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Gender Equality and Equity Narratives Amongst Women in Nongovernmental Organizations

Barbara Etta Austin-Lucas
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Barbara E. Austin-Lucas

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Gender Equality and Equity Narratives Amongst Women in Nongovernmental
Organizations

by

Barbara E. Austin-Lucas

M.Phil., Walden University, 2020

BA, Tufts University, 1973

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

February 2021

Abstract

Gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been largely unexamined relative to their lived experiences in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The purpose of this study was to explore the narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation were explored. For this qualitative narrative research, the conceptual framework was the narrative policy framework theory, which explores how narratives influence public opinion, policy dialogue, and policy change. A sample of 18 women from two registered NGOs that maintain a relationship with the United Nations were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected via semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis was conducted for emergent themes. The findings included four themes regarding global gender equality and equity in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The themes were (a) access to healthcare, advocacy for healthcare, and pandemics; (b) education equality and equity for all women via mentoring; (c) advocacy and empowerment for future socioeconomic status; and (d) preparation of women leaders for political participation. The findings have implications for positive social change for women in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation to better implement policies on global gender equality and equity challenges in NGOs.

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Dedication

I dedicate this labor of Love to the line of women and men who God equipped and empowered to contribute to my personal spiritual growth and development. Each saw in me what I did not readily acknowledge for myself. They gave me reasons, I needed, to take courage, to embrace the need for hard work and to achieve 'unfulfilled' dreams, not for myself alone, but in honor of them. These dreams were passed on to my children: Kemba Jarena, Hakim Jabez and Kareem Mandela; along with my spiritual son from another womb, Anthony (Tony) Bernard Pinn. As I started this journey determined to motivate and inspire them, they have consistently and thoroughly questioned, challenged and encouraged me. In the eyes of my granddaughter, Abriana-Jarena, I see my Destiny and I 'Will' to her the courage to achieve 'unfulfilled' dreams. Thank you, 'ALL' my children. I Love you to Life!

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Mendasi (Twi), Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this qualitative dissertation, I explored the gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) located in the northern United States as related to their lived experience with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs were captured through semistructured interviews. Through an examination of the 19th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Equality Act of 2015, BLS Report (2017) and policy addressing gender equality and equity, a foundational understanding of the body of knowledge regarding the gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs and their lived experiences with gender equality and equity was established.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2018), in 2017, women as fulltime wage and salary workers had median weekly earnings that were 82% of that of their male counterparts. A growing body of literature showed a disparity of gender equality and equity in the private, public, and NGOs sectors (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). The private sector is the part of the national economy not under direct government control and usually consists of for-profit organizations, and the public sector is government controlled, whereas local, national, or international NGOs are classified as nonprofit voluntary citizens' groups that refrain from direct involvement in the political affairs of governments. The major focus of an NGO should be the facilitation of the collaborative work demanded between public (i.e., government) and private (i.e., for profit) organizations.

There is a gap in the literature regarding policies established to ensure that the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities are achieved for all people (e.g., gender equality) along with providing all people with access to the highest levels of leadership in any profession (e.g., gender equity; Chary, 2017; Comwall & Rivas, 2015). Although there was research on the policies related to gender equality and equity in the public and private sectors, narrative accounts that highlighted the influence of gender equality and equity on the shared lived experiences of women in registered NGOs needed to be researched. Women members of registered NGOs advocate for policies that address gender equality and equity on behalf of other women while realizing these policies directly affect the quality of their personal and professional lived experiences related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

The BLS noted the women's-to-men's earnings ratio had improved substantially since the inception of earnings data collection in 1979 when women's earnings only ranged from 77% to 81% of the earnings of male workers aged 35 and older (BLS, 2018). The current earnings ratio does not meet the requirements of gender equality in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation (University of Michigan Library, 2018). Notably, the definition of gender equality focused upon creating the same starting point for women and men ensuring that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities do not depend on whether they were born male or female (Arat, 2015). Gender equity refers to a woman's inability to obtain direct access to the highest levels within a profession along with men (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity [CAAWS], 2018). . Gender

equality and equity of women in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation form the four key areas referred to as the “global gender gap” (University of Michigan Library, 2018). This study included the gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs that maintain a relationship with the United Nations (UN). The UN (2020) has intentionally advocated for women’s presence, preparation, and participation in local and global politics since its establishment in 1945.

In Chapter 1, I provide an overview of the influence of gender equality and equity narratives upon the lived experiences of women in registered NGOs as relates to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The study participants were women and members of NGOs registered with the UN of no particular convention or placement of their registration within the UN system. An introduction of background literature central to this study is presented followed by the problem statement, which addresses the paucity of gender equality and equity narratives. This chapter then provides the purpose statement, research question, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background of the Study

In August of 2020, the citizenry of the United States marked the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution (The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription, 2010). As a result of this legislation passed in 1920, women assumed equal rights as U.S. citizens to enfranchisement. The U.S. Equality Act

of 2015 designed to encourage and promote policies to assist in the progress of all people regardless of gender identification, had been pending for years.

Although women comprise at least one half of the world's population, their global story of struggle for equality and equity has not received the international response needed to demand immediate remedy. Women's narratives, when reviewed, demonstrated a gap in the literature focused upon the influence of gender equality and equity on the shared lived experiences of women members of registered NGOs related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation. As a result of this study, elements of collaboration needed to effect equality and equity amongst women in public, private, and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) worldwide were discovered.

In this study, I elaborated upon how the disparity of between healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, political participation, and gender equality and equity's influence on the lived experiences of women who are members of registered NGOs recognized by the UN. CAAWS (2018) defined gender equality as a policy, which focuses on ensuring that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities do not depend on being born male or female. Gender equity was described as a policy, which sought to ensure that women had direct access into any career path with the support needed to reach the highest levels of a profession along with men (CAAWS, 2018).

The literature documented and supported the role of the UN as it pioneered and promoted the cause and goal of gender equality (Chary, 2017). Arat (2015) proffered an historical overview of policies sponsored and supported by the UN, which assisted in gender equality and equity policy development and women's empowerment. Cornwall

and Rivas (2015) retorted that numerous historical dialogues about gender equality and equity were promoted by the UN to the detriment of the development of a transformative agenda that would have yielded policies that promoted global justice concerns. Cornwall and Rivas also asserted that gender equality and women's empowerment must be viewed and utilized as an integral part of a strategy that promoted a process which led to positive social change. A policy on gender equality would hold all nations and institutions accountable for their actions and commitment to the inclusion of women at all levels of an internationally recognized form of governance with a zero-tolerance level for discrimination against women. Cornwall and Rivas suggested that women must seek to create international alliances and collaborative efforts with individuals and organizations that agree to assist in advancing an agenda for gender equality and equity.

The literature supported that the collaborative nature of women's gatherings and formal conferences encouraged individual women to share their stories and subsequently empowered women collectively to embrace their struggle, name it, and give it voice (Alsandor et al., 2014). A unified voice, inclusive of women and men, has encouraged the establishment of policies that have been incorporated into the multicultural context of public, private, and NGOs. According to Waylen (2014), formal and informal institutions must embrace policies that advocate for gender equality and equity. The findings of this study provide an explanation for how policies/rules change and influence institutions regarding gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs as related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was that despite the fact that women represent 50% of the world's population in the 21st century, gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs have not been examined as related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Literature on women revealed the historical struggle to establish policies that ensured gender equality and equity. Women in registered NGOs advocated for other women while simultaneously experiencing the effects of inequality and inequity in their personal and professional lives.

In this qualitative narrative research study, I used a narrative inquiry (NI) design to capture the gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs by using an interview instrument developed by Charis (2017). The gender equality and equity narratives of the participants were collected through semistructured interviews. The review of the 19th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, an examination of the U.S. Equality Act of 2015, BLS Report (2017), and current policy addressing gender equality and equity, contributed to the body of knowledge reflected in the narratives of women in registered NGOs. I solicited the participation of a group of women who are members of registered NGOs. Gender equality refers to the effort to correct the inequities that place women in a disadvantaged and disempowered position globally (Carter et al, 2015). Gender equity describes a woman's inability to obtain direct access to the highest levels within a profession along with men (CAAWS, 2018).

In this study, I elaborated on the U.S. Equality Act of 2015 that seeks to prohibit discrimination based on sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and for other purposes (The Senate of the United States: 114th Congress 1st Session, July 23, 2015). Further, there is a discrepancy in gender equity regarding the earnings ratio by occupation. Women are more likely to work in professional and related occupations such as office and administrative support jobs and still earn \$392 less than men in weekly earnings in those professions (BLS, 2018). Health, education, economics and politics form four key areas referred to as the “global gender gap” (University of Michigan Library, 2018). The study was conducted in an urban center located in the Northeastern United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the gender equality and equity narratives of women who are members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experience with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation.

Research Question

This qualitative narrative research study used in-depth semistructured interviews based on open-ended interview questions. The interview protocol was developed by following the modified version of Chary’s (2017) gender equality interview instrument with a representative sample of women from various registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The research question that guided this study was this: What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs

related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation?

Conceptual Framework

Goman and Meyers (2016) suggested that narratives provide insight into the experiences that affect public opinion and policy. Researchers strategically use narrative policy framework (NPF) theory where the narratives reveal profound insight into beliefs in cultural experiences affecting public opinion and public policy (Goman & Meyers, 2016). The conceptual framework of this study was the NPF theory, which explored how narratives influenced “public opinion, policy dialogue and policy change” (Sabatier & Weible, 2014, para. 2).

NPF is a theory associated with the exploration of how narratives influence the initial development and ongoing evaluation of public policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Pioneer NPF scholars Jones and McBeth (2010) proffered that a dominant policy story leads to policy change. Researchers using NPF have discovered that narratives may reveal profound insight into beliefs deeply embedded in cultural experiences which can affect public opinion and public policy (Goman & Meyers, 2016). Thus, NPF was used in this research to connect the story of each participant’s experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation via interviews analyzed for emergent themes representing gender equality and equity on the lived experience of women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States.

Historically, frameworks in qualitative research have been used and understood in the following ways: (a) clarifying knowing, (b) identifying logical choices, (c) research

which supports existing theory, and (d) providing support and guidance for research and/or a study (Collins & Stockton, 2018, 1-2). NPF is identified as a quantitative research theory. At least three foundational positions emerged from this ongoing discourse: (a) theory and qualitative research have an insignificant relationship, (b) theory and qualitative research methodology are related, and (c) theory and qualitative research have an inseparable bond which affects every aspect of a study (Given, 2008). Anfara (2006) reported that the historical relationship between theory and qualitative research has been complicated, yet frameworks and qualitative research when used creatively can help focus the study, aid in understanding the study, identify scholarly voice, and interpret both the strengths and growing edges of academic research.

Nature of Study

The study participants were women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States who participated in this study by sharing their gender equality and equity narratives related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. NI is a specific set of qualitative methods to investigate the lived experiences of individuals referred to as the constructed reality, which is revealed through the narration of individual stories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Via NI, the researcher has the ability to listen, observe, analyze, understand, and interpret the data captured through the narratives of the study participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The decision to use qualitative research such as the NI design is discussed in Chapter 2; however, the NI design provides an opportunity to capture the

participants' narratives while simultaneously valuing their collective voice and experiences (Goman & Meyers, 2016).

Definition of Terms

The definitions of key terms use in this study are as follows:

Gender equality: A description of a policy that focuses upon creating the same starting line for women and men ensuring that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities do not depend on whether they were born male or female (CAAWS, 2018).

Gender equity: A description of a policy that seeks to ensure that women have direct access with the support needed to reach the highest levels of a profession along with men (CAAWS, 2018).

Global Gender Gap Index: An index designed to measure gender equality. A Global Gender Gap Report was first published by the World Economic forum in 2006; the four major areas measured for gender equality amongst women are health, education, economics and politics (University of Michigan Library, 2018).

Nongovernmental organization (NGO): A nonprofit voluntary citizens' group organized on a local, national, or international level independent of any government, typically one whose purpose is to address a social or political issue (Willets, 2006).

Sustainable development goals (SDGs): SDGs known as the Global Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity (Arat, 2015).

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: The BLS is the principal fact-finding department for the U.S. government. The BLS measures and monitors labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy. BLS's responsibilities include the collection and analysis of data on employment, wages, inflation, productivity, and other areas as needed (BLS, 2018).

U.S. Equality Act 2015: The Equality Act is a Bill in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate that if passed would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include protections that ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations; and public policy in general (The Senate of the United States: 114th Congress 1st Session, July 23, 2015).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made concerning this study: I assumed that gender equality and equity matter to women. In fact, the NI design coupled with the NPF relied upon the participants' ability to tell their individual stories in their own words. In order to retell and interpret their narratives, I endeavored to remain faithful to the structure and content of each participant's narrative. I assumed that a modified version of the Chary (2017) instrument was enough to capture the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. There was an assumption that participants provided honest and accurate responses to the open-ended interview questions asked during the

semistructured interviews. I also assumed that in order to provide responsible and informative answers to the interview questions, the participants had knowledge of the terms gender equality and gender equity.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was two NGOs. The population for the study was women members of two registered NGOs in relationship with the NGO headquarters all located in the Northeastern United States. I chose to limit the interviews to women members of two registered NGOs. I did not interview men members of registered NGOs in this research. The results of this qualitative study are relevant to registered NGOs in the United States. A delimitation was the gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs as related to their lived experiences in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Limitations

The study had limitations. Qualitative studies include subjective interpretation and flexibility, which is frequently seen as limitation by proponents of quantitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Semistructured interviews provide rich information and opportunities to ask follow-up questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The number of participants in the study was limited to 18 women who were members of two registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The availability of several registered NGOs in relation to NGO headquarters all located in the Northeastern United States allowed for purposeful sampling to be used to select the participants. The interview questions were limited and focused on the lived experiences of gender equality and

equity narratives amongst women in registered NGOs as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was the findings regarding gender equality and equity of women members of various registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States who through interviews shared their lived experiences related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The findings of the study include an elaboration on the disparities in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation related to gender equality and equity of women members of various registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The findings of the study can be used by women regarding gender equality and equity in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The findings of the study can also be used by women in other NGOs to gain insight about gender equality and equity. Senior administrators of NGOs can apply the findings of this study to support women regarding gender equality and equity. Researchers can use the findings of this study to shed light on gender equality and equity.

Summary

The problem was that despite the fact that women represent 50% of the world's population in the 21st century, gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs have not been examined as related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The purpose of this study was to explore the gender equality and equity narratives of women

who are members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experience with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation. The research question was What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation?

Women have entered the 21st century prepared to continue their quest for a national and international society, which fully embraces gender equality and equity. Women comprised 50% of the world's population while their status as equal citizens of the world remain a point of international debate. The recognition of gender equality and equity as global issues and international concerns in the 21 century is crucial to growing international communications and development. Historically, the 19th amendment of the U.S. Constitution acknowledged its 100th year in August 2020. The U.S. Equality Act of 2015 had not been acted upon although the required number of states needed for ratifying had been secured during the early months of 2020; and the BLS (2017) continued to report disparity in the salaries between men and women.

In Chapter 1, I presented how women's lived experiences are compared with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation (University of Michigan Library, 2018). Also, in Chapter 1, I discussed the NI design coupled with NPF, which was the foundation for exploring gender equality and equity narratives of women in various registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. In Chapter 2, I present a review of literature pertinent to providing a foundational understanding of

current research related to the problem statement and the question that guided this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the 21st century, gender equality and equity are global issues. However, although women represent 50% of the world's population in the 21st century, gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs have not been examined as related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The purpose of this study was to explore such narratives among women who are members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The research question was What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation?

In Chapter 2, I present a review of literature, which provides necessary foundational underpinnings revealed in current research on the global issues of gender equality and equity. The literature in this chapter is presented in four sections. The first section includes an historical sketch of the NPF. The second section provides an historical overview of gender equality and equity and women's empowerment; in addition to a snapshot view of four areas: healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The next two literature review sections present the national and international policy developments related to NPOs and NGOs on gender equality and equity. The final section is about the possibility of a connection of NPF and NI in order to weave together the narratives of nine women in NGOs located in the Northeastern United States specifically related to the women's shared lived experiences with gender equality and equity in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Literary Search Strategy

The literature review consists of peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles, books, dissertations that were researched and acquired through Google Scholar, Academic Search Premier, and Walden University's Online Library, which includes databases such as ProQuest Central, Political Science Complete, EBSCO, Sage Journal, Thoreau Multi-Database Search and Dissertation & Theses @ Walden University. Databases were accessed by using the following key words and/or phrases: *gender, women, female, equality, inequality, equity, inequity, United Nations, UN, Commission on the Status of Women, UNCSW, global gender gap, healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, political participation, gender gap, disparity, 19th Amendment, U.S. Constitution, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), narrative inquiry, lived experiences, nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, nonprofit organizations, NPOs, New York City (NYC), and New York State (NYS)*. Although a vast number of peer-reviewed articles have been identified, approximately 119 articles have been selected for the purpose of this literature review.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was the NPF theory, which explored how narratives influenced “public opinion, policy dialogue and policy change” (Sabatier & Weible, 2014, para. 2). Goman and Meyers (2016) suggested that narratives provide insight into the experiences that affect public opinion and policy. Researchers strategically use NPF theory where the narratives reveal profound insight into beliefs in cultural experiences affecting public opinion and public policy (Goman & Meyers, 2016).

NPF was used in this research to connect the story of each participant's experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation via interviews analyzed for emergent themes representing gender equality and equity on the lived experience of women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. I used Chary's (2017) qualitative gender equality interview instrument to explore the influence of gender equality on the lived experiences of the participants. Chary created a collective collaborative voice through the ability to identify the specific points of agreement amongst the women's narratives. Chary clarified that the importance of gender equality and equity was that women brought a feminine understanding and perspective with them which enriched the experiences of men. Chary cautioned that if women are mentored to think like men by men or women, then the feminine perspective remains absent. Chary's findings yielded that many times for women to be successful leaders in organizations designed by men for men they had to become "more male than males" (Chary, 2017, p. 109).

NPF is a theory associated with the exploration of how narratives influence the initial development and ongoing evaluation of public policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Pioneer NPF scholars Jones and McBeth (2010) proffered that a dominant policy story leads to policy change. Researchers using NPF have discovered that narratives may reveal profound insight into beliefs deeply embedded in cultural experiences which can affect public opinion and public policy (Goman & Meyers, 2016).

Literature Review

History of NPF

The NPF was formally named and introduced in 2010 by Jones and McBeth (2010). Initially, the coupling of narrative theory and public policy theory was conceived as a quantitative, structuralist, and positivist analytical approach to how narratives about public policy are constructed and strategically positioned in order to ensure a particular outcome (Norman, Spring 2018). The notable researchers/scholars engaged in the early stages of NPF included the following: Kaplan (1986), Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), Hajer (1993), Roe (1994), and Fischer and Forrester (1993).

The historical roots of NPF established during the last few decades of the 20th century was greatly influenced by the work of several scholars, such as Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), Kingdon (1997), and Baumgartner and Jones (1993). The goal of these scholars was to establish NPF as both credible and reliable for quantitative academic research. These researchers were dedicated to policy change theory and the quantitative research method analysis of structured narratives (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The NPF recognizes three levels of analysis at which narratives can function simultaneously: (a) micro level: individuals inform and are informed by policy narratives, (b) meso level: researcher studies policy narratives and how stories are deployed by groups, and (c) macro level: researcher is interested in how policy narratives embedded in cultures and situations shape public policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). NPF literature classified policy narratives as winning, losing, and incomplete. Although narratives may

not include every recognized component, each story has meaning and power amongst specifically targeted groups.

Since 2010, several dedicated NPF researchers have continued to build upon the established framework, in addition to continuing to explore new research possibilities. Gray and Jones (2016) proffered a response to the ongoing debate as to whether or not qualitative research methods could be used with NPF research. The work of incorporating qualitative research methods into NPF infused new life into NPF's future. Gray and Jones proposed that instead of debating either quantitative or qualitative research methodology as it relates to NPF, forward thinking researchers could adopt a position of accepting both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In order to accomplish a smooth transition, agreement was reached in two areas of major concern: (a) NPF's established central assumptions, theory and structure would remain recognized, and (b) qualitative standards for evaluating qualitative research would replace existing quantitative standards (Gray & Jones, 2016).

A qualitative research guide includes four steps: (a) identify and describe the policy issue, (b) decide on the research design and method, (c) decide on how to analyze the data collected and coded, and (d) determine how the policy narrative elements (e.g., setting/context, characters: hero, victim and villain, plot and moral of the story/policy solution; Gray & Jones, 2016, p. 199). Essentially, scholars agreed that policy narratives must have a beginning, middle, and end (Jones & McBeth, 2010).

Narrative Inquiry Approach

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) researched and pioneered the methodology for the narrative inquiry approach (NIA) throughout the last decade of the 20th century (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Inspired by the work of John Dewey (1938), whose educational philosophy placed continuous, interactive, and intentional experience at its center, Clandinin and Connelly have taught researchers across various disciplines the power and value in telling a story. NIA is a specific set of qualitative methods used to investigate the lived experiences of individuals referred to as constructed reality revealed through the narration of stories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The decision to use NPF qualitative methodology and the NI design provides an opportunity to capture the individual narratives of the participants (Goman & Meyers, 2016).

NIA uses qualitative research methods that afford the researcher an opportunity to enter into the life experiences of others as a co-participant (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). A collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participants develops as each one learns to trust, reflect, and be transparent while valuing the words and voice of another. Lindsay and Schwind (2016) contend that NI emerges from a personal-professional dilemma or puzzle. The researcher's desire for a deeper and wider exploration of the dilemma/puzzle creates the need to solicit the narratives of the lived experiences of others related to the particular dilemma/puzzle (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). According to Lindsay and Schwind, the analytical process includes three levels or concentric circles of justification such as personal, practical, and social. The three-layered

process of shared narratives ensures that several narratives are used which in turn serve to add accountability and credibility to the research.

