-family issues. Two shared negative views of sacrificing career for family and strongly believed that they would never be stay-at-home moms. Two others shared a more traditional mindset and communicated commitment to having a family and beliefs that they would need to put their careers on hold eventually to make that a reality.

The women's reflections on their experiences after college represent a significant shift in attitude about the gendered climate of business. Most participants had developed a clear recognition of women's underrepresentation in leadership roles and experienced the personal impacts of gender bias. They nearly all expressed an increased awareness of and experience with explicit gender discrimination. Their experiences and beliefs at this point were in closer alignment with the realities reported in the press for traditionally masculine career paths and organizations but significantly changed from their time at COB. Overall, they had discovered that "it's really not equal" for women in the workplace in relation to opportunity, treatment by supervisors, performance evaluation and work assignments. Hope went so far as to say, "I think because the business world is so male-dominated already, I think it's easier for men, I guess...I think the business world is very, like, harsh and—and difficult for women."

Nearly all of the women acknowledged that gender does indeed matter and that the rules of the game are much more complex and politically influenced than originally perceived. Additionally, the women who reported plans to start families, had redefined their definitions of success, resulting in tempered aspirations for leadership roles. For example, Ivy summed it up,

You know, you really need to realize that, like, it's really not equal. And it's hard, too, because you still have these old-fashioned mentalities of, like, the woman stays home and does this, and it's your responsibility, and, like, "Why can't you go to work and then take care of the kids and then cook dinner and do this?" And it's, like, "Okay. I can only do so much in a day."

In relation to performance evaluation, past research has shown that some women are unaware of the importance of factors beyond performance or time for career advancement such as visibility and relationship building (Catalyst, 2008). These findings were clearly supported in this study. Within a few years of joining the workforce, most of the women reported having come to the realization that working hard (working long hours and achieving objectives) may not be enough to achieve success. Hope lamented, “They really don’t give women the chance to prove themselves.” Ada added, “the more ‘likeable’ you are, the more likely you are to get ahead.” These assertions lie in direct opposition to their beliefs while in college. Catalyst research (2008, 2010) has shown that a lack of awareness of these “unwritten rules” and lack of access to informal networks through which to learn these norms, may severely impede women’s advancement. While efforts have been made to make rules explicit in handbooks and human resource policies, the “real” rules that dominate behavior and decision-making are often implicit and longstanding, built around the dominant masculine discourse that existed unchallenged for decades. The unwritten rules are learned through experience, mentorship and access to leaders and power networks (the old boys’ club). As was true for women in this study and has been supported in the literature, women (and other minorities) lack access to these resources (Catalyst, 2008, 2010).

The women also shared the realization that the rules of the game required adopting more stereotypical masculine behaviors to succeed. The women reported learning that they shouldn’t be emotional or cry (Dawn). Several of the women privileged masculine leadership behaviors and expressed the belief that since they

were not tough or decisive, they could not be successful. Other women provided examples of women leaders who adopted more masculine behaviors and were succeeding. They also cited the belief that failing to have masculine characteristics (e.g., ruthlessness, toughness) equates to lack of leadership potential. Hope reflected traditional gender stereotypes to explain her reluctance to seek a leadership role. She said, “probably not CFO or CEO status. But I don’t know. I think I have more of a quieter, introverted personality, so I think I don’t have maybe the personality for one of those big roles.” Prior research suggests that women and men leaders are positioned differently; women are not seen as being natural leaders of people, where men are (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). Ada also recognized the double bind of adopting masculine behaviors for women, “I feel like it’s very difficult for a woman to move up at XYZ because they have to like you but at the same time you have to kind of be a bitch. Cuz otherwise you’re not gonna survive.”

These findings align closely with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 related to the commonly held views of the ideal employee, manager and leader that continue to be associated with men and masculine identities (Alvesson, 1998; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; G. Powell & Butterfield, 1981, 2013) and privileging masculine identity and ways of thinking and living (Billing, 2011; Curtis, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Recently released research exposed the early foundations of this leadership bias against women. In the study, both boy and girl teenagers expressed bias against girls as leaders in powerful professions (Weissbourd, 2015).

Kerfoot and Knights (1998) documented the increasing pressures on both men and women to adopt more masculine behavior and the privileging of masculine work

culture. The women in this study had experienced this pressure. Bryans and Mavin (2003) found that women managers face multiple contradictions, whether to learn to fit in to the masculine paradigm of management or play a different game. In a study by Devine, Grummell and Lynch (2011) women reported having to develop an “elastic self” to negotiate the demands of masculine management cultures. After graduation, the women in this study uncovered the “real” rules of the game for women to succeed as leaders: be friendly and act like a man; and “career success equals sacrifices” (Faith).

Additionally, as discussed above, the participants reported not actively considering work-family balance until after college. While in college, they denied the possibility that work-family choices would impact their leadership and career aspirations. After college, they were clear that traditional gender roles persisted, requiring women to make difficult choices, negotiate tradeoffs and develop specific skills to balance multiple work-life roles (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2011). Where balancing work and family had seemed abstract and irrelevant during college, most of the women were now actively facing this challenge. According to the real rules of the game, the participants believed that over performing, long hours and sacrifice were required for leadership success. Most of them saw these requirements as incompatible with having a family. Additionally, based on their observations of other women in the workplace, many were considering stepping back from their careers to start a family. Faith shared, “now I don’t wanna be in leadership...all the women in the leadership position, most of them aren’t married and they don’t have children.”

These findings echo past studies suggesting that women make career decisions based on their perceptions of work-life issues and the incompatibility between active parenting and senior leadership roles (Liff & Ward, 2001). Participants of this study who reported still aspiring to leadership roles and planned to have families perceived their organizations as supportive of women and work-life balance. Bajdo (2001) found that organizational cultural practices related to gender equity were the most important predictor of the disproportionately low numbers of women in management and masculine fields. Several of the participants described organizational practices that would not support gender equity (e.g., unenforced harassment policies, unrealistic work hour expectations, lack of flexibility), despite citing formal policies to the contrary. The implicit cultural rules may be related to their decisions to leave or choosing not to advance.

Post-college, the women nearly all described tempered aspirations for leadership and much more complex definitions of success that no longer focused on roles and status but on the ability to balance work and life/family. This is supported in the literature on women's career development that finds women to be more likely to consider work-family issues and are more sensitive to the perceived incompatibility between parenting and senior leadership roles (Anderson, Vinnicombe & Singh, 2010; Liff & Ward, 2001; Sallop & Kirby, 2007). Some participants expressed being discouraged by what they saw women leaders in their organizations doing (e.g., delaying families, acting like men) and experiencing (e.g., discrimination, difficulty progressing up the ladder). Several appear to have developed "girl disease" (Smith & Chesterman, 2009) as described in Chapter 2. Ada, who was very ambitious when she

graduated, still believes she *could* be a leader but “I wouldn’t necessarily want the path to get to the end result.” The women were taking the real rules of the game into account to review and revise their aspirations for leadership. Dawn was clear that, “a successful woman today, for me, is balancing.”

