DECONSTRUCTING EVE: A CRITICAL FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF MID-LEVEL FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS IN CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL UNIVERSITIES

Dissertation

Submitted to
The School of Education and Health Sciences of the UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

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Dayton, Ohio
May 2016
DECONSTRUCTING EVE: A CRITICAL FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF MID-LEVEL FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS IN CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

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Research demonstrates that female staff in conservative, Christian colleges experience gender discrimination in a variety of forms, and this oppression is often because evangelical theology dictates women are ontologically second class citizens. This qualitative critical feminist dissertation specifically focuses on the gendered experiences of female mid-level administrators in evangelical academia. Interviews and participant reflective exercises were used to collect data, and findings demonstrate gender inequality exists within Christian academia. Female mid-level supervisors reported difficulty balancing home and work responsibilities, pay disparity, thwarted promotional opportunities, and covert and overt discrimination. Recommended strategies to address gender inequality include leadership development programs, mentoring, advocacy for balanced hiring and salaries, gender equity task forces, climate surveys, and internal and external coalitions.
Dedicated to Dr. Molly Armstrong Schaller.

Thank you for being love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been said that, “It takes a village to raise a child.” I contend that it also takes a village to write a dissertation. First and foremost, I want to thank my committee members whose insights, critiques, and praise resulted in a work far better than I could ever pen on my own. Drs. Molly Armstrong Schaller, Carolyn Ridenour, Sheila Hassell Hughes, and Kathryn Kinnucan-Welsch, I am forever grateful.

Second, I want to thank my participants whose stories inspired me, whose vulnerability honored me, and whose strength encouraged me. Thank you for sharing your truth.

Finally, there is a co-hort of women who have mentored me, emboldened me, and invested in me throughout my lifetime. Without them, I would never have made it this far. Renee Davenport, Kim Ahlgrim, Janet Hamilton, Kim Longo, Lou Ann Horstman, and Caroline Russell Smith: “I’m everything I am because you loved me.”

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1 Because You Loved Me by Diane Warren and sung by Celine Dion, 1996.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE EVANGELICAL OPPRESSION WITHIN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

“It is hard to be a female at a denominational school that denies that females can serve the church according to gifts, not plumbing.”

“This has not been an easy post to write. Religion has shaped every aspect of my twenty four years on this earth. In those twenty four years I have seen such brutality committed in the name of God that it is sometimes all I can remember. But I’ve seen redemption, too, and it is this, only this, that led me through the fundamentalist wilderness…

I’m a veteran of the American religious right and so when I write ‘Christianity,’ I refer to a version of it you probably only know from a Daily Show skit. Until I began my MA in London last year, I’d spent a total of three years of my life in secular education. I got taught at home, with creationist science lessons and history books that dedicated chapters to the Protestant Reformation and half a page to Islam. I attended a Christian university that mandated Bible study, banned dancing, and openly discriminated against gay students.

By the time I entered that university, I’d already drifted toward the margins. American evangelicalism is not particularly tolerant of independent women and I’d felt a steady but muted rage at the restrictions placed on my gender for so long that the struggle felt like a second skin [emphasis mine]. But fear is a powerful force, and so I clung, under threat of hellfire, to the beliefs that women should submit to their husbands and that other relationships, including those with the same sex, were simply not an option for the truly born again. A divine binary governed all of human experience.

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2 Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009, p. 121
But if Christianity is responsible for enforcing that binary, it’s also responsible for showing me that religion isn’t so easily limited to such narrow categories. Despite my university’s prejudices it’s also where I first met openly gay Christians: usually alumni whose identities challenged everything I’d been taught about religion and sexuality. It is through my interactions with them I finally understood that my own fight to be heard could not be separated from their fight for the same recognition. Fundamentalism erased us. We inhabited the gray spaces in a black and white world.

These days, I’m a statistic. I left the church three years ago and never looked back. But when people ask me what I believe now, I tell them my beliefs haven’t really changed. I tell them that I still believe human beings have intrinsic worth, and so everyone has the right to be heard. I believe that people have the right to live a life free of fear. I believe that when someone says they love the sinner, not the sin, they have no idea what love really means.

Above all, I believe I’ll always choose gray spaces. It is a deliberate choice now because if I’ve learned anything at all from my experiences, it is that fundamentalism is best defied from the margins. I defy it because I know that it is fundamentalism, not religion itself that seeks to erase whatever it finds uncomfortable. For those of us raised with religion, faith is our mother tongue. It is the vocabulary that defines our identities from our earliest days. And it is a perversion of faith to use that same vocabulary to demean or even ignore someone else’s identity. It is an act of cultural violence and there is nothing holy about it.

So as a person irrevocably shaped by faith, I am proud to stand with [an inter-faith organization that fights homophobia]. It reminds me of the best I’ve witnessed in Christianity. And it is my hope that universities like my alma mater will embrace its message and acknowledge, finally, that faith is not a monolith. There is always room for gray.”

This blog post was written in August 2012 by a fellow graduate of a conservative evangelical university. Her name is Sarah E. Jones (name and blog post used with permission), and as I type these words in my dissertation, she is penning her Master’s thesis on postcolonial theory and global policy. She graduated from our alma mater in 2011. I graduated in 2002. Our undergraduate careers never overlapped. Yet, our childhood, church, and academic experiences are remarkably similar.

The thread tying our lives together is conservative evangelicalism and our eventual departure from that worldview. Evangelicalism forged our family life, sustained
our secondary education, supplied our spiritual life, and overshadowed our college student experience.

As girls and later as young women, Sarah and I often subtly skimmed the wall (or glass ceiling) that hedges us into a gender-repressed ontological and epistemological landscape. On occasion, we crashed head first into the glass.

Prescribed theology, to be explained later on, relegated us to a life secondary to our brothers, fathers, pastors, male teachers, boyfriends, and boy friends. Even in the world of academia and higher learning, a place where open inquiry, freedom of expression and exploration, and more questions than answers allegedly reign supreme, we found ourselves bound to the very convention and traditions our spirits writhed against.

We both eventually realized we were not suffocating alone. Conservative evangelical colleges and universities are rife with oppression, repression, and even explicit gender discrimination (Absher, 2009; Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; McKinney 2012; Pedersen & Jule, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001; Wood, 2009).

**Patriarchal Evangelicalism: Study Context**

Females in Christian higher education are both overtly and covertly oppressed (Absher, 2009; Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; McKinney 2012; Pedersen & Jule, 2012;

College students represent not just their 19-year-old selves but the future of the planet. This world is much larger, considerably more complicated, and far more pluralistic than conservative evangelicalism. That means college students, regardless of their gender, backgrounds, or particular religious beliefs, need to function adequately and prosper in such an environment if global and national societal issues are to be effectively addressed. Yet what happens when the 122 Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) colleges and universities propagate female subordination and inequality within their walls (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012), impacting over 400,000 pupils (CCCU, 2015a)?

Plainly, the answer is that students become further entrenched in those social and theological mores and perpetuate them into the next generation (Hall, 2012; McKinney, 2012; Pederson & Jule, 2012). The discrimination continues. Perhaps one female faculty member also had students and society in mind when she cautioned,

I think the administration disregards women, but I think there’s a bigger disregard. It is about theology and conformity. So which layer do you start with?

To make it just a feminist or women’s issue doesn’t even begin to define it. I would actually use the word evil. I hate to use that word, and I know that I’m on tape, but sometimes it feels evil [to be at a so-called Christian college]. I continue to tell people to not let this be defined as a feminist issue… This is far bigger than
that. More people than women are in danger, in my opinion. (Garlett, 1997b, p. 93)

Because “gender is ‘a central organizing principle and a core symbolic system in this subculture [evangelicalism]’” (Hall, 2012, p. 238), it behooves administrators in evangelical higher education to deeply examine the messages they purposely and inadvertently communicate to their students about the sexes. Researchers have noted these mores are modeled in the classroom, in the organizational structure, and in the community-at-large in these institutions and are thereby transmitted to students (Bryant, 2009; Colaner Warner & Warner, 2005; Hall, 2012; McKinney, 2012).

For these reasons, this study will illuminate the plight of female mid-level administrators in conservative evangelical institutions. As researchers in an earlier study noted when discussing the views of female faculty, “… the culture violates their high expectations for their faith. Christianity, in their minds, ought to be an alternative model for the ‘secular’ culture, rather than conform to it” (Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995, p. 21).

**The Problem: Hidden Voices of Female Mid-Level Administrators in Evangelical Higher Education**

Specifically, there is an unfortunate lack of research on the experiences of administrative and professional staff members in evangelical colleges and universities. To date, a majority of research on evangelical higher education focuses on female faculty members and executive level leadership (Absher, 2009; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009;
McKinney, 2012; Pederson & Jule, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001; Wood, 2009). Not only will focusing on female mid-level administrators increase the knowledge base within higher education, but more importantly, this study provides a platform for these particular women’s stories to be told. By sharing their experiences, my intent was that participants would reflect upon the good, the bad, and the ugly of their careers and subsequently foster change within their respective institutions should they determine change is warranted.

Eve Speaks Up: Study Question

Because research on women in faith-based institutions has thus far been largely focused on female faculty and cabinet-level administrators (Absher, 2009; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012; Johnson, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; McKinney, 2012; Pederson & Jule, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001; Wood, 2009), my dissertation will center upon the gendered experiences of female middle-managers in conservative evangelical universities. Their stories deserve to be told. Their voices should no longer be excluded. As such, I sought to answer the following inquiry: *What are the gendered experiences of administrative and professional female middle-level administrators in conservative evangelical universities?*

By administrative and professional (A & P), I primarily mean salaried middle-managers in operational departments. To be included in this study, participants’ job responsibilities mostly involved operational or academic student services management (e.g., enrollment management, advancement, student life, facilities, career development,
academic support). For ease of identification, I included women holding positional management roles such as those with titles of Associate Director, Director, and Associate Dean who supervise other staff members. As a feminist, I fully recognize women are leaders within their workplace apart from the specific jobs they hold, and their experiences are just as valid as the experiences of the women who participated in this study. Research beyond this dissertation is needed to explore the professional experiences of entry to mid-level female staff members without supervisory responsibilities.

Some may question why I focused on women holding hierarchical titles, which seems to reinforce the hegemonic structure of higher education. Allow me to emphasize that titles helped me identify the particular cohort of women I was interested in studying: mid-level managers. As I have already discussed and will continue to expound upon, this specific segment of women in conservative evangelical colleges has been silenced. This study aims to elevate their voices within academic dialogue. To do that, I needed a way to recognize them within their respective institutions.

Furthermore, I was specifically interested in exploring mid-level female administrators’ progression from entry-level positions to their present role. It is valuable to understand the barriers they have encountered so those obstacles can be eliminated. I also suspected their experiences would illustrate the sexism they have endured in ways they themselves might not even recognize. Because of that, I utilized a critical feminist lens, which is a perspective not yet employed in the study of female leaders in Christian higher education. That fact alone increases the importance of my research.

However, to better comprehend why this study is significant, why female inequality exists within evangelical academia, and why a critical feminist lens is sorely
needed, one must first understand the history of evangelical colleges. Then one must examine the experiences of female faculty and staff members at these institutions, and finally one must analyze evangelicalism itself.

**History of Evangelical Colleges**

Though providing a thorough history of evangelical colleges exceeds the bounds of this dissertation, an overview is appropriate so that readers will understand how institutions in the CCCU— the quintessential North American collective of evangelical colleges and universities—are situated within the American higher education landscape.

Faith-based higher education is hardly a new phenomena in academia. Colleges and universities were founded in America specifically for the purpose of propagating religious ideas in colonial America, beginning with the establishment of Harvard in 1636 (Balmer, 2006b; Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). The aim of colleges at that time was to produce “educated orthodox laymen as its [society’s] leaders,” and “the church would get educated orthodox layman as its ministers” (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007, p.7). Over time, the focus of the academy shifted away from religion because of:

- the rationalism and empiricism of the Enlightenment, the impact of the American and French revolutions, the influence of the resurgent German universities of the nineteenth century, and the utilitarian need for incorporating new fields of knowledge such as science and modern languages into the curriculum to serve the requirements of an expanding society. (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007, p. 143)

When science introduced evolution into secondary education, controversy exploded in the 1925 Scopes trial, which challenged creationist thought. As a result, evangelicals considered their perspectives marginalized and established Bible institutes
where they would maintain complete control over the curriculum (Balmer, 2006a).

Believing higher education to now be “bastions to liberalism,” (Balmer, 2006b, p. 137) Bible institutes, colleges, and eventually seminaries, offered an alternative to modern higher education vilified by conservative evangelicalism (Balmer, 1999). As Charles Malik (1980), a former Lebanese ambassador, United Nations President, and professor, stated during the Billy Graham’s Center dedication at Wheaton College, an elite, evangelical college in Illinois, “The problem is not only to win souls but to save minds” (p. 294).

Moody Bible Institute in Chicago eventually became one of the preeminent Bible institutes and remains so to this day. It was one of the first Bible institutes founded, along with A.B. Simpson’s Missionary Training School (now named Nyack College) and A.J. Gordon’s Boston Missionary Training School, all established in the 1880s (Balmer, 2002) but became more prominent in the mid-20th century. Other institutes included Providence Bible Institute, Columbia Bible Institute in South Carolina, and Denver Bible Institute.

While the institutes’ goals were only to supply a Bible education, other colleges were founded to provide a liberal arts education from an evangelical worldview. These colleges included Wheaton College (IL), Bob Jones University, Taylor University, and Grove City College. Some colleges were birthed out of Bible institutes, like Biola University, formerly the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Balmer, 2002; Sanders, 2012) and Cedarville University, which merged with the Baptist Bible Institute of Cleveland (Balmer, 2002; Murdoch, 1987).
As evangelical colleges increased, the CCCU was established in the 1970s. Originally named the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities, the council was created by presidents of the Christian College Consortium to “expand the objectives of the consortium” (Balmer, 2002, p. 158). The coalition encompassed thirty-eight members at its launch and today boosts a membership of 122 colleges and universities and 61 affiliated institutions (CCCU, 2015a). The Council’s mission is “to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth” (CCCU, 2015a).

To be a member of the CCCU, an institution must adhere to the following characteristics (CCCU, 2015a):

- Strong commitment to Christ-centered higher education
- Located in the U.S. or Canada
- Regional accreditation or AAUC membership
- Broad curricula rooted in the arts and sciences
- Christians hired for all full-time faculty and administrative positions
- Sound finances
- Non-profit status

While progressive evangelical colleges are members of the CCCU, most institutions qualify as conservative evangelical colleges based upon their doctrinal statements. Conservative evangelical canons will be extrapolated later in this chapter.

**Where is Our Declaration of Independence?: Study Rationale and Justification**

With the study context, research problem and question, and history of evangelical colleges understood, one can now briefly examine the experiences of women professors
in conservative evangelical institutions. Considering the experiences of female faculty assists us in understanding the experiences of female mid-level managers since both groups exist within the same college culture. Specifically, women professors face difficulty in rank, tenure, salary, and work/life balance. They also encounter overt discrimination based upon conservative evangelical theology.

**Female Faculty Experiences**

**Faculty rank, tenure, and salary.** What does gender discrimination in the evangelical academy look like? First, consider the very make-up of conservative evangelical colleges. A large majority of their faculty are men, and scant few colleges have female presidents or even a woman in a cabinet-level position (CCCU, 1998; Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; Longman & Anderson; 2012; Moreton & Newsom, 2004a; Wood, 2009). Additionally, female faculty members employed by conservative evangelical universities are less likely to be tenured than their male counterparts and tend to be consigned to lower ranks (Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Lafreniere & Longman, 2008; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). To exacerbate the problem even more, women professors earn less than male faculty members despite controlling for factors such as rank, educational-level, demographics, and institutional characteristics (Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Schreiner, 2002; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995).

Further, researchers have found women professors in conservative evangelical institutions engage in more feminized, nurturing roles such as mentoring, advising, service, and teaching than do male peers (CCCU, 1998; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, &
Willingham, 2004; Schreiner, 2002). As a result, they have less time to dedicate to management responsibilities or scholarly research, which then hinders their tenure and promotion opportunities (Absher, 2009).

**Work/life distress.** Because of entrenched social and theological norms, female faculty also endure a more stressful work/life balance than do their male peers (Absher, 2009; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Moreton & Newsom, 2004b; Schreiner, 2002). At times, they report feeling torn between excelling as a professor and excelling as a mother and wife (Johnson, 2011; Schutte, 2008). Occasionally, this tension leads them to consider leaving Christian academia altogether, and because of this strain, some actually do (CCCU, 1998; Schutte, 2008). As a result, students lose talented teachers, and female students in particular lose much needed role models (Hall, 2012).

**Overt discrimination.** The above are examples of normalized and invisible gender discrimination on conservative evangelical campuses. However, observable discrimination has also been reported (Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001). Specifically, women professors in CCCU institutions have reported considerable hostility from administration, male colleagues, and even their students (Absher, 2009; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004). A participant in Gartlett’s (1997b) work on female leaders in these types of institutions shared that a student told her she ought to leave higher education in order to tend to her child at home. Another faculty member expressed her desire to leave evangelical higher education and return to the secular academy:
…because of the relentless student judgment against her. As she told me of the daily verbal abuse, one of her hands with fingers curled kept pounding the palm of her other hand as she released a litany of ‘daily, daily, daily,’ and ‘I’m sick of it, sick of it, sick of it!’ (Garlett, 1997b, p.77)

Additionally, in interactions with their male peers and university leaders, women professors encounter harsher treatment, unwelcoming attitudes, and negative comments about being female (Hall, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). Others felt they needed to take extra measures to demonstrate their competency, for they believed they were judged much more stringently than male colleagues (Walker, 2001). When asked what the most challenging part of working in Christian academia was, one female respondent in a 2007 survey of over 1,900 CCCU faculty simply stated, “I’m a female Bible professor… enough said…” (Pederson, & Jule, 2012, p. 264).

These women also describe feeling invisible and being treated like second-class citizens (Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Johnson, 2011; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001). “Being a female… I often feel disrespected, unappreciated, and unheard by certain individuals,” reported a participant in a study of CCCU faculty (Pederson & Jule, 2012, p. 265). Indeed, two female leaders in another project on female evangelical university leaders explained, “I do all the learning to speak their [men’s] language; they do none of it to speak mine,” and “Some of us feel like aliens in this culture [of evangelical Christianity], and I’m one of them” (Garlett, 1997b, p. 94, 95).

When female professors believe the gender harassment they experience is a result of their abusers’ religious faith, they perceive the collegiate atmosphere to be even more
damaging (Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). In fact, some contend discrimination on these campuses might be even more pronounced than in secular colleges and universities (Garlett, 1997a; Hall, 2012).

**Gendered theology.** Furthermore, female professors at conservative evangelical colleges and universities contend with patriarchal theology, which is an underlying cause of gender harassment and oppression in these institutions (Absher, 2009; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; McKinney, 2012; Pederson & Jule, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001; Wood, 2009). Because of the traditional, evangelical belief that women are subordinate to men (Balmer, 1999), female faculty and administers are often silenced. A brief, in-depth examination of this theology is forthcoming, but for now consider what these women have to say about the intersection of theology and university life.

In a study conducted in 1995 at an evangelical college, one female faculty member shared, “That undercurrent [of women being subordinate to men] is always there in the thinking and actions of the college… the constituency really, really falls into headship, the whole Dobson thing” (Garlett, 1997b, p. 78). A male CCCU president agrees, “The policies on women in the CCCU schools reflect the traditions of 30 different denominations, some of which would limit the leadership role of women based on their [the denominations’] understanding of scriptural mandates” (Cagney, 1997, p. 72, as cited in Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004, p. 44).

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3 James Dobson is a well-known conservative evangelical who founded Focus on the Family, a ministry that promotes traditional family values from a conservative, Christian perspective.
At this juncture, it is also important to note several researchers have demonstrated male faculty in CCCU institutions tend not to see gender but rather view that term as interchangeable with women (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; McKinney, 2012). Analyzing data from a study focused on more than 1,900 CCCU faculty, McKinney (2012) illustrated,

more than three-quarters of men do not see gender inequality within the CCCU as a problem at their institutions. Since men have higher rank and salary than women, they are more likely to be in positions of authority with the power to enact change; however, they do not tend to see gender inequalities. (p. 278)

However, their female peers do recognize the gender disparity within which they dwell. Women professors responding to the same survey evidenced they were more far dissatisfied with the gender inequality of female faculty and students at their institutions than men were (Hall, 2012). Likewise, data analysis demonstrated “gender remained the strongest predictor of whether or not faculty felt that women and men were treated equally at their institutions, with women being significantly more likely to believe women and men are not treated equally” (McKinney, 2012, p. 277).

Female Staff Member Experiences

Like their female faculty peers, women administrative and professional staff encounter difficulties in evangelical higher education. They, too, are missing from leadership positions and face discrimination because of evangelical dogma.

Underrepresentation in administration. First, very few women are present in executive or cabinet-level leadership (Longman & Anderson, 2012; Smith, Filkins, Schmeltekope, & Bateman, 2005). Longman and Lafreniere (2011) report that in 2010
women presided over only 6 out of 110 CCCU institutions, and only eighteen women were chief academic officers. Even when considering all vice-presidential positions besides academic affairs, only 19% are held by females (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010).

**Repressive theology.** When female professionals do achieve positional leadership roles in evangelical higher education, they are dealt the same stress as women faculty in those institutions, feeling torn between the theological construct that their role is at home while still desiring to advance professionally (Dindofffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Moreton & Newsom’s, 2004b). They are not propelled forward when faced with unwelcoming attitudes from male peers as well. In a study on female cabinet-level leaders in CCCU institutions, a female vice-president recalled a meeting in which she informed the other administrators present she would need to leave early to assist her daughter with prom preparations. To her chagrin, she was met with critical gazes. However, when a male leader left a similar meeting early to attend his son’s ball game, he was ushered out the door with approval (Johnson, 2011).

The disdain for non-academic female professionals within the evangelical academy is the same as the contempt for female faculty because it is based upon evangelical doctrine. Johnson (2011) examined the experiences of cabinet-level female leaders in CCCU institutions and learned “a majority of our participants agree that female advancement in faith-based institutions is either overtly or covertly affected by the role of theology” (p. 95). One respondent mentioned, “One of my observations of faith-based universities is that we are run like the church; that is the president is the pastor and all of us are trying to figure out how to please the pastor, if you will” (p. 71). Another female administrator stated, “The male dominated administration has assumed that church
doctrine is university doctrine, and therefore, how can you have a female leader in a faith-based university if it is unscriptural to have one in the church” (p. 71).

To date, this is largely all that has been written about female professional staff members in evangelical higher education; the dearth of research means little is known about what mid-level female administrators endure within their professional lives. As such, this dissertation will add vital voices to the dialogue about gender discrimination in evangelical colleges and universities. Educational administrators within these organizations who might be sympathetic to the plight of females in higher education can then assess how gender oppression be redressed within their respective institutions. Further, female managers themselves may decide to work for change on their respective campuses in order to create a more equitable work environment and to foster a more inclusive culture for students. Yet in order to fully comprehend why women in evangelical academia are repressed, one must investigate evangelicalism.

**Embedded Inequality: An Explanation of Evangelicalism**

Volumes have been penned about evangelicalism and its origins (Balmer 1999, Balmer, 2002; Balmer, 2006a; Balmer, 2006b; Balmer, 2010, Dochuk, 2011; Kidd, 2007; Marsden, 1991; Noll; 2001; Zoba, 2005). For brevity’s sake, the following definition of evangelicalism will serve as the word’s meaning in the course of this particular study; however, it is important to mention that diversity exists even within the narrow confines of the evangelical worldview:

‘Evangelicalism’ … refers to the North American expression of theologically conservative Protestantism. As a term it is a broad umbrella encompassing a wide variety of religious and denominational traditions – from the Pietistic traditions to

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*For a feminist deconstruction of evangelicalism, see Kimberly Hewitt’s (2009) doctoral dissertation.*
the Confessional traditions from the Baptist traditions to the Anabaptist traditions.

As used here, it is synonymous with the Protestant orthodoxy and conservative
Protestantism and while not always synonymous with Fundamentalism it certainly
would include it. (Hunter, 1987, p. 3-4)

There are several distinct doctrines that further define evangelicalism. The first
could be called conversionism (Cochran, 2005; Marsden, 1991; Noll, 2001; Zoba, 2005).
To be considered an evangelical, one must undergo a conversion experience whereby a
person declares she believes Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, became a physical man,
lived a blameless life, died on the cross as payment for humankind’s collective and
individual sins, and rose again on the third day (Balmer, 2006a; Balmer, 2010; Dochuk,
2011). This moment is often referred to as when people are “born again” or have
“accepted Jesus as their personal savior” (Kidd, 2007, p. xiii).

The second theological distinction of evangelicalism centers on the term itself:
evangelism (Balmer, 2010; Cochran, 2005; Dochuk, 2011; Marsden, 1991; Noll, 2001).
“At its root, the word ‘evangelical’ refers to the Gospels of the New Testament and to the
evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the ‘messengers of the good news’—who
wrote them” (Balmer, 1999, p. 13). The good news referred to is the Christian notion that
Jesus Christ offers eternal life in heaven rather than hell because He “saves” those who
believe He is God and was crucified and resurrected because of humanity’s sin. As such
evangelicals hold to the mandate given in Matthew 28: 18-20 that they are to preach the
good news, or the gospel, to the ends of the earth. The idiom “the Great Commission”
succinctly describes this command.
The third hallmark of evangelicalism is *biblicalism*, as coined by historian David Bebbington, wherein evangelicals place final authority in the Bible (Balmer, 2002; Cochran, 2005; Marsden, 1991; Noll, 2001; Zoba, 2005). *Sola scriptura* is another phrase that connotes the Bible’s definitive influence in conservative Christians lives’ (Balmer, 1999; Balmer, 2002; Balmer, 2006b). Both of these notions originated with Martin Luther during the Reformation when he was enlightened as to the true way of salvation, which for him was not by the Catholic Church’s sacraments but by God’s ultimate grace through Christ’s brutal death (Balmer, 1999; Balmer, 2006b; Balmer, 2010).

Additionally, it is vital to mention that the canonical Bible has complete jurisdiction in evangelicals’ lives because of their pervasive belief in its *inerrancy* and *infallibility* (Dochuk, 2011), meaning they maintain the Old and New Testaments are “the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice” (Noll, 2001, p. 59). Their absolute certainty in the Bible is founded upon verses such as II Timothy 3:16, which states “All Scripture is inspired by God…,” and if the Bible is sincerely the Word of God, it is logical to consider it perfect in form and content. It then follows it should not be questioned. For conservative evangelicals, the Bible is self-authenticating, and no other evidence is required to prove its sacredness or absolute Truth (Balmer, 2002; Noll, 2001).

As a result of their profound conviction of the Bible’s sureness, most conservative evangelicals adhere to *literalism*, which can be a considered another trait of evangelicalism (Balmer, 2002; Hewitt, 2009). Essentially, conservative evangelicals interpret the Bible literally, understanding it to very clearly mean what it says. As such, many cling to the Genesis 1-2 account of a six-day creation. They fervently maintain
Jesus was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23-25; Luke 1:26-38). That every story in the Old and New Testament truly happened in a historical context and has applications for how they live their lives today is their deepest contention. Ironically, in practice, their literalism is selective\(^5\). Children who curse their parents are no longer put to death as Leviticus 20:9 demanded. Greeting one another with a holy kiss is frowned upon in most circles (Romans 16:16, I Cor. 16:20, II Cor.13:12, I Thess. 5:26), and one most assuredly should not pluck out her eye if it leads her astray, though that command was spoken by Christ Himself (Matthew 18:8).

A fourth conservative evangelical trademark is their staunch suppression of female equality (Balmer, 1999; Cochran, 2005; Creegan & Pohl, 2005; Hewitt, 2009; Noll, 2001; Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1986). This particular unshakable belief requires further examination since it is the dogma most relevant to this study.

**Erasing Eve: Ingrained Inequity in Evangelicalism**

Conservative evangelicals marginalize women in part because they view all women as daughters of Eve, who, according to their tradition, was seduced by the serpent, masquerading as Satan, and ate the forbidden fruit while in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:6). Though Adam also indulged in the sacrilege, his role tends to be relegated to a minor faux pas (I Timothy 2:14-15; Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1986) whereas Eve has been forever criminalized (Chernin, 1987; Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1986; Stone, 1976). As a result of her treachery, God cast Eve and Adam out of the Garden forever while cursing Eve to suffer pain during childbirth and Adam to toil and labor (Genesis 3:16-17; 24). Now it is believed that sin has been passed to every generation following because of Eve’s mishap (Romans 5:12, 17-19).

\(^5\) For a more thorough analysis of selective literalism, see Hewitt (2009).
Further, conservative evangelicals denigrate women based upon what they believe to be biblical mandates. Due to their literal interpretation of their scriptures, they practice the instructions found in Colossians 3:18, Ephesians 5:22-28, I Timothy 2:11-15, and Titus 2:4. These verses require women to be subject to their husbands and to remain “quiet” in church, holding no authority over man (Noll, 2001). Of course, the author even cites Eve’s offense as a justification for women’s subjugation, stating,

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was created first, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman [Now she is so wretched as to not even deserve being named] being quite deceived fell into transgression. (I Timothy 2:12-14 NASV)

Another key text serves as the foundation for what is known as *headship*. The term is derived directly from Ephesians 5:22-22, which says,

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. [emphasis added]

Played out, men are considered to be the spiritual and practical leader of their homes. When decisions need to be made, they have final authority. Women are to submit to their spouses’ leadership, and as even traditional wedding vows demand, “obey” their husbands, in much the same way the body follows what the mind commands (Bartkowski, 1999; Gallagher & Smith, 1999).
Additionally, conservative evangelicals tend to subscribe to the notion of complementarianism, which stems from their concept of headship. Men exercise authority in their homes, their workplaces, and their churches (Bartkowski, 1999; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Noll, 2001). Women, on the other hand, exist to complement them. As Eve was created to be a “helpmate” for Adam (Genesis 2:20-22), so women are to support men (Bryant, 2009; Colaner Warner & Warner, 2005). In fact, the chasm between men and women in conservative evangelicalism is so deeply ingrained that “undermining the clear-cut divisions between masculinity and femininity is threatening because it undermines the very order of the universe itself” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 29) since this binary is a part of God’s very design.

A contrasting idea to complementarianism is the egalitarian position. Egalitarianism holds women and men are truly equal and are not bound to perform distinct roles (Bryant, 2009; Carlson-Thies, 2002; Cochran, 2005; Colaner Warner & Warner, 2005; Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1986). Supporting scriptural texts for egalitarian evangelicals are Genesis 1:27-28, which explains God created both woman and man in His image, and both sexes are required to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it” without any mention of gender-specific roles (NASV). Further, Galatians 3:28 proclaims, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NASV). As a result, egalitarians feel roles in the home and church should be given based on giftedness, not gender (Cochran, 2005; Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1986). Interestingly, researchers have repeatedly found that while many evangelical women verbally espouse complementarianism, their homes are more practically managed according to egalitarian
principles. That means conservative evangelical women dance with dissonance every
day, perhaps without even realizing it (Bartkowski, 1999; Gallagher & Smith, 1999;
Hewitt, 2009).

