

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CHIEF ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICERS AT
2015 *U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT* TOP 25 PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: WHY ARE
WOMEN UNDERREPRESENTED IN THESE ROLES?

by

DEBORAH ANN DIETZLER

(Under the Direction of Libby V. Morris)

ABSTRACT

This study explores the educational preparation and career pathways of the chief alumni relations officers at 2015 *U.S. News & World Report* Top 25 Public Universities in order to determine why women remain underrepresented in these roles. Through the theoretical frameworks of liberal feminism, social comparison, equity theory, and signaling theory, interviews with 10 sitting chief alumni relations officers were complemented by document analyses in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing the profession at large. These leading alumni relations professionals offer their views of present and future conditions for those interested in pursuing a career in the field. Special emphasis was given to the discussion of potential programs and initiatives that would have the goal to attract more women to the top leadership positions within alumni relations. The paper concludes with suggestions of related areas which warrant further study.

INDEX WORDS: Alumni relations, Gender equity, Feminism, Career paths

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DEBORAH ANN DIETZLER

B.A., Hofstra University, 1989

M.S., Texas A&M University, 1991

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DEBORAH ANN DIETZLER

Major Professor: Libby V. Morris

Committee: Charles B. Knapp
Karen Webber

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

To Peter

With gratitude for your endless support and constant good humor in all things – and for your willingness to make the sacrifices that allowed me to achieve my dream of earning a doctorate.

To Mom and Daddy

Becoming Dr. Dietzler took far longer than I ever anticipated, but now here we are. Everything I have achieved in this life is a result of the unconditional love, constant support, and the encouragement that you both so selflessly gave. I have been truly blessed to have had such wonderful parents, who believed I could accomplish anything.

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Earning my doctorate is a dream 31 years in the making. I still recall back in 1984 when I was filling out the SAT registration form and encountered the item – Highest level of education desired. I bubbled in “doctorate.” My mother’s reaction was rather incredulous and I don’t remember the conversation that ensued. What I do know is that I have always loved learning and loved school and so it is likely that it seemed to me that obtaining the highest level of education would be an appropriate goal. Indeed it has been.

When I began the doctoral program, it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to start writing this section from the beginning so as not to forget anyone who helped me along the way. Sadly, I neglected to do this so I find myself writing under pressure and hoping that I manage to capture the many special people who brought me to this accomplishment. Truly, to do that well would take a dissertation in itself.

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There are so many people from my 17 years at UGA and in Athens – colleagues, friends, and board members – who have been with me through many good times and a few that were challenging. I appreciate all of you though I cannot name each of you individually because I truly fear forgetting one of you and would never want it to be construed that omission was evidence of lack of gratitude. However, I must thank Dean Maureen Grasso, who pointed me in the direction of the Executive Ed.D. program and, in doing so, finally got me on the path to making my dream a reality. I am grateful for the enduring friendship of Rita Manning and Tammy Gilland, some of the very best colleagues and friends a person could hope for. Meredith Gurley Johnson and Julie Decker Cheney have been teammates and now friends for nearly two decades – I am so fortunate to have both of them in my life. Thanks to Dave Muia, who 19 years ago gave me the opportunity to join his team and who remains a treasured friend.

I have been known to say, “the beauty is in the involvement of the many,” and all of those included in the sentiments above are part of my many. You have each played a part in my journey and I am grateful. I must also acknowledge Jeff Jowdy with deepest gratitude for his friendship and the opportunity to be a member of his Lighthouse Counsel team. A few girlfriends have also provided so much love and support through the years –

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With that said, I save the deepest expression of my gratitude for my family. Without them, it would have been nearly impossible to achieve what I have achieved, and even if I had, the joy would be greatly diminished.

From the earliest days of my career in alumni relations, back in the days of hand-labeling mailings, my parents and sisters would gather around the kitchen table or the coffee table at night, helping me to label the many mailings heading to Stony Brook alumni. They have always been my biggest supporters and cheerleaders. Their unconditional love for me and their willingness to go that extra mile to help me succeed are gifts I can never truly repay.

My sisters are two terrific women who bless my life with their love, thoughtfulness and good humor, and the beautiful nieces and nephews they have given me. No matter what my life brings, I know they are in my corner and I am grateful.

My wonderful husband, Peter Anderson, my partner in all things for the last 17 years. His support and that of his family, most especially my beloved late mother-in-law Mary Page Welborn Sims, have enhanced my life. Volumes could be written about Peter, but he tends to get embarrassed when I wax poetic about him. Suffice it to say that his mother named him well, for he truly is a rock and I am thankful beyond measure that I am his and he is mine.

And then, there are my parents – Diane and the late Edward J. Dietzler. The sacrifices that they made through the years so that my sisters and I could have opportunities they did not are only one small demonstration of the outstanding parents

they were. Anyone who knows me knows that the loss of my father was the most devastating thing that has occurred in my life to date. The accomplishment of finally earning my doctorate, sweet though it is, suffers from his physical absence. I continue to endeavor to live my life each day in a way that would make him proud and honor the name he gave me.

If you know me for even a few minutes, you know that my mother is special to me beyond anything mere words can adequately convey. Throughout my life, she has been my strongest advocate, biggest cheerleader, and the person I can always count on to celebrate my joys and comfort me in times of challenge and sorrow. I am thankful for all that she has done for me and if she lives to be 100 (which I hope she does), I'll never be able to truly give to her all that she has given to me. I'm blessed beyond measure and beyond what I deserve to have been given the gift of this wonderful woman as my mother.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Emory Professor Melvin Konner (2015) may well say it best:

With the rise of what we like to call civilization, men's superior muscle fostered a vast military, economic, and political conspiracy, enabling them to exclude women from leading roles. . . . The result was 10 or 12 millennia in which we squandered half of the best talent in the human race. Brawn mattered for those centuries, but in spite of their greater strength, men had to make laws to suppress women because on a truly level playing field, women were destined to compete successfully and very often win. (p. B12)

As Babcock and Laschever (2003) remind us, the unequal treatment of women is a social construct, not a physical principle, suggesting that as a product of culture, gender imbalance can be altered if society wants this change. Citing "fundamental attribution error," these authors report that, when circumstances change, behavior and belief frequently change, and sometimes in a radical way (p. 159).

Fuchs (1989), moreover, noted that historical disadvantages to women have manifested themselves by law, religion, custom, and prejudice. Though his work dates back more than a quarter century, he found that for women, "the greatest barrier to economic equality is children" (p. 39). Slaughter (2015), Miller (2014a), and Mason, Wolfinger, and Goulden (2013), have found Fuchs's conclusions to hold true to the present day, with research confirming the persistence of the "motherhood penalty," or

discrimination against working mothers as related to compensation and perceived competence.

Underrepresentation in Many Fields

It is widely accepted that “the feminization of the paid labor force has been one of the most important social and economic changes of the 20th century for Western democratic countries” (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. i). Women compose the majority of the U.S. workforce, yet occupational segregation and underrepresentation of women remains the norm in a variety of fields (Slaughter, 2015; Konner, 2015; Bidwell, 2014; Rosin, 2010). In her 2015 book, *Unfinished Business*, Anne-Marie Slaughter offers a glimpse into the present state of women in the workforce. She reports that women comprise about 6% of Fortune 500 CEOs, and about 15% of corporate top executive level positions (often referred to as “C-suite” roles). Women make up about 20% of partners in law firms, “24 percent of full-time tenured professors, and 21 percent of surgeons” (Slaughter, 2015, p. 13). In her opinion, “the numbers from other professions are more dismal: eight percent of the most seniors bankers on executive committees in investment banking firms (and half of those are heads of human resources or communications), three percent of hedge and private equity fund managers, six percent of mechanical engineers, and eight and a half percent of the world’s billionaires” (Slaughter, 2015, p. 13).

Statistics such as these abound in the mainstream and scholarly literature. Konner (2015) shares many of the same data points as those noted by Slaughter (2015) above, but he also notes that women make up only 19% of the U.S. House of Representatives, 25% are American college and university presidents, 33% of federal district-court judges, and

35% of federal appeals-court judges. Plus, women comprise only one-third of U.S. Supreme Court Justices.

The gender gap is widening for entrepreneurs as well. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, “women opened 36.8 percent of new U.S. businesses in 2014 . . . down from an average of 40.7 percent over the last 19 years” (Simon, 2015, p. B7). Women entrepreneurs also have less access to capital. For example, from 2011-2013, “companies with a female chief executive received just 3 percent of total-venture capital investments” (Simon, 2015, p. B7).

Although the study of gender as related to women and work only blossomed in the 1970s, there is substantial literature, scholarly and otherwise, to address the absence of women in leadership roles across a variety of industries (Sandberg, 2013; Morley, 2012; Carvalho & Machado, 2010; Myers, 2008; Gold, 1996). Such hysteresis – the reality that women widely populate workforces but remain burdened by history in achieving leadership roles – is evidenced by scholarly literature and popular media alike. Rarely a day passes without the mainstream media covering the issue of the dearth of women in leadership positions or other aspects of gender inequity in some form. In August 2015, *The New York Times* published a highly critical exposé of the workplace culture at Amazon that revealed the complete absence of women on the company’s leadership team. Many of Amazon’s female employees attribute the gender gap to the company’s “competition-and-elimination system,” and note that being overly assertive can professionally endanger women at the company (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015, p. 21).

Jesse Jackson, speaking about technology companies like Amazon, noted the danger in continuing to “lock out” women, who comprise much of the “consumer base

companies depend upon to win. . . . Their C-suites, boards of directors, supplier and vendor base and workforce must look like America” (Jackson, 2014, as quoted in Guynn, 2014, p. 4B). The lack of women in technology continues to receive significant attention – recent statistics reveal that only 31% of Apple’s workforce is female, a percentage that grew by only 1% between 2014 and 2015. Facebook reports 31% of its overall workforce as female, yet only 26% of its top level positions are occupied by women. Intel, which also reports its workforce to be overwhelmingly white and male, committed \$300 million in January 2015 toward the training and recruitment of women and other groups currently underrepresented in computer science and technology. In October 2014, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella acknowledged the need for his company to address the absence of women in the senior ranks, noting that a diverse workforce is a necessity for remaining relevant in the current marketplace (Krantz, 2015; Guynn, 2015a; Lev-Ram, 2015; dellaCava, 2014b).

Nancy Lee, Google’s VP of People Operations agrees, noting that the future of the technology industry requires greater inclusivity and less homogeneity. (In January of 2014, Google’s workforce was 30% female.) Google, accordingly, has created *Diversity Core*, a program obliging employees to dedicate 20% of their time on initiatives to attract women and minorities not just to their company, but the technology industry as a whole. The company has also moved Natalie Villalobos, formerly the community manager for Google+ into a full-time position as their women-in-technology advocate. One major goal for Villalobos is to ensure that women are better represented at technology conferences – as presenters and attendees (Guynn, 2015b; Guynn, 2015c; Guynn, 2015d).