Varying Perceptions of the Impact of College Experience

The second research question asked: What role, if any, do alumnae believe their college experiences played in shaping their understanding of, preparation for, and aspirations in the traditionally masculine professional world of work? The emergent themes “gender matters?” and “faculty and coursework influence” outline both the reality of the experiences of women at COB and the significant influence faculty have on women students’ career choices and aspirations. The theme “COB as a bubble” and the summary retrospective revelations of the participants about what they wished they had known at graduation provide their view of the COB’s influence on their beliefs and attitudes.

The overrepresentation of men as students and faculty produced a subtly chilly climate at COB. Some participant perceptions of the impact of the gender gap on classroom interactions echo the findings of Sadker and Zittleman (2009) about the chilly climate women experience in the classroom due to the masculine discourse of education. Hope described, “I think women can sometimes feel out of their comfort zone when they are in the minority which could lead to participating in class less or asking fewer questions for fear of being judged.” Ivy remembered that she was often asked to type and take notes for her team and Dawn echoed that she did not always feel respected in group activities dominated by men.

In the classroom, gender bias is expressed as a series of microaggressions and microinsults with cumulative impact. Microaggressions most relevant to women's experiences are delivered verbally, non-verbally and environmentally (Nadal, 2010; Sue, 2010; Sue & Capodilupo, 2008) and include: sexual objectification; ascription of intelligence and leadership ability to men—assumption of inferiority; relegation to second-class citizenship in organizations; devaluation of women's values and ways of communicating and interacting; sexist language and jokes; restrictive gender roles; denial of the existence of gender inequity or discounting the impact of gender on life success; and denial of individual sexism. The women did not believe men faculty could effectively relate to or support women students. Dawn said, "The faculty...they're all old, white guys! And like, come on! It's tough to relate to them. They don't relate to these young girls." Ivy explained how men professors were incapable of teaching the realities of gender for women in the world of work, "he doesn't have a lot of experience—as a female in a business."

Several participants shared stories of microaggressions bordering on microassaults in the classroom perpetuated by faculty members who were men. They described being objectified and teased for their appearance, ignored in the classroom, and treated condescendingly. Dawn remembered one faculty member, a man, "We didn't feel supported. He would talk down to us all day long." Two participants reflected that objectification and other microaggressions made them feel exhausted and demoralized (Babaria et al., 2012). Microaggressions have been found to produce a chilly or gendered climate for women and have subsequent effects on their

aspirations and identities as potential leaders (Sue, 2010). The findings of this study echo these realities.

The second emergent theme during college describes the significant impact and influence that faculty and course work have on women students' decisions, aspirations and beliefs about their abilities. Students clearly viewed faculty as experts in their fields and took to heart faculty assessments of student skill and potential. Even off-hand comments from a faculty member had the ability to create, strengthen, weaken, or even destroy, aspirations. Several participants reported choosing majors and career paths based on off-hand comments by professors who expressed a fixed mindset view of intelligence (Dweck, 2006). These professors asserted that some students naturally had the skills and/or personality to succeed; other students did not. This fixed view of skills limits students, particularly women, from further exploring a field and developing requisite skills (Dweck, 2006). Fostering a growth mindset can increase persistence for women in non-traditional fields (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Unfortunately, this did not happen for many participants in my study.

The participant comments also reflect internalization of the beliefs heard from faculty about a fixed (versus growth) philosophy, an assumption of inferiority (microaggression) and showed that the women were relatively quick to withdraw from situations of potential failure. As described in Chapter 2, women may be more likely than men to limit career aspirations and interests because they believe they lack the necessary capabilities to succeed. After experiencing challenges in a class or being told that they do not have what it takes (Mangels et al., 2006), women are more likely to choose courses, majors and careers with the greater perceived likelihood of success

due to both internal and external factors (Bandura, 2001; Eccles, 1994; Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Wilson et al., 2007). Performance in entry-level classes and faculty support are influential. Kay and Shipman (2014) reported that women, in general, appear to suffer from a crisis of confidence, leading them not to act on their ideas and subsequently hold themselves back from achievement. Bess remembered, “I had a finance professor tell me that if I don’t know what my problem is, she doesn’t know how to help me.” Dawn had a similar experience and changed majors due to the professor’s failure to support her learning.

In terms of what impact COB had on them, the women unanimously reflected disappointment that their undergraduate experience had not better prepared them for the realities of the gendered climate of business. Their somewhat naïve and idealistic view of their future workplaces and experiences was not challenged in any way by the “bubble” at COB as will be discussed further below. The third emergent theme summarizes the participants’ unanimous view of COB, and undergraduate education in general, as being a bubble with little exposure to the realities of business or preparation of the skills necessary to succeed. According to their reflections, the women’s views about gender were not actively shaped or challenged by the COB.

Specifically the women expressed frustration with not having a more realistic understanding of the “rules of the game” at graduation. They believed that a predominantly men faculty with little real life experience using a lecture-based pedagogy was ineffective for teaching women how to manage and lead in real organizations. While most of the participants did not expect to have women professors, Joy pointed out the important role of same gender faculty industry

experience in providing effective examples of challenges and successes for women, “I think you do it through storytelling. I think that you kind of show your—like through your work at XYZ and stuff, those experiences that you share, um, basically just showcase like how badass a woman could be.”

As discussed in Chapter 2, significant prior research has emphasized the importance of same-gender role models, for women’s success in masculine fields and leadership (Carter & Silva, 2010; Catalyst, 1993; Parker & Welch, 2013; Ragsdale, 2013; Ramsey, Betz, & Sekaquaptewa, 2013; Riebe, 2012; Ropers-Huilman & Enke, 2010; Settles, Cortina, Malley & Stewart, 2006; A. Smith, 2012; C. Smith, 1997, 1998, 2000; Westring et al., 2012; Whitehead, 2010; Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007). These relationships help women build literacies and comfort in a masculine discourse and support professional women’s career aspirations and professional identity development (Beaman, Duflo, Pande & Topalova, 2012; Douvan, 1976; Levine, Mechaber, Reddy, Cayea, & Harrison, 2013; McDonald & Westphal, 2013). Exposure to women leaders and role models raises aspirations and sex atypical career identification for girls (Beaman et al., 2012; Ramsey et al., 2013). Findings from my study support prior research. Participants recalled few (or no) exposure to women role models, leaders or professors in the COB.