Articulating alternative (and perhaps more accurate) interpretations to the
evangelical version of all the scriptures previously mentioned is beyond the scope of this
study, and others have already artfully done so (Carlson-Thies, 2002; Cochran, 2005;
Scanzoni & Hardesty, 1986; Trible, 1979). Instead, these texts were provided to explain
the positions conservative evangelicals hold on women in leadership roles and why those
ideas are so deeply intertwined within their daily lives.

Further, it must be emphasized that the notions of complementarianism and
equalitarianism are evangelical concepts and are theological frameworks that this study’s
participants exist within. Hence, it is paramount these gender constructs be explored.

Reclaiming the Second Sex: A Brief Rationale for a Critical Feminist Approach

As stated above, the research question was addressed through a critical feminist
lens. With the conservative evangelical worldview firmly established, I now turn to a
brief rationale for this approach, which will elucidate why this perspective is appropriate
and necessary when researching the lives of women leaders in the evangelical academy.
A more in-depth explanation of the critical and feminist framework will be provided in
Chapter Three. Also in Chapter Three, I will clarify the differences between
epistemology and methodology. For now, consider feminism as “rooted in the very real
lives, struggles, and experiences of women” (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 3), and
feminist research as “put[ting] the social construction of gender at the center of one’s
inquiry” (Lather, 1992, p. 91). Specifically, I was interested in “unearthing women’s
subjugated knowledge” and challenging “the basic structures and ideologies that oppress women” (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 3).

Critical theory blends well with feminism because one of its primary aims is to give voice to the marginalized. Highly influenced by Marx, Habermas, and Freire, critical researchers place power at the center of their studies:

- who has it, how it’s negotiated, what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power, and so on it. It is also assumed that people unconsciously accept things the way they are, and in so doing, reinforce the status quo… Power in combination with hegemonic social structures results in the marginalization and oppression of those without power. Opposition takes many forms and cannot be ferreted out without attention to its many manifestations. (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 328)

I considered the androcentric, evangelical culture of conservative Christian higher education and examined how male-dominated hierarchical power structures have influenced the lived experiences of the women participating in this study. Because a purpose of critical theory is to root out oppression, employing a critical lens will be the most effective in identifying subjugation, challenging it, and ideally, changing it.

**Feminine Foundations: Study Assumptions**

Now that I have explored the difficulties surrounding women in conservative evangelical institutions, how those challenges were birthed from the evangelical worldview, and why a critical feminist approach will be utilized, I will briefly discuss my assumptions.
First, while I fervently hold that evangelicalism’s theology and leadership standards inhibit the women working within its’ institutions, I do believe women employed by conservative evangelical organizations defy the cultural demand that they remain at home, rearing children (Hall, 2012). Perhaps without realizing it, they are rebels in their own right. I also supposed most of the female leaders I interacted with would interpret their lives in the murky middle between complementarianism and egalitarianism, though they likely might not recognize it as such. I suspected they might not label their experiences as sexism or oppression since they and others like them, including myself, have been socialized to the notion that women are the second sex (Bartkowski, 1999; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Hewitt, 2009). What I was interested in, then, is how unacknowledged and unidentified oppression intersected with their professional career experiences and trajectories. How did they navigate the evangelical waters in a male-dominated sea?

With that understanding, I also assumed these women might be reticent to share their stories for fear of professional and/or personal retribution. Anyone who pushes back against the status quo, whether intentionally (like me) or not (perhaps like some of these women), might endure painful consequences. It then behooved me to be exceptionally careful to guard their confidentiality. The methods I employed to do just that are described in Chapter Three.

Further, in keeping with a critical feminist framework, I also assumed that diversity exists within the population I studied. Despite similarities, other researchers have demonstrated evangelicalism is rich with variety (Balmer, 1999; Balmer, 2002; Balmer 2006a, Balmer, 2006b, Creegan & Pohl, 2005; Dochuk, 2011; Hewitt, 2009;
Noll, 2001; Zoba, 2005). Hence, I remained open to every participant’s story and examined it for the nuances that were surely present. Indeed, the greater assortment of experiences and views the better, for then a more complete picture can be painted.

As readers will discover in Chapters Four and Five, some of my assumptions proved true, while others did not.

**Freedom in Pieces: Study Limitations**

Having understood the problem and study rationale, the evangelical perspective, the study’s critical feminist lens, and my assumptions, I will speak to the limitations of my research. First, one will note that male voices are not included. That is both a strength and a limitation. My feminist, critical approach demands I give voice to the marginalized; in this case, the oppressed are women. However, any time a researcher shares the stories of respondents, they are not sharing the stories of other potential participants; in my study, those participants are largely men. In that way, the exclusion of men might be viewed as a limitation by some.

Another limitation is the lack of minority women respondents, specifically women of color and LGBTQ women. Unfortunately, these women are rarely present in leadership positions at any institution, and they most definitely are underrepresented in conservative evangelical academia (Nieves, 2012). An entire dissertation could be written just about the experiences of women of color in leadership roles in CCCU institutions, and sadly, because non-heteronormative sexualities are largely forbidden at CCCU institutions\(^6\), the chance of finding an openly lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, or

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\(^6\) Evidence for this claim can be found by viewing the doctrinal statements, standards of conduct, student handbooks, and other faith statements located on the websites of the 122 CCCU member institutions. Most of these institutions will not hire a known LGBTQ faculty or staff member, nor do they permit their students to engage in sexual activity of any kind, particularly not same-sex.
transgender woman in a management role is nil. As such, I committed to intentionally seek out women of color as potential respondents, for they offer a unique perspective that certainly deserves inclusion. How I attempted to recruit minority women participants will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Additionally, there are no historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) or Hispanic serving institutions (HIS) in the CCCU. Hence, these particular types of colleges were not included in this research.

A final limitation is the relatively small number of women included in my study. As research has clearly demonstrated, the dearth of women in leadership positions at institutions of higher learning at large and most definitely in CCCU institutions means my potential participant pool was already quite narrow. I reached out to seventy women who appeared to meet the criteria for my study, but only eighteen agreed to participate. Thankfully, those who opted to contribute did meet study criteria. I hoped for a group of about twenty, so I did achieve my goal. My aim for a participant group of this size was three-fold. First, the larger the group, the easier it would be for me to conceal their identities, and second, the more women who participated, the stronger the research would be (Harding, 1987). Lastly, critical feminist theory aspires to give voice to the voiceless; the more voices present, the more notes, tones, harmonies, and melodies will sing the chords needed to incite change.

In conclusion, my aim was to provide an opportunity for women not yet heard to join the dialogue already being spoken about women in conservative evangelical institutions. As the above research attests, female faculty and administrators endure tremendous hardship simply because they are women (Absher, 2009; Eliason, Hall, &

In her seminal work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (1993), Carol Gilligan reminds the reader that:

Implicitly adopting the male life as the norm, they have tried to fashion women out of the masculine cloth. It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve—a story which shows, among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you
are bound to get into trouble. In the life cycle, as in the Garden of Eden, the woman has been the deviant. (p. 6)

Conservative evangelical universities, whose theology decrees all women—all Eves, if you will—as inferior, suppress women’s voices, stories, and lives as a result.

It is for these reasons that female middle-managers in conservative, Christian higher education should have the opportunity to share their stories and give voice to their personal and professional experiences so that perhaps change will result. In so doing, the environment of the entire institution and evangelical academy will become a healthier atmosphere for students. Perhaps evangelical colleges and universities will embrace the Sarah E. Jones’s in their midst and will encourage them towards their fullest potential rather than limit them because of their gender.

Likewise, using a critical feminist lens was a beneficial tool with which to examine their narratives. This is because the goal of these combined approaches is to dissect power, identify oppression, and create a space for the unheard to be heeded (Frye, 1996; Lather, 1991b; Lather, 1992; Merriam & Associates, 2002).

With that, Chapter Two presents the literature review, and Chapter Three discusses the project’s methodology. In Chapter Four one will find participant stories and findings, and Chapter Five houses study implications and recommendations for CCCU institutions.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: HEGEMONY—THE HALLMARK OF HIGHER EDUCATION

“Women in the academe are initiates who wandered into a ritual designed for men.”

In the early 1870’s Harvard’s Dr. Edward Clarke proclaimed “…biology was destiny. Too much study, he said, drew blood away from the ovaries to the brain, particularly if the female student overtaxed herself during the ‘catamenial function’ (menstruation)” (Gordon, 1997, p. 476). Fast forward to the year 2005 in which Harvard’s then president, Lawrence Summers, stated,

My best guess, to provoke you, of what’s behind all of this is that the largest phenomenon by far is the general clash between people’s (women’s) legitimate family desires and employer’s current desire for high power and high intensity; that in the special case of science and engineering, there are issues of intrinsic aptitude, and particularly the variability of aptitude; and that those considerations are reinforced by what are the lesser factors involving socialization and continuing discrimination. (Summers, 2005)

Despite the advances made by women in the academy in the years between these two disparaging statements, female faculty, staff, and students continue to endure considerable challenges. This chapter explores the difficulties female faculty and staff face in both secular and religious institutions of higher learning. However, in order to

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7 Beaman-Smith & Placier, 1996, p. 3
understand the trials women in American higher education face today, it is paramount one understands women’s post-secondary educational history.

_Same ole,’ same ole’: A Brief History of Women in the Academy_

“Why should girls be learn’d and wise? Books only serve to spoil their eyes. The studious eye but faintly twinkles. And reading paves the way to wrinkles” (Kerber, 1988, p. 21). These words were crafted by John Trumbell at the end of the eighteenth century, giving voice in a simple verse to what many in that day believed: women had no place in higher education.

In Victorian society, the woman’s place was believed to be in the home, overseeing the children, remaining forever subservient to her husband and other men. As a result, women had few legal rights, were barred from voting, and were shunned in the business sector (Gordon, 1997; Solomon, 1985). In fact, there is no record of a woman having earned a college degree in colonial times despite early America’s emphasis on education and the founding of several colleges (Thelin, 2004). Yet the voices of a few female “radicals” exerted enough influence as to open the doors for females to enter the male-dominated realm of education, if only to prepare them for raising good citizens (Gordon, 1997).

_Single-sex education_. Prior to full university admittance, women who sought advanced education were relegated to women’s seminaries or academies. The first seminary established to provide higher education to women was the Troy Seminary in New York, founded by Emma Hart Willard in 1821. To secure funding for the school, Willard developed a plan she sent to the legislature, appealing for funds. Her plan has been touted as “an enlightened skillful document… pleading for a consistent and
continuous course of education, and emphasizing ably the physical and intellectual, moral 
and spiritual conditions essential to it” (Taylor, 1914, p. 5). Securing the support of 
legislators, and even Adams and Jefferson, a bill passed that provided $2,000 for the 
seminary’s founding. For three decades, Willard oversaw the operations of the school, 
wrote curriculum, and taught (Solomon, 1985). Troy Seminary was described as an 
institution that “would not satisfy the ideals of our time, nor was it meant to, but it was 
one of the chief influences that led to the better day. It was far beyond anything then 
proposed or known” (Taylor, 1914, p. 6).

A contemporary of Willard, Catharine Beecher, driven by intellectual desire, 
opened Hartford Female Seminary in 1822 with the help of her sister. Though deemed 
“enlightened and progressive” (Taylor, 1914, p. 6), Beecher’s curriculum was based on 
the common notion that women’s role was to maintain their home; hence, Hartford 
Female Seminary structured its education to that end, though it was considered rigorous 
with subjects of Latin, algebra, and chemistry, among others (Ferguson, 1988). Within 
the first year, almost one hundred students enrolled. Beecher also raised $5,000 by selling 
stock subscriptions and appealing to the wives of influential citizens (Solomon, 1997).

Mary Lyon, on the other hand, founder of Mount Holyoke Seminary, offered a 
curriculum much like men’s colleges of the time (Ferguson, 1988) with courses of 
English grammar, arithmetic, geography, US history, and more (Taylor, 1914). In 1837, 
Lyon’s revolutionary idea that women and men were equally intellectually capable 
engendered enough support that three buildings were constructed, and tuition was kept 
relatively low. Of note, the first thousand dollars raised for the school were from women 
themselves (Solomon, 1997).
Together, “Troy, Hartford, and Mount Holyoke became prototypes for women’s institutions in the Midwest and Far West as well as the South” (Solomon, 1997, p. 21). A great debt is owed to these women for introducing women in America to higher education (Thelin, 2004).

As the idea of higher education of women spread, colleges established specifically to educate women sprang up, most notably Vassar (1865), Wellesley (1875), Smith (1875), and Bryn Mawr (1884). They were founded similarly to women’s seminaries, with the idea that further education would better prepare women for their domestic duties. They also were established to offer not only academic learning but moral and religious character development as well (Gordon; 1997; Solomon, 1997). Despite their aims, several of these institutions had to develop preparatory departments, for many of their students did not meet academic standards to commence college level work (Solomon, 1997).

The founder of Wellesley, Henry Durant, believed his purpose was to provide women “with opportunities for education equivalent to those usually provided in colleges for young men,” and to help him in his cause he selected Ada Howard, a Mount Holyoke graduate, to be the school’s president (Solomon, 1997, p. 48). Similarly, the benefactor of Smith College, Sophia Smith is noted as stating,

It is my opinion that by the higher and more thoroughly Christian education of women, what are called their ‘wrongs’ will be redressed, their wages will be adjusted, their weight of influence in reforming the evils of society will be greatly increased as teachers, as writers, as mothers, as members of society, their power for good will be incalculably enlarged. (Solomon, 1997, p. 48)
Eventually, the concept of women-only colleges migrated to the South, so colleges such as Agnes Scott and Randolph-Macon were born. They, too, held to the idea that female education should be founded on religious principles and should enhance a woman’s ability in the home. However, in time, these colleges philosophically broadened the influence of women: “The college is not intended to fit women for any particular sphere or profession but to develop by the most carefully devised means all her intellectual capacities, so that she may be a more perfect woman in any position,” stated L. Clark Seelye, Smith’s president from 1873-1910 (Solomon, 1997, p. 49).

Because these institutions served a single sex, students were afforded leadership opportunities, campus forums, and the ability to engage in discussions that might not have been permitted elsewhere. Also, because the faculty of these colleges were predominantly women, female students now had role models not to be gained anywhere else (Gordon, 1997; Thelin, 2004). Because of the advantages of women’s colleges, “an inordinate number of alumnae from the women’s colleges of 1880s went on to pursue advanced studies in law, medicine, and Ph.D. programs” (Thelin, 2004, p. 98).

Finally, of important note is the transformation of Mount Holyoke from a female seminary to a women’s college in the 1880s (Gordon, 1997; Solomon, 1997). In order to compete with the newly established women’s colleges, Mount Holyoke updated its curriculum, many faculty sought degrees themselves, and less focus was given to religious activity. Hence, it was re-charted into a college (Solomon, 1997).

According to Thelin (2004), “By the 1930s, the historic women’s colleges known as the Seven Sisters—Wellesley, Radcliffe, Smith, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Barnard, and Bryn Mawr—had acquired a collective reputation as the alma maters of a
talented, privileged elite of American women” (p. 227). Like the seminaries before them, surely the founders, faculty, and students of these institutions paved the way for future generations of American women. That road eventually led to coeducational college and universities.

**Coeducation.** Early feminists feared that the separation of sexes in colleges would only lead to an inferior education for women, so to ensure equality they embraced coeducation (Rosenberg, 1988). Oberlin, established in 1833, is considered a pioneer of coeducation because it offered women admittance from its inception (Gordon, 1997; Taylor; 1914; Thelin, 2004). However, the women were separated into a female department that promised “instruction in the useful branches taught in the best female seminaries” (Taylor, 1914, p. 35), though it was not regarded as equal to the men’s courses. Here, the women were required to engage in domestic duties along with their studies. In its first year, the student body consisted of sixty-three men and thirty-seven women (Taylor, 1914). It was not until 1838 that women were permitted to take the “collegiate” courses outside of the female department. In 1841, Oberlin graduated its first women, a total of three, and by 1843, all departments had female students (Taylor, 1914).

Another college that educated both sexes from its founding was Antioch College, opened in 1853 (Solomon, 1997; Taylor, 1914). In its first year, Antioch enrolled 253 men and 98 women, and a total of 28 women graduated from the college between 1856 and 1865 (Taylor, 1914). Like their male counterparts, the women studied subjects like algebra, Latin, French, physics, chemistry, and philosophy (Taylor, 1914). However, though educated together, Antioch kept the sexes separated in extra-curricular activities (Gordon, 1997).
Coeducation was propelled by two main forces: economics and the Morrill Act of 1862 (Rosenberg, 1988). First, it was considered too costly to maintain separate educational entities for men and women; it was less expensive to operate one school (Rosenberg, 1988; Solomon, 1997). Along those same lines, there was a great need for teachers, and because women typically studied to be teachers in college and could be recruited for jobs at lower salaries than men, it justified the inclusion of women (Rosenberg, 1988). Later when the Morrill Act was passed and government decided to further support higher education, taxpayers “demanded that their daughters, as well as their sons, be admitted” (Rosenberg, 1988, p. 111).

Two schools in the later 19th century were founded as coeducational: Cornell University in 1868 and Boston University in 1873. Cornell was established with the expectation that women would be permitted to enroll, though it was not until several years after its start that it finally began to admit women (Solomon, 1997; Gordon, 1997). Boston University immediately admitted women to every department and also provided graduate training to women. President William Warren championed coeducation: “The time had come for the idea of education for men only to be ‘retired to the museum of pedagogical paleontology’” (Rosenberg, 1988, p. 110).

However, coeducation was not without its opponents, mainly male students and faculty. Faculty resisted teaching women. Some faculty were so dismissive they called female students “Mr. So-and-So” as if they were men or addressed them by last name only (Rosenberg, 1988). Male students were also quite uncivil. Often women were barred from extracurricular activities (Rosenberg, 1988; Thelin, 2004). There were even few facilities that gave access to women such as dormitories or gymnasiums (Rosenberg,
As a result of this hostility and unequal treatment, women were marginalized (Gordon, 1997). Yet, they fought back by forming their own literary societies, organizations, and even athletic teams (Gordon, 1997; Thelin, 2004). “By 1872, ninety-seven colleges and universities had decided to admit women…” though clearly “…having access to the same education as men did not always entail being accorded the same right of recognition” (Rosenberg, 1988, p. 111, 113).

The percentage of female students in higher education has grown considerably since their first admittance. In 1890, 35% of all undergraduates were women. That figure rose to 47% by 1920 (Schwartz, 1997). Today, female students outnumber their male counterparts. By the fall of 2013, 56.4% of all college students were women (NCES, 2014).

**Patriarchal Prejudice: Challenges Faced by Female Faculty Members**

With female students firmly planted in American higher education, one might suspect equality between the sexes was eventually reached. Sadly, disparity remains. Like their predecessors in Victorian America, female faculty remain relegated to the basement of inferiority in many ways.

**Faculty rank, tenure, and promotion.** To begin, research repeatedly demonstrates female faculty are disproportionately underrepresented in senior faculty ranks (Christman, 2003; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Quina, Cotter, & Romenesko, 1998; Schoening, 2009; Ward, 2008). Madsen (2012) reports “women now account for 50% of assistant professors, 38% of associate professors, and 24% of full professors” (p.132). Women are also hired less frequently than men (Christman, 2003; Dryfhout & Estes, 2010). Additionally, women achieve tenure with less frequency than their male peers.
(Christman, 2003; Johnsrud, 1993; Schoening, 2009; Ward, 2008) and are hired into the academy at lower ranks and in less prestigious institutions when compared to men (Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993; Dryfhout & Estes, 2010; Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009; Madsen, 2012; Townsend & Twombly, 2007).

Some speculate as to why women are not achieving tenure and promotion. Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2006) interviewed 117 female assistant professors with young children. Faculty participants hailed from community colleges, liberal arts institutions, comprehensive universities, and major research universities. Through their data analysis, the authors determined having children negatively impacted female professors’ research productivity. Rate of publication is vital to obtaining tenure in many colleges and universities. Further, they learned women are far more likely than men to interrupt their careers due to family responsibilities. This obviously hinders women’s ability to secure tenure and advancement. Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden’s (2008) work demonstrated similar findings. They discovered women are 21% less likely than men to obtain tenure. They also ascertained women with children under six years of age are 22% less likely to realize tenure than their male colleagues. Interestingly, they further determined women have a 16% higher likelihood of attaining tenure should they remain single and childless. Moreover, female faculty who have children within five years of acquiring their Ph.D. are more likely to work part-time or leave academia altogether (Ginther & Kahn, 2006).

Of course, these professional obstacles come as no surprise since women in America continue to maintain the majority of child-rearing, aging parent caretaking, and household duties (Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993; Carlson, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Proctor Gerdes (2006) evidences the 2001-
2002 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI)’s survey where “women reported spending more time than men reported on household duties and childcare responsibilities, and reported more stress from managing household responsibilities and lack of personal time than men reported” (p. 11). Indeed, some female faculty even time their pregnancy to coincide with the academic calendar so that they are giving birth over the summer rather than in the midst of an academic year (Schoening, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2006).

Some might argue universities mitigate this difficulty with policies that allow for maternity leave and tenure clock-stoppage; however, Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s (2008) research demonstrates many women:

are fearful if they use policies they will face negative repercussions. This fear is rooted in dominant discourses associated with tenure and academic culture. It is also triggered by the need for women to maintain legitimacy as faculty members. Women as ‘outsiders in the sacred grove’ still occupy a tenuous place in the academic hierarchy. Taking leave or stopping the tenure clock is an action that can compromise legitimacy as faculty members. Dominant discourses prevail and dictate what the tenure process ‘should’ look like, and these discourses do not allow for stopping the clock or taking leave without fear. (p. 264)

Furthermore, several studies have shown that difficulty balancing work and family responsibilities contribute to women professors’ proclivity to leave academia all together (Johnsrud, 2002).

Aligning with cultural norms of nurturing might explain why female faculty tend to teach and engage in service at higher rates than men (Carlson, 2008; Christman, 2003;
Johnsrud, 1993; Mullen, 2009). In fact, women professors are perceived to be more accessible and caring than male faculty, so they are sought out more often by students for advising and mentoring (Carlson, 2008; Chrisler, Herr, & Murstein, 1998; Mullen, 2009; Ward, 2008). This, too, inhibits their research productivity, thereby contributing to their lower ranks and decreased advancement.

Additionally, it is quite likely women are barred from achieving equality in tenure and rank because the entire tenure system is patriarchal in nature. It is based upon the work habits of men in the early 19th century (Schoening, 2009). Besides, research—the very foundation of tenure—is a more masculine activity as traditionally defined by promotion and tenure policies. Solo studies that involve long hours, which better accommodate the schedules of male professors, are rewarded rather than more feminine approaches to research such as collaboration (Wilson, Marks, Noone, & Hamilton-Mackenzie, 2010). Indeed, even the notion that women have conducted research has been known to stymie tenure and promotion (Benokraitis, 1998; Christman, 2003; Johnsrud, 1993). Some contend “…women are promoted after they have already proven they can perform; men are promoted based on their perceived potential” (Christman, 2003, n.p.).

**Gendered knowledge construction.** An underlying, hidden cause of women professors’ battle to obtain tenure and promotion is an even more challenging struggle: the epistemological repression of knowledge construction. Martinez Aleman (2008) explains:

> In the West, epistemological traditions have equated masculinity with rationality, objectivity, autonomy, and efficiency, while standards of femininity have been crafted as masculinity’s contradictions: emotion, subjectivity, dependence, and
imprecision. The specific association of knowledge with sex…. Presents us with a knowledge paradigm in which the dualistic and binary construction of gender rends some knowledge certain and tangible, and other knowledge ambiguous and indeterminate. (p. 144)

Moreover, as the very knowledge of women is demeaned, so also is the way in which they construct knowledge questioned. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) demonstrated that women often come to know in manners that are different from how men typically craft knowledge. However, women are forced to succumb to more masculine methods of knowledge construction. In fact, Debold, Tolman, and Brown (1996) explain that female adolescents tend to approach the world in more complex, connected ways in their youth but through formal education actually digress into less sophisticated and more masculine forms of meaning-making as they progress through high school.

What this means for female faculty members is that the very knowledge they produce and then instruct their students in is held suspect by their male counterparts. And it is that same knowledge—or in more capitalist terms “output” and “product”—which they are judged upon. Hence, female faculty engage in a lifetime of work that is deemed inferior right from its very inception (Martinez Aleman, 2008).

**Salary.** Beyond the challenges female faculty face in obtaining tenure and promotion in a male-dominated system constructed by patriarchal knowledge, they also endure reduced wages (Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009; Johnsrud, 1993; Mullen, 2009; Proctor Gerdes, 2006; Quina, Cotter, & Romenesko, 1998; Schoening, 2009; Toutkoushian & Conley, 2005; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Toutkoushain and Conley
(2005) used data collected from the 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, which consisted of survey responses from 18,000 faculty in public and private institutions, to assess the wage differential between male and female faculty. They discovered, “even after controlling for characteristics such as experience, educational attainment, field, rank, and institution type as well as other variables that could also influence salaries, women still on average earn between 4% and 6% less than men in academe” (p. 23). In fact, Barbezat and Hughes (2005) concluded, after controlling for variables like those previously listed, up to as much as 23% of the salary differential between male and female faculty is ultimately due to discrimination. In 2011, this gender pay gap remains. Meyers’ (2011) doctoral dissertation demonstrated female faculty continue to earn 2.8% to 4.6% less than male colleagues, even after controlling for demographical and institutional structure factors.

Work environment. Not only are women professors paid less than their male colleagues, face more difficulty obtaining promotion and tenure, and contend with devalued knowledge formation, but they also experience more challenging working conditions than male faculty. Novice female professors have reported increased isolation and anxiety when compared to male peers (Carlson, 2008). Women have also recounted feeling more lonely and less integrated into their respective universities and departments than their male counterparts (Johnsrud, 1993). Additionally, women have less access to professional networks, resources such as research funding, professional development monies, and technology (Benokraitis, 1998; Johnsrud, 1993; Quina, Cotter, & Romenesko, 1998) and mentoring than male colleagues (Boice, 1993; Jackson &
O’Callaghan, 2009; Mullen, 2009). It goes without saying that the cumulative impact of all of these factors disadvantages women in their professional pursuits.

**Discrimination.** Discrimination also contributes to taxing working environments for female faculty. Discrimination in this context is defined as “the unequal and harmful treatment of people because of their sex…” (Benokraitis, 1998, p. 4). Many times this discrimination in the academy is subtle, such as students referring to female professors as “Mrs.” while calling their male professors “Dr.” (Benokraitis, 1998). Female faculty also testify they feel their work and research is devalued in comparison to male faculty (Benokraitis, 1998; Johnsrud, 1993), which is another form of covert discrimination. Further, student evaluations are biased toward male faculty. Basow, Phelan, and Capotosto (2006) reported undergraduates found male professors more effective than female faculty.

Additionally, female faculty often experience what has been coined a “chilly climate” in academia. In their groundbreaking work, Hall and Sandler (1984) describe a chilly climate as an atmosphere characterized by micro-inequities, which are commonplace, daily behaviors that marginalize and diminish someone on the basis of sex or gender. Over twenty-five years later, a chilly climate still accurately describes higher education. One study participant noted, “Women have difficulty being ‘seen,’ heard, and acknowledged by universities” (Mullen, 2009, p. 10).

Hostility, whether unconcealed or cloaked, feelings of invisibility, decreased worth, neglect (Vaccaro, 2010), and being “treated as second class citizens” (Boice, 1993, p. 76) continue to impact women professors. Some female faculty even experience hostility in the classroom and encounter disrespect from students based upon their
gender, typically in fields dominated by men (Ward, 2008). In a study focused on female
department chairs, women described “discriminatory, sexist, and power-laden
experiences. These ranged widely but centered on the sexist behavior of male faculty,
students, and administrators… a ‘certain culture of sexism’ was alluded to” (Mullen,
2009, p. 10). A full two-thirds of respondents in a study about female faculty
administrators perceived bias in higher education, according to a mixed-methods study
utilizing a survey and interviews of women who had served in higher education since
1970 (Proctor Gerdes, 2006). Words used to describe the bias they endured include:
“male rules, male standards, male hierarchy; glass ceiling; having to work harder or be
better to succeed” (Proctor Gerdes, 2006, p. 9).

Tokenism is another form of discrimination. Tokenism occurs when a person or
persons are viewed as symbols of a particular group (Quina, Cotter, & Romenesko,
1998). For example, women are often tapped for a myriad of committees. It then appears
they are represented across the university. Yet, it is often the case that female faculty
serve on more committees than male colleagues without truly having a voice (Christman,
2003). Further, these women chair committees less often than men and serve on less
prestigious committees than male faculty (Chrisler, Herr, & Murstein, 1998).

Discrimination and poor treatment are reasons why women opt to leave the
academy completely (Dryfhout & Estes, 2010). It seems that “set up through the
beneficence of patriarchy, the academy tends to reflect values of the same. Women’s
experiences are not part of the dominant paradigm and are, at best, frequently
misunderstood, and, at worst, devalued and discounted” (Christman, 2003, n.p.).
Sanctified Sexism\(^8\): Challenges Faced by Female Faculty Members in Christian Higher Education

Like their counterparts in secular institutions, women professors employed by conservative evangelical colleges cope with many challenges. Despite the dearth of research on gender bias in Christian higher learning, the inequity and discrimination is substantial (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2012). In fact, Garlett (1997b) determined female faculty in evangelical colleges encounter more career hurdles than their peers at secular institutions.

**Faculty rank, tenure, and promotion.** In 1998, 66% of faculty in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) schools were male, and the remaining 34% were female (CCCU, 1998). The same survey demonstrated that more male CCCU faculty hold the rank of associate and full professors compared to their female colleagues, and only 27% of women are tenured whereas 46% of male professors acquired tenure; this held true in 2002 as well (Wood, 2009). In 2006, only 36% of full-time faculty in CCCU institutions were female (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008). Still in 2007 this figure remained 38% (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009). “In fact, the data show that numerically, gender equity [at evangelical colleges] is a greater problem than in secular institutions. Women in CCCU schools are underrepresented when compared to national averages” (Hall, 2012, p. 242).

It comes as no surprise that female faculty in CCCU colleges and universities are fewer in number, rank, and tenure than men. The evangelical theology of these institutions directs their professional practices. Conservative evangelical colleges perpetuate the belief that women are ordained by God to rear children, manage the

\(^8\) Hall, M. Elizabeth, Christerson, Brad, & Cunningham, Shelly. (2010).
household, and submit to their husbands. Wood (2009) explains the traditionalist approach in which women are not to hold positions of leadership over men in any environment. This perspective aligns with the complementarian view that women were created to complement men, not rise above them (Carlson-Thies, 2002; Gallagher & Smith, 1999).