NIA requires the adherence to relational ethics in order to respect and uphold the highest levels of research integrity. NI requires that the researcher as co-participant/ collaborator demonstrates and embodies the ability to listen, observe, understand, and interpret in partnership with participant the meaning of the data collected from participants' experiences. Thus, NIA qualitative methodology involves the following strategies: semistructured interviews based upon interview questions, observation of persons in natural setting, focus groups, and surveys.

Narrative Inquiry Approach and NPF

NI is described as a “qualitative strategy in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals asking one or more to provide life stories” (Creswell, 2009, para. 3). NI incorporates a specific set of methods used to investigate a phenomenon; it often focuses on the lived experiences of individuals referred to as “constructed reality revealed through the narration of personal stories” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, para. 2). NPF is recognized as a new theory of the policy process (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). NPF explores narratives with the expressed purpose of discovering how narratives influence public opinion, policy dialogue, and policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). NI was researched, discovered, and introduced during the last decade of the 20th century. NI has been embraced by researchers in varied disciplines (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). NI and NPF are still establishing their place and significance in qualitative research.

NPF has historical roots which span over the last 40 years as a quantitative methodology (Jones & McBeth, 2010); however, NPF researchers and scholars recognized that qualitative methodology could contribute to NPF's development (Gray & Jones, 2016). The impact of the research utilizing NPF and qualitative research methodology (e.g., NI) is not yet known. As more researchers strategically use the NPF and NI combination, narratives may provide profound insight into beliefs deeply embedded in cultural and policy experiences which can positively affect public opinion and public policy. The following research articles use NPF and/or NIA to demonstrate how qualitative methodology alongside this theory and design (NPF and NIA) assist in the analysis and meaning making necessarily associated with narratives/stories.

Figure 1

The Relationship Between NPF and NIA



NPF is structured to provide an outline for collecting and analyzing narratives/stories that reflect the experiences and beliefs of participants. The desired outcome when using NPF is to have a positive influence on news media, public opinion and/or public policy. For example, a year after Michelle Obama served as First Lady of the United States between 2009 and 2017, she published her story entitled *Becoming*,

which was an immediate best seller (Obama, 2018). Thus, NPF was utilized to represent a narrative of Michelle Obama created by the White House staff to counter the negative press, which portrayed and stereotyped her as an angry, militant, unpatriotic, and disgruntled Black woman (Meyers & Goman, 2016). Michelle Obama was named a neo liberalist within the context of African American culture; she would be called a womanist, a woman who works for the whole and is against the division of Black people (Tsuruta, 2012, p. 3). Through the use of the three levels of analysis (micro-individual, meso-group/coalition, and macro-institutional culture) of NPF (Sabatier & Weible, 2014), Meyers and Gorman (2016) demonstrated how Michelle Obama and her staff reshaped her image through sharing her narrative. NPF used a source of sharing her cultural experiences and changed public opinion by correcting news media narratives (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). NPF can assist in not only changing the public's view of a person but also it can help shape public opinion regarding social, political and economic issues and concerns.

Blair and McCormack (2016) explored how NPF could evaluate narratives published in Colorado news media involving the contentious issue of hydraulic fracturing. The manner in which each local Colorado newspaper retold the story possessed the power to reinforce and/or convert the beliefs of its readers. Each news story was analyzed according to the narrative structure used in NPF (setting/context, characters, plot; and moral of the story) and all aspects similar except for the role attributed to the characters (villain, victim and hero). Actions can determine if the actor/character is seen as hero, victim, or villain. The environmental issue of hydraulic

fracturing was viewed differently based upon the political backing and leaning of the particular newspaper (Blair & McCormack, 2016). For example, The Boulder Daily Camera was viewed as liberal in its political views whereas the Colorado Springs Gazette was considered to be politically conservative (Blair & McCormack, 2016). Each newspaper shared the same narrative; however, determined two different heroes such that the liberal Boulder Daily Camera chose the public environmental organizations as heroes and the conservative Colorado Springs Gazette selected the oil and gas industry as heroes (Blair & McCormack, 2016). Essentially, NPF assisted in exposing the biases served as underpinnings in each narrative, which could provide a deeper level of insight for policy decision making and the forming of public opinion. NPF and qualitative research methods provide an opportunity to explore the role of narratives in the changing of public policy and the shaping of public opinion. NPF when historically linked with quantitative research methods would require a more scientific-based structure and sufficient data for statistical analyses (Gray & Jones, 2016). In fact, the quality of the narrative can outweigh the quantity of narratives (Blair & McCormack, 2016).

NI honors and explores the lived experience of both an individual and/or a group of people. The NIA focuses upon stories that could include people and written texts and/or all types of rhetoric (Patton, 2015). Deshpande et al. (2017) used activity systems and NI as a means to present a narrative to reflect on the socially collective lived experience of 87% of the U.S. population with neutrality. Qualitative research's methodology combined with the NIA encourage the researchers to explore and analyze human activity with the tension of neutrality recorded through a collection of written

documents from a myriad of sources such as U.S. government, public interest groups, professional organizations, broadband companies, court documents, and news media documents (Deshpande et al., 2017).

NI is not limited to the study of interviews and observations. NI embraces the storytelling role of written documents. In fact, storytelling described as a human design activity requiring a shared understanding of the verbal and written language used to tell, analyze, and interpret the findings. Each story revealed a beginning, middle, and an end (Deshpande et al., 2017). A narrative (e.g., how the telling of what happened is structured) was designed as a result of the stories (e.g., telling of what happened) the documents shared (Patton, 2015). Through constructing a narrative from documents, Deshpande et al. (2017) reflected what was learned from the story of neutrality alongside how the group learned how to embrace and engage the meaning-making process.

Narrative inquirers are cautioned that as researchers the concern is not limited to the research study alone, rather than the study connects to the lived experiences of people (Caine et al., 2018). According to Caine et al. (2018), the goal of NI is to look beyond an individual's cultural, socioeconomic, educational, and political situation imagining as well as inquiring how each story is retold and is relived after the research is completed. Researchers and research participants experience shifts and changes such as no one leaves an NI relationship unchanged (Caine et al., 2018). Although the issue of social justice is introduced through the life of a research participant, there are important insights shared with researchers in order to maintain a social justice perspective unchanged (Caine et al., 2018). A few insights are (a) NI must be viewed as a collaborative work between

researchers and participants, (b) researchers should focus on the lives of participants rather than policies/practices, (c) researchers should demonstrate concern for the person and not just identify the problem the person represents, (d) narrative inquirers should begin with an autobiographical inquiry, which connects to the phenomenon under study, (e) narrative inquirers start with experience and with an understanding that life is still in the making to predetermine another's life is to deny voice, and (f) narrative inquirers do not predetermine social justice issues rather the relationship between researchers and participants becomes the context in which social justice issues emerge (Caine et al., 2018). The practice of social justice is accompanied by ethical guidelines that are used to direct not only the research but also the life of the collaborators of the research.

Forward Thinking

An examination of the foundational literature for NPF and NI revealed both bodies of literature developed towards the end of the 20th century when the research was dominated by male researchers. Several females were cited in the foundational research of NPF (Arnell, 2007; McComas, 1999; Shanahan, 1999; Stone, 2002); however, it appears, in the 21st century there was a significant increase of female NPF researchers with the embracing of qualitative research methods. Although NI was pioneered by males, its appeal to both males and females across disciplines became evident. In fact, researchers use NI oftentimes reflected mixed gendered teams engaged and dedicated to the collaborative work atmosphere NI fostered. The focus of research with males leaned towards examining issues with the environment, organizational structures, and business systems whereas the focus of females and mixed gendered teams focused upon personal

and/or gendered relational empowerment issues and social change. NPF influences and becomes a catalyst for public policy reform and social change. The NIA provides an approach to design and qualitative research methods. NI's emphasis on people and documents storytelling provides a strategy for the incorporating of the written documents (BLS, U.S. Constitution, Equality Act of 2015, UN SDGs), which chronicle the story of women's journey towards equality and equity in the United States.

An Overview of Gender Equality and Equity and Women's Empowerment

At the outset, the difficult task of presenting an overview of gender equality, gender equity, and women's empowerment is acknowledged. The following is a brief historical sketch of the experiences of women in the United States with gender equality, gender equity, and empowerment. The view of women's lived experiences as it relates to the four areas such as healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation are presented. Women have been historically consistent in roles as educators and advocates, in fact, at times women were determined to be essential while always willing to serve the societal needs as dictated (Alston, 2005; Hemming & Savage, 2009). Women have functioned as both temporal and spiritual leaders (Christo-Baker, 2010; Barcella, 2016). Women have assumed leadership positions in family, community, and the church. The historical reality is that women have functioned in these roles while struggling to survive alongside male colleagues and a predominately female followership (Deaderick, 2019; Lehmijoki-Gardner, 2014). The presence of women as a necessary and invaluable part of the social economic structure of the building and sustainability of the United States has been noted for centuries (Hemming & Savage, 2009; Lunardini, 1996).

The major challenge that women's leadership in both the sacred and secular spheres of society face and exercise is the cultivation of a mindset which ignites the sparks of social change, which empowers present national and international leadership both males and females to identify and develop future leadership. The inclusion of women as equal and full co-laborers/partners along with addressing concerns with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation are issues with which women have learned to live.

Women of all races, cultures, and ethnic origins have experienced significant advancements; however, an examination of the global situation of women reveals the vast levels of social change that must still be achieved. Shapiro et al. (2015) explored the problem of equality and inequity alongside the diminishing number of women ascending to the top levels of leadership in the United States. Shapiro et al. (2015) revealed that in 2014 "women comprised 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs, 16.9% of Board seats, 14.6% of top executive positions, 15% of seats in Congress, 12% of Governorships, and 19% of CEOs of 400 largest charities" (para. 2). Thus, this historical situation has been described as gender inequity. According to Shapiro et al. (2015), the lives of women as early as the age of 12 have been documented as diminishing of self-efficacy and self-belief. Although women of varying racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds have fought for equality, equity, and full inclusion, these pioneers never anticipated that generations of women would fail to experience emotional and psychological growth that would lead to greater self-awareness, belief and efficacy (Pitman, 2017).

Women and Healthcare

Historically the health and wellness of women has been connected to their primary role in the propagation of humanity and has served as a source of political debate for centuries (Bliss, 2013). This role has produced an image of women as innately weak, inferior, and needing the protection of men while the reality of women's existence reiterates women persistence, strength, and superior ability to succeed and thrive when faced with difficult circumstances (Hemming & Savage, 2009; Lunardini, 1996). Women have been viewed as natural caretakers and nurturers of both children and men. The responsibility of care keepers/domestic engineers of the private sphere of the home is relegated to women.

According to Lunardini (1996), cultural tradition dictated that the nutritional plan for the family rested upon women who oftentimes were responsible for planting, harvesting, and preserving/storing portions of the crops for use during long, cold harsh winters. Throughout the development of the United States, the weight of these responsibilities was evidenced in women's mental, emotional, and physical healthcare and remains a current contributing factor in women's healthcare (Buse et al., 2018). Women's role and responsibility to produce future citizens through conceiving, birthing, and nurturing children literally cost women lives. In fact, over time women's life expectancy was lowered and a high level of infant mortality was realized due to the consistent lack of concern for women's holistic healthcare (Hemming & Savage, 2009). Unsanitary and unsafe health conditions and unsophisticated medical practices placed women's lives at greater levels of risk for diseases and death as a result of childbirth

and/or illegal abortions. Throughout the development of the United States, women have sought out the right to speak for and control healthcare designed primarily by men for women. Women have fought for the right to create and choose healthy life models acknowledged and encouraged the voices of women to be heard in the ongoing struggle for women's equality, equity and empowerment.

Women and Education

The educative journey of women during the growth and development of the United States from struggling colonies to a thriving nation has been centered on the question: What is the role of women in a developing nation? Historically, the essential dilemma of women and education was lodged in an ambivalent understanding of what was a woman's place/sphere of influence (Colman, 2011). Cultural tradition sought to confine women to the private sphere of the home, which called for a strict and limited domestic education. In fact, the restrictive aspects evolved alongside the education of women could be viewed as an attempt to cultivate and maintain historical limitations placed upon women's growth and development out of the private sphere/domestic into the public sphere /world marketplace (Deaderick, 2019). Essentially, in its development as a nation the predominately male leadership of the United States intentionally resigned responsibility in the home and relegated its influence and power to women in exchange for power and position in the world /global marketplace (Hemming & Savage, 2009). The power sought by men led to many internal conflicts and external wars that placed the lives and futures of women and children at risk.

The Revolutionary War signaled the birthing of a nation and the need for an educative process that would serve as a firm philosophical foundation providing an ongoing inspirational structure through which all citizens could experience a newfound freedom (Lunardini, 1996). During subsequent conflicts and wars, the necessity of women's intentional roles in maintaining the economic growth and development of the nation shed light on women's untapped capacity for learning and leading (Coster, 2011). Women proved to be a source of stability and strength in times of national and international crises. It was women's ability to do work traditionally reserved for men that demonstrated her value and competence outside of the home (Hemming & Savage, 2009). Employment and educational opportunities for women extended beyond times of conflict and at certain historical moments the percentage of women pursuing higher education exceeded that of men. Women's education created a direct path out of private poverty of the domestic sphere into the public prosperity of a growing economy driven by a highly politicized and patriarchal world marketplace (Bausum, 2004).

Women and Socioeconomic Status

The social relationships and intimate interactions of women with men in both the private and public societal spheres historically have impacted the lives of women in the United States. A cursory examination of a women's socioeconomic situation revealed that a woman's social status effected and determined her economical condition (Hemming & Savage, 2009). In fact, a woman's status reflected the social status of the man with whom she lived be it father/guardian and/or husband/partner. A series of legal designations were determined in the early stages of the nation which reverted a woman's

wealth to her husband upon marriage (e.g., *femme covert*). These legal designations attributed to the poverty associated with women culture and life experience.

Unfortunately, women fought for the right to independently own and sell property well into the 20th century. Since women's socioeconomic status was determined by her relationship with the men in her life, laws ensuring her wellbeing, and empowerment including minors for which she was responsible were essentially nonexistent (Colman, 2011).

Women over time realized that socioeconomic systems envisioned for the nation by the majority men participants were not designed for the development and encouragement of women citizens. Historically, the legislation, legal decisions, and policies associated with divorce and a myriad of insurances have had a negative impact on the futures of women and children (Hemming & Savage, 2009). The cultural changes that affected the lives of women were prompted by major social and economic movements (e.g., civil rights, suffrage, and women's rights, religious awakenings, stock market fluctuations) and a variety of military conflicts/actions that led to major wars (e.g., Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Falkland Islands, Desert Storm and Afghanistan;) (Coster, 2011; Judson, 1999; Lunardini, 1996). In fact, every major social and economic movement and significant military campaign challenged the cultural status quo and potentially changed the quality of women's lives and as a result all lives connected to women.

The educational and employment experiences of women emerged out of cultural necessity. As men served in wars, women responded to the dire need to sustain the

country's economy. Women were expected to leave employment outside of the home when wars ended; however, as a result of the death of a spouse, divorce and/or the experience of empowerment many women chose to remain in the public work force. Some women assumed the role of single heads of households (Hemming & Savage, 2009). These circumstances led to the feminization of poverty and a greater need for women to remain employed.

As society shifted from rural/agrarian to urban/industrial, employment opportunities provided levels which reflected a woman's education as well as compensation for her time and the societal value placed upon her work (e.g., blue collar, pink collar and white collar). The socioeconomic situation, which emanated from the combined impact of these conditions on women's life experiences (e.g., healthcare, education, employment opportunities, family, marriage, childrearing, religious values, and social status) oftentimes led to political decisions and policy development and/or social change centered around the needs of a patriarchal dominated culture (Pitman, 2017) with cyclical impact on women's lived experience.

Women and Political Participation

The historical experience of women in the United States in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation could only be adequately addressed and remedied through an unrelenting political appeal that recognized the power and personhood of those most affected by these blatant inequities, the women (Deaderick, 2019). Therefore, women strategically and systematically tested the judicial, ethical and moral standards upon which the United States was established (Frazer, 2019). Since

politics was not initially envisioned as a part of women's sphere, women had to insist upon the right to be present, heard and considered as a force with which to be reckoned (Bausum, 2004). It appeared women had agreed on a necessary absence of an aggregate of women representing women's causes and concerns in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation trusting men with the outcome of women's issues and concerns. The political tactic used to convince women that female concerns are best solved when placed in the care and left to the voices and vices of men deprived women of participating and investing in women's personal/individual and collective/group growth and empowerment (Deaderick, 2019).

Women citizens of the United States had sacrificially served as equal partners in the envisioning, establishing, and transforming of an international group of homeless refugees who settled into a nation of diverse Native American peoples and participated in the enslavement of African peoples for nearly 2 centuries. The United States was established upon its diversity, created a nation desiring freedom, justice, and equality for every citizen regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or religious background (Lunardini, 1996). Therefore, women diligently continue to seek to secure the right to exercise all benefits afforded citizens of the United States with all the protection provided by the law as it pertains to gender equality, gender equity, and women's empowerment (Hemming & Savage, 2009).

As women moved into the public sphere actively advocating for their rights as full citizens, they met the cruel backlash of both men and women who believed women needed to remain within the protective walls of the private sphere of the home (Frazer,

2019). Through equal educational opportunity and equity in employment situations, women will be positioned to envision and enact healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation reforms which empower both women and men of the present and future generations (Barcella, 2016; Pitman, 2017). Undoubtedly, essential legislation and policies regarding gender equality and gender equity are yet to be drafted, discussed, and deliberated. This is the crucial work of women in NPOs and NGOs in the 21st century.

International and National Policy Developments on Gender Equality and Equity

Women's leadership during the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century has made significant contributions to the global society. Internationally, women have served as presidents and prime ministers of countries as well as acquired prominence for historical participatory roles in establishing democracies throughout the world. Women have demonstrated effective and efficient leadership skills and abilities on both the national and international levels. Since its inception in 1945, the UN has provided a platform for an intentionally international gathering of women. In fact, the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) has modeled and championed the role of advocacy for the development of international women's leadership (Hemming & Savage, 2009). Its annual convocation has included the voices of a myriad of women and encouraged an agenda of women's global empowerment through advocating equity in education and employment opportunities (Pitman, 2017). In every sphere of women's leadership research has revealed that feminine ways or approaches to leadership or governance yield lasting results.

Feminine ways of knowing, doing and being have been celebrated and critiqued; withstanding the test of time (Deaderick, 2019). Research has called traditional masculine styles and traits into question and caused some to be abandoned. Feminine symbols, heroines, rituals, and values have challenged and changed cultures in the 21st century (Pitman, 2017). The work of the UN promotes ongoing research of women's leadership and empowerment establishing a lasting impression and marks of the feminine in various cultural contexts.

United Nations: SDGs

The UN's commitment to the global achievement of gender equality and equity is made clear through a review of its historical role in the global establishment and empowerment of women's leadership. The UN mission, which commenced 75 years ago has developed a network of supporters who fully embrace the 17 SDGs each linked to women continued international development and the elimination of the global gender gap. UN women have demonstrated that the feminine approach, although advocating shared power and egalitarian outcomes, remains rigorous in its offering of an alternative to a male model of leadership. In fact, there are situations that may demand both the male and female leadership approaches in order to achieve global success. Acknowledgement and active recognition of the existence of both masculine and feminine leadership traits demonstrate that leaders have choices that may not have been previously valued.

The work of the UN creates oversight to the monitoring of several ongoing challenges that threaten the influence and existence of femininity namely fertility, the limits placed on childbearing in some countries with the desire for a male child over a

female child. Also, a high percentage of women and children still live-in poverty (Hemming & Savage, 2009). Through the focused work of the UN, NPOs can become advocates for individuals and groups which have been denied value, visibility and voice in a particular cultural context.

Internationally, public/governmental organizations are not always financially equipped and/or socioeconomically positioned to meet the needs of all its citizens; therefore, NPOs and NGOs can work alongside local governments assisting in the addressing of global issues/concerns. Through its work, the UN has demonstrated that NPOs and NGOs working in an international context create and support greater cultural awareness through providing a committed presence. A group of organizations with a global mindset and an international commitment to educate individuals who become culturally aware cultivate a collective desire that others share the experience (Livermore, 2011). In the 21st century, NPOs and NGOs in an international context have an obligation and opportunity to support greater cultural awareness and cooperation amongst nations. This has been the historical mission of the UN since its initial founding.

NPOs and/or NGOs based in the United States have an opportunity to promote positive social change through creating a connection with the UN and its mission. The image of the United States as a place of opportunity has served to promote an international desire for some form of democratic governance. Democracy is viewed in many international countries as promoting positive social change; however, in order for NPOs and NGOs to lead another culture in positive social change, members of the organization must listen to the needs and concerns of the people living in a given cultural

context. All people (males and females) should be empowered to participate in discerning and deciding how an organization can partner with them to achieve the agreed upon goals. The work must be both intentional and collaborative for the promotion of positive social change. The partnership between public, nonprofit and private citizens should ultimately benefit the people/stakeholders which the organization serves. Changed individuals will change communities.