Megan J. Smith, the U.S.'s first female chief technology officer, is also working to increase the presence of women in technology, particularly in the government sector. Among her initiatives, she has created a presence on the White House website designed to educate the public about contributions women have made to science and technology (Davis, 2015). Technology power couple Freeda and Mitch Kapor have also been working on issues related to diversity in the technology sector for decades, and acknowledge the present cultural push toward equity provides an unprecedented opportunity to advance change (dellaCava, 2014c). These sentiments translate directly to higher education, and specifically to the issue of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions and roles that this study investigates. It has been suggested that universities would be wise to adapt to reflect the "America" present in today's collegiate body.

Women are also under-represented in the arts. *Vanity Fair's* Laura Jacobs (2015) notes that among certain art forms, women are "still dancing between raindrops," insofar as there is a serious shortage of female choreographers in classical dance and maestros for major American orchestras. Archie Comic Publications' Fiona Staples, referring to women in comics says:

It's hard not to be constantly aware of your gender and your place in the industry. If you compare now to almost 10 years ago...there were fewer women. You just wanted to be seen as an equal and you wanted people to ignore your gender. If you tried to bring feminism into the conversation, people would accuse you of wanting special treatment. Now I think it is much more acceptable to have that conversation. (Staples, 2015, as quoted in Gustines, 2015, p 3)

In April 2015, *USA Today* featured a story about the upcoming music festival season, noting that if one has a desire to headline a music festival, it helps to be a man. The paper reported that of the 160 artists performing at the 2015 Coachella festival, only 26 (16%) were female-fronted acts. Further research indicated that the female lineup at the festival has never exceeded 25%. Though female festival-goers interviewed expressed a desire to see more female acts featured, “the continued scarcity of women in rock, hip-hop and electronic dance music” makes the achievement of equal representation extremely challenging (Ryan, 2015, p. 1U).

Women are conspicuously absent from some of the superlative lists for literature, including the Modern Library of America’s list of the 100 best novels of the 20th century, which featured only nine works by women” (“A Turning Point,” 2014; Szalai, 2013). VIDA (vidaweb.org) has been tracking the number of male and female bylines in literary magazines since 2009 and found that as one example of the continued challenges for female writers in the magazine world, in 2013, 80% of the writers at the *New York Review of Books* were men (“A Turning Point,” 2014). Ann Hulbert, culture editor at the *Atlantic* indicates optimism surrounding women in fiction, but is less sanguine about non-fiction as evidenced by the low number of women winning prestigious awards for non-fiction writing (“A Turning Point,” 2014). From the period 2000-2014, of the 39 Pulitzer Prizes awarded for non-fiction, only 9 of them (23%) were bestowed upon women. Four of 14 (28%) of the National Book Awards for non-fiction have gone to women in that same period. Author Claire Messud observed that while women make up 80% of those reading fiction, the critics of the genre remain largely male, and author Jennifer Weiner has shared the challenges female authors face in successfully having their work reviewed

at all (Weiner, 2015; “A Turning Point,” 2014). Author Cheryl Strayed (2015) has also observed the stereotypes associated with women authors, that their work is smaller in scope and created to appeal exclusively to women readers.

Beyond the literary arts, the film industry is also noted for gender inequality. According to an August 2014 report released by the University of Southern California, women have portrayed only about 30% “of all speaking or named characters in the 100 top-grossing fictional films distributed in the United States” in the last seven years (Bloom, 2015, p. 66). Dargis (2015) found that “women in film are routinely denied jobs, credits, prizes and equal pay” (p. 1). Michele Schreiber, associate professor of film and media studies at Emory University, has further observed that male-led films remain the norm, and that the representations of complex female characters are rare (Freydkin, 2015).

Whether the result of intentionality or unconscious bias, the absence of female film characters and the underrepresentation of women in the industry have real effects – life imitates art. As Susan Douglas (1995), professor of media and American studies at Hampshire College, concluded, “American women today are a bundle of contradictions because much of the media imagery we grew up with was itself filled with mixed messages about what women should and should not do, what women could and could not be” (p. 9). Although Corliss (2014) points to some recent strides for women in Hollywood over the last two years, the need for progress remains. Producer Nina Jacobson, further, refuted the financial risk of featuring female protagonists, observing that women compose more than 50% of the population – and that women go to movies (Brodesser-Akner, 2014a).

In Hollywood and elsewhere, however, the preconception lingers that employing women is financially unsound. As Truitt (2015b) explains, “The Institute on Gender in Media, which examines gender disparity in film, found that fewer than one-third of characters in American films were female...three times as many male filmmakers – directors, writers, and producers – as female ones in the USA” (p B2). Furthermore, as Truitt (2015b) continues, “A 2014 study at the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University showed that women accounted for just 12 percent of the year’s protagonists seen in the year’s top 100 grossing films – down from 16 percent in 2002” (p. B2).

Underrepresentation in Higher Education

Ironically, “if academic credentials were the key to upward mobility, women would be running the world today” (Wolf, 2011, p. 94). It has also been found that every society where women gain in educational attainment and employment is more prosperous. In a 2006 study, the Gender, Institutions and Development Database, a project of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, measured the economic and political power of women in 162 countries and found that with little exception, greater power for women was correlated with greater economic success for the country (Gerzema & D’Antonio, 2013; Rosin, 2010; Myers, 2008).

Colleges and universities are no different than the technology sector, the film industry or the U.S. corporate sector. According to Fitzgerald (2014), the exclusion of women in higher education has been a reality for centuries. In American higher education’s earliest days, women were not welcomed, as these institutions existed to train future clergy, and the concept of women working outside the family farm or homestead

was yet to be realized. The doors were finally opened to women when economics and cultural change supported their participation (Thelin, 2011; Nidiffer, 2001). However, even when welcomed, women still found themselves to be second-class citizens – their opportunities generally limited to those institutions that prepared students for futures as wives and mothers (Lucas, 2006).

Within the span of a few decades, in every developed country, women have come to represent the majority of university students and degree holders. In the U.S., approximately 60% of the college population is female (Slaughter, 2015; Bidwell, 2014; Gerzema & D’Antonio, 2013; Wolf, 2013; Allan, 2011; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Goldin, Katz, & Kuziemko, 2006). According to U.S Census data, women have outnumbered men with regard to the earning of college degrees since 1985 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, p. 189). U.S. Census data released in 2014 revealed that there were over two million more living college degree holders who were women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Though the data affirms that women are increasingly represented more heavily among alumni overall, their representation will vary by institutional type and they will be found in greater numbers among the graduates of women’s colleges. Yet, women have not achieved parity in the alumni populations of military academies and technical institutes.

In 2012, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that women earned 62% of associate’s degrees, 57.4% of bachelor’s degrees, 62.6% of master’s degrees, and 53.3% of doctoral degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Clearly, women have staked their claim as full members of the higher education student community; however, their presence in administrative and academic leadership roles remains far below that of men. The lack of equality in the American higher education leadership landscape was

clearly illustrated by the 2009 White House Project which reported that in the U.S. women accounted “for 57% of all college students, but only 26% of full professors and 23% of college presidents” (Madsen, 2012, p.5). This condition of underrepresentation extends beyond paid positions to volunteer positions where women compose less than 30% of the membership of college and university boards (Madsen, 2012; Allan, 2011). Numerous studies catalog the challenges confronting women in higher education (Fitzgerald, 2014; Warner & DeFleur, 1993).

Valian (1998) found that in “almost every [academic] field and subfield . . . and at almost every point in their teaching and research careers, women advance more slowly and earn less money than men” (p. 217). Although it would seem reasonable to conclude that the tremendous gains in women’s access to higher education would have led to improved academic career opportunities for women, these opportunities have yet to be achieved in terms of numbers of positions, prestige, or compensation (Fitzgerald, 2014; Toutkoushian, 2003; Stolte-Heiskanen, 1993). Sociologists De Welde and Stepnick (2015), in their book *Disrupting the Culture of Silence: Confronting Gender Inequality and Making Change in Higher Education*, assembled 17 reports of scholarly research and six case studies demonstrating the challenges that contemporary female faculty continue to encounter.

Women remain underrepresented in many fields, some more surprising than others. Given the well-documented shortage of women in STEM fields, the male dominance in fields such as computer science remains unsurprising; in 2013, 85% of bachelor’s degrees earned in the field were awarded to men. Women tend to be better represented in the humanities, though philosophy – the humanities discipline with the

smallest proportion of women – employs women in fewer than 20% of its full-time professorships (Wilson, 2014). Female academics also struggle to achieve equal representation on panels at scholarly meetings, and junior female medical researchers have been shown to have more difficulty securing generous start-up packages. Recent research has also demonstrated a statistically significant gender gap at the Ph.D. level, with median start-up packages reported at \$889,000 and \$350,000 for men and women, respectively (McIntire, 2015b; Howard, 2015; Voosen, 2015; Wilson, 2014).

What makes the higher education situation interesting is not only the predominance of female students, but the fact that higher education produces its own labor market and thus is training more women who are capable of leadership roles (Grose, 2014; Smith, 2011). Additionally, Kulis (1997) asserts that “higher education constitutes an employment sector that should manifest the positive effects of affirmative action” (p. 151). Because, as Curtis and Thornton (2014) observe, “higher education is a central social institution in contemporary America,” one could reasonably expect social progress to be reflected in higher education’s leadership roles (p. 4).

The Problem Statement and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this exploratory study will be to examine the gender discrepancy that exists in professional alumni association leadership through document analyses and interviews with alumni relations executives at institutions named to the 2015 *U.S. News & World Report’s* list of Top 25 Public National Universities (hereafter referred to as the *USNWR* 25). The primary goal is to determine whether a particular career path or activities while in a junior-level position increased the likelihood of achieving a chief alumni relations officer (CAO) position at a *USNWR* 25 institution.

As noted earlier, gender inequity has been studied for decades, including both general investigations and more granular inquiries into various disciplines and job titles. To date, however, little investigative energy has addressed alumni relations, an area where significant disparity exists. At present 68% of the alumni associations of the *USNWR* 25 Public Institutions employ a male in the top staff position (see Table 1.1). Perhaps more distressing, women are even more poorly represented in the top 10 of these public institutions where men make up 80% of the alumni relations leadership.

