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Female Leaders: Paths to Leadership in the Florida State Legislature

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Female Leaders: Paths to Leadership in a State Legislature

by

Heather Conaway Roberson

MA, University of South Florida, 1999

BA, Maryville College, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

June 2019

Abstract

The issues women face and the policies that benefit women can be neglected by policy makers without women serving in the state legislature, yet little is understood about how influencing factors, characteristics and experiences shape political aspirations among women at the state level. Using feminist identity theory and feminist standpoint theory as the foundation, the purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore how female leaders develop their nascent political ambition and engage in the path to public office. Data were collected through interviews with 8 women who held office in a state legislature from 2012 through 2017. Interview data were transcribed, inductively coded, and subjected to thematic analysis to compile information on the leadership development of each female leader and to comparatively examine the paths to leadership. Key themes that emerged from the data included transformational experience, personality traits, and family being the top contributors to leadership development and nascent political ambition. Implications for positive social change stemming from this study include recommendations to leadership development programs to better understand the unique paths to leadership in state legislatures. Following this recommendation may increase the number of women contemplating a run for elected office, thereby contributing to a higher number of women in decision-making roles.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

If leadership is necessary and a desired role within society, then a need for developing quality leaders exists. Leadership potential is everywhere, but it is not always fostered to its fullest. Many individuals with leadership potential are overlooked, not fostered, or cast aside instead of developed and encouraged. Depending on an individual's gender, level of education, socioeconomic class, family influence, work experience, and societal culture, he or she may or may not be given an opportunity for leadership potential to develop (Adair, 2009). For example, women and minorities within most societies around the globe experience the least access to leadership development, which, in turn, limits their leadership potential and subsequently their voices within their societies (Schipani, Dworkin, Kwolek-Foll, & Maurer, 2009).

On state, national, and global levels, women face different challenges than men on their paths to power and leadership (Schipani et al., 2009). As of November 2018, women held only 24% of the seats in representative bodies, such as parliaments and legislative branches ("Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation," 2019). This severely limits the voices of women within electorates globally. If women are not rising to leadership positions or being elected to public offices, then their voices are not being heard equally. It takes women in leadership to accurately represent women (Mansbridge, 1999). Having female political leaders would benefit women worldwide since women make up more than half of the populations in countries across the globe (Geiger & Kent, 2017). However, because of opportunities and more advantageous paths

to leadership for men, women are still underrepresented in state, national, and global leadership posts (Geiger & Kent, 2017).

In this study, I explored how female political leaders are developed. More specifically, I examined through comparison and contrast selected female leaders to analyze the common factors that contributed most to their leadership development. I sought to investigate how female leaders evolve by interviewing women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 by deconstructing their paths to leadership from the bottom up and comparing/contrasting influencing factors.

If the developmental and transformative years of these female leaders can be better understood and generalizations consequently drawn, then more women in all countries may be able to seek out similar experiences as a way to start them along their paths to public leadership. Such generalizations could be used to help facilitate women in finding their own path to leadership and transform societies around the world to include and accept women as leaders.

In this chapter, I cover the background of relevant literature as well as the problem statement my purpose in the study. I also include the research questions central to the study, theoretical framework and nature of the study. I then identify definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations as well as limitations. I also explain the significance of the study with a summary overview of the information that I presented in this chapter.

Background

Women have been historically absent from the highest levels of political leadership in most societies around the world; therefore, examples of women leading so that others may follow their paths to leadership are lacking. Paths of leadership for

women tend to be sporadic and non-traditional when compared to paths of their male counterparts (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). Although women and men share many of the same influencing factors and characteristics that contribute to leadership development such as family, education, socioeconomic status, and even the society or culture, their experiences of these factors differ due to their gender roles (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Schipani et al., 2009). Depending on how a woman was raised or the limits placed on her advancement by her given society, cultural context determines how many obstacles to leadership opportunity she will face. Although women and men might share categories of influencing factors, each gender usually experiences these factors differently (Allen et al., 2004). Limited resources exist to assist women with challenges and obstacles to advancement that they face on their path to leadership development, unlike the resources readily available for men to take advantage of as part of their leadership development (O'Brien, Biga, Kessler, & Allen, 2010).

Classical, non-gender-specific leadership studies tend to examine what leaders do or how they affect others and focus less on what influences they had along their paths to leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2008; Buckingham, 2012; Burns, 1978; George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Yukl, 2010). The majority of the literature overlooks how leaders in general are formed or developed. A few researchers have sought to understand whether or not leaders are born or made. Most focus on the types of leadership traits and how those influence followers or employees (Adair, 2009; Kahn, 2010). When the focus is narrowed to developing leadership characteristics and contributing factors, a few studies include a description or examination of how leaders develop as compared with other leaders (Yukl, 2010). Such leadership development

studies tend to focus on the process that individuals should participate in so that they can gain certain experiences that will enhance their skills (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). With a focus on only opportunity-based formalized ways to develop leadership qualities, the nuances of personal experience, privilege, struggle, and gender are overlooked.

Hence, female leaders are overlooked within classical leadership theories. When they are included, it is as a unique anomaly and compared with male leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2008; Buckingham, 2012; Burns, 1978; Dahl, 1961; George et al., 2007; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Yukl, 2010). Moreover, the literature that does include women overlooks the unique characteristics of female leaders. Female leaders are generally included in studies that focus on barriers and diversity rather than with regard to their leadership traits (Yukl, 2010). Some of the mainstream theories note influencing factors that are different for female and male leaders and the socially constructed leadership characteristics attributed to each gender (Yukl, 2010). However, researchers generally do not address adequately how individuals from each gender are formed, developed, or influenced as they emerge as significant leaders. Leadership development is not typically examined with regard to the similarities or the differences between the genders and their unique pathways to leadership positions. This is a necessary part of research that has been overlooked and presents an opportunity for further research.

As an alternative to a bottom-up approach and in an attempt to deconstruct leadership development, researchers break down individual leadership from a top-down approach into different levels and skill sets along with motivations and identities (Lord & Hall, 2005). Examinations of what motivates an individual to be a leader often explore aspects of whether or not they seek to help themselves or to serve others as a way to

evaluate a leader (De Cremer, 2002). Furthermore, studies often explore the values that leaders may have in order to understand their actions and the characteristics of their followers (Lord & Brown, 2001). However informative these studies are, they are all done via a top-down approach, looking at leadership as a whole and attempting to determine what makes a leader and how levels of leadership might be reached. This approach is limited in that it is more general in nature and prescriptive instead of descriptive of what is actually happening along the paths of leadership development.

Instead, I used the bottom-up approach in this study as a way to examine the path to leadership for female leaders in a way that identifies the experiential development of each leader. This bottom-up approach provided an overview for eight women in this study and a more unique description of the path to leadership for each of those women through personal interviews. As a result, the stories of these women can be used as examples for future leaders seeking to forge their own paths to political leadership.

When gender specifics are included in leadership studies, such works tend to focus on female leaders who build consensus among subordinates, empower followers, and seek to involve others in the decision-making process rather than isolating themselves at the top (Lazzari, Colarossi & Collins, 2009). However, exactly where, when, or how these gender-specific leadership characteristics are acquired is left out of the mainstream research. Boatwright and Forrest (2000) noted that there are certain influences such as early caregiver relationships within a leader's developmental years that help shape what type of leader they will become. The absence of early political engagement and limited access to opportunities to explore political leadership early for women and girls contributes to the identified gender gap in nascent political ambition and

results in lower numbers of female political leaders (Costantini, 1990, Fox & Lawless, 2005, 2010; Fulton, Maestas, Maisel, & Stone, 2006; Lawless & Fox, 2005, 2010). For women, when these experiences are limited or absent from their developmental years, political ambition is limited as well. This influence on the development of nascent political ambition is still seen among qualified potential candidates in that women perceive themselves to be less of a risk taker and feel more responsibility to their families than their male counterparts (Fox & Lawless, 2004; Lawless & Fox, 2005). The research suggests that leadership characteristics are learned and that women tend to acquire more participatory or relational leadership traits as part of their socialization process (Boatwright & Forrest, 2000). In addition, some research indicates that women and girls are socialized to develop quality interpersonal relationships, a necessary skill for transformational leaders. (Carless, 1998). This area of leadership literature has focused on how female leaders learn their gender-specific skills. Studies such as these provide a basis for reference when examining the contributing experiences that shape a leader and help develop unique styles. However, no specific line of research or section of literature directly recounts from a bottom-up approach the unique experiences of how women are influenced and develop to become political leaders. It is this specific gap in the literature that I addressed in this study. By examining the life experiences of the female candidates in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017, this study filled the gap in the research literature that overlooks the bottom-up approach to understanding the trends and commonalities among women developing as leaders who seek public office.

Based on leadership theories and gender-specific leadership studies, it is apparent that the extant research is incomplete and inadequate because it focuses on leadership

traits, not development; it takes a top-down, not a bottom-up approach; and female leadership is treated differently as opposed to and/or not considered broadly. Hence, in this study, I sought to better understand how female leaders evolve by examining women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 by deconstructing their paths to leadership from the bottom up. Identifying the comparisons among female political leaders within the same country and political body along with their respective paths to leadership in conjunction with their individual life experiences provides examples for aspiring leaders to follow as they construct their own paths to political office. Moreover, deconstructing and analyzing shared experiences as well as common factors, such as education and training, serves as potential models for emerging female leaders to customize their own paths to leadership and transform societies around the world to include and accept women as political leaders.

Problem Statement

The pathways of women to political leadership are overlooked within the academic traditions of public policy, leadership, and political science. Leaving out paths to leadership for women aspiring to become political leaders results in a lack of examples of women who lead, contributing to fewer female leaders at all levels of government within a country. Women succeed when women leaders represent them through public office (Mansbridge, 1999). Without women as political leaders, the issues women face and the policies that benefit women are neglected. Starved for a significant increase of women in leadership and decision-making roles, half of the world's population will remain underrepresented, and half the world's population will remain marginalized within societies.

Few theorists have specifically suggested an expansion of the research to include an examination of the influencing factors and experiences of female leaders that influenced their rise to power. Researchers in a variety of fields, such as Yukl (2010), Lyness and Schrader (2006), George et al., (2007), Bass and Riggio (2008), Adair (2009), and Buckingham (2012), examined leadership development in general terms rather than in gender-specific terms. Mainstream leadership studies concerning female leaders are primarily focused on their personal leadership style and specific leadership traits. What is missing is the bottom-up approach looking at female leaders from the formative years forward and exploring what motivated their nascent political ambition, influenced, and shaped them to make the choice to become a leader, specifically a political leader.

I explored how female political leaders develop and reveal their political aspirations. More specifically, I examined, through comparison and contrast, selected political female leaders to determine what factors contribute most to their nascent political ambition and leadership development. I deconstructed the paths to political leadership to better understand the influencing factors and obstacles unique to women and their leadership development as a way to provide more examples for aspiring female political leaders.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in this qualitative ethnographic study was to explore how female political leaders emerge by deconstructing the development of female legislators in the state of Florida from 2012 through 2017. I analyzed the lives of these women to identify contributing factors to leadership development such as education, family influences, professional roles, influences of mentors, advocates, or sponsors as well as

socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Based on this feminist deconstruction of female political leadership development, my intent in this research was to construct new knowledge about common experiences and nascent political ambition among female leaders.

Research Questions

I attempted to address two research questions as they pertain to the female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017.

RQ1: What are the influencing factors, characteristics and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017?

RQ2: What experiences as part of their path to public office in the Florida state legislature influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study most closely followed feminist theory in that it focuses on the unique pathways to leadership for specifically women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. Feminist theory originated in the historical reality that women existed only in the private sphere while men have existed in both the private and public spheres equally (Olesen, 2005). During the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, feminist theory emerged from the political and social movements for those marginalized by society such as the abolitionist movement in the United States as well as the women's suffrage movement. Starting with the seminal work *The Second Sex* by de Beauvoir (1949) and then continuing in *The Feminine Mystique* by Freidan (1969),

feminist theorists took on a more focused examination of the oppression of women in addition to social gender bias that are barriers to success for women beyond the socially accepted traditional gender roles. Both de Beauvoir (1949) and Friedan (1969) examined the ways that society views women and how that perception affects how women view themselves. They explained that, if women were liberated within modern society and empowered to participate fully in the public sphere, they would be just as capable as men to achieve success (de Beauvoir, 1949; Friedan, 1969). These early works in feminist research and methodology provided a foundation for the expansion of feminist theory.

Today, feminist theorists recognize the uniqueness of female circumstances, experiences, and contexts within a patriarchal society (Olesen, 2005). They also acknowledges that mainstream social research has left out inquiry into women's conditions, stories, or roles as a way to construct a comprehensive understanding of societies (Stewart, 1994). Female political participation, representation, and female political leaders have been a focus in the latter part of the 20th century as women began to participate in the political sphere (Eagly & Carly, 2007). Feminist theorists have also provided ways to research the rich experiences of women, including barriers as well as nontraditional paths to leadership that are not experienced in the same way as men.

I conducted my research through a feminist lens of inquiry that recognizes the challenges that women face throughout their life that could prevent or inspire them to become political leaders. The feminist lens focuses on the notion that gender shapes one's experiences and how people interact with those around them (Lather, 1991). The feminist research approach facilitates the construction of new knowledge by analyzing previously overlooked areas of study outside of the patriarchal paradigm (Brayton, 1997).

This research was supported by feminist theory with respect to the context of women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 because I focused on the how and why female leaders reach positions of political power. Feminist theory supported the inquiry regarding influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations among female political leaders. More specifically, exploring the lives of these women using the feminist theory of lived experiences examined the unique development that makes up each woman's path to leadership. In addition, feminist theory was well suited for this research because it focuses on studying the personal experiences of female leaders in a way that deconstructs their own path to leadership. The feminist theory foundation provided the opportunity for further analysis of how the women in this study overcame traditional barriers to seek political office in their state. The feminist theoretical base permitted me to explore both shared categories and the ability to identify personal experiences and circumstances of these female leaders along their unique pathways of leadership development.

Nature of the Study

This study was a qualitative ethnography study in which I explored the factors that influence female leaders and explored commonalities and trends across the group that contribute to their paths to leadership. The qualitative ethnography method permitted me to go in depth to examine the detail and stories of personal experiences and influential moments (Merriam, 1998). This type of study provided the opportunity for me to use a wide variety of research-gathering techniques as a way to cross-reference information and details to verify facts (Creswell, 2009). The ethnography methodology facilitated in-depth data collection for each selected leader to provide a comprehensive exploration of

their development as a leader. This approach was appropriate within the qualitative tradition because it allowed me to explore personal experiences and narratives of the female leaders (Merriam, 1998). Moreover, this approach, as used within the feminist theoretical tradition, illuminated the overlooked experiences of female leaders who ran for political office, in the state of Florida, for a seat in the state legislature, and allowed me to investigate what influenced their leadership development and paths to power.

The 65 women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017, provided an opportunity to examine female leaders running for the state political office as a comparison within a similar cultural context. Twelve women from the original 65 were selected to further narrow the population. I interviewed eight female leaders with set of guiding questions focused on the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. Key concepts were studied such as education, family influences, professional roles, influences of mentors, advocates, or sponsors as well as socioeconomic and cultural contexts for a sampling of eight of the leaders. To gather information on each of these key concepts and to identify other possible factors, I included primarily personal interviews and biographical research. The biographical sources utilized included as available, campaign press releases and public records to gain information about each leader.

I analyzed data gathered through personal interviews to search for comparisons, contrasts, and trends among female leaders and their experiences along their paths to leadership. NVivo helped analyze, explore, and reveal themes in the data. Preliminary codes, or nodes, included the following: education; family; children; barriers; obstacles; training; mentors; sponsors; advocates; transformational experiences; political

experience; business experience; jobs; wealth; religion; culture; awards; honors; public service; charity activities; and goals. Within the main category of mentors/sponsors/advocates, there were subcategories of formal or informal, male or female, and business or public service. Details were further explored within the transformational experiences category by being categorized as either positive or negative in nature; overcoming an obstacle or experiencing a milestone achievement; personal or public experience; and at what point in their lives this took place. With all information loaded in to NVivo, I ran a search for comparisons and trends among the data gathered and reported with the program. The details for each woman and then the cross comparison and contrasting of the female leaders and their experiences along their paths to leadership provided an overview of the leadership development.

Definitions

Defining moments: Some sort of personal experience that a leader gives credit to as something that influenced his or her aspirations for leadership, leadership style, or personal values on leadership in a meaningful and lasting way (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010).

Experiential development: Private, professional, or public experiences that have influenced and helped form the pathway to leadership for an individual. These can include but are not limited to formal education or training, family support, professional roles, and public offices held (Yukl, 2010).

Nascent political ambition: Nascent political ambition is deciding whether or not to run for political office and is developed in individuals as it evolves with time (Fowler & McClure, 1989; Fox & Lawless, 2005)

Path of leadership development: The collective experiences that a person has had throughout his or her personal and professional life that has influenced the choice to be a leader (D'Amico, 1995).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the 65 women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 provided an opportunity to examine female leaders running for the state political office and as a comparison within a similar cultural context. Eight of the 65 women were the focus of my study, with each female leader being interviewed with set of guiding questions focused on the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. Key concepts were studied such as education, family influences, professional roles, influences of mentors, advocates, or sponsors as well as socioeconomic and cultural contexts for a sampling of between 8 of the leaders.

I assumed that women participating in the personal interviews were truthful and candid with their answers. I developed the guiding questions based on research in the field of gender and leadership and provide the starting point for the participants to share their experiences as they relate to their leadership development and path to political office. I conducted all interviews with the consent of the participants and in compliance with Walden University IRB standards. I compiled and stored recording and transcripts of the interviews securely for all participants to review prior to publication. All participants had the right to withdraw their permission to use their information at any time and confidentiality was maintained.

In addition to the personal interviews, I assumed that the historical biographical documents examined for the subset of eight female leaders out of the 65 women were a

true representation within public records and political biographical sketches. For example, if I gathered biographical information for a leader, I assumed that it was compiled by the leader or at least reviewed in some way so that it represents the truth. I assumed the same truth for political bio sketches wherein the individual compiling the information was neutral and nonbiased as well as the leader was truthful with details. These assumptions of truth are necessary to this study because personal interviews with the entire subset of female leaders were not conducted and, therefore, truthful statements within the historical records cannot be verified. Secondary data gathered by interviewing the subset of women provided an accurate and complete view of these women's path to leadership from which conclusions were drawn. I conducted the interviews with full compliance of Walden University human subject research protocols and with permission of all interviewees. Those interviewed had full permission to review audio recordings, transcripts, and research findings pertaining to their participation in this study. I ethically gathered, analyzed, and communicated data as well as conclusions with each participant.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included the paths of leadership for each of the women in this study as opposed to the leadership style of woman. I sought to better understand how female leaders evolve by examining women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 by deconstructing their paths to leadership. All of the female leaders shared certain developmental experiences and influencing factors that contributed in some way to their leadership aspirations and development. These developmental experiences included education level, family background and support, socioeconomic

status, professional experience or formal leadership training, barriers to leadership both public and personal, and other political offices held.

The sample size of this study was focused due to the nature of examining female leaders elected to serve in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. These specifics, although they lend to the advantages of comparing similar women in a similar setting, also raised the question of weakness in the study because I did not include men in the research. This means that the findings of this study may not be applicable directly to all individuals and perhaps only specifically to women in similar states and societies to Florida from 2012 through 2017.

The bounds of the study were limited to female leaders holding office in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 included in this study. Leadership development of other leaders in general and female leaders from different timeframes, states, and nations are beyond the scope of this study and would require further research. Gender is specifically identified as a focus in this study leaving research with a genderless focus beyond the scope of this study. Research outside the scope of this study includes other areas such as leadership traits, styles, and types.

Results from this study were specific to female leaders and serve as a study for future female leaders. It may be possible to find similarities that could be applicable to all leaders as opposed to only female leaders. Recreating this study could be difficult unless another small group of female leaders within the same state and timeframe are used in a different study. However, significant implications exist for this type of pathway to leadership study to be used by all aspiring leaders.

Limitations

I relied on personal interviews of the between eight female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 and biographical research as a way to determine the paths of leadership. Other than the ethical concerns of the informational source, there should be little concern for trustworthiness. For transcripts of interviews, I identified the source and include an explanation of possible bias with the researcher and within the source. The sources that included information and details retrieved are verified and fully cited so that other researchers are able to check said sources and duplicate the study. A full source review list and set of interview transcripts provided a neutral overview of each woman's path to leadership. This was problematic in that the interviews and biographical research is not an exhaustive method for gathering information about the lives of these women.