The UN SDGs were preceded by the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expired in 2015. The MDGs were established as a result of the Millennium Summit of the UN held in 2000. The eight goals presented and adopted by 191 UN member states and 22 international organizations were as follow: 1) Eradication of extreme poverty, 2) Achieve universal primary education, 3) Promote gender equality and empowerment of women, 4) Reduce child mortality, 5) Improve maternal health, 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, 7) Ensure environmental sustainability, and, 8) Global partnership for development. These MDGs were set to expire in 2015 and subsequently served to underpin the seventeen SDGs, which replaced the eight MDGs in 2016. The UNCSW effectively negotiated that gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG #3) underpin all goals post the expiration of MDGs in 2015. A cursory overview of the seventeen SDGs confirm the wisdom of that strategically political decision (SDG #5). Achieve gender equality and empower women is directly linked to at least 10 of the remaining 16 SDGs.

The UN agenda of voting on the 17 SDGs that would replace the MDGs which expired in 2015 was essentially snubbed by mainline American media. The UN's

adoption and advocacy for the 17 SDGs by the year 2030 provides an opportunity for U.S.-based NPOs and NGOs to engage in a movement for positive social change with a global effect in the four areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation.

National: 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Equality is important because it is a founding principle of this nation. The words articulated in the Declaration of Independence, *all men are created equal* represented a God-given mandate and a spirit of equal opportunity in which the initial authors ascribed. Although equality was a founding principle, equality excluded men of color and an entire gender which represented one half of the world's population. In addition to the inequity demonstrated in the voiceless women, many cultural groupings have fought long and hard for the right of equality expressed in founding documents to be extended to them as rightful citizens of the United States. The struggle for equality continues regarding gender equity. The principle of equality inspires thoughts for future, change, and progress which imply upward mobility. It is reasonable for each generation to expect to do better than the previous generation. People learn from the past in order to plan for the future. Unfortunately, too often, progress is measured by visible materialism rather than, a viable maturity.

The 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution mirrored the language and modeled the spirit of the 15th amendment, which secured the right of men of color to vote in 1870:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. (The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription, 2010)

The 19th amendment was first submitted and introduced to congress in 1878. The 19th amendment did not achieve congressional passage until 1919 and was ratified in 1920. Women and men of color lived to experience that the right to vote did not ensure equality. Although people of color supported the United States through a series of wars (WWI, WWII, Korean War, and Viet Nam War), the just rewards of equality and equity eluded them. Women, in general, left the marketplace and returned to the domestic sphere while men of color were systematically blocked from the marketplace economy and intentionally denied the veteran benefits due to them. Racism, sexism, and classism combined and converged to create a national crisis in the United States.

The modern Civil Rights Movement led by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the support of the Kennedy or Johnson presidential administrations created a series of Civil Rights legislation designed to address issues, which emerged as a result of a comprehensive modern Civil Rights campaign. A movement that surged in the Southern United States in the mid-1950s (as a result of boycotts, sit-ins, teach-ins, nonviolent protests, marches,) within a decade had ignited a spirit of freedom nationally and internationally. The Civil Rights legislation proposed and passed by Congress included the Equal Pay Act (1963), the Equal Rights Amendment (this amendment was three states short of ratification when time expired in 1982), the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the

Voting Rights Act (1965). Historically, the Civil Rights legislation passed by Congress was not new. Similar legislation had been proposed in the late 1930s through the late 1940s as a part of the New Deal initiative; however, the changes promised were never realized.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was fifth in a line of civil rights acts presented to Congress since 1863. The collaborative nature and the intentional inclusivity of the voices previously silenced forged a different future for the 1964 version of the Civil Rights Act. It became historical because it was the first-time discrimination in employment was prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or gender. Although the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau was established two months prior to the ratification of the 19th amendment (1920) and was charged to focus on advocacy for women's "equality and economic security and promoting quality work environments" women in the United States were not thriving in the work environments.

The Johnson administration demonstrated its commitment to positive change and provided remedy through follow up policy called affirmative action. Affirmative Action guidelines provided explicit instructions for employers to include in company policies to recruit and advance qualified minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and covered veterans. To push the remedy of nondiscriminatory actions President Johnson assigned to it the status of an Executive Order 11375. The Department of Labor's BLS maintains ongoing records on the state of the participation of various groups and the labor market of the United States. These statistics help the federal and state government to monitor and respond to labor market trends.

The Educational Act (1972) required educational institutions of higher education that receive federal funding to provide equal programs. Title IX provided an opportunity for young women to receive sports scholarships which resulted in a significant increase of women's participation in college sports. The Civil Rights Restoration Act (1988) restored the power of Title IX. This action was needed after a Supreme Court decision (1984) reopened the possibility of discriminatory action against women by allowing an educational institution an opportunity to argue for the necessity of disparity in the funding of its programs. The Equal Rights Amendment (1972) passed through Congress but was three states short of ratification in 1982. In 2015, the Equality Act was introduced to Congress. This Act continues the struggle for assisting in securing and ensuring a future of gender equality and gender equity in the United States.

New York State and New York City impact on women in NGOs

New York State (NYS) has a historical presence and investment in the U.S. women's rights movement. In 2018, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand introduced to the U.S. Congress a Resolution honoring the 170th Anniversary of the first Women's Rights Convention held in the United States in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. The resolution served as both recognition of women's rights history in the United States and a reminder of the responsibility women must assume in supporting and promoting NYS's long standing commitment to women's empowerment. Governor Andrew Cuomo the 56th governor of the State of New York is the father of three daughters. Governor Cuomo has demonstrated a commitment to gender equality and equity through his administration's legislative agenda (marriage equality, minimum wage increase, paid family leave, and,

equal rights for women). An examination of NYS's *2018 Women's Opportunity Agenda* revealed a 5-point focus on Health, Safety, Workplace, Girls and Family. A comparison to the global gender gap (healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation) confirmed NYS explicit interest in women's healthcare and socioeconomic status with an implicit interest in education and political participation for the preparation of the next generation (New York State Council for Women and Girls, 2018).

The New York City Commission on the Status of Women (NYCCSW) was the result of an executive order by Abraham David Beame the 104th Mayor of NYC serving between 1974 and 1977. An Advisory Council was empowered to assess, and present recommendations designed to improve upon the status of women in NYC. The 42 Advisory Council members were Mayoral appointees serving a 3-year term. The terms were staggered in order to ensure that the advocacy work of the Advisory Council would be ongoing. The work of the Advisory Council included suggesting areas for proposed legislation that would strengthen the role and position of women in NYC. Thirty years later under the leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio several New Yorkers reported that women continued to experience incidents of discrimination as a result of gender discrimination. Mayor Bill de Blasio decided a more aggressive approach was required in order to promote an agenda of gender equality and equity (New York City Commission on Gender Equity, 2018).

The First Lady of New York City, Ms. Chirlane McCray, has emerged as a leading voice and encouraging presence in the gender equity campaign. As the co-chairperson of the New York City Commission on Gender Equity (NYC CGE), Ms.

McCray has organized and navigated a myriad of resources that together provided strategic exposure, education, and community engagement to the needs involved in the achievement of gender equity. The NYC CGE has simultaneously brought awareness to concerns, such as: economic mobility, health, and reproductive justice along with an overall increase in understanding of the plight of women in New York City. NYC CGE goals are reflective of the four areas of disparity such as healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation). In her role as co-chairperson of NYC CGE, Ms. McCray has encouraged partnerships between public and private programs, organizations and agencies throughout NYC. Ms. McCray is a strong advocate for NYC CGE's mission and advocates for new legislation and policy changes that support collaborative activism to secure gender equality and equity.

UNCSW and SDG #5

The UN founded in 1945 held its initial meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) with the support of an all-female delegation from the United States at Lake Success, New York in February 1947. CSW formed a partnership with other UN divisions in addition to several NGOs associated with economic and social issues and concerns. CSW focused its work around the establishing of global conventions that systematically and strategically addressed and examined global women's issues. The research responsibilities connected to these global conventions opened the door for women's writing of position papers and international policies designed to improve the quality of women's lives globally.

The CSW convened conventions on The Political Rights of Women (1953) and Convention on the Consent to Marriage (1957 and 1962). As a direct result of the efforts of the CSW the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against women was adopted in 1967 and the drafting of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979. CSW's research on women and poverty encouraged advancement in the areas of community development, agriculture, science and technology. Also, the Decade of Women (1975-1985) centered upon global awareness of equality, development, and peace.

Women's conventions have been held in Mexico, Nairobi, Kenya; and Beijing, China (1995). The four historic divisions DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI, and UNIFEM have combined resources becoming known as UN Women and a part of the Secretariat of the CSW. The four areas of disparity, which are healthcare, education, socioeconomic status; and, political participation have been the focus of UN CSW's work. The UN CSW's work of global advocacy, global research and policy making continues in the twenty first century. The 17 SDGs are intimately connected to every aspect of the work of UN Women through the year 2030.

Update: Healthcare, Education. Socioeconomic Status and Political Participation

A review of the global gender gap: healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation provide an understanding of the persistent presence of these challenges for at least the last 500 years. The lived experiences of humanity are expressed and evaluated through the utilization of these categories. Therefore, an update of the global gender gap will provide an opportunity to look back at the historical movements in

each area in order that significant changes (progression or regression) may be identified and appropriately addressed regarding the impact of the global gender gap on gender equality and equity as it relates to the shared lived experiences of women in registered NGOs.

Women and Healthcare

Women's health in the context of the colonies and eventually the nation was a complex issue because women were assigned the major responsibility of caring for men, bearing children while providing support to aged and/or infirmed relatives. Childbearing was the major cause of death for women, history does record that funds were allotted for major research to determine the causes of the high percentage of maternal deaths. In fact, death during childbirth was so common; women were counseled when pregnant to prepare for death along with preparing for a new addition to the family. The publishing of the tract *Moral Physiology* in 1830 was the first-time birth control was viewed in a favorable light. The American Medical Association announced its opposition to abortion in 1859. As the women's movement became fueled by Victoria Woodhull's run for the president of the United States in 1872, the U.S. Congress passed the Comstock Law in 1873 prohibiting the mailing of obscene material and defined birth control information as obscene and this law was not changed until 1936.

Margaret Sanger opened the first birth control center in Brooklyn, New York in 1916. In 1921, Congress passed the Sheppard-Towner Act, which sought to improve health care for infants and children as well as mothers and pregnant women. Women continued to protest for the right to own property, pursue careers, and to make the

ultimate decisions regarding personal health concerns. In 1973, Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision supported the position, which granted a woman's right to choose what happens with her body particularly regarding an abortion. Opposition to this decision has continued to be debated throughout the United States in the 21st century.

Women and Education

The role of education for women in the United States has been a subject of historical debate. Intimately connected to a woman's purpose, initially education was provided to teach a woman how to maintain the home (caring for men, children, the aged and infirmed). Formal schooling for women which required the support of tax dollars was first mentioned in 1818 when Emma Willard requested monies to be set aside in order to educate women. Less than 2 decades later, colleges for women and coeducational institutions began to develop such as Oberlin College in Ohio in 1833 and Mount Holyoke Seminary in Massachusetts in 1837. The laws connected to child marriage and child labor affected the educational futures of women to a great extent. The fair Labor Standard Act of 1938 along with the Education Act of 1972 [Title IX] established a minimum wage for work and prohibited federally funded institution from using discrimination on the basis of gender. Even though the Supreme Court disempowered this Act, Congress reinstated its full meaning and power with the Civil Rights Restoration Act in 1988. A study conducted by The American Association of University Women revealed educational bias based on gender in 1992. The study documented a decline in women's voice and achievement, which starts as early as age 10. There is a marked difference in

women's presence in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics which continues to be a concern in women's education in the twenty first century.

Women and Socioeconomic Status

Women have made significant contributions to the social and economic development of this nation since the early 1600s. As colonists sought a fresh start in life experiences and enslaved persons fought for human dignity, women were the first responders to the social problems and economic crises both nationally and internationally (e.g., independence, abolition of slavery, moral reform, abortion rights, suffrage movement, temperance, prostitution, illiteracy; and immigration). In every stage of socioeconomic development in the United States, women of various cultures, races, ethnicities and religious beliefs positioned themselves alongside men in an equal fight for liberty, justice, and the pursuit of happiness. Women joined the various branches of the armed services, organized relief programs, and founded schools, religious institutions, the American Red Cross, settlement houses to service economically challenged communities as well as building a movement characterized by women leaders.

Women have worked to keep the economy strong while men enlisted and/or were drafted into active military duty during wars and national and international conflicts. After the wars/conflicts ended women were expected to relinquish positions in the workforce/marketplace and return to the privacy of the home/ a woman's sphere of influence; however, historical records support that throughout the years fewer women returned to the private sphere of the home after wars, increasing the percentage of women in the marketplace. Eventually, the collective lived experiences of women were

intricately woven into the fabric of the socioeconomic context of the nation. It is evident, the disparity in healthcare, education socioeconomic status, and political participation as related to gender equality and gender equity has been an essential aspect of women's lived experiences in the United States.

Women and Political Participation

Political participation has been at the heart of the lived experience of women in the United States. Women learned how to navigate through a myriad of political changes which were compounded by social issues and concerns locally and globally. The decision regarding how women's rights and the global gender gap such as healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation affect each other is a political action with political consequences. All legislation that influenced women's progress in a positive and/or negative manner was a result of sustained political action.

There are several historical documents that assisted in paving the way for political actions that led to significant changes in the collective lived experience of women in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York yielded the Declaration of Sensitivity crafted by women to resemble the Declaration of Independence written one hundred years earlier. When the founding patriarchs failed to heed Abigail Adams's words to her husband John, "remember the ladies," women realized that a struggle would ensue for the power needed to experience the comprehensive change women desired. Thus, the 1848 Document of Sensitivity and other documents with like purposes emphasized and advocated for a woman's right to own property (Arat, 2015; Carter et al.,

2015; Chary, 2017; Sandberg, 2013) and the right to assume guardianship of her children. This document paved the way for the future documentation of women's rights such as a woman's right to choose and to have ultimate responsibility for her body, women's rights in marriage and adequate accommodation in divorce, women's suffrage, women's employment and labor statistics, pay equity and equal rights. It is clear that the work of the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) has not only inspired women globally but also its work has left an indelible imprint on local women as well.

New York City and New York State share the story of being the home of the first meeting of the women's suffrage movement in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, the founding meeting place of the UN headquartered in New York City in 1945; and, the initial gathering of the international women's movement in Lake Success, New York in 1947. Indeed, New York City provides a unique lens through which to view the shared life experiences in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation as related to women in NGOs. These various lenses help to understand the global gender gap in terms of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation upon women shared lived experiences.

Gaps in the Research

This literature review included gender equality and equity alongside the historical lived experiences of women as reflected in the four areas of disparity in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Although the literature revealed women's lived experience in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic

status, and political participation, there is a gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of women in registered NGOs. This study addressed the gap in the literature focused on gender equality and equity.

Women in NGOs have been positioned on the frontline of the continued struggle for gender equality and equity advocating simultaneously for women. The narratives of women in registered NGOs needed to be captured, recorded, analyzed, and interpreted narratives regarding gender equality and equity. The literature review revealed the gap in the narratives of women in registered NGOs on disparities in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation taking into consideration the influence of gender equality and equity on the lived experience of women in NGOs (Arat, 2015).

Women in NGOs on Gender Equality and Equity

Women have functioned in significant positions in the UN since its founding in 1945. Currently, the work of women in NGOs are reflective of the programming achieved by women in registered NGOs connected and working through the global platform supported by the UN. The UN SDGs were preceded by the eight MDGs, which expired in 2015. The MDGs were established as a result of the Millennium Summit of the UN held in 2000. The eight goals presented and adopted by 191 UN member states and 22 international organizations were as follow: 1) Eradication of extreme poverty, 2) Achieve universal primary education, 3) Promote gender equality and empowerment of women, 4) Reduce child mortality, 5) Improve maternal health, 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, 7) Ensure environmental sustainability, and 8) Global partnership for

development. These MDGs were set to expire in 2015 and subsequently served to underpin the 17 SDGs that replaced the eight MDGs in 2016.

The UNCSW effectively negotiated that gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG #3) underpin all goals post the expiration of MDGs in 2015. A cursory overview of the seventeen SDGs confirm the wisdom of that strategically political decision. SDG #5: Achieve gender equality and empower women is directly linked to at least 10 of the remaining 16 SDGs. The UN agenda of voting on the 17 SDGs. The SDGs are intimately connected to the four areas of disparity also known as the global gender gap, which includes healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

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also known as the global gender gap: which includes healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration has achieved many accomplishments in the past seven years; however, there is still progress needed in health and socioeconomics. In 2018 in NYS the wage gap remained eighty-nine cents for women to every dollar made by men (New York State Council for Women and Girls, 2018). Unfortunately for women of color the wage gap is greater (e.g., Asian American 85 cents, African American 66 cents and Hispanic 50 cents). Fifty percent of female workers in NYS are minimum wage earners. Women comprise 50% of U.S. college graduates with 29% of the women majoring in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The labor statistics for NYS mirror the statistics of the BLS. The NYS focus on passing legislation that will change the life experiences of women in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation has stirred up crucial dialogue amongst women and men regarding gender equality and gender equity (New York State Council for Women and Girls, 2018).

In June 2015, Mayor de Blasio the 109th Mayor of New York City established the New York City Commission on Gender Equity (CGE) to continue the thirty years of work accomplished by the NYC CSW. The mission statement of CGE charged the Commission "to address issues of inequity and discrimination facing girls, women, transgendered and gender non-conforming persons regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, faith, gender expression, immigration status, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status" (para. 3). In September 2016, the New York City Council confirmed the need for

a permanent presence of CGE to establish and maintain a long-term focus on the elimination of gender discrimination in NYC.

Although the global gender gap included healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation, the New York City CGE focused upon two of the four areas: namely, healthcare (e.g., affordable reproductive health care services) and socioeconomic status (e.g., gender leadership gap and gender pay gap). The CGE has engaged the citizens of New York City in educational forums, film screenings, panel discussions, workshops, public protest marches and celebratory community events. First Lady McCray in her work as Co-Chairperson of CGE has established a firm foundational understanding of and for gender equity promoting a three-prong agenda: (a) economic mobility, (b) health and reproductive justice, and (c) safety (ending gender-based violence) (New York City Commission on Gender Equity, 2018).

A review of international, national and local (New York City and New York State) policy development on gender equality and gender equity revealed that New York City is strategically positioned to benefit from the international work which emanates from the UN and the cutting edge forward thinking associated with the policy making which emerges from the state capital in Albany, NY. Although historically the UN's (international) influence on the policy development of gender equality and gender equity in NYC and NYS is undeniable, how NYC and NYS (local) influence the work of the United States (national) in partnership with the UN (international) must be determined. NYC and NYS acknowledge healthcare and socioeconomic status of the global gender gap healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation.

The UN, NYS, and NYC claimed historical roots in the women's rights movement. The UN has provided an international platform for women to draft, discuss and disseminate policies that possess the potential to influence the lives of women locally, nationally and internationally. NYS and NYC have been positively influenced by the work of the UN on behalf of women and families. Policy development related to gender equality and gender equity in the twenty first century requires a connectedness with not only the legislation/policy, but an understanding of the lived experience of people with and for whom the policies are designed to empower and change. NPOs and NGOs provide the workers responsible for furthering the needs of ordinary people. Women comprise a significant percentage of the labor force in the overall organizational structure of both governmental/public and nongovernmental/private institutions.

Summary

Women comprise 50% of the population worldwide; however, women are still subjected to the demeaning and disempowering effects of gender-based inequality and inequity. This qualitative study explored how gender equality and narratives of women in registered NGOs influence the shared lived experiences while addressing the disparities in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States were captured through semistructured open-ended interviews using Chary's (2017) gender equality interview instrument. I used five research areas which together presented an overview of the influence of gender equality and equity on the shared lived experience of women.

A historical overview of gender equality, gender equity and women's empowerment were presented regarding global gender gap in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Information on the development of international (UN), national (USA), and local (New York City and New York State) policies of NGOs and/or NPOs were presented to address the issues of gender equality and equity. Research on gender equality and equity from the UN [SDGs and UNCSW] with an update of the current research on the "global gender gap" [health, education, socioeconomics and politics] was also presented. Gaps in the literature on gender equality and equity relating to women in NGOs were presented.

In Chapter 2, I discussed and described the following areas of research: NPF as an historical overview of gender equality, gender equity and women's empowerment, the development of national and international policies on gender equality and equity influenced by NPOs and/or NGOs, current research on gender equality and equity, and, the gaps in the research on gender equality, gender equity and women's empowerment as related to NGOs. The research supported an historical disparity that existed in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation between men and women regarding the global gender gap. The research also reflected that the statistics of NYS mirror those of the nation (i.e., the United States). In Chapter 3, I will provide a detailed discussion of the methodology for this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experience with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation. The gender equality and equity narratives of the participants captured through semistructured interviews that assisted in acquiring an increased understanding of the influence of gender equality and gender equity upon the lived experiences of women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. Through an examination of the 19th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Equality Act of 2015, BLS Report (2017), and current policy addressing gender equality and equity, a foundational understanding of the body of knowledge regarding the gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs and their reflecting and reconnecting of their collective lived experiences with gender equality and equity will be established.

In Chapter 3, I state the research questions for the study along with a rationale for the choice of the research tradition and design. The role of the researcher and the methodology selected will be presented and discussed in detail with particular attention given to participant recruitment and selection, instrumentation, data collection and a presentation of a data analysis plan. A summary of Chapter 3 is followed by a brief introduction of Chapter 4. The research question that guided this study was What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to

their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation?