The potential ramifications of this imbalance are manifold. While many alumni suffer the misconception that universities care exclusively about their ability to make financial contributions, alumni are also important to student recruitment, career services, and reflecting the positive image of the university. The reality is that universities today need both general networking support and private funding from alumni. Is the modern alumni association prepared to provide engagement opportunities that address females and philanthropy? Today's college graduate has numerous opportunities for volunteer service. Is an alumni association led by a male executive, and perhaps chaired by a male volunteer president, an attractive arena for alumnae participation? In 1997, Kulis raised the notion that "as more institutions witness their female students becoming a majority, there is likely to be increased pressure to provide women as successful role models in teaching, administrative, and professional staff positions" (p. 167).

Table 1.1

2015 U.S. News & World Report Top 25 Public Universities with Gender of Chief Alumni Relations Officer

Rank	Name of Institution	Gender of CAO
1	University of California – Berkeley	Male
2 (tie)	University of California – Los Angeles	Female
2 (tie)	University of Virginia	Male
4	University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	Male
5	University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	Male
6	College of William & Mary	Female
7	Georgia Institute of Technology	Male
8	University of California – San Diego	Male
9	University of California – Davis	Male
10	University of California – Santa Barbara	Male
11 (tie)	University of California – Irvine	Male
11 (tie)	University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign	Male
13	University of Wisconsin – Madison	Female
14 (tie)	Pennsylvania State University – University Park	Male
14 (tie)	University of Florida	Female
14 (tie)	University of Washington	Male
17	University of Texas – Austin	Female
18	Ohio State University – Columbus	Male
19	University of Connecticut	Female
20 (tie)	Clemson University	Male
20 (tie)	Purdue University – West Lafayette	Male
20 (tie)	University of Georgia	Female
20 (tie)	University of Maryland – College Park	Female
20 (tie)	University of Pittsburgh	Male
25	Texas A&M University – College Station	Male

It is documented above that females compose a greater percentage of college graduates and current college students. Are these women interested in becoming involved (in terms of financial support and/or volunteer service) with an organization where the leadership fails to reflect current demographics? *More*, a lifestyle magazine targeted to successful women over age 40, recently reported results from a survey of wealthy women in the U.S. and five other countries which found that 77% indicated a desire to invest in companies that have diverse leadership (“Notebook,” 2014c). Despite

the well-documented salary inequities, it has been demonstrated that controlling for a number of demographic variables, and with the exception of political contributions, women are more inclined to contribute to charity than men (Merrill, 2015). Dvorak and Toubman (2013) found that alumnae are more likely to donate and to give more frequently than their male peers. Although they noted that more research was needed to determine the specific cues and contexts that move each gender to give, their findings make a powerful case. In many instances, the professional staffs of alumni associations are largely female, and women are trusted with the majority of organizational maintenance activities. Going forward, will alumnae be willing to be part of an association that perpetuates the stereotypes of women doing the work while men receive the credit?

This exploratory study examines the context and careers of individuals in alumni association leadership through in-depth interviews with CAOs at the *USNWR* 25. One purpose of this research is to formulate recommendations for those women seeking to achieve top leadership positions in alumni relations. This study fills an important void in the research and will be shared with the Council for Alumni Association Executives (CAAE) to assist this organization as it strives to legitimate the alumni relations profession through more deliberate research into the field.

Research Questions

Two overarching research questions guided this study:

- What are the career paths of chief alumni officers (CAOs) at leading public research universities and what is central to their achievement of this position and role?

- Why do women remain underrepresented at the top level of leadership in the field?

Related to these questions, I explored whether there are specific professional or educational experiences and/or qualifications possessed by the male CAOs that made them the desirable candidates for their positions.

Conceptual Frameworks

A study of this nature could use a multitude of approaches to examine and better understand the gender disparity that exists in the CAO position at some of the nation's leading public universities. Clearly, feminist theory provides one lens through which to view the issue, but the work of this project will be enriched by employing organizational and sociological theories as well.

Feminist Theory

This study will use a feminist approach, which according to Creswell (2013) centers “on and makes problematic women’s diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations” (p.29). This approach is well suited to this research topic, as it accounts for the work done by specific groups of women – in this instance CAOs in certain institutions (Creswell, 2013). Feminism is often spoken of in the singular, but it is important to note that the concept is plural. Feminists are unified around critiquing the patriarchal characterization of the world, but they bring differing and sometimes conflicting assumptions to the concept (Crotty, 1998).

Feminist research is designed to “establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative” (Creswell, 2013, p. 29). Given this definition, I

am confident that a feminist approach will yield a final product that will be most useful to the alumni relations field. Lather (1991) comments on the essential perspectives of the feminist theory framework, noting that feminist researchers “see gender as a basic organizing principle that profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete condition of our lives” (p. 71). She offers that the goal of feminist research is to “correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social position” (p. 71).

Feminist research operates within the paradigm of critical social science research with goals that include critiquing, challenging, transforming and empowering. Merriam (2009) describes power dynamics and their place at the root of critical research, and Patton (2002) makes clear that the objective of this research exceeds concepts of studying and understanding – there is a clear desire of those who conduct critical research to effect change in our society. Critical researchers wish to be a force in the creation of a more just society. As Crotty (1998) observes, feminists bring to research

an abiding sense of oppression in a man-made world. For some, this may be little more than an awareness that the playing field they are on is far from level and they need to even things up. For others, the injustice is more profound and severe. They perceive the need for very radical change in culture and society. . . .

Feminist research is always a struggle, then, at least to reduce, if not eliminate, the injustices and unfreedom that women experience. (p. 182)

Stewart (1994) explains that researchers need to consciously and systematically consider their personal ideologies and determine how these impact their understandings of a woman’s life, as well as the ways in which these ideologies might influence their

own work. When applied to research from the feminist perspective, this means “researchers need to inquire into how a women understands her gender, acknowledging that gender is a social construct that differs for each individual” (Creswell, 2013, p. 30). Those pursuing feminist research need to understand the importance of investigating power relationships and how they impact women. They also need to appreciate that no two women are identical and thus avoid the search for a singular voice (Creswell, 2013).

There exists a spectrum of feminist theories, which provide richness and diversity of feminist thought (Crotty, 1998). But according to Allan (2011) all have in common the ideas that

- gender inequality exists and is central to social relations and the structuring of social institutions;
- gender inequality is not “natural,” but a product of social relations; and
- gender inequality should be eliminated through social change (p. 19).

Liberal feminism is centered on the concept of respect for humans as individuals and retains an overarching focus of achieving fairness between the genders. In general, higher education favors the liberal feminist perspective as a strategy for approaching the gender equity issue. At the opposite end of the feminism spectrum is radical feminism, which is rooted in markets and economics and in its expression advocates for a complete overhaul of patriarchal systems (Tong, 2014; Allan, 2011).

Additional feminist theories include Marxist, socialist, and materialist feminism, the lattermost of which holds as a central tenet that the capitalistic society, with its emphasis on class, is the source of women’s oppression. Multicultural, global, and postcolonial feminist theories focus on diversity and factors including race, class, age,

sexual orientation, and disabilities, which they seek to consider alongside gender (Tong, 2014). Psychological feminism espouses the hallmark female characteristics of nurturing, caring, and empowering as strengths, not weaknesses, and as keys to ending the oppression of women (Allan, 2011). While this diversity of feminist frameworks will be considered as interview questions are developed and data are analyzed in the report of findings, the ideas specifically surrounding liberal feminism, i.e., the desire to attain equity, are most germane to this study.

Organizational and Sociological Theories

In order to provide a wider range of explanations for the research findings, various aspects of organizational and sociological theories will also be considered. The nature of this study lends itself to social comparison theory – which centrally proposes the “similarity hypothesis” or the idea that individuals prefer to compare themselves to those bearing similar characteristics – along with equity theory, which suggests that people compare inputs as well as outputs (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1992; Wood, 1989).

Social comparison theory was proposed by Festinger in 1954 and experienced a resurgence in interest beginning in the 1980s. The theory posits that people desire to self-evaluate and prefer to do so using clearly articulated standards. When such objective benchmarks are not available, individuals will use other people as the basis for comparison (Wood, 1989). As related to higher education, although clearly articulated standards often exist, very frequently calls for change are made based on the acquisition of information about what other colleagues and institutions are doing (Lattuca and Stark, 2009).

For this study, the criteria of clearly articulated standards and comparison to similar others are both relevant. First, there exist the clearly articulated direct standards, which can be related to the institutions and alumni associations under investigation, along with concrete qualifications that CAOs possess. Then, one can also more subjectively compare these CAOs' experiences and pathways to leadership; this is the area where gender may complicate paths to achieving the CAO positions at *USNWR* 25 public universities. If women in junior positions are unable to access the necessary experiences, it is possible that subjective, unquantifiable standards may hold them back from attaining CAO positions, no matter how well they compare to men using direct standards.

Self-improvement is one of the motivations that drive the comparisons central to social comparison theory. In these comparisons, the individual often chooses someone in a superior position as the focus or comparison target (Wood, 1989). This sort of upward comparison factors into this study, as the research here assumes that the CAO positions at the *USNWR* 25 universities are the most desirable positions in the alumni relations sector. This desirability derives not only from the prestige accorded to these institutions from rankings and other measures of success, but also may derive from the compensation of these positions relative to others in the sector, and from the opportunities made available to a CAO at a *USNWR* 25 institution, which may elude those employed by institutions with lesser stature and fewer resources.

Social comparison theory features among its important components the notion of dimension under evaluation, which is the attribute on which comparison is made (Wood, 1989). For this study, gender will serve as the dimension under evaluation, but according to social comparison theory, the surrounding dimensions must also be taken into

consideration. It is expected that some of the surrounding dimensions will emerge as the data are collected; however, initial surrounding dimensions will include achievements while in a junior position, CAO degree level and the institution granting the degree, the current tenure as a CAO, and the gender of the decision maker(s).

Pfeffer and Davis-Blake (1992) caution that sole occupants of positions, a situation that applies to CAOs, can compare themselves “only to others in similar positions in different institutions,” but indicate that such “inter-organizational comparisons may be hampered by lack of access to similar others or by inadequate information about them” (p. 757). The comparison of CAOs in this study will include another factor – the lack of homogeneity among these organizations, which will make direct comparisons challenging. This reality is one that is often acknowledged across higher education, including the CAOs in the alumni relations sector.

Kulis (1997) offers that while “academic institutions occupy a unique employment sector, with unusual organizational characteristics and labor market conditions, they may be viewed as strategic sites for examining the gender segregation of jobs” (p. 151). He reports that there is a large array of institutional characteristics that has “been linked to gender inequities in the workplace including institutional size, unionization, gender composition of the power structure, and dependence on governmental resources” (p. 152). The materials described in the data collection section of Chapter 2 will elucidate the aforementioned characteristics. The data presentations, which will draw from organizational charts and budget information, will be critical in establishing commonalities and differences that likely exist among institutions led by

these CAOs. Further, the analyses may serve to illuminate possible organizational and structural causes of the current state of gender inequality in these positions.