**Work/family stress.** As such, scholars have repeatedly shown that women professors in these types of institutions report they hold more family responsibilities than male peers (CCCU, 1998; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004). Female faculty who maintained most familial responsibilities actually reported more distress than female professors whose homes were managed more equally (Thorstad, Anderson, Hall, Willingham, & Carruthers, 2006). These researchers examined the personal and professional experiences of 30 female faculty members from Christian universities who also had children. They explored the women’s view of both practical and emotional spousal support. Though most participants reported happy, supportive marriages, the instances of misery should not be ignored. For example, one study participant “talked about having to quell her intellectual life… while maintaining the household and caring for the children as her sole responsibility” (Thorstad et al, p. 240). Another “felt that she bore all the household and parenting responsibilities in addition to providing the main source of income” (Thorstad et al., p. 240).

Moreover, women professors often feel as though they must choose between their career and their children, sometimes even opting to not pursue a promotion or completely putting their career on hold (CCCU, 1998; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Schutte, 2008). Indeed, a respondent in Schutte’s (2008) qualitative study on academic women in
Christian higher education who were at various points in their career and in diverse
disciplines termed the tension she feels “saticficing” because she has done “the best she
can with the time and resources she had and [tried] to not let any of the balls in the air
fall” (p. 421). Thorstad, et al, (2006) found some women faculty expected family would
be held as a higher priority than it truly was in Christian higher education, so these
women were disappointed when their work experiences demonstrated that was not the
case. Hall (2012) further illustrates,

Women who end up in academic careers must fight subcultural expectations in
order to arrive at their goals. In a subculture that prioritizes marriage,
childrearing, and homemaking, academic women choose educational and
employment paths that are often in tension with these aims. (p. 243)

Moreover, female faculty’s care-giving extends to the academy as well. The CCCU found
“women faculty spend more time than men faculty do preparing for teaching, advising
students, and creating/performing. They spend less time than men faculty in
administrative duties and research/scholarly writing” (CCCU, 1998, n.p.). Indeed, women
in Christian higher education experience what Ingersoll (2003) termed a “double-bind.”
Not only must female faculty display godly characteristics such as patience and love
along with stereotypical feminine qualities like tenderness and self-deprecation, but they
must also demonstrate they are academically competent (Ingersoll, 2003).

**Salary.** Female faculty in conservative evangelical colleges are paid less than
male faculty—yet another way they are subjugated to their male colleagues (Schreiner,
2002; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). In 1998, the CCCU surveyed faculty
and learned male faculty earned three times what female professors did (CCCU, 1998).
Lafreniere and Longman (2009) analyzed data collected in 2004 from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and discovered “The median salary range in the CCCU for female faculty was $10,000 less than the median salary range for men after controlling for faculty rank, advanced degree, and length of experience” (p.12). It appears that while the salary gap between male and female professors has decreased, it clearly still exists.

**Work environment.** Tolerating more difficult professional conditions than male peers adds to the difficulty female faculty face in Christian academia. One scholar surveyed over 1,200 faculty members at faith-based colleges and universities in North America. She discovered female faculty at these institutions viewed salary, working conditions, and appreciation/recognition as highly important factors that determine whether or not they are satisfied with their job. Simultaneously, those women reported feeling dissatisfied with those same variables. They also felt unhappy as it related to the amount of time they had available to spend with family and work towards tenure while also being displeased by having few opportunities for advancement (Absher, 2009).

Other researchers noted women professors in these colleges believed they did not have the same sense of belonging in their universities as their male colleagues (Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004). Additionally, they lamented having fewer role models, increased loneliness, and what they perceived to be a great lack of understanding for what is required of them to be both a mother *and* a professor (Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004). Hall (2012) cites her earlier research that:

compared an evangelical college to a secular college in the same geographical location and found that the discrepancies between men and women in rank,
resources received, and satisfaction with aspects of the university climate were significantly greater at the evangelical college. (Hall, 2012, p. 243)

This same grief was expressed by a participant in a mixed-methods study on 184 faculty at a conservative evangelical college who stated,

I could write my own book of lamentations concerning the inequities I find: a male dominated administration and graduate faculty, an imbalance of class loads, the fact that women do most of the advising. I see men getting more preference, and more support for international travel, for funding, for conferences. The last time I presented at a national conference, it came out of my own pocket… I expect more from a Christian community and I’m continually disappointed… more and more I am reminded that the kingdom has not yet come. (Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995, p. 21-22)

**Discrimination.** Like their female colleagues at secular institutions, women professors in evangelical colleges face discrimination. Only 24% of female faculty in evangelical colleges agreed that women professors “are treated equally to male faculty” at their respective universities (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009, p. 117). This data stems from Joeckel and Chesnes’ 2007 survey of over 1,900 faculty at CCCU colleges and universities. Likewise, analyzing the same data “gender comparisons showed that women were much less likely to perceive gender equity in their institutions than were the men” (Hall, 2012, p. 241). In fact, “many male faculty at CCCU institutions do not perceive or acknowledge the plight of their female colleagues and female students…sexism, perhaps, has become normative and therefore transparent” (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009, p. 119, 121).
However, it seems that men are not the only ones who do not recognize discrimination on their campuses. Several studies have evidenced it is the more theologically, politically, and socially conservative women professors in evangelical institutions who feel they are fairly treated while the more liberal, democratic female faculty are more likely to identify oppression. Joeckel and Chesnes’ (2009) data reveal 59% of female professors who consider themselves theologically conservative believe they are fairly treated, though recall only 24% of all female respondents maintained they are treated equally. Using the same data, Hall (2012) also noted those “who considered themselves more theologically liberal… and who were Democrats were less satisfied with gender equity at their institutions” (p. 242). She contends “because of their gender-related experiences, they may… be more likely to critically examine the assumptions of the evangelical subculture, including traditional roles in the church and in the home” (p. 243). Yet, might it also be that the pervasive socialization and theological acculturation of the evangelical familial and church environment (Balmer, 2006a; Balmer, 2006b; Bartkowski, 1999) blinds women to its negative influence? “A rigid theological conservatism does not readily lend itself to the flourishing of female faculty who embrace complete equality with men in the full range of duties—administering, teaching, and researching—at CCCU institutions” (Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009, p. 128).

Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, and McHenry (1995) examined the experiences of female faculty at a conservative, Christian college. Participants described the culture as “patriarchal” and “paternal,” named the administration “the old boys network,” and stated female faculty are supposed to be “good little Christian girls,” “the darling daughter of
the patriarchy,” and “a sweet, little, nonentity” (p. 18-19, 26). Even a few male respondents vocalized these terms. One particular contributor poignantly shared,

There is a kind of peculiar evangelical, patriarchal naiveté which is, in its own way, dangerous, no matter how innocent or unconscious… it may not seem as virulent as spray painting epithets on the wall or announcing that women shouldn’t be teaching in the classroom—overt sexism, but is perhaps, just as dangerous. (p. 19)

Hall, Christerson, and Cunningham (2010) found that when harassment is attributed to a Christian belief system, female faculty’s perceptions of institutional climate is more negative than when it is credited to other motivations. This supports the results of another study on students in CCCU institutions who experienced gender harassment. Here, the researchers examined instances of gender and sexual harassment within a sample of 187 female participants from a West coast, private, evangelical university. The students were administered standardized questionnaires. Results indicated when students believed the discrimination was a direct result of Christian theology, they too felt the campus atmosphere to be more negative than when the discrimination was attributed to other causes (Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012). Unfortunately, their results also showed gender harassment:

was experienced by 97% of participants. Participants reported either overhearing or being told demeaning and derogatory comments about women (80%), comments that suggest women are unsuited for certain roles (88%), comments that assume women have different interests than men (81%), and comments that express a double standard for men and women (61%). (p. 349-350)
Examples of remarks made include:

Women are housekeepers, make babies... they should be kept at home, they shouldn’t work at all... go back to the kitchen... women are made to serve under men. Women are made to reproduce and care for their children. Husbands have the last say, it doesn’t matter what the wife thinks. (Eliason, Hall & Anderson, p. 351-352)

Perhaps even more disturbing is that “many of the statements were attributed to the perpetrator’s Christian belief system, and many contained explicitly Christian content or justification for the harassing statement” (Eliason, Hall & Anderson, p. 352).

Though this particular study centered on female college students at an evangelical college, it is these same students who become future faculty members at CCCU schools, and these are the experiences, values, and beliefs they bring with them into the Christian academy—beliefs likely planted in traditional, evangelical homes, watered in conservative Christian schools and churches, and clearly fertilized in evangelical colleges and universities. According to Joeckel and Chesnes (2009),

In short, gender inequities have become subtly institutionalized, woven seamlessly into the daily, unquestioned workings of the school—hence the invisibility of sexism on campus, as indicated by our data—reinforced by a theological, political, and social campus climate that has become normative...

(p. 123)

**Inequality in the Trenches: Challenges Faced by Female Staff Members**

Thus far, we have examined the professional lives of female faculty in both non-sectarian and conservative evangelical institutions. Diving deeper into the landscape of
higher education, we ought to explore what it like to be a female staff member in a college or university setting.

Besides their arrival into academia in the mid to late 19th century as students, women also entered into academia as deans of women (Schwartz, 1997). In fact, women are credited with establishing the student development profession. Schwartz (1997) explains,

They [women] laid the foundations of professional practice for higher education administration and student services… the entire field of student services, from admission and orientation to student activities, to residential housing to career services, can be traced to the work of the deans of women. (p. 503)

The advent of dean of women paralleled the increasing enrollment of women in the early 1900s, and their role was “to provide counsel and support to young women” (Schwartz, 1997, p. 506). Of course, it must be noted that the first deans of women began their careers as professors and remained committed to scholarship even while carrying out their roles as student services deans (Schwartz, 1997).

Eventually, staff were hired within other sectors of the university because non-academic personnel were needed to manage various operations when college administration outgrew the abilities of a single person—the president—or the collective abilities of faculty (Brubacher & Rudy, 2007). As such, women now had other avenues to pursue.

However, like their female faculty colleagues, female staff members in colleges and universities face challenges as well. Salary inequity proves to be an issue not just for women professors but for female administrative and professional staff as well.
Toutkoushian (2000) examined full-time and part-time salary data collected in 1998-1999 from one college, noting the percentages of female staff were consistent with national trends. He found male staff earned about 5% more than women in operational departments. Within positions he qualified as administrative/professional, data indicated men were paid 16% more than women.

Similarly to female faculty clustered in lower ranks, Kulis (1997) used 1991 EEO-6 (equal employment opportunity) data from over 1,500 higher education institutions to examine the gender segregation of college and university personnel. His analysis demonstrated “more than a third (36 percent) of all female employees are concentrated in clerical positions, and 24 percent more occupy non-faculty professional positions… In contrast… proportionally more of the men than of the women are found in top administrative… craft, and service jobs” (p. 159). Moreover, this was the case regardless of institution type (e.g. research, elite, local, public). Also, women were often relegated to “positions that are considered peripheral to the primary mission of the institution. For example, women are often found in positions created to provide advising, counseling, and programming to women and other minority group members or in affirmative action and equal opportunity positions” (p. 25). Even when women did achieve managerial positions, they endured more employment stress than their male peers (Volkwein & Zhou, 2003).

Additionally, female professional staff members collided with organizational barriers when seeking promotion. Johnsrud (1991) conducted a case study of non-academic female university employees over three years at a large, public research university where she scrutinized 454 personnel records of administrative and support
staff vacancies that were filled via promotion. Her statistical analysis found the men and women who were promoted were largely equal in terms of educational-level, years of employment, and age. However, the promoted women earned significantly less than promoted men, and the women were not promoted to as high a rank as the men.

Likewise, in an earlier study on the career mobility of university professional staff, Sagaria (1988) discovered women were promoted intra-institutionally more than men in colleges where male staff administrators already outnumbered women. She then posits, promoting women would be highly visible and give the appearance of opportunity for career advancement for women. Therefore, it is plausible that in higher education institutions where men administrators outnumbered women administrators, women would be promoted within institutions more frequently than men, and this practice could magnify the appearance of equal opportunity. These women were known by the institution, and therefore their behavior was somewhat predictable to men. Perhaps they were promoted because advancement of women within an organization was the least threatening way of satisfying affirmative action requirements. It did not change the ratio of men to women regardless of the many positions in an institution that they may have held over time. Furthermore, it is plausible that promoting women within the organization eliminated the organizational risk of hiring women from outside the institution who were less well known or proven and might have been potentially undesirable or disruptive (p. 323).

Interestingly, she used questionnaire data of almost 3,000 male and female college staff administrators but excluded “members of religious communities” (p. 312) because
“special considerations control their career mobility; they are viewed first as members of a religious order and secondly as members of an academic labor market” (p. 312). One wonders how the results might be different had she included staff administrators from faith-based institutions.

Using covariance structural modeling “to investigate the theoretical propositions about the cumulative effects of gender on outcomes of promotion” Johnsrud and Heck (1994) tested whether gender had an effect on women college staff members’ current and previous positions and how their gender then situated them in organizational hierarchy (p. 28). To do this, data from over 1,000 university records of promotional opportunities were analyzed over a three-year period. The files were obtained from a large, public university. Results evidenced that:

women are significantly more likely to be in classified positions (for example, non-administrative positions such as data entry) and in lower-paying jobs, yet they have significantly more experience in the organization. Moreover, women's educational back-grounds are not significantly different from those of men. These findings confirm the hypothesis that gender has a significant direct effect upon the prior position of the individual. (p. 37)

Analysis also confirmed:

That being female has a direct effect upon attainment at two points in the process of promotion. That is, being female has an initial impact upon the status and responsibility attained from the position held in the organization. The initial gender bias is cumulative… Being female, therefore, directly affects organizational status and responsibility at time one (TI, that is, prior position), and
directly as well as indirectly affects status and responsibility at time two (T2, that is, hierarchical placement). One could speculate, therefore, that the effects of being female may increase at some hypothetical promotion in the future (T3). (p. 39)

Female staff members also view their campus climates as less open to diversity (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006), much like women professors. Concerned that the voices of professional staff members were excluded when assessing campus diversity, Mayhew, Grunwald, and Day, (2006) randomly surveyed over 1,000 professional staff members at a large, Midwestern university. They hoped to ascertain whether staff felt the campus atmosphere was welcoming of diversity. When examining both male and female professional staff members’ perceptions of diversity at their respective institutions, only staff members who considered their individual department to be non-sexist, non-homophobic, and non-racist translated that perception to the broader university culture. It comes as no surprise that women find their colleges opposed to difference given that they themselves are often the “other” of higher education. Furthermore, in a national study focused on mid-level university staff managers’ morale and intent to leave, those who encountered discrimination were significantly more likely to consider resigning than those who did not. While this particular study did not differentiate between genders when addressing discrimination, of the 1,900 survey participants randomly selected from a population of over 11,000 Higher Education 2002 Directory university mid-level leaders, 54.2% were female, so it is not an illogical leap to assume that female staff members 1) endure discrimination that 2) motivates them to leave (Rosser, 2004).
Hiring practices of administrative and support managers is another hardship female staff members encounter at colleges and universities. In an attempt to assess such practices, Sagaria (2002) embarked on a study of staff search committee chairs, hired candidates, and unsuccessful applicants. In-depth interviews of thirty-two respondents and document analysis were conducted across operational divisions and staff levels. Results demonstrated that even search committees who claimed to be committed to equal opportunity and who actively sought diverse candidate pools still counted more white men among their finalists than minorities or women. Further, it appeared that “fit,” a vaguely defined term seemed to address:

comfort with a candidate and a projection about how acceptable that individual would be to others in the university. Consequently, if judgments are influenced by individual cultural lenses such as those likely to be held by white men, then they may well be disadvantageous to black females, white females, and black males.

(Sagaria, 2002, p. 690)

In fact, a black female participant who was a potential hire stated,

I found out a lot of things that transpired after my interview that made me aware of the concern for my fitting in. I knew the first choice candidate. We were aware that each other was applying and he kept me informed of his progress. I know that I was really the only one qualified for the job because I was the only one who had run a program like theirs. He had run a very different kind of program. But, he was a man. (Sagaria, 2002, p.689)

Moreover, black men, white women, and black women noted they were subject to intrusive questions and much more scrutiny than what white men reported. These same
participants expressed concerns about being viewed as more aggressive or contentious than they really were. Interestingly, “search chairs expressed reservations about personality characteristics, behaviors, and dress only when the candidate's race, gender, or both differed from his or hers” (Sagaria, 2002, p.695).

**Opaque Oppression: Challenges Faced by Female Staff Members in Christian Higher Education**

Having explored the nature of the academy for female faculty and staff in both secular and conservative evangelical institutions, one can now turn attention to the hardships female staff members at evangelical colleges and universities bear. Research on female staff members and women mid-level managers in Christian higher education is desperately lacking, so there is scarcely any research to examine. As such, this study will assuredly add needed voices to the dialogue about gender in Christian higher education.

To begin, consider the role of president in conservative evangelical higher education. In their study meant to construct a profile of Christian college presidents, Smith, Filkins, Schmeltekopf, and Bateman (2005) testify that only 2% of CCCU presidents are women, though 21% of all college presidents were women, according to a 2001 survey of over 2,500 college presidents conducted by the American Council on Education (Smith, Filkins, Schmeltekopf, & Bateman, 2005). The CCCU has not made significant strides in correcting this gender imbalance. Longman and Lafreniere (2011) report,

In 2010, only six of 110 [CCCU] presidents were female, with the two most recent additions only in the 2009-2010 academic year. Given that the role of chief
an academic officer is the primary pathway to the presidency, it is notable that as of 2010, only 18 female chief academic officers in the CCCU were women. (p.48)

Essentially only 5.45% of CCCU presidential positions are held by women, but in non-sectarian institutions 23% of chief executive officers are female (Longman & Anderson, 2012). Why might this be? Wood (2009) suggests it is because many CCCU presidents come from the pastorate or other ministerial leadership positions—roles women in that faith-perspective are allegedly God-forbidden to hold—so it is quite understandable why CCCU schools’ top executives are men.

Few women hold cabinet-level positions as well. According to Wood (2009), “In 2002, women represented only 14% of CCCU chief academic officers… Today [2005], women hold about 19% of such positions” (p. 78). However, these same positions are held by women at 26% of non-CCCU colleges (Moreton & Newsom, 2004a). This trend has been maintained to present day where only 19% of cabinet-level leaders are women in CCCU schools—quite contrary to the over 50% in other institutions (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010).

Similar to their female faculty colleagues, Moreton and Newsom’s (2004b) female chief academic officer/academic vice-president respondents described tension between their career and their marriage, and most of them never desired a leadership role. Moreover, a majority of the women administrators in one project did not even consider their own management potential until they were encouraged to pursue leadership by a supervisor or trusted confidante (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010). Understanding the theology that undergirds the personal and professional lives of these women, it is
understandable that they either dismissed their own capabilities or were ignorant of them altogether.

In her 2011 doctoral dissertation, Johnson focused on the experiences of nineteen female vice-presidents and one women president of Church of Christ colleges that are members of the CCCU. She found female vice-presidents at these institutions were limited by “the organizational culture which is inclusive of theology, patriarchal attitudes and biases of the institution as well as an extreme lack of female mentors” (p. 133). Additionally, these women endured similar barriers as female faculty members: tension between career and family responsibilities, a predominately male culture, and a biased academic environment (Johnson, 2011). Likewise, Dindoffer, Reid, and Freed (2011) sought to examine how female vice-presidents, provosts, and presidents in Christian higher education negotiated the struggles of personal and professional life. Here, they interviewed six women from four Christian colleges in one Midwestern state. All of the women shared that they encountered stress while trying to balance family responsibilities with their career. Ironically, three of the women were married to pastors, which meant that they were:

affected by the traditional homemaker/male provider sphere since their congregations maintain expectations for them in that role even though they are working professionals. The levels of leadership to which women are entitled vary in each of the participant’s denominations. The prevailing attitude within their respective churches toward accepted or expected women’s roles also affects the participants in the spheres of women’s work/men’s work, since only one of the denominations represented by the participants ordains women as pastors or allows
them to function as elders in the church. Each participant has elected to operate within the framework of her own church’s position while also looking for incremental changes in church policies toward women in leadership. (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011, p. 301)

Additionally, these women mentioned that they had been passed over for promotions and also suffered pay inequities at various points in their career. Lastly, they often were the first women to hold their position, which occasionally created uncomfortable moments when male administrators had to adjust to their presence.

Using data collected in 1998, 2006, 2008, and 2010, Longman and Anderson (2012) analyzed the gender makeup of senior-level administrators at CCCU schools. Specifically, they focused on the presidency and vice-presidencies. Vice-president positions included roles such as vice-president for enrollment management and vice-president for advancement. Overall, they found “in 1998, 95% of the CCCU institutions had either one or no women on the executive leadership team; in 2010, that figure had decreased to 78%” (p. 432). While this illustrates a substantial positive change, the vast majority of CCCU institutions are still primarily led by men. Note that 34% of these colleges have no women serving as a president or vice-president. The gender disparity in secular higher education is not as drastic as it is in conservative evangelical colleges (Longman & Anderson, 2012).

It is important to mention that 60% of the students in CCCU institutions are women (Lafreniere & Longman, 2009). Who are their role models when female faces are missing in the classroom and in cabinet meetings? Who will guide them to their fullest potential if women—who are uniquely positioned to mentor younger females—are absent
from the academy or clustered in jobs with little influence? The lack of female voices in Christian higher education not only impacts female faculty and staff, but it may very well hinder the intellectual, social, and spiritual growth of the female students it seeks to serve (Wood, 2009). Surely the famine of female leadership in conservative evangelical universities underscores why young women from these institutions are less likely to pursue graduate work or aspire to academic careers if they can only reach the glass ceiling of a college classroom (Hall, 2012).

No doubt, women professors at both secular and evangelical colleges and universities endure immense challenges in their professional lives. These trials range from suppressed sexism to outright discrimination, from biased student evaluations to disparaging comments about their gender. This treatment also bleeds into the lives of female staff members as evidenced by the research on executive level female leaders in Christian higher education. What remains concealed, however, are the experiences of female mid-level managers in conservative evangelical universities. One might assume they share similar experiences, but until adequate research is conducted educational leaders will not confidently know. Without understanding the professional lives of women leaders in the middle, the Christian academy cannot alleviate their trials, prepare them for advanced leadership, or determine what their influence is within the lives of its students. Additionally, without a space for these women to share their stories, they cannot individually or collectively advocate for whatever change they deem necessary on their respective campuses. As such, this dissertation will serve as a megaphone for their voices so that transformation can occur within conservative evangelical colleges.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY: A WAY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

“I disregard the proportions, the measures, the tempo of the ordinary world. I refuse to live in the ordinary world as ordinary women... I am a neurotic — in the sense that I live in my world. I will not adjust myself to the world. I am adjusted to myself.”

Eating the Forbidden Fruit: Epistemology Explained

As a constructivist, I reject the notion that reality is summarily objective, tangible, measurable, or universal. Rather, I maintain realities are multiple, socially constructed, and contextual (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lather, 1992; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Ridenour & Newman, 2008). The aim of this type of research is to deeply understand the unique experiences of respondents within their distinct milieu. Further, there are multiple interpretations of said realities (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In fact, when considering interpretations from a critical feminist viewpoint to be explained shortly, one must bear in mind that interpretations will usually reflect the perspectives of those in power, squelching the analysis of the marginalized (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Additionally, all interpretations are value-bound (Creswell, 1998). This is understandable given that the tool used to collect data is the researcher herself. One cannot divorce her own perspectives while examining the perspectives of another. As such, it is paramount for qualitative researchers, particularly those of the critical,

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9 Anais Nin, The Diary of Anais Nin, Volume One.
feminist, and postmodern predilection, to articulate their views so readers understand the internal context of the researcher. I will share my personal outlook momentarily.

Further, qualitative researchers embed their findings within everyday life and are committed to the emic (insider) vantage points of their respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research captures nuance and details that enhance understanding. It elucidates shades of frustration, hues of triumph, and the myriad of gradations in between—all sketched from the participants' own words. Lastly, I must mention this approach is actually quite fitting for this study since a qualitative framework is considered by scholars to be “the other” to quantitative (Lather, 1992, p. 90), and a critical feminist standpoint balances upon the crux of “other.”

**Critical feminism.** As noted in Chapter One, this dissertation is founded upon feminism. Though there a plethora of feminisms (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007), I have opted to employ a broad feminist perspective. Doing so will allow me to encompass other analogous strains of thought a narrower view might not permit. Ultimately, my aim is “to uncover and challenge the assumptions and social structures that oppress” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 328) women in middle-management positions at conservative evangelical institutions. Critical theory’s goal is similar: to disturb the status quo, for it is the uncontested present state of affairs that perpetuates oppression of all kinds upon many people (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Though Foucault (1977) is considered a poststructuralist, his thoughts on power parallel feminists’, which is a crucial part of this research. He asserts that “power produces; it produces reality… [power] compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes” (p. 194, 193). It is androcentric power that suppresses women,
so to counter this control and reclaim freedom “much of contemporary feminist scholarship and research strive to give voice to women’s lives that have been silenced and ignored…” (Brooks, 2007, p. 54). Frye (1996) explains that out of women’s voices and knowledge come our emancipation. Yet she also cautions that the feminine experience is diverse, so if subscribed to in part, the whole is distorted. That leads me to a three additional models.

**Postmodernism/poststructuralism/deconstructionism.** Though my primary approach is a critical feminist one, my study is also tangentially informed by postmodern thought, poststructural theory, and deconstructionism. I include a cursory explanation of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstructionism because each paradigm influenced me as a researcher. Each has been important to my thinking and influenced my selection of critical feminism as the guiding model for this study.

Postmodernism rejects binaries, which Leavy (2007) calls “artificial splits” (p. 88). In this project, existing binaries are male/female, sacred/secular, saved/lost, true/false, and evangelical/non-evangelical. Postmodernism also denies absolutes, questions all interpretations of reality, and strongly favors pluralism, which is fundamentally the acceptance of multiple perspectives and realities. In fact, postmodern investigators are careful when excluding voices from their projects; they weigh their motives for privileging some voices over others and are transparent when doing so (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Especially in relationship to this scholarly project, postmodern researchers pay attention to how the authoritative voice of the researcher can be subdued to allow for multiple voices to be heard. There is also greater sensitivity to language and language
usage, which can ‘become the object of study in their own right, rather than merely a 

Fine (1994) further fleshes out positionality and “other” when she explains “working the hyphen,” a phrase she coined to describe the interplay between researcher and respondent (p. 70). She enlightens the obscured dash and extols postmodern researchers to query their relationships with and between the contexts of their study and their participants, to smear the borders surrounding them:

Working the hyphen means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, ‘happening between,’ within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and who story is being shadowed, why for whom, and with what consequence. (Fine, 1994, p. 72)

So, too, I was cognizant of my interactions with the women participating in this study. I questioned what was not being said and why. I teased out the subtleties, the strains, and the sighs—both theirs and mine.

While the prominent post-critical educational researcher Patti Lather (1992) categorizes poststructuralism and deconstruction under postmodernism, I will briefly dissect them, though one could argue that even considering these terms as paradigms destabilizes the very notion of paradigm (Lather, 1992). Poststructuralism, according to Lather (1992), is the:

10 Here, I consider positionality to simultaneously mean selective positionality “(as in the case of those who opt for a particular position) and enforced positionality (where others forcibly define the position whether it meets with subjective criteria or not)” (Franks, 2002).
working out of academic theory within the culture of postmodernism… structuralism is the premised efforts to scientize language, to posit it as systematizable. Poststructuralism’s focus is on the remainder, all that is left over after the systematic categorizations have been made. (p. 90)

By citing Bannet (1985), Lather (1992) further explains that poststructuralism centers on the “gaps, discontinuities and suspensions of dictated meanings in which difference, plurality, multiplicity and the coexistence of opposites are allowed free play” (p. 90). Poststructuralism troubles and problematizes traditionally-accepted and even postmodern knowledge construction, the nature of realities, and research methodology (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Where there are lines, poststructuralism will cross them, asking why they are there in the first place. Where lines are not readily noticeable, poststructuralism will peel away the debris so they can be examined and questioned.

Deconstruction, then, like its sister poststructuralism, also dislocates conventional wisdom and subconsciously held truths. Deconstructed ideas are “reversed, displaced, taken apart to reveal the assumptions about relationships and power” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 376). Additionally, Lather (1992) illustrates, “the goal of deconstruction is to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal” (p. 96). Put another way, all meanings located within stories and within written texts are bared through deconstructionism when the ideas which have been excluded, yet by virtue of their absence are still emblazoned within the text, are revealed. This is because, as Leavy (2007), explains,
deconstruction is based on the notion that the meaning of words happens in relation to sameness and difference. In every text, some things are affirmed, such as truth, meaning, authorship, and authority; however, there is always an ‘other,’ something else, that contrasts that which is affirmed. That which has been left out or concealed, the ‘other,’ appears missing from the text but is actually contained within the text as a different or deferred meaning. (p. 90)

Overall, critical feminism is the paradigm upon which my study rests with further insights provided by postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstructionism. Aligning with these concepts, I extrapolate how I am located within this project. In doing so, readers will continue to appreciate my critical feminist approach and my experience within the study context.

Renouncing My Own Cross: The Researcher’s Positionality & Reflections

The researcher’s positionality. Like other constructivist paradigms that recognize “all researchers carry their particular worldviews, histories, and biographies with them into their research projects” (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007 p. 13), using a critical feminist framework behooves me to acknowledge my own self-in-relationship to the study. In feminist research, “the researcher is encouraged to openly acknowledge, and even to draw from, her situated perspective in the course of her research project” (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, p. 15). To that end, I present myself.

Recall the introduction to this project wherein I concisely shared my conservative evangelical background. I was literally raised in the church as my Southern Baptist parents confined me to Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening services from birth until I enrolled in college. Yet, for a vast majority of my life, this
sentence was acceptable. I embraced Jesus’s virgin birth, His perfection, my supreme imperfection, and His salvation.

I was educated only by conservative Christians throughout my primary and secondary years. College brought me to a mid-western evangelical institution where I believed myself to flourish. Much of it was truly enjoyable.

I also brushed up against oppression and had no language to express the latent sexism within my world. It grated me without my recognition until my doctoral studies provided me the lens to connect the pieces I already knew littered my view. Higher education offered me a dialect to articulate and name oppression. This was heightened by personal experiences that congealed to create a different reality, a truth I was never permitted to authenticate.

My evolution ironically occurred over a period of several years in which I was steeped in conservative evangelicalism, for I worked at a CCCU institution. Understandably, the cognitive dissonance I began to experience increased until I stood upon a precipice: Am I or am I not an evangelical?