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative methodology was used for this study. Qualitative researchers learn to listen, observe, capture, rewrite, analyze, understand and interpret the meaning of the data collected. The data collected are actual words, descriptive observations, reflections and experiences of both the researcher and participants (Patton, 2015). Gray and Jones (2016) are credited with the work of incorporating qualitative research methods into NPF theory. NPF is the result of the coupling of narrative theory and public policy theory provided the critical foundational structure. Qualitative methodology and various theories have evolved into a creative relationship that helped to focus, understand, identify scholarly voice and academic strengths of research studies (Anfara Jr., 2006). Therefore, the decision to use a qualitative methodology along with NPF assisted in focusing upon and exploring how narratives influenced the development and the ongoing evaluation of public policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

For this study, I used a qualitative methodology with NPF as the framework and NIA as its design. NIA proffered a specific set of qualitative methods to investigate the lived experiences of individuals referred to as a constructed reality, which revealed through the sharing of narratives/stories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Both NIA and NPF were used for the semistructured interviews when the interview protocol was designed to contain open-ended interview questions. I used the interview protocol to capture the individual narratives of women in various registered NGOs located in the Northeastern

United States while simultaneously valuing individual experiences that possessed the potential to create a collective voice. NI is used as a qualitative approach to view individual participants as co-participants or collaborators in telling a story. In this study, I used a modified version of the Chary (2017) interview instrument, which addresses the gap in the literature regarding women's gender equality and equity narratives on disparities in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. I examined gender equality and equity narratives on the lived experiences of women in registered NGOs. Therefore, the stories captured via the interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted.

Role of the Researcher

As the primary researcher, my role was to investigate the lived experiences of participants in order to hear, listen, learn, and retell the story of another with integrity. I assumed the role of an observer-participant assisting the participants in constructing of reality as I listened to their words and observed their actions within the natural setting. I created a collaborative relationship with the participants. Each participant learns to trust, reflect, and become transparent while each person values the words and voice of another (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). My role in data collection was to allow participants to share their stories.

The context and setting of the research was an urban center. The participants were women in various registered NGOs. I collaborated with women in registered NGOs for over 3 decades. I used a reflective/analytical journal and observational fieldnotes to record personal assumptions and biased reactions to the content of participants'

narratives. Even though numerous NPOs and NGOs exist in the research context; there are fewer NPO and NGOs that have maintained status as registered NGOs. Therefore, the requirement was that women participants met the criteria of membership in a registered NGO. Participants were not compensated for their participation in this study. Essentially, I remained reflexive in my position and purposeful to avoid including colleagues as participants in this study.

Methodology

In this section, I identify the population used for this study along with the sampling strategy and the relationship between saturation and sample size. The criteria upon which participants' selection was based is also established. I also share the rationale for the number of participants along with the specific procedure for how participants were identified, contacted, and recruited. The goal of this section is to identify and explain the various components of the research methodology and how together the data, once collected and analyzed, provided crucial responses to the research question proposed in this study.

Participant Selection

The population identified for this study were women members of two registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. Each participant was a member of registered NGOs. Initially, I contacted the administrator responsible for research at the NGO and asked to identify potential participants for this study who were members of their NGOs. I requested referrals of women who worked specifically with gender equality and equity issues/concerns. I identified 30 potential participants, and 18 agreed to

participate in interviews. Therefore, the interview questions were focused upon the gender equality and equity narratives of women members in registered NGOs focused upon their lived experiences as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

I solicited potential participants by contacting two leaders of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States and/or contacting persons who work with specific groups in the areas of gender equality and equity. I requested a list of members who met the selection criteria to be the potential participants in this study. Although I inquired about available space in offices designated for conducting interviews, I was aware of the recent coronavirus pandemic and was prepared to conduct interviews via telephone or zoom.

Each potential participant received a letter of invitation that outlined the expectations for all study participants. The selection criteria for participants were women with enough knowledge and awareness of issues and concerns associated with gender equality and equity, the completion of a demographic survey (see Appendix A), and participation in semistructured interview questions based on a modified version of Chary's (2017) interview instrument on gender equality.

I emailed an invitation to each potential participant intended to ensure the participant's willingness to be a part of this study. I conducted 18 interviews because with this number of participants I reached the saturation point in the data collection process. Each participant submitted to a 1-hour semistructured interview. I recorded these qualitative interviews digitally with the permission of each participant. Participants

reviewed and accepted the informed consent form via email. The names of the organizations are not revealed in the findings, and the names of participants are held in strict confidentiality to protect the participants according to the policy of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Each participant had a minimum of 2 to 3 years' work experience with registered NGOs. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire, which assisted me in the final data analysis of my research. . I requested a follow-up interview to conduct member checking (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). I used the expertise of a professional transcriber and a technical assistant, persons who agreed to work with me on this research. A copy of all data collected will remain in an undisclosed place in a lock box for 5 years after the completion of the dissertation.

Instrumentation

In qualitative research methodology the researcher is the primary instrument. I used Chary's (2017) interview instrument. I kept researcher's observation notes to record during the interviews, transcribed the semistructured interviews that were digitally recorded, and kept analytical/reflexive memos.

In addition to the primary research resources, several secondary sources of research served as supportive data to this study. Statistical data acquired from the BLS assisted in corroborating possible disparities between men and women in the labor force. The Congressional Record of activity regarding the historical journey of bills, acts, and laws provided information on the legal actions taken on the issues of gender equality and equity. Amongst the historical documents were the 19th Amendment, which legalized a

woman's right to vote in 1920, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which introduced sex/gender as a consideration in civil rights actions, and the Executive Order of President Johnson, which followed and initiated Affirmative Action. In addition to these sources, scholarly peer-reviewed articles served to confirm the participants' experiences with gender equality and equity.

Chary (2017) developed an interview instrument. Chary's intent as a management professor, researcher, and consultant was to examine how gender equality and equity concerns affected the lives and careers of women and men. Chary's findings revealed that the feminine perspective enhanced the cultural context of a business. Gender equality was recommended over gender neutrality because women's voice and presence filled a void in any and every situation (Chary, 2017). I researched what the gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs revealed regarding their lived experiences related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Chary's research encouraged businesses to view women's presence and voice as an empowering influence.

Procedures for Data Collection

The data were collected via semistructured qualitative interviews from 18 participants. I was responsible for the collection of all data. Each participant committed to one interview, which lasted 1 hour. Each interview was digitally recorded via audiotape with the permission of every participant. I recorded observational field notes during the interviews. Participants were given an opportunity to review the interview transcript via member checking. At the conclusion of the interviews, I sent a formal

“Thank you letter” to all participants. Chary’s (2017) interview instrument was modified to reflect the research question. I also created a questionnaire to gather demographic information on each participant.

The data analysis plan was centered in the design. I focused on the basic elements of this qualitative research to explore the gender equality and equity narratives. I contacted via email and a follow up telephone conversation two leaders of registered NGOs requesting names, emails, and cell phone numbers of potential participants. I conducted 1-hour interview with each participant. All interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of participants. I discussed with participants another interview date for member checking. I recorded observational field notes throughout the interview process. I maintained an electronic journal recording thoughts, insights, reflections and learning connected with the research process on a weekly basis during data collection and analysis.

During the data collection process, participants were asked to answer all interview questions with honesty and transparency. All data collected are held in strict confidence and the participants were assigned a code to protect their anonymity. The names of organizations were masked as required by Walden University’s IRB. All collected data will be kept confidential and safely stored for 5 years after the publication of the dissertation. After 5 years all data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis Plan

In qualitative research methodology, the researcher is the primary instrument. Dr. Chary provided his written permission for me to modify and use his interview instrument

for my research study. Additional instruments that were used to answer the research question were: (a) observation notes that I recorded during all 18 interviews, (b) transcripts of the in-depth semistructured digitally audio recorded interviews, (c) analytical/reflexive memos and journaling, and (d) a demographic survey/questionnaire distributed to and completed by all 18 participants. My goal as a qualitative interviewer was to listen, observe, and capture the narratives of each participant's lived experience with gender equality and equity.

The process of data analysis commenced after the data collection. The topic explored and the questions queried shaped the stories of each participant. The narratives of 18 women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States were captured by audio digital recording to reveal the gender equality and gender equity narratives as related to their lived experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Observational fieldnotes were recorded during the interviewing process in addition to keeping a reflective analytical electronic journal.

I analyzed the 18 narratives by using the four areas of the global gender gap such as healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The research question, the literature review as well as the interview questions reflected the seamless structure these four areas afforded my research process. The initial hand coding of the data was accomplished through the demographic survey, which provided a foundational understanding of the lived experiences of the 18 participants.

The hand coding of the observational field notes, interview transcripts, and journal added another level to the analytical process of understanding the collection of

narratives that guided the hand coding process along with the systematic analysis of the 18 narratives obtained from the semi-structured open-ended interviews that comprised the primary research data collected for this study. The hand coding process involved reviews of the interview transcripts. I coded the interview transcripts focusing on global gender gap, which guided my research from its inception.

I started the coding process using different colors. The colors were pink for healthcare, blue for education, green for socioeconomic status, and orange for political participation. As my data analysis progressed, I acknowledged the need to assign a separate color for gender equality and equity, which was yellow.

I coded with designated colors my field notes taken while interviewing participants during the second and third reviews. I started out coding words and phrases for healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Patterns and categories emerged. I collected and transcribed all interview data. Each participant was asked to review their individual interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the captured interview data that reflected their words and views on each interview question. I hand coded the data collected from the research creating a chart and code book. Discrepant cases were not found.

Trustworthiness of the Study

During the data collection and analysis, I focused on clarity and agreement on concepts, common methods, and timelines to ensure alignment of the research question, purpose statement and the problem statement. During the interviews, I built good relationships and trust with the participants to enhance the quality of the findings. In

order for this qualitative research to be trustworthy, I ensured that my qualitative research method was based on understanding of the local context.

The qualitative research interview technique that I used enhanced the credibility of the research. Credibility places a rigorous demand on the qualitative researcher who must remain vigilant to search for complexities and research patterns not always obvious and explainable in the research process. The qualitative researcher must be committed to quality research, which reflects the concept of rigor that results in “more trustworthy findings” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 17). Credibility introduces a high level of quality necessary for qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189). As a novice researcher, I established credibility within this study as the participants were all familiar with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Regarding transferability, I believe the themes I presented provide the readers with evidence that the research study’s findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations withing MGOs. Thus, for the purpose of this research, dependability includes the aspect of consistency. Therefore, dependability was achieved by analysis of patterns and themes to reach data saturation.

Qualitative strategies can be used to achieve and affirm varied issues connected to the overall trustworthiness of a study. The goal of trustworthiness is to establish confirmability. I demonstrated trustworthiness during the coding process by my knowledge of proper data analysis procedures to credibility in the comprehensive qualitative research process. I established confirmability through reflexivity in this qualitative study because reflexivity is an integral part of ensuring the transparency and

quality of qualitative research. Furthermore, the participants reflected on their lived experiences and answered the interview questions. Thus, I addressed reflexivity, as a novice researcher, because I was self-aware regarding my role within the study.

The strategies that were employed to ensure credibility (i.e., internal validity) in this study was member checking. Transferability refers to how the research process can be easily adapted to and applied from one place and/or group of people to another. The strategies selected to demonstrate transferability (i.e., external validity) in this study was thick description and variation in participant selection. Dependability reflects the level of reliability and faithfulness that can be attributed to and placed in the research study. Confirmability is considered to serve as a means of objective verification or corroboration that assists in the establishment of validity was achieved through the strategies of journaling (reflexivity), member checking, and observational and field notes.

Ethical Procedures

I treated all participants with respect. I conducted this study by being transparent. The data I have collected during the interviews are kept in a locked filing cabinet. I ensured that all data collection and analysis procedures were ethical, and the participants were protected, all participants, and NGOs names were assigned pseudonyms. Thus, only data related to this study was collected from the participants during the interviews.

Saldana (2016) proffered that ethical issues linger in all research which includes human participation. Ethical concerns can be personal and/or professional in nature. I anticipated potential issues for myself and participants. Creswell (2009) asserted that researchers should avoid any associations and/or acts of misconduct that might reflect

negatively on their organizations or institutions. Relational ethics necessitates that researchers take seriously their ability to self-reflect and identify with others through reflecting on their differences and similarities. Research ethics addresses the ethical issues faced by researchers and the need for researchers to understand, consider, and, approach their roles with humility in collaborative relationships (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Thus, ethics was a crucial and integral aspect of this qualitative research.

The essential purpose of qualitative research is grossly compromised if ethical standards are absent and/or ignored by qualitative researchers. As a qualitative researcher, I remained committed to transparency in the critical work involving the self and others. I conducted ethical interviews with their conversational partners ensuring they end the interviewing process in a better position than when they entered by showing respect, honoring promises, providing no pressure to participate, and doing no harm (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

As a novice qualitative researcher, I diligently anticipated ethical issues related to the research problem, research purpose, research questions, collection of research data, research data analysis /interpretation, and the writing and disseminating of research results (Creswell, 2009). Prior to recruiting participants, I obtained approval from Walden University IRB (Approval no. 06-09-20-0338432). Research institutions require IRB's approval in addition to informed consent forms filing to protect the researcher, participants in the research, and the research institution. These procedures "can help a researcher conceptualize what 'harm' might mean and look like in the proposed research" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 347). Walden University has established research ethics

through its IRB, ethics committees, and institutional codes of ethics. As a researcher in the Walden University community, I followed all ethical IRB guidelines.

The following documents were used regarding the ethical permissions and procedures connected to Walden University's IRB Application, interview protocol, demographic questions, informed consent form, letter of invitation, letter of cooperation and confidentiality agreement. I treated the participants with dignity and respect and informed them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I described the qualitative methodology. My role was that of a novice researcher. I collected rich data from the participants that represented their narratives. I described the credibility, reliability, and transferability of this study. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the gender equality and equity narratives of women who are members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experience with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation. The gender equality and equity narratives of the participants were captured through semistructured interviews. I incorporated a modified version of Chary's (2017) gender equality interview instrument. The research question that guided this study was What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation?

In Chapter 4, I focus on providing an explanation for the context in which the data were collected and analyzed. In this chapter, I include the findings based on the lived experiences of the participants regarding healthcare, education, socioeconomics, and political and gender quality and equity. The demographic information, gathered as a result of the demographic survey associated with the 18 participants, observational notes, and journal notes are also presented. I conclude the chapter with a summary.

This research involved women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The participants and I were directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only was the United States confronted with a health pandemic, which affected the education, socioeconomic status, and political participation of its citizenry, but the spiritual, psychological, and emotional state of the people as a result of COVID-

19 had not at the time of this research been fully considered and/or calculated. COVID-19 further exacerbated the influence of the global gender gap as related to the lived experience of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States when the center of most activity returned to the home due to the federal, state, and the local government restrictions. The response to the request for citizens to self-quarantine shut down major cities in the Northeastern United States.

Countless celebrations and planned programs were cancelled from calendars leaving hotels and meeting halls empty. Among the cancellations was the 25th celebration of women's rights and gender equality, Beijing 1995 and the 75th celebration of the founding of the NGO headquarters organization in the Northeastern United States. This was scheduled to be a major conference addressing the fifth of the 17 SDGs: gender equality. The cancellation of this meeting placed an indefinite hold on the vote for global support and adoption of the policies and the goal of gender equality. The financial impact of the subsequent loss of income and the high levels of unemployment in the public and private spheres throughout the United States as a result of COVID-19 revealed an unprecedented negative influence on the lived experiences of women as related to the global gender gap: healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

The impact of the nationwide self-quarantine associated with COVID-19 affected not only healthcare in the United States but also the other three areas of the global gender gap: education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The United States was confronted with the voluntary closure of all educational facilities, and in the area of

education virtual learning became the rule of the day. The voluntary closure of religious institutions meant that social media platforms became the medium through which congregations experienced the activities of worship, teaching, and evangelism.

During COVID 19, the home or shelter for the homeless became the place from which all household members connected virtually with school, work and houses of worship. Families were reintroduced to each other as they adjusted to different methods of loving, caring, celebrating and comforting while adhering to restrictions on the number of persons allowed to gather in one place simultaneously. Social distancing practices and the need to wear personal protective equipment when reentering the world for the designated crucial necessary engagements first responders who were required to work, doctor visits, and trips to the grocery store, pharmacy and/or liquor store.

The Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of 1964 and 1965 included gender-based discrimination. In January 2020, the state of Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. The gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States included and addressed all these human concerns. This global state of disease and unrest affected the development and execution of my Walden University IRB process.

I ensured that anonymity would be satisfactory for this research study. I masked the place of the research (i.e., the Northeastern United States), to mask the participant organizations such as NGO and NPO, and held participants' names and information in confidence by identifying participants only by letter as Participant A, Participant B, and

so forth. The ability to maintain confidentiality was a challenge since sharing specific details of dialogue was crucial to the demographic stories associated with this research.

I used NPF as a theory and followed the research guide suggested by authors Gray and Jones (2016). The qualitative research guide included four steps: (a) identify and describe the policy issue, (b) decide on the research design and method, (c) decide on how to analyze the data collected and coded, and (d) determine how the policy narrative elements (setting/context, characters: hero, victim and villain, plot and moral of the story/policy solution) connect to convey the story. NIA was the qualitative strategy I employed to collect data from 18 participants in probing their lived experiences with gender equality and gender equity with the goal of a personal narrative developed for each of the 18 participants.

Each participant met the selection criteria of being a member of a registered NGO located in the Northeastern United States for at least 2 years. I requested referrals of women who worked specifically with gender equality and equity issues/concerns. I used purposive sampling. Eighteen participants from a pool of 30 women agreed to participate in interviews. Thus, the sample was 18 women members of registered NGOs, located in the Northeastern United States.

The interview questions focused on the gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. COVID-19 (i.e., the coronavirus pandemic) affected the data collection process. Due to the pandemic, Walden University's IRB mandated that

interviews take place via telephone, computer, or an acceptable social media platform without face-to-face interviews.

An invitation letter was emailed to 30 potential participants. For recruitment purposes, I requested initial interactions via email and the response “I consent” to the informed consent form to indicate the participants’ acceptance of the invitation to participate in interviews. I received “I consent” responses from 18 participants. Each participant agreed to a 1-hour semistructured interview. I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B).

I conducted the interviews with the participants via telephone or the audio feature of Zoom, a cloud-based peer-to-peer videoconferencing platform (<https://zoom.us/>). All interviews were recorded via a digital audio recorder. The interviews were held during a specific timeframe between Friday, June 26, 2020 and Friday, July 3, 2020. The participants chose the time most convenient and conducive to their personal schedules. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). During the interview, participants were asked to answer all questions with honesty and transparency.

In addition to the primary research resources, several secondary sources of research served as supportive data to this study. Statistical data were acquired from the BLS, which assisted in corroborating possible disparities between men and women in the labor force. The Congressional Record of activity regarding the historical journey of bills, acts, and laws provided information on the legal actions taken on the issues of gender equality and equity.

Historical documents I reviewed included (a) the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which legalized a woman's right to vote in 1920; (b) the Voting Rights Act of 1965 coupled with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which introduced sex/gender as a consideration in civil rights actions; and (c) the Executive Order of President Johnson which followed and initiated Affirmative Action. The Equality Act introduced in 2015 received the 38th state needed for ratification by Congress in February 2020. NYC and NYS Annual Reports on Women's status and concerns connected to gender equality and equity provided historical and statistical data that supported the spirit of the times. In addition to the sources, scholarly articles served to confirm women participants' experiences with gender equality and equity. I focused on the basic elements of my qualitative research plan as I explored the 18 narratives regarding gender equality and equity. I conducted 18 one-on-one 1-hour interview with the participants.

Thematic analysis was used for emergent themes. The analysis revealed themes for healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The themes for healthcare were (a) pandemics and global disasters, (b) access to healthcare, and (c) advocacy for wholistic healthcare (see Figure 2). The themes for education were (a) education for all, (b) education for equality and equity, and (c) educating/mentoring the next generation (see Figure 3). The themes for socioeconomic status were (a) agenda making for future, (b) advocacy awakening for change, and (c) action taking for empowerment (see Figure 4). The themes for political participation were (a) increasing opportunities for women leaders, (b) men learning to listen to women leaders, and (c) adequate preparation of women leaders (see Figure 5).