Although the 1992 findings of Youn focus primarily on the academic labor market, there are conclusions in his work that merit consideration in this study. One theory focuses on “differences in career outcomes being explained by differences among individuals in the academic prestige system, in the quality of performance and ability, and in the quality of one’s mentorship or sponsorship” (p. 101-102). These concepts – individual differences, quality of performance, and mentorship – will be examined as they relate to the professionals and institutions under investigation. While all of the participants in this study lead universities in the *USNWR* 25, the alumni associations and the CAO positions may vary significantly in terms of organizational hierarchy prestige. This factor could prove to be especially important in relation to those associations that are self-governing.

Youn (1992) also investigated the relationship between initial employment, mobility, and later career success. When reviewing the career paths of the CAOs in this study, Youn’s sociological research on professional mobility provides an additional framework for analyses. It is likely that there are a number of reasons why women are not progressing in this field. One issue to explore is that unlike many areas of academe, the field of alumni relations does not require one standard preparatory path or set of credentials for the CAO position. In fact, there are current examples of CAOs who possessed no prior higher education professional experience prior to being named to the position. It would be difficult to imagine a provost, for example, being hired from

industry, and perhaps even more far-fetched to imagine an individual without a terminal degree occupying this position.

Several other findings from Youn's (1992) research will also be investigated as they potentially apply to the CAO position. He observed that universities construct "elaborate hierarchies that stratify academic workers" (p. 110), and again these observations may well apply to administrative roles. Kulis (1997) further reported that "women administrators may be disproportionately in positions that carry little authority, such as student affairs and human resources" (p. 167). This is another aspect to consider in the area of organizational structure. At several points throughout the study specific mention will be made regarding the 19 self-governing alumni associations which feature CAOs who are essentially CEOs of independent corporations. (Note that this group of 19 features only 2 women; see Appendix A.) Alumni associations that are interdependent remain entwined within the university hierarchy and therefore subject to the value institutional leadership places on alumni relations.

Youn (1992) also concluded that Ph.D.s are generally employed by universities from the same prestige categories as those from which they earned their terminal degrees, and he found this pattern to be most persistent in prestigious institutions. He also observed that women faculty were less likely to be found at leading research universities. Investigating the relationship of these findings to the study participants' experiences provides another framework for analyzing the gender inequity present in this group.

Also related to this study is Spence's 1974 signaling theory, which offered the notion of education as a signal to a potential employer. While Spence posited that those workers who achieved higher levels of education would receive better compensation due

to their credentials, many scholars have developed variations on Spence's theory in the intervening years. Page (2010), for example, explored the relationship between the acquisition of degrees and potential employers' assumptions about employee productivity. In this study, educational attainment may provide one significant signal of CAOs, although other signaling (e.g., one's overall professional profile) may relate to prior jobs and the activities and accomplishments those jobs entailed, insofar as they imply potential success in CAO position.

In summary, this study will investigate the gender discrepancy that exists in professional alumni association leadership using theories of liberal feminism, social comparison, equity theory and signaling theory. Additionally, the work of Kulis (1997) and Youn (1992) and their conclusions about the academic labor market will be considered. Through interviews with CAOs at 2015 *USNWR* Top 25 public research universities, the study will endeavor to determine whether a particular career path or activities while in a junior-level position will increase the likelihood of achieving a CAO position at a *USNWR* 25.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This exploratory study examined the gender discrepancy that exists in professional alumni association leadership in the *USNWR* 25. Using interviews and documents, this research explored the career paths and backgrounds of selected Chief Alumni Officers (CAOs), their current positions and roles within the institutional context, as well as their perspectives on career trajectories, educational preparation, qualities for success, and gender disparities. A large body of literature informs research on gender; however, very little research exists on alumni associations or gender disparities among its chief officers.

This literature review will discuss the concept of sexism, provide an overview of the current status of women in professional environments, offer a historical overview of women in American higher education, along with a summary of how women are represented in higher education in other countries. A more specific investigation into the current status of women in university advancement roles, especially those in alumni relations will follow. A comprehensive section on the roles of mentors, sponsors, advocates, and networks is included to illustrate the value that such relationships have for professional advancement. The discussion of these relationships and the role they played in the success of the research participants will be reviewed in Chapter 4. Recommendations for creating opportunities for junior level women to benefit from such relationships will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Historical Perspective

To describe the body of literature pertaining to women and leadership as crowded is to grossly underestimate the volumes being dedicated to this topic. While gender equity has been part of the national conversation since the time of Abigail Adams, who urged her husband to consider making education available to women, there are various moments when the dialogue became more pronounced (Roberts, 2009). Some might posit the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* as stimulating a period of piqued interest. Others would suggest the 1972 enactment of Title IX was a turning point. In the last few years, however, one can scarcely contest that Facebook's COO Sheryl Sandberg brought the issue back to the forefront through the theories on women and success offered in her 2013 book *Lean In*. Slaughter (2015) applauds Sandberg's efforts, noting that "she had the courage to become an avatar for a revived feminism in an industry where blending in with the boys has been the key to survival" (p. 13-14). More importantly, perhaps, Sandberg gained attention in the era of the 24/7 news cycle and the social media network, which allows millions of people to exchange their views on the topic and gather in the like-minded groups necessary to effect change.

A key challenge to sustained progress is the premature proclamation of victory whenever gains are made. Following the 2014 United States elections, *USA Today* ran the headline "Women Shatter Glass Ceilings in Congress" noting that there would be at least 103, and potentially as many as 105, women when the new Congress convened in January 2015. An attention-grabbing headline for sure – but given that women still hold fewer than 20% of the seats in Congress (a fact the author points out in the body of her piece), it would hardly seem accurate to depict the current situation as a shattering of the

proverbial glass ceiling (Camia, 2014). Myers (2008) observed, further, that while there are more women than men voting, our country's legislature is still dominated by men. In November 2014, *More* magazine reported findings from the Institute for Women's Policy Research indicating that, should present trends continue, it will be 2121 before women achieve parity with men in Congress. Internationally, women gained 3,036 parliamentary seats in 49 countries during 2013 elections. This outcome resulted in women comprising 26% of all members (elected or appointed), which represents an all-time high ("Notebook," 2014b). In July 2015, Bryne and Loehkre reported 22 nations with female presidents or prime ministers, also an all-time high. The progress should certainly be celebrated, but not used to advance a false sense of equality. Similar examples of progress that falls short of equality can be found across a wide variety of industries where women are under-represented.

Obstacles Based on Sexism

Gloria Steinem (2014), widely regarded as a key voice for women's rights, has often commented on the curious growth of sexism. Her research found examples of matrilineal societies that existed in Africa which were characterized by egalitarianism. Steinem also noted that many Native cultures didn't have gender pronouns such as "he" and "she." The present-day reality, however, is that gender inequality remains a key issue in the United States and beyond.

Those men and women who support feminism might suggest that the unequal treatment of women, especially with regard to their participation in the workforce, reflects poorly on our country and in fact is preventing the United States from achieving the greatness that is well within its grasp. The late feminist Sandra Bem (1993) observed

that although the position of women had improved markedly in the decades prior to her seminal work, *The Lenses of Gender*, she posited that due to the visible and immutable nature of the gender characteristic, women still faced pervasive discrimination in educational institutions, the job market, and the political arena. Her assessment of the U.S. Supreme Courts' women's rights rulings of the time were that they provided equality only to those women who were in the same situation as men.

There is little argument among feminist scholars that progress on equality has been agonizingly slow, and Konner (2015) believes women have the right to be impatient. When asked at a presentation in November 2014 why she thought equality was taking so long, Steinem indicated that she had greatly overestimated the degree of democracy in our country. Since all women's issues are now majority issues the slow pace of progress continues to surprise her. However, when she considers the history surrounding slavery and suffrage, she finds that it took more than 100 years for slaves and their descendants to achieve true equality under the law. In Steinem's estimation, women's equality may well take another 100 years. Myers (2008) also reported that although at one time progress had seemed inevitable, it now appears stalled.

Lest the United States be characterized as the only country in the developed world with problems of gender inequality, it bears note that issues of such gender disparity have a long and global history. Such problems persist even in nations ruled by women. England's Queen Victoria, for instance, was known to extol the importance of feminine submission. Her female subjects were not permitted to vote, she didn't support women studying medicine, and, ironically, she was "convinced that we women, if we are to be good women, feminine and amiable, and domestic, are not fitted to reign" (Price, 2014, p.

34). Even with Chancellor Angela Merkel in power for a decade, Germany still experiences an imbalance in women's representation on corporate boards and in top level executive roles (Petrou, 2015; Dauer, 2014; Kinkade & Snider, 2014).

Women in American Higher Education

From the time of its inception with the 1636 founding of Harvard College, early American higher education welcomed no women, as these institutions existed to train future clergy in an era when women seldom worked outside the family farm or homestead. The doors finally opened to women when economics and cultural change supported their participation (Allan, 2011; Thelin, 2011; Nidiffer, 2001a). Allan (2011) refers to the various societal events that allowed women to participate in higher education in the period following the Civil War. Seven decades of activism contributed to a shift, albeit a slow one, to the presence of women in the civic realm. Specifically, the Morrill Act of 1862 increased access to higher education and provided more opportunities for women who desired this level of education and career training.

Women's participation in higher education ebbed and flowed throughout the twentieth century due to changing attitudes and world events. When men left academia during wartime, the women who filled the classrooms of America's colleges and universities met a favorable response. When more male students returned, however, women in higher education often came to be seen as threatening to men and their professional prospects (Allan, 2011). Lattuca and Stark (2009) specifically reference the 1960s women's movement as being a contributor to increasing enrollments, while Valian (1998) observes that the increased presence of white women in higher education which began in the 1970s has proven to be a critical turning point in the history of American

women and their entry into those academic fields and professions that had been previously dominated by men.

Fast forward to the most recent two decades – as reported in Chapter 1 more than half of college students and degree holders are now women. Women have staked their claim as full members of the higher education student community; however, their presence in administrative and academic leadership roles remains far below that of men. Valian's (1998) research suggests that when considered in the context of the pace progress realized by women in higher education in the last few decades, these inequitable conditions will persist into the foreseeable future.