I am not. I renounced my once certain faith and embarked on a journey into feminine spirituality, feminism, and postmodernism. Relishing the questions rather than the answers was a new phenomena for me and one I found liberating. I found comfort in ambiguity instead of certainty. Dialectic has now become normal.

Naturally, I am quite fascinated by the worldview I formerly held so tightly, which is why I chose to study it. What this means is that I had to tread cautiously. I am an insider and an outsider. My thirty years as a conservative evangelical provided me avenues to understand the participants in this study, and my novice outsider status
simultaneously rendered me suspect and tainted by the very world evangelicals seek to expunge.

I was also a danger to the study itself. My rejection of conservative Christianity and neophyte explorations of other perspectives likely biased me against the very informants and knowledge I sought. The procedures I used to tackle this dilemma will be outlined in the upcoming Methodology section; however, at this juncture, I would like to provide the reader with a glimpse into how I processed my experience within the study and thereby further understand my positionality. The segment below also includes excerpts from the reflexive journal I kept.

**The researcher’s reflections.** To start, I confess that this work required more years than I had originally hoped. There was a gap of two years between the proposal’s acceptance and data collection. The delay was largely because of my own emotional struggle with the topic. As a recovering evangelical, I was faced with diving back into a religious environment I was desperately trying to extricate myself from. I was confronted with my rage towards a faith that ravaged my self-esteem for most of my life. How could I possibly interview women that I perceived to be both victims and perpetrators of the same doctrines? I recognized that my psychological state would likely increase my impartiality and perhaps render me incapable of empathy.

As such, I focused my energies towards peeling away the emotional layers of my experiences, attempting to make sense of them. I spent much time reading about others who also de-converted and studying ancient religions in order to understand the origins of patriarchy. I also shared my experiences with trusted advisors, verbally processing my emotions.
Over time, my anger decreased, and my perceptions of possible informants shifted from victims/abusers to merely women on their own journeys. However, I still suspected I might struggle when encountering participants with complementarian perspectives and braced myself, expecting that most respondents would adhere to this viewpoint. One might imagine, then, my surprise to discover a majority of participants held to the egalitarian position. Though I am no longer a believer, and Christian doctrine has no authority in my life, I most certainly believe women are equal to men, so I was ecstatic to find a commonality with my participants. I was also pleased that when interacting with respondents who espoused the complementarian perspective I did not feel anger and could still connect to them. In my own journal, I penned the following:

I have found myself open and very aware of my reactions to what they share. I sought to ensure my verbal responses would be authentic, without judgment, and I questioned myself internally quite a bit if it seemed like my responses were too translucent to where they would be able to discern my worldview. Not that it would be negative for them to presume I hold a feminist or egalitarian approach, but I don’t want my perspective to hinder their sharing in any way, particularly if our beliefs clash.

I speculate the openness I felt is because I maintain both an emic and etic understanding, having once been a Christian and now a non-believer, and surely it is also because I had largely released the fury I previously held. Additionally, by journaling throughout the data collection process, I was able to further express any reactions I had to participants.

Quickly, my worry became not how I would feel towards the women in the study but how I would transcribe their interviews in a timely fashion, navigate all of the data,
and finish the final chapters of my dissertation. It was a relief to embrace the normal concerns of a qualitative researcher.

Another struggle also arose prior to and during data collection related to my own positionality: How would I present myself to participants? I identify as a feminist and as an atheist. Should they be aware of my personal beliefs, would they even participate in the study? Certainly, I had no plans to deceive participants, and I also did not feel compelled to share my personal beliefs from the onset, largely because I also feared they may not authentically reveal themselves to someone with a worldview so contrary to their own. Yet at the same time, how could I ask them to genuinely disclose themselves if I wasn’t willing to do the same? Below are some of my thoughts from my reflective journal related to this particular struggle, which one can see was ongoing throughout the interview process:

I worry that my opinions will leak into the conversation unconsciously and hinder participants from sharing their honest thoughts and feelings. I’m not sure how to guard against that because as the research instrument itself I have to be authentic and can never be truly unbiased. (10/6/14)

I also noticed that in my brief replies I was probably conveying my own opinions on her experiences. I worry that I will unduly muddy these waters and might unintentionally prompt respondents to adjust their answers based on their interpretations of my reactions. But I also know it is impossible to be fully objective because absolute objectivity doesn’t exist. All I can do is work to adjust my response to sound curious and inquisitive rather than as if I have a solid opinion. (10/12/14)
I struggle with presenting myself genuinely in a way that doesn’t announce my non-belief and also doesn’t easily presume I’m a Christian. I imagine, though, that since my participants know I am a graduate of an evangelical college, they assume I am a believer just like them; however, there could be clues that I am not when I sympathize with the gender discrimination they face. A hard-core conservative, complementarian, evangelical would likely not be emphatic with their plight. However, an egalitarian would, which is probably what they assume I am. And I certainly would call myself an egalitarian but not at all in the religious sense. Yet, I also identify myself as a University of Dayton student, which they could discover is a Catholic institution (and this particular demographic of woman would likely not hold Catholics as “real” Christians), so in that way, they could question my faith.

I do know, though, that if ever asked directly to disclose my religious beliefs I would tell the truth, even if it meant losing a participant. But that doesn’t lessen my struggle in how I present myself. If I am open with my lack of belief from the start, I wouldn’t have participants, or I would have participants who probably wouldn’t be fully honest because they would feel a deep need to present their faith in a most holy light; they would protect evangelicalism at the cost of hiding their stories.

In the end, I only know to keep doing what I have been doing. Presenting myself without much faith context and being authentic in my verbal and emotional responses to their experiences, allowing them to presume whatever
they would like, and knowing that if questioned I would share my non-belief with them and suffer the consequences. (10/26/2014)

After much internal debate, I determined I was ethically obligated to divulge my status if asked, risking that respondents might withdraw from the study. I concluded I did not need to share my positions unless questioned because ultimately their voices are more important than mine in the research context. As a feminist, my consciousness has been raised because I recognize the patriarchal system, and I was preparing to interview women who might not. It was possible they remained so entrenched within misogyny that they did not identify it. As such, I deemed making room for their experiences paramount, and it was possible that had I unveiled my perspectives they might have felt limited in revealing theirs.

However, with each participant I did inform them that they were welcome to ask me questions about my experiences as well, which was a means of minimizing the power imbalance and also building rapport. However, no one inquired about my faith, personal perspectives, or political beliefs.

A final significant concern arose during the data analysis portion of the research process. I had asked participants if they would be willing to review my initial analysis of their interview to provide feedback and also to offer their own interpretations. All of them agreed to do so and hence all were given their own data. In Appendix E, one can read the email I sent to them along with their data, assuring them that contrary interpretations were welcomed. Yet, what if they found my understandings offensive? Interestingly, all twelve informants who responded concurred with my interpretations. Why? It might be a result of the power differential that exists between researcher and
participant, no matter how hard an investigator works to equalize the relationship; hence, they might not have wanted to contradict me, perhaps believing I knew more than them. It could be that they sincerely agreed with my perspective. It could also be timing as data was sent to them towards the end of the academic year; they may have been too busy to give the information more than a cursory glance. Whatever the reason, I then found myself disappointed that no one offered alternative readings because I had hoped to include multiple interpretations within the final work.

Clearly, the research process was arduous for me far beyond traditional investigator stress. Hopefully, by understanding what my struggles were and how I tended to them, readers can better assess my place within this study, which is particularly important because I was the research instrument itself. Now, one can embed the methods described next within my experience of the research.

**Stringing Words Together: Methodology**

Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) explain, “There is no single method, methodology, or epistemology that informs feminist research. Feminist researchers… draw from a wide array of methods and methodologies…” (p. 4). Because philosophical analysis of the differences between method and methodologies is not the focus of this dissertation, allow me to briefly define them as they are employed within this project before delving into the specific methods I utilized.

Harding (1987) cites Caws’ extrapolation of methodology as “a theory and analysis of ‘the special ways in which the general structure of a theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines’” (p. 24). An epistemology like the critical feminist viewpoint framing this study is then a specific “theory of knowledge…”
concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its presuppositions and basis, and the
general reliability of claims to knowledge” (Harding, 1987, p. 25).

Harding (1987) also explains “A research method is a technique for gathering
evidence” (p.23), and methods are best derived from methodology (Ridenour & Newman,
2008). That means one who approaches the world believing there is but one reality might
propose research questions to determine that reality and may find quantitative methods
more conducive to data collection. Those who profess multiple, co-constructed realities
might employ more qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus
groups to gather evidence in light of their more constructivist research purpose.

Hence, constructivist methods were used in this study, and their implementation
was guided by a critical feminist approach as no specific feminist methodology exists.
The specific methods I utilized are described in the following Methods section.

**Painting Eve: Methods**

Complying with standard research protocol, I first sought IRB approval from the
University of Dayton. While awaiting IRB approval, I began identifying study
participants.

**Participants.** First, I identified a cohort of CCCU institutions whose doctrinal
statements reflect conservative evangelical theology\(^{11}\). This was easily done by perusing
CCCU member institutions websites. From there, I compiled a list of women currently in
middle-management positions, serving in operational or academic support departments,
which was accomplished by inspecting online human resource directories. This is
referred to as purposeful sampling (Krathwohl, 2009) because I was intentionally seeking
certain women to share specific information.

\(^{11}\) See [http://www.cedarville.edu/About/Doctrinal-Statement.aspx](http://www.cedarville.edu/About/Doctrinal-Statement.aspx) as an example.
I included retired women who previously served in middle-management positions or those who now work in other organizations but who have middle-management experience in conservative evangelical institutions in order to increase the likelihood that I would secure an adequate number of participants. Further, women who have retired or now work in other establishments might not have the same risks as those presently employed in conservative Christian academia, which could bolster the possibility those women would participate. Lastly, their particular stories were valuable because they shed light on why they left these types of colleges and universities. (These women were identified through other participants and my contacts).

Moreover, as a feminist researcher I was compelled to include the most marginalized of voices. In this particular realm, women of color fall into that category. I hoped to include as many minority women as possible, so when gathering possible participants I purposely searched for minority women on college websites and reached out to them first. Of course, by doing so, I might be guilty of tokenism, which has been previously described. To prevent this, I diligently invited all minority leaders I identified to participate.

Once a list of prospective informants was compiled, I initiated contact via email (See Appendix A) and then followed-up by phone to secure their support. Further, snowball sampling (Krathwohl, 2009) increased my participant pool when active respondents suggested other women who might be willing to participate.

Ethically, all respondents were provided with a thorough informed consent (See Appendix B) so that they would be fully aware of the benefits and risks of participating. Also in keeping with a critical feminist perspective, I committed to informants that they
owned their story; they were lending it to me, and I counted it an honor to bear witness to their experiences. They were informed that at any point they could rescind their participation. My aim here was to reduce power differentials between us, elevating their importance to the study. It is also my sincere view of any data.

I must also mention I intentionally limited my study by imposing rigorous confidentiality. Thick, rich descriptions are considered a necessary technique to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; Krathwohl, 2009; Merriam & Associates, 2002). However, in this instance, such descriptions could diminish the confidentiality of my respondents, placing them at risk. As the researcher responsible not just to ensure their truths are brought to light, I was also responsible to provide every protection possible to safeguard their confidentiality. I suspected they would feel more secure by knowing they and their institutions would only be described in aggregate. That means age ranges, broad geographic regions, student population ranges, and educational attainment ranges were used; identifying characteristics were hidden in the collective. Furthermore, job titles were eliminated entirely. Informants are only identified by their self-selected pseudonyms. Likewise, their colleges and universities are labeled I1 (Institution 1), I2 (Institution 2), I3 (Institution 3), and so forth. This, too, should obscure identities.

While it might appear that providing combined descriptions is counter to a critical feminist approach that seeks to reveal veiled, oppressed experiences, consider that the respondents’ individual testimonies are quoted in the findings sections to the extent their verbatim words do not malign confidentiality. My fellow critical feminists would likely agree that informants’ wellbeing is far more important than the data and that
transferability can still be ascertained by the audience based upon summative material and individual stories.

However, before I delve into specific methods, it is imperative I address how I negotiated the power differential that always exists between the researcher and the researched. First, it should be recognized that both the investigator and the participant have power within the relationship (Wolf, 1996). While the researcher ultimately determines what will be written, the participant determines what will be shared and which aspects of self they will display to the researcher (Lavis, 2010). Context decides who holds more power. For instance, Wolf (1996) writes that “studying up” (p. 2) undermines the researcher’s power because she is studying those with more position such as those from a higher socio-economic status. Lavis (2010) also discusses “researching up” (p. 322) by studying those who hold more professional experience than the investigator. That concept directly applies to this work because I am a brand new mid-level administrator. The women I interacted with are more advanced in their careers than I am, and in that sense have more power than I do. However, one might contend that in another way I maintain more power because I have more formal education than some respondents. Yet, despite the situational and fractured nature of power within the research process, a completely equal relationship between investigator and respondent is impossible (Millen, 1997). As such, it was pivotal that I, as the investigator, not oppress participants engaged in the research process with me; I was responsible to guard against it (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991). Strategies for doing so will be outlined below as I discuss data collection.
**Data collection.** Once IRB approval was granted, data collection commenced. Individual semi-structured interviews were scheduled and conducted over-the-phone. (See Appendix C for my interview protocol). Interviews are certainly in keeping with a constructivist methodology (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Furthermore, “in-depth interviewing allows the feminist researcher to access the voices of those who are marginalized in a society; women, people of color, homosexuals, and the poor are examples of marginalized groups” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 190).

However, it is important to note that the interview protocol served as a prompt and not a rigid prescription for how the interview would proceed. In keeping with a critical feminist framework, the interview process was more dialogic; it was a conversation rather than an interrogation (Lather, 1991b). Each participant was free to share whatever she wanted, regardless of whether or not it seemed to relate to the topic on hand.

Because this study is focused on the gendered experiences of female mid-level managers in the evangelical academy, I inquired about their doctrinal views concerning women in leadership roles since they live and work within a theological setting that shapes how they experience those environments. Using a critical feminist lens, I am compelled not only to dissect gender and power within evangelical theology, but I must also provide space for participants to share their own ideas on the gender doctrines of their ascribed faith. It was also paramount I consider respondents’ biblical beliefs on women because the literature suggests that evangelicals often blur the theological views of church leadership and Christian higher education (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Hall, 2012; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Moreton & Newsom, 2004b).
Should that also be the case with informants, it would surely impact how they view themselves and their campus as female leaders.

Other topical areas centered upon the challenges and joys they experience as female managers, difficulty or ease in balancing home/work responsibilities, institutional supports, campus climate, and how they believe gender has or has not influenced their work environment. The topical areas noted within the interview protocol were generated from the literature about women leaders within conservative Christian higher education (Absher, 2009; Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; McKinney 2012; Pedersen & Jule, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001; Wood, 2009).

With the permission of each respondent, interviews were recorded and promptly transcribed; audio files were stored immediately following completed transcriptions on a laptop that only I had access to, and upon my successful dissertation defense, all audio files—labeled by pseudonym—were promptly deleted, further safeguarding respondents’ confidentiality.

Some might question the practice of recording interviews; however, feminist researcher Marjorie Devault (2004) notes that recording interviews allows the investigator to more fully concentrate on the respondent’s story rather than attempting to remember content. Given that my epistemological approach requires I also attend to what is not said and how experiences are shared, I believe recording interviews better enabled me to focus on each participant as she deserved. My aim was to be fully present with her in the interview and all subsequent interactions in order to communicate I value her and
her unique experiences, not just because she was assisting me in my academic pursuit, but because she is worthy of being heard.

Nevertheless, I determined that should a respondent prefer her interview not be recorded I would honor her wishes and take copious notes following the interview in order to preserve her story. Furthermore, in order to increase equality between myself and participants, I asked every women if she would like the audio file of her interview. Doing so means the respondent would own the data and would have continual access like me. All participants declined the audio file, but several accepted my offer to have their transcript emailed to them, using whatever email address felt safest to them. (A few did provide their personal email addresses).

Within the interviews, reciprocity was an important principle employed to downplay the power I hold. Wolf (1996) recommends “‘intersubjectivity,’ a dialectical relationship that allows the researcher to compare her work with her own experiences as a woman… and share it with her subjects, who then add their opinion” (p. 5). Utilizing this concept, one of my interview prompts provided a scenario from my time working at a conservative evangelical university, which I acknowledged as my own experience, and I asked respondents to share their interpretation of that event. However, I only employed this tactic with the first few participants because most women were eager to share their stories, and I did not want to commandeer conversational time from them. Nevertheless, I was prepared to offer my own employment experience had it been warranted.

Additionally, and as recommended by Acker, Barry, and Esseveld (1991), in general, I presented my authentic self to each respondent and intended to honestly respond to her inquiries about my life, though few asked questions of me. In this way, the
interview became an interactive dialogue (Lather, 1991b) between two real, unique women each with her own ideas, neither of which is more “right” or more “wrong” than the other. Ultimately, a completely equal relationship between researcher and respondent is impossible (Millen, 1997), but I hoped that by offering myself I somewhat mitigated our hierarchical relationship.

I also gained permission to conduct follow-up interviews with each respondent in order to more deeply understand her experiences and to seek clarification about information provided in previous interviews if needed. Moreover, this elevated the respondents’ status within the investigation process because I did not intend to step into their lives, grabbing their stories for my own sake never to be heard from again. Taking this approach one step further, I attempted to create an ongoing dialogue with each respondent in which the interview conversation could continue via phone or email. Not only would this provide more opportunities to gather data and supply triangulation, but it would also decrease objectification of the participant, which is paramount in a critical feminist study. In any study, regardless of one’s particular paradigm, it is easy to reduce a respondent to a number or a set of experiences—an object of study—rather than uphold her as a human being (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991). An ongoing relationship allows participants continual comment on their stories and the research process itself.

After each interview, I provided each participant some reflection questions about what the interview process was like, what they wished they had shared but didn’t, and what I should or should not have asked (See Appendix D). This introspective exercise hopefully further increased each respondent’s awareness of her own professional (and perhaps personal) experiences and might have prompted participants to view her life from
another perspective. Perhaps the continued reflection will also spur action to improve her
professional environment should she deem change necessary.

I then requested she mail or email me her responses within two weeks of her
interview should she so choose. Engaging in the reflective exercise was in no way a
requirement to participate in the study; it was merely an offer for continued consideration
of topics discussed in the interview. Eleven women completed the reflective exercise,
and their responses were included in the data analysis.

Lastly, each interview involved a discussion of data interpretation so that the
process would not remain in the study shadows. I explained that my view maintains
multiple interpretations are valid. As Kincheloe and McLaren (2003) elucidate:

No pristine interpretation exists—indeed, no methodology, social or educational
type, or discursive form can claim privileged position that enables the
production of authoritative knowledge… the meaning of human experience can
never be fully disclosed—neither to the researcher nor even to the human who
experienced it. (p. 444, 449)

That means how the participant viewed her experience might be different from how I
deciphered it. I committed to represent their perspectives as accurately as possible, which
means they received a verbatim transcription along with my initial interpretations. They
were encouraged to respond to both, and their responses to my analysis would be
included in the final product. I planned to include both explanations within the research
project so that the reader could consider how each interpretation might be applicable to
her or his situation. However, while twelve informants replied to my request that they
offer opinions on my expositions of their data, they all concurred with my interpretations
(See Appendix E for my email requesting their feedback). As such, I cannot present multiple interpretations.

**Analysis.** After transcribing each interview verbatim, transcriptions were analyzed with identifying information redacted. Reflexive responses were also analyzed upon receipt.

Since feminism does not specify a certain type of analysis, I utilized Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) constant comparative technique. Though a tool used in grounded theory research designs, it is often borrowed by other types of qualitative research and was most effective here because it required an immersion into the data. Traditionally, researchers using this analysis would formulate three categories of data that would eventually result in a theory (Merriam & Associates, 2002). While I am not attempting to extrapolate a theory from the data, the deep submersion in the empirical material enabled me to grasp nuances of meaning, subtle emotions, and hints of paradox. Clearly, this parallels my critical feminist lens along with postmodernism’s and postructuralism’s overtones that incite investigators to deconstruct story all the way to its jot and tittles, to the whispers it hears.

The constant comparative process is quite like Patton’s (2002) approach to content analysis in which a researcher searches for patterns or themes within the data. Codes were developed according to units of meaning. Here, these units of meanings began to emerge even before coding as I saturated myself in the data by reading it through to gain a sense of the whole (Patton, 2002).
Painting Eve Inside the Lines: Ensuring Quality

Given my distinct positionality, my purposeful limiting of the study to protect participants, and the overall importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006), it is paramount I address how I built trustworthiness into my study. To begin, I mention reflexivity. According to Harding (1987),

A third feature contributing to the power of feminist research is the emerging practice of insisting that the researcher be placed in the same critical plane as the subject matter, thereby recovering for scrutiny in the results of research the entire research process. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture she/he paints. (p. 31)

For this reason, I kept a reflexive journal as excerpts shared above attest. In it, I examined biases, prejudices, and emotions that might have blinded me to the study participants’ individual and collective truths. A reflexive journal is also a means of maintaining trustworthiness in a research study (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006; Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Second, peer debriefing was an important tool (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Regular conversations with my dissertation chair and other trusted advisors enabled me to further process whatever internal strife arose but more importantly it afforded me expert insight into my burgeoning interpretations. My chair also read my data to provide feedback on identified themes.

Third, the triangulation of methods strengthened the trustworthiness of the project (Krathwohl, 2009; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Ridenour & Newman, 2008). Using
individual interviews and reflective exercises helped confirm emerging themes and patterns were supported by the data.

Fourth, I provided interview transcripts and my initial interpretations of the data to participants for their comments, which served as a form of member-checking (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Respondents had the opportunity to clarify and reflect upon their perspectives. The goal of the member checks was not to refute my interpretations so long as they were embedded in the data but to ensure I accurately presented the interpretations of the participant.

Fifth, I maintained an audit trail (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Ridenour & Newman, 2008) so that other researchers interested in replicating my study will have sufficient data to do so. Additionally, should anyone question my research design or results, I have proper documentation to demonstrate that my results align with the empirical material and a critical feminist framework.

Finally, “consistency of epistemology must exist between the research question, data collection, and analysis procedures” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 1999). Continuous application of critical feminism in each step entrenched trustworthiness into the study. Clearly, this can be seen by how I have woven critical feminist rationale into my chosen methodology, method, and quality-measures.

In conclusion, my dissertation is housed within a critical feminist framework. As such, I questioned power-structures, examined dark corners, and spotlighted the stories of women that have thus far not been seen. Postmodernism’s call to challenge all interpretations, denounce binaries, and embrace pluralism assisted me in ensuring all voices were heard. Poststructuralism’s decree that researchers notice the crevices and
cracks protected against neglected interpretations or ideas. Deconstruction did likewise. These epistemologies were the foundation for my constructivist methodology, which determined interviews and reflective exercises were the most appropriate methods of data collection. Finally, trustworthiness was carved into the study by means of reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, method triangulation, member checks, an audit trail, and consistently applying my epistemology to every aspect of the study—from method selection and data collection to analysis. The following chapter will discuss findings and interpretations of the data.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS:
HERSTORY\(^{12}\)

“Is it worth it to go through that? Is it worth it for any woman to battle that?”\(^{13}\)

This study sought to answer the question: What are the gendered experiences of administrative and professional female middle-administrators in conservative evangelical universities? Through semi-structured interviews and post-interview reflective exercises, I collected the poignant stories of eighteen mid-level supervisors. This chapter includes their accounts, exposing a plethora of gender discrimination on their respective conservative Christian campuses.

Meet Eve: Description of Participants

Before one can examine the gendered experiences of this study’s participants, the reader must first be introduced to them. However, as noted in the previous chapter, I will forgo the detailed description of respondents that is typical in qualitative research in order to safeguard their confidentiality. As such, participants will be described in aggregate and general terms.

To begin, eighteen women agreed to participate in this study. Respondents are employed in divisions such as Advancement, Business Affairs, and Student Affairs, and

\(^{12}\) Robin Morgan, a feminist poet, is credited with coining the term “herstory” in her anthology *Sisterhood is Powerful*. Herstory is used within feminist writings to underscore the many ways in which women’s experiences and activism have been written out of history.

\(^{13}\) Annabelle, participant.
all of them possess a bachelor’s degree. Several earned advanced degrees. They supervise from one to ten professional staff members. They range in age from 30 to their late 60’s and have held a management position at their respective institutions from two to over thirty years, averaging a little over ten years in their current position.

Most of the participants are married, and most have children. A handful are single or engaged. In terms of ethnicity, a majority of them identity as white; two identify as racial minorities. Additionally, when asked about their political affiliation most of them described themselves as conservative or Republican. A few used the word moderate, and fewer still identified as liberal. Further, participants described themselves as confident, positive, a “get it done kind of gal,” quiet, confrontation-avoidant, a “doer,” intuitive, introverted, focused, approachable, and welcoming.

Over half of the respondents obtained a position within higher education because they either had a previous relationship to the institution at which they were employed (e.g., the college is their alma mater), or they were drawn to Christian higher education because of the mission, specifically as it related student emotional and spiritual growth. For example, one participant said, “to be able to instill, I think, that passion of learning and growth and development in college students is just such a rich and rewarding vocation.” The remaining informants secured their positions because the college was conveniently located near their homes, they sought the tuition benefits, or they needed a job.

Lastly, seven participants became managers when they were promoted into the role at their various institutions. Six respondents were hired into their supervisory
positions from outside of higher education or from another institution. The remaining informants did not address their path to management in the interviews.

**Eve’s Environment: Description of Colleges**

Having a basic understanding of the respondents is important for readers in order to place the participants within the context of the study and better understand the results. Likewise, having a general sense of the colleges represented here is also paramount for the same reason. Yet, once again, institutions will be described in aggregate to further protect participants’ confidentiality.

First, the informants hail from fourteen colleges across the nation, specifically the West, Midwest, South, and Northeast. All of the institutions are private, residential colleges largely focused on undergraduate education. Using the Carnegie Classifications, each college was listed as “high” to “very high” in undergraduate enrollment, and they ranged from “selective” to “more selective” in terms of their undergraduate profile.

Collectively, their undergraduate student populations range from about 1,000 to over 4,000. These institutions offer twenty to over one hundred undergraduate academic programs. Academic programs include typical liberal arts majors like English and history along with professional programs such as accounting and engineering. Finally, eight colleges offered at least one or more master’s degree program while far fewer also maintained doctoral programs. As a reminder in order to maintain confidentiality, institutions referred to within the findings sections will only be identified as I1, I2, and so forth.
Not a Women’s World: Findings

With an overall sense of the participants and their respective institutions, I will now attend to their experiences. Specifically, the remaining portion of this chapter will consider the participants’ views on women’s leadership within the church and Christian higher education followed by their institutions’ perspectives on gender. Next, I will describe the obstacles they face along with the campus climate of their colleges. Then I will examine the covert and overt discrimination they have encountered and what they believe caused the discrimination. Finally, I will explore participants’ own cognitive dissonance and internalized subjugation.

Recall that these themes were generated based on interviews intentionally crafted to be open and conversational rather than controlled and prescriptive. Categories were then derived using Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) constant comparative coding technique. By the end of this chapter, I will have answered the initial research question: What are the gendered experiences of administrative and professional female middle-administrators in conservative evangelical universities?

Views on women’s church leadership. Because previous research suggests that evangelicals’ theological views of church leadership and Christian higher education are often blurred (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Hall, 2012; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Moreton & Newsom, 2004b), I thought it pertinent to ask each participant to share her thoughts on this particular topic. Yet before doing so, I should note that the concepts of egalitarianism and complementarianism are binaries and are held as such from the evangelical perspective (Bartkowski, 1999; Bryant, 2009; Colaner & Warner, 2005; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Ingersoll, 2003; Noll, 2001). By discussing them
according their established categories, it may appear is if I am endorsing that dualism now; however, the findings demonstrate some participants, much like in other research, blend these opposing perspectives. Three women appeared to straddle the divide between the egalitarian and complementarian belief. Eleven participants either stated outright that they embrace the egalitarian position or described themselves in a manner that evidenced they view men and women as equally able of holding all leadership roles within a church body. Three respondents firmly support complementarianism. Hence, there will actually be three viewpoints examined below.

Further, one could argue that by using the term complementarianism I am reifying its meaning and imposing that power upon study participants. As a feminist, I certainly acknowledge the power of language to oppress or liberate. In the context of this study, I am using those terms because they allow me to describe evangelical viewpoints participants are familiar with. Each respondent (and indeed each reader) has her own agency to embrace or reject any label or description, to claim or re-claim them as best suits her.

Egalitarians. “I believe women can be called to be pastors or preachers or deacons or whatever else God wants to call them to do,” said Jane. Sally bluntly remarked, “I fully support women that believe that [being a pastor] is their calling…And who am I to say, um, but if you don’t have a penis you really can’t do this?” Martha expressed an almost identical sentiment:

I have no problem with it [women as pastors] whatsoever. I think it depends on a person’s giftedness. We’re all gifted differently, and I figure we just have to
figure out how we’re wired, and then go with the flow. If they [women] wanna be a senior pastor that’s fine with me.

Likewise, Crystal shared,

… I've been in other denominations or part of other churches where that's [women as pastors], not accepted so I understand the rationale… in my mind I see what they're saying. I'm not sure that I interpret the scriptures the same way… for example, God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, male and female,’ you know. It's not like, ‘we made a man and oh, that wasn't enough, so we'll give him, like, a pet.’ It's that both of us bring reflections of the divine, not fully, but we are made in God's image, male and female, so. And while they are to complement each other, I think that's good, but the man is to complement the woman as well.

Minerva explained that her views are a result of her long-term affiliation with her childhood denomination and later the denomination she and husband entered upon their marriage, which she describes as “progressive” when it comes to women's leadership roles within the church:

I grew up in [childhood denomination] where women were very, um, often in leadership roles… it’s transpired over years of it becoming, um, more common place for women to be more active, more, um, visible and so forth. Um, it’s always been, um, so from the [second denomination], um, even in the early days of my being in it… there were women in leadership in the [second denomination]…

She also acknowledged a more conservative denomination opposes her view and then aligns her view with scripture as she interprets it:
Um, well I know that it would be, um, for instance if you were of the Southern Baptist [tradition]… That wouldn’t be happening. Um, they have a very different view of what women should be allowed to do within the church context. Um, I don’t know about, um, a lot of other denominations, but I do know that in some places that just wouldn’t be the case. Um, that women would be seen in leadership. I don’t think they’re right from my own personal perspective. I think women have a great deal, um, to say, and if you wanted to come right down to it the first disciple, the first one that was told to go and give the good news by Christ was Mary. Um, if that’s not a, um, positive for the women being involved in ministry I don’t know what is.