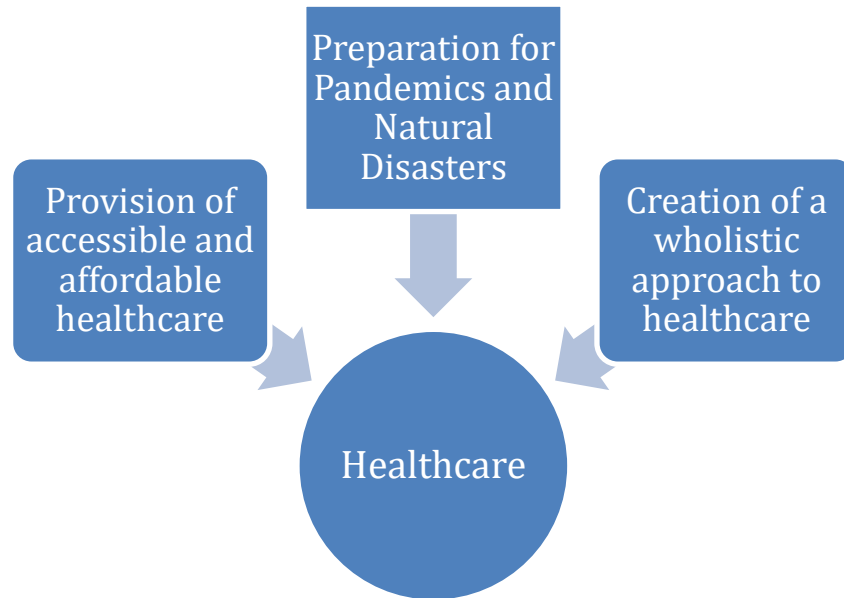
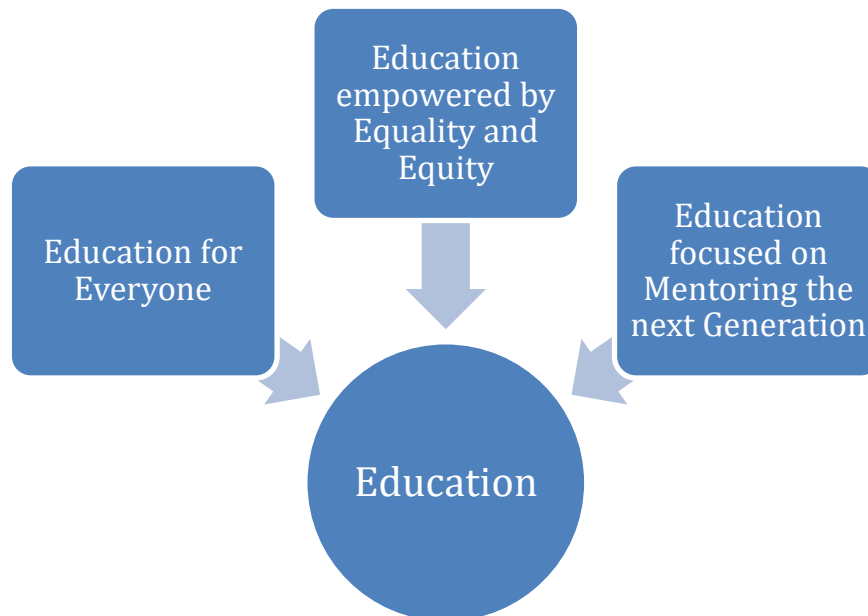
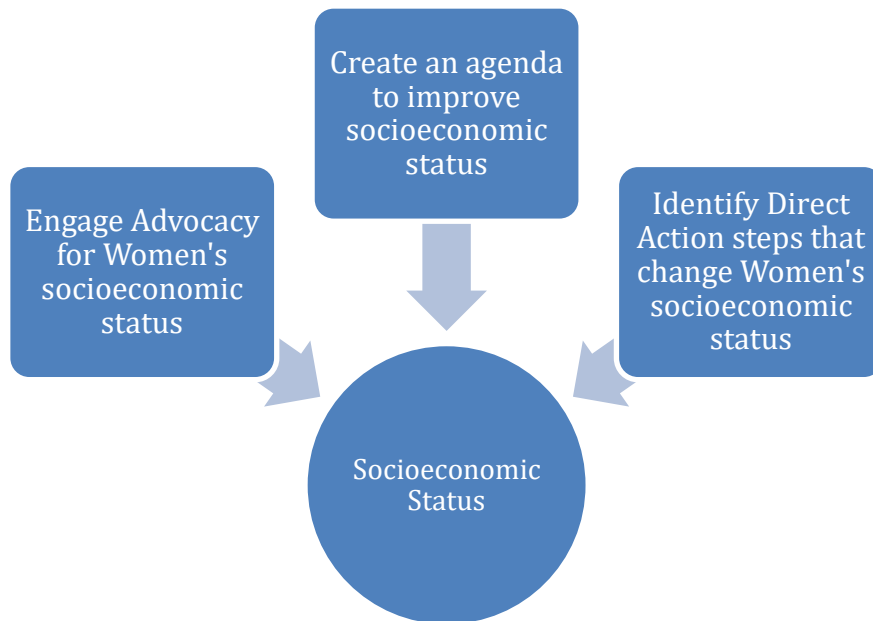
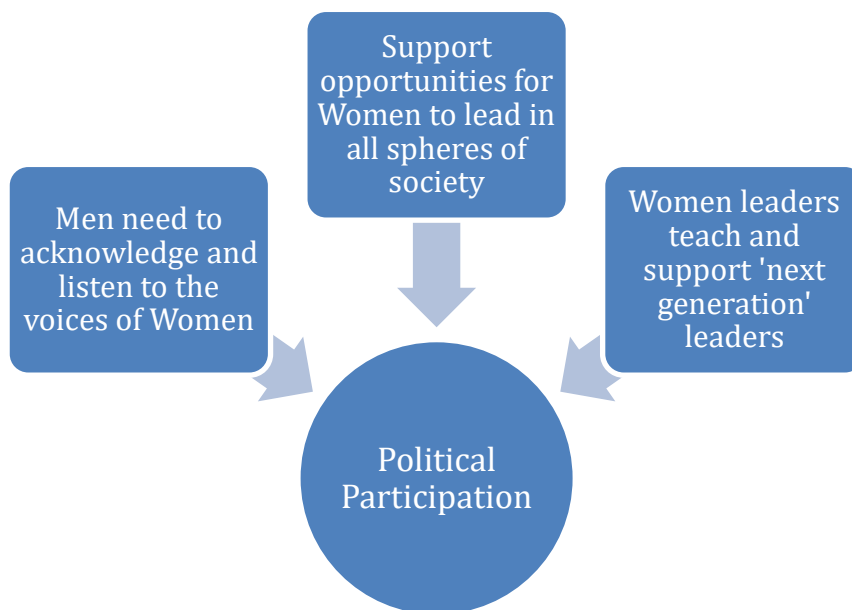
Figure 2*Healthcare Themes***Figure 3***Education Themes*

Figure 4*Socioeconomic Status Themes***Figure 5***Political Participation Themes*

Evidence and Trustworthiness

As a qualitative researcher, I used validity strategies in order to strengthen and increase the level of trustworthiness in this study. For the purposes of this research; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were terms that introduced internal and external validity in addition to reliability and objectivity which together reinforced trustworthiness. Credibility introduced a high level of quality necessary for qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Transferability referred to how the research process was easily adapted to and applied from one place and/or group of people to another.

The strategies selected to demonstrate transferability (e.g., external validity) in this research was thick description and variation in participant selection. Dependability reflected the level of reliability and faithfulness that was attributed to and placed in the research study. In this study dependability was demonstrated through triangulation and observational field notes that accompanied the interviewing process. Confirmability which was considered to serve as a means of objective verification or corroboration that assisted in the establishment of validity was achieved through the strategies of journaling (e.g., reflexivity), member checking, and field notes taken during the interviews.

Trustworthiness in the coding process was demonstrated through my utilization of proper procedures and commitment to credibility in the comprehensive qualitative research process. The semistructured interviews and open-ended interview questions enhanced the credibility of the research when I selected participants who were informed on the topic to be researched. Initially, for the purposes of this study, I hand coded the

data obtained from the interviews to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

Simultaneously, this served to demonstrate my commitment to rigor in every aspect of this study. The plan presented in Chapter 3 to ensure the trustworthiness of the research was implemented.

Credibility

My commitment to the quality of this research study was reflected in the data collection and analysis. The selection of Partner Organizations (PO-A and PO-B) and research Participants (A-R) was key to establishing credibility. I understood if I did not select women members of registered NGOs who could share their individual lived experiences with integrity and conviction, then I would have difficulty retelling their individual and collective narratives. The strategies employed to ensure credibility (internal validity) in this study were thick description of interview transcripts and member checking. Each of these contributed to the credibility of the participants' narratives constructed as a result of the 18 interviews.

Transferability

Transferability referred to how the research process can be easily adapted to and applied from one place and /or group of people to another. This study was inspired by the research of Chary (2017) who explored the lived experiences of nine businesswomen in India as related to gender equality. Although the research was conducted with women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States, disparities recognized in India were present in the United States. Also, utilizing the research areas which comprised the global gender gap (healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and

political participation) assisted in adding to the credibility of the transferability. The strategies selected to demonstrate the transferability (external validity) in this study were thick description and variation in participant selection. Participants in the research were recommended by the leadership of two organizations through purposive sampling utilizing the snowball strategy. Each of the two participant organizations contributed nine participants to the study. I discovered through my research that 8 of the 18 participants reported membership in more than one NGO located in the Northeastern United States.

Dependability

I realized throughout the research process that the dependability of the research rested upon the relationship that was created between the participants and myself. I had to depend on the faithful partnership and collaborative relationship which developed during the data collection and analysis processes. I learned to rely on participants reflection upon and remembering of their past experiences recognizing the essential points of their lived experiences. Each participant communicated in a variety of ways when and why I should rely on their telling of their narrative. Dependability reflected the level of reliability and faithfulness that was attributed to and placed in the research study. In this study dependability was demonstrated through triangulation of interview transcripts, secondary data and observation notes. The comparative analysis of interviews via transcripts, observation field notes, secondary data, and member checking served to reinforce the dependability of the data and the process.

Confirmability

The promise of confidentiality restricted my sharing of information between PO-A and PO-B. I could not compare or contrast a participant's narrative with other research participants. I utilized a weekly online analytical journal to talk through and analyze the points where I recognized a continuing thread of information and/or explanation of beliefs and actions. Confirmability considered to serve as a means of objective verification or corroboration that assisted in the establishment of validity was achieved through the strategies of weekly journaling of analytical memos (i.e., reflexivity), member checking, and observational field notes taken during the 18 interviews.

Member Checking and Discrepant Cases

The analysis of the data required the collaborative participation of the 18 participants. Each participant was asked to review their individual interview transcript and interview summary to ensure that the data accurately captured and reflected their words and views (member checking). I wrote observational field notes throughout the interview process. I reviewed digital audio recordings and observational analytical memos/notes. I kept an electronic analytical memo journal recording thoughts, insights, reflections and learning connected with the research process at least on a weekly basis. I hand coded the data collected from the research documents and created charts and a Code book. There were no discrepant cases. All research data was included in the discussion and the findings.

Themes of the Study

Demographics

This study had certain demographic delimitations and assumptions as an integral part of its design. First, all participants were female by design. The participants provided all information on a voluntary basis. I interviewed 18 women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. Demographic data are presented in Appendix C. Demographic questions sought to ascertain the age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational level, marital status, number of children, household income, employment status, and religious affiliation. The household income, employment status, and religious affiliation questions queried participants on their forward focus regarding the future mission of NGOs. The first demographic question (DQ 1) asked about the age of the participants. The 18 participants' ages were organized in the following groups: one participant was in the age group 26-34; two participants were in the age group 35-44; three participants were in the age group 45-54; five participants were in the age group 55-64; five participants were in the age group 65-74; and two participants in the age group 75-84 (see Appendix C).

The second demographic question (DQ 2) asked about gender choices such as female, male, or other. All of the 18 participants self-identified themselves as female. The third demographic question (DQ 3) asked about race/ethnicity such as African American, Caucasian American, Hispanic (nonwhite), Native American, Asian American, and/or other. The participants were 12 African Americans, three White, one African and Native American, one African, and one Armenian (see Appendix C).

The fourth demographic question (DQ 4) asked about the highest level of educational achievement and one was a high school graduate, one had an associate degree, five had bachelor's degrees, eight had masters, and two had either PhD or EdD, and one participant did not respond to this question. The fifth demographic question (DQ 5) asked about their marital status and seven were single (never married), one was separated, two were divorced, two were widowed, and six were married. The sixth demographic question (DQ 6) asked about the number of children in their family, ages of children, and the number of children living at home. Three participants had one child, four participants had 2 children, 4 participants had 3 children, seven participants had no children, and five participants had children living in the home.

The seventh demographic question (DQ 7) asked about the participants' annual household incomes. One participant had an annual income of less than \$20,000. Three participants had an annual income between \$46,000 and \$55,000. Three participants had an annual income between \$56,000 and \$65,000. Two participants had an annual income between \$66,000 and \$75,000. Four participants had an annual income between \$76,000 and \$90,000. Three participants had an annual income between \$100,000 and \$175,000. One participant had an annual income of \$200,000 or more. In summary, 13 participants had an annual income under \$100,000, four had an annual income over \$100,000, and one participant chose not to respond to this question.

The eighth demographic question (DQ 8) asked about their present employment status. One participant was unemployed. Six participants were employed. One participant was self-employed. Four participants were retired. Four participants were volunteers. One

participant reported “other” and one participant had a dual designation of retired/volunteer.

The ninth demographic question (DQ 9) asked about the sector in which they were employed. Two participants were employed in the public sector. Two participants were employed in the private sector. One participant was employed by a not-for-profit organization. Four participants were employed by NGOs. Seven participants were employed as volunteers. Two participants did not respond to the question.

The 10th demographic question (DQ 10) asked how many years they had been employed in this sector. Thirteen participants responded to the number of years in their area of employment and five did not respond to this question. The 11th demographic question (DQ 11) asked the participants to identify their religious affiliation and the number of years of this affiliation. Participants identified their religious affiliation in several ways. Six participants reported their religious affiliation as Christian. Two participants reported their religious affiliation as Protestant. One participant reported her religious affiliation as Catholic. One participant reported her religious affiliation as Spiritual. Denominational religious affiliations were also reported as follows. Five participants self-described as Baptist. One participant self-described as Methodist. One participant self-described as African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ). One self-described as African Methodist Episcopal (AME). Eighteen participants responded to this question and 17 participants provided the number of years of their religious affiliation with the organization they designated. The average of the years shared by participants was 46 years for each of the 17 participants.

The 12th demographic question (DQ 12) asked the names of NGOs they were affiliated with. Eight participants named one NGO. Eight participants named two or more NGOs. The 13th demographic question (DQ 13) asked what issues should NGOs focus upon in the 21st century? Some participants stated that they advocate for human rights and women's rights. Other participants reported that they advocate for gender equality regarding the global gender gap in healthcare, education, and socioeconomic status. Other participants reported that they would like to have discussions on response to pandemics and unexpected catastrophes.

The 14th demographic question (DQ 14) asked about the role of NGOs in the future. Some participants stated that building in more relevant interaction with generation X and beyond. Other participants stated recruitment of younger membership. Other participants stated empower, activate and engage the younger membership in envisioning and embracing innovative strategies for century old problems. Other participants stated that they advocate for global change regarding gender equality and collaborative partnerships that address global issues/concerns.

The responses of each of the 18 participants were woven together creating in each of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation a collective story that reflected the lived experience of women in NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The narratives of the 18 participants were distinctively different and strikingly similar. Subsequently, for the purposes of this research study. The following summaries captured the essential elements of the themes embedded in the narratives of

the 18 women participants of this research study. Excerpts from the gender equality and equity narratives of the participants are presented below. Four themes emerged:

- access to healthcare, advocacy for healthcare, and pandemics
- education equality and equity for all via mentoring
- advocacy and empowerment for future socioeconomic status
- preparation of women leaders for political participation

Theme #1: Access to Healthcare, Advocacy for Healthcare, and Pandemics

The 18 women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States responded to the question regarding how their experiences with healthcare influenced their gender equality and gender equity narratives as follows: (a) preparation for pandemics and/or natural disasters, (b) provision of accessible and affordable healthcare; and (c) creation of a wholistic approach to healthcare (see Figure 2). The major experience with healthcare cited by 13 of the 18 participants during the time of data collection (June 26 to July 3, 2020) was the pandemic COVID 19. Participants were concerned about the process of preparation required for a pandemic.

The global gender gap in the area of healthcare must face the reality that COVID-19 has hit people with preexisting illnesses aggressively such as diabetes, asthma, and pregnancies and in communities testing is limited with domestic violence and alcoholism on the rise. Healthcare should be available to everyone working with an NGO and gaining skills you realize the price of a lack of healthcare. The next generation must be taught to gather information follow up and understand how to act on and support each other with the information received.

Participants K, M, O, A, and Q contributed to the collective gender equality and equity narrative related to healthcare. Participant K asserted that healthcare received the level of respect a person was given. Participant K stated, “There are differences. If you are rich you have opportunities and resources offered to you that a person not financially connected does not have.” Participant K recalled at the age of six while visiting her maternal grandmother in the rural south both Participant K and her older brother required healthcare.

Participant K’s grandmother assessed the situation and determined her brother’s situation was more severe than hers. In fact, he was diagnosed with appendicitis and Participant K had hurt her leg from a fall. Participant K developed a limp, which was ignored until her father came for a visit and observed her limping and brought her back north. Participant K had to have surgery and remained in the hospital for rehabilitation for almost a year. Participant K asserted, “I had to learn to walk all over again.” The hospital and rehabilitation experiences shaped her lifelong belief that healthcare should be available and affordable to all. Participant K remembered, “We were treated the same. It did not matter if you came from a family with means or a poor family. We were all children who received the same attention, food and healthcare”. In contrast to Participant K’s childhood experience, Participant K declared, “I’m afraid to go in the hospital today. If you have money you can get what you need. There is a difference between those who have and the have nots.”

Participant M understood the differences between the healthcare received by people and expressed her frustration, “It is disappointing that we still have to fight and

advocate for healthcare in the 21st century.” Participant O was aware of other countries outside of the United States who handled healthcare differently. Participant O posited, “We all should be treated the same. You go to Cuba you do not pay what you pay here for healthcare. Healthcare needs to be on a level playing field globally.” Healthcare was understood as a global concern and Participant A asserted, “People need to be granted the healthcare needed. A human being, a living soul should have access to the healthcare needed.” Participant Q proffered that healthcare advocacy was a part of the DNA of NGOs. Healthcare was inclusive of providing purified water, protection against female genital mutilation, and other violations against girls and boys. There are many aspects of global healthcare that women must be empowered to address. Participant Q stated, “We’re in this COVID 19 the women are getting together via electronic media. We’re in this together. We do not speak the same language, but we can compare our situations globally.” Healthcare in all its expressions (e.g., physical, emotional, mental, and economic) should be available, accessible, and affordable for everyone.

The next experience shared by 17 of the 18 participants focused on the challenge of accessing affordable quality healthcare. Participants were equally concerned about educating people in order that they remain healthy and advocating for affordable quality healthcare for those who become unhealthy. The third area of importance for all 18 participants was the emphasis on wholistic healthcare. Participants understood healthcare was oftentimes associated to a person’s gender such as women’s reproductive health and maternity leave, pre-existing physical ailments such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, mental/emotional conditions such as depression, stress, and cultural contextual based

such as Female Genital Mutilation, Acid attacks, Me Too movement, Human trafficking, Black Lives Matter expressions of disease.

Participant A defined an NGO as a nonprofit organization available for service described as advocacy. Participant A work with NGOs focused on getting everyone excited about the possibilities of change by focusing on the next generation, which led to the establishment of a Youth Chapter in April 2019. The discussion of the global gender gap revealed that everyone should have access to healthcare was viewed as a right that should be available regardless of a person's gender. Participant A stated that in fact "give people what they need."

Participant K viewed NGOs as an ecumenical group of women committed on the local and national levels to addressing the social issues of healthcare. Participant K connected her gender equality and equity narrative as it related to her lived experience with the global gender gap with her work accomplished with NGOs. Participant K was convinced that healthcare should be accessible and available to everyone. Participant K was influenced by a personal injury in her childhood, which was not corrected by surgery until her return home from visiting relatives. Participant K advocated no one should have to wait or be denied healthcare. Participant K reported that NGOs must be open and honest with youth, tell them, "we need your help." NGOs must be reeducated regarding the meaning and mission of the work. Participant K said, "We must move forward." Through Participant K's work with NGOs, she has been exposed to disparities between the rich and the poor and the haves and the have nots as it is related to the global gender gap in healthcare. Participant K stated, "NGOs are nationally based with local chapters.

People are provided various services based on what they can pay.” Participant K reported that the focus must be on achieving gender equality and gender equity. Everyone should be afforded an opportunity without any barriers to their success.

Participant M described an NGO as a nonprofit organization where women of faith in relationship with God and each other seek to raise money to do the work needed in their community. Participant M’s response to how the global gender gap influenced her gender equality and equity narrative prompted her to assert, “I still see hope!” when asked to comment on healthcare the initial concern was raised regarding the pandemic: COVID-19, which has caused many people to question the adequacy of the healthcare offered in the United States. Participant M stated the need for universal wholistic healthcare attending to a person’s mental, emotional, and spiritual condition affected by their physical health. Participant M further defined this moment in time as a movement, which everyone in the house was invited to come out and peacefully protest.

Partnerships with schools and parents are the rule of the day due to the virtual learning focus of our children’s health. Participant M emphasized the value of listening to our youth in order to hear their concerns and together discover ways to address their health issues. Participant M said that we must educate our children by teaching them how to advocate for healthcare. Our children’s health is important to prepare them to serve on the front lines of the struggle. Healthcare is driven by a patriarchal economic system. Women are opponents of a patriarchal economic system. Participant M reported that we live in an unfair world, but we must continue to work towards the reduction of disparities in healthcare. Empowering people should be the purpose for quality in healthcare.

Funding for healthcare should go directly to the grassroots people. Participant M said, “Teach them to look beyond gender equality and gender equity. People must learn to go for what they want. That is the work of faith, according to God’s will, I will get it. That is faith.” Participant M also stated, “We must teach the people to go to the source. God provides resources. It is an unfair world and we cannot get caught up in the system.” The work of advocacy dictates that the peoples’ healthcare needs should be met. Participant M reported, “The mission must be kept before you and the people. Engage men and women to walk together, supporting each other, and working together achieving our purposes. We have too many resources to be left behind in certain areas.”

Participant O described an NGO as a non-political organization without direct ties to government. The work of NGOs attracted her to this organization, and Participant O chose to become acquainted with its mission through serving as an officer. Participant O’s reflection on the global gender gap and its influence on her gender equality and equity narrative as related to healthcare revealed her concern for women unable to acquire the proper health insurance. Participant O said that healthcare is a concern. There is a need to focus on healthcare. The passion Participant O possessed for young men and young women learning how to engage in positive communication and their work together inspired her accomplishments in her leadership role with the NGO regarding healthcare. Participant O created and modeled with young people the relationships they carry into adulthood regarding gender equality and equity in healthcare must be understood by men and women. The hidden agenda Participant O engaged with youth is that both genders are learning together at young ages how to respect and make room for each other in public

and private spaces while mutually honoring the gifts and skills possessed by each person. Healthcare has played a major role in the mission of NGOs. These goals of empowering young women and men to create collaborative partnerships while still young are admirable and worthy of serving as models for other NGOs concerned about attracting next generation memberships.