The lack of equality in the American higher education leadership landscape is clearly illustrated by the 2009 White House Project, which reported that in the U.S. women accounted “for 57% of all college students, but only 26% of full professors and 23% of college presidents” (Madsen, 2012, p. 5). Women remain drawn to fields that are broadly considered to benefit society. In 2003, 65 % of doctorates in education and 54% of those in the social sciences were earned by women (Myers, 2008). Warner & DeFleur (1993) found that along with quantity of education, area of study factored heavily in the attainment of senior administrative leadership positions in higher education. Their work, although two decades old, discovered liberal arts degrees being best represented among those women holding senior administrative leadership positions. They also reported that specialized degrees are often devalued and considered to be inadequate preparation for such leadership positions. While their research was focused on academic leadership generally, the specific consideration of educational preparation for a senior leadership role in alumni relations remains to be explored.

A Worldwide Challenge

Numerous studies catalog the challenges confronting women in higher education worldwide (Aiston, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2014). Our European peers' environment has been characterized by Gold (1996) as "women teach and men manage" (p. 1). Only 13% of Europe's higher education leadership is female, and some countries, including Denmark, Lithuania, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Hungary, employ no female vice chancellors (Fitzgerald, 2014).

A particularly bleak situation exists in Ireland, where men occupy 85% of the higher education management roles (Fitzgerald, 2014). Gendreau-Massaloux (1993) found that in 1985 only three women in France were serving as rectors (out of a possible 32 positions) and only three women were serving as university presidents. Though the situation may have improved in the decades since, her 1993 research showed no change over the 8-year period. She further observed that the situation throughout Europe at the time was equally uninspiring, featuring no women vice-chancellors at any of the 44 universities, and no women rectors in Spain's 31 public universities, leading her to conclude that women must demonstrate a collective commitment for national policy strategies that address these deficiencies.

Women have realized a comparatively high degree of equality in all the Nordic countries, largely due to the longer traditions of women's power in this region and evidenced by the gender parity which exists in Iceland in the fields of banking and government. Additionally, Iceland has a political party founded by women – the first worldwide. Even still, there remains room for improvement in the Nordic countries with respect to female representation at the senior levels of higher education administration

(Truitt, 2015b; Myers, 2008; Stolte-Heiskanen, 1993). Evidence finds that Sweden's sustained attention to gender equity has enabled females in postsecondary education to occupy 43% of vice chancellor positions, as well as 60% of positions for deputy vice chancellors and 31% for deans as recently as 2010 (Fitzgerald, 2014). Although the Netherlands has a lower percentage of female professors than countries like Sweden and Portugal, all Dutch universities have committed to a "Charter to the Top" policy, created in 2008 to advance female talent in that country's organizations (Teelkena & Deemb, 2013).

Similarly, in Portugal, which boasts one of the oldest higher education systems in Europe, the percentage of women in academia also ranks among the highest for any Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country. However, while women comprise more than 41% of the Portuguese professoriate, equality in leadership positions remain distant, as only 7% of vice chancellors are female (Fitzgerald, 2014; Carvalho and Machado, 2010).

In nations like China, Kristof and WuDunn (2009) report many women, particularly those of the lower socioeconomic classes, are still bound by traditional societal roles and are not afforded the same educational opportunities as men. For these women, who are often sent to work in factories at a young age, gaining access to even basic levels of education would be an important step forward. Those Chinese women who are able to pursue higher education face obstacles considerably greater than those of their American counterparts. At the outset, they continue to face discrimination as college applicants – an irony not only because the Chinese government issued regulations against gender discrimination in the workplace and the university, but because the notion of

gender equality is found in China's constitution and constitutes a clear component of the communist ethos (Rhoads, Xiaoyang, Xiaoguang, & Youngcai, 2014; Sharma, 2013; Blum, 2012).

Sarah Aiston (2014) conducts research to examine the issues surrounding the lack of women in the higher education leadership in Hong Kong and Mainland China, including the role and impact of the Chinese culture. Through her work, Aiston has found that women account for fewer than 25% of the academic population in Mainland China, the lowest percentage internationally. Her mapping exercise revealed that of the eight institutions funded by China's University Grants Commission (UGC), only eight of 110 senior positions defined as dean or higher were occupied by women. Aiston and others pay particular attention to the phenomenon known as the "Third Gender," or "left-over women," in Mainland China. These terms are used to describe those women who desire career over marriage and family, a condition that defies the traditional social order of Chinese culture (Blum, 2012).

The Present State of Gender Inequality

Despite academic attempts to demonstrate diversity, a closer look reveals that academia is clearly still gendered, a problem evidenced by women's absence in senior leadership positions as well as high female concentration in the disciplines and departments that compose the "velvet ghettos," in part-time academic positions, and at institutions where employment is least stable and secure (Keenan, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2014; Smyth & Steinmetz, 2008). It has further been observed that women are more likely to experience negative consequences as a result of reduction in institutional resources (Stolte-Heiskanen, 1993).

Fitzgerald (2014) notes that while equity is a noble goal, “it will take more than a numerical shift to shatter centuries of gendered traditions, regimes and cultures” (p. 26). Authors and researchers around the world report the reinforcement of masculinity in the workplace. This idea manifests in various ways, including the expectation that work is full-time, if not more; the assumption or expectation that an employee has no external demands that would take precedence over work; and the belief that successful leadership is associated with toughness, stamina and competitiveness, which are all prototypically male traits (Slaughter, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2014; Sandberg, 2013; Hertneky, 2012; Wolf, 2011; Myers, 2008).

There also exist “boundary heightening behaviors” that fortify the domain of men, who are more likely to indulge in frequent sports talk and the use of sports jargon to describe business activities. Such talk (perhaps unintentionally) serves to alienate or exclude women (Slaughter, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2014; Korkki, 2014). Shepard and Stimmler (2014) report that “banter is the way men relate to one another, and kidding, teasing, and jokes are staples of the workplace” (p. 22). They note that women often find this behavior off-putting, as women tend to adopt a more formal style as they rise through the leadership ranks. Researchers also caution that the presence of women in management does not mean that a permanent change in organizational culture has occurred.

Despite decades of discussion surrounding gender equality, and despite a multitude of programs developed to address the issue, inequality persists with regard to academic and administrative leadership positions in higher education settings across a variety of cultures, countries, and continents. Rhoads, et al. (2014) suggest that even if the university does not cause gender disparity, the academy can and should assume

leadership in addressing this problem by developing programs to support women in their professional academic lives. They further suggest that this global issue requires international discourse, and that here, too, the academy can and should take the lead in addressing the many and ongoing challenges surrounding women and the workplace. Addressing similar concerns, Teelken and Deem (2013) astutely conclude that policies and procedures do not in and of themselves bring an end to the inequality. Of the research reviewed, their proposal of audit procedures that would address gender equity, akin to those procedures that assess teaching, research, and other important higher education metrics, is one of the more promising.

Women in University Advancement

While the issues surrounding women's compensation and career advancement relative to men are well-documented in business, the literature is comparatively sparse in the area of university advancement (a term that encompasses professionals in alumni relations, development, and often public relations). Since 1982, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) has conducted regular compensation surveys and has reported their findings in the organization's periodical, *Currents*, while also offering plenary sessions at various conferences throughout the year. At present, the CASE compensation surveys represent the only formal research being conducted to uncover gender disparities among advancement professionals.

In 2011, the CASE compensation survey of advancement professionals revealed that women aged 61 and over were earning \$42,000 less than male counterparts, while women in their 40s were earning \$18,000 less, and women in their 30s \$6,000 less.

Although CASE's historical research found the salary gap was closing, the rate of progress would not realize parity until 2040 (Jackson, 2011; Worth, 2002).

The fact that younger women in the field of advancement are realizing smaller wage gaps is good; however, the 2011 CASE study reported that women constituted more than two-thirds of the advancement profession, a proportion that held steady as recently as the 2013 report, which found that women compose 70% of the membership. In 2011, the median annual salary reported for women was \$63,000, compared to \$78,000 for men. By 2013, the median annual salary for women had risen to \$67,000, but the salary for men had risen disproportionately to \$86,000 (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, 2013).

While some higher education leaders have reviewed these statistics and concluded that they reflect gender disparity in the larger American society, others reflect the sentiments reported earlier and agree that higher education, by virtue of its mission and purpose, should be a model for social justice. When considered against such a barometer, the ongoing inequities are particularly discouraging (Jackson, 2011; Ballenger 2010).

Women in Alumni Relations

Germane to this research is the 2011 CASE study that found the field of alumni relations to be successfully closing the overall salary gap in the advancement profession. Noted for being the lowest-paying positions among the advancement disciplines, the median annual salary for alumni relations jobs increased nearly 21 percent over the preceding three years, which represented the largest growth in the advancement field (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, 2011). CASE has not conducted a salary survey since 2011; therefore, no additional information is presented

concerning the potential overall gains alumni relations professionals are making in terms of salary as related to their advancement peers. The need for timely data in this important area is discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition to CASE's work in the larger advancement arena, the Council of Alumni Association Executives (CAAE) collects compensation data annually from its member institutions. CAAE membership includes most of the largest and most prestigious alumni associations in the U.S. Both CASE and CAAE caution against generalizations based on the data reported due to the myriad organizational arrangements of alumni relations offices. The relationships between these offices and the institutions they serve can range from fully dependent (integrated) to fully independent. Each fully dependent organization may include a board of directors, but it is likely to be advisory in nature, owing to the complete dependence on the university for operating funds. The fully independent associations are entirely self-governing, and while they operate in close collaboration with the institution, they are separately incorporated 501c3 organizations and are therefore autonomous. Plus, many associations blend both concepts to create an interdependent structure (Council of Alumni Association Executives, 2014).

CAAE's 2013 compensation survey featured 66 member institutions responding to the request for salary data. Forty-three of the respondents were male and 23 were female. Appreciating that granularity exists beyond the scope of this review, the median salary for males was reported at \$190,000 annually, while that of females was \$163,200 (Council of Alumni Association Executives, 2014). The salary gap appeared to be closing in the CAAE 2014 compensation survey, although of the total 69 respondents only 19 of the 69 were women, a decline from the previous survey. The 2014 median

salary for males was reported at \$176,500 annually, while that of females was \$173,400 (Council of Alumni Association Executives, 2015).

The Equal Pay Issue

CASE found that in advancement overall, professionals in hiring positions offered salaries to men that, in 2011, exceeded offers to women seeking the same positions by an average of more than \$10,000 (Jackson, 2011). Although Fuchs made this observation in 1989, referring to the preceding quarter century, it remains relevant to the present:

The persistence of substantial gender inequality a quarter-century after the passage of major antidiscrimination legislation and several decades of massive social change poses a major problem for economic analysis and policy. Why are women at an economic disadvantage relative to men and why is it so difficult for them to improve their relative position? The most popular answer – prejudice and exploitation by employers – is seriously incomplete. There is undoubtedly some prejudice and some exploitation, but the evidence in support of the employer explanation is weak and there are many facts about work and wages that are inconsistent with it (p.26).