Egalitarians’ shifted views. It is not surprising that several of the egalitarian respondents formerly held complementarian positions. Roberta explained she was raised in a home that modeled gender equality but when attending an evangelical college was taught that the complementarian perspective was most biblical:

I think as an undergrad I thought I was supposed to think more complementarian because that’s what was in my bible classes and that’s what was modeled to me. And so I left [I4] thinking, ‘Oh yeah that’s, like, the holy and righteous way to think: more complementarian.’ Um, but I had never seen that modeled in my family life. And so there’s a lot of conflict there. Like, ‘well [I4] said this, but this is what I saw in my home.’ And then I think once living it out in my marriage we–my husband and I–were, like that just didn’t make sense to us how that can be supported by scripture… I definitely am more on the side of egalitarian, absolutely.
Brianna extrapolated that her egalitarian belief is grounded in education. She was raised in a church that maintained women should not be pastors:

But it would be, you know, the Bible says the man is the head of the household—that kind of stuff. And the pastor therefore is reflective of the home. And so the pastor should be a man, and the woman should be submissive. Those were the relations that they drew.

While that belief:

was always something that I felt was wrong…. When you don’t know stuff, you just don’t know. You just accept what you’re being told… so just having the opportunity to be educated and to learn and to be exposed to different types of leadership, that’s what changed my thinking.

Crystal was also raised with a differing belief, so when she changed denominations later in life and learned that her new church home ordained women, she re-examined her previous perspective:

I'm not a bible scholar, but I have done some reading about this because obviously when we came into the [new denomination] this was foreign to me as a young woman of 15, 16: women can be pastors? I'd never heard this. And so I navigated through that.

As an adult, she was encouraged to take a leadership role within her church, which once again forced her to re-consider her beliefs on gender:

…And so I looked into it because I didn't want to do something that was not biblically correct or pleasing to God… in my opinion it's not good understanding and translation and interpretation of scripture to say that there should be a
difference and women should only have this role. They should only be allowed to
do this and this. Men should be here doing this and this. Um, I don't believe
that's biblically correct.

I came to the conclusion through reading what others had written about the
verses that were troublesome pertaining to women and men and leadership and
the women should be silent in the church and, um, that was a big one, the stories I
read through. What I did on those verses, I began to see that if you look deeper,
that is not what was being said and that there were women prophets, there were
women prophets in the Old Testament, there are women prophets in the New
Testament, um, that there are some cases in which you could say there were
women who led home fellowships because their name is listed first as the one. If
Paul or someone was writing to the church there they would write to the leader
first. So Priscilla and Aquila is one of those examples. He put Priscilla's name
first. She was probably leading that group. So, some of those kind of things.
Lastly, Martha too clarified that her position had changed based primarily on life
experiences or circumstances:

I just didn’t think about it. And then when I stopped, when I was confronted
with something in my life to deal with, I would think about it, and then I always
chose the quote, unquote, more liberal way… it’s only because I never thought
about the topic. Because when I was, you know, younger I just didn’t think about
it. And even as a young wife and mother I remember some of my friends, you
know, not believing they could work outside the home or only homeschooling
their children. And I don’t have a problem with those who homeschool… but I
didn’t feel like it was my obligation to stay at home. I thought, ‘yeah, sure, that would be great, but I can’t afford it, so, and I like what I do, so I’ll just make them a part of this life.’

**In between egalitarianism and complementarianism.** A handful of respondents did not ascribe to either belief but rather seemed to fall somewhere in between. Sharon remarked,

I’m fairly conservative on my role, my opinions about with leadership roles… I think, you know, like I don’t have any problem with women like being on staff… I guess I have a little bit of cringiness about female pastors. But I can’t really even say why I feel that way, and it’s probably something I’m working on getting over.

Interestingly, she also expressed dismay that women are frequently taken advantage of in churches:

I think in general like the skills and the gifts and the talents of women have been, uh, both overlooked and, um, what’s the word I’m looking for, exploited in churches, um, if that makes any sense. For example, um, like I remember like as a, you know, as a teenager, the church hired a new youth pastor and, you know, the assumption was that his wife was also going to be a sponsor in the youth group, but she wasn’t, um, paid. You know what I’m saying? Um, and so I think that is a kind of a prime example of, like, overlooking the talents and gifts that she was bringing to the table but then exploiting her willingness to, you know, kind of come into that situation. Um, and I think that that is not uncommon in the church.
She further commented about the need for women to be compensated for their church work and the youth’s need to understand women as valuable:

Um, but I do feel like, you know, especially in like women’s ministry and with, you know, youth, like there definitely should be people… compensated at similar levels for the amounts of work that they do in those kinds of scenarios… a pastor who, like, runs a men’s bible study as part of his responsibilities as a pastor but then the women’s ministry, that’s all volunteer run, right. Like, and I feel like some of those inequalities definitely exist and shouldn’t. Um, I don’t think always that women should be relegated to children’s ministry. Um, and I think it’s important for, like, kids and teens especially to see women, like, viewed as important, and unfortunately it sometimes has to do with authority that comes with, you know, an actual job title and a paycheck.

Sharon also explained that her views are in flux as a result of a female family member’s ordination. Having grown up Baptist, she was taught that biblically women were not to be pastors in the church and was not exposed to women in leadership positions within her church or her evangelical college. Yet knowing her kin’s talents she agrees her relative is fit to pastor. As such, she is in the process of renegotiating her belief, remarking, “I’ve been doing some of my own exploring, my own learning, my own study, um, I think that maybe that, um, interpretation of like what is biblical has been not entirely correct.”

Annabelle also stands between the two worlds, explaining:

I think I’m a mild egalitarian, and that’s because, I don’t know what’s keeping me from fully saying I am. There are some passages that I need to spend more time
in. I tend to think women can fulfill any function in the church, though, including senior pastor or whatever it is.

It may be there is an emotional side of me after what I’ve experienced here that it’s not theological to me as much as it is, ‘Is it worth it to go through that? Is it worth it for any woman to battle that?’ But I don’t know. To spend, to forge those paths and to try to prove yourself—is that worth it? Like in a pastoral context. A lot of pioneering…

Jo seemed to experience less tension than Sharon and Annabelle as she toes the line between complementarianism and equalitarianism:

Well, growing up, I grew up in a denomination where women could be ordained and were often lead pastors at churches. Um, but I never really thought anything twice about that. When I met my now husband, that’s something that we kinda talked through a lot like in our engagement time because his church did not allow for women to be elders or pastors. Um, so I kinda struggled with that a lot. So we did like, you know, some research and some bible studies on this topic and, uh, kinda came to the conclusion that I don’t really know what the right answer is, but I’m comfortable that both sides can back their perspectives biblically…. I guess that’s kinda where I stand. I’m kind of understanding both camps and don’t really wanna pick a side.

**Complementarians.** Rebecca called herself “old school” when asked about her position on women in leadership roles within the church and elucidated,
Women are only to have certain leadership roles in the church. The female pastor or elder is not appropriate. Um, I think women leading in functional areas, y’know, overseeing a committee or those sorts of things is appropriate.

She also mentioned that her view has never changed.

Claudia similarly described her belief, sharing,

I believe that women have a place in leadership but not top leadership. Like, I don't believe they should be ruling elder in the church, but I do believe that scripture speaks of deaconesses, things like that, and I believe women could do that. I do believe that it's scriptural that women in leadership need to work alongside or with a ruling elder and not just go out on their own doing things, that it's scriptural that she have guidance and advice from a ruling elder.

She went on to provide an example how this viewpoint and structure manifests itself within her church:

In my church we have a women's ministry group, a women's ministry council, and they do certain things in the church that they're in charge of; one of those is the woman's bible studies. Well, the women—if we want to study a certain secular book or certain, well, not necessarily secular, but a book other than scripture—the women's leadership person would have to get that approved by a ruling elder.

Lastly, Michelle endorsed the same views as Rebecca and Claudia, stating,

I guess my personal choice or decision is I think as far as a senior pastor position in a church, I believe the Bible directs us that that is a male position. But that certainly leaves open other positions in the church that I think a woman is better suited to provide that leadership than a male. So I can’t say specifically what I
would agree with and disagree with, but I think the one position that I do have a pretty strong stance in is the senior pastor role as a male.

Worthy of note, Michelle is the only complementarian to share that her view “evolved:”

I certainly was raised in a really more conservative church background and really not encouraged to do a lot of thinking until I was maybe more in high school and had a youth pastor that wanted more for us and wanted us to, you know, really use our brains to make some decisions rather than being indoctrinated. So given a little bit more freedom to think those things out and then certainly as I’ve gotten older and have more experience with, um, the change in the church today, just, yeah, I think those are good changes. I think those are, um, valid, um, things to think through differently. And so I just think getting older and maturing and not being so, um, strict in my thinking has evolved over the years.

She went on to explain that she now attends a church she calls “freeing” where people are more involved in a variety of ministries, several of which are overseen by women. Hence, it seems her view morphed from one in which women should hold no leadership roles within a church to one where some but not all leadership positions could be filled by women.

Having examined the beliefs participants’ possess about gender roles within the church, one can now consider what they think about women in leadership in Christian higher education.

**Views on women’s leadership within Christian higher education.** Almost every participant agreed that women are capable of and should hold leadership positions
within the Christian academy. In her reflective exercise, Martha re-iterated her view by stating, “Not all women can or should be leaders, and not all men can or should be leaders. Persons with the God-given ability to lead should lead, and it really is okay to follow.” Sally was also succinct in her response, “I think women are capable and should be in leadership roles.” Jessica shared,

I love it. I am a huge advocate…. Women just have a different way of looking at things and, um, I’m a huge advocate of equal, um, of equal time, of equal rights… I think that the way women process, um, leadership responsibilities and the way, uh, they think through things, I think it’s needed so much more, um, than what we give time for.

Despite her complementarian perspective, Rebecca stated,

I think there is a benefit to any leadership group to having a mixed group as far as cabinet level or any group of people really. I think if you get all men together or all women together you are missing some perspectives… I don’t have a problem with women being in leadership, but if they are going to be in leadership they need to be qualified to be there.

Likewise, Michelle, who is also a complementarian, articulated,

I think anything goes if you’re qualified and you have the gifts and abilities. I see the church very differently than I do even a Christian institution. I think a Christian, um, institution of higher education is more of a business than the church, which is not intended for that use, so that’s how I’m able to separate the two. And I feel, um, women at institutions of higher education should have women in leadership positions, and they should be encouraged to do so.
Note that both Rebecca and Michelle explicitly stated women should be qualified to hold a leadership position; they were the only two respondents who did so. Everyone else spoke in terms of women using their abilities within leadership roles. Additionally, not a single participant stated a man should be qualified to assume a leadership position.

However, contrary to her complementarian peers, Claudia seemed unclear about whether or not a woman should hold an executive level position at a Christian university, though she makes an exception for them chairing a department if they are faculty. She appears to conflate the pastoral role with a vice-presidential or presidential role:

I don't see that at the college I'm from there would ever be a woman president or even a vice president, actually. That has never happened. As far as faculty and on being a chairman of, a chair of a department, that kind of thing, I don't see any problem with that at all. In fact, I think that should happen. I've really never thought about a vice president of the college I worked at being a woman. I don't think that would happen. Even the board of trustees, there are women on the board that are just liaisons—in a liaison position, but not actually members of the board that are women.

I know there are women that are very qualified, but scripturally I just feel like God put women here to be a helpmate to men, but I don't think a woman should be head over a man necessarily, in certain institutions, like I don't necessarily agree with a woman being a pastor. And I know there are certain denominations where that's true, and I think women have been very effective that way, but I'm not sure that that's really biblical.
When asked how she would feel should her institution ever have a female president or vice-president she replied,

> Uh, well, the college is not the church; however, I don't know. I'm not sure. I really had never even thought about it until you asked me this. I can't see it happening ever, but I know there is a distinction between, you know, that the college is not the church. I think the college was founded upon Christian principles and founded upon–and what came about through much prayer, and I think it was God ordained, but I don't see that a woman would be [an executive level leader] because it's such a conservative school.

Situated between both theological outlooks, Sharon verbalized,

> I think that in general, I think churches are not schools and vice versa. So I feel like it’s different, but it hasn’t necessarily been treated as different in terms of, you know, traditional leadership kind of roles. I think, women have a lot to bring to the table and that hasn’t been taken advantage of in Christian higher ed. Um, I mean, still to this day, you know, women in, you know, higher levels of leadership it’s more rare… I do know that, you know, like the women who are there are still kind of having to like, you know, use their elbows, throw their elbows to get, um, you know, to get more than a seat at the table but to have their voice heard…

Jo, who is comfortable with both scriptural viewpoints, explained her thoughts on women in leadership in Christian higher education:

> Um, well, there I definitely think, you know, just as in all businesses, I think that a person should be evaluated on their skills and their abilities and their
experiences and not their gender. I don’t think there’s anywhere in scripture that would argue anything differently, um, for business. So I think that, you know, equal opportunity and I don’t think I’ve really seen the opposite of that in my life, at least not in my experiences.

A few of those who identify as egalitarian also lamented the dearth of women in leadership in Christian higher education. “I would ask why the heck aren’t there more female presidents?” said Sally, and Brianna noted,

I actually feel like if we had more women in leadership, a lot of the issues that we have right now won’t happen…. I really do believe that women can be leaders of whatever. Any institution—whether it’s political, church, whatever.

**Institutional-level views on gender.** While participants shared their own personal ideas on gender roles and leadership within Christian academia, they also discussed how they perceive their respective institutions’ gender views. Only a few respondents believed their colleges have a history of embracing women in management roles. Crystal shared,

... equality is a big virtue of theirs [the denomination associated with the college] as well, a pillar of what they believe and … They believe that the pastor gift is ordained by God… could be a man or a woman.

She went on to explain that some of their first faculty members were women and that some of the first missionaries affiliated with the college were females. As such, gender equality is “a high value here.”
Similarly, Minerva postulated her college’s ties to a particular denomination that embraced women in leadership enabled the institution to do the same, specifically as it relates to women in ministry programs at the college:

Our School of Theology has been very, um, embracing of women that have come to them for Masters of Divinity and Doctors of Divinity and of the various degrees that you can get. Um, but these women are active women. They don’t just get that degree and then not do anything with it. And the church has allowed for, um, them to make their way in ministry. I don’t see them as being beaten down and kept, um, within, you know, the constraints that Paul would have had us in…. So, I think in that perspective our church has been, um, fairly at the forefront of, um, seeing women as being a positive in ministry.

However, most believed their colleges have shifted away from traditional gender roles. Jane shared that the “battle” for women to hold leadership roles within her institution was won quite some time ago, though she acknowledged that women there still faced challenges:

I think the ideological battle has already been fought, and, like, in name, like, everyone would agree, you know, a woman could do any job that she wanted, um, and so I think that having that stance ideologically has led to, you know, people wanting more women in leadership, like, you know, the president having more women invited to cabinet…

So I think we're in more, like, the maybe, like, implicit or subconscious sexism stage. I don't know if there's a stage, but, um, I think about this in terms of racism, like, I went to a training yesterday. We were, like, looking at, like, where
we're at in becoming a multicultural, like, we all know we don't want to be racist. We want to be a multicultural place, but, there's still, like, residual subconscious policies and practices, so I think, yeah, for us we're kind of past the explicit sexism, and now it's more, um, you know, the sexism that we're subconsciously living out values that we were taught as children or taught from the media or, um, that we just haven't fixed yet in our culture, um, and, I am sure that our [specific program] professors would give you like a hundred specific examples of how this plays out at [I6], but I haven't… like, trained my, um, sensitivity such that I would be able to, like, notice a lot of, like, the structural sexism that is still part, you know, part of our institution even though we're not necessarily intending it to be there.

Likewise, Michelle discussed the history of her institution in regards to gender roles, explaining how changes in leadership have resulted in more gender equality within management:

… the president was a former pastor, old school, I mean, when he left… I understand it was a really unpleasant place to be because he was just too much old school type understanding. And then … they hired, uh, another gentleman that was a little bit more forward thinking and, um, was really willing to open up opportunities for everyone who wanted to have a position, and I think that has grown and matured over the years. We have female board members now, which we never used to have. We have, um, we have had over the several years female vice presidents in various positions, executive leaders that are females. Um, so
that certainly has gotten better over the years, and we’re moving in a better
direction as far as that’s concerned too.

She further elucidated,

We’re not tied to a particular church or a particular denomination any longer.
We’re tied to, um, an evangelical stance, and we have our biblical standards
certainly, but a better cross representative of the Christian faith and
denominations.

In fact, she believed the institution’s departure from a more conservative tradition
fostered a more gender inclusive environment:

This is my take, that that changed our perspective a little bit and opened us up to
more, um, a more varied, um, program offering, which then, in turn, allowed us to
be more diverse and having females come in and take positions maybe even at the
faculty level first and then as we grew realizing we need women in leadership
positions across the whole institution.

Rebecca also noted that her college’s divergence from Baptist conventions
modified the institution’s gender views:

Um, I think the shift in culture has come, um, our university is Baptist in heritage.
So I think that coming from a traditional Baptist viewpoint when I started
working here to a real cultural shift in moving away from that and the progression
of time. Um, overall the view of woman in the workplace from then to now has
changed dramatically, so I think it is a reflection of those changes in the church,
in the university, and in the culture as a whole. We didn’t have our first female
cabinet member until it was probably I would say between 2000-2005 we had our first female cabinet member here.

Jessica mentioned a change in presidential leadership resulted in more women in management positions:

Four years ago we, uh, we got a new president who was from the [outside of higher education]. Uh, the president before that was actually from the pulpit or preaching background. And so when our new president stepped in and was used to working with women, um, that seemed to open the doors. We also had, uh, several more women put on our board of trustees.

She also explained that her institution appeared to be intentionally widening the gap between their associated denomination and the college itself, thereby enabling more women to assume supervisory roles:

So here’s, uh, it doesn’t always do a good job of this but the stamp from the university, and it’s becoming much more prominent, is they want that separation. This is not a church. This is a business. This is a university. So while we have the faith base of the [denomination] we’re not governed by [denomination]… I’ve seen the shift in the last probably ten years that we are making very clear lines between church and university. Um, and the women who are on, yes, they’re [denomination] and they may not take leadership roles in their church, but they are in business, you know, they are company presidents, they are, um, on boards in major markets in the U.S. They are decision makers in commerce, and they want that reflected in the university where they are also governing and also making decisions and also giving their money in huge donations and things like
that. So the line between church and university is becoming a much more bolder line.

Pam also tied her former college’s shift in gender views to new leadership, stating,

… New individuals in key positions. She was the interim that filled in [an executive level role] and she was influential in hiring several key positions… all of them were different in their thinking regarding women in leadership. So I think that helped effect the change. So, you know, of course they did bring in an outside person to be [an executive level leader], and the board of trustees still had that view [that women shouldn’t be managers]. But the fact that she was able to bring in individuals in key leadership positions I think has really helped… I think they’re going to be hiring differently. I think they’re going to be seeing women as potential leaders on the campus and so probably being active in trying to bring female leadership into key areas.

Two respondents more specifically revealed that theological convictions seeped into the ethos of their colleges. Continuing on with Pam, she explained that the Bible department of her former college espoused a complementarian position, which in turn impacted the college environment, particularly for female students:

… that’s probably what I experienced at my previous institution because they did believe that women in the church were not to be leaders and the affiliated denomination that they were a part of held that view but kind of was trying to move away from it. But that did very much bleed over into the institution.
But for the students I saw many of the students that were trained under this particular theology. They were given the opportunity to hear the other side of the theological debate, but they bought into this particular theology, and they seemed to be more content in their role as becoming a wife and a mother. And so that disturbed me because I felt like that was limiting their opportunities and limiting God’s ability to be able to lead them into something that they might be, you know, they might be really gifted in.

Roberta similarly disclosed,

I agree with most of what [I4] adheres to absolutely… some of the people that hold the biggest power and voices on our campus is our theology department. And they have a very specific view of, um, men and women’s roles within the church and society. And so I think that that has kind of, um, perpetuated a certain standard of roles for men and women still through the church but then in the workplace. I think the more you move up the chain of command the more distinct I think the view tends to be more towards that complementarian perspective.

Which is why I think, again, um, at our university we have our President who, again, is a wonderful human being. But under him all of his direct reports are all males, white males specifically.

As one can see, some participants believed their colleges embraced gender equality whereas others thought conservative Christian convictions prevented gender balance. Most described institutional shifts towards gender equality, extrapolating the change as a result of weakened ties with overarching denominations and new executive
level leadership. With that in mind, I can now explore the various obstacles these respondents encountered within evangelical academia.

**Obstacles encountered.** Informants were subjected to a variety of obstacles in their colleges that either caused them stress and/or they felt might (or actually did) prevent them from advancing. These challenges included home/work balance, being a woman, and thwarted ambition. According to them, the inability to progress in their careers was a result of cultural norms and theological beliefs.

**Home/work balance.** As previous research illuminates, women in Christian higher education struggle to balance their home and work responsibilities (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Hall, 2012; Moreton & Newsom, 2004b; Schutte, 2008). This study’s respondents confirmed that a major professional obstacle was negotiating their home and employment duties. Jo shared,

> I took this job for work/life balance, and it’s definitely better than the other jobs that I had before. So I’m grateful for that. But I think what’s hard for me as a growing professional, it’s hard to continue to balance. I want to take on all the tasks that are asked of me from [supervisors] to show that I’m willing to learn and grow and to take on more. But I don’t want to do that to the detriment of time with my family. I’m trying to kinda find that personal balance, um, that works best so that I can advance my career without sacrificing home time.

Crystal reinforced Jo’s struggle as she explained she had to curtail her side jobs in order to focus on her full-time position while also mothering her children:

> I haven't done much of that and I do miss that, but it was a rough transition… It was rougher for me than it was for him [her son]. He was so glad I wasn't over
his shoulder all the time. But I would rush home, pick him up at the bus stop and then bring him to a friend's home… Then as he got older I was able to leave him home a bit. But yeah, that was a challenge the first couple of years, and we actually paid our daughter to be his caregiver through the summer.

Sally also stated,

It was quite, quite challenging, and as an [position] I was out evenings, so yes, it was a challenge; fortunately I had a spouse at home, able to be at home, and was in agreement with what I was doing.

Moreover, she mentioned that later on in her career, her husband’s health declined, so he was unable to work, making her the only breadwinner in the home and thereby increasing her stress. Brianna, who was also pursuing an advanced degree, had to “put myself on the back burner a lot” in order to juggle her supervisory role with her home responsibilities:

Um, unfortunately I do a lot of that by not thinking about myself... Um, and quite honestly, I think a lot of it is just the Lord giving me strength. The other challenge is I have two kids ... And so one requires a lot more care than the other. And, um, so when I go home that’s what I have to do. I have to manage behavior and manage making sure homework is done and so those sorts of things. And typically when I deal with school is that I do that at night when the kids are asleep or early in the morning. And/or on the weekends. So I just kinda figure out when is the best time to do something, and that’s when I do it.

Martha exclaimed that it was only by “God’s grace” she was able to navigate her responsibilities at home and work. “We just got through it.” She actually worked until the moment both children were born, including while in the hospital about to give birth:
I remember being in the hospital in labor with my daughter, and they gave me an epidural, which slowed things down. They said, ‘well you’re not, you know, you’re not dilating fast enough,’ and so I was just laying there. So I said, ‘well then give me the phone.’ And I remember on the phone working with a staff member in the office and doing work over the phone.

She further expressed dismay that she was not able to pursue more education:

I’ve had, you know, with my life, where my balance didn’t allow me to give anymore was that I wanted to go on and get my masters for sure and possibly a Ph.D. But I never had time because I kind of was in a job where this job would be impossible at 40 hours a week.

While juggling multiple roles was difficult, several respondents explained that supportive spouses help them manage. Minvera shared,

I had an extremely, um, supportive husband for one. You know, if I wasn’t available [husband] was and if, um, you know, the daughter needed to go to dance lessons or my son needed to go to football practice and I couldn’t be there then he could be. Um, and there are times when I could break away during the day to do various things, um, but then come back and continue whatever needed to be finished for that day.

Michelle earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree while working as a full-time supervisor and also credited her children and former husband with supporting her:

I returned and got my bachelor’s degree, and then I went on and returned and got my, uh, Master’s degree while employed, while having kids at home. And, um, really just had their full support and the support of their father really. At that time
just knowing that was a good thing. I give all the benefit to them and my ex-
husband for just creating an atmosphere where that was welcomed, that getting an
education was, you know, a good move.

Roberta said,
… I have a very gracious husband, a very supportive family, and my student
leaders are incredible people that help to fill in the gaps. So that’s how it
happens, and there’s a lot of work on the weekends, work at night, work early
in the morning, yeah…

She also shared,
I feel directly supported by my supervisor but by the university I would honestly
say no because there’s a lack of awareness of how much—and I’m not the only
one in this—staff have to work and are under resourced this way. I’m not an
anomaly here. I truly believe—and I’ve done some research projects within our
university—I’ve come to believe that [14] runs on goodwill.

She has also arrived at a crossroads and is not sure how to maintain her current workload
and expand her family:
… and we want more kids, so this isn’t sustainable… I ask myself every weekend.
I go home and I ponder, ‘Lord, what do you have for me?’ So that’s exactly what
I’m trying to figure out this year is how can I make this job sustainable so I can
have a second child. I don’t know what I’m gonna do. Like I don’t know. There
isn’t a place for me here… I work like a dog… I think I have many
colleagues at my level of leadership that share very familiar views.

In her reflective exercise, she reiterated,
As I reflected on what I shared, I thought more about my love for higher education and how I have felt I have been able to use all of my gifting and abilities in my role as well continually be challenged and grow. But as my husband and I consider growing our family, I know that there is going to be a moment when I have to choose to take a back seat in higher education in a less demanding position or do a complete career change that would allow me the flexibility and financial compensation that my family needs. This is the choice that I am wisely considering in the next two years.

**Being a woman.** Along with traversing a treacherous path between home and work, respondents also shared that simply being a woman was a challenge within their institutions. Jessica returned to her undergraduate alma mater to assume a supervisory role and explained that being both young and female was difficult:

> Um, and for a long time [I12] was very male heavy on the administration side. And, um, and so for them to kind of let go of the reins to a female but also then to someone that young, it took some coaxing; it took some honestly impressing and kind of breaking down some of those walls before I really kinda was able to own the position. I often use the, um, analogy of a ship, you know, a ship doesn’t turn on a dime and so took, you know, a couple of turns to kinda get our groove going and kinda take our department we were wanting to head.

Correspondingly, Anna remarked:

> … part of it is gender related… But I will say that there were definitely colleagues on campus who, they were very clear, um, behavioral and body language and non-verbal cues regarding, you know, working with a woman, working for a woman in
authority, um, etc. So that is very sort of not roadblocks, but just like blank non-responsiveness.

In her reflective exercise, Annabelle clearly articulated the hidden stress women endure within evangelical academia:

There can be a long-term emotional and physical toll on women in mid-level leadership roles due to some of the added stresses. The subtle pressures to be good at many things, to prove one’s worth to the institution, and to maintain a positive presence and voice can be greater than it is for male colleagues. This can make it challenging for women who don’t move up the ladder to high-level positions because normally the expectation is to maintain the same energy level as when they began. It is normal for Christian institutions to make adaptations for men as they mature in their roles, while women often leave when they grow beyond their position.

Martha summed it up: “And the gender imbalance is just still a reality. You would think that we forgot to enter the 21st century.”

**Thwarted ambition.** Several respondents bemoaned the lack of advancement opportunities at their respective colleges, not unlike what previous studies have already determined (Johnsrud, 1991; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Sagaria, 1988). Carole put it bluntly:

Jen, I’m gonna brass tacks it for you. I really feel pigeonholed in my position here. This is what I’m here to do solely. I really don’t see any opportunity for growth for me personally. Um, I think if someone were to corner the decision-
makers on this they’d say because I do such a good job in what I do. Bam! This is where I need to be. But that’s pretty, um, mislabeling.

She also explained that she had recently been passed over for a promotion, the position given to a colleague with less experience:

… it was plain as the nose on anybody’s face; why would this younger woman be promoted over not just me, but there’s some other people that have years’ worth of experience. And they got completely overlooked. And this person with no experience whatsoever got promoted.

It should be noted that shortly after our interview, Carole accepted a position at a secular university in her area and is no longer working in Christian higher education as a result of her inability to advance.

Jessica shared a similar experience:

… I’m as high as I can go there. I would love to take on more responsibility and absorb more teams and move up as far as, uh, title. I would love to be an [advanced position] in our division, um, and would take on more, uh, responsibilities and, uh, obviously more pay… to grow I will need to either leave the university or we will need to do some redesign of programs to where I can be, uh, in charge of more people and more programs…. that was kind of the position that I asked for and was passed up on, so, um, when they redesigned that, uh, and they gave it to this other guy…

Brianna also believed she will not be able to move beyond her current position:
... in my role there is nowhere else for me to go. I am at the top of where I can go. And so I don’t know how long I’ll be satisfied with that necessarily. So that’s where the challenge is. What’s next?

She went on to state that colleagues of hers feel the same; they have reached the pinnacle and will not receive promotions, though they will be given more work:

... and they feel it’s the same thing. Um, basically there are a couple of things that may change. So the type of work you do may change. Um, the department in which you work may change. But all that happens is you get piled on more work but not necessarily more benefits or more prestige. So.

Additionally, Brianna suggested male managers don’t encounter an inability to advance professionally like their female counterparts do:

I think that, um, there’s an expectation that the male would acquire tenure or, um, you know, be vice president or whatever... there are more opportunities for them to seek those things out, um, even as far as funding from lots of grants. And they have the opportunity to apply and do all sorts of things...

Reasons why women don’t advance. Given the difficulty respondents experienced in their attempts to advance in their careers, six shed light on why that might be. Their rationales centered on cultural norms and theology. Culturally, Sharon stated it is rare for women to hold management roles because of “those same traditional and possibly small-minded views about, um, you know, traditional male/female roles.” Jane related it to women’s multiple roles in which women have to:
… take care of kids, and run your home, and have a full-time job. I don't have kids. If I did, I would be feeling pressure to not try to do more at work. I would be cutting back at work instead of trying to do more at work.

She then explained,

that's not necessarily the institution's fault, but I think it's something that's broken in our society, and I'm not sure how to fix it, but I know that that is a part of it. Um, I think there's sexism in our society as well, and that obviously leaks into the church.

Likewise, Brianna named traditional gender roles as a factor that prevents women from growing professionally:

I think a lot of that is just sort of engrained in us, but also there is that expectation, particularly with families, that the woman’s role is to take care of the family. And so the male, they kinda have one thing to take care of or to deal with where the woman is expected to wear multiple hats and to do them all well. And so, um, I think it’s a saying… ‘being a jack of all trades.’ And so women have to wear that—be that role, the jack of all trades—um, whereas a man can be a ruler of his trade.