According to the participant descriptions of pedagogy in use at COB, the majority of courses in the COB rely on a transmission model of teaching (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). Professors play the role of the sage on the stage and espouse an injection model that builds a known and accepted base of knowledge that is not up for argument or discussion (Munby et al., 1997). Educational institutions have been

criticized for employing a hidden curriculum which seeks to reproduce existing oppressive systems of relations in society and indoctrinating the privileges of the dominant groups (Anyon, 1980) and this appears to be the case at COB as none of the participants could recall learning anything about women leaders or women's topics. Hope shared, "I don't think that I ever felt like the University was catering to women necessarily in any way or, like, helpful, I guess, in pointing out, I guess, the obstacles in the business world and stuff for a woman."

Recommendations for Practice

In response to these findings, I will now outline recommendations for Colleges of Business to positively affect the experiences of women students: 1) creation of women-only leadership development curricula; 2) creation of faculty development related to gender bias, inclusive pedagogy and student advising; and 3) integration of required gender bias curriculum for all students at the COB. First, however, I summarize the key social justice, inclusive pedagogy and realistic job preview literature that informs my recommendations. Women's narratives shared in this study highlight the importance of improving the curricula, climate and pedagogy. By rooting my recommendations in prior literature *and* participant narratives, I honor both the expertise of my participants and the scholars who have come before me.

Schools, like organizations, are vulnerable to perpetuating a masculine discourse and gendered climate. Schools, as cultural mediators, can, and do, reproduce and affirm the norms and values of the dominant culture through language, curriculum, pedagogy and structure (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Kozulin, 1994). It is argued that, given this power, schools are "fundamentally tied to a struggle for a

qualitatively better life for all through the construction of a society based on non-exploitative relations and social justice” (McLaren, 2003, pp. 70-71). The undergraduate experience may narrow or magnify perceptions of gender differences as they relate to academic self-confidence and engagement, choice of undergraduate major and career aspirations (Curtis, 2013; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Paris & Decker, 2012; Sax & Arms, 2009; Sax & Bryant, 2006; Sax & Harper, 2007). Therefore, college provides a critical opportunity to strengthen aspirations and gender atypical beliefs. Research has suggested that business schools specifically reproduce traditionally gendered and classed understandings of identity and business (Hall, 2013) and teach a masculine bias (Mavin & Bryans, 1999, 2004). Narratives from 10 women alumnae support these conclusions.

In contrast to the methods reportedly used in this COB and by colleges of business in general (Mavin & Bryans, 1999, 2004), the goal of social justice education (SJE) is full and equal participation of all groups in society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure—a society where oppression does not exist (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007). SJE recognizes that oppression does, in fact, exist. Some social groups have more power and value than others—and they make the rules. These groups define the dominant culture and tell us what is important, what is beautiful, what is knowledge, what is right. SJE also offers a unique opportunity for interrupting hegemonic patterns through increasing understanding of social inequality and modeling of equitable relationships in school (Adams & Love, 2009). SJE curriculum and pedagogy works

against the dominant discourse that affirms and validates existing privileged practices (Lewis, 1992) and continues to shape beliefs about work climates (Stalker & Prentice, 1998).

Adams and Love (2009) recommend that an inclusive curriculum must address both what and how we teach and learn—reconnecting to the roots of progressive education. Social or cultural-historical approaches to curriculum recognize the importance of the cultural reality of each individual learner, focusing not on fixing them, but enabling their ongoing development by honoring their individual cultural history and social practices (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). An effective social justice curriculum must 1) include content that allows all students to feel valued and represented, 2) incorporate multiple perspectives, 3) be supported by representative supporting history and research, and 4) use inclusive methods of delivery, learning and assessment (Adams & Love, 2009). It should name the differences, name privilege and teach across difference (Blackburn, 2007). Additionally, it should recognize and address resistance by members of privileged groups (Goodman, 2001) and oppressed groups (Ogbu, 2000). Further, Adams (2007, p.15) presented the core frameworks of a social justice education practice:

1. Establish an equilibrium between the emotional and cognitive components of the learning process
2. Acknowledge and support the personal and individual dimensions of experience, while making connections to and illuminating the systemic dimensions of social group interactions
3. Pay explicit attention to social relations within the classroom

4. Make conscious use of reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning
5. Reward changes in awareness, personal growth, and efforts to work toward change, understood as outcomes of the learning process

Research has supported the idea that elements of social justice education have a positive effect on women's sex atypical career aspirations, literacy development and professional identity development (Betz & Schifano, 2000; Bierema, 2010; Debebe, 2011; Edwards, Elliott, Iszatt-White, & Schedlitzki, 2013; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Gervais & Hoffman, 2012; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2007; Isaac, Kaatz, Lee, & Carnes, 2012; Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010; Merrick, 2012; Pool & Qualter, 2012; Ramsey et al., 2013; Steele, 1997). For example, studies in STEM disciplines found that school environments and curricula that were more welcoming to women and taught resistance to traditional stereotypes, promoted identification with scientific fields and persistence for women students (Ramsey et al., 2013).

Similarly, the feminist practice of consciousness-raising has been found to be essential to building critical literacies and strengthens the ability of women to manage in the masculine discourse (Fisher, 2001; Lewis, 1992). These practices have been shown to allow women to persist in dominantly masculine discourses (Betz & Schifano, 2000; Bierema, 2010; Debebe, 2011; Edwards, Elliott, Iszatt-White, & Schedlitzki, 2013; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Gervais & Hoffman, 2012; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2007; Isaac, Kaatz, Lee, & Carnes, 2012; Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010; Merrick, 2012; Pool & Qualter, 2012; Ramsey et al., 2013; Steele, 1997). Without exposure to the realities of the masculine discourse, women are entering the workforce

expecting one thing and likely experiencing something completely different. Worell, Stilwell, Oakley & Robinson (1999) found support for exposure to gender and women's issues effecting positive outcomes for students.

All of these practices are closely aligned with the Human Resource process of Realistic Job Preview (RJP). RJP performs as a discourse socialization process that allows new organizational members to acquire necessary social and content knowledge and skills to make an informed decision about joining and ultimately to participate successfully (Wanous & Reichers, 2006). The incorporation of RJP in organizational recruiting practices ensures that candidates are fully aware of the organizational culture and job requirements. For women in business school, RJP for organizational leadership may increase person-job fit and person-organization fit and possibly lead to greater persistence for women leaders in their future organizations. Fit increases individual employee satisfaction, engagement, retention and organizational productivity (Phillips & Gully, 2014).