Alumni relations and indeed higher education in general are not the only industries where women's salaries lag behind those of men. A thorough investigation of the salary disparity issue is not called for in this study, owing to the many nuances surrounding the matter. Salary inequity varies drastically across a variety of metrics including age, educational achievement, state of residence, and the like. To frame the issue with a basic statistic, the Institute for Women's Policy Research released its most recent findings in March 2015, in which it is predicted that women will not reach salary

parity with men until 2058. The study also revealed that women need greater levels of educational attainment than men do in order to secure the best paying jobs (Paquette, 2015).

The review of recent research above illustrates the need for further exploration into the gender discrepancies found in virtually every facet of higher education. This research works to close that gap specifically in the arena of alumni relations. Because the only existing research on gender discrepancy in alumni relations addresses compensation, it will be useful to investigate other factors contributing to women's status and success in alumni relations.

The Role of Mentors

It is clear that developing relationships with other professionals, whether male or female, and regardless of organizational type, can and does play an important part in achieving a leadership position (Wolf, 2011; Ballenger, 2010; Brown, 2005). As is often suggested, success is less about what one knows than who one knows. Thus, the role of mentors, sponsors, and advocates and how these networks may assist in the professional development and achievement of CAOs will be considered as part of this research. The literature surrounding these concepts is plentiful and continues to merit investigation in scholarly research and the mainstream press both.

Mentoring dates back to ancient times and the Homeric character of Mentor, who appears in *The Odyssey*. Most scholars studying mentoring refer to this mythical figure, but less often is it acknowledged that the character known as Mentor, assumed to be a man, was actually the goddess Athena who disguised herself in several ways throughout the epic in order to provide guidance to Odysseus, Penelope and Telemachus. It could

therefore be possible that even in ancient myth, the lesson was that male and female strengths are both needed for support and success (McInnes, 2010).

The current landscape features a constellation of relationships designed to provide advice and counsel, but to date, the key terms for describing such relationships often appear interchangeable. These relationships can vary from spontaneous to structured and may not always be directly related to career issues. In some cases, women report a diverse array of mentoring-style relationships that address a breadth of needs, including personal development (Ballenger, 2010). Lack of clarity around the overall concept challenges research efforts and additionally impedes the ability to replicate the benefits associated with such relationships (McInnes, 2010). Women in particular appear prone to mischaracterization of these relationships, often placing more value on them and their potential than warranted (Hewlett, 2013). Bounded rationality rules the day, as synthesizing the voluminous literature on the topic would provide a life's work.

In her investigation of female leadership of women's colleges from 1880 to 1910, Cynthia Farr Brown (2001) revealed that these women used several strategies when developing their leadership styles, an approach they felt necessary to establishing their authority. A key finding related the cultivation of male and female allies, and, in particular, "some of the strongest support for female leadership came from men" (p. 37). It is not surprising to learn of supportive relationships, including the presence of male mentors. A more thorough investigation would likely reveal even earlier instances of such activity.

In contrast to the paradigm of the male mentor who advocated for women in higher education, most current literature focused on the activities of men finds that

deliberately or not their behaviors serve to exclude women from the formal and informal networks that enable the ascension to leadership. This behavior includes, but is not limited to, the mentoring relationships that provide important personal and organizational perspectives (Fitzgerald, 2014; Wolf, 2011; Matsa & Miller, 2011; Ballenger, 2010; Cronin & Fine, 2010; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Myers, 2008; Tannen, 1994).

According to Hewlett (2013), one would be challenged in the modern workplace to find mid-level professionals who haven't been "mentored to death" (p. 101). She cites a 2008 survey conducted by Catalyst, an organization that advocates for women in business, which revealed that 83% of women MBAs working full-time reported having been mentored. In the professional realm, mentors can also provide important insights into institutional politics. According to Hewlett, mentoring relationships are powerful, and they matter but on their own (as traditionally defined) they are not sufficient to guarantee achievement of a leadership position.

Brown (2005) asserts that mentoring provides an invaluable resource for those women who seek leadership positions in higher education and supports the literature found in higher education and business which universally reports that "even women with outstanding credentials can find it difficult to rise to leadership without having been vouched for by powerful individuals in leadership positions" (p. 659). Ballenger (2010) also found numerous examples in her research that demonstrated a correlation between women in higher education who availed themselves to mentors and subsequent success in ascending the career ladder. Call it mentoring or call it sponsorship: support from influential, experienced professionals is frequently noted as being critical to the achievement of leadership roles. Forgoing these types of relationships can have

consequences; former White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers (2008), for example, testified that despite her professional credentials she lacked the fashion sense needed for someone in her position and wished that she would have had a mentor to help her navigate her way to appropriate wardrobe and grooming choices for the variety of activities associated with such a visible role.

Nidiffer (2001b), one of the leading scholars of women in higher education leadership, considers the sharing of personal stories to exemplify the powerful role of mentoring relationships. This narrative technique appears to be one of the more popular methods for transmitting the experiences of female leaders across a variety of industries (Fitzgerald, 2014; Hewlett, 2013; Sandberg, 2013; Hertneky, 2012; Wolf, 2011; Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Myers, 2008; Book, 2000; Bateson, 1989) Using Karen Doyle Walton's work with American female college presidents, Nidiffer illustrates that mentoring relationships generally played a key role in success.

This opinion is also espoused by Brown (2005), whose research with female presidents revealed a strong commitment to serving as mentors for the next generation of women leaders. Brown (2005) surveyed 91 female independent college presidents and found that most respondents regarded at least one mentor as essential to the achievement of a leadership position. Regrettably, these studies did not delve into what particular activities constituted a mentoring relationship, thus contributing to the concern and confusion surrounding an agreed-upon definition of this role.

Rita Bornstein (2007), former president of Rollins College, found that women's career progress is hampered by the lack of support networks and mentors who can provide guidance as successful women contemplate and prepare for leadership

opportunities. She defined such relationships to include effecting connections with decision-makers. Bennett College President Gloria Randle Scott offered that women will be the ones making the changes to higher education for the next generation and urged a commitment to sharing the inspiring stories of women in higher education on a consistent and regular basis. Other scholars support this notion and further encourage sitting female college presidents to serve as role models and mentors, but they do not clearly distinguish whether these terms are complementary or interchangeable, and what activities might be unique to each (Brown, 2005; Green, 1998; Schwartz, 1997).

There is also evidence of the value of male mentors, advocates and sponsors. Numerous authors reported instances where men desired to see women succeed and further suggested that such support may be rooted in the male desire to feel responsible for the success of another (Williams & Dempsey, 2014; Wolf, 2011; Myers, 2008). Several of Hewlett's (2013) respondents also reported a belief that women who are not allied with men will face difficulties as they attempt to climb the career ladder. In fact, Barsh and Cranston (2009) found among their female interview subjects many who indicated especial indebtedness to senior level men. A full investigation of this proposition, especially as it relates to the male domination of the topmost levels of higher education leadership, might prove useful; the work of Fitzgerald (2014), in particular, provides numerous contrasting examples of men's efforts to keep women from achievement of higher education leadership positions. Explorations of this nature often yield more questions than answers, and the nature of this work, so closely tied to human interactions, makes absolute conclusions virtually impossible.

Georgetown University's Deborah Tannen (1994) suggests that mentoring may handicap women, largely as a result of the prevalence of the "old boys' network." She recounts the experience of a female applicant who found herself part of an academic search in which a male candidate who was a favorite of a sitting faculty member had access to insider information and advocacy; the search committee scheduled his interview presentation last so that he might attend those of the competition. Tannen asks, should such activity be construed as "preferential treatment or just 'mentoring,' a system by which a younger person has a supporter and ally higher up who 'brings him along'?" (p. 158). Despite the definitional ambiguity of mentoring— a difficulty it shares with Hewlett's (2013) concept on "sponsorship," as discussed below – Tannen's example is one of many that illustrate the advantage gifted to those professionals (male and female) who receive this type of support.

Mentors versus Advocates and Sponsors

Cronin and Fine (2010) examine mentoring in the context of the business world, with observations salient to higher education. They assert that "business is a world of empirical learning where mentors and advocates are the professors" (p. 108). The same "empirical learning" logic can be applied to higher education. Though it has been documented that higher education benefits from training its own workforce, significant research shows that those who climb the ranks of higher education administration remain woefully unprepared for their roles, due primarily to inadequate preparation and training. Many scholars suggest that higher education leaders would do well to investigate the work of other sectors in the area of professional development where significant attention is paid to leadership training and the cultivation of a robust internal talent pool. Such

succession planning activities have been largely ignored in higher education yet many other industries find this practice to be essential for an organization's survival. The skills that make an individual an excellent teacher or researcher do not necessarily translate to success in administration (Bennett, 2015; Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Smith, 2011; Davis, 2008). This is another area where formalizing the activities of supportive relationships could yield fruitful results.

The Tiara Syndrome

The idea of a sponsor or advocate gains power when considered alongside women's documented tendency to downplay their performance results, a behavior that may pose a greater obstacle to success than perception of their leadership competencies (Hewlett, 2013; Sandberg, 2013; Wolf, 2011; Vanderbroeck, 2010; Myers, 2008).

Fitzgerald (2014) amplifies this assertion in describing higher education as an environment where self-interest and self-promotion are reinforced, along with the often false assumption that excellent work and commitment will be rewarded. The founders of Negotiating Women, Inc., refer to this situation as the "Tiara Syndrome," and report that women often believe a good performance will lead to reward (Sandberg, 2013). Wolf (2011) further supports this idea with her suggestion that "most women believe the workplace is a meritocracy" (p. 51). These ideas were reinforced in October 2014, when Microsoft's CEO Satya Nadella suggested that women not ask for raises and trust that the system would reward their performance ("Women in tech," 2014).

As a result of these beliefs, many women report reluctance to apply for promotions, even when they are capable and deserving. Golden Gate University professor Kit Yarrow (as cited in Cancino, 2015) references the cultural norms that make it less

acceptable for women to negotiate, particularly concerning matters related to money, and concludes that this is a contributing factor to the dominance of women in positions that are traditionally lower paying (Hewlett, 2013; Sandberg, 2013; Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Bem, 1993). University of Connecticut professor Gina Barreca (2013) defines the related idea of “achievement dysmorphia” as the reluctance of women to accept compliments on work well done.

If women desire to rise to the ranks of leadership but hesitate to promote their abilities and achievements, this conundrum begs to be addressed. While developing self-esteem and self-advocacy skills might best occur through the help of a mentor as defined in the Homeric sense, sponsors and advocates could also assist in this area, but likely excel most in highlighting the accomplishments of such capable women. The literature reviewed for this project is replete with anecdotes demonstrating how instrumentally individuals in senior positions assist in professional development, personal improvement and access to opportunities that benefit career and personal enhancement.