Carole also remarked that women’s dual roles inhibit advancement:

I know women that beat themselves up day and night because they are keeping a management role and have a 5-year-old and an 8-year-old at home and ‘how do I be everything to everyone?’ But I don’t really think you can, and I mean that’s a tough call. And then some that start out on a, you know, on a certain, you know, professional path, and then have children and just pull out all together… So I really think that struggle with how to balance work and family really is difficult
for some… And again I don’t sit here in judgment. I just think those are some of the factors.

She further stated,

I also don’t think women are necessarily given the same opportunities. Um, just in even in some of the job searches I’ve seen happen over my career, you know, maybe they don’t have the experience because they haven’t been at it as long or whatever, and so they’re not tapped for that final interview for some of the roles or that kind of thing.

Jessica essentially repeated Jane and Carole’s assessment that women’s many hats deny them career advancement:

… when you look across a lotta leadership positions, women in higher ed, uh, especially at faith based colleges, most of them do have families, and most of them have had to support husbands while they were getting degrees first or while they were pushing through to get their jobs and they were second. They were taking care of kids and working at the same time, running families, um, and trying to have the professional career. And I think that’s a lot. And so they’re used to fighting for what they have. I look at very few women in leadership roles, whether they’re director, vice president, president, I look at very few of them and think they’ve had an easy road.

Offering another reason, Jane named women’s socialization as a factor in lack of upward mobility:

I think women aren't, um, confident; women aren't socialized risk takers. Um, they're not socialized to be confident, and I think those qualities helps you
advance. Lacking those qualities keeps you from advancing. Those are some of the things I think about that.

Brianna too seemed to concede that socialization plays a role in women’s lack of advancement, though it operates behind the scenes:

I think that’s institutional. That’s something that is somewhat engrained in us. There are some hidden—like to call it hidden curriculum really… And so basically it’s one of those things that we pick up as the norm that’s not clearly stated.

Jane also suggested the culture of higher education itself contributes to females’ inability to develop professionally:

I'm sure there's other things at play, like the corporate structure. Our institution doesn't necessarily follow corporate structure, but having a culture of, you know, of overwork is not a hospitable culture for someone that has a lot of work to do at home as well. Like, there's definitely a culture of overwork here, but I can't say that it's worse than other places. But I think, you know, making it okay for people to—for men and women—to say limit their hours in order to tend to home responsibilities has not become a widespread expectation that women would have freedom to, you know, take time when their kid is sick or take time for having a kid or take time for, you know, home responsibilities… the system is set up still for one person to work, and one person to stay home, um, even though only a minority of people have that arrangement.

She delved even deeper to suggest what enables “the system” to remain engineered against women:
I said earlier some of that has to do with unequal division of tasks at home, um, but I think we're still culturally looking to men to lead subconsciously or consciously. There’s still, like, a subconscious bias of, like, when you think of a person in charge, you know, you're thinking of a man. Um, and I think that that finds its way into hiring committees, and it's hard to avoid.

Like Jane, Carole alluded to a subconscious reason why women don’t advance; however, she suggested it comes from within women themselves:

… I just think we women in general tend to limit ourselves much faster than I think a man does, and that’s a crying shame. I really wish women would just kind of, I mean, we talk about this call that God has placed on our lives and really open ourselves up to that… Some it is to be the best wife and mother. And I applaud that. There’s definitely a need for that in our culture today. But some women, um, you know, want to share, you know, and maybe have a qualified childcare professional or a family member or somebody that’s going to help them along the way. And they want to stay in the workforce. And I applaud that. I don’t know if everyone is necessarily suited to be that full-time parent.

Jane also blamed the media for perpetuating:

older scripts about what men are like, what leaders are like, and what, you know, what it means to be a good leader. Um, like, women lead in different ways, and those ways aren't always valued as highly as the ways in which men lead or are always viewed as legitimate ways of leading. We have a vice president now who's a very gentle person, a woman. A gentle and sympathetic leader, and it's
fine. We love her, but, you know, she'll run into people who will tell her, like, she's not, you know, leading because she's more of a meeker personality, I guess.

Two participants proposed that men bar women from advancing. Jessica explained that some men do not enjoy change or appreciate being challenged, but in her view, women excel in those areas because they have to fight so hard for their supervisory positions. Hence, male leaders hesitate to promote women so that they can avoid change and challenges:

I hate it when people do women stereotypes. But I’m so doing men stereotypes right now... what I’ll say is in my experience men are afraid of change, or they don’t like change. They, um, there’s a lot of ego there, and it’s easy for them to, um, to feel like they’re being challenged. And I know that men can feel like they’re being challenged by other men; I’ve personally witnessed men in, uh, administration roles put men underneath them in positions who are much more laid back or who do not challenge them. I’ve seen that. So I think you have those egos there who don’t like to be challenged. And I think women in leadership positions they have had to fight for those positions. So they are used to pushing the boundaries. They’re used to calling people to the carpet and saying, ‘you’re not doing your best.’ And I don’t think that a lot of men want to be challenged like that. Um, women have to fight for the roles. Very few of them are just given to them. And I think that’s sometimes opposite in when men receive their roles. It’s not all the time for sure. You know, there are very qualified men in so many positions, um, but I think women have to fight. And so they come in with a very different mentality, and um, I think that can be scary to some guys.
Annabelle was more frank when she said,

I think it is male domination. That sounds so awful, but I think that just threatens the system, that maybe shows or makes certain men feel like they should be doing that if they aren’t. And I don’t know. When you’re asking that, I’m thinking that’s a really good question, and I think it has to do with power. It’s all about power, and if a woman shows visionary leadership—I think sometimes when men do, that they ally together and walk together in that. If a woman does it, it’s suspect so you don’t get that same partnership in the vision… What I’ve experienced not just in this situation but all along is when moving forward I have to do it alone, so I don’t have the benefit that a male may have in someone affirming, getting excited with you, and actually speaking into it because, you know, vision takes a lot of people.

Informants believed cultural norms are not the only reasons women are prevented from advancing within Christian higher education. Six respondents link thwarted ambition directly to conservative evangelical theology. Four of the women who believe evangelical doctrine hinders female professional development identity as egalitarian. The other two straddle the fence between complementarianism and equalitarianism.

When asked what she thinks hampers women from securing mid-level management roles at her institution, Annabelle stated, “… yeah, ‘cuz we are a conservative evangelical university… theology, I think that’s one angle. Our foundation is as a Bible institute.” When posed the same question, Sharon explained, … it stems from the way that scripture has been… you’ll still hear sermons about, you know, um, men as the head of the house and women in, you know, more
submissive roles. And, um, you know, I think a lot of it comes from the church.
And so then institutions that were set up in those traditions kind of followed along
with that.

Jane, Carole, and Brianna, expressed a similar sentiment as Sharon and Annabelle:
That goes back a long way. I think it's tradition, but I think it's tradition that is
written about in the Bible, and so I think that people take that as that’s what it
should be, um, because, you know, in Bible times women were given props
for, you know, minding their business and being busy at home and Proverbs 31
and, you know, taking care of everything at home, that was, you know, that was
really commendable. And so I think churches today have kind of extrapolated
that and said, ‘this is still commendable. This is, like, what women should be
doing.’ So I think that becomes, you know, the dream for some women, even if
it's not your dream, there's, like, pressure that it should become your dream…
your home is prioritized higher for women, whereas for men being able to, like,
provide income is really valued for men in Christian circles. So, it's not
surprising at all that you won't find many, like, top level, like, I think there's
probably like two CCCU presidents that are women. There are not many. (Jane)
Some of it is the church’s perspective on women… Like I said, I know a lot of
women in my circles that have upbringing in the church… I mean the church has
a loud voice in our subconscious. It’s much louder than I think we give it credit
for. (Carole)
And again, I really do think it goes back to the theology that we all kinda adhere
to, um, again going back to the interpretation of those Scriptures… Um, and so
that is somewhat the expectation, and it’s still lived out even today that the men will be the ones in leadership, um, and the women, somewhat secondary… I think that lends itself to how we think, um, in higher education, particularly in Christian higher ed. And even in the church, it really does relate back to those indications that women are to be submissive, and they should obey and listen to the male.

(Brianna)

Jessica hypothesized that not only does theology preclude women from advancing, but it does so because policies are based those dogmas:

I think being a conservative university. [I12] is [denomination] based… The [denomination] itself does not, uh, allow many women to lead in that church.

And so, um, I think that that kind of spilled over into the university. They try not to make the university a church, but sometimes it’s hard when your constituents are all conservative Christian based. And so I think for a long time, um, that stigma carried over into the university. So, you know, you’ve got our governing board, you’ve got our administrators, our faculty, our staff all very deep in the [denomination]. So that, you can’t help, you know, but have that tradition and those, um, policies, if you will, put in place here at the institution. Um, and it is, you know, we say we are a [denomination] faith based university. So it’s to be expected… there are just things in the church that don’t carry over well for a university. Women in leadership positions is one of those things.

**Campus climate.** Beyond discussing why they believed mid-level female managers struggle to advance professionally in Christian higher education, participants also spoke of the campus climate at their institutions. Earlier studies evidence the
atmospheres in conservative Christian colleges are taxing for women (Eliason, Hall, &
Anderson, 2012; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, &
Cunningham, 2010; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). The experiences of
women in this study validate current research. Several respondents with an equalitarian
outlook described their college environments as “chilly.” Jane shared,

… I think there's a, um, like a chilliness…. like, if our VP and provost and
president and my boss were all men I would feel more intimidated to speak up
about things and they're not, you know. I think having, you know, more women
around me helps me feel more confident in just saying what I think. I don't feel as
on the spot if I talk because I'm not, like, the only woman in the room… I feel
more freedom just to be who I am and say what I'm going to say and not feel like
I'm, you know, speaking for my whole gender or, you know, not feel intimidated.

Brianna similarly described her campus as “chilly” while also highlighting that
other campus constituents besides woman find the college culture exigent:

… the climate is chilly, but it’s secondary to the other issues. I think the issues of
race and culture has a louder voice, and so that takes precedence. But it is
definitely chilly for women too, um, because we have some, you know,
discussions where even female instructors are challenged by male students…

Carole was quite frank in her portrayal of her campus’s climate when she said,

“I’m going say it’s like a cold fall day as we head into winter.” She did, however, further
elucidate that some progress has been made recently with the addition of more females to
the Board of Trustees and recent promotions of women, yet, “… I think we have a long
road ahead.”
Anna believed her VP was supportive of her, got along well with her colleagues, and felt her contributions were valued, but simultaneously remarked,

I also had to tread carefully and be honest about who I was without, um, revealing enough about myself to be put in a box. You know. Somebody, you know, somebody who is this, or who is that, or who believes this or who doesn’t believe that. So I tread very, a very neutral, respectful line…. Treading carefully to be respectful... if I’m assertive, does a male person see that as being a bitch?

Besides the possibility of being inappropriately labeled for being assertive, another reason she had to “tread carefully” was because she described herself “as somebody who’s not particularly religious,” and in fact found this to be formidable since:

…there were a lot of judgments and narrow perspective. Not a lot of acceptance for even different faith walks. So if you were on the liberal side, you might not respect a more conservative side. And if you were on a conservative side, you might not respect a more liberal side. And I found that to be kind of a hubristic, uh, judgmental environment at times… I think that was probably the hardest perspective for me to handle at an evangelical school, was the sort of ‘we’re right and you’re wrong,’ um, vibe that some, some religious people can have.

Annabelle, who identified as a “mild egalitarian” and who greatly enjoyed her role working with students, still said, “…has it been worth it in this environment? Ehhhh, I don’t know. I can’t just jump on board with that and say, ‘yes it has been.’” In fact, at the time of our interview, she was contemplating searching for a new position because:

… over the past 6-7 years it’s just become clear it’s not an environment where it’s supportive…. I don’t know. I don’t want to spend the rest of my career
weathering that. I think I’m ready to feel like I’m not swimming upstream all the
time..... I love this niche that I have. But I don’t think I want to do it here. It’s
swimming upstream.

Moreover, Roberta spoke of her campus as possessing a “culture of fear:”
[I4] also has this kind of culture, like, it’s not spoken but I feel it, like this culture
of fear. And so if you have a little bit of power, meaning whether it’s budgets,
resources, personnel, people hold onto them very tightly… there’s a lot of fear of
the unknown. I think because there historically has been a lack of transparency in
a lot of things. Whether it’s who gets pay raises and why. Why do salaries start at
a certain level when, you know, my male counterpart comes in and automatically
gets a pay raise and a promotion. Um, so there’s a lot of things behind closed
doors that has never been given full disclosure… employees only can guess and
then out of guessing I think is that fear that comes up.

She went on to explain that:

there’s a certain personality type that is successful on this campus, and it is like
the good Christian nice person, you know. And so you have to be very nice, um,
especially as a person of color. So if you bring a little bit of heat, if you cause a
little too much tension, if you ruffle a little too many feathers you’re gonna hit
roadblocks. Whether it’s with faculty or with staff or with, you know, systems
that are in place, people aren’t as willing to work with you. And this is just what
I’ve observed, like from my little vantage point… And that’s why my boss left
actually. She was this amazing powerhouse of a woman… just a wealth of
knowledge, um, and experience and just one of the most incredible people I’ve
ever gotten to meet in my personal life. She’s like the kind of person that you read about in books in history, you know…And she was, you know, given a lot of projects and responsibilities not just within our division but across the university… And she just was getting a lot of notoriety and as this very influential woman and has just this, you know, incredible presence and just wonderful spirit. Um, she was fully silenced – silenced – silenced. As soon as she started to shine she was not given as many opportunities to shine and to use her giftings and so, of course, [another college] sought her out and, of course, she left.

However, not every respondent who espoused an egalitarian viewpoint had a negative outlook on her work environment, which contradicts other researchers’ results. Crystal remarked,

I would say here at [I9] under the current administration, I feel like there are absolutely no restrictions. I don't feel that it's an issue. I feel like it's more about how I perform and what I bring to the table and not really in any way affected by gender issues.

Likewise, Minvera felt,

Very comfortable. Um, I have the person I report to, um, is quite easy to deal with. … I’ve not really had any issues, um, that I can recall…it’s been a very good tenure. I’ve enjoyed, um, my position. Um, I feel like I’m respected. I feel comfortable.

Mia also described enjoying her campus and the benefits her position brings:
And where I’m at now I’m happy…. I enjoy it and ultimately if I were to stay there for the long haul, my son’s education would be paid for. And they also have good, um, 401K matching plan... I feel as if I’m valued and I’m happy there. I’m helping people… I like the family time I have with my son. I like that I have no stress, and I can have happy time with my son.

Martha, too, had no complaints about campus climate at her institution, though she also noted the gender disparity in positions. “I don’t sense any tension. I just know that there’s not very many upper-level female managers and then at the lowest level of staff are almost all, 100% female.”

Rebecca, the sole complementarian who shared her thoughts on her work setting, stated,

I feel very respected and highly valued. Um, and I don’t think it’s because I’m a female. I think it’s because people view, um, the work that I do as being worthy of that respect. And I think, too, um, a personality that is welcoming and, um, I’m willing to listen if people have a disagreement or they truly have a question, something they don’t understand. I feel they know I have an open door policy and they can just drop in anytime, and we can sit down and talk. So I don’t think it’s value because I’m a female; I think it’s just value because of the credibility I’ve brought to the position.

She went on to explain that she has seen an increase in the number of female leaders at her institution yet also admitted she is not sure how other women may be experiencing her campus:
… I have seen improvements over the years the number of female representatives I see at mid-level, upper-level, and my experience has been so positive that maybe I just don’t see that as an issue here and maybe it is and others feel differently. I don’t know. But I know from my personal experience it’s been nothing but positive for me…

Lastly, Jo, who stands between the complementarian and egalitarian positions, also felt comfortable at her campus. She stated, “…not much to comment on that I can really think of; um, I have no complaints really. I work with probably an equal number of males and females, and I don’t feel any, you know, negative or positive pressure or influence, um, from being a woman in the workplace.”

What might be the most fascinating observation is that the participants who aligned with an complementarian perspective and felt positive about their campuses also disclosed discriminatory experiences to be discussed below.

**Discrimination.** Previous research indicates that discrimination is wide-spread in conservative evangelical colleges (Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Hall, 2012; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Longman & Anderson, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Wood, 2009). Indeed, the experiences of respondents in this study support the literature. Regardless of their theological perspectives, fourteen participants described instances of discrimination. Their experiences were generally either covert, meaning the discrimination could be viewed as subtle, or overt, meaning the discrimination they faced was relatively blatant. Some participants even linked the discrimination they experienced or observed to conservative dogma.
Covert discrimination. Respondents faced covert discrimination that seemed to fall into a variety of categories: female stereotypes, being dismissed and feeling unheard, the glass ceiling, pay disparity, and the lack of women in leadership positions overall.

Female stereotypes. Several respondents addressed stereotypes of women as problematic within their colleges. In her reflective exercise, Rebecca shared that her college used to hold a women’s only event for female staff members, the name of which will not be mentioned in order to protect her confidentiality but clearly indicated a prominent stereotype of women within evangelical circles:

I am not sure why it stopped, but I was a bit relieved. It always felt a little bit weird. As I think I mentioned in my interview with you, I don’t really think that there is reason for a lot of gender distinction in the workplace, so this just felt wrong to me.

Sally explained that in her department women tend to be employed more than men due to meager wages, so her area of expertise is now viewed as a “women’s field.” Moreover, she extrapolated that women often accept positions for poorer pay because their earnings are not the family’s primary source of income. In this way, especially in evangelical environments where women are often deemed second class citizens, women are pigeonholed into low-salaried jobs because those roles are viewed as “women’s work.”

Similarly, Jessica shared that most of the female employees on her campus are employed in positions where the duties are typically “female type work:”

… a lot of the women are in maybe, like, coordinator roles, so they’re not administrative assistants but they’re not management level, so coordinator roles.
They do a lot of stereotypical, uh, female type work. They’re meeting and greeting people. They are planning, you know, their departmental events. They are, um, you know, doing I guess sort of stereotypical female things as opposed to being decision makers, managers, that kind of thing.

Annabelle also exposed how women are typecasted:

I look at some of the women that have been hired at [I4] in the last couple of years both in co-curricular and in academics, and they seem to fare better if they take on a posture of a supporter.

Additionally, she explained how female mid-level managers at her institution are deemed able to accomplish much with very few resources:

The women folk can do the administrative work. I’m saying that sometimes it’s viewed that a woman can be fantastic at making a lot out of a little. Women can maximize. Women can go the extra mile. Like we’ve been trying to get our secretary back full-time because they took away some of our resources, and I think the subtle message is, ‘Well, you guys can do that.’ I think there’s an unconscious thing that a woman can do a lot of her own administrative work, secretarial support help.

Brianna provided a very specific example of how a colleague stereotyped her because she was advocating for a student. The colleague “rudely” emailed her to state that “if all a student did was cry for me,” she would yield to the student’s request. She felt this interaction was gender related because, “they said that, I felt it was like a stereotype–women are soft–and so when people cry, you’re moved by their emotion, and you make that judgment based on the tears.”
Crystal believed, “the men are the ones that are considered the leaders and, you know, women are to do this and this and the men don't do this or this or this. It was just like, really?”

Roberta offered an illustration of a woman at her college who was able to advance but supposedly she was only able to because she was “nice,” seemingly promoting the stereotype that “nice” woman are the most acceptable:

… a dear friend that I’ve known a long time and she’s thankfully actually been able to move up the ranks at [I4] , which is very exciting. Uh, but she always acknowledges the fact that because of her personality type she’s been able to move because she’s very nice, and she’s very honest about that. She’s like, ‘I know I’ve been able to move up because I’m a nice woman.’

Lastly, Anna suggested merely being employed in Christian academia is viewed as suspect given the conservative evangelical stereotype that women are to be home, tending to the household and children:

I can’t speak to other evangelical schools. But, um, many [male employees are] parents of homeschooled children, and many male professors and administrators, whose wives are absolutely stay-at-home wives, and that’s fantastic. You know, that’s a terrific thing when a family makes that decision. But I don't think this was a deciding process, right? I think this was a cultural norm. And so that was, uh, that’s what makes me feel that way: knowing that there’re literally, um, you know, men are looking at us like, ‘my wife is at home baking bread and educating our children, and what are you doing?’ You know. So, you’re wrong, you’re
‘other’, you’re not woman appropriately Christian, in an appropriately Christian fashion.

**Being dismissed and feeling unheard.** While being stereotyped, participants also described being dismissed and feeling unheard. In fact, feeling invisible and unacknowledged is common place for women in higher education (Christman, 2003; Mullen, 2009; Vaccaro, 2010). Several participants spoke of occasions in which they felt minimized or ignored by colleagues or supervisors. Claudia mentioned thinking what she discussed with her male supervisor “didn’t quite get through.” She believed her department was under-resourced and would request funding to hire more staff, but:

He… really didn't understand maybe some of the pressures or the stresses that would occur. He was just happy that, you know, we were there and taking care of the situation. So because of that, I think he always felt like, well, I would just get it done and maybe when I said I needed help didn't really hear me because I had always gotten it done in the past… I didn't think he took me seriously sometimes… sometimes I felt not as important…

At times, Claudia discovered other departments within her division would have a staff position funded, leaving her feeling even more deflated.

Crystal shared,

It's almost a sense you have that you're being dismissed even if no one is saying that… I don't think it's even verbalized, but it's like, well, they only ask advice from the men, or we're only looking to fill this position with a man, kind of thing, that the men would have an advantage is something I've observed.
She then went on to offer an example. A senior administrator asked her to oversee an important university event; however, a male leader in other department was not amenable to working with her, though his assistance was needed in order for her to manage the event. As a result, she spoke with the senior administrator who in turn had a conversation with her colleague to rectify the situation. Here, she felt as though her coworker was being dismissive by his obvious refusal to interact with her.

Crystal also presented a less furtive illustration, explaining that despite her institution’s more open-minded beliefs about gender equality, some still maintain women should not be leaders as a result of conservative evangelical teachings:

… I would say there have been people, um, in some departments who were managers who felt that women should not be leaders, in leadership roles over other men… This is all under the radar, but actually, um, I used to supervise two individuals, and one of the individuals I was called to supervise was, I would say, of the opposite mindset. And I thought, ‘well, this will never work.’ So, um, as I began to work with that individual, I will say this, he was always very respectful, but I did notice a couple of times he would go to my male supervisor and express things. And it bothered me; most of the time [Crystal’s boss] would come back and pull me in. There were just a couple of times that that didn't happen. Um, so that was how he [her boss] helped us navigate through that bias [with] this particular man… I was very grateful that he [her male employee] was very respectful and positive, but there was a way of being respectful in person and then not doing something and I noticed that, unless my supervisor told him and then it became, ‘okay, well then I guess that’s the right thing.’ And my supervisor was
great. I would say 95% of the time he would pull me into it and put him [her male staff member] back in a place that was under my authority. But I would say that was not what, um, he [her male employee] believed should be happening. And again, he was never mean or disrespectful to me in any way in my presence. It was that passive, ‘I'm just not doing it. I know what I'm doing. I've been doing it forever; this is how it's done.’ And maybe that's just his personality as well, but I think it was also, in my opinion, as being reinforced by the teachings of his church.

Mia shared her experience of a male colleague in a meeting “where I was trying to talk, and every time I talked there was this guy who kept interrupting me.” She also discussed other experiences of mixed-gender discussions, including feeling ignored in one such meeting:

I’m sitting in meetings, and it’s normally staff, women who are staff who are disrespected… they’re [male peers] used to doing it, and they continue on and then after a while they don’t even realize they’re being rude and inconsiderate… I think there’s a layered approach to the women. Staff women are shut down. They don’t have respect. Faculty women are typically not shut down unless they just really have nothing to add. Um, administrative women are in that squishy area where I think you do have to prove yourself…

…it just was the tone of the conversation, um, there were other men in the room, and they were talking to each other. They weren’t really directing their conversation to me, which lead me to believe that potentially it was because I was a woman.
Anna spoke about the manner in which even body-language can be dismissive and described what she labeled a “passive aggressive” interaction with a male co-worker:

… part of it is gender related… But I will say that there were definitely colleagues on campus who, they were very clear, um, behavioral and body language and non-verbal cues regarding, you know, working with a woman, working a woman in authority, um, etc. So that is very sort of not roadblocks, but just like blank non-responsive… I had a male colleague who, you know, disagreed with a decision that was mine to make. But I had said ahead of time, like, ‘Okay, here’s the decision I’m making for the school. I wanted you to be the first to know.’” And then he stopped talking to me. Very passive-aggressive. So I went to his office one morning and said, ‘You know, I really want us to have a good working relationship, you know, I want your feedback. This is a collaboration.’ And he just said, ‘I have no idea what you’re talking about.’ And then would never talk to me again.

The glass ceiling. As previous research attests, professional advancement proves exceedingly difficult for women in Christian higher education (Johnsrud, 1991; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Sagaria, 1988). Almost half of the respondents shared experiences of being bypassed for promotions themselves or witnessing female colleagues collide head-first into the glass ceiling. Rebecca recalled feeling “slammed down” when a male co-worker with no experience in her particular area was placed into the management position for which she had interviewed. In fact, this individual did not even work in her department. Sally discussed a moment in her career when she was promoted to a supervisory position yet was not empowered to actually manage her staff, “That is how it
was. I had a title, but I didn’t have the supervisory capacity. It was not handed to me, and I think that may have been more a result of the supervisor over myself…”

Pam described several instances of gender disparity in professional advancement. To begin, she stated,

… the previous school that I was from was a little less sensitive to gender roles and, in fact, they’ve never had a female president. They, I think, [former female employee] who is the young lady I was talking to you about, is the first female dean…. In fact, I had one of the female chair persons tell me that she felt like she was limited in her ability to do her job there because of the fact that she was female. And at the time I didn’t really, you know, pursue that but there was always just that undercurrent that there was that group on campus that felt that way.

While Pam conceded that at her former institution women did achieve some modicum of success, mentioning a few “strong willed individuals that were females” in director positions, she still questioned whether their gender deterred their advancement:

I never saw them as being affected in their limitations but being a female, however, none of them ever, you know, the glass ceiling, so to speak, still seemed to be there because they didn’t rise to the top; they didn’t move up the ladder, so why they didn’t, I don’t know. It could have been they just weren’t, you know, qualified or what, or it could have been that they were female.

She further explained that while the complementarian belief was not predominant on her institution it seemed to still pervade campus because the theology department touted it.
As such, she considered conservative theology a reason why women struggled to progress at her former campus:

… theology department that actually taught that women were not supposed to be in leadership roles. I mean, they held to that theology. The rest of the campus I would say two-thirds of the campus didn’t agree with that at all…Well, there was one very vocal professor who taught it in his classes. And so you always had that persons–there were a number of students that really looked up to that professor so, you know, they would always–you knew who they were so to speak. I know I’m not really giving you specific answers, but in conversations with the students they would make themselves known that they believed in this professor’s theology, and you just kinda knew. So, you know, it very well could be, looking back, it could very well be perception on my part and not really, but I know other women felt that way there ‘cause we talked about it.

Anna also told of a female co-worker who was vying for a promotion but did not receive it despite her obvious qualifications and achievements, which might be a result of the unconscious institutional belief that women are not suited for supervisory roles:

I know the colleague that I mentioned who went up for [position]… I know she, she felt frustrated by what she felt was a lack of respect for female leadership… Um, there’s still an undertow. I think there’s still an undertow of there should be males teaching, there should be males leading the departments.

When asked what she thought the undertow was rooted in, she easily replied, “I think, you know, in talking with my colleagues who I could speak with about this and, you know, I think it is that sort of vocal minority of more conservative perspective.” Like
Pam’s former institution, Anna stressed that the conservative element on her campus was marginal yet somehow managed to become the most powerful.

Jessica expressed dismay that so many educated women on her campus remain in administrative assistant roles:

… a lot of the women are, uh, you know, administrative assistants. Um, there are very few decision-making women that I can think of on the staff side. Now in managerial roles, the percentage is probably a little bit higher. Um, but it’s male, uh, heavy on the staff, with the exception of, like I said, administrative assistants. I don’t love that looking over on the staff side it’s more administrative assistants. I don’t, you know, because there are women who have college degrees and the only position they can get is an admin. And I hate that.

She also clearly blamed the dearth of staff women in leadership roles directly on the glass ceiling:

I definitely think the glass ceiling is, uh, is on the staff side at [I12]. Um, there have been opportunities, uh, for women. I know for a fact that they have wanted to take on more leadership responsibilities, and those leadership responsibilities have been given to men.

She further expounded by citing her own experience in which she asked to take on additional tasks during a reorganization:

I, um, expressed interest with my [supervisor] that, uh, I would like to take a part of that on. And, um, it was made pretty clear that they had already picked, uh, a guy to take the lead on that. He had not been at [I12] as long as I have, and, um, I definitely think I probably was a better fit for the position. But for whatever
reason they didn’t open it up for, uh, interviews, discussions; it was definitely an assignment.

Jessica then linked the lack of women in leadership roles on her campus to conservative theology and conventional gender roles when she explained,

I think Christian education usually leans more on the conservative side, which does not push for women leadership traditionally… I think that state institutions, non-faith based institutions, I think that they probably are able to be much more progressive. I think partly because they don’t have the constituents that are conservative faith-based. Obviously they have them but it’s not quote, unquote, governed by that… I think women in leadership positions they have had to fight for those positions… They’re fighting against everything we’ve talked about. They’re fighting against tradition, they’re fighting against, uh, conservative mentality. Um, you know, women who are married and have children often get pushed towards they are taking care of the family as well.

*Pay disparity.* Not only did participants mourn that glass ceilings exist at their institutions, but they also lamented the pay inequality as well. Six specifically addressed this particular type of discrimination, affirming current research that demonstrates pay partiality persists in conservative Christian higher education (CCCU, 1998; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; Schreiner, 2002; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). Mia acknowledged that:

I don’t think I’m paid as much as the men… So I do have concerns about the pay scale between women and men at that campus… I’ve heard what other people’s salaries are, and they just don’t seem to compare to men’s.
Sharon felt similarly and wished that the Christian academy would not only hire more woman but pay them equally:

… what I’ve seen is women having to fight harder, women probably not getting paid as much and, I mean, honestly, in some cases not being valued or respected… they could hire more women and pay them the same that they would pay men for, like the same job, the same level of position. Um, and I haven’t done any research on that, but my guess would be it’s not equal, or it traditionally hasn’t been equal…

Minerva reiterated Mia and Sharon’s thoughts and believed her college was attempting to redress pay disparity, but it remained “a work in progress:”

I think if you look at pay grades and so forth, um, that there would be disparity there. I think there always is with women; it doesn’t matter where you’re at… I think Human Resources works really hard with the various Vice Presidents and with the Budget Committee and so forth, and I think they’re cognizant of the situation of the disparity that’s always been. Um, and they’re trying to be more intentional about seeing to it that those raises that should be happening, and that, um, they’re equitable between the genders. I still feel, um, we’ve not reached that goal 100% at all.