Participant Q shared that working with NGOs was rewarding because it taught her through working with women how to establish a goal and/or policy and experience it becoming reality. Participant Q's reflections on the influence of the global gender gap on her lived experience with gender equality and equity as related to healthcare prompted her to think globally regarding the health concerns women face daily. The health of women in a global context is not limited to COVID 19, but domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) that are issues that affect the health of women. As Participant Q asserts "health is a lifestyle for women."

Through Participant Q's work with NGOs since 1990, an understanding of the global health has developed for all people of all ages. Participant Q said there is a "push for the education of girls and boys which demands the establishing of health policy and the setting of attainable goals." There is a commitment to educate the next generation in order to keep the work moving forward! The work of NGOs must continue to as Participant Q said "keep talking, show up, support the next generation, we must learn to listen to each other."

Healthcare is affected by gender equality and equity policies and must continue to be discussed and decided upon by NGOs. The conversation about gender equality and

equity is a global discussion, which will cause a major shift in the economic system and usher in new levels of political participation for women. The presence and participation of women in politics has been an ongoing discussion regarding healthcare, which could be settled if the men in position had a will to do so. Women are present in greater numbers in organizations as members; however, there is a lack of women's presence and participation in the top levels of decision making in public and private companies and organizations. Participant Q stated, "Women must seek and secure positions of leadership at the top levels of organizations." Participant Q concluded, "Our job is not done yet, we must talk more, bring people into NGOs until they can stand on their own."

Theme #2: Education Equality and Equity for all via Mentoring

Education represented a majority of the national and international work initiated and accomplished by women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. Participants committed to education for everyone sponsored girls by paying for their tuition, uniforms and school supplies. Eleven of the 18 participants asserted that both boys and girls needed education. The goal of the participants was to work to get girls in school and to help them finish. Twelve of the 18 participants believed that the educational endeavor must teach the importance of global equality and equity. All of the 18 participants stated that the importance of equality and equity should be taught even if your experience does not demand it. Twelve of the 18 participants reported that mentoring the next generation is needed. All of the 18 participants encouraged mentors to both youth and peer groups to share your stories with the next generation. They were convinced that "the future belongs to the youth."

The interviews associated with Participants I, G, E, and C assisted in the retelling of the gender equality and equity narrative related to education. Participant I was introduced to the work of NGOs during her post-secondary education. Participant I learned how women and men were treated differently in the spheres of education. Although Participant I continued and pursued her education and career goals, she realized that women were often denied voice in their own education. For example, Participant I said that not providing maternity leave at the workplace and having violence in their homes affected their education. Education proved to be her path to advancement and increase in socioeconomic status; however, Participant I's exposure to the work of advocacy unleashed her passion for changing the narrative of other women and their children. Particularly, in the case of countries that denied girls an education beyond primary school or if they became pregnant. Participant I asserted, "In some countries child marriage is the norm and as soon as girls become pregnant, they are forced to stop studies." Participant I reported, "There are places where "girls are denied education whether they are pregnant or not."

Participant I's international work with NGOs affected her experience with "the marketplace and sacred spaces, the secular and religious spheres have remained closed to women's development via education." Participant I reported that countries in East Africa and Indonesia have experienced a surge in the number of pregnancies amongst school age girls. An investigation concluded that between March 2020 and June 2020 the increase in pregnancies was due to COVID-19. School age girls were confined to their homes that were not safe spaces. Reportedly in one East African country over 4,000 girls were

violated while in Indonesia 500 girls were impregnated. Approximately 500,000 girls globally were forced to become women at an early age. In an unprecedented action, some governments permitted girls to continue their education. Participant I asserted, “The global attention given to COVID-19 pandemic has exposed this healthcare crisis alongside education.” According to Participant I, these young girls are the next generation and just as governments changed policies as a result of the COVID-19 pregnancies “people in power must be willing to share their wealth, influence and status with those in the margins.” According to Participant I, NGOs must be “focused upon advocating for the education of girls and accompanying them on their journey.”

Participant G addressed her experience with education and gender equality and education and reported that “my personal story began when my upper middle-class parents agreed to marry me off at 14 with an eighth-grade education.” Although this custom was permitted, it was not the norm in her comfortable community. The judge signed the paperwork, but no one asked her opinion. Participant G’s older and younger brothers were forced to attend school while she was forced to quit school at the age of 14.

Participant G unwillingly married a man 16 years older and convinced herself she would find a way to finish secondary school. Due to a civil war in her country at the age of 16, Participant G migrated with her husband to the United States. Participant G was clear that education was always her goal. Participant G earned her Grade 12 diploma at the age of 16 upon arrival in the United States; however, her energies were diverted to performing the responsibilities as a wife, business partner, and mother of three children. Participant G asserted, “We were making money, but I did not have an education.”

Several decades later, Participant G discovered her voice and became an advocate for girls' education and fought against marriage before the age of 18. Participant G earned a B.A. degree and began working with NGOs. Participant G worked to achieve a change in marriage laws in her home state, which raised the age of marriage to 18 in 2017.

Participant G's work by her own admission has been a part of her "healing process because as I am growing, I am learning about becoming who I am." As Participant G sought answers for why her family and community failed to support her human right to acquire an education and to not marry at 14, she posited, "I should have had the choice."

According to Participant E, gender equality and equity is "a global policy problem that no country has successfully achieved for women." Participant E reported she lacked knowledge and experience in the areas of gender equality and equity prior to accepting employment in an NGO after undergraduate school. Participant E was raised in a middle-class community in a small city with the privilege of protection "with some strong female figures" as role models. Through her two employment opportunities after college graduation with NGOs she acquired an understanding and appreciation for the work focused upon the global gender gap. Participant E proffered, "I was able to travel and meet women all around the world in differing settings." Oftentimes in meetings women's voices were silenced by men determined to speak to a woman's experience. Participant E stated, "It has been frustrating. I want to hear her story. I want to hear from her directly."

The complicated nature of gender equality and equity demanded a clearer picture of how women are tied up with a myriad of issues including climate change, which affects women and girls more than it does men and boys. Women are not in leadership

positions at the level of decision making needed to affect change. Participant E said, “Most of the decision makers, most of the executives at the top level are men.”

According to Participant E, the challenge in terms of working with the next generation is a simple mandate “it’s just getting girls in school and keeping them there.”

Participant C provided an example of how women have used NGOs as educational spaces. Participant C admitted that her 2- and 1.4 years old with the NGO was an intentional educative journey. Participant C asserted, “I have little experience. I am learning a lot.” Participant C insisted that many people take positions but do not have knowledge of the office or the purpose of the organization. Participant C embraced her position and was determined to learn and support others in the fulfillment of the organization’s mission. As she considered how to prepare the next generation, Participant C suggested “Give them a full understanding of what gender equality and equity is. Train them how they must follow up with the knowledge gained.”

Participant C asserted, “NGOs are not funded by government.” Participant C was invited to an event sponsored by an NGO and was impressed with how the women worked together and subsequently became a member. As a result of working with new members for a period of 2 years, Participant C learned more about the organization and recommended that strategy to others. Participant C insisted that “present leadership must teach and support youth into leadership positions.”

According to Participant C, “More education is needed.” Equity and equality should apply to everyone be paid for a job and have decent living quarters particularly in urban areas. Participant C understood that political participation regarding education

reflected a relationship between knowledge and power and asserted “the goal is an informed people who will create laws and policies to promote gender equality and gender equity.” Participant E shared that working for an NGO, which operated an international exchange program was her first job out of college. Participant E stated, “This position opened my mind and gave me firsthand knowledge of women’s experience.” Participant E viewed the global gender gap as it related to education as a “wealth gap.” COVID-19 as a pandemic has global effects but all countries had to deal with specific problems such education for girls, which is a major concern. NGOs must work harder to get girls in schools and keep them there. NGOs need to pay attention to the community they serve and listen to the voices of people. Education can be used to mentor women for the next generation of women’s presence contributing to the normalcy of the culture. Each woman should receive education.

Participant G understood NGOs as uniquely related to the headquarters located in the Northeastern United States. Participant G described the work of NGOs as advocacy. Advocacy is a process through which an idea develops from within a group of people, the government listens, laws are changed, and so are the lives of people along with their country. More developed countries block the progress of less developed countries. The global gender gap as related to her lived experience revealed that education is a human right to which all people deserved free access regardless of gender and socioeconomic status. Women and girls should not be viewed as expendable, replaceable, and undervalued. Participant G insisted that all people must be taught the importance of empowering and helping themselves.

Participant G revealed that as a child bride she was forced to leave school at 14 and finished college at 55. “I knew it was not right, but it took a long time to gain voice. I was a child, we made money, but I did not get an education.” Participant G also revealed, “Equal access to education leads to power and women blossom when they find their voice.” Participant G said that women should have equal access to education.

Participant I shared that NGOs were not-for-profit organizations that provided needed education, service, guidance, and direction to groups in certain areas of concern in various countries. Participant I’s response to her lived experience with gender equality and equity as related to the global gender gap revealed that the pandemic COVID 19 has influenced the lives of women and girls not only as a physical illness but also as a social cultural problem. In Participant I’s position working closely with NGOs internationally, reports of a significant rise in pregnancies amongst school age girls have been documented. Prior to this pandemic, two thirds of the world’s population of women had restricted access to education. Usually when a girl became pregnant her education ceased; however, in the East African country of Kenya, the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools and a reported 4,000 girls were pregnant as of June 2020 and pregnancy opens the door for child marriage. Participant I said education for all children has been influenced by COVID 19.

Theme #3: Advocacy and Empowerment for Future Socioeconomic Status

The gender equality and equity narrative related to socioeconomic status. Participant H provided an historical perspective on the gender equality and equity concerns that emerged out of the Beijing Conference in 1995. The MDGs resulted from

this gathering attended by the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Dr. Dorothy Height President of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and other global women leaders of NGOs. According to Participant H, a global recognition of women's rights accompanied by a global demand for "equal treatment, equal pay, equal everything." Major progress was achieved by women in faith-based communities after 1995. Participant H said, "In my denomination we elected our first woman Bishop."

Participant E shared her privileged socioeconomic status. She stated in her socioeconomic position there was no expectation for her to change the world, but the world changed her. Participant E's assertion "everyone deserves a good start in life!" was followed by her belief that there should be equal pay for equal work. Participant E's observational learning supported her belief that climate changes affect the lives of women and girls more than poverty. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing conference was scheduled to be celebrated in March 2020; however, it was "cut short because of COVID" as Participant E said. Participant E explained that NGOs described as "faith based" or "feminists" at times disagree with supporting issues since each NGO has its own agenda and priority, but "everyone is on board with gender equality."

Participant J was invited to speak at the NGO headquarters located in the Northeastern United States, while engaged in the mission activities of her denomination both locally and globally. Participant J's exposure to the NGO's diversity of women, religious organizations, and secular interest groups captured her personal and professional attention stirring up a call for advocacy on behalf of women and youth. Participant J asserted, "We talked about socioeconomic status, schools, health and gender

equality. It was wonderful to be able to empower women in this changing world of work and achieving gender equality.”

Participant F was clear that she appreciated having opportunity to speak.

Participant F asserted, “We take for granted having a voice to say what is on our mind or go out to get a job. We hear women say, that is not possible in my country.” Participant B joined an NGO after attending a retreat designed to provide education for new members of the organization. Participant B described it as “a connection with other young women and the organization learning its mission and how our gifts could assist the NGO’s growth.” The experience convinced her that she needed to invest in the next generation. Women worked together using the MDGs and SDGs to focus and guide their work with over 3.5 million women globally.

Participant D introduced to NGOs as a teenager entered the work of NGOs through her legal career. Participant D admitted her socioeconomic challenges during her growing years led her to focus on education because it would serve as her way out. Participant D declared, “I am someone who is highly educated” and demonstrated throughout the interview how her educational pursuits assisted her work with NGOs. Participant D’s legal acumen provided needful counsel and creative approaches to various projects and programs.

Participant D insisted, “Most rewarding experiences are rooted in the personal relationships developed working with NGOs.” Participant D proffered it was through responsible relationships that people change and ultimately change their world. Participant D witnessed in her global legal work with NGOs many people experienced

war crimes, torture, exploitation, and a complete disregard of personhood. Participant D's work emanates from a heart that feels the struggle of another person and works to support the person through the painful moments.

Regarding socioeconomic status, Participant D encouraged all women to study, understand, and teach others. Equality is about being equal; however, women's capacity to bring forth new life makes women creatively different. Participant D said, "We're equal as human beings to men, but at the same time we are different regarding socioeconomic status."

Participant F had a similar understanding of equality in socioeconomic status. Participant F posited, "Equality has a quality aspect. There's a difference in women; gender equality gets you to the table, but gender equity means you know what to do at the table". On the other hand, Participant D acknowledged equity, "fairness" as attainable by all and the driving force towards justice.

Participant F was treated differently because "professors chose the guys as research assistants and gave guys the work." As a working attorney Participant F shared, "in the Unified Bar (meaning men and women) the positions are dominated by men who work in large law firms "these men give lip service to human rights; at the end of the day, it is how to promote profit for companies." It was in the Women's Bar Association that Participant D found meaningful work and opportunities to serve in various leadership capacities.

Participant F declared, "Look how far women have come, yet they're still behind. As much as we contest for gender equity, fairness for women. We will be fighting a long

time.” Participant D determined that men in power lack the will to share power and financial resources with women and people of a lower socioeconomic status. Participant F agreed, “You have people who just do not want to treat people the same. People have decided some should have and others should not have.”

The 18 participants advocated on behalf of women. There were 12 of the 18 participants who proffered that the task was to teach persons how to advocate for themselves and others regarding socioeconomic status. People take direct action to deliberately change women’s socioeconomic status. Direct action suggested by six of the 18 participants involved taking affirmative steps that addressed the differences that existed between the socioeconomic statuses of men and women. The privilege afforded to men and the poverty associated with women as related to socioeconomic status.

Participant B insisted that the work of NGOs was to help prepare the next generation by telling them “they can become more informed and have a different experience, giving them confidence in their leadership ability.” The global gender gap discussion regarding socioeconomic status involved exposing the wage/pay gap between men and women, ethnicity gaps, and the need for equal opportunity. Participant B said, “Informing people about issues, addressing inequities with confidence, and understanding what type of fighting needs to be done.” Participant B insisted, “I want to get things done. There have been too many false promises.”

Participant D shared that there are “multiple definitions” for NGOs. The question is how NGOs can be responsible and help influence the future. The deeper issue is that too many organizations are dominated by men who create an obstacle for gender equality

and gender equity regarding socioeconomic status. Participant D's response to the global gender gap related to socioeconomic status was that the pandemic "COVID 19 was a major cover up." Thus, women must share their stories with the next generation.

Participant D reported,

I was educated in higher learning institutions and women took me under their wings to mentor me. Socioeconomic status reveals that although women contribute to sustainable peace, the preference remains for men who make the top dollar opposed to tokenism for women who are nicked and dimed and have to work harder.

Affirmative action refers to special measures described as the mind and heart of fairness. NGOs served to assist in the change of how the status of women was viewed globally. In fact, in 2020 the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women's status was scheduled, and the UN was scheduled to vote on Women's Equality.

Participant H provided reflections on her lived experience as related to the global gender gap with socioeconomic status mentioning COVID-19 was the reason that the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Conference was not held.

Participant J characterized an NGO as being independent of governments and affiliated with other NGOs that are usually staffed by individuals/workers or volunteers concerned with providing essential services to humanity by working to improve the living conditions of people worldwide. Participant J's reflections on the influence of the global gender gap on her lived experiences with gender equality and equity revealed that COVID-19 had heightened an awareness of how wide the disparities were regarding

gender equality and quality regarding socioeconomic status. NGOs in the opinion of Participant J must be willing to investigate and responsibly respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

Participant J mentioned how NGO had built a hospital in Ghana, West Africa. In fact, the slogans used were “healthcare is wealth care” and “human rights = healthcare.” Regarding socioeconomic status and gender equality, Participant J asserted that regarding socioeconomic status, women should be directed towards private jobs created for the future. Women connected through SDGs must be used by NGOs to position women through education for leadership positions. These leadership opportunities connected to education also provided various methods for socioeconomic status growth and development. Therefore, gender equality and equity should create a path for gender pay equity.

Participant L insisted that financial assistance should be provided to women for a particular purpose. Participant L asserted, “Women should have the power to decide where the money goes in their community.” Participant L contemplated how to prepare the next generation. Participant L contended, “We must teach the history, but realize it is history, listen to the young people and let them become the leaders of today.” Women learn the power of gender equality through living it. In fact, Participant L insisted, “Gender equity is how you get to gender equality: the fair treatment of women and men.” Participant N suggested that women must learn how to ask appropriate questions.

The global gender gap influenced women’s political participation at all levels. International statistics reported that “One in four women are in national parliaments and

these are the places where decisions are made, and policies are formed.” The 18 participants said that women have worked hard; however, there is a lot of work that remains to be accomplished. Globally women are paid 16% less than men for performing the same work. The 18 participants also reported that Internationally, 60% of women are employed in the informal sector or grass roots work, which has a significant impact on their socioeconomic status.

In conclusion, the goal of the global presence and work of NGOs was to influence meaningful and sustainable change in the socioeconomic status of individuals, especially women, and their communities. The gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered NGOs were influenced by the participants’ lived experiences with socioeconomic status by improving the socioeconomic status of women, engaging the work of advocacy for women’s socioeconomic status, and taking action steps to change women’s socioeconomic status. All of the 18 participants agreed that a comprehensive agenda needed to be developed to address the socioeconomic status.

Theme #4: Preparation of Women Leaders for Political Participation

The gender equality and equity narratives from the interviews related to political participation of women leaders. Although NGOs are not directly engaged in politics, women do work closely with governments in performing humanitarian work and assisting in developing communities. Participant L explained that NGOs were not-for-profit, advocacy and social justice minded organizations. A native of a Northeast African country and the daughter of a pastor, Participant L, who was born and raised in an environment where NGOs were active partners alongside the church and local

community. Participant L's religious affiliation and the faith community with which her NGO works are different; however, the needs of the people are similar. Participant L's experiences with political participation contributed to her gender equality and equity narrative, which drew upon her lived experiences in her homeland of Africa as well as her experience as an NGO member/worker in the United States. Participant L stated, "We are a part of this global community. That is why I was brought here to do the work." Participant N advocated that women must discern in a global culture when people need a person-to-person connection."

Participant E asserted that in her work with women in NGOs, it is frustrating when male ambassadors want to tell the women's stories instead of allowing the women to speak for themselves. There are not enough women in the top levels of leadership and women want participation. Gender equality promises a level playing field with the same starting point while gender equity acknowledges that not everyone starts at the same point, but all persons need help reaching their destination. Participant E posited that the use of quotas to achieve gender equality and gender equity might be a viable option.

Participant J advocated bringing youth alongside adults teaching them to discover and use their voice and skills for political participation. Participant J believed in the abilities of the next generation for political participation. Participant J stated that for political participation, young people are talking, working, and diligently studying gender equality and gender equity. According to Participant J, young people should be prepared to become leaders and all nations are urged to adopt and implement the SDGs. Participant

B expressed an interest in providing ongoing teaching and training through a mentoring program created to prepare and support young people for political participation.

The power of women standing together with one voice to reach their goal was dissipated in the narratives of the 18 participants. The fourth theme was about political participation of women as an ongoing concern. Historically, leaders have made promises to women that were not kept. The 18 participants emphasized that women can create safe spaces for the next generation of women to learn and to be heard. Also, the 18 participants emphasized that women could be prepared for political participation and this goal should be the work of NGOs in the future.

Participant F queried, “Women have been prevented from reaching the top of the social and political ladder.” Although the pandemic prevented the physical face-to-face interactions amongst women, the global meetings did not cease. Women connected, strategized, and committed to political agendas via various social media platforms.

The political rights of women afforded international NGOs another issue upon which every participant agreed. Participant H insisted, “We heard stories from our sisters and decided to help them.” Participant H articulated that gender equality and equity and/or the lack of political participation was the common theme throughout women’s experiences as related to the global gender gap. Participant H stated, “Beijing was 25 years ago and there are still inequities in the development goals that have not been achieved. So, how much progress did we really make in 25 years?” Participant F insisted, “Women are still being denied political participation opportunities. If men would just listen and care, men could do something about the situation.”

The participants revealed that historically women have had to do so much more with less. Also, the participants stated that women have an opportunity to support each other while developing and repurposing traditional leadership roles. According to the participants, political participation relates to gender equality and equity. Although Participant J has experienced success with her work with NGOs, she admitted her disappointment that all her work with NGOs had not produced the goal of gender equality and equity. Participant J insisted that when women and men sit together at the table, they learn “working together works!”

The political participation issues of women should be discussed amongst NGOs; however, Roe versus Wade was deemed a United States issue and could not be discussed in NGO gatherings. Roe versus Wade was a political move that kept the international community from commenting on U.S. policy. SDG #5 advocates gender equality for women by the year 2030. Participant H mentioned that NGOs should focus on the importance of political participation; however, the education of women regarding political participation has led NGOs to build hospitals and take a bold stand against poverty.

Several hindrances to women’s empowerment via NGOs have been cited. The first point mentioned was the internal disagreements between NGOs described as feminist-based NGOs versus faith-based NGOs. The second concern was the infighting, which exists over the political stance that should be taken by the collective body of NGOs. The work between the two factions is the discovery and agreement on the common ground shared by all parties.

At this point both groups agreed on the need for continued advocacy for gender equality and equity policies that will address the global issues of women's access to opportunities for political participation. Although NGOs are not considered political entities, the politics is doing the work without appearing to be political. If an agenda is considered too political, it is cut out and not addressed formally by the group.