Limitations to an ethnographic approach exist in that the sample size is small and generally focused on a shared trait. The small sample size for a qualitative ethnography makes it very difficult to replicate by other researchers (Creswell, 2009). With this study, the sample size was purposefully chosen by examining women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. This could be difficult to replicate or mirror in a similar study until more women start running for political office. I used the foundation of feminist theory, which is also limited by its gender focus. The feminist research approach facilitated specific in-depth inquiry but also makes it difficult to replicate a study with the opposite gender or with both genders being included in the same study (Creswell, 2009).

The search itself might have involved a level of bias by the researcher, because I am also a woman. As a woman along a leadership path and as someone who has experienced some of the factors being examined, I may have presented bias that would filter the interview process. This balanced the acknowledgment of gender as a possible influence on bias to promote neutrality. With any study, there can be a level of personal bias that influences the researcher. All sources were clearly identified, as a way to reduce bias and the context of each source stated with the acknowledgment that each source was unique (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998).

Another limitation with this study was with the eight female leaders as the subset of the original group of 65 women. Those I chose were selected due political party to gain as close to a balanced number from each party. Each participant had the choice of a face-to-face recorded interview or an online interview using a web-based meeting tool with audio recording capability. The limitation of eight women participating in the personal interviews could be expanded for future research.

Significance

Classical, non-gender-specific leadership studies tend to examine what leaders do or how they affect others and less on what influences they had along their paths to leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2008; Buckingham, 2012; Burns, 1978; George et al., 2007; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Yukl, 2010). The majority of the literature overlooks how leaders in general are formed or developed. This study filled the gaps in the larger spectrum of leadership development literature. By examining the paths to leadership of the women serving in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 and comparing their shared experiences, the developmental and transformative years of these

female leaders is better understood, and generalizations consequently can be drawn so that increasing numbers of women will be able to seek out similar experiences along their paths to public leadership. Such generalizations provide insight for women to find their own path to leadership and transform societies to include and accept women as leaders. Women experience these opportunities and seek out experiences differently than men (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). The paths of these women might inspire other women to become leaders. When more women are in leadership positions, conditions for all women will improve by creating a conduit through which their needs and concerns can be shared. This type of change also facilitates change not just for women but also for men, children, and families with the resulting needs of women being voiced by female leaders in a way that only female leaders can understand through shared circumstances among their gender.

Summary

Leadership grows through a natural process of development based on experiences and opportunities provided for and sought out by individuals with the potential to lead. Women experience these opportunities and seek out experiences differently than men. Because few studies identify paths to leadership for female leaders, more research must be done to understand and identify the shared factors and experiences that support female leadership development. In this ethnographic study, I looked at the experiences of women serving in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 through the feminist lens of inquiry. The feminist research approach facilitated the study of gender-specific experiences along each woman's unique path of leadership development. Influencing factors such as education, family, socioeconomic status, culture, and defining moments in

this study were analyzed to address the research question regarding what factors

influence female leaders. By analyzing the experiences and influencing factors of each

female leader, I shaped the research questions concerning the early years and leadership

development of these women.

In Chapter 2, I examine the academic literature on gender and leadership to

provide an understanding for the focus of this study and provide insight into the

foundation of women as leaders and leadership development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The pathways for women to political leadership are left out from the academic traditions of public policy, leadership studies, and political science, creating a significant gap. Without women as political leaders, the issues that women face and the policies that benefit women are neglected. Women succeed when women leaders represent them through public office (Mansbridge, 1999). Without a significant increase of women in leadership and decision-making roles, half of the world's population will remain underrepresented and will remain marginalized. Without examples of how other women develop leadership aspirations to run for public office, fewer women will lead politically. In this study, I deconstructed the paths to political leadership to better understand the influencing factors and obstacles unique to women and their leadership development as a way to provide more examples for aspiring female leaders. The first research question that I examined was the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who have held office in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. In my second research question, I examined how their experiences as part of their paths to pubic office influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017.

Researchers in the variety of fields examine leadership development in general terms rather than gender specific (Adair 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2008; Buckingham, 2012; George et al., 2007; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Yukl, 2010). These theorists look at what types of leadership characteristics leaders display or how they rose through the ranks to

leadership positions (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). Most focus on male leaders and masculine leadership traits rather than including women as part of the general study of leadership (Adair, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2008). Few theorists have specifically suggested an expansion of the research to include an examination of the influencing factors and experiences of female leaders (Yukl, 2010). Within general leadership studies, the research surrounding female leaders is primarily focused on their personal leadership style and specific leadership traits (Buckingham, 2012). As a whole, leadership research tends to focus on examining what leadership looks like rather than how leadership skills develop.

Studies that examine leadership such as Yukl (2010) allude to the fact that further study of female leadership characteristics is necessary and that more female leaders should be encouraged to become leaders. As with general leadership studies, the research surrounding female leaders is primarily focused on their personal leadership style and specific leadership traits (Buckingham, 2012; Yukl, 2010). What is missing is the bottom-up approach, looking at female leaders from the formative years forward and exploring what motivated, influenced, and shaped them to make the choice to become a leader, specifically a political leader. Leadership grows through a natural process of development based on experiences and opportunities provided for and sought out by individuals with the potential to lead (Adair, 2009). Women experience these opportunities and seek out experiences differently than men (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). In this study, I sought to better understand how female leaders evolve by examining the development of women serving in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 through the analysis of their paths to leadership positions and comparing/contrasting

influencing factors. To inspire more women to seek their own path to leadership and develop more female leaders, more research must be done to understand and identify the shared factors and experiences that support female leadership development.

In this chapter, I explore research on leadership to provide a foundation for further research. I present the literature search strategies and the theoretical foundation of feminist theory. A variety of studies have used feminist theory, noting that women succeed when women leaders represent them through public office. The study of female leaders and gender as a factor in leadership is well grounded in feminist theory and research methods.

In addition to feminist studies, the overall survey of relevant research starts with the general study of leadership theories by examining what determines leadership and the definitions of a leader. Then the major leadership studies are presented as a framework for how leaders develop and grow. Female leadership, gender leadership traits, women as leaders, and nascent political ambition is included to provide background information of the evaluation of female leaders and their development of leadership traits that contributed to them running for political office. The paths of female leaders are presented as the primary context for this study, focusing on the characteristics and experiences that influence leadership development in female leaders such as mentors, sponsors and advocates, family, socioeconomic class, education, personality traits and transformational experiences, as well as societal and cultural factors. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the literature relevant to the research focus of this study.

Literature Search Strategies

I searched Academic journals, books, papers and articles from around the world to find research related to the central research question in this study of how female leaders develop. SAGE Premier, CQ Researcher, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, and Political Science Complete. I used primary terms such as *leadership*, *leadership traits*, *women as leaders*, *women as political leaders*, *nascent political ambition*, *leadership development*, *feminist theory*, *gender* and, *leadership* as well as *leadership training* in finding sources. The search started with general leadership theories and studies and then focused on women in leadership, specifically political leadership. From there, the search narrowed to examine gender and leadership and the influence on leadership development. The search was narrowed further to find information on the paths of leadership for women and the variety of factors and experiences that influence female leadership development.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study most closely followed the feminist theory in that it examined the unique lived experiences of women serving in the Florida state legislature and their pathways to leadership. Feminist theory recognizes the uniqueness of female circumstances, experiences, and contexts within a patriarchal society (Olesen, 2005). It also acknowledges that mainstream social research has left out inquiry into women's conditions, stories, or roles as a way to construct a comprehensive understanding of societies (Stewart, 1994). I conducted the research in this study through a feminist lens of inquiry that recognizes the challenges that women face throughout their life that could prevent or inspire them to become political leaders. The feminist lens

focuses on the notion that gender shapes one's experiences and how one interacts with others (Lather, 1991).

The origins of feminist theory reach back to the 1800s with Harriet Jacobs and her call for the lived experiences of women to be examined and included in society as a way to build a more comprehensive understanding (Jacobs, 2000). This is considered the first wave of feminism in which voting rights were sought for women and protections against violence as well as labor conditions were gained. From this first wave, the roots of feminist theory were established to support the need for women to be included in the human experiences of public life with equal protections and equal value within society. Understanding the human experience furthered the study of societies and only looking at the male human experience left a gap in uncovering the whole picture of human experience as it only focused on the contributions of men in public life. The unique experiences of women needed to be explored so that barriers could be identified to lay the groundwork for eliminating those barriers in the future.

Feminist theory developed further in the 20th century with the appeal for women to be viewed as more than just an extension of their husband or family but rather as individuals with their own values, thoughts, and stories (de Beauvoir, 1952; Freidan, 1963; Smith, 1978). This is considered the second wave of feminist theory that sought to end social discrimination for women. The feminist perspective, which had been overlooked in the first wave of feminism, was now being seeking to include female voices and experiences that had been previously excluded.

This second wave of feminism sought new knowledge by seeking out topics and groups that had been previously marginalized or left out of mainstream research (hooks,

2003; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Trinh, 1991). Feminist theories began to assert new ways of thinking in which new questions were being asked, the less-studied groups were being focused on and the stories of women were being collected. Feminist theory in the second wave pieced together a more complete understanding on a much deeper level of the complete human experience on a wide variety of topics (Harding, 1987). Feminist theory was starting to provide a framework for a deeper understanding of the gender specific experience of women along their paths to leadership.

The third wave of feminist theory began in the late 1980s and 1990s as a response to negative connotations that feminism in the second wave had elicited in society. In this third wave, major strains of feminist theory evolved to include areas such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, and post-modern feminism (Harding, 1987). Each of these strains took on its own unique perspective of why women had either been marginalized or oppressed, but they all shared the same common theme that women had been excluded due to the male established power structure; thus, they demanded change to the power elite (Lather, 1991). The third wave of feminist theory seeks to be more inclusive of all social groups that experience the same discrimination that women face to better understand the male power structure and the barriers that exist for women and minorities who seek to participate equally in public life.

When it comes to history, feminist theory sees women as overlooked in the stories of societies, leading to an incomplete and inaccurate record or study (Kelly-Gadol, 1987). Feminist theory sees women as agents of change throughout history and seeks to detail these influences for a new set of knowledge-based understanding. For example, when

there are significant shifts forward in societies, there is noticeable progress for women from the private realm to the public realm happening at the same time. This shift forward in societies demonstrates that sex or gender is a level of analysis that mainstream historians have overlooked (Kelly-Gadol, 1987). Feminist theory seeks to first acknowledge the gendered limited contexts of history and then go beyond by asking new questions and discovering new details previously left out of historical accounts (Tuana, 1989). In addition, feminist theory asserts that women have unique experiences, perspectives, and contributions that have been overlooked or under-examined by mainstream societal research.

Feminist theory includes the previously excluded and the neutral understanding of the expanded research focus, presenting the opportunity to learn more than what society is limited by and seeks to include the experiences of women. Feminist standpoint theory and feminist identity developmental theory include the perspective of the female experience through the lens of feminine identity, approaching the research in a way that emphasizes the uniqueness that was each woman's lived experiences.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory seeks to include the unique female perspective through examination of the lived experiences of women. The theory itself originated in the subfields of political science, sociology, psychology, and science with theorists like Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, Hilary Rose, Nancy Hartsock, and Alison Jaggar (Harding, 1987). The broader standpoint theory in social science acknowledges that there are cultural, racial, generational, and societal biases that limit the full inclusion and subsequent power of certain groups (Collins, 1986). Within these

marginalized groups, such individuals experience social interactions differently than the primary power group; therefore, their experiences have been overlooked by mainstream researchers (Andersen & Collins, 2007). Women are the marginalized group in feminist standpoint theory, which finds its roots in Marxist theories, whereas general standpoint theory examines the subordinate relationships within societies that overlook the lived experiences of the oppressed (Collins, 1986).

One of the subgroups acknowledged in the mainstream standpoint theory is women and girls, resulting in the more specifically focused feminist standpoint theory. This theory acknowledges that the lives of women and their experiences differ significantly from men's lived experiences (Harding, 1987, 1991, 1993, 2004). The examination of the lives and experiences of women is a strength of feminist standpoint theory in that it incorporates the inclusion of lived experiences and story-gathering specifically unique to women. The broader feminist theory acknowledges that the personal stories and unique experiences of women are valid points of data and knowledge in research and feminist standpoint theory takes this further by gathering this knowledge from the ground up from the perspective of individual women (Harding, 1991, 1993, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory goes deeper to examine a woman's standpoint or perspective as different and unique. It also acknowledges the diversity of women's experiences, asserting that collecting stories as part of research is personal and unique to each participant (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). In gathering feminist research and analyzing the data collected, the intersecting themes and similar experiences within stories provide the researcher with new understandings of complex topics (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004).

The gathering of unique experiences from the standpoint of women made the feminist standpoint theory appropriate for this study. Feminist standpoint theory facilitated answering the research question by examining what influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences have shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. Feminist standpoint theory also provided the basis for examining the lived experiences that women in this study have along their paths to leadership as a way to address the research question concerning the experiences as part of their path to public office that influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017.

Feminist Identity Development Theory

Another theory related to feminist standpoint theory adds an additional level of analysis to this study, feminist identity development theory. Feminist identity development theory acknowledges that the lived experiences of women are unique and overlooked by mainstream social science theories. Feminist identity development furthermore acknowledges that there is a unique female identity that is different from that of the mainstream male identity and therefore is developed through different experiences that are unique to the way women and girls are treated and acknowledged (Brayton, 1997; Hyde, 2002; Leaper & Friedman, 2007).

The feminist identity development theory has its origins in the social science subfield of psychology and part of the mainstream identity development theory. This mainstream identity development theory asserts that individuals develop their own personal identity as a result of their lived experiences (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986).

Individuals build an identity subconsciously through experiences like roles they play in their families, social groups, culture, or even the constraints or preferences that society applies to their culture, gender or age group (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Identity development theory proposes that an individual's identity development is influenced significantly by external factors and experiences (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009). As with other mainstream social theories, identity development theory focuses primarily on the lived experiences and identity development of men as the mainstream majority and overlooks the unique experiences of women as they develop their own individual identities within societies, families, social groups, and the workplace.

Downing and Roush first introduced the concept of female identity development theory in 1985. The origin of the theory began with the broad identity theories, examining the variety of subgroups that develop their own identity within societies as a way to explore the varieties of identities (Downing & Roush, 1985). From there, the subgroup of women and the unique identities that are developed through lived experiences specific to how their gender is treated in society gives way to idea of distinct female identity development. The research acknowledged that women had different personal identities than their male counterparts and explored how the female identity could be shaped by significantly different experiences (Downing & Roush, 1985). The subgroup research gave way to feminist identity development theory which goes further in noting that women develop differently than men due to these alternative lived experiences (Hyde, 2002).

The primary claim of feminist identity development theory is that the identities of women are uniquely developed in a way that is profoundly different than male

counterparts in their respective society (Hansen, 2002; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Since women in most societies and cultures around the world are marginalized with regard to access to power and how they are treated within their society with regard to education, healthcare, and employment, feminist identity development theory asserts that the development experiences of women are overlooked by mainstream research (Leaper & Friedman, 2007; Marine & Lewis, 2014). Therefore, little was known about how women develop identities within different societies. More specifically, the feminist identity development of female political leaders was missing in that the unique experiences, circumstances, and perceived barriers or supportive factors have not been explored. Feminist identity development was used to examine the unique experiences of the women in this study to examine how their own specific feminist identities developed in relation to the constraints of society and what barriers they faced as women along their path to leadership. In addition, feminist identity theory is used to address how the identities that the women in this study developed contribute to the leadership aspirations cultivated during their formative years and throughout their lives, leading to their run for political office.

Rationale for Using These Theories in This Study

This study provided an analysis from the bottom up that examined the variety of factors and transformational experiences that shaped the leadership development of women along their paths to become leaders. This study utilized feminist theory through feminist standpoint and feminist identity development theory with respect to the context of women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. These feminist theories provided a foundation for further analysis of how the women in this

study overcame barriers to seek political office. These theories further supported the exploration of both shared categories and the ability to identify personal experiences and circumstances of these female leaders along their unique pathway of leadership development.

As a way to understand the unique pathway of female leadership development, this study researched the unique experiences from the standpoint of women with an understanding of their personal identity development. Feminist standpoint theory facilitated answering the research question regarding the factors and experiences that shaped political aspirations among female leaders serving at the same level of political office by gathering details as lived through the unique perspective and standpoint of the individual lives of the women in this study. Feminist standpoint theory also provided the basis for examining the lives of these women as a way to address the research question regarding the leadership traits and aspirations of women during their formative years and throughout their lives along their path to public office.

Likewise, feminist identity development theory was used to examine the unique experiences of the women to address the research focus regarding how their own specific feminist identities developed in relation to the constraints of their society and what barriers they faced along their path to leadership. In addition, feminist identity theory was used to address how the identities that the women in this study developed contributed to the leadership traits and aspirations cultivated during their formative years and throughout their lives leading up to their run for political office.

Feminist theory, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist identity development theory have been utilized in studies that explore the unique experiences of women as

leaders (e.g., Chan & Drasgrow, 2001; Collard & Reynolds, 2004; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fulton, et al., 2006; Jalalzai & Krook, 2010; Schipani et al., 2009). Other studies have used these theories to explore the experiences of women in leadership roles by gathering the information necessary to understand the unique perspective from the standpoint of each woman as a way to examine the women as leaders. Studies such as those by Elliott and Stead (2008), Shahtalebi, Yarmohammadian and Ajami (2011), and Blackmore (2013) studied the experiences of leading women in a variety of professional settings as a way to understand how women develop into leaders from a non-traditional gender-influenced path to leadership.

The factors studied by Elliot and Stead (2008) included childhood, family setting, individual drive and allies. The women in the study were examined for how their leadership develops within, via a variety of professional settings as a way to provide a better understanding of leadership (Elliot & Stead, 2008). By examining the influencing factors along the path to leadership for these women, Elliot and Stead identified common barriers and motivating experiences that all leaders can benefit from by knowing. As in this study, Elliot and Stead acknowledged that the experiences of female leaders are missing from leadership research and that feminist theory can support the study of these missing experiences. They concluded that women's path to leadership has been sparsely analyzed and is disconnected from the social and personal influences that women uniquely experience as they develop as a leader (Elliot & Stead, 2008).

Shahtalebi et al. (2011) utilized a feminist qualitative methodology to examine the influencing factors of eight women who are leaders in higher education. Such factors include personality, individual perspectives, societal influences, leadership skills, family,

and education with additional sub-components (Shahtalebi et al., 2011). The researchers interviewed each of the eight women extensively and then cross-referenced their responses within a descriptive phenomenological approach (Shahtalebi et al., 2011). A significant finding from the study suggested that the leadership skills of women are uniquely developed under conditions that are linked to internal and external influencing factors related to gender (Shahtalebi et al., 2011).

Blackmore (2013) examined educational leadership in relation to women as leaders. As with the other two studies, Blackmore acknowledged that little research has explored the unique experiences of women as they develop as leaders. She stated that examining the experiences of women leaders from a feminist perspective adds to the understanding of leadership and how it is developed and practiced (Blackmore, 2013). Female educational leaders were examined in relation to influencing factors such as culture, work/school environment, community, and collaboration (Blackmore, 2013). Blackmore determined that context matters in relation to how women develop as leaders, and, specifically in educational leadership, a variety of influencing factors affect a woman's path to leadership.

This study specifically explored the unique development of women serving the in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 by examining their unique lived experiences from a feminist standpoint and then compiling these experiences to identify influencing factors and deconstruct a path of development that is unique to each of the female leaders. Women develop differently than men, and the feminist identity development theory supported this by acknowledging that women develop differently than their male counterparts, understanding that the differing development of women has

been overlooked by mainstream research, and documenting the unique story of each woman to further explore the development of women as leaders (Hyde, 2002; Marine & Lewis, 2014).

This study expanded the research in feminist theory, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist identity development theory by providing foundational knowledge of the factors and experiences that affect the leadership development of women serving in a similar political office at the same level in the same state. By identifying the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations among female leaders serving in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017, this study expanded upon what is known about how women develop as leaders, unique from their male counterparts. Specifically, this study added to the knowledge of how leadership traits and aspirations of women influenced and cultivated during their formative years and throughout their lives as part of their path to public office as a way to further understand how women develop as leaders apart from the male norms of leadership.

General Studies of Leadership

In this section, major trends in general leadership studies are examined to understand the foundation of leadership studies. The variety of leadership topics are also explored how not only the type of leadership but also the leaders themselves have been studied through the years. To conclude the general studies of leadership section, I examine how the inclusion of women as leaders and the pathways to leadership for women has been marginally explored by social science researchers.