In combination with this literature, and grounded in the reflections and recommendations of the participants in this study, I make a number of recommendations for COBs. First, I recommend that COBs incorporate opportunities for women to interact in a woman-only space to learn about leadership, curriculum about the masculine discourse and the rules of the game, and exposure to feminist, same-gender faculty, guest lecturers and current exemplars.

The importance of women-only space has significant support in the literature (Henneberger, Deutsch, Lawrence, & Sovik-Johnston, 2012; Riebe, 2012; Mael, 1998; Szelenyi, Denson, & Inkelas, 2012) as it provides women opportunity for academic

achievement without social pressure and abundant leadership opportunities (Mael, 1998), maintains self-esteem of participants in the face of challenging experiences (Henneberger et al., 2012), lifts stereotype threat effects (Steele, 1997), and reduces sex role stereotyping (Merrick, 2012). Women's leadership development curricula could be delivered across multiple women-only platforms. First, it could be integrated into any current course offerings that focus on career development. If possible, women could participate in women's only portions of the course for certain topics. The COB in this study currently offers a two credit online career development course. Woman-only content could be integrated into the course. Alternatively, the content could be taught in a separate women-only course offering and offered as a professional elective for credit. It could possibly be designed to satisfy general education requirements. A course like this already exists (women's leadership and professional development) at the study university in the women's studies area that covers much of what I would recommend. Additionally, womencentric content could be delivered during meetings of women-only clubs (women in business or engineering, sororities) using a multiple workshop model and conducted by student affairs professionals and a panel of women alumnae. Finally, if possible, a women-only living learning community could be created in the residence halls.

As requested by the participants, the revised COB curricula and program content should include exposure to and discussion of the realities of the work world. First, it should include gender and sex role stereotypes and discrimination/bias literacy (Hill et al., 2010; Mentkowski & Rogers, 2010; Miller & Sisk, 2012; Nadal, 2010; Probert, 2005; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Sturm, 2006; Sue, 2010; Sue & Capodilup, 2008).

Exposure to, and challenging of, implicit gender bias has been shown to be effective in changing attitudes of students toward increasing persistence in sex atypical career identification for women (Merrick, 2012). Additionally, discussion of the statistical realities of gender underrepresentation and its measured impacts in predominately masculine fields and organizations should be included (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Catalyst, 2013; Debebe, 2011; Edwards, Elliott, Iszatt-White, & Schedlitzki, 2013; Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2007; Soares, Cobb, et al., 2011). Career self-exploration should encourage women to consider gender atypical career paths as well as traditional ones (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hill et al., 2010) coupled with education about the growth mindset. Developing a growth mindset (Yeager & Dweck, 2012) has been shown to promote resilience in the face of the challenges that women will face in sex atypical fields of study and career paths. The growth mindset emphasizes that skills and behaviors for any field of interest can be developed and are not “gifts.” Additionally, critical discussions about the pressures on women in traditionally masculine roles and fields to behave like men would help women develop coping tactics and prepare them to negotiate identity conflicts between gender and professional identities (Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009; Hatmaker, 2013).

Exposure to same gender role models and mentors raises aspirations and gender atypical career identification for women (Beaman et al., 2012; Betz & Schifano, 2000; Douvan, 1976; Levine et al., 2013; McDonald & Westphal, 2013; Mael, 1998; Merrick, 2012; Ramsey et al., 2013). Revised COB curricula and programs should provide multiple opportunities for women students to learn about, and meet same gender and counter stereotypical role models via readings, vidcasts,

conference attendance, mentor programs and speakers series. These role models could include faculty with corporate work experience or successful women alumnae. Engaging alumnae to participate in a mentor program with students would be optimal. Due to the gender asymmetries that have existed for years, there are fewer women alumnae than would be needed for 1:1 mentoring. Group mentoring facilitated by online discussion platforms (via LinkedIn or other) could be very effective and provide further opportunity for networking among students. As part of their interactions, women role models can be directed to intentionally expose students to the existence of unwritten rules and norms of dominantly masculine workplaces related to performance, advancement, networking and leadership (Catalyst, 2008, 2010; Parker & Welch, 2013; Xu & Martin, 2011) including work-life balance choices and their implications. Encouraging critical discussion and reflection on difficult topics will help women make informed and empowered decisions about their careers (Betz & Schifano, 2000; Bierema, 2010; Gervais & Hoffman, 2012).

In addition to providing leadership development and consciousness-raising for women students, it is essential to focus on the role of faculty in combatting bias to improve the climate in COBs. I recommend a faculty development series to supplement the current mandatory online harassment training that comprises the extent of gender education for faculty in many universities.

National legislation has sought to enhance the equal inclusion and treatment of women in education (Title IX of the Education Act of 1972) and to reduce all forms of gender discrimination in the workplace (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1963). In response, organizations have directed efforts at increasing structural diversity: the

numerical representation of faculty, staff and students (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). During the same timeframe, women's participation in college grew to 58% of all undergraduates in 2012 (DiPrete and Buchman, 2013; NCES, 2012). However, the numbers of tenured women faculty have not increased significantly (AFTEHE, 2011). Given the importance of successful women role models and mentors for women undergraduates, colleges of business must continue to attract and retain more women faculty. Many universities have efforts directed at this goal (ADVANCE, President's Commissions). However, improving structural diversity—increasing the numbers of women—is not enough. That is why I propose a series of faculty workshops to address faculty attitude change. A study by Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) showed that when individuals are simply exposed to diversity there is little attitude change. However, when individuals were exposed to diversity *and* had their beliefs about diversity challenged, they experienced positive attitude change toward the target.

Faculty development workshops could be conducted during faculty meetings or retreat to encourage faculty to reconsider both *what* and *how* they teach and adopt SJE principles and more inclusive pedagogies. Faculty would be encouraged to adopt new attitudes and incorporate new approaches if promotion and tenure guidelines could be revised to include inclusive teaching and SJE curriculum adoptions as evaluated elements. Current Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and university accreditation standards support the incorporation of multicultural competence into student and faculty assessment (AACSB, 2012). Next, I outline the content of these workshops.

The foundation of the workshops should expose faculty to SJE and inclusive pedagogy to build inclusive classrooms and support gender equity in COBs. Content of these workshops would include both content (bias, the mechanisms of privilege and oppression, the dominant discourse) and process (student-centered, inclusive teaching practices) (Adams & Love, 2009). Both elements would focus attention on improving the climate in classrooms for women students.