Participant H asserted, "NGOs have a history of fighting for women's rights and the historical role of men in that fight was a political education." Taking affirmative steps is a shift that comes in policy. Political participation, according to Participant D, has involved "an exclusion of women in positions of power and leadership, women leaders must be identified, political will must come from the top." Participant D stated, "Equality is defined as a fallacy created by humans; therefore, women are equal but different. Equity is fairness and justice. Equality ensures access to resources and opportunities, but equity moves us to change policy or create new policies."

The work of NGOs is to provide support to women as they seek to build a better life for themselves. The work of NGOs is not political but involves politics. Participant E's work with NGOs was most rewarding when she witnessed women work through their fears to gain confidence in their abilities and achieve collective goals. According to Participant E, the difficult work of NGOs was "watching the male leaders of governments attempt to break the women down after you have built the women up." Participant E's reflections on the global gender gap regarding political participation was focused on the pandemic COVID-19.

The education of women on the ground was viewed as essential work of NGOs along with advocating for political participation of girls whose parents do not see the necessity for their healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation are connected to politics. Participant F stated, “We must work with, teach, and socialize the children for political participation. The more children learn to value life, they can become the difference.” The 18 participants agreed that there are many people who want equality and equity for women, but they have been silenced because of political reasons. According to Participant G, “Open the door allowing women to experience the power of equal opportunity.” Participant G reported, “Political participation provides women with an opportunity to be heard regardless of their socioeconomic status.”

The 18 participants said that equality is described as having the same opportunity as everyone else and equity is fair treatment in the exercising of rights, benefits and opportunities. Participant G reported, “We must give children an opportunity for political participation to be at the table by teaching them, empowering them, and listening to them. Participant H reported, “Men have not listened to women regarding their status. Gender equality and equity means being at the table to talk about change in order to implement the changes.”

According to J, “NGOs assisted some women “who felt they would have a better life if they left their countries” in their relocation process. According to J, women worked with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and wondered why only one country had passed the bill that would assist in the general improvement of the status of women and would provide more opportunities for youth

political participation. According to Participant L, the worldwide adoption of a patriarchal society led to preexisting gender inequalities deeply rooted in discrimination. In fact, Participant L proffered, “The global agenda included the feminization of poverty and the elimination of women’s voices in terms of decision making and policy implementation with regards to political participation.”

The 18 participants mentioned that political participation is used to maintain the status quo influenced and permitted the ongoing feminization of poverty, gender-based violence against women, prevention of women’s educational economic advancement, and limitations on women’s political participation. Participant P’s insights provided a hidden truth regarding the depth of the change required for political participation. Participant P asserted, “You can change policies, laws, and education.”

Participant R worked for NGOs while in West Africa and was engaged with a community of women involved in a cash crop. Participant R learned through observation that women assumed the roles of initiators and supporters of the work of NGOs. Participant R stated, “Women provide most of the work. Women are the road runners.” Participant R proffered that the hidden power women have concerning political participation is that “women can support other women.” Participant R envisioned women starting local movements that would develop statewide ending up with a national impact and influence. Women would have to be prepared to educate themselves, identify candidates for positions, and develop common goals to be collectively achieved.

Participant P agreed with the need for intentional preparation. Participant P proffered, “We have a whole lot more work we need to do and there still needs to be a lot

of education.” According to Participant R, regarding political participation, the creativity of women would assist in producing methods of meeting the needs of other women. Participant R was invested in reaching women as well as men and youth. Although women are intimately engaged in the work of NGOs, women must envision the involvement of men and youth as an extension of the NGOs mission.

Participant N shared that she possessed “a passion for the young who want a change, but do not know how; they need help.” The mission of an NGO must be accompanied by a passion to accomplish the work with the people. According to Participant N, “We must just: stay focused.” Participant N concluded, “Gender equality and equity are policy terms that must be taught, discussed, and demonstrated through our lived experience.”

Participant R argued that gender equality and equity where men and women together need to assume responsibility for the education of the next generation for political participation. Participant R stated, “Youth should start at a young age working in the community involving themselves in local politics and being exposed to the workplace.” The 18 participants agreed that guidelines for political participation should be incorporated into programs designed to teach leadership skills. According to Participant R, essentially women and men must lead by example by “mentoring the younger generation grabbing their interest and motivating them.”

Participant L explained that NGOs can be faith based or secular based with emphasis focused on the work of advocacy. The goal is to support the work of the headquarters of NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. According to Participant

L, “The global gender gap has widened due to the preexisting problems perpetuated by a patriarchal society, which has identified poverty with feminism.”

According to the participants, the political participation of women is influenced by gender equality and gender equity narratives during this season was the pandemic COVID-19. The pandemic’s effect on the lives of women has been challenging to say the least. Women represented 70% of the front-line essential workers during the height of COVID-19.

Participant N reported that NGOs are not funded by government and are staffed by volunteer workers. Participant N said, “I have learned a lot and expanded my understanding of how women are treated in other countries. I stand on the shoulders of my sisters, but reaching the next generation is the challenge NGOs must face in 2020.” As Participant N pondered how the global gender gap influenced her gender equality and equity narrative related to political participation.

Participant P described the work of NGOs as having both a national and international mission and responsibility. Participant P stated, “My work with NGOs influenced my view of gender equality and gender equity regarding political participation.” Participant P stated, “Even when traveling you see similar faces but in different places.”

The work of NGOs is designed not to interfere with government structures, but to assist women in accomplishing projects to empower their communities. Participant P’s reflections on how the global gender gap influenced her gender equality and equity narratives as related to political participation that more needs to be done to give women

opportunities for political participation. Participant P served as a woman's advocate assuring that women received opportunities for political participation. Participant P's passion for supporting women veterans has caused her to be asked to leave meetings; however, her advocacy was not the real reason. Participant P discerned, "Women have been taught to respect authority." Participant P also stated that women need to advocate for their own political participation."

Participant R asserted that becoming a part of an NGO was a rewarding experience as her education into the work of the organization required attendance at local and statewide meetings. Participant R continued her work and has visited the country of Sierra Leone, West Africa as an adult. Participant R's response to the question regarding how the global gender gap influenced her gender equality and equity narrative related to political participation she replied that "the women population must be well informed to care for themselves and be prepared for political participation."

Summary of the Themes

Each narrative reflected the participant's constructed reality in story form. The participants simultaneously assisted me in the work required in both the capturing and the analyzing of the individual narratives; however, I allowed the data embedded in the narratives to direct and guide the content and analysis of the collective narratives. The collective narratives provided an example of how the three analytical levels: micro (individual), meso (group), and macro (institutional) together reveal a deeper and fuller analysis of the global gender gap area.

All of the 18 participants in this research study agreed that NGOs were guided by policies that supported their independence from a government's political direction and/or fiscal support. Participants enthusiastically supported an intentional increase of political leadership positions for women. In fact, 16 of the 18 participants asserted that gender equality and equity should be resolved in the 21st century and there needs to be more opportunity for women in positions of leadership. Ten of the 18 participants referred to directly and/or indirectly the low numbers of women in decision making leadership positions in the NGOs and at the NGO headquarters located in the Northeastern United States. Reportedly, 70% of the workforce of NGOs are females and less than 20% of women are in leadership positions with NGOs. It was clear that the next generation needed male and female leaders as role models and mentors.

Education must not only be available to young girls but also there must be protection and promotion of women and girls' power of equal opportunity. Globally, women are paid less than men. Political participation of women on behalf of women provided an answer. The political participation needed would ensure that women would have decision making power to combat the ongoing social economic issue to their lives. Political participation will help women to get involved.

Participant A concluded, "Gender equity is bigger than gender equality it will make the necessary difference and is the greater challenge for women to achieve." Participant B stated, "There should be a partnership between health and education; as well as the health professionals and the community." Healthcare in a community is demonstrated by concern for personal health and the health of others. Participant C

reported, “My experience is that doctors tend to give more information/referrals to men than they do to women. Doctors have better bedside manner, sense of value and deeper respect for male patients. Women are taught not to ask too many questions.”

Participant D said, “There should be a partnership between health and education needed in the community.” Education is key and a change must come. Participant E stated, “There needs to be social teaching of youth focused on social justice and self-determination.” Participant F said, “Education should be rooted in helping young women.”

Socioeconomic status is connected to gender equality and gender equity policies. Participant G stated, “Men and women should enjoy the same opportunities and the fairness afforded to them to achieve their personal and professional goals. If a person is qualified, they should not be denied the position.” Participant H mentioned, “Locally and globally people want change regarding political participation of men and women. Participant I had a clear commitment to men and women working together, she remembered a time in her past when a man reflected in her presence.

Socioeconomic status founded upon an understanding that women can be elevated in terms of economic condition through the gender equality and equity policies that support and enforce women’s rights as civil rights and human rights. Participant I promoted a policy, which would give funding to grassroots groups foregoing the overhead that usually goes to compensate the leadership of a given organization. Participant I insisted, “Informed people create positive participation supporting both men

and women. Promoting supportive local level strategic planning focused on educating youth for political progress.”

The relationship between healthcare and education is crucial. A global education that speaks to the stated need of educating the next generation must be explored and established. Women in NGOs with a change of mindset can co-create and serve a significant role in the development of educational strategies in collaboration with youth leaders. Gender equality and equity influences the socioeconomic status of women veterans.

Participant R advocated that women should receive basic comprehensive integrated instruction, which provided an overview of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Also, all women should be encouraged to focus on acquiring a formal education. The goal is to create well informed, open-minded persons prepared for potential political participation on every level of society. Participant R insisted, “We must teach the next generation -leading by example- becoming mentors to the younger generation.”

Summary

In this research study, I addressed the following question: What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation? The participants’ interview summaries in each of the four areas of the global gender gap provided an understanding of how narratives from 18 individuals could be woven into narratives with an impactful plea for positive social change. Four themes emerged based

on the similarities of story lines shared by the 18 participants. In Chapter 5, I provide a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

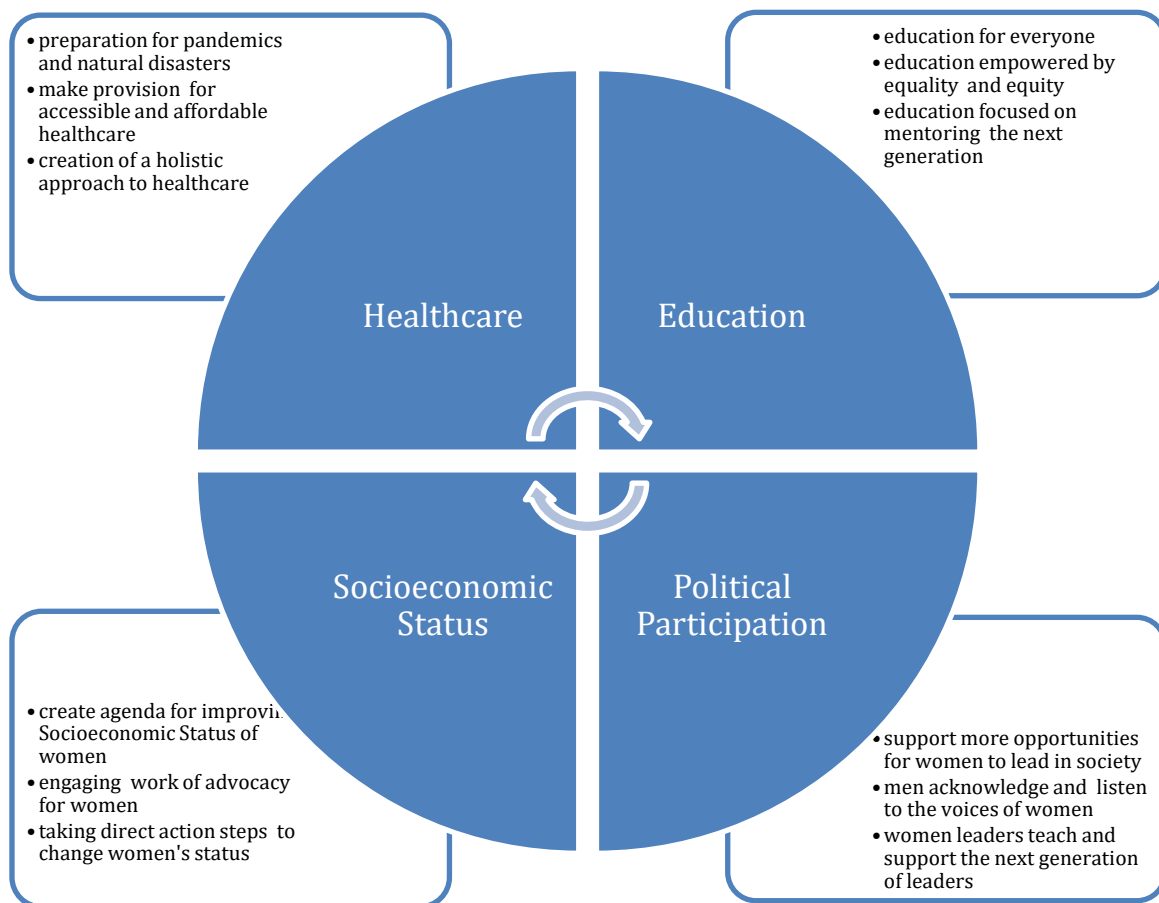
The problem addressed in this study was that despite the fact that women represent 50% of the world's population in the 21st century, gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs have not been examined as related to their lived experiences in the areas of healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The purpose of this study was to explore the gender equality and equity narratives of women who are members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to their lived experience with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation. The research question was What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation? The findings included four themes regarding global gender gap in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Interpretation of the Findings

The themes were (a) access to healthcare, advocacy for healthcare, and pandemics, (b) education equality and equity for all women via mentoring, (c) advocacy and empowerment for future socioeconomic status, and (d) preparation of women leaders for political participation (Table 3). Figure 6 shows a summary of the themes. Figure 7 shows keywords from the themes.

Figure 6

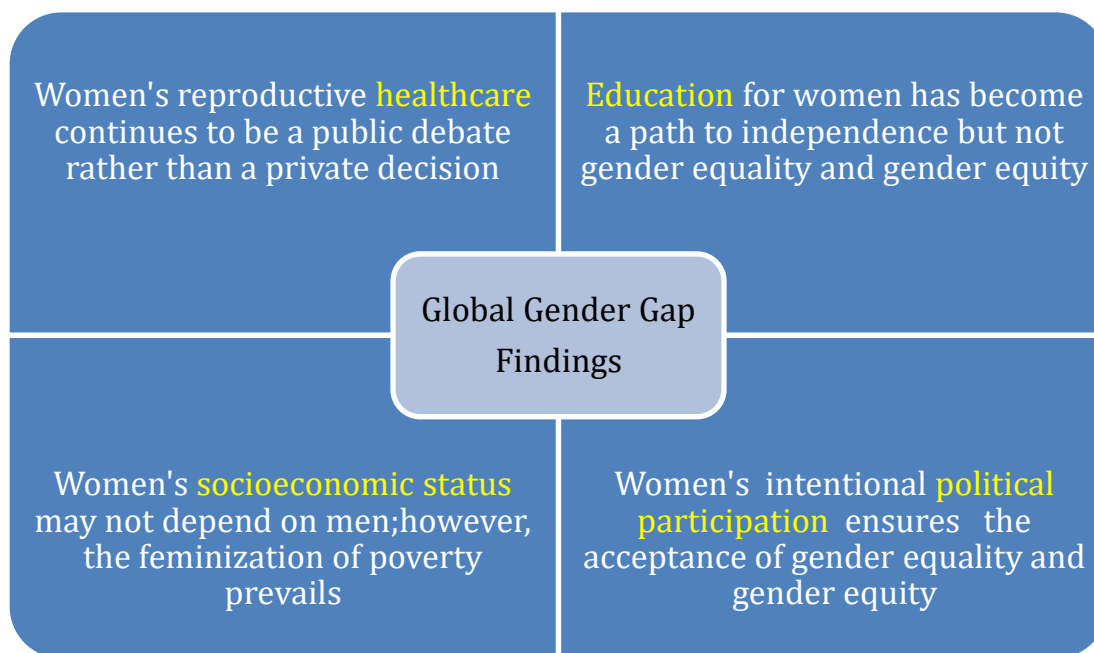
Summary of Themes



Keywords from the themes show the interconnectedness of the global gender gap in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation (see Figure 7). Each theme cannot exude the societal power and influence without the others. Together these four themes create and promote a systemic stronghold, which reinforces a patriarchal culture of power and dominance while it rendered one half of the world's women population experiencing the feminization of poverty. These findings are from the interviews with 18 women. The four themes are from the collective narratives that confirmed the disparities between men and women as related to the global gender gap.

Figure 7

Key Findings



The first theme was access to healthcare, advocacy for healthcare, and pandemics. The 18 women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States responded

to the question regarding how their experiences with healthcare influenced their gender equality and equity narratives as follows: (a) preparation for pandemics and/or natural disasters, (b) provision of accessible and affordable healthcare; and (c) creation of a wholistic approach to healthcare (see Figure 2). The major experience with healthcare cited by 13 of the 18 participants during the time of data collection (June 26, 2020 to July 3, 2020) was the pandemic COVID 19. The 18 participants were concerned about the process of preparation required for a pandemic. All of the 18 participants stated that healthcare should be available to every woman working with an NGO because healthcare is affected by gender equality and equity policies.

The second theme was education equality and equity for all women via mentoring. Education represented a majority of the national and international work initiated and accomplished by the 18 participants who were women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States. The 18 participants asserted that women need equality and equity for all women via mentoring. Education can be used to mentor women for the next generation of women's presence contributing to the normalcy of the culture.

The third theme was advocacy and empowerment for future socioeconomic status of women. The participants also reflected on their lived experiences regarding global gender gap and socioeconomic status. The 18 participants mentioned socioeconomic status challenges with regards to gender equality. Also, the 18 participants advocated on behalf of women to teach persons how to advocate for themselves regarding their socioeconomic status. The gender equality and equity narratives of women in registered

NGOs were influenced by the participants' lived experiences with socioeconomic status by improving the socioeconomic status of women, engaging the work of advocacy for women's socioeconomic status, and taking action steps to change women's socioeconomic status. All of the 18 participants agreed that a comprehensive agenda needed to be developed to address the socioeconomic status.

The fourth theme was about the preparation of women leaders for political participation. The gender equality and equity narratives from the interviews related to political participation of women leaders. The political participation of women has been reported as an ongoing issue. The 18 participants emphasized that women could be prepared for political participation and this goal should be the work of NGOs in the future.

Discussion of the Themes and Relevant Literature Review

I used Walden University's online database and searched for keywords associated with the themes. I also used the following journals to search for peer-reviewed articles: *American Journal of Health Studies*, *American Journal of Management*, *Policy Studies*, *Urban Education*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, and *Political Research Quarterly*. As I contemplated how the research extended knowledge of gender equality and equity, I recognized and reflected upon the deeper level of understanding of these policies I acquired both personally and professionally. During the process of capturing the gender equality and gender equity narratives of the 18 participants, several participants acknowledged and articulated their belief that there was no difference between the two policies.

I was surprised that persons in the role of advocating for changes in these public policies did not understand the nuances of the two definitions. As a result of this discovery, I identified several topics potential members of NGOs needed to study and understand as a significant part of a general education regarding the global gender gap. This general educational focus was deemed necessary for women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States.

These NGO partner organizations (PO-A and PO-B) identified their need to recruit, educate, and mentor young persons (e.g., females and males) as potential members. The educational preparation initially needed to target potential members both adults and youth, given that both groups possessed educational deficiencies related to knowledge about gender equality and gender equity. Also, the literature and the research data revealed that healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation were closely connected and interdependent. Finally, all members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States needed to acquire working knowledge and the facility to discuss and advocate for the current 17 SDGs as part of the 2030 global agenda adopted by the headquarters of NGOs.

The four areas of the global gender gap and the SDGs related as follow: healthcare (SDG #3), education (SDG #4), socioeconomic status (SDG #5), and political participation (SDG #16). These four areas of the global gender gap strategically connected to SDGs provided an opportunity for extending knowledge that in turn strengthened the skills of the memberships of PO-A and PO-B. The literature provided documentation of the wisdom and political insight of NGO women as they negotiated the

connection of SDGs with their agenda items through political participation. The extending of knowledge was demonstrated through SDGs and the relationship that existed between SDGs and the global gender gap (Arat, 2015; Pittman, 2017).

Since the establishment of the governing principles of the United States of America, women's quest for human rights has been reflected in an ongoing struggle for gender equality and equity. This quest has continued into the 21st century. The mantra, "women's rights are human rights," captured the essential spirit and power source at the center of the women's rights movement (Ackerly & Carella, 2017). Historically, gender disparities were countered with two prominent methods: "investment in women" and the "rights-based approach" (Ackerly & Carella, 2017, p. 11).

The gender gap developed as a result of a historical divide, which designated separate spheres of power and influence for men (e.g., public/marketplace) and women (e.g., private/home). However, when men went to war, some women exited the home and entered the workforce for the sake of maintaining a developing nation. As men returned from military conflicts and wars, some women who entered the marketplace remained due to a change in marital status through subsequent divorce, desertion and/or death of spouses. Women endured personal challenges and worked hard to preserve a home/country to which soldiers could return to and continue to build. Women and men together earned "rights" to full citizenship.

The thought of women acquiring rights outside of their relationship with men was unthinkable; however, the increasing disparities in the lives of women when compared to the quality-of-life afforded men birthed women's self-advocacy (Harmon et al., 2020).

The fight for women's rights exposed the inherent biases and weaknesses in the laws and policies that supported the overwhelmingly male-dominated leadership of society in the United States (Druckman et al., 2018). The strategic struggle for women's enfranchisement took 144 years to achieve. Women differed in their political approach to full inclusion of women, but all agreed that disparities of every kind must be eliminated to ensure the goal of gender equality and equity (Barnes & Cassese, 2017).