Leadership has been studied by scholars for centuries. From leadership on the battlefield to leadership of individuals and governing bodies, it is a subject that has

always evoked criticism and wonder. Traditionally, the research on leadership has centered around the leaders and their behavior, characteristics, traits and whether or not their leadership was effective in relation to their followers (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002; Schilling, 2009; Toney, 1996; Zaccaro, 2007). For example, the negative aspects of masculine-dominated leadership styles as a norm have been examined to determine their effects on societies and cultures (Schilling, 2009). In addition, scholars have critiqued how leaders are chosen and who is permitted to participate in this choice, with many studies focusing on the type of leadership instead of how a leader develops from early formative experiences.

While leadership is not a new subject, understanding leadership through those who lead, those who follow, and those who seek to lead is something that a variety of leadership theories explore. Major leadership studies seek to understand leadership on every level by exploring not only what leadership is but how it works and what it looks like. The concept of leadership is first seen as a situational relationship between a leader and followers (Burns, 1978). The existence of a leader is validated by followers, meaning that a leader does not exist legitimately if followers are not present. This symbiotic relationship is the foundation of transactional leadership theory which originates with the social-exchange perspective focusing on the relationship between leader and followers being mutually beneficial in that both succeed in towards a shared goal (Bass, 1985; Chemers & Ayman, 1993). All leader-follower relationships may not be mutually beneficial as transactional theory proposes. In reality, some leader and follower relationships are positive while others are negative or oppressive. The positive transactional leadership relationships are an exceptional example of value-based

leadership that supports the growth and development of both the leader and the followers, depending on the context in which they are leading.

Another primary traditional leadership theory is transformational leadership theory which takes transactional a step further, emphasizing empowerment, collaboration and motivation as a way to participate in leadership (Burns, 1978). This is also a positive leader-follower relationship that promotes symbiotic roles in which the leader would not exist or could not continue to lead without the support of loyal followers who are vested in shared goals. Transactional leadership is a continual relationship that is dependent upon communication between leader and followers that establishes and maintains trust as well as supports empowerment to make the transactional relationship stronger (Bass, 1985). Motivation in transactional leadership theory is also a key to maintaining leadership status and enduring trust among followers. Leaders within this theoretical strain are either extremely successful or fail miserably with followers.

The understanding of what identifies a leader is important but merely examining the leader-follower relationship does not fully explain the complexities of leadership (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). The act of leadership is very much influenced by the context within which someone is leading, and the leader is ultimately affected by experiences, circumstances, and interactions with others (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Osborn, Hunt & Jauch, 2002). This is contextual leadership, wherein the extant literature focuses on the knowledge of how and why leaders behave certain ways adding to the dimensions of understanding what is leadership proposing that leadership is unique to the construct of situations surrounding it (Osborn et al., 2002). Depending on the situation, a leader will exhibit more or less of certain traits that are appropriate to the leadership

context (Adair, 2009). Therefore, leadership is personal, individual, and contextual in relation to followers and circumstances at any given time. Although this is not the main focus of the study, it was important to understand what leadership is and what types of leaders are included in leadership theories to explore the nuances of leadership in this study.

Gender and Leadership

The study of leadership and gender generally focus on determining the values that leaders may have in order to understand their actions and the characteristics of their followers (Kolb, 1997; Lord & Brown, 2001, Lord & Hall, 2005; Posner, Kouzes, & Dixit, 2011). However informative these studies are, they are all done via a top-down approach by looking at leadership as a whole and attempting to determine how levels of leadership might be reached. The top-down approach overlooks how leaders develop and tends to focus only on leaders once they are already in a leadership role, missing critical developmental nuances. Traditional paths to leadership for men include hierarchical ascension, military might and even more democratic rises to power through popular elections. The male perspective on leadership and the development of leaders are prevalent in mainstream leadership theories (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Schilling, 2009; Toney, 1996; Zaccaro, 2007). There are numerous examples throughout history, politics, business, and psychology that center on male leaders and the male experience. The unique experiences of women are not included on a widespread scale within the mainstream leadership theories, thus leaving a gap in the research on leadership as it relates to gender (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Schilling, 2009; Toney, 1996; Zaccaro, 2007).

Mainstream leadership studies tend to focus on the male viewpoint or experience rather than include female leaders and how they develop leadership skills (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2001; O'Brien et al., 2010; Posner et al., 2011; Stetler, 2002; Yukl, 2010). The study subjects have been predominately male paths to leadership, focusing on how they rose to power or were elected to office (Adair, 2009; Kahn, 2010; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Posner et al., 2011; Yukl, 2010). For example, men experience similar upbringings with privilege and access to all levels of education along with opportunities to lead that women and members of minority groups in societies may not have. Women as leaders have not been studied widely in the mainstream leadership theoretical traditions. Women experience the world differently than men and how they are treated, the opportunities that they are offered, and the circumstances that they face are unique to them. There are societal constraints on the expectations of women that lead to barriers to leadership development for women. Society views women as less likely to lead; therefore, women must seek out alternatives to the leadership development that men experience to find their own unique opportunities to lead. All these differing experiences affect the paths that women take to leadership roles.

Paths to leadership are not the same for all individuals, with each person's path to leadership being unique, and, for women in particular, it may not be the straight or traditional path up the ladder that a man would take. Women who aspire to leadership roles should learn to spot their own unique possibilities for leadership development and growth as a way to discover their own pathway to success (Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Marsh, 2006, Welch, 2000). This can be a unique challenge for women who are seeking leadership opportunities in that they are not able to spot or determine their own openings

for growth like their male counterparts can due to gender-based obstacles and social stereotypes (Welch, 2000). Due to gender constructs in society on how women should behave, a woman might be fearful, less confident or face significant barriers that prevent her from not only recognizing but also taking advantage of opportunities to develop and grow as a leader. In the United States, women tend to work their way up within an organization or company rather than taking a risk by expanding experiences and job growth as other companies (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). Taking risks like this is vital to leadership growth for both male and female leaders. Another study shows that there are certain obstacles that women face when moving up the leadership ladder that their male counterparts do not face since men are more predisposed to take risks and explore new leadership experiences (Marsh, 2006). Women often do not search for varied leadership experiences as a means to develop their leadership skills like men do (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). This risk-taking as part of seeking out opportunities that facilitate leadership growth is just one of the different ways men and women experience leadership development. Without this type of risk-taking, growth as a leader is limited, and, with women traditionally fearful of risk, growth as a female leader is a particular challenge.

Women develop through career paths to leadership that are much more complex than their male counterparts. Paths for women leaders are generally outside the norm and non-sequential in traditional terms like their male counterparts. Taking into consideration the number of barriers that female leaders face, women experience a variety of leadership opportunities that are generally not within the same organization, resulting in careers at different companies as compared to male counterparts who are able to advance on a linear path a single organization. Evidence points to a labyrinth of leadership

opportunities being a widespread issue for women caused by the barriers women face on male-dominated as well as gender-neutral career paths (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristkikari, 2011; Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, & Hawkins-Rodgers, 2007). Such barriers can include organizational structures or internal policies, stereotypes, bias decision-making, lack of diversity or a non-collaborative workplace. Women in these biased, less diverse or non-collaborative organizations were seen as lacking the desired characteristics for leadership such as ambition, self-confidence, and competitiveness (Koenig et al., 2011; Whitmarsh et al., 2007). For example, if a woman speaks out with an idea or commentary in such a work environment, she would be perceived as pushy, out-spoken, or confrontational rather than praised like a man for being innovative, brave, and confident. Women are more likely to excel in an environment that embraces equal opportunity policies and demonstrates shared empowerment. If this is lacking, then the path for women is limited within the organization (Melamed, 1996).

As a result, women must find alternative paths for leadership development as they form their labyrinth of experiences that result in leadership success (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The women who successfully navigate a complex pathway to leadership do so with the assistance of resources external to the organization such as contacts, networking and advocates that provide a variety of experiential opportunities for leadership development. These experiences expand leadership development and are a challenge to women or are different for them based on societal gender constraints.

In understanding that gender is a learned and socially constructed identity different than one's medically determined sex, a person can come to realize that leadership development can be significantly affected by gender roles. Gender roles start

from birth with such things ranging from boys and girls being treated differently by society to medical professionals overestimating infant milestones for boys versus girls and encouraging more cuddling and assistance for girls (Evans, 2014; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). For example, boys are cheered on to be smart and independent like daddy and girls to be sweet and nurturing like mommy. There are set stereotypes in most western societies that cast the female gender as weak compared to the strength of the male gender. In terms of leadership, the characteristics of being a leader include being honest and straight forward, which is something that women in society find difficult since it goes against the norm of women being expected to remain in the background since these are considered male personality traits (Buckingham, 2012; Evans, 2014). It is difficult for women to defy the social norms and lead with traits that are expected of men, resulting, in some cases, in women who cannot rise above this gender stereotype and missing out on full leadership development.

A leader's personal ambition or self-motivation to lead varies by gender. Men tend to be more ambitious and therefore more open to leadership aspirations (Williams, 2007). This creates a barrier for women that they have constructed themselves based on societal constraints and stereotypes, resulting in women tending to be less ambitious to aspire to public office (Williams, 2007). In addition, women as leaders are less likely to participate in self-promotion and emphasize their individual achievements (Bligh & Kohles, 2008). They are not as boastful and less likely to claim credit for success than a man and prefer to serve in a more collaborative role where they learn to serve or lead in a role that results in less acknowledgement or recognition for their leadership attributes.

Thus, traditionally, women are viewed as lacking the necessary traits be become leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Perceived leadership roles have been tied to masculine gender traits whereas limiting the aspirations of potential female leaders since they do not wish to appear outside of the norm (Boatwright & Forrest, 2000). Research reinforces this pattern, with one study noting that, among similarly qualified male and female potential candidates, only 62% of the men versus 46% of the women seriously entertained the idea of running for political office (Lawless & Fox, 2012). This idea of perceived leadership roles limits aspirations for many women due to the perceived preference for male leadership traits and ideals.

Society rewards men for being ambitious and powerful while placing a negative stigma on women who exhibit the same traits, creating an environment in which women who speak up, are ambitious, take risks, give direction or take charge are perceived as bossy, angry and out of line (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). Women thus see themselves as unqualified by social standards for leadership. For both genders to succeed as leaders and develop to their optimal leadership potential, they need to look beyond the gender stereotypes and be the genuine individuals they were meant to be (George et al., 2007). Then and only then will authentic leadership development occur at levels for all individuals with the potential to lead regardless of their gender.

Gender stereotypes are a reality in many cultures and still present even with female leaders who reach the pinnacle of political leadership in their country. Margaret Thatcher was dubbed "Attila the Hen" during her term in office, Golda Meir was referred to as "the only man in the cabinet", Indira Gandhi was called "the old witch" by President

Nixon, and Angela Merkel has been given the title "the iron frau" (Jalazai, 2004). As

societies progress and evolve, gender stereotypes do not fade or even lessen when women

lead a nation. These persisting stereotypes limit the leadership involvement,

development, and aspirations of women and girls. This is not just a notation of the lack of

women as leaders but rather evidence that the path to leadership for women is different

than that of men and subsequently more difficult due to gender stereotypes, thus limiting

to women developing into leaders (Lawless & Fox, 2012; Lilliefeldt, 2010; Reingold &

Harrell, 2010; Rosen, 2013; Schipani et al., 2009). For example, in many instances,

leaders develop under the tutelage of a mentor or gatekeeper currently holding a

leadership position. With more men than women serving in leadership positions, the

potential is limited for opportunities for mentorship or transformative leadership

development.

Women as Leaders

Much has been studied about gender differences, the obstacles faced by women,

and gender-based leadership traits, but few studies have engaged the specific and unique

leadership development of women as political leaders (Koenig et al., 2011, Palley, 2004;

Rios, Stewart, & Winter, 2010; Shankar, 2007). This can be a disadvantage for all

citizens since societies can benefit from having more women in leadership roles. When

there are more women in leadership positions, the result is a more inclusive and positive

work environment with smaller earning gaps between men and women and more

supportive work/life/family policies (James, 1998; Shin, 2012). Societies adopt

supportive public policies that reflect the needs of women and families, contributing to

the stability of a nation when more women are in leadership positions (Shin, 2012). When

more women are in political leadership roles the more policies a society has to support its citizens making it more stable as a nation.

The same concept of including more women can be applied to women in political leadership roles. It is reasonable to propose that if similar improvements in expanding female leadership on a state, national, or global scale are made, then political policies for all individuals will experience positive benefits. Women are starting to begin to take a higher profile role in politics worldwide but there are still barriers and stereotypes that limit the level of leadership a woman can experience (Lawless, 2004). As the number of women engaging in political parties has started to rise, this has had little effect on traditional party structure or leadership but has had an influence on raising awareness for social issues and reaching gender quotas where applicable, meaning that more women as leaders are needed, not just more women getting involved in politics (Kittilson, 2010). More women as leaders provides more examples of diverse leaders and varied paths to leadership to learn from and aspire to.

With the slow progress made by an increasing number of women being elected to political office worldwide, there is still an uncertainty regarding how and when that will affect the condition of women through policy change and continued leadership roles (Jalalzai & Krook, 2010). Research supports that, when more women are elected to leadership roles, there is an improvement of quality of life for all women since these elected women will have the chance to be advocates for gender specific issues and policies (Rudman & Phelan, 2010; Taylor, Lord, McIntyre, & Paulsen, 2011). More women in leadership roles would provide more opportunities for all women to be heard and participate in policy making. However, in order for this to occur, leadership

development needs to take place so that women can be added as part of the candidate selection process in societies around the world.

Women as Political Leaders

A woman as a leader in the private sector is very different than a woman as a political leader. Many times, a culture shift or a concerted effort must be undertaken for a woman to make it through the candidate selection process in most countries. Candidate selection in political races can be traditional in the sense that they focus on male candidate traits and traditional paths of development rather than considering the unique circumstances and experiences of aspiring female leaders (Blackmore, 2012; Olsson, 2000; Shamir, Dayan-Horesh & Adler, 2005). This can be significantly challenging for women due to ingrained societal gender stereotypes. Patterns of candidate selection overlook gender as a separate factor in that they conform to the mainstream understandings of institutionalism without acknowledging the barriers and challenges experienced by female candidates during the selection process (Krook, 2009). Subsequently, research has excluded close examination of the varied paths to leadership and barriers to leadership development for women.

Candidate selection is changing, and women are being incorporated in the political leadership process as part of government policies and social shifts. The effort is being made to include more women in politics, but there is no support for the leadership development of the women who choose to be politically active. This shows that the political party affiliation and subsequent support is more of a cue for voters to follow rather than support leadership development resource for female candidates (Dolan &

Lynch, 2013). Without formal support for the leadership development of female political leaders, women are left to find their own opportunities for growth into a leadership role.

The path for women as political leaders is haphazard at best with no typical path for women to rise to political office. A few women have reached political office through family ties, many more have been elected based on their individual achievements and promise (Blackmore, 2012; Jalalzai, 2004; Rosen, 2013). The small number of female political leaders suggests that the stereotype of masculinity as a leadership requirement for a political leader is being slowly eroded (Jalalzai, 2010; Reingold & Harrell, 2010; Rosen 2013). However, there is still progress to be made through leadership development of women with political aspirations.

Women and Finding a Path to Leadership

The unique experiences of women and their varied paths to leadership roles are overlooked in general leadership theories. Mainstream leadership theories do not adequately address how the leadership aspirations of women are developed or influenced as they emerge as significant leaders, and, among those that do include gender, tend to focus on female leaders and how they lead rather than how they reached leadership (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). Exactly where, when or how these leadership characteristics are acquired or are developed is left out of the mainstream research. Gender-specific studies note that there are certain influences such as early care giver relationships within a leader's developmental years that help shape what type of leader they will become. (Asgair, Dasgupta, & Stout, 2012; Beer, 1999; Boatwright & Forrest, 2000; Melamed, 1996; Kolb, 1997; Schipani et al., 2009; Tellhead & Bjorklund, 2011). One study suggested that leadership characteristics are learned and that women tend to acquire more

participatory or relational leadership traits as part of their socialization process (Boatwright & Forrest, 2000). Without these key relationships as part of early leadership development, women are at a disadvantage when compared to men in that they must seek out these relationships if they do not already exist within their support system.

Social role theory asserts that women and girls are socialized to develop quality interpersonal relationships which is a necessary skill for transformational leaders (Carless, 1998). This area of the leadership literature focuses on how female leaders learn their gender specific skills through relationships and interactions within family unites as well as part of their culture and society. Studies like these provide a basis for reference when examining the contributing experiences that shape a leader and help develop a unique style and path to leadership.

Women and Nascent Political Ambition

Perceived gendered leadership roles have an effect on how many women actually consider running for political office. This can have a negative effect on a woman's nascent political ambition. Out of the group that had considered running, 22 percent of the men compared to 14 percent of the women actually found running for office in the future appealing (Lawless & Fox, 2012). As a result of contributing gender roles and societal stereotypes, men are more likely to consider themselves very qualified to run for political office than women. Deciding to become a candidate takes courage and opportunity that is rarely cultivated or provided for girls and women. Nascent political ambition is developed in individuals as it evolves over time (Fowler & McClure, 1989).

Women are less likely to develop nascent political ambition to the level of their male counterparts due to the lack of societal role models, familial encouragement, in

addition to the burdening load of bearing the majority of the household responsibilities in families (Lawless & Fox, 2012). As compared to boys, as girls grow up they receive less encouragement to engage in political conversations among family members which translates into reduced ambition to run for political office (Lawless & Fox, 2005). Even the education system in the United States provides less opportunity for girls than boys with regard to political expression and exploration of political ambition (Greenlee, Holman, & Vansickle-Ward, 2014). From the start, most girls are marginalized by family, friends, and educational opportunities as related to political engagement which is critical to the development of nascent political ambition.

The absence of early political engagement and limited access to opportunities to explore political leadership early for women and girls contributes to the identified gender gap in nascent political ambition and results in lower numbers of female political leaders (Costantini, 1990, Fox & Lawless, 2005, 2010; Fulton et al, 2006; Lawless & Fox, 2005, 2010). For women, when these experiences are limited or absent from their developmental years, political ambition is limited as well. This influence to the development of nascent political ambition is still seen among qualified potential candidates in that women perceive themselves to be less of a risk taker and feel more responsibility to their families than their male counterparts (Fox & Lawless, 2004; Lawless & Fox, 2005). It is the variety of political engagement and professional experiences during the leadership development of girls and women that contribute to their nascent political ambition that gives them first, the confidence to run and second, the characteristics to win.

Characteristics/Experiences That Influence Leadership Development

Few studies include a description or examination of how leaders develop (Blackmore, 2012; Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2001; Lord & Hall, 2005; Posner et al., 2011; Welch, 2000). Most leadership research tends to focus on the process that individuals should participate in so that they can gain certain experiences that will enhance their skills (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). However, this focus is on mainstream paths to leadership rather than gender specific examples or diverse type of leadership development opportunities. As an attempt to deconstruct leadership development further, one study analyzes individual leadership in to different levels and skill sets along with motivations and identities (Lord & Hall, 2005). In other words, the tools and training that individuals can partake of in order to learn certain leadership skills are studied in great number instead of how leaders organically develop with certain factors and influences at play in their lives. Leadership development is presented as a prescribed set of activities that build skills for leadership (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2001). Contrary to the prescribed set of activities, true leadership development takes place when a person takes on a significant and seemingly unsurmountable responsibility and is entirely accountable for the results (Marsh, 2006). Meaning leadership can be learned through examples, experiences and empowerment. Individuals that engage these activities are able to enhance their leadership development within their organization and can use these experiences to further their progress along their path to leadership (Posner et al., 2011; Blackmore, 2012). Such activities are generally reserved for potential or aspiring leaders who fit the mainstream mold of societal expectations and limited for women.

Paths to leadership are different from women than they are for men. General leadership studies focus on men as the primary examples and such studies of women overlook the complexity of experiences, leadership foundations, influential backgrounds and other factors that contribute to the leadership development of women (Collard & Reynolds, 2004; Day, 2001). Women tend to face deficits when it comes to traditional foundations for leadership development and lack inclusion as part of leadership studies. Including the experiences of women is not a simple task, as not all female leaders have the same experiences just as they do not exhibit the same characteristics and therefore should be studied in individual context (Day, 2001). Female leaders have unique paths that are not only different for each woman but also significantly vary from those of their male counterparts. The path to leadership for women is not straight but filled with many twists and turns constructed by each individual to overcome specific barriers to rise to a leadership role (Hardy-Fanta, Lien, Sierra, & Pinderhuges, 2007; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Along the path, women have influencing factors like individuals who support their leadership development, barriers to growth, gender-based biases, transformational experiences as well as educational and socioeconomic opportunities or obstacles.