Participants in the present study enumerated various microaggressions perpetrated in and out of the classroom by both men students and faculty including: objectification; relegations to second-class citizenship; ascription of intelligence to men (Sue, 2010) and invisibility (Nadal, 2010). Workshops aimed at informing and shaping attitudes of faculty (and students) toward bias and breaking bias habits can make a difference for those who are the target of discrimination. For example, an intervention workshop intended to increase gender bias literacy (Carnes et al., 2012) in STEM faculty produced increased bias awareness and led to increased commitment to changing behavior to promote gender equity for students and faculty. I suggest that faculty at COBs regularly participate in similar workshops aimed at decreasing bias and supporting the integration of inclusive pedagogy. These workshops could be founded on reported student cases of microaggressions and their impact, to emphasize the relevance of the training and garner buy-in for participation.

Curriculum and pedagogy must work against the dominant discourse that affirms and validates existing gendered practices (Lewis, 1992). As a foundation for a SJE curriculum, Connell (1996) suggests first a careful assessment for gender bias in: 1) the accepted definitions of masculinities (and femininities) and lack of multiplicity

and plurality; 2) regimes – power relations (who reports to whom, who has power, what types of treatment are tolerated and/or supported); 3) the division of labor within the school (work specialization – who does what in the college, on student teams and in the classroom); 4. patterns of emotion (feeling rules – what is okay related to the expression of emotions); and 5) symbolization (language, value of knowledge areas, curriculum materials, career advisement). A faculty development workshop could invite faculty to consider and critically evaluate each of these issues as they relate to their course designs and interactions with students. For example, faculty can be supported to evaluate the sources of information they share with students (text books, cases, information media), and seek to actively reformulate and restate things in a non-deficit, gender-inclusive way (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Textbooks and other books should be chosen to be gender inclusive, and if they aren't, that reality should be confronted and discussed in the classroom. Efforts should be made to seek out more representative options. In general, coursework should work to build media literacy, to ensure that students are able to critically evaluate the media and information that they consume—particularly as it relates to gender stereotypes (Connell, 1996; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009).

Faculty development could encourage and facilitate incorporation of discussions of gender, power, the feminine and masculine into the curriculum (Blackburn, 2007; Connell, 1996; Martin, 1995). It would also develop faculty comfort in leading discussions of careers and work options that are inclusive, representing the value and legitimacy of all societal roles and providing exposure for all students to all career paths regardless of gender or gender stereotypes. Faculty

should also actively question the assumptions about assumed roles in student groups and the division of labor in the classroom. Specifically, faculty need to initiate discussions questioning the roles men and women take and are assigned in group assignments. For example, students should discuss: why women should and often do take notes in group meetings and why women are assumed to be better typists or organizers.

Additionally, research by Yeager & Dweck (2012) support the idea that a growth mindset promotes resilience in the face of challenge for women. According to their research, the belief that intellectual abilities can be developed—that they are not an innate gift—can be taught. Faculty have a key role in teaching this belief. A faculty development workshop could share this research and provide practical support for incorporation into course curriculum and pedagogy. Fostering this mindset is crucial to increasing persistence of women in non-traditional majors (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Faculty must be made aware of the extraordinary impact they have on the aspirations and beliefs of their students. Yeager and Dweck's (2012) research suggests that promoting a growth mindset in students is a simple process. Faculty can simply discuss the concept at the start of each course and endorse its validity for the current course.

In addition to the development recommended for women students and faculty, it is crucial to break the cycle of privilege for the men students who share the classroom with women students and who will enter the same workplaces with their women peers. With this in mind, I also recommend the integration of SJE into COB coursework for all students. As discussed above, SJE should name intentionally

identify differences, name privilege and teach across difference (Blackburn, 2007). Additionally, it should recognize and address resistance by members of privileged groups (Goodman, 2001) and oppressed groups (Ogbu, 2000). First, coursework should include teaching all students about implicit bias awareness, similar to the faculty workshop content. Devine, Forscher, Austin and Cox (2012), used an educational intervention to reduce implicit racial bias in students. The intervention successfully increased awareness of implicit bias, concern about the impact of the bias, and desire for strategies for reducing bias. The intervention produced a relatively long-term reduction in bias, awareness of bias and concern about discrimination in general.

Making both men and women students aware of gender-based discrimination, bias and its impacts, can provide them all with literacies necessary to have the strength to confront discrimination and ultimately change the status quo. Given the low numbers of women faculty in non-traditional majors in co-educational environments and the dearth of women role models in textbooks and curriculum, COBs must intentionally and strategically provide exposure to same non-traditional role models to both men and women students. Exposure to counter-stereotypes has been shown to successfully reduce stereotypes and prejudice for men and women (Paluck & Green, 2009) and at the same time increase divergent or creative thinking of participants (Gocłowska & Crisp, 2013).

Value of the Study

Women undergraduate business students have been largely ignored in the research about women's experiences in traditionally masculine fields. They make up a

significant proportion of the pipeline for leadership roles but fail to achieve these roles post-graduation. Studies that contribute to making women's experiences in undergraduate education visible will further inform improvements to curriculum in the historically masculine field of business. Past studies have demonstrated that business education (as compared to other educational programs) largely reproduced traditional gendered and classed understandings of identity and business success (Hall, 2013) and perpetuated preferences for the masculine managerial stereotypes and occupations (Fernandes & Carbral-Cardosa, 2003; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Paris & Decker, 2012). Mavin and Bryans (1999, 2004) found a distinct masculine bias in management education and a failure to incorporate women's experiences in business, rendering women invisible. More recent literature has continued to highlight the persistent issue of gender discrimination and a chilly climate for women at business schools (Kantor, 2013; Mojtehedzadeh, 2014; Scott, 2014a). Changes to curriculum to increase undergraduate business alumnae's ability to successfully manage in the masculine discourse may encourage more women to take on leadership roles in corporate America and make their experiences while in college more positive and growth producing.

Reflections on Methodology and Implications for Further Study

As a developing researcher, my comfort with the use of the chosen method for data collection and analysis is under construction. Additionally, there are opportunities to expand the methods to provide different and possibly equally rich analysis. First, interviewing is an art. As discussed in Chapter 3 Limitations, my phrasing of questions and incisiveness of follow up questions improved during the

course of these interviews, but would no doubt improve further should I have further opportunity to continue conversations with these women. Historical interviews rely on the memory of participants. The use of a longitudinal approach in the future could improve the trustworthiness of the narratives collected. Talking to women during their undergraduate experience, or at least at graduation, and then again several years after transitioning to work may produce richer results. Additionally, I believe that the stories and reflections captured electronically via email added richness to my data. Participants had time to reflect on questions and our discussion and remember additional experiences. Having taught numerous online courses using discussion forums, I have found that some of the richest stories are shared online and in discussion with peers—a virtual focus group. I believe increased use of this method to future studies would increase the depth of participant memory, reflection and personal benefit.