Martha confirmed pay imbalance continues to be problematic at her college:

Well, men are given more leadership roles and higher pay, and it’s just a known fact, but people just live with it… Even in positions within my own area or an area where I had to absorb it, like areas used to be separate, and then they were
combined into this area here. So I saw those salary levels; I saw definitely higher for the male versus the female.

After pondering why there are more men in management roles with higher pay at her college, Martha concluded it is:

Probably from just our patriarchal background, you know, with the church and the fact that, you know, it’s taken a long time for even the church to see that women can have a role in the church and in leadership.

Roberta reinforced Martha’s knowledge of pay disparity because:

… it’s been documented and taken to Human Resources where colleagues of mine who are overseeing larger areas have not received promotions nor pay raises. But then they hire, you know, a male counterpart and automatically, we are told by a certain supervisor, ‘oh no, you know, he has a family so we need to make sure he has a certain title and a certain pay level because he’s supporting a family.’ …It’s not like in the handbook like, ‘oh, if you are a male with a family you will get paid more. It’s more like you hear that like word of mouth. Unwritten rule.’

When asked how that “unwritten rule” was penned, she quickly replied, “I think it’s in our theology.”

Finally, Jessica concurred when she stated,

I know that the majority of the men in leadership positions are paid more than women in leadership positions. My equals on director level—I know the guys are paid more than I am.

Lack of women in leadership overall. Lastly, in the category of covert discrimination, researchers have already verified the absence of women in leadership
Positions within Christian higher education writ large (Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Johnson, 2011; Longman & Anderson, 2012; Smith, Filkins, Schmeltekope, & Bateman, 2005). Respondents also reported that there is a general shortage of women in supervisory roles across their institutions. When I asked Rebecca if she could suggest other female mid-level administrators at her college who might be willing to participate in this study, she replied,

It is interesting to me that as I think of names of people to pass on to you how few female managers I can think of at [I1]. We have two female cabinet members, but most of the departments are, in fact, led by men. Hmmm.

Pam explained that a former colleague of hers “was the first vice president there as well. So, you know, they don’t have a history of having female leaders on their campus.” She imagined that may be because the college’s governing body is all men. “Plus the board of trustees, I mean, you could look at all of the board of trustees, and they were all male, white males.”

The same apparently held true at Roberta, Sharon, Martha, and Claudia’s respective institutions:

…in all transparency of our university, but there’s, um, a lot of white males in high positions of influence and leadership. Um, there’s very few–actually there’s–I don’t think there’s any female leader that’s a higher up outside of the academic house. (Roberta)

I think that there probably are people here who have experienced that [the glass ceiling] whether it’s, um, on the academic side or not. Um, I mean, I don’t feel like the university is actively trying to prevent women from advancing in
leadership. But, you know, men still outnumber women on the school, you know, the Board of the university and at the cabinet level. (Sharon)

… just that like the hourly staff I think they’re all women. And the presidential cabinet level has historically been all men; right now they do have one woman on board, but it’s very lopsided; there’s no equality there… you do just find more men in leadership roles. (Martha)

I don't see that at the college I'm from there would ever be a woman president or even a vice president, actually. That has never happened. I've really never thought about a vice president of the college I worked at being a woman. I don't think that would happen… even the board of trustees, there are women on the board that are just liaisons—in a liaison position, but not actually members of the board… (Claudia)

**Overt discrimination.** Beyond covert discrimination, participants’ endured overt discrimination as well, which current research establishes is prevalent amongst this cohort of colleges (Eliason, Hall, & Anderson, 2012; Hall, 2012; Hall, Christerson, and Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995). In particular, informants seemed to encounter or observe discrimination that was related to hiring, promotions, and employability in a manner more pronounced than what Roberta referred to as the “unwritten rules” of hiring, promoting, and employing women. The examples provided will make this differentiation more clear. To begin, Pam shared a poignant example of a woman at her previous college who was barred from advancing beyond her position because the committee tasked with hiring specifically determined that a female would not be suited for the role. Her
colleague eventually left the institution, and Pam followed shortly thereafter, deciding she could not work for a college that would explicitly hinder women’s advancement.

Parallel to the situation with Pam’s co-worker, Sally mentioned, “Well, for example, the college charter says only a male from the denomination would be college president.” Here, it is obviously discriminatory campus policy that prevents women from progressing to the highest levels of college leadership. Apparently, a similar guideline exists at Claudia’s college, for she stated,

But on the other hand I do believe in higher ed. there are probably some positions that certain Christian higher ed. institutions would never have a female in. As I said, in my institution I don't think the president or even the vice president would be female, mainly because they have to be ruling elders of their church to have a vice presidency and the president as well, so that knocks out females right there.

Annabelle heartbreakingly revealed yet another example of explicit discrimination related to employability, stating, “Even some [male students] have told me outright that they do not believe I should be in my role because of my gender.” She went on to describe some adjustments she was making to her department structure that upset some male students. Rather than respectfully express their concerns to her, “a couple of what I’ll call the ‘alpha male’ students who were leaders came in, and I would say they were very abusive. They were kinda threatening.” Further, “even some of the [male] leadership admitted that gender was driving that situation … Nothing came from it. There was no resolution... I got crucified for taking leadership.”
Brianna briefly demonstrated that Annabelle’s experience is not unique, for she remarked, “we have some, you know, discussions where even female instructors are challenged by male students.”

In an additional case of outright bias, Rebecca divulged an experience she had during an interview earlier in her career at her institution where discriminatory and thereby illegal questions were asked of her:

My second interview for my first position obviously was one of those all day things where you are talking to the director and the whole staff and everything like that, and I had an interview with one of the VPs, and one of the questions he asked me was how my husband felt about me working full-time.

Likewise, Carole shared,

I’ve seen it in places where, um, let’s say a woman is of childbearing age and someone has not been considered for a role because what if she gets pregnant and then we’ll have to deal with maternity leave and that kind of rationale. As horrible as that is, I mean that’s sometimes been discussed in terms of whether or not a candidate should be moved forward in the process… when it was first said to me, I said, ‘Well, you know,’ and they understand legally they can’t. But the fact that it came up in conversation, its mind boggling.

Roberta encountered a related conversation, only this exchange occurred between her and her male supervisor:

… so when I got pregnant and I told, and even though I have a great relationship with my boss, when I told him I got pregnant he’s like, ‘oh, so you’re gonna quit your job, right, so when you gonna call it quits?’ And I was like, ‘I have [an
advanced degree directly related to her departmental work]. This is my calling. Just because I’m gonna have a child, that has nothing to do with my employability.’ And so, but it wasn’t even like a question to him…

It seems these overt discriminatory occurrences are all based upon the conservative theology addressed in Chapter One. When discussing gender disparity in Christian higher education overall, Sharon succinctly affirmed,

it stems from the way that scripture has been interpreted as far as, you know I mean, you’ll still hear sermons about, you know, um, men as the head of the house and women in, you know, more submissive roles. And, um, you know, I think a lot of it comes from the church. And so then institutions that were set up in those traditions kind of followed along with that.

Yet despite acknowledging the connection between inequality and conservative dogma, participants appeared to experience cognitive dissonance, which can be defined as psychological tension stemming from seemingly opposing beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously (Festinger, 1957).

**Cognitive dissonance.** The apparent cognitive dissonance expressed by participants seemed largely focused upon their theological persuasions. Rebecca, an espoused complementarian, believed that women should not hold pastoral positions within the church, though she was comfortable with women in leadership roles within Christian higher education provided they are “qualified” to be there:

I think to the extent that a woman is capable and qualified, um, I don’t see any problem with that… I don’t t have a problem with women being in leadership, but
if they are going to be in leadership they need to be **qualified** to be there [emphasis added].

She further explained that,

I think there is a benefit to any leadership group to having a mixed group. Um as far as cabinet level or any group of people really. I think if you get all men together or all women together you are missing some perspectives… By the same token, the idea of a placing someone in a position—obviously you aren’t going to place them there just because of their gender—but, um, sometimes decisions being made based on gender, um, taking that maybe heavier into account than qualifications I don’t think that benefits anyone.

Interestingly, when we discussed the cultural shift she perceived in the church and her institution that allowed greater freedom for women to hold leadership position—a stance she personally maintained—she believed that in the workforce men and women should be treated equally, yet she labeled her view “liberal:”

Um, I think it’s a good thing. I mean [pause], the [sighs], Oy, that sounds liberal. Yeah, if women want to work, if women need to work, they need to be allowed to work. They need to be treated as equals. They need to have every, y’know, whatever leads them to make the decision to work or to stay home if they make that decision to work that needs to be honored and not questioned, ‘Why aren’t you home with your kids?’

It appears there is tension around just how equal a woman is permitted to be in Rebecca’s world. She should not be a pastor, can only secure a leadership position if she is “qualified,” and her gender should not be accounted for. Yet management profits from
both genders’ involvement, and indeed, women in the workforce ought to be treated as equals. In fact, she takes the “liberal” position that a woman’s decision to work ought to be honored, violating the complementarian outlook that demands women remain relegated to a secondary role within the home, the Church, and the marketplace.

Further, Rebecca fascinatingly claimed,

I know of a couple of women here who are very, um, focused on advancement… and moving up, which is fine, and there’s nothing wrong with that, but I think they probably have a different perspective on things… I mean, I’m not aware of any big pockets where things are particularly difficult or particularly wonderful for, um, for female leaders, so um, I’m not sure I can speak to that. I don’t see any huge ups or downs, I guess…. I feel like I’m treated as a competent professional and not as a competent professional who happens to be a female. So I’m also somewhat clueless sometimes because I’m not looking for it so I’m just not aware of it [chuckles]… I don’t perceive a lot of differences based on gender.

However, towards the end of the interview in which I inquired about how evangelical colleges can be more supportive of women in leadership roles, Rebecca mentioned a TedTalk she had recently viewed (She emailed me the link so I could watch it as well). In the lecture, the speaker discussed the different ways men and women need mentors in the workplace. Said Rebecca:

There was a TedTalk that I saw a week or so ago about the differences in the way men and women are mentored in the workplace and the things that they are taught to focus on. I can’t remember the specifics. That just really spoke to the skills that women perceive are important to advance.
Hence, Rebecca viewed a speech on the differences between men and women in the labor force but remains unable to articulate said differences. That may be why she struggled to express her emotions about the promotion she was denied for a few years, waffling between feeling “rejected” and “slammed down” and suggesting the institution made the decision “out of desperation out of their financial situation.” For Rebecca, women’s leadership ability is limited to narrow spheres where gender differences aren’t perceived and yet simultaneously undergird many experiences.

Claudia appeared to face the same discordance as Rebecca. She thought women are able to be leaders within their institutions yet should not have authority over men:

As far as faculty and on being a chairman of, a chair of a department, that kind of thing, I don't see any problem with that at all. In fact, I think that should happen… I know there are women that are very qualified, but scripturally I just feel like God put women here to be a helpmate to men or to man, but I don't think a woman should be head over a man.

Notice she too only granted positions of influence to “qualified” women. Neither Claudia nor Rebecca ever remarked that a man ought to be “qualified” to be a manager. Even still, Claudia later acknowledged that a college is not a church and admitted she had not given this topic much thought, which may be why dissonance was present:

… well, the college is not the church; however, I don't know. I'm not sure. I really had never even thought about it until you asked me this. I really can't see it happening ever, but I know there is a distinction between, you know, that the college is not the church. I think the college was founded upon Christian principles and founded upon—and what came about through much prayer and I
think it was God ordained, but I don't see that a woman would be [an executive level leader] because it's such a conservative school.

Michelle also unknowingly expressed cognitive dissonance during our interview. She sat squarely within the complementarian (and heteronormative) camp when she stated,

Um, I think for me, um, the scripture that refers to the shepherd, the lead shepherd being the husband of one wife. In my mind I think that clearly separates that position from any other in that you have a wife, therefore, you’re a husband, you’re a male. And I haven’t been able to get beyond that.

Yet, she also voiced,

I guess just understanding that God created us with certain gifts and abilities, and it was irrelevant whether you were female or male, but you were given gifts, and we were called to use those gifts in whatever role we were intended to use those gifts. So, again, just other than the senior pastor position I really felt that if a person was gifted to do that position it didn’t matter to me if they were male or female.

Michelle’s statement is quite contradictory. Gender does not matter; what is paramount is giftedness, but women still should not be pastors. Perhaps by more deeply examining their beliefs, Claudia, Rebecca, and Michelle can resolve their apparent internal conflict.

Annabelle may have engaged in more self-reflection than Rebecca, Claudia, and Michelle because she considered herself to be a “mild egalitarian” but has not yet completely embraced that position. In just one statement, her cognitive dissonance is clear:
I think I’m a mild egalitarian, and that’s because, I don’t know what’s keeping me from fully saying I am. Um, I [brief sigh]. There’s some passages that I need to spend more time in. I tend to think women can fulfill any function in the church, though, including senior pastor or whatever it is.

Keep in mind that this is the same participant whom we read earlier was told by male students she was ineligible for her job because she is a woman. Annabelle also clearly articulated that “male domination” is threatened when a woman displays “visionary leadership.” She discussed an exodus of women employees from her institution and linked it to evangelicalism along with “… that element of having to work a little harder, push yourself more. It’s not a level playing field, I don’t think,” but she has not entirely adopted egalitarianism.

Egalitarian respondents also evidenced cognitive dissonance related to theology. Carole pronounced,

… I fully support women that believe that that is their calling. Um, I knew, like I knew my first name, that I was meant to be in the role that I was in…. God definitely gifts us all in different ways. And who am I to say, um, but if you don’t have a penis you really can’t do this?

But she also admitted,

I was raised Baptist. Um, so it’s more kinda I’m not, um, offended by their—by how they, um, we’d worship on Sundays or that kind of thing. Um, and as I say that I’ve been in churches where they’ve had a Senior Pastor that is a woman and, um, it’s not that I’m uncomfortable with it, um, I actually currently attend a church that doesn’t believe in it.
It is interesting that Carole supported women’s ability to be pastors yet attended a church that defends the complementarian credence and further still is not affronted by it.

Fellow egalitarian Jessica seems to be situated within the same dilemma as Carole. She does not think a woman’s gender should impede her ability to pastor a church, and yet she feels uncomfortable attending a church with a female minister:

I do not have any biblical foundings that it is wrong to have a woman, you know, lead singing or a woman do communion or a woman, you know, preach to the pulpit. I don’t feel like that’s wrong… I think that there are places for women in the church and I think there are places, you know, I don’t think God has any, um, he’s not gonna strike anybody down if a woman, you know, speaks from the pulpit. Um, I am more comfortable worshiping, um, at a church where it is a male preacher.

Lastly, another trend appeared when considering possible cognitive dissonance: using feminist language without actually espousing feminism. It appears that work of the women’s movement has seeped into evangelicalism beyond the terms egalitarianism and biblical feminism because several women employed linguistics generally equated with feminism. For example, Martha stated that it is the church’s patriarchal background that causes what she states is a gender imbalance in Christian higher education, and Claudia used the word “discriminate” to describe what some female faculty at her institution encounter. Martha is situated within the egalitarian camp whereas Claudia is a complementarian. Additionally, Jessica uttered the phrase “glass ceiling” three times during the course of our conversation, and Pam explained egalitarianism by stating it is “women are more in equality with men.” Patriarchy, discriminate, glass ceiling, and
equality are steeped with feminism, yet none of these women ever labeled themselves as feminists. Perhaps that is because there is significant stigma attached to the term feminism within conservative evangelicalism, or it might be these women simply were not aware that their language is indeed that of a feminist.

Undoubtedly, these participants exhibited cognitive dissonance throughout their interviews, which is actually typical for evangelical women. Creegan and Pohl (2005) discuss Christel Manning’s work in which she examined, how conservative women reconcile seemingly contradictory positions on gender issues. In her research, she encountered women who simultaneously affirmed the gender understandings of religious traditionalism while maintaining a feminist identity in the workplace. (p. 44)

Manning found that evangelical woman in the academy navigated multiple selves and would employ “bracketing” to negotiate their various identities where they set aside “one self, or of bracketing one set of commitments, in order to live faithfully in another deeply valued community” (p. 45). Quoting Manning directly, the author’s relate,

Just as secular or liberal American women must juggle many different roles and do not adopt a consistently feminist identity, so religious conservatives are not consistently antifeminist and are frequently shifting between active, assertive, independent roles that are traditionally reserved to men to more passive, submissive, nurturing roles deemed appropriate for women. (p. 45)

It is possible then that the seemingly conflicting thoughts of some participants are their attempt to traverse dualistic worlds. What might be even more captivating than their
dialectical dilemma is what I have termed their internalized subjugation, which I will address in the following section.

**Internalized subjugation.** When dissecting the stories of respondents, I noticed two patterns emerge. First, I observed participants describe themselves in terms typically associated with women. Second, I witnessed informants engage in gender stereotyping, largely pigeonholing fellow women. As a feminist, I have labeled these observations *internalized subjugation* because I suspect these behaviors are a result of the unconscious, sexist socialization all women endure, and perhaps deeply religious women all the more. As such, women have internalized our own subjugation, and we then project it upon other women. While the means and impact of socialization are beyond the scope of this study, research substantiates sexist stereotypes are embedded within our collective and individual subconscious (Bargh & Raymond, 1995; Rhode, 2007; Stern & Karraker, 1989; Witt, 1997).

**Feminized self-descriptions.** It is common knowledge that men are viewed as powerful, competent, aggressive, strong, resilient, completive, and intelligent (Diekman, & Eagly, 2000; Schein, 1973). Women are seen as nurturing, accommodating, sensitive, emotional, submissive, and meek (Alvesson & Due Billing, 1997; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Given the patriarchal culture all women are submerged within, particularly conservative evangelical women, it is not surprising that study participants claimed feminine attributes rather than traditional masculine characteristics.

Rebecca stated that, “I’m not hard-driving; I’m not competitive… I settle and I’m content. I don’t rearrange the furniture at home and those sorts of things.” As such, she actually has not sought professional advancement. Brianna remarked, “I am typically
very quiet. I don’t like necessarily confrontation.” Likewise, Pam mentioned, “… I’m aggressive to get my work done, to get my, you know, vision implemented, but I don’t have an aggressive personality… I would say I’m approachable.” Claudia admitted, “And I have a hard time saying no to people” and that “I don't like to be critical of people, I guess. I find it hard to confront people with maybe something they're doing wrong, even though I know that's a necessary part of my job…” Jo said, “I’m a people pleaser for sure,” and Crystal called herself “positive” and an “encourager.” Michelle shared, “I think, too, um, a personality that is welcoming and, um, I’m willing to listen if people have a disagreement or they truly have a question, something they don’t understand.” Roberta commented, “I was bossy as a little girl” and also said she has “positivity” and a “responsibility tendency.”

Only one participant selected traits more commonly associated with males to describe herself. Jessica pointed out that, “I thrive in stressful situations. I thrive with challenges. Um, and honestly as a young leader I was, um, I was bent on proving myself… self-confidence has never been an issue for me.”

Given that both men and women are acculturated to these gendered attributes, it is understandable that respondents labeled themselves as they did, particularly in light of their phallocentric religious environment. However, one might suspect that since so many participants aligned themselves with egalitarianism they may have also used traditionally masculinized terms to describe themselves as well. It may be because they remain so engulfed in conservative theology that they are unknowingly limited in how they can depict their personalities. However, perhaps had there been several more interviews they may have expanded upon their self-descriptions. Certainly, as critical, feminist researcher
I cannot claim knowledge of their inner worlds. I merely offer a possible interpretation of why they employed feminized traits rather than masculinized ones.

*Gender stereotyping.* Not only did informants portray themselves using feminized terms, but they also engaged in gender stereotyping, depicting fellow women negatively. They also pigeonholed women into traditional gender roles despite their egalitarian framework.

For example, when discussing why Mia worried about the pay disparity at her institution, she stated it is because:

I know women, well, especially in the Christian environment, women are typically very quiet; um, its passive-aggressive environments where if there’s a problem you normally don’t tell the person you have the problem with. You go and you complain about it to somebody else or you say it in a way that seems like a compliment on its face but in actuality it’s a slap in your face, a backhanded comment, so, um, I have noticed that.

Here, Mia seemed to imply that because women are “quiet” and “passive-aggressive” they will not confront workplace challenges like pay inequality. She continued on to claim that women complain in ways that appear complimentary but are really insincere. She also offered an example to elucidate her comment:

Women, on the other hand, I don’t find out that they have a problem with… something our office is doing until months later when I hear it from somebody else and somebody else, and then I might pull up an email and see that there’s an email written in passive-aggressive language… women are very petty and, um, I don’t get that with the male population on campus, and I don’t know why it is.
Obviously, I cannot invalidate Mia’s experiences with other female staff on her campus. She clearly has had encounters she deems “passive-aggressive” and “petty.” One could also frame women’s alleged passive-aggressiveness as an adaptive mechanism to survive in a patriarchal system. Rather than challenge her interpretations, I returned to the original pay disparity discussion since she had stated that female mid-level managers are not valued on her campus, asking her to link women’s indirectness to pay inequity. She explained,

I look at it as men seem to be able to advocate for themselves better in a Christian environment so when they go with a low ball offer they come back and say, no, this is what I need whereas women in the mid-management, lower positions will accept what they’re given…

Later on in the conservation she expanded this idea when she clarified why she thought female mid-level administrators on her campus are likely to be indirect and passive-aggressive:

Well, part of it could be their Christian upbringing and that you need to be respectful and obedient. I don’t want to say they’re in that position for a reason, but they haven’t gone out of their way to get higher positions, and my sense is because they are quieter in nature and when you have somebody who doesn’t speak up for themselves there’s more opportunities for bullying or, um, just kinda overbearing personalities to get in the way.

Interestingly, Mia also connected gender stereotyping to conservative evangelicalism, believing that female staff members at her institution have been indoctrinated to be “respectful” and “obedient;” therefore, they do not attempt to secure advanced positions.
She also deemed their “quieter” personalities a culprit in their alleged lack of ambition as well. However, despite her feminist outlook, Mia seemed to blame for their inability to progress professionally while also acknowledging Christianity’s role.

Martha also type casted women disapprovingly, even recognizing the sexism in her comment:

It’s that when women disagree we tend to hold onto that disagreement. When men tend to disagree, they have it out and move on. And that sounds terribly sexist, but I’ve seen it in action. And so I would say that the women are more concerned of not offending anyone, hurting feelings, causing any, you know, divisiveness.

I inquired about why she asserted women have a proclivity “to hold onto disagreement.” She responded,

Oh dear, wow, is that a cultural thing, you know, they don’t make a junior high movie called mean boys, but there was one called mean girls. [Laughter]. Okay, that’s, maybe that’s a bigger cultural dynamic.

Brianna stereotypically described the internal struggle she thought female leaders at her college encounter in their supervisory roles:

… they have to act hard without feeling, without emotion, or just act like a man would act, and it’s all about business. It’s about me getting to the top as opposed to embracing the caregiver side of a woman, um, and the relational side…

Because a lot of times women, they feel like they have to act as a man in order to be in leadership. And it’s somewhat expected. Or that they’re there to be the caregiver of whatever.
Fascinatingly, she juxtaposed “acting hard” with “embracing the caregiver” almost as if it is impossible for a woman to embody both elements. She also seemed to criticize women who focus on climbing the ladder rather than welcoming the relational aspect of their responsibilities. However, like Mia and Martha, Brianna too found the drought of women in leadership positions distressing, yet she made it impossible for them to achieve those roles since seeking advancement is seemingly inappropriate.

Not every respondent’s stereotypes of women were negative, however. A few discussed women using traditional gender classifications that were more flattering to them. As she shared her views about women’s leadership within the church, Michelle discussed a particular role she felt females are best suited to hold:

We had a female, um, leader in our outreach ministry, um, reaching out to the poor in our community, providing, um, housing support, clothing ministry, food ministry, um, managing what we called a monetary program where people from the church would give to this particular fund… and she and others in her committee were able to distribute money if the need was obvious. And so I think that role of a female was really quite vital because I think they’re just more attuned to people in need… I think people feel a little bit more comfortable reaching out to a female motherly type person if they have a need, especially, you know, a male seeking help. Um, another role I see of a really strong woman leadership is in children’s ministries.

Consequently, according to Michelle, not only should women refrain from the pastorate position, but they are uniquely suited for assisting others in need and working with children, especially if they are “motherly” and particularly if men require aid.
Pam spoke about her experiences at both of her institutions in which she led a mixed-gender department. She highlighted how she interacted with her male and female staff differently:

So it was kind of different to see how I could interact with the different ones. For the male group, and I don’t want to be gender specific because they’re all human beings, but there was a very distinct, unique distinction there. The men I was able to help them more by giving them—they had more of an aggressive wanting to pursue their career. So I was able to give them opportunity to grow professionally, providing them connections where they could get connected with other professionals. Giving them opportunities to attend different conferences or advanced training programs that would help them build their skill set in their area. So it was more on a professional level for the men. For the women, I found that one on one coaching, talking them through situations, seemed to be more helpful and what they were more inclined to respond to…The women were more open to talk about, you know, personal things, like, you know, this happened to me today or, you know, I really like what you’re wearing, where did you get that [laughter]. Whereas the men were more focused in their conversation with me being someone of the opposite sex they did not—we didn’t have that personal connection. So we would end up—would ask them about their families and we were very, you know, I considered them friends, but there was less of a personal relationship there. So they—more of the conversation steered toward the professional work and what their interests were.
Were there truly differences amongst the men and women of her staff, or was Pam merely reifying culturally sanctioned norms that men are to pursue careers while women chit-chat? However, Pam did share that she encouraged several women on her staff to obtain advanced degrees, and they did, so she was not completely neglecting their career interests. She also mentioned that she challenged gender norms amongst her student employees, desiring that female students in particular would not limit their horizons because of conservative dogma. Yet at the same time it appears as if Pam might have been reinforcing those same gender roles with her staff. Indeed, Pam herself said the following after reading my initial analysis of her interview:

Secondly, I have become increasingly aware over the past several years at how gender stereotyping I have become. This document confirms this as well. So the question is: am I stereotyping more? Or am I now more aware of the gender issue? And how do you strike the right balance? I grew up in a very accepting home where gender, race, ethnicity, etc. were never an issue. I was encouraged to do or be anything I wanted. It was not until I became employed in a Christian college where there was some gender bias that I became aware of the issues surrounding it.

Perhaps by participating in this research Pam and others will continue to reflect on their own unconscious bias and seek avenues to enhance the experiences of women at their respective institutions.
Summary of Findings

In conclusion, the gendered experiences of female mid-level managers at conservative evangelical colleges are varied and complex, and much aligns with current research results.

While informants’ views were either complementarian, egalitarian, or somewhere in between, they all encountered a myriad of obstacles on their campuses. Several discussed the challenges surrounding home/work balance. Others mentioned being a woman and thwarted ambition. Theology was often linked to women’s struggle to grow professionally, complicated by societal gender roles. Previous research supports the relationship between evangelical dogma and repressive campuses (Absher, 2009; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; Mckinney, 2012; Pederson & Jule, 2012; Sequeira, Trzyna, Abbott, & McHenry, 1995; Walker, 2001; Wood, 2009).

Respondents described the climates at their respective campuses as “chilly,” (Jane, Brianna, & Carole) and as having a “culture of fear” (Roberta). Anna spoke of needing to “tread carefully” while Annabelle felt she was “swimming upstream.” However, six other informants felt the atmosphere at their colleges was positive, and they were comfortable and valued there.

Participants also experienced gender discrimination, which is typical on Christian higher education campuses (Absher, 2009; Garlett, 1997a; Garlett, 1997b; Hall, 2012; Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2004; Hall, Christerson, & Cunningham, 2010; Joeckel & Chesnes, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; Mckinney, 2012;
The discrimination they encountered was both overt (subtle or somewhat hidden) or covert (obvious and blatant). Covert bias consisted of being dismissed and feeling unheard, remaining relegated beneath the glass ceiling, pay inequality, and the overall shortage of women in management positions. Overt discrimination included gender favoritism in hiring, campus policy that forbids women from obtaining certain roles, hostile remarks related to gender, biased interview questions, and pregnancy-based discrimination. Several informants connected the discrimination they experienced or witnessed directly to conservative doctrine.

Additionally, respondents appeared to experience cognitive dissonance about their religious views concerning women in leadership. Some participants felt women should not maintain pastoral positions or be in authority over men while also believing women ought to be treated equally in the workplace. Two participants adhered to the notion that women are scripturally permitted to be pastors yet do not feel comfortable attending a church with a female minister. It may be, as Creegan and Pohl (2005) postulate, that participants are “bracketing” (p. 45) their identities or beliefs in order to navigate multiple environments wherein their personal outlooks might conflict with an organization’s or group’s perspective. This allows for fluidity between milieus without having to strictly adhere to one particular set of doctrine.

Finally, participants seemed to fall prey to their own internal subjugation. Here, they engaged in feminized self-description, largely only depicting themselves with conventionally female attributes. They also projected negative gender stereotypes onto fellow women without considering why they employed gendered typecasting or what
created and fostered those stereotypes. This may be because stereotypes are socially conditioned (Bargh & Raymond, 1995; Rhode, 2007; Stern & Karraker, 1989; Witt, 1997) and certainly amplified within a conservative evangelical setting.

In Chapter Five, I will discuss the implications of respondents’ experiences within the evangelical academy, offer avenues to remedy some of the difficulties faced by female mid-level supervisors in Christian higher education as suggested by informants, and recommend areas for future study.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: STUDY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

“You know, I think what needs to change is that people need to understand they’re not God.”

The research question, “What are the gendered experiences of administrative and professional female middle-level administrators in conservative evangelical universities?” was answered through semi-structured interviews with eighteen participants. Their stories were collected and analyzed through a critical, feminist paradigm, using Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) constant comparative method. Within the findings, respondents discussed the tension that exists between home and work responsibilities. They noted the lack of upward mobility they and their female colleagues encounter. Additionally, several mentioned a “chilly” campus climate, though some also found their institutions to be a positive working environment.

Beyond those challenges, informants also endured gender discrimination that included the glass ceiling, pay inequality, and the overall famine of women in management positions. Participants also shared feeling dismissed and unheard. Further discrimination involved gender partiality in hiring, campus policy that bars women from obtaining certain roles, antagonistic remarks related to gender, biased interview questions, and pregnancy-based bias. Additionally, the obstacles and discrimination these women face were linked to conservative doctrine by the participants themselves. Lastly,

14 Anna, participant.
findings uncovered the respondents own feminized self-descriptions, gender stereotyping, and cognitive dissonance—internal conflict often related to their theology and the actual reality they confront in the workplace.

**Why Eve Matters: Implications**

It is important to clearly define the impact gender discrimination has in conservative evangelical colleges. There are several important reasons why women must have a seat at the leadership table and why gender equality must become the norm within Christian higher education management.

First, as mentioned in Chapter One, a majority of college students are female. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 56.4% of all college students are women (NCES, 2014). The number of female students in CCCU institutions follows this trend: women comprise 60% of conservative, evangelical university undergraduate populations (Longman & Lafreniere, 2009).