Mentors, Sponsors, and Advocates

Individuals who have sponsors or mentors in their organization or personal life experience more success in terms of higher compensation, promotions within their field and greater fulfillment overall with respect to their career (Allen et al., 2004, Blackmore, 2013). Sponsors or mentors is not what all leaders experience nor is it something that women experience or find readily available to them as leadership development opportunities. More informal leadership development can occur for women such as self-

taught activities or experiential opportunities that present themselves as part of one's work environment (Van Der Boon, 2003; Yukl, 2010). Women, differently than men, have to be able to have the confidence and the drive to craft their own leadership development experiences. Individuals who seek out these types of opportunities benefit from learning from mistakes, risk taking for improvement and developing mentoring relationships with individuals who can advocate for more formalized leadership development (Van Der Boon, 2003; Yukl, 2010). Women who lead are creative with regard to recognizing development opportunities.

For female political leaders, the less formal type of leadership development is more common in that gender-specific development programs are scarce. However, when gender is isolated, women lack the number of experiences that men do when it comes to mentorship and advocates for their professional growth and they have a more difficult time finding a mentor or advocate as a result of gender stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2003; O'Brien et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010). These social constraints on women in the workplace present a unique barrier to finding a mentor. No matter whether an organization is business or political in nature, white males are generally at the helm making hiring and promotion decisions. This significantly reduces the pool of available mentors. If a woman is able to gain a male mentor, there are generally social stereotypes to contend with in regard to stigmas and suspicion about whether the relationship is more than professional. This creates a *de facto* obstacle for women seeking mentor that does not exist for their male counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2003; O'Brien et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010). The result is more men than women experience access to this type of leadership development.

As with the other leadership studies, when women are examined as a sub-group, obstacles thwart their leadership development opportunities. Researchers have pointed out that social research provides a basis for the claim that individuals learn through experience and that sponsorship and advocates support women in reaching the highest levels of leadership within a variety of organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; O'Brien et al., 2010; Olsson, 2000; Schipani et al., 2009). These opportunities for mentorship and the benefits of a professional advocate are ways in which individuals build their *social capital* which is determined to be "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the network of social relationships" (Schipani et al., 200, p. 103). It is this social capital that the individual benefits from along the professional path to leadership. Even when women are able to find mentors in a male-dominated leadership structure, it is common for these women to learn and then exhibit male leadership traits, resulting in even women in leadership positions mentoring other women with learned male leadership traits (Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Olsson, 2000; Schipani et al., 2009: Shin, 2012). Masculine mentoring may or may not have an overwhelming negative effect, depending on the organization and leadership structure, but it does serve to fuel the assumption that female leaders who had male mentors learned male leadership traits and therefore may seek out males as possible mentees rather than women in need of a professional sponsor.

Leadership development opportunities for women in the form of mentorship, sponsorship and professional advocates are limited in most organizations. The chance to lead is the first step to becoming a leader (Adair, 2009). Gatekeepers and mentors are necessary for female leadership development in that a political candidate is more likely to

be nominated by said gatekeeper, especially if the mentor is a woman (Elliot & Stead, 2008). More women in politics equals more visibility overall and promotes increased encouragement of other women (Cheng & Tavits, 2009; Elliot & Stead, 2008). The path of each of the women in this study included an examination of whether or not they experienced support from a mentor, sponsor, advocate or a combination of all three during their leadership development. These were the key factors to determine influence and development of leadership in these women.

Leadership is organic and grows within an individual over time. That growth of leadership is learned from experiences throughout a person's life and then from channeling what they learn to develop the capacity to inspire others (Adair, 2009; Elliott & Stead, 2008; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Kahn, 2010; Posner et al., 2011; Yukl, 2010). Leaders shape and influence those whom they lead, but the major leadership theories overlook what shaped and influenced the leader as they developed to their full potential to lead others. In addition to research on who leads and leadership traits, there are studies that place value of mentors and other factors that contribute to leadership development. Family, education, socioeconomic status are other factors that contribute not only to each leader's individual learned personality traits but also to the overall leadership development experience (Adair, 2009; Blackmore, 2013; Dolan, 2014; Dolan & Lynch, 2013; Elliott & Stead, 2008; Ettus, 2012; Shahtalebi et al., 2011). With each leader's personal experiences being different and the possibility of varying levels of influence that these factors might have on each person's path to leadership, there is not enough research to address how all leaders develop. There is a gap in the research that overlooks the unique experiences that female leaders have as part of their paths to political office. The

next sections explore the paths to leadership for women and the factors that influence

their leadership development along their paths.

Family

Besides professional opportunities, many potential leaders experience their first

mentorship experience within their own family. One's family is the first and, many times,

the most personal factor that influences leadership development (Adair, 2009). For

women, it is not just the influences in early life from their family but also the choices

they make to have a family of their own that contribute or sometimes limit their

leadership development. Being a parent tends to limit workplace participation more for

women than men when a higher percentage of women than men leave the workplace to

care for family needs (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Rudman & Phelman, 2010). This

percentage of departure by women contributes significantly to the gap in leadership

among the genders, leaving few women available to mentor other women, further

limiting the growth and leadership development of all women. Those women who rejoin

the workforce at their same professional level as when they exited experience decreased

earnings throughout their career as compared to their male counterparts who stayed in the

workforce without exiting at any time (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hewlett & Luce, 2005;

Rudman & Phelman, 2010). What this means is that there are more demands on women

with regard to family obligations and choices than there are on men in most western

societies, and the resulting effects of this can be obstacles or setbacks for professional

opportunities for leadership development. Even if a woman chooses to stay in the

workforce throughout her career, full-time, while balancing a family and care, there are

still personal obstacles that the woman herself might place in her own path of leadership development.

Guilt is one factor that women tend to place on themselves when they are balancing a professional life with a personal life. Guilt from social pressures to conform to the traditional mother and wife roles, guilt that by not conforming they might somehow be depriving their family of something that society cherishes or even guilt for not being able to contribute one hundred percent of their energy to just one role (Borchorst & Siim, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman & Phelman, 2010; Wilson, 2007). This can be such a significant issue for women that one researcher stated, "show me a woman with no guilt and I'll show you a man" (Wilson, 2007, p. 58). This is where women differ from men the most when it comes to leadership development and professional experiences. Most women are expected to put family first and professional aspirations second, whereas, for a man, the professional path is expected and promoted as the primary focus, resulting in more opportunities for leadership experiences and fewer obstacles for development (Rudman & Phelman, 2010). Social expectations or cultural constraints that relate to gender roles present barriers and challenges for women who subsequently experience guilt related to their leadership aspirations. Family and the demands as well as the shared responsibilities at home can either positively or negatively affect the leadership development and opportunities for women along their respective paths.

For women to develop equally as leaders there is a demand for women to find a balance between personal and professional expectations. Socialization can influence a woman's career choices in a way that leads her to choose more traditional female career

paths as a way to be more socially accepted (Von Hippel, Wiryakusuma, Bowden, & Shochet, 2011; Zunker, 2002). In many cultures, there are gender-related expectations for the roles of women in the private versus professional or public life which act as constraints to leadership development for women. This can also contribute to women overlooking self-identified opportunities for leadership development because they do not fit the norm of what society expects from the balance between family and career. Family influence plays a significant role in these socialization expectations. The career choices of a woman are often rooted in the experiences and expectations presented within their family of origin (Von Hippel et al., 2011; Zunker, 2002). Families can influence leadership development by providing critical support for young women during significant times of their lives such as throughout their formal education, during the child rearing years, and during career development. As the result of family obligations, women and potential female candidates are less outwardly ambitious than their male counterparts (Fulton et al., 2006). Family can play a powerful role in the development of women as leaders throughout their lives.

Another area of leadership development and family is parental influence. Parental relationships are the first mentoring relationship for women and can influence leadership aspirations from an early age (O'Brien et al., 2000). O'Brien (2000) argued that the healthy stable relationship that a young woman has with her parents or other consistent family member can contribute to leadership development behaviors by seeking out opportunities for learning. Leadership development in adolescence is essential for a young woman to establish a strong sense of self confidence and authentic understanding of how they fit in (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). This is when young women are not only

beginning to determine their role aspirations in society but also developing their confidence to begin to lead. Unfortunately, patriarchal constructs that construct the basis for human relationships in many societies are difficult to overcome and therefore create barriers to empowerment for young women seeking leadership roles (Lazzari et al., 2009). Expectations of women within a culture or society begin at an early age, and it is parental or family influences that can counteract the barriers by providing young women with the confidence to face gendered challenges to their leadership development.

Socioeconomic Class

In addition to and closely related to family, another factor is at play when developing leadership aspirations among individuals: socioeconomic class. Researchers have found that men and women from higher socioeconomic family origins tend to be provided with more career-focused support from an early age as compared to those from a lower socioeconomic background (Schipani et al., 2009). Adolescent girls from a lower socioeconomic background have a more difficult time developing their voice and establishing their confidence as a leader (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). The result is that individuals from a higher socioeconomic background tend to have higher aspirations throughout their lives as compared to other class levels because they are following role models from their own class, social strata, and family (Schipani et al., 2009).

When there is a lack of role models for one gender to look up to, there is a problem with equity in leadership development opportunities. For example, in most western societies, men tend to be the leaders in business and government roles. There are few senior women in the structures of organizations and governments for young girls from even the highest levels of socioeconomic status to look up to as role models (Hoyt

& Simon, 2011; Schipani et al., 2009). This has prompted some European countries to start organized leadership programs just for women and girls. Countries such as Germany and Great Britain have created programs to make potential female leaders with female mentors. Programs and policies like this attempt to reach out to potential female leaders no matter their socioeconomic status and provide opportunities for leadership development that would not necessarily be available otherwise. Many times, leadership potential is overlooked or remains unseen as they did not attend elite schools or because they did not have access to the higher socioeconomic societal circles (Evans, 2014; Kahn, 2010). For women, this can be even more challenging and the potential for being overlooked for leadership development is even more extreme than that for men.

Education, Transformational Experiences, and Personality Traits

Education is generally an individual's first socialization experience outside of one's family unit. Leadership emergence can be identified during a formal education process. The emergence of leadership aspirations tends to be manifested in masculine predictors such as ambition, self-confidence and self-promotion (Hoyt & Blasovich, 2010; James, 1998; Kolb, 1997). For women, this manifestation of leadership development can begin as a part of formal education. Education in leadership generally takes place within formal constructs of higher education as a way to provide opportunities for leadership skills to be learned and practiced (Latu, Mast, Lammers, & Bombari, 2013; Welch, 2000). There are opportunities within higher education tracks that permit students to gain experience in leading peers and taking risks in leadership roles. This type of leadership education is beyond career skills but inclusive of civic leadership development as a way to engage future leaders in active leadership experience with

gained knowledge and confidence of how to leader successfully (Latu et al., 2013; Welch, 2000). Through educational experiences, relationships are forged, and horizons expanded by learning about the world and society in which they live, providing the opportunities to emerge as a budding leader (Adair, 2009; Evans, 2014). Within this environment, leaders begin to emerge, and potential starts to appear. The influence of educational experiences on how leaders develop starts as early as the primary years when curiosity and the appreciation for learning start to take root (Adair, 2009; Evans, 2014). The quality of the education or even access to education can be a challenge for women, which can have a significant influence on leadership development.

The foundation from the primary stage extends into the secondary and post-secondary educational years for potential leaders when they seek out leadership experiences that help them develop their leadership skills even further (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & MacManus, 2011). For most leaders, it is some type of formalized education that provides the experiences and hands-on practice of leading or observing leaders close up in ways that facilitate their own individual leadership development. Unlike the traditional settings of courses and classrooms, the overall educational environment provides unique opportunities that are specifically suited for each potential leader who seeks them out. These unique experiences could range from an internship in a chosen field to a certain struggle or obstacle that the individual had to overcome in order to succeed or survive.

It has been suggested that one thing most leaders share as part of their own leadership development is a uniquely personal experience that they attribute to influencing their leadership aspirations and abilities (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Kahn,

2010; Stout et al., 2011). It is these transformational experiences, either in a formal educational setting or otherwise within an individual's path of development that both have a profound effect on leadership development and are virtually impossible to recreate for others to learn and develop from in precisely the same manner. It is as if these transformational experiences are as unique as the personalities that are going through it. Leadership development occurs during defining moments in which the individual experiences a turning point that results in solidifying a way of thinking or causes the individual to re-think a previous way of thinking (Avolio et al., 2009; Stout et al., 2011). Defining moments for women who are aspiring to lead can be limited within the constraints of society and culture which makes education vital to expanding opportunities and possibilities for women and girls.

Culture

Beyond the settings of family and education, leaders interact with the society within their own culture as part of their paths to leadership. Leaders learn from society and culture as much as they learn and develop from school and family. "It takes a whole society to raise a leader" - African Proverb. This societal interaction and cultural context can be specific to certain leaders. Cultural expectations are key to shaping a woman's leadership development. The expectations within one's culture as to the role of a woman in the public and private spheres contribute not just to societal expectations but also to personal expectations of leadership aspirations (O'Brien et al., 2000; Zunker, 2002). Some gender roles can be so ingrained in a society that women and girls can be limited to just what is expected of them. To counteract gender role constraints, Scandinavian cultures and countries have emphasized women-friendly policies as well as gender

equality with the underlying premise of society's common interests which has resulted in an increased involvement of women in leadership positions over time (Borchorst & Siim, 2008).

Changing the way that society thinks about women as leaders or the potential for a woman to be a leader can have a significant effect on the electability of a female candidate (Rios et al., 2010; Welch, 2008). Institutional changes within a society can influence the leadership aspirations and subsequent leadership development of women. In countries that have promoted an increase of female representation, there has been a significant increase in female candidates since 1992 (Rosen, 2013). In order to create more opportunities for more women to develop as leaders, societies, and cultures must be open to evolving the roles of women to include leadership.

A similar influence to promoting female representation has experienced like results in the increase of female gubernatorial candidates in the United States from 1978 to 2008 by way of increased career opportunities for women, wider access to higher education and more opportunities for women to join the political realm (Windett, 2011). This provided a chance for more women to become political candidates in local and state elections in the United States. The more opportunities that voters have to vote for a female candidate, the more engaged politically the women in the society become and therefore possibly become inspired to run for office themselves (Olsson, 2000; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005; Reingold & Hall, 2009). However, when voters are presented with both male and female candidates running for the same office, gender stereotypes only slightly influence voting. Voters tend to vote based on incumbent record or party affiliation and only employ gender stereotypes in the decision to vote when there is little known about

the candidate (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Olsson, 2000; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Perceptions about women as leaders and the opportunity for women to have female leaders as role models for their own path to leadership is very much tied to cultural constraints or tolerance.

Future development of leaders, both men and women, requires expanded awareness of cross-cultural diversity as a way to facilitate the collaboration necessary to come up with globalized solutions (McLaurin, 2006). There have been more efforts to include women in the political process in a variety of societies. However, the presence of women in political organizations is not enough, so a more purposeful effort to increase access to leadership for women and a collective understanding of the barriers that women face when running for political office is needed to increase long-term representation (Smith, Reingold, & Owens, 2012). Even with efforts to include women, without expanded knowledge of how women develop as leaders, progress will be stunted. Across the globe, when there are more women in elite positions of leadership, they are integral to the decision-making process, thus facilitating wider access for all women to participate in leadership roles (Bashevkin, 2014).

By gathering the experiences of the women in this study, analyzing their unique paths to leadership and then identifying common factors that contributed to their development as a leader, this study provided examples for women worldwide on how they can customize their own path to leadership. In this study, the cultural context and similar acceptance among individuals was examined as a factor for the leadership development for female leaders and their aspirations for leadership in state government.

If a culture supports, the development of women as leaders then many more opportunities for women to lead will open up for all women.

Gender and Leadership

Major leadership studies focus more on men as leaders and masculine leadership traits rather than on exploring the unique experiences of female leaders. As women begin to be incorporated as part of leadership, the research literature remains more of a top-down view of the difference between male and female leaders. There is still much to be explored about women as leaders and how they develop leadership aspirations. The study of gender and leadership provides the acknowledgement of differences between make and female leaders, but it does not address why they have developed into different types of leaders (Palley, 2004; Rios et al., 2010; Shamir et al., 2005; Shankar, 2007). However, the experiences of women are different than those of their male counterparts as seen in a variety of paths women take to political leadership and are overlooked. As a result, women must find alternative paths for leadership as they navigate the labyrinth of experiences that result in leader success (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Shamir et al., 2005). Their gender determines the barriers and challenges that they might face, and, subsequently, the varied path to leadership that they must construct is far less traditional than for men.

Women as leaders and female political leaders are uniquely studied through the leadership research by examining how these women lead rather than what influenced their leadership development. What is known about women as political leaders has been compared to male leaders and how men as leaders reach office and lead (Jalazai, 2004; Rosen 2013). Women have not been extensively studied as leaders beyond the comparison to the traditional roles of male leaders. The masculine traits of ambition, self-

confidence, and competitiveness are seen as positive traits for male leaders and negative traits for female leaders (Whitmarsh et al., 2007). This gendered comparison puts women who seek public office at a disadvantage for leadership development that is supportive of their unique experiences since it does not fit their personal paths to leadership. The exploration of how the leadership development of women is different than men, unique to their gender is missing from the research literature. Hence, this study examined the lives of female leaders serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017.

Women experience different barriers to leadership success than men, and they experience different societal constraints than men do in most cultures. The roles of women in private life have an effect on the possibility of fully participating as a leader in public life. For example, roles within one's family can become barriers for women if they are seen as too ambitious in a way that differs from the expected norm of women in their culture (Buckingham, 2012; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004). Other barriers for women can be things like socio-economic level and education. Depending on the society, a woman could be less likely to have stable socio-economic status or equal access to quality education as compared to her male counterparts.

Barriers for female leadership development can be overcome with support and opportunities for leadership growth like mentors, sponsors, and advocates (Yukl, 2010). These supports can be in either or both public and private roles. For example, a supportive family or spouse can provide assistance to overcome societal stereotypes for a woman to be the primary domestic resource. These domestic supports provide opportunities for a woman to take advantage of leadership development through education or work experiences. The mentor or sponsor role can be supportive in the

workplace as a way to help a woman along her leadership path by identifying opportunities for growth through new experiences that she would have not necessarily seen or taken advantage of as compared to her male counterparts (O'Brien et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010). It is the combination of opportunities for women that open up when they have the support of family, culture, mentors, sponsors, or advocates that propel them along their path to leadership by providing them with the support necessary to further their education, leadership experience, and personality traits as way to help them reach their full potential as a leader.

The experiences of women along their paths to leadership is missing from the literature. The literature identifies influencing factors and possible supports such as mentoring, culture, family, education, socio-economic status, but there are no studies that look specifically at the paths of women political leaders in a way that compares the similarities of their leadership development. By acknowledging that women are different in how they develop their identity in relation to the society and culture in which they live as well as by discovering the unique experience of their gendered standpoint, this study explored common themes and influences along their path to leadership.

Summary and Conclusion

Significant research exploring the unique experiences of women as leaders has barely scratched the surface. The bulk of the research focuses on gendered leadership styles, and only certain studies have examined specific female leaders once they have reached political office. Women develop as leaders differently than their male counterparts because they have different experiences and develop their individual identity differently than men. What is not known is how these experiences are different for

women than men. There is little to no research on the leadership development of women as political leaders that includes the paths that they followed to elected office. It is not known what unique experiences the women that seek political offices live through nor is it known what influencing factors may have contributed to their leadership development. There is no in-depth study of these unique experiences and influences factors among the women seeking and serving in political office that examines their pathway to leadership.