Women Helping Other Women

The relevance of these findings to higher education today has not been fully investigated, but correlation exists between the sponsorship concept and that of the “Good Mother,” who helps create leaders for the next generation (Spore, Harrison, & Haggerson, Jr., 2009). Hewlett’s (2013) Center for Talent Innovation has reported that Caucasian men make up only 17% of college graduates, which suggests that now is an opportune time for ambitious women to demonstrate their desire to ascend to leadership roles, as fewer men will congest the pipeline. One key benefit of Hewlett’s (2013) *(Forget a Mentor) Find a Sponsor* is its careful creation of a framework for successful

sponsor-protégé relationships. This volume provides a useful set of readily implementable recommendations. The work of Shepard and Stimmmer (2014), Williams and Dempsey (2014), and Doyle-Morris (2009) also provides action plans that female higher education professionals could easily apply to their positions in academia. Barsh and Cranston (2009) further offer that “any company interesting in cultivating women leaders would do well to invest in developing an army of sponsors to bring the next generation along” (p. 133).

Cronin and Fine (2010) raise some concern for women seeking mentors and advocates. While their work demonstrates that such relationships benefit both parties and the business at large, they have also found that the “informal and arbitrary nature of most approaches reveals some unintended consequences that put women at a disadvantage relative to men in the workplace. For not so obvious reasons, the rules of mentoring and advocating just don’t work as well for women” (p. 115). One key issue is the selection of mentors, which often occurs through a top-down approach. In those cases, women are less likely to attract the best mentors available. Because the pool of senior level women is smaller, fewer opportunities exist to be mentored by a successful woman who has “been there.” Brown (2005) suggests that women need to actively seek out appropriate mentors, rather than waiting to be approached. Given the confusion about what specifically constitutes a mentoring relationship, fear of uncertainty and rejection may well impede women from pursuing such relationships. An additional challenge is that advocates and sponsors sometimes support others confidentially; consequently, the beneficiary may not even know such support was offered. For this reason, attempts to

document the success of these activities in relation to women's achievement of leadership positions remain limited (Cronin & Fine, 2010).

Queen Bees

Though, as discussed earlier, some have asserted the obligation for women in senior positions to provide assistance to those women who aspire to leadership complications result from those women who have achieved success but do not desire to provide advice and counsel to the next generation (Fitzgerald, 2014; Sandberg, 2013; Brown, 2005; Spore, et al., 2002; Tinsley, Secor, & Kaplan, 1984). While Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (2006) is famously quoted as saying, "There's a special place in hell for women who don't help other women," hives of women known as "queen bees" exist throughout organizations. Higher education is not immune.

"Queen bee" was coined in the 1970s by researchers who revealed that there exist women in leadership roles who deliberately impede other women from joining them (Mavin, 2008). Several theories have been offered, ranging from the desire to be the only female to the idea of "tokenism," or the idea that men permit selected women into leadership ranks only with the understanding that these women refrain from welcoming other women along. Queen bees continue to thrive in today's workplace due to increasing numbers of women in leadership positions. These women are not interested in serving as mentors, advocates, sponsors or Good Mothers. In fact, they may attempt to undermine their future competition. For many women, the unfortunate truth is that they are their own worst enemies, frequently judging, and perhaps even condemning, the choices of other women. The irony of the situation, while striking, remains outside the

scope of this research (Helou, 2015; Friedman, 2014; Williams & Dempsey, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2014; Drexler, 2013; Sandberg, 2013; Mavin, 2008).

Men, Women, and Mentoring

Women also suffer the discomfort between genders as it manifests in mentoring relationships. Men who choose to mentor women often face suspicion of inappropriate relationships, while men perceive women mentees as opportunistic or threatening. Those men who go so far as to champion or advocate for women may endure additional teasing from male colleagues. Thus, men remain more likely to select other men for these types of relationship opportunities, as they find comfort and security in this choice. It is unfortunate that male-female mentoring relationships, and their inherent diversity benefits, face the brunt of such long-standing societal stereotypes (Hewlett, 2013; Cronin & Fine, 2010).

Barnard College President Debora Spar describes the additional need for relationships allowing women to receive feedback and criticism. Too often, there exists a “pervasive organizational tendency to handle women with kid gloves[,] . . . to praise and encourage women and go out of our way not to upset them” (Hewlett, 2013, p. 113). Such coddling harms women, as many have difficulty accepting negative evaluation as a result. The ability, and perhaps even obligation, to give and receive assessment must figure centrally into successful supportive relationships. Further complication stems from some women’s reluctance to seek out a mentor for fear of perceived weakness and overreliance on others. Male dominance at the organizational apex contributes to this perception, which supplies further evidence that those men who seriously value gender

equity need to be part of the solution and make the mentoring of women a priority (Williams & Dempsey, 2014; Hewlett, 2013; Sandberg, 2013; Cronin & Fine, 2010).

Women, who characteristically build smaller but deeper networks than men, often stop at a single sponsor, mentor, or advocate. In reality, though, women (and men) benefit most from recruiting a variety of people to serve in these support roles. Given the complex nature of the workplace and the myriad needs for modern professional ascendancy, a diverse group of sponsors, mentors, and advocates, who each bring a unique strength to the relationship, is far more likely to yield the desired assistance. At its very foundation, business is conducted through relationships. Success stories of those professionals who have benefitted from cultivating deep networks of contacts, including mentors, sponsors and advocates, are abundant (Shepard & Stimmiller, 2014; Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Doyle-Morris, 2009).

Networks

The thorough examination of all formal and informal networks for women professionals lies beyond this study's scope. Participation in these groups can provide guidance with less risk than that of the mentor-advocate-sponsor relationship. Some of these networks, like the American Association of University Women (founded by Marion Talbot in 1881), allow for women to gather together, assumedly free from queen bees and other detractors, for dialogue, support, and encouragement (Nidiffer, 2001b). While women comfortably turn to their personal networks for advice on matters of the family and home, this tendency extends short of their professional lives (Wolf, 2011).

Some researchers investigate the lack of activity among professional networks for women in leadership positions. Various theories have been offered, including the

proposition that women hesitate to band together (as men do) because, as a marginalized group, they would risk segregating themselves further from the people and situations they are trying to change. Others suggest concern regarding the optics of spending too much time with other women, and fear of potential repercussions for ostensibly taking up a feminist cause (Myers, 2008).

The ever-increasing ease of technological communication allows women to participate in professional networks with relative ease. Brown (2005) suggested that these initiatives might prove beneficial, particularly because they can exist without geographic and temporal limitations. The success of Sheryl Sandberg's (2013) *Lean In* has spawned circles of women (and even some circles of men) to meet in small groups and engage in an ongoing conversation about professional development and the implications of this popular book's content.

Also outside the scope of this research is women's lack of representation in decision-making roles and leadership positions such as corporate boards (Wilson, 2009). Barriers to women's achievement of such positions likely include the dearth of women with hiring power, which may limit access to such opportunities regardless of the preparation and support mentors, advocates and sponsors provide. Determining differences in how such relationships occur across generations will also help create useful frameworks for professional networking. Expectations about the work of mentoring differ among age demographics. For example, baby boomers tend to view a mentor as someone to help them get promoted, while Generation Xers view them in a more parental light and expect them to be caring and supportive (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).

Gerkovich (2015) indicates that participation in these informal networks is a critical part of women ascending the career ladder. In her 27-year career in the field of diversity and inclusion, however, she has found that women lack equal access to these networks. She also notes the crucial role that mentorship and/or sponsorship plays for women, yet here too she continues to observe a gender imbalance.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter reviewed a portion of the plentiful literature that exists to describe and address the issues surrounding gender inequity in the workplace. To help situate the issue for higher education an overview of the history of women in U.S. higher education was discussed along with information regarding the representation of women in higher education in other countries. A current overview on women in advancement positions and roles was provided, noting the absence of literature relating to women in leadership in alumni relations. Given the importance placed on the roles of mentors, sponsors and advocates, a comprehensive overview of these relationships was included.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This research did not test a particular theory; rather, it was an exploratory study of the career pathways of female and male alumni directors at major public research universities. Qualitative research was undertaken as it has been found to provide research that is more comprehensive and granular than quantitative research and it lends itself well to the specific case-based objectives of this study (Elliott, 2005). This study integrated elements of narrative analysis and document analysis in interpreting interviews conducted with 10 CAOs, five female and five male, who are employed at 2015 *U.S. News & World Report* Top 25 Public Institutions (*USNWR* 25). First-order, or ontological, narratives consist of the stories that people tell about themselves and their personal experiences (Somers & Gibson, 1994). By supplying such narratives, the 10 CAOs who participated in this study illuminated the career paths of those in their positions and provided insight into the similarities and differences in the experiences and achievements of male and female leaders.

The social sciences have demonstrated interest in narratives since the early 1980s. According to Elliott (2005), narratives display three key features: They are chronological, meaningful and social. She further explains the importance of acknowledging the audience(s) for whom the research has been produced, the omission of which yields an incomplete and unsatisfactory understanding by the reader and potential user of the research. Narrative researchers have a particular interest in the stories that emerge

through the research process, since each participant has a unique story to tell. In this particular study, first-order narratives were gathered (Creswell, 2013).

An important characteristic of narrative research is the organization of a sequence of events – in this case, the career pathways of the CAOs – into a whole. The narrative is intended to convey the meaning of the events as they are understood in relation to the whole (Elliott, 2005). Another key feature of narrative research is the belief among experts in the field of the importance of evaluation which instructs the narrative's audience as to how to interpret the narrative and suggests appropriate responses to it. Experts also hold that the telling of narratives, in and of themselves, constitutes an evaluative act given that the narrative's subject is selecting events and decisions of importance to convey (Elliott, 2005).

This research aims to inform upper level administrators and those in alumni relations about the career paths taken by some of the leading CAOs in the field. Understanding the preparation and achievements of these CAOs in the positions they occupied prior to their current positions will aid in preparing and recruiting the next generation of CAOs. In the feminist tradition, this research may be particularly useful to women in alumni relations as they navigate their career paths.

Research Questions

Two overarching research questions guided this research.

- What are the career paths of chief alumni officers (CAOs) at leading public research universities and what is central to their achievement of this position and role?

- Why do women remain underrepresented at the top level of leadership in the field?

Related to these questions, I explored whether there are specific professional or educational experiences and/or qualifications possessed by the male CAOs that made them the desirable candidates for their positions. I further examined these findings to determine any advantages these men may have had in the achievement of their positions. Also conducted was investigation into the ways in which the profession can better prepare women to be competitive for these positions.