Narrative analysis was selected as the method for studying the experiences of business alumnae during college and in transition to work and their perceptions of the impact of COB on those experiences. It is the best method to document stories from a group that has been silenced by the positivistic, gendered approaches of business education research. As discussed in Chapter 3, the analysis of the narratives employed Riessman's (2008) triptych of narrative analytical strategies: thematic (what), structural (how) and dialogic/performance (identity performances). Immersion in the data led me to use only the thematic lens for this study. However, I believe that use of the dialogic/performance lens could be used in future studies of this population to increase understanding of their navigation of discourse and identity. Exposure to

critical feminist paradigms has been shown to help women develop an internalized gender identity, literacies and manage challenges (Fisher, 2001; Rogers & Garrett, 2002). It would be interesting to explore the potential for intentional identity development during undergraduate education.

The sample for this study was an appropriate start for this previously unexamined population. However, future studies could explore a broader sample of women to include current students, older alumnae and more alumnae. Looking at the experiences of women in small and not for profit organizations would be of interest as well. Intentionally seeking alumnae who have not continued a relationship with the Alumni Services Office would also improve the sample. In conjunction with or in addition to the longitudinal approach suggested above, future studies could also take a more targeted case study approach with one or two individuals and a broader source of data about their experiences. Additionally, replication of the study at other institutions is necessary to explore whether the experiences of these women is transferable or local.

Two additional avenues of study could be explored. While I did not specifically study the development of social or feminist identities in the participants, I did know the literature (reviewed in Chapter 2). While analyzing the transcripts and discovering the emergent themes, I recognized potential evidence of identity development both during college and after college. This could be a rich data source and merits further study. Future research using feminist identity development scales could guide a better understanding of what experiences lead to development, and

coping strategies of women in the masculine discourse and ultimately how to build those into business school curricula.

The influential role of faculty was an emergent theme of this study. Therefore, an investigation of the attitudes of men and women faculty about development of women students for leadership and the masculine discourse is also merited. Future studies could also explore faculty perceptions about the impact they have on women students and their beliefs about how they and their classes are perceived by women students. This study only collected data from students.

Summary and Concluding Thoughts

This study both confirmed some of my existing perceptions of women student experiences at the COB and challenged my beliefs about the impact of college experiences on future work experiences. As a faculty member, I would like to think that undergraduate education has a positive impact on students' transitions to the world of work. The women in this study confirmed that they felt well-prepared for work, technically, but once in the field they realized that they were ill-prepared for the realities of the work world for women.

As a feminist educator, I was not happy to hear these stories. I agree with Stalker and Prentice (1998) that students will bring existing stereotypes, identities and beliefs with them into the undergraduate setting, developed over years of exposure to attitudes that may slot women into particular roles in life and that "if they leave with them unaltered, the university is not doing its job of encouraging students to consider the full range of avenues open to them" (p. 62). Higher education must encourage critical thought and development as Noddings (2006) suggests,

Unexamined lives may well be valuable and worth living, but an education that does not invite such examination may not be worthy of the label education...[it should be] an examination of how external and internal forces affect our lives.

We need to ask not only what we believe, but why we believe it. Similarly, we need to ask, what do I feel? Why? What am I doing? Why? And even, what am I saying? And, again, why? (p. 152-155).

Obviously, we are failing at this role in student development. It is important to continue talking about gender, challenging assumptions about gender and listening to and supporting students as they grapple with these ideas.

The women also clearly communicated the influential role faculty play in encouraging or discouraging their aspirations for particular fields. Faculty must wield this power responsibly and be cautious about making off-hand or casual remarks to students. Particularly women students. Even in jest. As a faculty member, I take these findings to heart.

During the interviews, I unfortunately heard much of what I had previously heard anecdotally from my women students about their experiences with bias. However, I was surprised by the pervasive ambivalence participants shared about the existence and impact of gender bias while simultaneously describing incidents that could be defined as discrimination both legally and ethically. As a woman faculty member, it is my responsibility to educate students about harassment and discrimination against all marginalized groups. This study reaffirmed my commitment to this responsibility. It is also my responsibility to confront harassment and microaggressions by students and faculty when I witness them. I need to be a role

model for women and men students about how to productively confront discrimination and combat bias.

Narrative research is difficult and takes time. It is difficult because of the personal interactions the researcher has with the participants. Maintaining distance while also participating in an intimate discussion with someone is difficult. It is also very difficult to put aside other roles when conducting research of this type. I found myself slipping into my educator role during interviews when discussing bias and feminism. As Clandinin (2013) says, both interviewer and participants are partner participants, telling, retelling, and reliving the experiences being narrated. It is difficult to fully participate while maintaining a professional distance. Practically, in the process of participating, alumnae may deepen and evolve their own understandings of their professional aspirations and identities—a form of consciousness-raising and confirmation/disconfirmation. The same is true for the researcher.

It takes time to analyze transcripts and stories. It takes time for emergent themes to become clear. As an impatient person, eager to draw conclusions, narrative analysis provided me the opportunity to slow down, listen to the data and allow themes to emerge naturally.

Conclusion

This narrative study of business alumnae's experiences during their undergraduate studies opens a new conversation about how undergraduate experiences influence women's aspirations and skills for managing the masculine discourse of business. Narrative Inquiry is in direct alignment with a feminist perspective and provided the opportunity to document stories from a group that has until now been

rendered silent by the prevailing positivistic approaches to research privileged in the discipline. Additionally, much of the prior literature about the gender gap in corporate leadership has focused on the experiences of women already in the workplace.

In this study, semi-structured interviews and electronic communications allowed ten alumnae to share stories about their college and professional experience and their perceptions about the impact of those experiences on their aspirations and life choices.

Thematic narrative analysis rendered eight emergent themes about women's experiences before and after college. The findings suggest significant shifts in the perceptions of gender, the gender gap and its personal implications once women enter the work world. Additionally, women reflected on the unrealistic, minimal, and sometimes negative impact of their experiences while in college on their perceptions of gender. Participant observations and reflections point to opportunities that business undergraduate education has to better prepare women students for the realities of a corporate work world still dominated by men. As a result of these findings, I recommended two specific changes COBs can make to improve outcomes for their women students: a women student leadership development program and inclusive education faculty development workshops.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: COB Course Requirements 2014

Lower Core Classes (18 credits)

- BUS 111 Intro to Business Analysis and Applications
- BUS 201+202 Financial & Managerial Accounting
- ECN 201+202 Micro & Macro Economics
- BUS 210 Managerial Statistics I

Students must earn a 2.7 GPA in the six core classes listed above and a 2.5 cumulative GPA to maintain their status.