This study filled the gap in this knowledge by examining the leadership development and path to political office for women that served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. This knowledge contributed to feminist theory, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist identity development theory by compiling examples of known paths to leadership for women to follow when constructing their paths or identifying leadership opportunities for development. Knowledge gained through this study provides insight into how female leaders develop their own unique identity and nascent political ambition to serve as a guide for aspiring leaders. A comparison of the experiences of these women and identity development expanded the research in female leadership development by addressing the gap in the literature of studies that focus on groups of female leaders within the same country, state, and similar political offices. Learning what experiences these women had as part of their life-long leadership development expanded the research to better understand the ways in which women develop their aspirations to lead. The methodology and design of this study is detailed in chapter three.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The pathways of women to political leadership have been overlooked within the academic traditions of public policy, leadership, and political science. Leaving out paths to leadership for women aspiring to become political leaders results in a lack of examples of women who lead, which, in turn, contributes to fewer female leaders at all levels of government. Without women as political leaders, the issues women face and the policies that benefit women are neglected. Women succeed when women leaders represent them through public office (Mansbridge, 1999). Starved for a significant increase of women in leadership and decision-making roles, half of the world's population will remain underrepresented and half the world's population will remain marginalized within societies. Lacking examples of how other women develop leadership aspirations to run for public office, women will remain unclear in that there are not appropriate examples of paths for them to follow.

Researchers in the political, organizational, and psychology leadership fields seek to examine leadership development in general terms rather than gender specific (Adair 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2008; Buckingham, 2012; George et al., 2007; Lyness & Schrader 2006; Yukl, 2010). These scholars look at what type of leadership characteristics leaders display or how they rose through the ranks to leadership positions. Most scholarship has focused on male leaders and masculine leadership traits rather than including women as part of the general study of leadership. Few theorists specifically suggest an expansion of the research to include an examination of the influencing factors and experiences of female leaders that influenced their rise to power. Researchers such as Yukl (2010)

suggest that further study of female leadership characteristics is necessary and that more female leaders should be encouraged. However, no suggestion has been made to expand the research to include an examination of the influencing factors and experiences of female leaders that influenced their rise to power leaving the leadership development of women largely overlooked.

As with general leadership studies, the research surrounding female leaders is primarily focused on their personal leadership style and specific leadership traits. The study of a small group of female leaders aspiring to political office, examining their paths to leadership, addressed the gap in the research, presented an opportunity to expand the segment of knowledge that focuses on the formative factors that contribute to the development of future female leaders. A bottom-up approach looking at female leaders from the formative years forward was missing, so in my study, I explored what motivated, influenced, and shaped them to make the choice to become a leader, specifically a political leader. This type of research could expand the understanding of how leaders are developed and influenced in a way that can benefit all leaders.

In this study, I explored how female leaders are developed and find unique paths to leadership. More specifically, I examined, through comparison and contrast, selected female leaders regarding what factors contributed to their leadership development. With a foundation in feminist theory, I deconstructed the paths to political leadership of women serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 to examine the influencing factors and obstacles unique to women during their leadership development to provide more examples for aspiring female leaders.

In this chapter, I detail my qualitative research design and rationale, my role as the researcher in the feminist theoretical foundation, the ethnography methodology, and issues of trustworthiness for this study.

Research Design and Rationale

I addressed two research questions as they pertain to female leaders who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017.

RQ1: What are the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017?

RQ2: What experiences as part of their path to public office influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017?

This study was a qualitative ethnographic study, in which I explored the factors that influence female leaders, comparing and contrasting commonalities and trends across the group that contribute to their paths to leadership. The qualitative ethnography method permits the researcher to go in depth with the research to examine the detail and stories of personal experiences and influencing moments (Merriam, 1998). This type of study provided the opportunity to utilize a variety of research-gathering techniques to cross-reference information and details to verify facts (Janesick, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The ethnography methodology facilitates in-depth data collection for each selected leader to provide a comprehensive exploration of their development as a leader. The ethnographic approach is appropriate within the qualitative tradition because it allows the researcher to explore personal experiences and narratives of the female leaders (Merriam, 1998). This approach, used within the feminist theoretical traditions, illuminated the

overlooked experiences of female leaders who served in a similar political office, in the same state, and within the same timeframe.

The 65 women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 provided a focused group of female leaders running for the state political office and serve as a comparison within a similar cultural context. I interviewed 8 of the 65 female leaders with a set of guiding questions focused on the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. I studied key concepts such as education, family influences, professional roles, influences of mentors, advocates, or sponsors as well as socioeconomic and cultural contexts for a sampling of eight of the original group of 65 female leaders. To gather information on each of these key concepts and to identify other possible factors, I included biographical research. I used biographical sources included as available campaign press releases and public records to gain information about each leader.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was purely as an observer and participant as an interviewer in the study; I am not a political leader and do not know any of these women personally. However, I am a resident of the state of Florida and registered to vote in my state. Only one of the 65 women ran for an office in a district in which I am able to vote. In this qualitative ethnographic study, I had an observer view, resulting in less biased data than a participant researcher may have (Emmel, 2014). As a researcher, I worked to maintain my objectivity and conduct the interviews in a neutral manner that takes in to account my own experiences as a woman to provide context for the analysis of the interview information and analysis of the results in this study (Patton, 2002). To avoid

bias and maintain neutrality, I brought attention to the unique experiences of the participants and report clearly the participant voice (Patton, 2002). Each of these female political leaders served as a public figure in Florida with sufficient background information and biographical accounts of their lives available from their run office. Once I compiled the ethnographic research completed interviews, a comparative analysis was conducted of the experiences and influencing factors of each of the women. My role was that of observer and participant and I provided points of analysis through researcher reflexivity within the qualitative approach that strengthened the valued perspectives of feminist research methodology (Patton, 2002).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The female leaders in this study were part of an uncommon group that can be referred to as an extreme sampling (Patton, 2002). The population in this study consisted of all women who have served in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. The small population of women who serve in state legislative seats in the United States is a broader population that the participants for this research were purposefully chosen for comparison and analysis purposes. Florida is a diverse state with the fourth largest population in the United States as of the 2010 U.S. Census (Website Services & Staff, 2011). Florida politics represent a cross section of national political trends and serves as an appropriate pool for participants. The timeframe of 2012 through 2017 was chosen due to the state legislative redistricting that occurred in 2012 forward to the most current research year.

In order to further narrow the focus of this study, specific interview participants were chosen from within the group of female state legislators. This study used a purposeful sample of women served in office during the same timeframe in the Florida state legislature. Purposeful samples are often small and full of rich research opportunities due to the nature of the selection criteria of participants (Emmel, 2014).

The purposeful sampling strategy consisted of how these individual female leaders are selected as a group. Therefore, a small purposefully selected sample size is appropriate so that researcher can examine each individual selected (Emmel, 2014; Patton, 2002). This purposeful sample population was directly related to the research questions and provided a specific set of participants that were studied through their own leadership development experiences and nascent political ambition then compared with one another to draw commonalities and conclusions on how women develop as political leaders. It was expected that, as the information gathered from each leader was compared across the group, commonalities and trends that contribute to their leadership development would emerge.

Women that served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017, provided a research opportunity to examine female leaders running for the state political office as a comparison within a similar cultural context. Key concepts such as education, family influences, professional roles, influences of mentors, advocates or sponsors as well as socio-economic and cultural contexts were studied for a sampling of eight of the female leaders. In order to gather information on each of these key concepts and to identify other possible factors, this study included personal interviews and biographical research. The subset female leaders were interviewed with set of guiding questions

focused on the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. In addition to the personal interviews, the background information on each woman includes biographical research sources. Campaign press releases and public records were utilized to gain information about each leader.

The small number of women as leaders that fit the criteria for this study also set the sample size for this study to a subset of eight participants with those participants being personally interviewed. Saturation was achieved with this sample population as it relates to the focus of this study and the paths to leadership of women who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. Saturation in a qualitative ethnographic research model is reached when an appropriate number of relevant participants have been identified and included, and the inclusion of additional participants would be beyond the scope of the research (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Adding additional female leaders to this sample from other states or timeframes would have diluted the research focus of this study by adding experiences that are not directly comparable.

Data Collection

This study included personal interviews as well as biographical research as part of an ethnographic approach. The personal interviews provided the opportunity to analyze the personal and unique experiences of female political leaders as it relates to their leadership development throughout their lives. The ethnographic approach provided the opportunity to research a specified population within a shared context or timeframe with the ability to build a deeper understanding of the participants within the ethnography boundaries (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin,

2003). This study focused on the leadership development of women as political leaders within the same state legislature and timeframe. Once defining the boundaries of the ethnography focus, the researcher identified the population to include the subset of eight women from the original sixty-five women that held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. The personal interview subset was determined from the subset from the original population of sixty-five as a way to explore a deeper and more personal analysis of the unique experiences of how women develop as political leaders.

Interviews

Eight female leaders chosen from the sixty-five that served in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 were interviewed with set of guiding questions focused on the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. The eight women were chosen based on political party so that an even number from each party were approached to participate. In order to maintain reliability of this study, all participants were asked the same set of guiding questions (Patton, 2002). Personal interviews were conducted in compliance with all ethical research standards through Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). All interview participants were contacted via email, traditional mail, and phone to invite their participation and provide them with information that outlines the purpose and scope of my research, any confidentiality concerns, the use of my research, and the opportunity to ask and have all questions answered before consenting to participate (see Appendix A). Each interviewee signed an IRB approved consent form for participation and use of information provided (see Appendix A). They were also informed that at any time prior to research publication,

they may withdraw their consent for any reason. None of the interviewees were compensated in any way for their participation.

The personal interviews took place either in person at the participant's local office and or via online web conferencing (Zoom.us) from a location of their choice with me in their personal office online so that the participant and the researcher are able to see one another during the interview. Each interviewee was asked the same set of questions covering leadership and political ambition development as a starting point for the interviews (see Appendix B). In order to support credibility of the study, questions were developed ahead of time to organize data collection as well as facilitate discussion points. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent back to each participant for their review. Each participant had seven business days to review the interview transcription for accuracy. If they did not reply with corrections or additions by the end of seven business days, the researcher considered the interview transcript to be accurate and ready to be included in the data collection of this study.

The interview questions (see Appendix B) were developed and justified based research in the field as it related to the focus of this study and the leadership development of women. Question one asked each participant about the mentors, sponsors, or advocates that either formally or informally supported their leadership development. This question was justified because it is grounded in social research which provided a basis for the claim that individuals learn through experience and that sponsorship and advocates support women in reaching the highest levels of leadership within a variety of organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; O'Brien et al., 2010;

Olsson, 2000; Schipani et al., 2009). Opportunities for mentorship and the benefits of a professional advocate are ways in which individuals build their social capital (Schipani et al., 2009). It is this social capital that the individual benefits from along the professional path to leadership and is particularly unique for women. The mentor or sponsor role can be supportive in the workplace as a way to help a woman along her leadership path by identifying opportunities for growth through new experiences that she would have not necessarily seen or taken advantage of as compared to her male counterparts (O'Brien et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010).

Questions two, three, and four for the participants covered their experiences with family, socioeconomic class, and education and how those factors may or may not have influenced their leadership development and political aspirations. Women experience different barriers to leadership success than men, and they experience different societal constraints than men do in most cultures. The roles of women in private life have an effect on the possibility of fully participating as a leader in public life. For example, roles within one's family can become barriers for women if they are seen as too ambitious in a way that differs from the expected norm of women in their culture (Buckingham, 2012; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004).

In addition to and closely related to family, another factor was at play when developing leadership aspirations among individuals: socioeconomic class. Researchers have found that men and women from higher socioeconomic family origins tend to be provided with more career-focused support from an early age as compared to those from a lower socioeconomic background (Schipani et al., 2009). Adolescent girls from a lower socioeconomic background have a more difficult time developing their voice and

establishing their confidence as a leader (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). The result was that individuals from a higher socioeconomic background tend to have higher aspirations throughout their lives as compared to other class levels because they are following role models from their own class, social strata, and family (Schipani et al., 2009).

Education is generally an individual's first socialization experience outside of one's family unit. Leadership emergence can be identified during a formal education process. For women, this manifestation of leadership development can begin as a part of formal education. Education in leadership generally takes place within formal constructs of higher education as a way to provide opportunities for leadership skills to be learned and practiced (Latu et al., 2013; Welch, 2000). There are opportunities within higher education tracks that permit students to gain experience in leading peers and taking risks in leadership roles. This type of leadership education is beyond career skills but inclusive of civic leadership development as a way to engage future leaders in active leadership experience with gained knowledge and confidence of how to lead successfully (Latu et al., 2013; Welch, 2000). Through educational experiences, relationships are forged, and horizons expanded by learning about the world and society in which they live, providing the opportunities to emerge as a budding leader (Adair, 2009; Evans, 2014).

Question five focused on asking the participant about transformational experiences that have influenced their leadership development. It is these transformational experiences, either in a formal educational setting or otherwise within an individual's path of development, that both have a profound effect on leadership development and are virtually impossible to recreate for others to learn and develop from in precisely the same manner. These unique experiences could range from an internship

in a chosen field to a certain struggle or obstacle that the individual had to overcome in order to succeed or survive. It has been suggested that one thing most leaders share as part of their own leadership development is a uniquely personal experience that they attribute to influencing their leadership aspirations and abilities (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Kahn, 2010; Stout et al., 2011). It is as if these transformational experiences are as unique as the personalities that are going through it. Leadership development occurs during defining moments in which the individual experiences a turning point that results in solidifying a way of thinking or causes the individual to re-think a previous way of thinking (Avolio et al., 2009; Stout et al., 2011).

Question six asked the interviewee about their unique personality traits that may have facilitated their path to political leadership or influenced them as a leader. The study of gender and leadership provided the acknowledgement of differences between make and female leaders, but it does not address why they have developed into different types of leaders (Palley, 2004; Rios et al., 2010; Shamir et al., 2005; Shankar, 2007). However, the experiences of women are different than those of their male counterparts as seen in a variety of paths women take to political leadership and are overlooked. As a result, women must find alternative paths for leadership as they navigate the labyrinth of experiences that result in leader success (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Shamir et al., 2005). Their gender determines the barriers and challenges that they might face, and, subsequently, the varied path to leadership that they must construct is far less traditional than for men. Candidate selection in political races can be traditional in the sense that they focus on male candidate traits and traditional paths of development rather than considering the unique circumstances and experiences of aspiring female leaders (Blackmore, 2012;

Olsson, 2000; Shamir, et al., 2005). This can be significantly challenging for women due to ingrained societal gender stereotypes. Patterns of candidate selection overlook gender as a separate factor in that they conform to the mainstream understandings of institutionalism without acknowledging the barriers and challenges experienced by female candidates during the selection process (Krook, 2009). Subsequently, research has excluded close examination of the varied paths to leadership and barriers to leadership development for women.

Question seven provided the opportunity for each interviewee to share details about times they have experienced resistance or overwhelming support along their path to leadership. Similar to the women in this study that are at the state legislative level, support by promoting female representation has experienced like results in the increase of female gubernatorial candidates in the United States from 1978 to 2008 by way of increased career opportunities for women, wider access to higher education and more opportunities for women to join the political realm (Windett, 2011). This provided a chance for more women to become political candidates in local and state elections in the United States. The more opportunities that voters have to vote for a female candidate, the more engaged politically the women in the society will become and therefore possibly become inspired to run for office themselves (Olsson, 2000; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005; Reingold & Harrell, 2010). However, when voters are presented with both male and female candidates running for the same office, gender stereotypes only slightly influence voting. Voters tend to vote based on incumbent record or party affiliation and only employ gender stereotypes in the decision to vote when there is little known about the candidate (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Olsson, 2000; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005).

Perceptions about women as leaders and the opportunity for women to have female leaders as role models for their own path to leadership is very much tied to cultural constraints or tolerance.

The last question for the participants focused on barriers that they may have faced when working towards their goal of holding office in the Florida state legislature. There have been more efforts to include women in the political process in a variety of societies. However, the presence of women in political organizations is not enough, so a more purposeful effort to increase access to leadership for women and a collective understanding of the barriers that women face when running for political office is needed to increase long-term representation (Smith et al., 2012). Even with efforts to include women, without expanded knowledge of how women develop as leaders, progress will be stunted. Across the globe, when there are more women in elite positions of leadership, they are integral to the decision-making process, thus facilitating wider access for all women to participate in leadership roles (Bashevkin, 2014).

This set of interview questions (see Appendix B) was based on the combination of opportunities for women that open up when they have the support of family, culture, mentors, sponsors, or advocates that propel them along their path to leadership by providing them with the support necessary to further their education, leadership experience, and personality traits as way to help them reach their full potential as a political leader. Questions one through five supported Research Question 1: What are the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017? Questions six through eight supported the data

collection for Research Question 2: What experiences as part of their path to public office influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017?

Data Analysis Plan

The information gathered for the subset of eight women which included personal interview for all participants was categorized to identify specific demographic details such as socioeconomic level, spouse/children, date of birth, age, political party, education level, and career type. Additionally, the details of experiences were included in the analysis for categories including public service, self-identified obstacles, formal leadership training, mentors, sponsors, advocates, and transformational experiences. These categories produce the codes or nodes within NVivo of education; family; children; barriers; obstacles; training; mentors; sponsors; advocates; transformational experiences; political experience; business experience; jobs; wealth; religion; culture; awards; honors; public service; charity activities; and goals. Within the categories of mentors/sponsors/advocates and transformational experiences there were sub-categories or additional nodes through which to further analyze and group these categories. For mentors/sponsors/advocates, there were sub-categories of formal or informal, male or female, and business or public service. For transformational experiences, the details were categorized as either positive or negative in nature; overcoming an obstacle or experiencing a milestone achievement; personal or public experience; and at what point in their lives this took place.

All personal interview transcripts were loaded individually for each woman into NVivo for analysis and comparison. Key words that match or relate to the nodes were

identified and categorized within the program providing an overview of high-level analysis of sources. Once all information on each of the nodes is loaded and transcripts have been run through NVivo, a comparison was done to search for comparisons and trends among the data gathered and reported with the program. Identifying themes or trends in the analysis of data provides an overall view of what is occurring with the population to provide a comprehensive view of shared experiences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). The details for each woman, the cross comparison of the female leaders, and their experiences along their paths to leadership provided an overview of the leadership and political ambition development for the participants.

The NVivo qualitative data analysis tool supported the analysis of the information gathered through personal interviews to examine the paths to leadership for these women as well as identifying the factors that influence their leadership aspirations. By identifying common factors and experiences, the researcher determined which ones have a collective influence on leadership development throughout their formative years and along their path to public office.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

In order to gather information on each of the key concepts and identify factors, this study was conducted through personal interviews and biographical research. Personal interview transcripts were used for the subset of eight women. In order to support credibility of the study, questions were developed ahead of time to organize data collection as well as facilitate discussion points. To further ensure trustworthiness and credibility, all interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. A copy of

the transcribed interview was sent back to each participant for their review. Each participant had seven business days to review and respond to the interview transcription for accuracy. If no reply has been received by the end of seven business days, the researcher considered the interview transcript to be accurate.

Biographical research for each woman was conducted to accompany the personal interviewees. Sources included as available campaign press releases and public records were utilized to gain information about each leader. Each of the subset of eight women was researched individually searching for similar sources of information. Each source was logged and compared to other sources for each woman. If sources did not include information about each of the women, that was noted and included as part of the analysis process.

In order to support the research in determining the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political ambitions and aspirations among female political leaders, data was collected and coded for each participant. These factors included socioeconomic level, spouse, children, political party, public service, education level, career roles, mentor, sponsors, advocates, as well as any formal leadership training. From the personal interviews, personal experiences of each woman were also gathered and logged to explore the influence during their formative years that contributed to their leadership traits and aspirations. The experience categories included self-identified obstacles or challenges and transformational experiences. Each of these factors and experiences were tagged and compared among the women for commonalities during their rise to leadership roles. Review of potential commonalities and relations were analyzed

by the researcher and reported as part of the pathway for the woman as well as the comparison between the women as a group analysis.

Transferability

The scope of this study was to explore the paths of leadership for each of the women in this study and then deconstructed as well as analyzed the leadership development of female leaders serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. This was unique to this study since women as leaders are usually compared cross-generationally or cross-culturally since so few serve in political office within the same time frame. Female leaders shared certain developmental experiences and influencing factors that contributed in some way to their leadership aspirations and development. These developmental experiences included education level, family background and support, socio-economic status, professional experience or formal leadership training, barriers to leadership both public and personal, and political offices held. These specifics, while they lended to the advantages of comparing similar women in a similar setting, also raised the question of weakness in the study since men are not included in the research. This means that the findings of this study may not be applicable directly to all individuals and perhaps only specifically to women in similar societies and states like Florida during 2012 through 2017.

The female leaders in this qualitative ethnographic study were chosen based on similar levels of leadership from within the same state and roughly the same generation. Based on the criteria of same political level, same state, similar generation, the women in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017, provided the opportunity to examine female leaders serving at the same political level within the same state and to be

compared within the same culture and generational context. The methods and research model used in this study could be used in other studies with similar political candidates or other types of leaders to determine the impact or influence of factors or experiences on their leadership development.