The growth and development of women's participation in politics in the United States inspired a global movement (Angevine, 2017). As women exercised their ability and power to support persons elected and invested in representing women's rights, the reality that women were as qualified as males and fierce advocates for their constituents was manifested (Bendix & Jeong, 2020). Women legislators demonstrated the ability and skills needed to win elections and influence policy development and implementation.

Women's presence was felt in major political parties although they were sometimes denied the strategic support and financial backing afforded their male colleagues (Barnes & Cassese, 2017). Female legislators lifted their voices at times in opposition to policies that failed to provide necessary relief to women and joined forces as needed to effect policy change that influenced both men and women within and without the United States (Adams et al., 2019). In fact, female legislators, through their sensitivity in the areas of race, gender and class, were positioned to serve as global role models effecting international positive social change (Mhaine et al., 2020). Therefore, women's entrance, exposure and education into the marketplace empowered vast numbers of women to pursue their purpose, value their presence and embrace their

collective power to influence the four areas referred to as the global gender gap regarding healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

The global gender gap identified, as a result of research, the four areas of disparities: healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Although global disparities persist, policies have yet to be established to create and provide corrective measures designed to alleviate the devastation caused by the effects of the global gender gap. Healthcare as described in this research is not limited to physical health, but it encompassed mental, emotional, socioeconomic and spiritual aspects of health as well the presence of long-standing disparities in the lives of any group of people should not be tolerated. Concerning women and other minorities the trajectory of the disparities results in more harm than remedy as documented through the research (Azeez et al., 2018).

Participants preferred to speak to the need for healthcare, which should be accessible and affordable to women. Women's reproductive health remained a major source of political debate and policy deliberation (Davis-Floyd et al., 2020). The predominately male leadership of the United States in the fields of politics and healthcare have attempted to control and regulate a woman's right to decide what happens to her body from the establishment of this nation in 1776.

In the 21st century, various policies have been written with a spectrum, which calls for supportive action to silencing women on the subject. Diseases affect the focus on wholistic health; however, the focus of the people at this time is COVID-19. Education must be provided to women regardless of the gender and/or socioeconomic status. Since

education is not confined to schooling, women must be educated about the various educational opportunities that exists in specific communities (Generett & Welch, 2018). In fact, women within families and other community institutions are potential teachers. Intergenerational dialogue provides opportunity for empowering a younger generation through the lived experiences of the community sages (Sakho, 2017).

Education and healthcare when combined create a power combination (Barnes et al., 2018). Although physical education in the 21st century is not at the center of curricula activity, epidemic must be addressed through teaching physical movements (Shen, 2017). Good health practices and a health philosophy are best learned when intentionally taught to women. Women need to be targeted for consistent teaching that will lead to purposeful and positive social change.

Socioeconomic status in 2020 is determined by a person's ability to work hard and push beyond the barriers established to discourage progress. If a female child is born in a country and/or culture that discourages female education, a preexisting barrier prohibits her personal vision and potential contribution to her community. Healthcare and education are a powerful combination in individuals' upward mobility.

Research revealed that a student's living condition be it homeless or housed does not hinder their academic performance; however, a human's will to conquer a difficult situation cannot be adequately described or measured (Tobin, 2016). Gender equality and equity policies can seek to address more than family leave for males and females (Birkett & Forbes, 2019). The policies created to proffer remedies to century long social diseases

such as racism which leads to disparities in healthcare, education and socioeconomic status must be seriously considered (Maltby, 2017).

The quest for a role for women in the area of political participation has persisted since Abigail Adams asked her husband in 1776, to please, “Remember the Ladies.” Women were written out of the U.S. Constitution until the 19th Amendment in 1920 (Butler & Preece, 2016). The Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and 1965 reminded a nation of its unkept promises to more than 15% of its citizenry. Men and women of African descent who worked to build the foundational wealth of the United States could live in a country for 4 centuries with a lived experience driven by disparities in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

As women increased in record numbers related to becoming steady reliable voters, female legislators were empowered to demonstrate their ability to contribute and create policy for local and global issues and concerns. Foreign policy traditionally perceived as reserved for males was made available for women as an increasing number of international women assumed political positions. Major global barriers were being removed for women and the political participation of women had changed drastically; however, male representation had been reduced not overturned. Men continued to hold the purse strings and a major say in which women were approached, recruited and supported financially by a particular party. In fact, women could win the election, but not gain the resources afforded a male.

Women demonstrated a seriousness about offering themselves for public office understanding the sacrifice of both personal and familial time (Baturo & Gray, 2018).

They simultaneously discerned the need to ensure their own success becoming suspicious of male support of women (Swers & Thomsen, 2017). Therefore, women legislative caucuses developed providing women to women support and collaboration on policy making endeavors (Adams et al., 2019).

In 2016 and 2020 the numbers of women entering Congress reflected record increases. President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson was elected as President of Liberia, West Africa leading the rural areas of her country to an expansion of female participation (Asongu & Kodila-Tedika, 2017). The citizenry of the United States in 2020 acknowledged the contributions of women of color through the election of a woman of color as Vice President of the United States (Costa & Schaffner, 2018).

Women have become more involved and engaged in political participation (Verge & Wiesehoneier, 2019). The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), 2015 received the one state needed for ratification in the early months of 2020. I anticipate the ERA will take effect in 2021. NGOs when confronted with personal pressures and corporate confusion search for answers that often appear through the work of advocacy for gender equality and equity (Ackerly & Carella, 2017). As educated advocates of global issues and concerns, members of registered NGOs can lend their acquired skills in advocacy work to prepare peers and the other living generations how to educate and create proactive steps in responding to pandemics such as COVID-19 (Gostin et al., 2020).

The social concerns such as racism, sexism, and classism continue to impact the healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation of citizens of the United States (Yeboah, 2018). The global gender gap must be addressed intentionally and

consistently through focused conversations and analytical actions to determine a purposeful agenda across generations (Carpenter et al., 2019). The work achieved through the combination of health professionals, educators and community organizers generate new levels of vision for the people served (Henfield & Washington, 2019).

Ultimately, community leaders connected with political representatives from local, state, federal and international positions must assist in crafting a paradigm reflecting the human dignity and value all people should possess and experience. In the area of healthcare women continued to assume responsibility for the health of persons in their families with a concern for the larger community (Bliss, 2013). The disparities in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation were evident to all peoples and nations claiming the lives of a reported 220,000 citizens of the United States alone.

Several reviews of the literature revealed that during a time of national and/or international crisis women were first responders particularly through their service rendered through religious or para religious organization. During wars women assumed positions alongside men as well as worked to ensure that the various levels of government and private businesses continued to build up and benefit families and the nation. The findings disconfirmed the literature in this regard because as the 18 participants shared their lived experience with the pandemic COVID-19 in the year 2020 both women and men were confined to the domestic sphere unless deemed a first responder.

From the change to social media platforms and virtual communications networks had commenced on a minimal basis, COVID-19 pushed these platforms and networks to their optimum. Every area of the global gender gap secured a means by which business was accomplished virtually such as doctors, clinics, hospitals, educational institutions at all levels, religious organizations, private and public business offices, courts, post offices. Due to COVID-19, changes influenced and negatively affected the global gender gap in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation.

Global pandemics have occurred in the past; however, the outcome was contained to a certain manageable degree. During the global pandemic in 2020, each area of the globe dealt with its own situation. In 2020, it appeared that each nation was fighting for its individual survival as opposed to global commitment to global survival and restoration. A national and/or global coming together of nations evidenced in the literature did not occur in 2020 as related to the global pandemic COVID-19 (Deaderick, 2019).

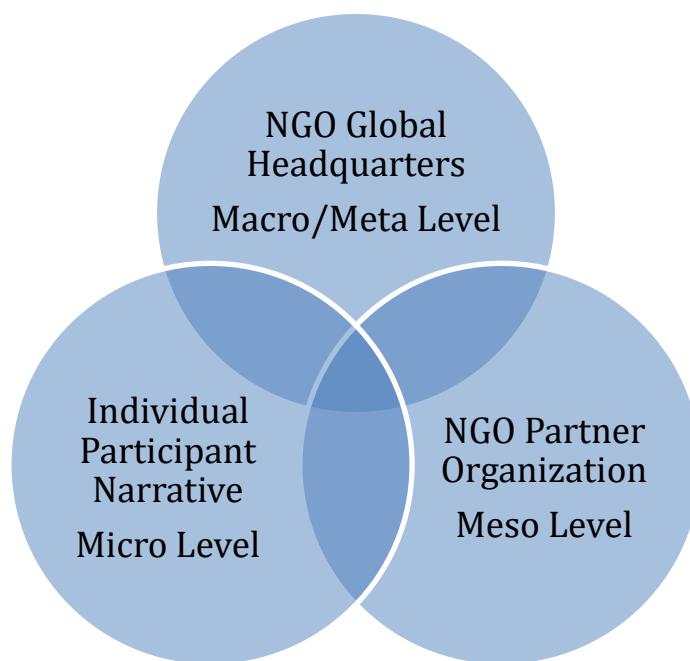
Interpretation of Findings

The gender equality and equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation were interpreted in Chapter 4. NPF was used to analyze the interview transcripts (see Figure 8). I used micro, which referred to as the unit represented by each individual interview, meso the group of policy actors represented by the two NGOs/Partner Organizations, and macro, which some have referred to as the meta and/or grand narrative of large scaled shared societal/cultural

values. The process required that I understood the individual, the individual as a part of the NGO and the NGO as a part of the larger headquarters represented over 190 nations globally. In fact, women in registered NGOs live locally but think globally. I discovered that the local connections to global situations are not deemed as important and therefore dismissed as insignificant (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Three Levels of Analysis and Relationships



The narrative structure used in NPF (setting/context, characters, plot, and moral of the story/policy solution) was an established strategy in the NI. Each narrative determined the narrator was the designated “sheroe.” As one participant stated, “No one can tell your story like you!” The mere fact that they told their own stories made them victors not victims and advocates not villains.

The 18 heroes explored with me their individual and collective gender equality and gender equity narratives identifying disparities and discerning influences on their shared lived experiences as women members of various registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Although women's socioeconomic statuses were similar, their experiences with health and education differed. In fact, it was interesting to note that their advocacy interests were established by 21 years of age and political participation was shaped out of their varied lived experiences.

Each participant could determine when they "gained voice" and understood the necessity of using that voice on behalf of others. I believe that their commitment to establish educative/mentoring opportunities for the next generation fulfilled this goal for the individual and the organization. These women shared historical disparities that must be identified, corrected, and replaced through the policies of gender equality and equity along with proper global sustainable support.

Healthcare narratives revealed the need for an intentional, sustained focus on preventative health education which prepares people to approach healthcare holistically. Healthcare must be envisioned as a right that should be made both accessible and affordable for all people. Historically, the citizenry discerned and demanded support when needed for its overall wellbeing as a result of national disasters and pandemics.

Educational narratives revealed it should be made available to both girls and boys. Education from Kindergarten through secondary school should be viewed as a necessity as well as a global right for all children regardless of the socioeconomic status and/or

condition of the family. Education was determined as a powerful necessity for all persons in the twenty first century.

Socioeconomic Status narratives for women should be studied, analyzed and addressed by reviewing all the policies connected to gender equality and gender equity. Essentially, the laws, practices and policies which encouraged the ongoing feminization of poverty must be confronted and eliminated. Clearly, the historical condition of women's personal health, highest level of educational achievement and connectedness to political activism in the community influenced their socioeconomic status.

Political Participation narratives revealed how women historically were strategically denied, dismissed, downplayed and downsized as a political influence. At early ages women need to be exposed, educated and encouraged regarding their rights and responsibilities related to political participation possibilities on the local, state and national levels. Women must discern and demonstrate the importance of building and preparing future leaders through their work with youth (Barcelli, 2016; Deaderick, 2019; Pittman, 2017).

Acknowledging gender equality and equity would take another five generations or 170 years before it was achieved (Deaderick, 2019). The global gender gap must be considered as an adversary to gender equality and equity and all SDGs associated with the adoption of these policies. I engaged in conversations with the 18 participants regarding their experiences with gender equality and gender equity. The gender equality and gender equity narratives of these women have influenced public policy as related to the eradication of the global gender gap (Pittman, 2017). Therefore, these narratives

provided an explanation for why the pursuit for gender equality and equity persist in the 21st century (Waylen, 2014).

Limitations of the Study

I recruited women from registered NGOs with headquarters in the Northeastern United States. The nature of semistructured interviews captured a narrative of each participant's lived experience. Therefore, the interview questions were limited and focused upon the lived experiences of gender equality and equity narratives amongst 18 women in two registered NGOs as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and, political participation. The number of participants in the study was limited to 18 women who were members of two registered NGOs. The nature of interviews captured a narrative of an individuals' lived experience in an area of interest (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, the interview questions were limited and focused upon the lived experiences of gender equality and equity narratives amongst women in registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. This qualitative research study was limited by interviews. This study was conducted with 18 women from two registered NGOs.

Recommendations

The findings of this study included four themes. The primary recommendation for this study is to share the themes with women at NGOs to support women in registered NGOs located in the United States as related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. A secondary recommendation would be for administrators of NGOs to implement the findings to support women in creating working

environments related to healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and, political participation. I recommend further research by interviewing more participants from various NGOs. I also recommend that future research interview members of NGOs from other similar areas within the United States.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study may help administrators at NGOs to better implement policies on gender equality and equity to support women in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. Understanding gender equality and equity to support women can help other women facing similar challenges in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation. The findings have implications for positive social change for women in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status, and political participation to better implement policies on global gender equality and equity challenges in NGOs.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 provided an introduction which summarized the research findings of Chapter 4. The findings included literature, which was confirming, disconfirming and extended knowledge. Findings were analyzed and interpreted. Limitations acknowledged in the research were reviewed and revised as needed. Recommendations for further research were provided along with a discussion of implications for social change followed by the conclusion.

This research study explored the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States during the

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic of 2020. The pandemic had a major impact upon the Northeastern United States. Internationally, the Beijing 25 conference scheduled to focus upon women's/gender equality and equity was cancelled because of the pandemic. Nationally, it was estimated that over 220,000 people lost their lives due to COVID 19. Despite the pandemic, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA); however, Congress has yet to take any action. The U.S. Census Bureau (An agency responsible for the numbering of persons living in the United States every decade) completed its work; and, a national Presidential election was held in the United States. Needless to say, all of these issues and incidents influenced and impacted the 18 narratives captured for this study.

The Gender Equality and Equity narratives related to the women's lived experiences with the global gender gap which included healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation were at the center of this qualitative research. All 18 narratives were captured, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted to fill the gap in the literature which represented the lived experiences of women in NGOs through their gender equality and equity narratives. The findings discovered in 18 individual narratives and 4 collective narratives the confirmation that disparities existed between men and women as related to the global gender gap. The narratives revealed despite the progress of women disparities related to the global gender gap still existed in the twenty first century. The COVID19 pandemic significantly exasperated the situation and strategically exposed the disparities in healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and

political participation amongst women and men, wealthy and working class; and persons of diverse racial cultural backgrounds.

In 2020 women hold up half the sky, yet it is predicted that gender equality will not be achieved for another five generations or 170 years. Although women members of registered NGOs located in the Northeastern United States are taught their work is not political, the work is personal. The majority of the 18 participants articulated their call to advocacy and activism was identified and acknowledged before they were 21 years old. Participants agreed that educating/mentoring the next generation was a priority. I recommended the simultaneous education of NGO members in order to ensure both groups received meaningful up to date information. Women must understand the disparities in the global gender gap: healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation; however, the research suggested that political participation is where women must focus their energies for significant advancement and the demolition of disparities in healthcare, education and socioeconomic status.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questions

Introduction: The demographic information provided by research study participants is essential to the rigorous research process. Demographic data can assist in illuminating research findings and results. Please remember all responses to the questions are strictly on a voluntary basis. All data collected will be held as confidential.

1. Age: Under 21years ___ 21-25years___ 26-34 ___ 35-44___ 45-54___ 55-64 ___ 65-74___ 75-84___ Over 85 years___
2. Gender: Female ___ Male ___ Other _____
3. Race/Ethnicity: ___ African American___ Anglo [non-Hispanic] ___ Hispanic [nonwhite] ___ Native American ___ Asian American ___ Other (specify)_____
4. Education [highest level achieved]: ___ No H.S. ___ H.S. [no Diploma] ___ H.S./ GED ___ AA/AS ___ BA/BS ___ MA/MS/MDiv ___ PhD/MD/JD/EdD / DMin _____ Other _____
5. Marital Status: ___ Single [Never Married] ___ Separated ___ Divorced ___ Widowed ___ Married
6. Children: Number of children in the family? _____ Living at home? _____
Ages of children: ___ under 12 ___ 13-17 ___ 18-25 ___ 26-35 ___ 36-45 ___ over 46
7. Household Income: ___ Under 20,000 ___ 25,000-35,000 ___ 36,000-45,000___ 46,000-55,000 ___ 56,000-65,000 ___ 66,000-75,000 ___ 76,000-90,000 ___ 100,000-175,000 ___ 200,000+
8. Employment Status: ___ Unemployed ___ Employed ___ Self Employed ___ Retired ___ Volunteer ___ Other _____[Specify]
9. Present Employer: ___ Public sector ___ Private sector___ NPO ___ NGO___ Other _____
10. How many years at this place of employment? _____ How many years in workforce? _____
11. What is your Religious affiliation? _____ How long? _____
12. NGOs you work with at this time? _____ How long? _____
13. What issues should NGOs focus upon in the 21st century?

14. What is the role of NGOs in the future?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Good Morning. My name is Barbara Austin-Lucas and I thank you for assisting me in this research study which is designed to explore the influence of gender equality and equity amongst women in NGOs. The research will explore disparities, if at all, connected to the “global gender gap” which includes healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation. During this one-hour semi structured open-ended interview we will explore your lived experience [healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation] as a woman in a registered NGO. The process will not exceed sixty minutes and will be recorded via audiotape for transcription analysis and research purposes (with your consent). Your privacy will always be protected. Data collected digitally will be removed at the end of the research study and audio cassette tapes will be stored in a locked box in an undisclosed place with one hard copy of all transcripts for five years. After five years all data will be destroyed by a professional shredding service. You may choose to stop this interview at any time. Do you have any additional questions and/or concerns?

Research Question

This qualitative narrative research study will utilize in depth semistructured open-ended questions interviews. I will incorporate the following research questions alongside a modified version of Chary’s (2017) gender equality interview instrument with a representative sample of women from various registered NGOs.

RQ: What are the gender equality and gender equity narratives of women in registered NGOs related to their experiences with healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation?

IQ1. Please provide a definition of a Nongovernment Organization [NGO] and describe your initial experience with a Nongovernmental Organization [NGO].

IQ2. Share your understanding of the “global gender gap.” How do you explain your journey working with a nongovernmental organization? What has been your most rewarding experience? What has been your least rewarding experience?

IQ3. What is your definition of “gender equality”?

IQ4. How do you define “gender equity”? What is the difference between “gender equality” and “gender equity”?

IQ5. Describe how has “gender equality” influenced your lived experience in the area of healthcare? Education? Socioeconomic status? Political participation?

IQ6. Describe how has “gender equity” impacted your lived experience in the area of healthcare? Education? Socioeconomic status? Political participation?

IQ7. How has your work with NGOs influenced your view and understanding of gender equality / gender equity?

IQ8. As you reflect on your work with NGOs, what has not been done that would hasten the global community towards “gender equality” / “gender equity”?

IQ9. How can women in NGOs help prepare the next generation to embrace gender equality/gender equity?

IQ10. What immediate international action would arrest the disparity of treatment, if at all, regarding the “global gender gap” [healthcare, education, socioeconomic status and political participation]?

IQ11. Please share any additional comments or thoughts on gender equality and equity.

Time started:

Time ended:

Appendix C: Demographic Table

P	M/F	Age	Race	EDUC	Work	Status	Kids	Time	Income
A/A	F	55-64	AA	MA	U	M	3	10+	\$46-55K
A/B	F	35-44	AA	BA	E	U	0	7	\$100-175K
A/C	F	55-64	AA	BA	E	U	1	2	\$100-175K
B/D	F	45-54	Anglo	PhD	E	U	0	20	NA
B/E	F	26-34	Anglo	MA	E	U	0	4.5	\$56-65K
B/F	F	65-74	AA/NA	MA	R	M	1	50	\$56-65K
B/G	F	55-64	Armenian	BA	V	D	3	8	\$76-90K
B/H	F	75-84	AA	AA	E	U	1	10	\$46-55K
B/I	F	45-54	AA	MA	E	U	0	15	\$76-90K
B/J	F	65-74	AA	EdD /LHD	V	M	3	39	\$200K
A/K	F	65-74	Anglo	MA	V	S	0	50	\$66-75K
B/L	F	35-44	African	BA	SE	U	0	12	\$56-65K
A/M	F	45-54	AA	MA	E	D	2	13	\$76-90K
A/N	F	65-74	AA	MA	R	W	2	2	\$20K
A/O	F	55-64	AA	HS	E	M	0	6	\$76-90K
B/P	F	55-64	AA	MA	E	M	2	8	\$66-75K
A/Q	F	75-84	AA	BA	R/V	W	2	20	\$46-55K
A/R	F	65-74	AA	BBA	R	M	3	12	\$100-175K

Note. P = participant; AA = African American; Gender (M for male or F for female),

Age, Race/ethnicity; Educ = education such as BA = Bachelors of Arts; MA = master's degree; HS = High school; and LHD = Doctor of Letters; Status = M for married, U for unmarried, W for widow, D for divorced, and S for separated; Employment (U for

unemployed, E for employed, R for retired; V for volunteer, and SE for self-employed)
and Time in years; Household Income \$K in thousands of USD.