Other Classes Taken in the First 2 Years (10 credits)

- XXX 101 Traditions and Transformations
- BUS 110 Business Computing Applications
- BUS 211 Managerial Decision Support System
- WRT 227 Business Communications

College of Business General Education Requirements (33 credits)

- 6 Credits Natural Science
- 6 Credits Foreign Language
- 6 Credits Letters
- 3 Credits Social Science
- 3 Credits Math and Quantitative Reasoning
- 3 Credits Literature
- 3 Credits Fine Arts
- 3 Credits English Communication

Upper Core Classes (23 credits)

- BUS 355 Operations and Supply Chain Management
- BUS 320 Financial Management
- BUS 315/318 Legal and Ethical Environment of Business I/ Business Law
- BUS 345 Business in Society
- BUS 341 Organizational Behavior
- BUS 365 Marketing Principles
- BUS 390 Passport Program: Your Career Advantage
- BUS 445 Strategic Management

APPENDIX B: Introductory Participant Email

Dear Participant,

My name is Aimee Phelps Lee and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Education at the University of Rhode Island/Rhode Island College. My dissertation research seeks to document the experiences of alumnae of the College of Business and explore how that experience shaped their identities and aspirations and equipped them for the world of work in corporate America.

I have been a full-time faculty member at the University of Rhode Island College of Business for the last 5 years and have taught there since 2001.

I am contacting you because the Alumni Office at University provided me with your email as an alumna of The College of Business in the last 3-8 years. If I have reached you in error, please let me know or simply ignore this email. I would like to invite you to participate in my research.

The research will consist of two in-depth interviews about your experiences at University and your subsequent career and life experiences. I will be sharing my findings and thoughts about our first conversation with participants via email to ensure that I have understood what you told me and am accurately portraying your experiences. This feedback will inform the second interview to ensure that I am making the best use of your valuable time.

Interviews will preferably be held face to face at a location and time of your choice. If necessary we can conduct the interviews on Facetime or Skype.

Your part in this study is confidential and voluntary. None of the information will identify you or your organization by name. All records will be kept in a password-protected file, accessible only by me and pseudonyms will be used in any written analysis.

If you are interested in participating, please email me back or call as soon as possible so we can further discuss your participation!

Please feel free to call me if you would like to discuss further. I look forward to talking to you!

Best,

Aimee Phelps Lee
Faculty
University of Rhode Island - College of Business
Ph.D. Candidate in Education
238 Ballentine Hall
7 Lippitt Road
Kingston, RI 02881
aimee@uri.edu
401-864-1167

APPENDIX C: Participant Information Form

Business Alumnae Study Participant Information Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11f-bg9c6MTxIBMXBYv_CqDS...

Business Alumnae Study Participant Information Form

* Required

0. **First Name ***

.....

0. **Last Name ***

.....

0. **Current Mailing Address ***

.....
.....
.....
.....

0. **Preferred Phone Number ***

.....

0. **Preferred Email ***

.....

0. **Date of Birth ***

.....

Example: December 15, 2012

0. **Race**

Check all that apply.

- Asian American/Pacific Islander
- Bi/Multi Racial
- Black
- Caucasian
- Latino
- Native American
- Other

APPENDIX C Con't

Business Alumnae Study Participant Information Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11f-bg9c6MTxIBMXBYv_CqDS...

Undergraduate Information

0. **Graduation Date from URI ***

.....
Example: December 15, 2012

0. **Major ***

.....

0. **Minor**

.....

0. **Extracurricular Activities**

Sports, Greeklife, Clubs, Work-Study

.....
.....
.....
.....

0. **Current relationship with URI**

Do you keep in touch with any faculty or alumni from URI? If yes, who and how often

.....
.....
.....
.....

0. **Did you take a class with me (Aimee Phelps Lee)?**

Check all that apply.

- No
- One
- Two
- Three or more

APPENDIX C Con't

Business Alumnae Study Participant Information Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11f-bg9c6MTxIBMXBYv_CqDS...

0. Further Education

Degrees or certificates earned and date

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Post-graduate Information

0. Work History

Starting with current position, please list company name, title, supervisory duties, dates - feel free to email a current resume if you prefer

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

0. Life History - family where you grew up

Please describe mother's occupation and career; father's occupation and career path and Siblings - ages, occupations

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

0. Life History - current life circumstances

relationship status, children (#, ages)

.....
.....
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.....
.....

APPENDIX C Con't

Business Alumnae Study Participant Information Form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11f-bg9c6MTxIBMXBYv_CqDS...

0. Work Continuity

Have you had an absence of greater than 6 months from the workforce since you began work?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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APPENDIX D: Study Participant Characteristics

PSEUDO	LOCAT	AGE	RACE	GRAD DATE	MAJOR	CURRENT IND	HAD ME	FURTHER ED	RELAT STATUS	WORK INTERRUPT	Reason didn't use
ada	RI	28	Caucasian	2008	Accounting & Finance	Financial Services	No	MSA	MARRIED, NO CHILDREN	No	
bess	MA	29	Caucasian	2007	International Business	Pharmaceuticals	No		SINGLE, NO CHILDREN	No	
cece	MA	25	Caucasian	2011	Accounting	Financial Services	One	MSA	RELATIONSHIP	No	
dawn	MA	26	Caucasian	2010	International Business & Spanish	Financial Services	One		MARRIED, ONE CHILD	N/A	
ella	RI	31	Caucasian	2006	Finance	Financial Services	No	MSA	ENGAGED	No	
faith	CT	28	Caucasian	2009	Marketing	Professional Services	No	MBA	ENGAGED	No	
grace	RI	30	Caucasian	2006	Accounting	Food & Beverage	No	MSA	DIVORCED, NO CHILDREN	No	
hope	RI	25	Caucasian	2011	Accounting	Business Services	No		MARRIED, NO CHILDREN	No	
ivy	RI	29	Caucasian	2007	Management	Financial Services	No	CAGS	RELATIONSHIP	No	
joy	CT	25	Caucasian	2011	General Business	Hospitality	Two	MS - HR	RELATIONSHIP	None.	
k	CA	28	Caucasian	2008	Management	not selected					
l	RI	26	Caucasian	2010	Business Administration	not for profit	No		ENGAGED	no	industry
m	EU	26	Caucasian	2010	Accounting & Applied Mathematics	not for profit	One		RELATIONSHIP	No	industry
n	NC	27	Caucasian	2009	Marketing		No	CPA	RELATIONSHIP	No	location
o	RI	?	Caucasian	2008	Management of Information Systems		No		ENGAGED	No	location
p	RI	26	Caucasian	2010	Accounting		No		DIVORCED, NO CHILDREN	No	age
q	RI	28	Latino	2008	Marketing & Management	not for profit	No	MBA 2013	SINGLE, NO CHILDREN	No	backup
r	RI	43	Latino	2007	Accounting		No	MBA 2014	MARRIED, NO CHILDREN	No	industry