Dependability

With personal interviews, there are always limitations to dependability. For example, interviews and personal records are all limited by the views or intention of the person who wrote them or compiled them (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). The interviews might involve a level of bias given that this researcher is also a woman. The same potential bias holds true for personal interviews conducted and transcribed by the researcher. As a woman along a leadership path and as someone who has experienced some of the factors being examined, there may be bias present that would filter the interview process. This was balanced by acknowledging of gender as a possible influence or bias to promote neutrality.

Specifically, to this ethnography model, there were limitations of dependability in the data collection (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). There was basic biographical information reported similarly among all of the women. Other than the ethical concerns of the informational source, there should be very little concern for trustworthiness. For transcripts of interviews, the researcher identified the source and include an explanation of possible bias with the researcher and within the source. The sources that included information and details retrieved were verified and fully cited so that other researchers are able to check said sources and duplicate the study.

A full source review list and set of interview transcripts provided a neutral overview of each woman's path to leadership.

This qualitative ethnography relied heavily on a small number of personal interviews to determine the paths of leadership for female political leaders in the State of Florida. This is problematic in that the personal interviews are not exhaustive methods for gathering information about the lives of these women.

Confirmability

With any study, there can be a level of personal bias that influences the researcher. To address concerns about confirmability and reduce bias that could affect dependability in this study, all sources were clearly identified, and the context of each source stated with the acknowledgment that each source were unique (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). A variety of sources and personal interviews were used in the ethnographic study, and the information gathered from each compiled, categorized, and cross-compared with the categorical information for the female political leaders to identify limitations and reduce bias by acknowledging the lens through which they were written (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998).

As a way to address these limitations and bias, the documents used were categorized into primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include autobiographies, personal letters, public speeches or personal journals, anything that demonstrates the subject's personal attitudes, memories, or views (Patton, 2002). Secondary sources include media articles, interviews or biographies. These types of sources, although not personal, can be reliable in that the author would be able to use a variety of sources to verify the report's accuracy (Patton, 2002). Cross-referencing a

combination of both types of sources facilitated a neutral overview of each woman's leadership development as well as detected any variation of information necessary for fact checking.

There were limitations of confirmability in a qualitative ethnography approach in that the sample size was small and generally focused on a shared trait; hence, it would be hard to confirm with a similar or different population. The small sample size for a qualitative ethnography makes it very difficult to replicate by other researchers (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). With this study, the sample size was purposefully chosen with a subset of eight of the sixty-five women serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. This could be difficult to replicate or mirror in a similar study until more women start serving in state legislatures nationwide. This study utilized the foundation of feminist theory which supported the research related to specific in-depth inquiry but also makes it difficult to replicate with the opposite gender or with both genders being included in the same study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998).

Ethical Procedures

Other than this researcher's own gender and own experiences that have influenced the leadership development of this researcher, there are no known biases or relationships with regard to the subjects of this study. There were no ethical concerns with the research conducted in this study other than verifying the integrity of sources included in the ethnography, conducting personal interviews, and accurately representing them in the analysis.

This was an ethnographic study of eight women with personal interviews of all participants included. The primary source of research for the eight participants was

personal interviews and documents that provide biographical information for each participant. The selection of these sources was all from publicly available information. In addition to the biographical background for each woman, I conducted personal interviews with each of the women during which I asked a series of guiding questions that covered the factors that influenced their leadership and political ambition development. Each interviewee was able to stop the interview at any time for any reason. I followed IRB guidelines, and all research conducted and collected was done so in a manner consistent with an approved IRB from Walden University.

All interview participants were contacted via email, traditional mail, and phone to invite their participation and provide them with information that outlined the purpose and scope of my research, any confidentiality concerns, the use of my research, and the opportunity to ask and have all questions answered before consenting to participate (see Appendix A). Each interviewee signed an IRB approved consent form for participation and use of information provided (see Appendix A). They were also informed that at any time prior to research publication, they could withdraw their consent for any reason and be removed from the data analysis. If anyone requested to be withdrawn from the research, all records and copies of details related to their personal interviews were destroyed. Participant names and other identifiers were kept confidential as requested. None of the interviewees were compensated in any way for their participation.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent back to each participant for their review. Each participant had seven business days to review and respond to the interview transcription for accuracy. If no reply was received by the end of seven business days, the researcher

considered the interview transcript to be accurate. Copies of the electronic records and files were maintained by the researcher on a personal computer, on a separate external hard drive, and backed up through an offsite cloud based encrypted repository account through the company Carbonite. Electronic records were maintained for at least five years by the researcher in compliance with Walden University IRB policies for electronic data review.

Summary

In this section, the methodology of this study was presented as a qualitative ethnographic study with personal interviews. Research of biographical information and personal interviews with eight women chosen from the pool of sixty-five women provide the opportunity to examine and compare female leaders serving in at the same political level within the same state and timeline. The population for this study was determined to be an intentionally selected population and set of participants that met the focus of the research questions to determine the shared experiences that shape the leadership development of women running for the same level of political office. The subset of between eight of the sixty-five women that served in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 were selected as congruent with the criteria for the ethnography focus.

In this chapter it was explained that there were personal interviews with eight participants. In addition, background information was compiled for each woman utilizing sources such as campaign press releases and public records to gain information about each candidate. The personal interviews were recorded and transcribed with all transcripts loaded into the NVivo program and utilized to search for comparisons and tends among the female leaders and their experiences along their paths to leadership. The

information gathered is categorized to identify specific demographic details that included

category codes or nodes within NVivo such as education; family; children; barriers;

obstacles; training; mentors; sponsors; advocates; transformational experiences; political

experience; business experience; jobs; wealth; religion; culture; awards; honors; public

service; charity activities; and goals.

In chapter four the analysis of the data gathered is discussed in addition to trends

and patterns identified as observed along the unique path to leadership for these female

political leaders. Details on demographics of participants, data collection specifics,

analysis of data, and evidence of trustworthiness are reported. The developmental and

transformative years of these female leaders is better understood, and generalizations

consequently drawn so that increasing numbers of women worldwide are able to seek out

similar experiences along their paths to public leadership. Such generalizations provide

insight for women worldwide to find their own path to leadership and transform societies

around the world to include and accept women as leaders.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this study, I explored how female leaders are developed and find unique paths to leadership. More specifically, I examined, through comparison and contrast, select female leaders regarding what factors contributed to their leadership development. Research on female leaders was primarily focused on their personal leadership style and specific leadership traits. To address the gap in the research and expand the segment of knowledge that focuses on the formative factors that contribute to the development of future female leaders, I examined a small group of female leaders aspiring to political office and their paths to leadership. In this qualitative ethnographic study, I also explored the factors that influence female leaders, comparing and contrasting commonalities and trends across the group that contribute to their paths to leadership. This approach, used within the feminist theoretical traditions, illuminated the overlooked experiences of female leaders who served in a similar political office, in the same state, and within the same timeframe. With a foundation in feminist theory, I deconstructed the paths to political leadership of eight women serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 to examine the influencing factors and obstacles unique to women during their leadership development to provide more examples for aspiring female leaders. Taking a bottom-up approach by looking at female leaders from the formative years forward was missing from the research and I explored what motivated, influenced, and shaped these women to make the choice to become a leader, specifically a political leader. This type of research could expand the understanding of how leaders are developed and influenced in a way that can benefit all leaders.

I addressed two research questions as they pertain to female leaders who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. In Research Question 1, I asked about influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. In Research Question 2, I explored what experiences as part of their path to public office influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017. In this chapter, I detail the research setting and demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and summary of the findings for this study.

Demographics

The population for this study included the 65 women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. These women provided a focused group of female leaders running for the state political office as a comparison within a similar cultural context. This focused population of female leaders provided a unique research opportunity to explore the leadership development of a smaller subset of women leaders. I interviewed 8 of the 65 female leaders with set of guiding questions focused on the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. The eight women ranged from the youngest one in her 20s to the oldest in her 70s. Three of the women were in their 30s, one in her 40s, one in her 50s, and one in her 60s. Of the eight women, three were Republicans and five were Democrats. All but one of the eight women were married at one time or currently and had children. Two out of the eight women had no degree beyond high school and the other six had at least undergraduate degrees with two holding graduate degrees. Their professions prior to political office

varied somewhat with three business women, one engineer, one lawyer, one nurse, and one pure politician with this being her first career after college. As far as cultural demographic, three were Hispanic, four were white, and one was African American. Overall, the volunteers for this study represented a diverse group of women that volunteered when contacted about the study so that they could share their experiences in leadership development that contributed to their nascent political ambition and path to office. Each woman shared their gratitude to be able to contribute and a willingness to serve as examples for other female leaders as they develop and begin to think about how they join government and improve society.

Data Collection

This study included personal interviews as well as basic biographical research as part of an ethnographic approach. The personal interviews provided the opportunity to analyze the personal and unique experiences of female political leaders as it relates to their leadership development throughout their lives. The population included the subset of eight from the original 65 women who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 to explore a deeper and more personal analysis of the unique experiences of how women develop as political leaders. I interviewed these women with set of guiding questions which covered the possible factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development. To maintain reliability of this study, I interviewed all participants with the same interview guide. I conducted personal interviews in compliance with all ethical research standards through Walden University IRB (IRB# 01-31-18-0176184). I contacted all possible interview participants via email to invite their participation and provide them with information that outlines the purpose and scope of

my research, any confidentiality concerns, the use of my research, and the opportunity to ask and have all questions answered before consenting to participate (see Appendix A). Each interviewee signed an IRB approved consent form for participation and use of information provided (see Appendix A). They were informed that at any time prior to research publication, they could have withdrawn their consent for any reason. None of the interviewees were compensated in any way for their participation.

The personal interviews started in September 2018 and ended in December 2018 with the general election taking place in early November 2018 for most of the participants. The eight women involved were generous with their time during campaigning with a few that requested interviews just following the election when their schedules calmed down. The interviews took place online via web conferencing (Zoom.us) from a location of their choice with me online so that the participant and the researcher were able to see one another during the interview. Each interviewee was asked the same set of guiding questions covering leadership and political ambition development as a starting point for the interviews (see Appendix B). In order to support credibility of the study, questions were developed ahead of time to organize data collection as well as facilitate discussion points. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent back to each participant for their review. Each participant had seven business days to review the interview transcription for accuracy. If they did not reply with corrections or additions by the end of seven business days, the researcher considered the interview transcript to be accurate and ready to be included as part of the data collection for this study. None of the participants requested changes to their transcript nor did they request to be withdrawn from the study.

Data Analysis

All personal interview transcripts were loaded individually for each woman into NVivo for analysis and comparison. Based on the research literature relating to leadership development and nascent political ambition, information gathered for the subset of eight women from personal interviews for all participants was categorized to identify specific demographic details such as socioeconomic level, spouse/children, date of birth, age, political party, education level, and career type. Additionally, and based on the research literature, the details of experiences were included in the analysis for categories including public service, self-identified obstacles, formal leadership training, mentors, sponsors, advocates, and transformational experiences. These researched categories produced the creation of nodes within NVivo that included education; family; socio-economic; personality traits; barriers; resistance or support; mentors, sponsors, or advocates; and transformational experiences. For transformational experiences, the details were categorized as either positive or negative in nature; overcoming an obstacle or experiencing a milestone achievement; personal or public experience; and at what point in their lives this took place. Key words that matched or related to the nodes were identified and categorized within the program providing an overview of high-level analysis by examining the frequency of factor tags, identifying patterns of instances or experiences, and ranking the results.

Once all information was loaded and transcripts run through NVivo, a comparison was done to search for comparisons and trends among the data gathered and reported with the program. The details for each woman and then the cross comparison of the female leaders and their experiences along their paths to leadership provided an overview

of the leadership and political ambition development for the participants. By identifying common factors and experiences, the researcher determined which ones have an influence on leadership development throughout their formative years and along their path to public office based on frequency of statements and tags.

<div align="center">**Evidence of Trustworthiness**</div>

Credibility

There were no adjustments to the evidence of trustworthiness described in chapter three. Personal interview transcripts were used for the subset of eight women. In order to support credibility of the study, questions were developed ahead of time to organize data collection as well as facilitate discussion points. To further ensure trustworthiness and credibility, all interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent back to each participant for their review. Each participant had seven business days to review and respond to the interview transcription for accuracy. If no reply was received by the end of seven business days, the researcher considered the interview transcript to be accurate.

Based on the research literature related to leadership development and nascent political ambition, data was collected and coded for each participant to support the research in determining the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political ambitions and aspirations among female political leaders. These factors included socioeconomic level, spouse, children, political party, public service, education level, career roles, mentor, sponsors, advocates, as well as any formal leadership training. From the personal interviews, the personal experiences of each woman was gathered and logged to explore the influence during their formative years that contributed to their

leadership traits and aspirations. The experience categories included self-identified

obstacles or challenges and transformational experiences. Each of these factors and

experiences were tagged and compared among the women for commonalities during their

rise to leadership roles. Review of potential commonalities and relations was analyzed by

the researcher and reported as part of the pathway for the woman as well as the

comparison between the women as a group analysis.

Transferability

The scope of this study was to explore the paths of leadership for each of the

women in this study and then deconstruct as well as analyze the leadership development

of female leaders serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. This

was unique to this study since women as leaders are usually compared cross-

generationally or cross-culturally since so few serve in political office within the same

time frame. Female leaders shared certain developmental experiences and influencing

factors that contributed in some way to their leadership aspirations and development.

These developmental experiences included education level, family background and

support, socio-economic status, professional experience or formal leadership training,

barriers to leadership both public and personal, and political offices held. These specifics,

while they lend to the advantages of comparing similar women in a similar setting, also

raise the question of weakness in the study since men are not included in the research.

This means that the findings of this study may not be applicable directly to all individuals

and perhaps only specifically to women in similar societies and states like Florida during

the time period studied.

The female leaders in this qualitative ethnographic study were chosen based on similar levels of leadership from within the same state and roughly the same generation. Based on the criteria of same political level, same state, similar generation, the women in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017, provided the opportunity to examine female leaders serving at the same political level within the same state and to be compared within the same culture and generational context. The methods and research model used in this study can be used in other studies with similar political candidates or other types of leaders to determine the impact or influence of factors or experiences on their leadership development.

Dependability

With personal interviews, there are always limitations to dependability. The interviews might involve a level of bias given that this researcher is also a woman. The same potential bias holds true for personal interviews conducted and transcribed by the researcher. As a woman along a leadership path and as someone who has experienced some of the factors being examined, there may have been bias present that would filter the interview process. This has been balanced by acknowledging of gender as a possible influence or bias to promote neutrality. This qualitative ethnography relied heavily on a small number of personal interviews to determine the paths of leadership for female political leaders in the State of Florida. This was problematic in that the personal interviews are not exhaustive methods for gathering information about the lives of these women.

Confirmability

With any study, there can be a level of personal bias that influences the researcher. Personal interviews were used in the ethnographic study, and the information gathered from each were compiled, categorized, and cross-compared with the categorical information for the female political leaders to identify limitations and reduce bias by acknowledging the lens through which they were written (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). There are limitations of confirmability in a qualitative ethnography approach in that the sample size is small and generally focused on a shared trait; hence, it would be hard to confirm with a similar or different population. With this study, the sample size was purposefully chosen with a subset of eight of the sixty-five women serving in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. This could be difficult to replicate or mirror in a similar study until more women start serving in state legislatures nationwide. This study utilized the foundation of feminist theory which lends itself to specific inquiry but also makes it difficult to replicate with the opposite gender or with both genders being included in the same study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998).

Results

The research in this study attempted to address two research questions as they pertain to the female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were developed and justified based research in the field as it related to the focus of this study and the leadership development of women. This set of interview questions (see Appendix B) was based on the combination of opportunities for women that open up when they have the support of family, culture, mentors, sponsors, or advocates that propel them along their path to

leadership by providing them with the support necessary to further their education, leadership experience, and personality traits as way to help them reach their full potential as a political leader. The summary of results and themes as they relate to each research question are as follows.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What are the influencing factors, characteristics and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017?

Mentors, Sponsors, or Advocates

Interview question one asked each participant about the mentors, sponsors, or advocates that either formally or informally supported their leadership development. It is this social capital that the individual benefits from along the professional path to leadership and is particularly unique for women. All eight of the participants mentioned a mentor, sponsor, or advocate of some sort in their interview. Only one of the eight responded at first that no one helped them but then proceeded to share few stories of county commissioner that she worked part time for that encouraged her for years to run for office and supported her as an advocate for leadership opportunities. All of the participants described their mentors as individuals that were self-identified as mentor type influences rather than formal mentorship relationships. Only one of the interviewees mentioned a college professor as a secondary influence and possible mentor as someone in a formal role. The majority sought out beneficial relationships throughout their leadership development that would enhance their growth such as colleagues with similar interests and/or those who have faced similar challenges. One woman recounted that

during a difficult time as she was adjusting to public office, dealing with a cancer diagnosis, and going through a divorce, she sought out fellow women and like-minded men in the state legislature for guidance and support. She shared that without those, as she termed them, mentors, she would not have made it through her first two years in office. Two of the participants recalled that their formal mentor was also a family member that served in office or was politically active throughout their younger years. Overall, each participant had some level of influence, support, or guidance from someone or many people in their lives that have served as mentors, sponsors, or advocates as part of their leadership development.

Family

Interview question two covered their experiences with family and how that factors may or may not have influenced their leadership development and political aspirations. Women experience different barriers to leadership success than men, and they experience different societal constraints than men do in most cultures. The roles of women in private life have an effect on the possibility of fully participating as a leader in public life. Each of the eight participants described family having a significant influence on their political aspirations and leadership development. In five of the interviews, both parents were described as influences from an early point in their lives with stories that conveyed families that were politically or socially active in ways that emphasized the importance of government participation. Two of the participants had only one parent that they considered an influence on their leadership development. Out of the two that described only one parent as an influence, one said their father was a primary influence and had held public office during her childhood years and the other described her mother as the

single influence but only to be politically aware. The one influenced only by her mother was also the only participant to view this family influence in a negative term sharing that even though her mother emphasized to be politically aware she also regularly underestimated her daughter's intellect and ability to the point of discouraging the participant's leadership aspirations by telling her that being a waitress would be the best career option for her. One interviewee described her grandfather as the primary family influence on the importance of public service. All but one of the interviewees were married at some point and had children. One participant had not yet been married and did not have children. Overall, each of the participants shared that there was a significant influence from family on their leadership development and political aspirations.

Socio-economic Class

In addition to and closely related to family, another factor is at play when developing leadership aspirations among individuals: socioeconomic class. This question was an interesting question for the participants to answer. A few knew immediately what the question was asking while the others thought for a moment as if this was the first time anyone had asked them about that connection. Four answered promptly that they did not grow up with wealth and that there had been some type of struggle in their lives either while young or during the early career years in which money was scarce and sacrifices were made due to lack of funding. One participant described her own struggle of moving out of her parent's home at age seventeen, supporting herself through high school graduation, starting college, and then opting to drop out and get married and start a family. It was during that time when her children were young that she started to get politically active at the local level to improve education and neighborhood resources. She

shared that if she had not had that type of economic challenge, she may not have gotten politically active. Conversely, she shared that it was her one regret that she did not finish college and she felt it is the one thing when she is in a room of fellow lawmakers that she is lacking, the degree. Another participant shared that she felt that her socio-economic status growing up was a significant influence and that as she has grown more successful in her career but has not forgotten what it is like to struggle as she carries out her role to represent her constituents. All of the interviewees felt that socio-economic status had some level of influence on their political aspirations and leadership development and none of them viewed it as a barrier. It was the level of reflection and acknowledgment that varied among the eight women with about half saying that the struggles influenced them and that they see it as their duty to improve conditions and provide resources for those in need.

Education

Education is generally an individual's first socialization experience outside of one's family unit. Leadership emergence can be identified during a formal education process. For example, there are opportunities within education tracks that permit students to gain experience in leading peers and taking risks in leadership roles. All of the participants felt that education had some influence in some way on their leadership development. The one that did not feel education had a role in her leadership development was the one that did not finish college. When asked about her high school or early education, she shared that even though she didn't feel that she had any formal leadership experience during that time she did recall that anytime she was involved in any project, club, or activity people put her in charge of it and that perhaps people viewed her

as a leader. One of the other seven shared that she felt that her most influential educational moments occurred while she was in high school at an all-girls school. She shared that in that type of learning environment there was no option other than leading since there were no boys to be given preference or serve as a distraction. She felt that this was beneficial to her confidence during those years and later in life with her attitude of never underestimating herself. Oddly enough though, that same participant described herself as insecure when leading and almost paralyzed by fear but takes the leap anyway then looking back on gratefully on her success. As politicians, only two out the eight had degrees in fields related to politics with one in political science and the other in public policy. One of the participants has a degree and work experience in engineering and the rest are self-proclaimed entrepreneurs with businesses ranging from real estate to insurance. Overall, the educational level and experiences or lack thereof was included by all of the participants as an influencing factor to their leadership development and political aspirations.