Women’s matriculation into the workforce mirrors what is occurring in higher education. Per the United States Department of Labor, women account for 47% of the workforce, and they are estimated to comprise 51% of the labor forces job growth through 2018 (USDL, 2010). Further, most women (52%) are employed within a management or professional role, and almost 40% hold a bachelor’s degree (USBLS, 2014).

Since most students enrolled in Christian academia are women and because they will eventually hold a significant share of the marketplace, it behooves evangelical colleges to adequately prepare them for their future employment. Yet when these students are learning in an environment where women are subjugated to men, where they do not
have female mentors or role models, where their campus atmospheres are “chilly,” and where discrimination abounds, women are less equipped to succeed in the workforce.

Indeed, Roberta mentioned her concern for the female students at her college, believing the lack of women in leadership will have a negative impact:

… a lot of our students come here, especially our female students thinking that they’re gonna come here, find Mr. Right, leave, you know, get a degree but get married and ultimately stay home, have kids and that’s gonna be their life is to be a stay at home mom. So, yeah, I don’t know, I mean, I hear it from students all the time… it just causes a little bit of alarm for me. And I think, ‘well, you’re right, like if you’re not seeing other women in influential positions on this university, you know, modeling a work/life balance and being in front of you, why else would you think otherwise, you know.’

Longman and Anderson (2011) note that without women in leadership:

… many CCCU campuses will continue to lack the important perspectives that woman can bring to the leadership table. Equally regrettably, students, staff, and faculty will lack the role models who challenge and affirm those gifted in the next generation to aspire to leadership for the sake of the broadest beneficial kingdom impact with their lives. (p. 441)

Further, when male students do not have the opportunity to interact with or possibly work for a female leader, it is possible that chauvinistic attitudes will be further entrenched within male pupils that will then be enacted throughout their careers. Discriminating against women supervisors within the evangelical academy will only perpetuate gender
inequality, ultimately harming all students (Hall, 2012; McKinney, 2012; Pedersen & Jule, 2012; Wood, 2009).

Besides the deleterious effect the vacuum of women in mid-level management roles can have upon the student population, another unfortunate outcome is simply what is missing from the leadership banquet. Conservative Christian colleges need women’s voices, vision, leadership styles, and experiences if they want to progress in an increasingly complex higher education environment.

Management theories and practice are shifting. No longer is a hierarchal, power-laden, depersonalized model of leadership, typically associated with men, considered ideal. Instead, researchers posit that other styles are effective and worthy of consideration: transformational leadership, collaborative leadership, and pluralistic leadership to name a few (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Helgesen, 1990; Helgesen & Johnson, 2010; Kezar, 2000; Kezar, Carducci, Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Additional research demonstrates that women tend to embody these types of leadership approaches because females often favor cooperation, relationship, and power-diffusion (Helgesen, 1990; Helgesen & Johnson, 2010; Kezar, 2000; Kezar, Carducci, Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore the factors that explain why women tend to be more collective, connected, and empowering in their management methods, and in fact, one must be careful to not essentialize the leadership styles of either women or men. From a critical, feminist perspective, theories ought to allow room for difference and individual expression (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Nevertheless, the point here is that divergent approaches to leadership are vital to healthy institutions of
higher education, but when evangelical colleges prevent women from progressing, they stifle their valuable insights and experiences that can assist institutions in problem-solving, creative thinking, and growth (Helgesen, 1990; Helgesen & Johnson, 2010; Kezar, 2000; Kezar, Carducci, Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

In their book, *The Female Vision*, Helgesen and Johnson (2010) provide a stunning example of what can happen when women’s experiences and ideas remain invisible: the recent collapse of America’s economy in 2008. They cite several financial authors who recognized the leading organizations responsible for the crisis were captained by men. They also share reports by a handful of women who forewarned of the coming doom but where scolded by men as too cautious and “too hostile to entrepreneurial effort” (p. 33). Helgesen and Johnson (2010) posed the question: What might have happened had the financial sector heeded their admonitions? Further, they also rightly highlighted, “the underrepresentation of women in senior positions was both a consequence and a symptom of a leadership culture that had grown increasingly unbalanced” (Helgesen & Johnson, p. 31).

Perhaps evangelical colleges ought to ask the questions, “What answers to current problems remain unmentioned because not everyone has a seat at the strategy table? What types of opportunities are we failing to provide for students because gender equality is anathema? How much greater could our institution be if women held more leadership roles?”

When a diverse array of perspectives and experiences are available, insights, strategies, and solutions can arise that might not have been considered otherwise. Women’s voices and vision are a part of the answer to the puzzles plaguing Christian
higher education today, but if they are not fully embraced within their institutions, they cannot wholly assist the institution or its students in realizing their ultimate potential.

**In Their Own Words: Participant Recommendations**

Having explored the implications of the participants’ experiences, I will now address possible remedies that may alleviate the obstacles and discrimination female mid-level managers encounter within Christian higher education as suggested by the respondents themselves. First, however, several participants highlighted the need for cultural change within the evangelical academy in order for the professional lives of women supervisors to improve. Crystal emphasized,

… at many institutions it would require a significant cultural shift. And when I say cultural, I mean because it's part of the denominational culture that this is the way it is. I think it would require a cultural shift. You know, I respect that the people who believe that way [embrace complementarianism] feel that they are doing what is required by their understanding of the word of God. And until that would be shifted, I don't know how that can be fixed.

Correspondingly, Jessica stressed that “trendsetters” are needed. Colleges must be willing to:

… break the mold. We need somebody to break through that ceiling. You need a conservative Christian university to put a woman as president, you know, um, have the majority of the administrators be women; somebody has to do that. At that point in time I think people will look, and they will say, ‘wow, that’s amazing.’ And I think you will have women who want to work for them… I think somebody is gonna have to take a stand and gonna have to kinda break
through that on their own and be trendsetters, forge through that on their own and be an example.

Carole said there would need to be “transformative moment” on her campus. I asked what it would take for such a moment to occur. Her immediate response was, “Jesus returning to Earth. No, I’m kidding.” I suspect she was not entirely speaking in jest based upon how she continued her response:

Um, that’s a great question. Um, I honestly will say I’m really not sure. I’d hate to say, you know, pin it on, just, you know, a certain woman comes on board and boom it happens. I mean, it’s taking that step back, and what would have to kinda happen culturally, not just at our Christian institutions, but culturally to value a woman’s input. And, and looking at the double standard that’s, you know, very prevalent still today in 2014 [laughing] let alone, you know, the ‘70’s. It’s, um, yeah, I mean, you know, I could give you the easy answers of education, and um, you know, confidence building for women and, and, and sensitivity training for men [laughing], but I mean, I don’t, I guess I’d say that there’s no easy answer. I don’t know what would be the, um, easiest way to go about it. Deep prayer, maybe that’s [laughs]…

Lafreniere and Longman, (2008) exhort that “presidents and other cabinet-level administrators have a responsibility to encourage and support emerging leaders on their campus, particularly women and ethnic minorities that are currently underrepresented in leadership” (p. 402). Informants voiced their own suggestions for how upper-level administrators can aid them in their roles, which will be considered below, but first it should be noted most of the following recommendations will require administrative
approval. Given the theology and climate of conservative, evangelical colleges, it is not likely that male leadership will be sympathetic to the plight these women face. It is more probable that participants and their female colleagues will need to become “tempered radicals” and advocate for themselves in order to create change. Meyerson (2001) in her work *Tempered Radicals: How People use Difference to Inspire Change at Work*, defines tempered radicals as:

…people who operate on a fault line. They are organizational leaders who contribute and succeed in their jobs. At the same time, they are treated as outsiders because they represent ideals or agendas that are somehow at odds with the dominant culture… Tempered radicals at once uphold their aspiration to be accepted insiders and their commitment to change the very system that casts them as outsiders. (p. 3)

**Social change movements.** Given the need for cultural transformation and the likelihood that female mid-level supervisors will need to lead that movement themselves, it will be beneficial to consider how social change occurs. A complete analysis of social movements is beyond the bounds of this study, so I will briefly address the definition of a social movement and how one is created and sustained. Doing so may assist women administrators in conservative colleges develop a framework from which to enact change.

*Defining a social movement.** According to Jasper (2014), “social movements are a sustained, intentional effort to foster or retard broad legal and social changes, primarily outside of the normal institutional channels endorsed by authority” (p. 5). More specifically, a social movement consists of an organized group with a defined purpose and some sort of internalized structure so that it can persist (Auretto, 2001; Goldberg,
However, the structure may not be hierarchical and can be semiautonomous and decentralized (Goldberg, 1991). Aretto (2001) explains that a movement requires “management skills to accomplish tasks such as mobilizing participation, arousing interest among followers and potential members, and organizing for action (p. 43). Social movements may use a variety of tactics to promote their cause such as letter-writing campaigns to political leaders, rallies, lobbying, sit-ins, marches, etc. Those activities often require grassroots organizing, leveraging of social contacts, division of labor and maximizing individual members’ skills and expertise, and commitment to the cause.

At the time of this writing, a prominent social movement in higher education is a student-led drive to eliminate campus sexual assaults and demand that universities appropriately handle the cases that do occur (See Know Your IX and End Rape on Campus). Student activists banded together to launch campus protests, rallies, sit-ins, and marches. Campus groups then connected with each other to provide support and create multi-campus networks. As a result of their work, many victims were aided in reporting their assaults and filing complaints against their respective universities (EROC, 2015).

Creating and sustaining a social movement. With the basic concept of a social movement in mind, one can now explore how they are forged and persevere. Jasper (2014) and Goldberg (1991) provide overviews of the various sociological theories that ascertain how movements are formed, but in general “social movements often arise between groups defined by class, ethnicity, language, and religion, and from political institutions” (Smith, Thomas, & McGarty, 2015, p. 543). In cases in which there is not a

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15 Know Your IX: [http://knowyourix.org/](http://knowyourix.org/)
End Rape on Campus: [http://endrapeoncampus.org/](http://endrapeoncampus.org/)
precipitating conflict that prompts a movement, Smith, Thomas, and McGarty (2015) propose that recognizing the difference between “what is and what should be can also be the basis for novel group formation…” (p. 549). They postulate that the mere act of thinking about, critiquing, and speaking out against current social structures helps foster social change that transform the original order. Dissenters discuss and eventually agree upon desired social norms, which bolsters the group’s confidence to make change that leads to action (Smith, Thomas, & McGarty, 2015).

With goals in hand, groups organize, develop a leadership structure, and seek to raise the consciousness of others as a means of increasing their membership. Strategies such as those mentioned above may be employed to promote awareness and recruit followers. Goldberg (1991) explains that in order to survive, movements must remain cognizant of their image and constantly express why the movement is necessary. As such, it may be helpful to seek allies such as respected community leaders, religious authorities, media commentators, and politicians.

Likewise, Oberschall (1993) extrapolates that for a movement to continue there must be a core group of activists who ensure regular communication with group members, needed funds are raised, alliances with peer groups are formed, meetings are organized, protests, rallies, and similar events are scheduled and marketed, and other central tasks are accomplished.

In higher education, Astin and Astin (2000) identified five group characteristics that are required for social change: collaboration with a shared purpose, disagreement with civility, division of labor, and a learning environment. When collectives organize around these traits, they are more likely to flourish, and a movement succeeds when new
advantages are introduced into organization or social order and when there has been a positive structural impact (McCammon, Granberg, Campbell, & Mowery, 2001).

Cultural change is onerous, but there are some actions female leaders themselves can take to foster said shifts. The strategies recommended below by respondents in this study may be avenues female change agents within the Christian academy employ in order to reduce discrimination and improve their environment.

**Internal and external coalitions.** As the social change movement literature suggests, mid-level female administrators may also find it beneficial to create a campus coalition of women in similar positions that meets regularly to offer each other support and to devise strategies to improve working conditions. Allan (2011) postulates that:

Most if not all strategies employed to advance women’s status in higher education have emerged from women’s formal and informal (grassroots) activism… Often behind the scenes, feminist activism in higher education, like other arenas, employs both formal mechanisms (policy, task forces, commissions) and grassroots approaches (networking) and has served as a backdrop to policy initiatives, formal changes to the university infrastructure; efforts to shift norms and cultural values… (p. 99)

As such, this type of organizing may bolster any of the efforts suggested below.

Further, it might be helpful to invite executive level women, should there be any in their respective institutions, to participate in order to provide guidance, assuming, of course, having such an administrator present would be safe for coalition members. Additionally, these women could reach out to other CCCU institutions to determine if comparable groups exist and develop an informal network. Partnering with other campus
groups can provide supplementary support, allow for an exchange of ideas, expand participants’ own networks, and present a united front across the conservative college sector.

**Leadership development programs.** The literature contends that programs aimed at increasing leadership ability among women are valuable (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Lafreniere & Longman, 2009; Longman & Lafreniere, 2011), but study participants lamented that no such programs existed on their campuses. Sally mentioned, “I’m not aware of ‘identifying prospective women for leadership and let’s develop them.’ I’m not aware of anything like that.” While Rebecca did not differentiate between the needs of male and female managers, she did acquiesce that “They’re leaders; they need skills. They need resources. They need training.” Likewise, Mia stated, “Number one, they should probably offer to, um, do some conferencing because I’ve never been offered to go to a leadership conference; that should be made available.”

Perhaps leaders can investigate other universities that employ leadership development curriculum on their campuses and adopt those programs on their own campuses. In fact, the CCCU hosts a leadership program specifically for women: the Women’s Leadership Development Institute. At the time of this writing, the CCCU has fashioned an advanced leadership institute for women that will focus on constructing institutional leadership development programs (CCCU, 2015b). Given that the CCCU is the overarching association for each college represented in this study and if even they judge women’s leadership development important, female leaders may be able to persuade campus administrators that such a curriculum is vital for their college as well.
**Mentorship.** Besides leadership development, respondents discussed the value of mentors. Jessica stated,

I didn’t talk about the importance of mentors, but I believe being mentored by strong, Christian leaders is a key to success. In my professional journey, I have strong successful women and men who have played an integral part in modeling admirable leadership qualities and ways to build on strengths and weaknesses. Michelle mentioned previous supervisors or other campus administrators who mentored and encouraged her, ultimately galvanizing her to obtain a graduate degree. “She was able to genuinely support my ideas and boosted my confidence. She always felt I could be successful, even when I doubted myself.”

Unlike her peers, Annabelle grieved the lack of guidance she has received over the course of her career. “There’s not many women modeling good leadership in mid-management. So I can’t say I was mentored in it. It wasn’t modeled for me.” Clearly, mentorship is beneficial to female staff members, and previous research agrees (Absher, 2009; Dahlvig & Longman, 2010; Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Hall, 2012; Madsen, 2012; Morten & Newsom, 2004a; Rosser, 2004).

Additionally, not only can individual female managers seek out a mentor on her own, but she can also advocate that a formal program be established at her institution. Like leadership development programs, it is probable that some universities maintain formalized mentorship programs through their Human Resources departments, so Christian college supervisors can recommend that their campuses reproduce such programs and adopt them to their particular institution’s needs.
Telecommuting. Like mentorship, another means to assuage the challenges female mid-level supervisors tackle is telecommuting. Though Jo was the only respondent to suggest telecommuting, it is certainly worthy of report. She said, “…being allowed to work from home and, you know, never feeling guilty for having taken my maternity leave or anything like that, I don’t think there’s much more that [I2] could do for me.” In her arrangement, she works from home several days a week and has not found that working remotely has impeded her ability to manage staff or complete her tasks. Plus, it allows her the flexibility she needs to tend to her home responsibilities.

Veritably, previous research indicates employer flexibility and family-friendly policies allows the organization to avoid employee turn-over and communicates female employees are valued (Absher, 2009; Jo, 2008; Longman & Anderson, 2011). As such, women supervisors might want to approach their supervisors about telecommuting.

Advocate and practice equitable hiring and pay. Several participants stated that Christian higher educational leaders should strategically hire more women and pay them equally, and other studies have come to the same conclusion (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Hall, 2012; Pedersen & Jule, 2012). Sharon thinks, “they could hire more women and pay them the same… pay them the same that they would pay men for, uh, like the same job, the same level of position,” and Mia expressed the same when she said, “… salary should really be reviewed to see are women receiving equal pay compared to their male counterpoints.” Brianna offered similar sentiments as she stated, I think one of the biggest things is number one to offer more opportunities; I know even when they post jobs, they say there is no, you know, bias or whatever. But I think there is. So creating more opportunities for women.
Pam also concurred, sharing, “…they can hire strategically to, you know, fill that gap. I think they can make sure their policies and practices, you know, hold to that.” In fact, as a current supervisor, she explicitly hires women when the candidate qualifications are equal because she tends to work in a male-dominated field and wants to ensure her department has an equal amount of men and women. Further, she hires this way since “I think you get a better perspective because you’re getting multiple genders… I’ve strategically tried to hire that way.” Additionally, Roberta, who previously mentioned she is debating whether or not she can remain in her position remarked,

I think if my salary was a little more comparable, um, maybe to what other institutions pay considering my experience, what I provide, I mean, everything that I do, if I was I think a little more equitably compensated I think I would stay.

Hence, whenever possible within their own departments female mid-level managers can work with Human Resources to recruit and hire more female candidates, provide equal salaries, and offer their female staff opportunities for professional development, thereby growing more women managers from the inside. However, their reach is likely limited to their own offices, but they can advocate for more gender inclusive hiring with their own supervisors and with Human Resources in so far as that feels professionally safe for them. They may consider banding together with other supervisors who feel similarly to jointly promote hiring equality, approaching Human Resources in a manner that will minimize potential back lash while still encouraging gender balanced hiring. Leaders could consider creating an informal coalition with staff advisory councils that might already exist on campus, particularly since a general
function of staff assemblies is to advocate for staff and represent their concerns to senior-level administrators.

**Gender equality committee.** Beyond supporting gender equity in hiring and pay and practicing it within their own scope of responsibilities, another option would be to request the institution create a task force dedicated to gender equality. Jane suggested such a committee could attend to hiring and pay disparity and climate issues.

A potential means to suggest such a group be formed would be to align it with a campus’s strategic plan, particularly if diversity is an aspect of the college’s plan. By researching other colleges who have similar committees and situating it within an area the institution already deems important, establishing a gender equality committee may be possible.

However, this tactic must be carefully considered and weighed against potential repercussions. It may be best to gather a group of staff members who would also be willing to recommend a gender equity committee, for there is strength in numbers.

**Climate assessment surveys.** Lastly, a climate assessment survey is another medium that female mid-level managers can propose. When suggesting avenues to promote gender equality in Christian higher education, Hall (2012) noted that the overall campus climate toward women must be transformed. She observed that the process of campus climate change “involves diagnosis of the problem” (p. 246), and a survey can be a tool to do just that. Mia advised the survey can be “sent out to women asking about what the climate is, um, how do they feel, um, they’re being addressed in the environment.”
Like advocating for inclusive hiring, equal pay, and the creation of a gender equity committee, a climate survey would also need to be approved by senior administrators. However, this particular suggestion does not have to be solely focused on women. Female mid-level managers can suggest, along with any of their colleagues who feel likewise, that an all-encompassing staff climate survey be administered. It might be easier to secure buy-in for an inclusive survey rather than a gendered one. Data on women can then be extracted with specific remedies tailored to their concerns.

Of course, this recommendation must also be cautiously considered. It would be paramount that any survey distributed be anonymous in order to protect all staff members from retribution. It would likely be wise to have an outside agency develop (with staff recommendations derived from confidential focus groups) and implement the survey to further safeguard staff voices. Also, it might be prudent to encourage this particular method through a staff council or similar body.

Assuredly, developing coalitions, advocating for leadership development programs, seeking out mentorship, promoting equal hiring and pay, recommending a gender equity task force, and suggesting a climate survey may or may not be appropriate strategies female mid-level administrators can employ. To use Jessica’s term, “trendsetters” are likely required if improvements are to be made. Nevertheless, social change movements do provide a blueprint women might find beneficial in creating strategies for change.

Moving Eve Forward: Future Research Suggestions

Research begets research, and this study is no different. This particular inquiry could be parlayed into a second investigation by exploring more deeply the theological
shifts informants encountered. It was beyond the scope of this research to significantly consider how these shifts occurred, particularly outside of the women’s professional lives. However, it might be enlightening to examine how their roles as educational leaders may have contributed to their doctrinal metamorphoses. Moreover, it would be advantageous to replicate this study within other campus contexts such as non-sectarian colleges and other faith-based universities in order to compare the experiences of female mid-level managers at different types of institutions.

Additionally, aiming to understand the gendered experiences of female supervisors at conservative Christian colleges automatically means the voices of other women were not included. Future research should focus on the professional lives of non-exempt women staff members within evangelical universities. Their experiences are particularly important since respondents in this study and other investigations assert they are generally relegated to lower-level staff positions (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Kulis, 1997).

Also largely missing from this dissertation but worthy of examination are the experiences of minority female leaders in Christian higher education. The two respondents in this work who identify as women of color embodied an intersection of gender and ethnicity that could not be fully explored due to the limited nature of this study. Research specifically centered on their voices can better present their lives, magnify their voices, and further educate evangelical college administrators.

Lastly, inquiries about the professional lives of LGBTQ staff and faculty in conservative higher education, particularly women and women of color, is needed but likely very difficult to attempt due to lack of access, fear, and confidentiality concerns.
Identifying LGBTQ individuals within this collection of colleges would be challenging because most CCCU institutions maintain doctrinal statements that prohibit queer sexualities. As such, it might be too dangerous to investigate their experiences, which is unfortunate because this particular population deserves to have their voices heard as well.

**Conclusion**

Christian higher education contains a paradox. A majority of its students are females, being schooled in a variety of degree programs, but they are taught that their place is in the home. Women are barred from advancing within its ranks because of gendered theology, and yet women are clearly advancing the educational mission of these colleges through their commitment and talent. This study showcases that enigma by giving voice to a cohort of female staff whose stories have rarely been told, which was the ultimate purpose of my research.

Female mid-level managers at conservative evangelical colleges and universities weather experiences quite unlike their male counterparts. Despite the positive aspects of their positions and campuses, they must cope with the stress of multiple roles, unequal pay, thwarted professional growth, chilly and unwelcoming climates, and even subtle and blatant discrimination. However, those ordeals do not have to be permanent. Employing the strategies suggested earlier might result in a more just institutional environment despite the evangelical academy’s inherent gender contradiction. As Pedersen and Jule (2012) remark:

Goals for achieving more equitable arrangements are important, and we do not mean to say anything otherwise here, but our vision is for more than equity and balance. We are longing for a full celebration of woman in all of her uniqueness,
capacity, potential, and humanness, and for a reconfigured celebration of man on
grounds that do not enable his flourishing at the expense of women. (267)

For the women in this study and all female managers in Christian academia, may it be so.


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16 Following the example of Patti Lather (1991a; 1991b; 1992; 1993) I have chosen not to ascribe to the authorized mandates of the APA whose style of references ungenders scholars. By including their first names, I affirm the authors’ gender and also allow readers to more readily identity their respective gender.


Frye, Marilyn. (1996). The possibility of feminist theory. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall, 
(Eds.), *Women, knowledge, and reality: Explorations in feminist philosophy*, 2nd ed., 
(pp. 34-47).


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Glaser, Barney G. & Strauss, Anselm L. (1967). The Discovery of grounded theory: 


Smith, Laura, Thomas, Emma, & McGarty, Craig. (2015). “We must be the change we want to see in the world”: Integrating norms and identities through social interaction. *Political Psychology, 36*(5), 543-557.


Wilson, Jacqueline Z., Marks, Genee, Noone, Lynne, & Hamilton-Mackenzie, Jennifer. (2010). Retaining a foothold on the slippery paths of academia: University women,


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [Name],

I hope this email finds you doing well. My name is Jen Castellani, and I am completing my dissertation at the University of Dayton. I am writing to you because you may be interested in being a participant in my doctoral research based upon your background in Christian higher education.

Specifically, I am studying the experiences of female mid-level administrators in conservative, evangelical universities. Little research has been conducted on this particular population of women, and I believe female managers at Christian colleges deserve to have their voices added to the academic dialogue about evangelical higher education. Additionally, as a graduate and former employee of an evangelical college, this topic is important to me on a personal and professional level.

I am asking research participants to:

- Participate in 1-3 one hour in-person or phone interviews
- Complete a post-interview reflective exercise in which you will briefly write about your interview experience
- Participate in a focus group 1) if you feel comfortable and 2) if I am able to secure several participants in your area

I will take several measures to safeguard your confidentiality (discussed in detail in the informed consent), will provide you with all interview audio recordings (unless you prefer not be recorded) and initial analysis for your feedback, and I will provide you with an executive summary of my findings if you would like.

If you are interested in participating and/or have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [phone number] or castellanij1@udayton.edu. I will also follow-up with you by phone in a few days should I not hear from you. Additionally, here is a link you can send to colleagues whom you think might be interested in participating: http://tinyurl.com/nhnrnk1

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Please note that my dissertation proposal has been approved by my committee and graduate school, including IRB approval. My research is being overseen by my committee: Dr. Molly Schaller (Chair), Dr. Carolyn Ridenour (Member) Dr. Kathryn Kinnucan-Welsch (Member), and Dr. Sheila Hassell Hughes (Member).

Thank you,

Jen Castellani, M.A., PhD candidate
APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

STUDY TITLE
A Qualitative Analysis of the Experiences of Female Mid-Level Administrators at Conservative Evangelical Colleges.

You are asked to participate in a doctoral dissertation research study conducted by Jen Castellani, a PhD candidate in Educational Leadership/Higher Education Administration from the University of Dayton. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge base about the experiences of female mid-level managers at conservative evangelical colleges. Little research on this population currently exists, so this research will add insights into the higher education dialogue.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in at least 1 and as many as 3 in-person, phone, or Skype interviews (Interviews will likely be an hour in length). In-person interviews will be held in area coffee shops, restaurants, public library study rooms, or wherever you would feel most comfortable.
- Complete a reflective exercise after the first interview. The exercise will consist of a handful of questions that can be submitted to the interviewer via email or direct mail.
- Participate in a focus group if one will occur in your geographic area should you feel comfortable doing so. (Focus groups will likely be an hour in length). Focus groups will occur in coffee shops, restaurants, or public library study rooms.
- Provide feedback on the results of the initial analysis.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
While there are few risks related to this research, any interview based methods open people to potential harm for over disclosure. In the course of an interview, reflective exercise, or focus group, you may decide to share experiences you find uncomfortable or even painful. At any time, you can refrain from sharing.

**ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS**

You will directly benefit from participating in this research because you will have the opportunity to reflect upon your professional experience and perhaps develop new insights that will foster personal growth. Additionally, you might connect with other female leaders who have similar experiences. Lastly, you will have the satisfaction of knowing you contributed important knowledge to the field of higher education.

**PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will not receive payment for your participation in the study. However, depending upon the in-person interview time and location you select, the researcher will pay for your coffee, lunch, or dinner.

**IN CASE OF RESEARCH RELATED ADVERSE EFFECTS**

If you are experiencing any kind of discomfort as a result of your participation in this study, you may contact the faculty advisor overseeing Jen's dissertation: Dr. Molly Schaller, Associate Professor and Department Chair, at 937-229-3677.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

You will select a pseudonym that will be used to identify you in transcriptions and the final report. Your institution will be given a pseudonym such as College 1. Your job title will not be used if it is unique enough to identify you.

All participants and respective institutions will be described in aggregate to further mask individual identity.

All data will be stored on a secure laptop and a secure filing cabinet that only the researcher will be able to access.

All audio recordings, transcriptions, and other data will be destroyed promptly upon a successful dissertation defense.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, that will not
affect your relationship with the University of Dayton or other services to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice or penalty. The investigator may withdraw you from participating in this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the researcher or her faculty advisor listed below:

- Jen Castellani, PhD candidate, University of Dayton, Educational Leadership Department, [phone number redacted], castellanij1@udayton.edu.
- Dr. Molly Schaller, Faculty Advisor, University of Dayton, Counselor Education & Human Services Department, 937-229-3677, mschaller1@udayton.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Dayton: Dr. Mary Connolly, (937) 229-3493, Mary.Connolly@notes.udayton.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT (or legal guardian)

I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Participant (please print)
____________________________________________

Address ___________________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date _____________
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Info

(Note: Demographic info will be requested verbally)

Pseudonym: Age: Ethnicity:
Position: Educational Level: BA/BS MA/MS Doctorate
Years in current role: Marital Status: single married divorced widowed
Years at current institution: Number of Children: Ages of
Children:
Number of employees supervised:
How would you describe your political perspective?

Topic Areas

Observational Notes

Topic 1: Why Higher Education & Evangelical Higher Education

Topic 2: Career Path & Career Goals

Topic 3: Hindered & Helped (obstacles she has faced and how she has received career assistance)
Topic Areas

Topic 4: Researcher Scenarios (solicit participant’s interpretation of situation)

Scenario 1: [Redacted for researcher confidentiality]

Q1: What are your thoughts about that situation?

Q2: How reflective is that circumstance of evangelical higher education?

Scenario 2: [Redacted for research confidentiality]

Q1: What are your thoughts about that situation?

Q2: How reflective is that circumstance of evangelical higher education?

Topic 5: Views on Women as Leaders in Church & Higher Education

Topic 6: Gendered Experiences (what is it like being a women supervisor in an evangelical college?)
APPENDIX D

REFLEXIVE EXERCISE

What motivated you to participate in this study?

Of what you shared, what would you like to clarify or further explain?

What do you wish you had shared that perhaps you didn’t think of at the time?

Placing yourself in the role of researcher, what questions would you ask participants?

Think about your first few months as a female manager in Christian higher education. What advice would you give to yourself?
APPENDIX E

EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS REQUESTING DATA FEEDBACK

Dear [Name],

I hope this email finds you doing well! I’m emailing because I have completed my initial data analysis of all participant interviews, so I wanted to send you my interpretations of our interview as we discussed. I’ve attached your data along with your full interview transcript so that you can view your data in context.

I welcome your thoughts on my interpretations (themes) along with your own interpretations. You might agree with my view, you might completely disagree with how I have categorized your experiences and perspectives, and/or you may find yourself somewhere in-between. I want to hear your honest opinions and feelings because it will make for a richer, more complete analysis, so please don’t worry if you see things differently than I do. It is also important to share if your perspectives change based on reading my interpretations. Your perspectives on the data will be included in the final paper because it is important to me that your voice be heard.

Please review the data and send me your thoughts by XX [three weeks from when email is sent]. You can send me your thoughts in the email itself, in a Word document, or enter your notes directly in the Excel spreadsheet—whatever is easiest for you.

Thank you again for participating in this study; it is been an illuminating process, and I am sure future readers will feel the same.

Warmly,

Jen Castellani

PS – The “RE” in the data denotes responses provided by the Reflective Exercise.