Age range 25-31

Grad dates 2006-2011

Majors

4 accounting

2 finance

2 Intl Business

1 marketing

1 management

1 general business

Relat Status

3 married

1 children

1 divorced

5 engaged/relationship

1 single

3 had me

6 further degrees all continuous from URI CBA

APPENDIX E: Business Alumnae Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW 1 – Experience at COB

- How would you describe your experience at the college of business?
 - How did your in class/out of class experiences shape your aspirations and intentions around work (specific situations, friends, faculty, staff, other)
 - Probe:
 - What interactions, classes, lessons, topics at University had the greatest impact on your career/life choices? How?
 - How did you feel that COB prepared you for the ‘real world’? The climate of business?
 - Did the gender composition of your classes at COB have any impact on your experience? Please explain
 - How were the contributions of women treated – in class, in business, in research?
 - Probe:
 - Were you exposed to female role models, feminist ideas, feminist research and writing? Were women’s contributions to the field included in coursework?
 - Who were your role models, mentors while in college? How did they impact your future choices? Did you have female teachers? What did you learn from them?
 - Was COB supportive of you? Of women in general?
- In what ways did your time in the college shape your outlook on business, your career and in general? Why? How?
 - Probes:
 - How did your college experience shape how you think about negotiating the various roles you chose/choose to play
 - What were your expectations about work and life when you graduated? What shaped those expectations?
 - What challenges did you anticipate in your career?
- What did you want to do when you entered the college? When you graduated? How, if at all, did it change?
 - Probes:
 - Describe your career aspirations? Have they changed? How? When? Why?
 - Did you want to be a business leader? Why or why not? Did you when you graduated?
- Where there any specific things you learned in college that particularly helped your career success?

APPENDIX E Con't

INTERVIEW 2 - Experience at Work

- What challenges have you faced in your career thus far?
 - What has contributed to these challenges and your responses to them?
 - Can you talk about any specific challenges you faced that were connected to gender?
- What are your career and life aspirations?
 - Probe:
 - Do you want to be a business leader? Why or why not? Did you when you graduated from University?
 - How do you define leadership? Do you see gender as having a role in leadership? Leadership ability?
 - What is your definition of a successful woman? Has this definition changed?
 - How likely do you believe you are to achieve your aspirations? How do you see those aspirations coexisting or conflicting? How do you/will you negotiate these conflicts?
 - How do you see your work as fitting in with your own life, is it working the way you anticipated?
- Does your identity as a female have an impact on your work experience? Are there other identities in addition to being female that you might possess that could influence your work experiences and lead to challenges
 - How do you position yourself in relation to feminism? How have these beliefs affected your decisions about your personal and professional life?
 - How do you feel that negative experiences related to gender in the masculine discourse of business have shaped your identity?

Sources: Janz & Pyke (2000), Mazerolle, Borland & Burton (2012); Ropers-Huilman & Enke (2010); Kelan & Jones (2010)

APPENDIX F: Follow Up E-mail to Participants

Happy Fall!

I hope everyone had a great summer! I am so very sorry that it has taken so long to get back to everyone. It took most of the summer to get all of the first round of interviews done and transcribed - and then school started...I am just now digging back out.

I really enjoyed talking to all of you. It was such an amazing experience for me. I really appreciate the time and thought you all gave.

I need two more things from you to close the loop and complete my data collection. Please respond by email **before November 1**. Or if you prefer, we can schedule a phone call or meeting.

First, I have begun to analyze the interviews and am finding some common themes and experiences. Not everyone agreed on all of these, but I am trying to tease out some of the key takeaways. Please read through the list below and let me know what you think. Did I miss anything? Did I misconstrue anything? Do these make sense?

- Entered undergrad with high career aspirations and plans for marriage and family – graduated with similar aspirations and plans
- Overall: Undergraduate experience had little impact on aspirations for leadership, identities related to work and life or skills for navigating gender-based challenges.
- During undergraduate:
 - Limited or ineffective exposure to female role models or gender-based work/career challenges
 - Limited exposure to ‘how’ to achieve aspirations (for example: alternative career paths, getting a job, negotiating salary, seeking promotion, managing office politics).
 - Gender composition of faculty and student body was noticeable and had some impact on learning and undergraduate experience
- At graduation, believed
 - They were prepared for the real world
 - Work life balance was not a consideration or a concern
 - Gender-based challenges might exist, but won’t have a personal impact

APPENDIX F Con't

- In retrospect:
 - University was a supportive, protective 'bubble' that provided technical skills but little exposure to the 'real world'
 - Work is all about people and soft skills - learned nothing about this in the undergraduate curriculum
 - Balancing work and life is a continuous challenge - many are considering 'stepping back' from career or changing career directions to focus on family at some point soon.
 - Gender-based challenges at work are very real. Undergrad did not prepare female students for gender-based challenges or provide tools for managing them effectively.

Second, I have some follow up and clarifying questions. Please feel free to write as little or as much as you want. Bullets and sentence fragments are absolutely acceptable. Specific examples are appreciated.

- Did you work during the school year while at University? Full-time or Part-time? Where?
- Did you have an internship? Where? Describe your experience - how did it effect you?
- Did you feel like you 'belonged' at the COB? Do you feel like you 'belong' in the world of business? Did COB have any impact on that feeling? In what way?
- Do you consider yourself a 'career/business-woman?' Why or why not?
- In general, do you believe women face challenges in the workplace? Can you provide examples of these challenges? Did anything/anyone help form this belief?
- Before graduation, from whom did you receive career advice (at University or elsewhere)? What was the advice?
- At graduation,
 - What were your expectations about how you would be treated in the workplace?
 - How did you think promotion, feedback processes, salary decisions and similar career processes would work?
 - What did you think the keys to career success would be?
 - How did this compare with reality?
- A few of you mentioned that it was 'harder' to be a woman at COB (vs. in other departments, classes, activities at University), if you agree with this, can you explain how it was 'harder?'
- A few of you said that you felt you 'couldn't be yourself' at work. Can you describe how you have changed your behavior or hidden things at work in order to be more successful? Or how not making changes has impacted you? Did you learn how to do this before leaving University? How?
- Where do you envision yourself 10 years from now? Work? Family? Life?

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