Transformational Experiences

Interview question five focused on asking the participant about transformational experiences that have influenced their leadership development. It is these transformational experiences, either in a formal educational setting or otherwise within an individual's path of development, that both have a profound effect on leadership development and are virtually impossible to recreate for others to learn and develop from in precisely the same manner. These unique experiences could range from an internship in a chosen field to a certain struggle or obstacle that the individual had to overcome in order to succeed or survive. It is as if these transformational experiences are as unique as

the personalities that are going through it. Based on all the interviews, all eight participants included multiple transformational experiences in their responses. It was a common occurrence for interviewees to have at least two to three stories of experiences at various times in their lives that influenced not only their leadership development but also their political aspirations. One participant recounted her entire political origin story starting with being what she termed an angry mom, progressing through traffic control efforts, all the way to those in local government asking her to serve as well as run for office. She explained each transformational experience as seeing a need to solve a problem and then working on a solution and seeing it through to implementation. Within each story she described herself as the accidental politician but was equally proud of being a part of each of the efforts and solutions.

Another participant shared similar situations where there was a transportation issue that they had run into as part of their engineering work and after numerous meetings with the county officials she realized that she could be in government and be on the decision-making side of the solutions. Most of the participants also shared experiences early in their lives either with family or in school where they were asked to lead and how they viewed this as a positive influence on their self-confidence. Four participants were active in politics or political related issues while they were growing up and saw those early experiences as influential to their political aspirations later in life. The activities included assisting their parent or grandparents with their political activities as well as their own social concerns such as education and individual rights. The other four participants shared experiences that caused them to run for office like solving a community problem and seeing the potential to bring about change. One participant

shared that her experience working as part of grass roots campaigning in the 2008 presidential election inspired her to think of herself as a possible leader in her own community.

Three of the interviewees also shared transformational experiences that influenceded additional leadership development after they were elected to their first political office. These experiences ranged from gender bias situations to sexual harassment from fellow legislative members. More examples of these gender and harassment situations are included in the barriers section. However, as these situations pertain to the factor of transformational experiences each of the three participants shared these stories as even more reasons for them to stay in politics and work to better the system from the inside out. Each remarked that the women in public office, no matter what their party affiliation had a common bond of being female and that they have reached out to fellow women in and across the aisle to work together to end the misogynistic traditions. Overall, the numerous accounts of transformational experience examples shared by all participants, points to this factor being of significant influence on continued leadership development and political aspirations.

Research Question 2

RQ2: What experiences as part of their path to public office in the Florida state legislature influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017?

Personality Traits

Interview question six asked the interviewee about their unique personality traits that may have facilitated their path to political leadership or influenced them as a leader.

However, the experiences of women are different than those of their male counterparts as seen in a variety of paths women take to political leadership and are overlooked. Their gender determined the barriers and challenges that they might face, and, subsequently, the varied path to leadership that they must construct is far less traditional than for men. This can be significantly challenging for women due to ingrained societal gender stereotypes. Subsequently, research has excluded close examination of the varied paths to leadership and barriers to leadership development for women. Overall, each woman interviewed felt that they had some type of personality trait that they felt contributed to their political aspirations and ability to lead. All mentioned determination as a trait with each recounting their own story of how they do not take no for an answer and that compromise is a process that takes perseverance to get to an outcome that both or all parties are comfortable to approve. Bravery was another trait that was commonly reported. Each participant described themselves as someone who felt it was their responsibility to say things that other people are thinking and are afraid to say in meetings or committees. In their stories each described instances where they felt that speaking up and saying things that others were not brave enough to bring up helped them gain leadership credibility and confidence in their political aspirations. Tenacity was another trait that all mentioned by way of stories of small discouragements or losses that did not deter them but rather fueled them to keep on course. Three out of the eight mentioned flexibility as an important personality trait by mentioning that in their lives while balancing work, politics, and family they have to be flexible at all times to meet the changing needs and impromptu crisis that arise on a daily basis. One interviewee mentioned that she sees friends and colleagues that cannot handle the challenges of

balancing everything and the unexpected because they are not willing to be flexible and stay positive. Another participant shared that she felt her sense of humor was the most important personality trait that has helped her through all sorts of male dominated situations. She felt that her ability to as she put it, give back to the boys as much as they gave it to her, helped her gain their respect and in turn some of her harshest critics became her biggest supporters because of their ability to bond with her humor. Overall, each of the participants felt that certain personality traits contributed to their leadership development and political aspirations.

Overwhelming Resistance or Support

Interview question seven provided the opportunity for each interviewee to share details about times they have experienced resistance or overwhelming support along their path to leadership. Perceptions about women as leaders and the opportunity for women to have female leaders as role models for their own path to leadership is very much tied to cultural constraints or tolerance. Interestingly, only one of the participants shared a story about overwhelming support as a contributing factor to their leadership development and political aspirations. This interviewee shared that when she was advocating for traffic calming measures near her neighborhood school and working to provide better resources for families in her community, she experienced widespread support from her community members. When she finally decided to run for public office, she shared that support was all she had and that her opponent had all kinds of financial support. She went through a variety of details from her first campaign with most of it focusing on personal support and community outreach with the result being a win over a well-financed incumbent.

The rest of the participants shared resistance stories from their early days of campaigning and holding office. One of the seven shared that she experienced only mild resistance due to her young age and gender but that it was getting better since holding office. Her solution was to let her work speak for itself and the resistance would fade. The remaining six participants shared harsher stories about resistance that focused on resistance they had experienced when running for office and once in office. For each of these six women the central shared factor in their stories was their gender and how they were being treated by voters or colleagues. One participant shared that when she first ran for office, she experienced significant resistance which was very unexpected. She was running for office against another female candidate and thought that voters would compare her and her female opponent equally with little bias. Her campaign advisor at the time advised her to focus on her female opponent's track record in public life and to go negative with the challenges that her opponent faced. She shared that she didn't want to do this at the time but felt that her campaign advisor had more experience with this type of stuff, so she went forward with the strategy. She recalled that it was not received well for her among voters and the media in her district and she was criticized for attacking a fellow female and told that she was being perceived, even though all her information was factual, as trying to slander this other woman. She lost that election but won her next one where she ran against a male candidate and kept everything positive. She also remarked that is was an eye-opening experience for her since she had always worked with facts in her engineering career and that in politics perception carries more weight than facts when gaining support.

The other participants shared experiences when they were underestimated by their colleagues and overlooked until they spoke up in addition to instances when they were given near impossible tasks because the men thought they would fail miserably. It was interesting that not one woman shared that they experienced resistance from other women, unless they were a political opponent, beyond voters that may not have supported them. As mentioned earlier and in stories of resistance the participants all mentioned that fellow women in an across the political aisle helped to support one another when in office together.

Barriers

The last interview question for the participants focused on barriers that they may have faced when working towards their goal of holding office in the Florida state legislature. There have been more efforts to include women in the political process in a variety of societies. Even with efforts to include women, without expanded knowledge of how women develop as leaders, progress will be stunted. Only two of the eight women interviewed shared that they had experienced minimal barriers in their leadership development and path to political office. These two women were younger than the others interviewed and remarked that they were thankful to the women who had served before them and felt that some barriers had been lessened because of their trailblazing service. For the remaining six women each had at least two stories of gender specific stereotyping and barrier instances.

Four of the women shared that they had instances where they had been underestimated by male colleagues with a variety of scenarios in committee meetings and hearings where men volunteered to help them understand the proceedings and make sense

of the process for them. One mentioned that in her third term in office a member that had just been elected told her that he would show her the ropes and that she had nothing to fear. She very quickly demonstrated to him that she was the ranking legislative member and that he needed her help. Another participant shared that she likes to arrive early to any and all meetings and on occasion when she was the only person in the room a male lobbyist came in and immediately asked her to pass out his material to all the committee members once they arrived. She said she knew what was happening and went along until the clerk entered the room and she asked the clerk to pass out the material. She said he looked at her strangely and still didn't realize she was a sitting representative. Then she said the committee meeting started with all the members in place and she glanced over to the lobbyist and caught his gaze and he was bright red with embarrassment. He then came up to her after the meeting and apologized profusely. She shared that he never made that mistake again. In a similar incident another participant was mistakenly told by security that she could not bring her coffee into the hearing and that only representatives could have beverages in the committee rooms. She played along for a few questions and then asked the security guards how they can tell who is a representative and who is not. They said the representatives wear special lapel pins and she asked, like the one I am wearing? Again, an incident of assumption based on gender and lack of awareness.

Two other participants shared more concerning barrier stories that centered on sexual harassment within the state legislature among colleagues. One woman shared that she had a colleague that she served with that made advances on her when they traveled together and constantly included sexual innuendos in their conversations. She said it was so bad that she did not even tell her husband because she feared her husband would harm

the man. She reached out to other women serving with her and asked if this was a common thing for this man. They shared that he had a reputation for this and also shared the names of others in the legislature to look out for. She asked them all how they had dealt with these types of situations and each shared that the ethics code for the Florida state legislature is virtually non-existent and that even if an inquiry was started it would be quietly ended by the male dominated body because they protect their own. She was told that a few women actually punched this one man to end his advances and at that point she decided to be as direct with him as possible because she had nothing to lose. She said that she called him one night and told him she could no longer work with him because his advances, innuendos, and inappropriate behavior made her uncomfortable. She told him to stop, that she loved her husband, and she expected better of him if they were to continue to work together. She said he replied with a matter of fact okay and told her he would not treat her like that anymore. She shared that everything changed after that and he is very professional with her now with no hard feelings. Unfortunately, she shared that she believes that he turned his attention to female lobbyists and staffers.

Another participant shared that she also regularly experiences inappropriate jokes about women and disrespectful comments in her presence. She felt that her male colleagues may be testing her in these instances to see how much she will tolerate or as she put it to see if they can consider her one of the boys. One woman shared that she and a fellow female colleague will be reintroducing a bill to strengthen the code of ethics and conduct for legislative members and that it was almost brought to the floor for a vote previously but was killed last minute by the speaker because he was afraid if it passed he would have to disclose his affair with a staffer to his wife. Overall, each of the

participants shared that the good old boys club is alive and well in Florida politics but that they are encouraged that as more women serve there will be a growing intolerance to these practices and barriers will start to fall.

Major Factors

Each of the eight participants identified an occurrence of each of the influencing factors asked about in the questions. The main difference between the factors was the number of occurrences that participants referenced in their recounting of factors and experiences. Transformational experiences had the most mentions by all the participants as influencing impacts on their leadership development and political aspirations. Behind that was the sharing of certain personality traits developed throughout their lives as being essential and influential to their leadership development and resilience when faced with challenges. Family came in third as an influencing factor and related to transformational experiences and personality development. Barriers came in a close fourth just in front of mentors, sponsors, or advocates ranking fifth. The stories shared about barriers were closely related to experiences that motivated and transformed most of the women to overcome bias and break through gender barriers. Each woman interviewed had some level of mentor, sponsor, or advocate as part of their leadership development however more of the stories shared focused on their own achievements and successes with those that mentored them referred to as inspirations rather than someone who opened doors for them.

The remaining factors of education, socio-economic status, and resistance or support came in sixth, seventh, and eighth in rank respectively. Education was reported as an influence in that it provided opportunities to gain experience leading and as related to

some transformational experiences among the women. However, most reported that their formal education or lack thereof did not wholly prepare them for leading and that much of their leadership development was informal rather than part of their education. Socio-economic status was second to last in the reporting based on how most of the interviewees responded with their status as a neutral influence overall. The support or resistance factor was related somewhat to the barrier factor by those that shared resistance stories with only two participants reporting supporting instances.

Summary

In this chapter, I explore the results of this study and data collected to support Research Question 1 that focused on the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders. I also explore Research Question 2, in which I explored the experiences as part of their paths to public office in the Florida state legislature that influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017. The eight women interviewed were asked a series of eight questions that included inquiries into the factors and experiences that shaped their leadership development and influenced their nascent political ambition. Results of the data collected were reported through narrative summaries while maintaining anonymity for each participant. Influencing factors were identified and ranked according to frequency. Additional findings, implications, and opportunities for additional research are reported in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Recommendations

Introduction

My purpose this qualitative ethnographic study was to explore how female political leaders emerge by deconstructing the development of female legislators in the state of Florida from 2012 through 2017. I analyzed the lives of these women to identify contributing factors to leadership development such as education, family influences, professional roles, influences of mentors, advocates, or sponsors as well as socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Based on this feminist deconstruction of female political leadership development, my intent was to construct new knowledge about common experiences and nascent political ambition among female leaders.

Key findings for each of the eight participants were identified and all eight referred to an occurrence of each of the influencing factors asked about in the questions. The primary variance with the factors was the number of occurrences that participants referenced said factors as part of their interview. Transformational experiences had the most references by all the participants as influencing impacts on their leadership development and political aspirations. Listed second was personality traits developed throughout their lives as being essential and influential to their leadership development and resilience when faced with barriers of challenges. Family was ranked third as an influencing factor in that most transformational experiences took place in some relation to their family background and contributed to the development of certain personality traits. Barriers that each female leader experienced along their path came in a close fourth just in front of mentors, sponsors, or advocates ranking fifth. The stories shared about barriers were closely related to transformational experiences that motivated in one way or

another, each of the women to overcome bias and break through gender barriers. Each woman interviewed had some level of mentor, sponsor, or advocate as part of their leadership development or within their support structure at the time of the interview. However more of the stories they shared focused on their own achievements and successes with those that mentored them referred to as inspirations rather than someone who opened doors or removed barriers for them. The remaining factors of education, socio-economic status, and resistance or support came in sixth, seventh, and eighth in rank respectively. Education was reported to provided opportunities to gain experience leading and related to opportunities that brought about transformational experiences for some of the women. However, most reported that their formal education or lack thereof did not wholly prepare them for leading and that much of their leadership development was informal rather than part of their education. Socio-economic status was reported by most of the interviewees as a neutral influence overall. The support or resistance factor was related somewhat to the barrier factor among those that shared resistance stories with only two participants reporting supporting instances. Overall, the ranking of the factors and frequency of referenced factors resulted in transformational experience, personality traits, and family being the top contributors to leadership development and nascent political ambition among the eight participants.

Interpretations of the Findings

In the first research question in this study, I addressed the probe into the influencing factors on the leadership development and their paths to political office in order to address the problem that the unique experiences of women and their varied paths to leadership roles are overlooked in general leadership theories. Mainstream leadership

theories do not adequately address how the leadership aspirations of women are developed or influenced as they emerge as significant leaders, and, among those that do include gender, tend to focus on female leaders and how they lead rather than how they reached leadership (Lyness & Schrader, 2006). Exactly where, when, or how these leadership characteristics are acquired or are developed is left out of the mainstream research. Gender-specific studies note that there are certain influences such as early care giver relationships within a leader's developmental years that help shape what type of leader they will become. (Asgair, Dasgupta, & Stout, 2012; Beer, 1999; Boatwright & Forrest, 2000; Melamed, 1996; Kolb, 1997; Schipani et al., 2009; Tellhead & Bjorklund, 2011). Without these key relationships as part of early leadership development, women are at a disadvantage when compared with men in that they must seek out these relationships if they do not already exist within their support system. This study found that certain factors such as family and education where foundational relationships are formed did influence the eight women interviewed. All of the women shared a family influence which was positive for seven and slightly negative for one with either a parent or grandparent or both that they considered someone who contributed to their leadership development and/or an inspiration to them to aspire to lead in the political realm. With regard to education as an influential factor most women shared that experiences to lead or being seen as a leader among their peers in high school and/or college was something that let them gain confidence in leading and contributed to their overall leadership development. The findings from the interviews confirms both family and education as factors that contribute to female leadership development and influence nascent political ambition.

How women are socialized during their formative years has an influence on how women view themselves in society. Social role theory asserts that women and girls are socialized to develop quality interpersonal relationships which is a necessary skill for transformational leaders (Carless, 1998). This area of the leadership literature focuses on how female leaders learn their gender-specific skills through relationships and interactions within family unites as well as part of their culture and society. Studies such as these provide a basis for reference when examining the contributing experiences that shape a leader and help develop a unique style and path to leadership. The findings in this study uncovered that the eight women in this study experienced unique socialization within their families and educational settings that contributed to certain personality traits that helped them when dealing with barriers and resistance along their paths to leadership. In addition, and as part of their individual experiences of socialization, the factor of their socioeconomic level contributed in a small way to each woman's sense of responsibility to enter public service. For example, even though all eight women felt neutral towards how their socioeconomic level contributed to their overall leadership development, all eight also shared stories about how their upbringing and their socioeconomic status during their upbringing inspired them by instilling them with a sense of community and service to others. One participant shared that her socioeconomic level was something that permitted her to work part time when she decided to run and serve. She mentioned that not everyone has that luxury and she knew that, was thankful for it and that was something that reminds her daily that it is her privilege to serve others. Another participant shared that they had known struggle and success and despite the privilege that they may have experienced in some way or another they would never forget

that they serve all their constituents and not just those that voted for them. When faced with resistance, all eight women referenced specific personality traits and a support network to help them through those tough times along their leadership path. The findings from the interviews confirms that socialization for women is influenced by family, education, socioeconomic level, barriers, and support or resistance to develop personality traits that help them along their paths of leadership development.

Nascent political ambition in women develops differently than in men. Perceived gendered leadership roles have an effect on how many women actually consider running for political office. This can have a negative effect on a woman's nascent political ambition. Out of the group that had considered running, 22% of the men compared with 14% of the women actually found running for office in the future appealing (Lawless & Fox, 2012). As a result of contributing gender roles and societal stereotypes, men are more likely to consider themselves qualified to run for political office than women. Deciding to become a candidate takes courage and opportunity that is rarely cultivated or provided for girls and women. Nascent political ambition is developed in individuals as it evolves with time (Fowler & McClure, 1989).

Women are less likely to develop nascent political ambition to the level of their male counterparts due to the lack of societal role models, familial encouragement, in addition to the burdening load of bearing the majority of the household responsibilities in families (Lawless, 2012). As compared with boys, as girls grow up, they receive less encouragement to engage in political conversations among family members which translates into reduced ambition to run for political office (Lawless & Fox, 2005). Even the education system in the United States provides less opportunity for girls than boys

with regard to political expression and exploration of political ambition (Greenlee, Holman, & Vansickle-Ward, 2014). From the start, most girls are marginalized by family, friends, and educational opportunities as related to political engagement which is critical to the development of nascent political ambition. This was not the case with seven of the eight participants. Most of the women mentioned a significant family member as an influence on their political ambition. One of the eight shared that her mother was a negative influence for her because she always told her that she should not aspire to be more than a waitress with a steady paycheck. However, that same participant shared that it was her mother that exposed her to the importance of politics and political involvement by always having the national conventions on television or watching presidential addresses. It was interesting that even though her mother felt she was not leader material the participant learned the power of political engagement and importance of public service from her mother. Overall, the interviews confirmed that the seeds of nascent political ambition for these women were planted as part of foundational family experiences.

Although not the case for the eight participants in this study, for most women the absence of early political engagement and limited access to opportunities to explore political leadership early for women and girls contributes to the identified gender gap in nascent political ambition and results in lower numbers of female political leaders (Costantini, 1990, Fox & Lawless, 2005, 2010; Fulton et al, 2006; Lawless & Fox, 2005, 2010). For women, when these experiences are limited or absent from their developmental years, political ambition is limited as well. This influence on the development of nascent political ambition is still seen among qualified potential

candidates in that women perceive themselves to be less of a risk taker and feel more responsibility to their families than their male counterparts (Fox & Lawless, 2005; Lawless & Fox, 2005). It is the variety of political engagement and professional experiences during the leadership development of girls and women who contribute to their nascent political ambition that gives them first, the confidence to run and second, the characteristics to win. The interviews in my study confirmed that transformational experiences related to leading and political engagement were significant influences for all eight women. The factor of transformational experiences was the factor that was mentioned most by all eight women and ranked first out of the eight factors in the interview questions as to frequency of reference. For each of the women, the transformational experiences they shared occurred all along their paths to leadership and continued growth while in and after serving in office. Each of the eight women shared stories of opportunity, resistance, support, challenge, gender bias, and struggle with a few sharing instances of harassment but all shared what they learned from each experience and linked it to how it made them a better leader, fueled their aspirations for political office, and/or helped them grow stronger as a woman. In addition to the transformational experiences, each woman shared stories of formal or informal mentors, sponsors, or advocates that recognized something in them that helped them decide to lead or inspired them to run for public office. What was learned from the interviews about the factors of mentors, sponsors, or advocates plus transformational experiences confirm that women need these types of influences, supports, and experiences to develop nascent political ambition.

As far as overall leadership development, paths to leadership are different from women than they are for men. General leadership studies focus on men as the primary examples and such studies of women overlook the complexity of experiences, leadership foundations, influential backgrounds and other factors that contribute to the leadership development of women (Collard & Reynolds, 2004; Day, 2001). Women tend to face deficits when it comes to traditional foundations for leadership development and lack inclusion as part of leadership studies. Including the experiences of women is not a simple task, as not all female leaders have the same experiences just as they do not exhibit the same characteristics and therefore should be studied in individual context (Day, 2001). Female leaders have unique paths that are not only different for each woman but also significantly vary from those of their male counterparts. The path to leadership for women is not straight but filled with many twists and turns constructed by each individual to overcome specific barriers to rise to a leadership role (Hardy-Fanta, Lien, Sierra, & Pinderhuges, 2007; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Along the path, women have influencing factors like individuals who support their leadership development, barriers to growth, gender-based biases, transformational experiences as well as educational and socioeconomic opportunities or obstacles. The findings from my study supported that not only do women have paths to leadership that are unique to their male counterparts but also, the path to leadership for each woman is as personal and unique as the individual woman. The eight women in my study all shared unique stories, recounts, details, and experiences that were individually their own. However, when common factors are applied, categorized, and analyzed there are common themes that run from woman to woman. Transformational experiences were by far the most influential factor for

leadership development and most significant contributing factor to nascent political

ambition for each of the eight women. Other contributing factors of personality traits;

family; education; barriers; sponsors, advocates, mentors; socioeconomic level; support

or resistance all played roles in leadership development and formation of nascent political

ambition for all eight women as well. My study was an extension of knowledge for the

development of female leaders and contributes to an expanded understanding of nascent

political ambition in women. This research utilized feminist theory through feminist

standpoint and feminist identity development theory with respect to the context of women

who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. These feminist

theories provide a foundation for analysis of how the women in this study overcame

barriers to seek political office and supported the exploration of shared factors and

personal experiences of these female leaders along their unique pathway of leadership

development. Feminist theory recognizes the uniqueness of female circumstances,

experiences, and contexts within a patriarchal society (Olesen, 2005). It also

acknowledges that mainstream social research has left out inquiry into women's

conditions, stories, or roles as a way to construct a comprehensive understanding of

societies (Stewart, 1994). Feminist theory supports research of the rich experiences of

women, including barriers as well as non-traditional paths to leadership that are not

experienced in the same way as men.

The research in this study was conducted through a feminist lens of inquiry that

recognizes the challenges that women face throughout their life that could prevent or

inspire them to become political leaders. The feminist lens focuses on the notion that

gender shapes one's experiences and how people interact with those around them (Lather,

1991). The feminist research approach facilitates the construction of new knowledge by analyzing previously overlooked areas of study outside of the patriarchal paradigm (Brayton, 1997). For the women in this study gathering their experiences through a feminist lens was beneficial with respect to the context of women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 because it focused on the how and why female leaders reach positions of political power. By exploring the lives of these women through feminist inquiry the research focus was on studying the personal experiences of female leaders in a way that deconstructs their own path to leadership.

As another way to understand the unique pathway of female leadership development, my study researched the unique experiences from the standpoint of women with an understanding of their personal identity development. Feminist standpoint theory seeks to include the unique female perspective through examination of the lived experiences of women. This theory acknowledges that the lives of women and their experiences differ significantly from men's lived experiences (Harding, 1987, 1991, 1993, 2004). The examination of the lives and experiences of women is a strength of feminist standpoint theory in that it incorporates the inclusion of lived experiences and story-gathering specifically unique to women. The broader feminist theory acknowledges that the personal stories and unique experiences of women are valid points of data and knowledge in research and feminist standpoint theory takes this further by gathering this knowledge from the ground up from the perspective of individual women (Harding, 1991, 1993, 2004).

Feminist standpoint theory goes deeper to examine a woman's standpoint or perspective as different and unique. It also acknowledges the diversity of women's

experiences, asserting that collecting stories as part of research is personal and unique to each participant (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). In gathering feminist research and analyzing the data collected, the intersecting themes and similar experiences within stories provide the researcher with new understandings of complex topics (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory supported the inquiry in this study by providing a foundation to examine what influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences have shaped political aspirations and nascent political ambition among female leaders who held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017. Feminist standpoint theory also provided the basis for the examination of the lived experiences that women in this study have along their paths to leadership as a way to address the research question concerning the experiences as part of their path to public office that influenced and cultivated leadership aspirations of women serving during 2012 through 2017.

Feminist identity development theory is another theory related to feminist standpoint theory that added an additional level of analysis to my study. Feminist identity development theory acknowledges that the lived experiences of women are unique and overlooked by mainstream social science theories. Feminist identity development furthermore acknowledges that there is a unique female identity that is different from that of the mainstream male identity and therefore is developed through different experiences that are unique to the way women and girls are treated and acknowledged (Brayton, 1997; Hyde, 2002; Leaper & Friedman, 2007).

The primary claim of feminist identity development theory is that the identities of women are uniquely developed in a way that is profoundly different than male counterparts in their respective society (Hansen, 2002; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Since

women in most societies and cultures around the world are marginalized with regard to access to power and how they are treated within their society with regard to education, healthcare, and employment, feminist identity development theory asserts that the development experiences of women are overlooked by mainstream research (Leaper & Friedman, 2007; Marine & Lewis, 2014). Therefore, little is known about how women develop identities within different societies. More specifically, the feminist identity development of female political leaders was missing in that the unique experiences, circumstances, and perceived barriers or supportive factors had not been explored.

Feminist identity development was used to examine the unique experiences of the women in this study to examine how their own specific feminist identities developed in relation to the constraints of society and what barriers they faced as women along their path to leadership. In addition, feminist identity theory was used to address how the identities that the women in this study developed contributed to the leadership aspirations cultivated during their formative years and throughout their lives, resulting to their run for political office. This study expanded the research in feminist theory, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist identity development theory by providing expanded knowledge of the factors and experiences that affect the leadership development of women serving in a similar political office at the same level in the same state. By identifying the influencing factors, characteristics, and experiences that shaped political aspirations among female leaders serving in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017, this study expanded upon what is known about how women develop as leaders, unique from their male counterparts. Specifically, this study added to the knowledge of how leadership traits and aspirations of women influenced and cultivated

during their formative years and throughout their lives as part of their path to public

office as a way to further understand how women develop as leaders apart from the male

norms of leadership.

Limitations of the study

This study relied on personal interviews of the between eight female leaders that

held office in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 and biographical

research as a way to determine the paths of leadership. Other than the ethical concerns of

the informational source, there was very little concern for trustworthiness. For transcripts

of interviews, the researcher identified the source and include an explanation of possible

bias with the researcher and within the source as needed. In order to support the most

neutral overview of each woman's path to leadership, a full source review and bias

identification list and set of individual interview transcripts were compiled and cross

compared among the participants. The possible bias in the sources and personal

interviews could be considered a limitation to this study because interviews and

biographical research is not an exhaustive method for gathering information about the

lives of these women.

There are also possible limitations to this ethnographic approach due to the small

sample size and focus on a shared trait of female leadership. The sample size for this

study was purposefully chosen with by examining women who served in the Florida state

legislature from 2012 through 2017. This could be difficult to replicate or mirror in a

similar study until more women start running for political office. This study utilized the

foundation of feminist theory which is also limited by its gender focus and makes it

difficult to replicate a study with the opposite gender or with both genders being included

in the same study. In addition, this researcher is also a woman along a leadership path and as someone who has experienced some of the factors being examined as part of the interview process. This was balanced by the acknowledgment of gender as a possible influence on bias to promote neutrality.

Another limitation with this study was with the eight female leaders as the subset of the original group of sixty-five women. Those chosen were volunteers based on an initial invitation sent to all sixty-five women. Interestingly, the eight volunteers represented almost a balance of political party and a nice variety of ages and ethnicity. Each participant had a recorded interview online using the web-based meeting tool Zoom with audio recording capability. The limitation of eight women participating in the personal interviews could be expanded for future research as well as the timeframe in which the women served in the state legislature being expanded to include more participants.

<div align="center">

Recommendations

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This study investigated and analyzed the unique experiences of women who seek and serve in political offices. Based on the research with the eight participants, it was determined that there are factors and experiences that contribute to a woman's leadership development throughout her life and influence her nascent political ambition. The number one factor that all participants in this study ranked highest was transformational experiences that helped them not only learn how to lead but also sparked a desire in them to lead in a political role that serves others at the state level. Even though this study provided an in-depth look at the unique experiences and influences factors among the women seeking and serving in political office as part of the Florida state legislature that

examined their pathway to leadership, there is still a need for more researchers to fill the gap in this knowledge by examining the leadership development and path to political office for more women. The original participant size could be expanded, and the date range extended to include more women. In addition, female at different levels of government could be included for further research in order to gain the perspectives of local and/or national female leaders. Also, this study could be replicated in different states and compared to the Florida participant pool. A quantitative approach could be employed for this participant profile with a larger pool and similar factors as a way to expand and add to the qualitative research gathered in this study. Fortunately, for any researchers interested in this subject matter, there is still a need for further research to expand the research to include more lived experiences and examine what influencing factors may have contributed to the leadership development of more female leaders.

General Leadership Studies

Leadership has been studied by scholars for centuries. From leadership on the battlefield to leadership of individuals and governing bodies, it is a subject that has always evoked criticism and wonder. Traditionally, the research on leadership has centered around the leaders and their behavior, characteristics, traits and whether or not their leadership was effective in relation to their followers (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002; Schilling, 2009; Toney, 1996; Zaccaro, 2007). For example, the negative aspects of masculine-dominated leadership styles as a norm have been examined to determine their effects on societies and cultures (Schilling, 2009). In addition, scholars have critiqued how leaders are chosen and who is permitted to participate in this choice,

with many studies focusing on the type of leadership instead of how a leader develops from early formative experiences.

This study could serve as a foundation for future research on comparing the experiences of male and female leaders not only for paths to office but also how certain leadership traits develop. The study could be expanded to include the comparison of male to female political leaders and how they develop their nascent political ambition and ultimately decide to run for office. There could also be a comparison between different levels of government offices at the state and national level in the United States as it relates to female and male leaders. In addition, a comparison of public and private or government and business leaders could be conducted to explore how men and women develop differently in varied leadership roles. Overall, this study contributed to general leadership studies by adding to the foundational knowledge of female leadership development and paths to office while providing opportunities for expanded research for men and women in leadership.

Gender & Leadership

In understanding that gender is a learned and socially constructed identity different than one's medically determined sex, a person can come to realize that leadership development can be significantly affected by gender roles. Gender roles start from birth with such things ranging from boys and girls being treated differently by society to medical professionals overestimating infant milestones for boys versus girls and encouraging more cuddling and assistance for girls (Evans, 2014; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). There are set stereotypes in most western societies that cast the female gender as weak compared to the strength of the male gender. In terms of leadership, the

characteristics of being a leader include being honest and straight forward, which is something that women in society find difficult since it goes against the norm of women being expected to remain in the background since these are considered male personality traits (Buckingham, 2012; Evans, 2014).

A leader's personal ambition or self-motivation to lead varies by gender. Men tend to be more ambitious and therefore more open to leadership aspirations (Williams, 2007). This creates a barrier for women that they have constructed themselves based on societal constraints and stereotypes, resulting in women tending to be less ambitious to aspire to public office (Williams, 2007). In addition, women as leaders are less likely to participate in self-promotion and emphasize their individual achievements (Bligh & Kohles, 2008). They are not as boastful and less likely to claim credit for success than a man and prefer to serve in a more collaborative role where they learn to serve or lead in a role that results in less acknowledgement or recognition for their leadership attributes. Thus, traditionally, women are viewed as lacking the necessary traits be become leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Research reinforces this pattern, with one study noting that, among similarly qualified male and female potential candidates, only 62 percent of the men versus 46 percent of the women seriously entertained the idea of running for political office (Lawless & Fox, 2012). This idea of perceived leadership roles limits aspirations for many women due to the perceived preference for male leadership traits and ideals.

This study provided a glimpse into the unique experiences of women as leaders, how they develop certain leadership traits, and what influences fuel their nascent political ambition. With the bulk of the established research focusing on gendered leadership

styles and female leaders once they have reached political office, this study provided the opportunity to further explore the unique experiences that women have along their path to political office so that more can be learned about how the leadership styles of women originate. In addition, the study could be expanded to include not only women but also men so that a comparison and contrast could be conducted to determine similarities and differences in the paths to leadership and development of leadership traits between the genders. The development of nascent political ambition could also be explored based on the foundational research in this study examined how women and men are influenced to lead politically and eventually choose to run for office.

Women as leaders

Women develop as political leaders differently than their male counterparts because they have different experiences and develop their individual identity differently than men. Candidate selection in political races can be traditional in the sense that they focus on male candidate traits and traditional paths of development rather than considering the unique circumstances and experiences of aspiring female leaders (Blackmore, 2012; Olsson, 2000; Shamir et al., 2005). This can be significantly challenging for women due to ingrained societal gender stereotypes. Patterns of candidate selection overlook gender as a separate factor in that they conform to the mainstream understandings of institutionalism without acknowledging the barriers and challenges experienced by female candidates during the selection process (Krook, 2009). The path for women as political leaders is haphazard at best with no typical path for women to rise to political office. A few women have reached political office through family ties, many more have been elected based on their individual achievements and promise (Blackmore,

2012; Jalalzai, 2004; Rosen, 2013). The small number of female political leaders suggests that the stereotype of masculinity as a leadership requirement for a political leader is being slowly eroded (Jalalzai, 2010; Reingold & Harrell, 2010; Rosen 2013). However, this study provided a foundational understanding of leadership development among women who hold political office and have political aspirations.

This study established research on the leadership development of women as political leaders that includes the paths that they followed to elected office. This study could be expanded to include more analysis and knowledge is needed in order to expand examples of known paths to leadership for women to follow when constructing their paths or identifying leadership opportunities for development. Different levels of government offices could be included such as state, local, and national as well as additional states to explore possible variations or progresses in different area of the United States. This study could also be expanded internationally by examining female political leadership development in one country and comparing that to similar countries. Above all, knowledge still needs to be expanded beyond this study to provide insight into how female leaders develop their own unique identity and nascent political ambition to serve as a guide for aspiring leaders. It is essential to learn more about what experiences women have as part of their life-long leadership development to further expand the research and better understand the ways in which women develop their aspirations to lead.

Implications

Classical, non-gender-specific leadership studies tend to examine what leaders do or how they affect others and less on what influences they had along their paths to

leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2008; Buckingham, 2012; Burns, 1978; George et al., 2007; Lyness & Schrader, 2006; Yukl, 2010). The majority of the literature overlooks how leaders in general are formed or developed. This study filled the gaps in the larger spectrum of leadership development literature. This study contributed to the sparse research literature specific to the leadership development and nascent political ambition of female leaders by examining the leadership development and path to political office for women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017. This knowledge contributes to feminist theory, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist identity development theory by compiling examples of known paths to leadership for women to follow when constructing their paths or identifying leadership opportunities for development. Knowledge gained through this study provided insight into how female leaders develop their own unique identity and nascent political ambition to serve as a guide for aspiring leaders. A comparison of the experiences of these women and identity development expands the research in female leadership development by addressing the gap in the literature of studies that focus on groups of female leaders within the same country, state, and similar political offices. Learning what experiences these women had as part of their life-long leadership development expanded the research to better understand the ways in which women develop their aspirations to lead.

This study has the potential to influence policies and practices on how women are recruited for political leadership roles. Even though not one of the participants in this study experienced a formal leadership development program, all eight did share similar experiences that could be formulated into a program that would provide opportunities for women to begin their leadership development. Political parties, local governments, and/or

state governments could develop policies that would guide programs specifically for women or that would include men that could serve as leadership programs for those individuals that think about running for office but lack the connections, resources, or experience. This study could be used as a model to expand the research on leadership development and then formulate policies and programs to develop more diverse leaders in all levels of government.

By examining the paths to leadership of theses eight women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 and comparing their shared experiences, the developmental and transformative years of these female leaders is better understood, and generalizations are drawn so that increasing numbers of women will be able to seek out similar experiences along their paths to public leadership. Such generalizations provide insight for women to find their own path to leadership and transform societies to include and accept women as leaders. The paths of these women might inspire other women to become leaders. When more women are in leadership positions, conditions for all women will improve by creating a conduit through which their needs and concerns can be shared. This type of change will also facilitate change not just for women but also for men, children, and families with the resulting needs of women being voiced by female leaders in a way that only female leaders can understand through shared circumstances among their gender.

Conclusion

Paths to leadership for women are not a typical or a straight line but more like a labyrinth or a spider web that is unique to each individual woman. The understanding of how female political leaders develop has been expanded by this study. The contributing

experiences and reflections of the eight female leaders in this study deepened the understanding of the variety of factors and experiences that influence the leadership development of women throughout their lives and inspires their nascent political ambition. Other women can be inspired by the findings in this research to seek their own paths of leadership development and look for opportunities to lead. Female leaders should be inspired and encouraged to continue to lead and grow along their own path as well as help other women learn to lead and develop their own nascent political ambition. This study confirmed that there are certain shared factors among the leadership development of eight female politicians and that those factors should not only be studied further but also serve as a guide for women who are aspiring to lead as guideposts for contributors to meaningful and successful leadership development among women.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about paths to leadership of women in the Florida state legislature. The researcher is inviting women who served in the Florida state legislature during 2012 through 2017 to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Heather Conaway Roberson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to better understand how female leaders evolve by examining women who served in the Florida state legislature from 2012 through 2017 by deconstructing their paths to leadership from the bottom up. Identifying the comparisons among female political leaders within the same country and political body along with their respective paths to leadership in conjunction with their individual life experiences will provide examples for aspiring leaders to follow as they construct their own paths to political office. Moreover, deconstructing and analyzing shared experiences in addition to common factors such as education and training will serve as potential models for emerging female leaders to customize their own paths to leadership and transform societies around the world to include and accept women as political leaders.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in a one-time personal interview with the researcher lasting no more than 30 minutes.
- The interview will take place via web conference and audio recorded.
- Review the transcript of our interview for accuracy and approval.

Here are some sample questions:
- What educational experiences have you had that contributed to your political aspirations?
- Do you consider yourself having mentors, sponsors, or advocates that supported your leadership development?
- What influence did your family have on your leadership aspirations?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

By examining the paths of women in this study might inspire other women to become leaders. When more women are in leadership positions, conditions for all women will improve by creating a conduit through which their needs and concerns can be shared. This type of change will also facilitate change not just for women but also for men, children, and families with the resulting needs of women being voiced by female leaders in a way that only female leaders can understand through shared circumstances among their gender.

Payment:
There is no compensation to participate in this study.

Privacy:
The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by data security measures for electronic records. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or via email at XXXXXXX.XXXXXXXX@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at 612-312-1210.

Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Obtaining Your Consent
If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent _____

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Characteristics and Experiences that Influence Leadership Development

and Political Ambition

1. Do you have mentors, sponsors, or advocates that supported your leadership development? If so, in what ways did those individuals influence you?

2. What influence did your family have on your leadership development and political aspirations? What was significant about this to you?

3. How did your socioeconomic class during your formative years have any influence on your leadership development and/or political aspirations? Can you give me an example this influence?

4. How did your education influence your leadership development and political aspirations? Why was this important to you?

5. Can you recall any transformational experiences along your path to leadership that contributed to your leadership development and political aspirations? If so, in what ways did the transformational experiences contribute to your leadership development?

6. Do you feel you have any particular personality traits that have facilitated your path to political office or helped shape you as a leader? Can you provide examples?

7. With respect to American political culture and gendered norms in society, were there any instances along your path to leadership in which you experienced

resistance or overwhelming support? If so, please describe how did that instance influenced your leadership development?

8. How have you overcome any perceived or real barriers to reach your goal of holding office in the Florida state legislature? Please explain how this motivated or discouraged you along your path to office.