By exploring these research questions, I aim to fill the gap that exists in the alumni relations professional literature. Little work has been done on the career paths of those who have succeeded in achieving the most prominent positions in alumni relations organizations. Another factor contributing to the timeliness and relevance of this research is the aging of the leadership, like the aging of the professoriate, at some of the top-tier programs. Whether they have served their institutions for multiple decades or they joined the profession after working outside higher education, a number of these baby-boomer professionals are approaching retirement. Several of the field's most prestigious positions at leading public and private institutions could become available in the next five to ten years. Thus, this research may be timely for the field in the search and selection process for new leadership in alumni relations.

Sample Selection

A study of this nature is best served through purposeful sampling. This strategy allows for selecting those respondents most likely to yield rich data and, in the case of this study, insight into the historical and cultural factors within alumni relations that has

resulted in the current underrepresentation of women in CAO positions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

To answer the research questions, I considered the gender of those at the top public research universities, as named by *USNWR*, and then invited five women and five men to participate in the study (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1). This sample size of five female and five male CAOs allowed for the collection of extensive information about each respondent and increased the likelihood in variation of responses between men and women and across the group as a whole. While the study aimed to develop a collective story, it also sought the opportunity to tease out specific and particular information since one overall intention of qualitative research is to avoid generalizing (Merriam, 2009). At the same time, Chase (1995) describes the ability of narratives to allow the researcher a deeper understanding not only of the individual but of culture shared by a particular community of individuals.

This set of institutions and the CAOs leading these universities were selected for this research based on my experience at the University of Georgia for 17 years, 10 of them in the CAO position. During that time, the presence of women among the CAOs in this prestigious group was rather low, generally with no more than three to five women in the top leadership positions at any one time. As these institutions are widely considered to be among the very best public institutions in the U.S., they are a group worthy of further investigation, as the larger society may look to these institutions to be leaders in social change and related issues, including gender equity.

Prior to receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the ten targeted CAOs, five male and five female, were contacted via electronic correspondence to

determine their initial willingness to participate in the study. Note, as Table 1.1 illustrates, that there were 17 males and eight females serving in *USNWR* 25 public institutions at the time research was conducted. Since the CAO at UGA was omitted as a potential subject due to my potential bias, seven females remained in the pool. It was important to establish the potential for participation, as there were a limited number of females in participant pool overall; thus, if more than one female was unwilling to participate, other strategies for data collection would have been needed.

Upon receipt of IRB approval in May 2015, written and informed consent using a standard introduction letter and a standard letter of consent (see Appendix A) was obtained from each of the participants before the research began. Additionally, the IRB approval granted permission to contact the remaining CAOs who were not selected for interviews if that became necessary as the research unfolded. Given the nature of the findings, in September 2015, the remaining ten CAOs were contacted via electronic correspondence to determine whether they entered the alumni relations field in the CAO position. Note that there were only 10 remaining at that time due to a number of CAO departures in the period following the commencement of the research. (See Appendix B for a list of the 2015 *USNWR* Top 25 National Public Research Universities that indicates which institutions have a vacancy at the CAO position at the time of this study's publication.) The University of Georgia (UGA) was not considered for this research, even though UGA appears in the *USNWR* 25 list, due to the issues of potential bias disclosed in the author's note at the end of this chapter. However, the career path of the current CAO at UGA did surface as pertinent information during communication with other CAOs.

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) discusses the concepts surrounding data collection in an exceptionally clear and thorough manner, advising the researcher to consider collection as a series of activities. These activities are interrelated and share the goal of acquiring good information that answers the research questions. Creswell suggests that qualitative research permits multiple entry points to data collection and emphasizes the importance of considering multiple phases in data collection. To the untrained, data collection may resemble simple interviewing or observing. In reality, a meaningful and successful study requires a complex series of data-collecting activities, along with critical evaluation.

Multiple sources of data were compiled to address the research questions.

Interviews provided the primary source of information; however, several documents, which are detailed in the section below (see Table 3.1), were also collected and analyzed to aid in determining the career paths of the CAOs at these 10 leading public research universities, investigating what is central to their achievement and exploring why women remain underrepresented at the top level of leadership in the alumni relations field.

Table 3.1

Documents and Information Collected from Participants

Current vita

Current job description and/or position announcement if more appropriate

Organizational charts for institution and alumni association/office of alumni relations

Gender composition of institution's senior administration

Gender composition of alumni association board

Year of institution's founding

Year of alumni association's founding

Budget of alumni association/alumni relations department

Size of living alumni population broken down by gender

Size of current student enrollment broken down by gender

Note: Participants were asked to provide these documents and information if they were not available through the internet or other public sources.

Interviews

The research interviews employed for this study represented the best option for yielding the desired richness of data. Prior to conducting the interview, each participant was sent the interview questions via electronic correspondence. A semi-structured format was used, which gathered the same general demographic information from each participant. Each interviewee was asked the questions described in Appendix C. However, due to my personal relationships with these respondents and knowledge of the profession, many of the interviews were partially unstructured and informal and these questions were often asked out of order, owing to a response that suggested moving into a different question would allow the interview to flow more smoothly. In fact, Elliott (2005) suggests that when conducting an interview focusing on the “broad life course or on experiences (such as education and training or employment) that may span a great many years...it is important not to impose a rigid structure on the interview by asking a standard set of questions” (p. 31). Chase (1995) and Eisner (1991), moreover, caution against limiting interviews to formal encounters centered on questionnaires. These authors assert the importance of putting the participant at ease and avoiding a stiff approach – likening a good interview to the participation in a good conversation. This caveat pertains especially to the current study, as many of the subjects have served in the alumni relations sector for more than three decades, and thus offered expansive recollections exceeding the scope of a simple questionnaire.

The interview questions were created to explore a variety of areas and to allow for an investigation of how each participant’s experiences may or may not have led to the achievement of the CAO position. First, participants were asked share their educational

background and how that preparation played a role in their career. The results gathered from this question yielded information regarding any trends among the group as related to academic preparation.

Description of Questions

Participants were asked to recount how they became interested in a career in alumni relations. This question was adapted for those who had a career outside of alumni relations and/or higher education prior to the achievement of the CAO position. This purpose of this question was to gather information concerning career paths in the event that these would uncover particular trends in the journey to the CAO position.

The CAOs interviewed were asked to share specific roles and/or position descriptions they had in their careers that provided opportunities to develop leadership skills, specifically those skills that have proven to be particularly beneficial to their achievement of, and success in, the CAO position. The following discussion addressed respondents' participation in the professional organizations, including CASE and CAAE, although this question was often moved nearer to the end of the interview due to the aforementioned issues regarding flow of conversation. It was expected that the information obtained from this question would allow for the creation of an inventory of leadership skills essential to success, along with the possibility of uncovering differences in the responses offered from male and female participants. Liberal feminist theory, along with social comparison theory and the stylistic differences of leadership associated with each gender, framed my thinking as I analyzed the responses.

With regard to the questions surrounding structural differences, several participants had tenures of such duration that they were unable to accurately recall the

gender composition of the university leadership and search committees at the times of their hiring. Nonetheless, the question that addressed this topic was pertinent to the organizational and sociological theories asserting that people are drawn to and professionally favor others who look like themselves. A discussion of each participant's position and role in the larger institutional framework was included to assist in determining if any connection seemed to exist between reporting structure, service on major university committees, participation in decision-making and the overall relevance and value placed on the individual's role and position as well as that of the alumni association's stature overall. In a related area of inquiry, participants were asked to discuss the association's budget size, staff size, and the size and gender composition of the living alumni population to uncover any potential relationships between these areas and the leadership position.

Participants were asked to share their thoughts on the underrepresentation of women at the highest levels of leadership in the profession, along with offering general thoughts on ways to enhance the profession's reputation and relevance. This included robust discussions regarding the participants' thoughts on potential career paths, potential college majors, the creation of a formal academic program for alumni relations, the formation of an apprenticeship program and/or formal mentoring for junior members of the profession, and the role the various professional organizations could and perhaps, should, play in leadership development.

Those interviewed shared either their exact age or, in one case, provided an age range. Most shared their exact salary or a range they believed to be accurate owing to some less precise areas of their compensation. Along with this discussion, the reality of

women's underrepresentation in top positions and unequal compensation was discussed, including any activities participants were engaged in to remedy the situation. Finally, participants were asked if they had any additional thoughts that were not covered in the prepared questions, along with any areas they believed were being overlooked in the research.

Interview Protocol

Nine of the interviews were conducted in-person; seven took place at the individual's campus and two were completed during the CAAE Summer Institute, held in July 2015 in Chicago, Illinois. One interview was conducted telephonically due to convenience for the respondent. These interviews were varied in length with the shortest one taking just over 30 minutes due to the participant experiencing an unexpected scheduling constraint, and the longest lasting just over two hours. The duration of the majority of interviews was in the range of an hour and a half to just under two hours.

As indicated earlier, I have established relationships with the majority of the interviewees; thus, it was important to make clear the purpose of the research and the motivation in selecting them as participants, and they were assured anonymity in the reporting of the research. Participants were informed that they would be afforded the opportunity to review those portions of the report pertaining to them, and that they will receive a personal copy of the research.

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Elliott (2005) cautions that first-person narratives are subject to a variety of influences. First, the subject may be influenced by the person conducting the interview. There are also secondary audiences that may have an effect; for example, if the interview takes place in a more public setting,

the interviewee may be influenced by the possibility of the conversation being overheard. It is also possible that interviewees – including those interviewed for this research – might consider future audiences (whether possible or imagined) for the published work, which can play a role in their responses. Elliott notes that the lattermost concern is particularly germane to recorded interviews, as the act of recording indicates the likelihood that the interview will be listened to in the future, that transcription is a possibility, and that that portions of the conversation may appear in a written text. To address the matter of confidentiality, the interviews were conducted in the participants' private offices or other location of the participants' choosing where they believed privacy could be assured. Participants were informed that the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the research, and that prior to destruction I would be the only individual with direct access to these recordings and transcripts.

Documents and Institutional Information

While CAO job descriptions all fit a basic framework, alumni associations vary in their institutional relationships, their areas of focus as determined by volunteer boards and/or university administrations, and other factors unique to institutional history and culture. Accordingly, the positions and roles of the CAO may differ by institution.

As Table 3.1 illustrates, a variety of documents and institutional information was obtained from participants. Organizational structure was investigated to understand the participants' reporting lines, including the gender of the immediate supervisor. To further situate each individual in the organizational hierarchy, the gender composition of each institution's senior administration and the alumni association board was obtained. Organizational charts of the universities were gathered in order to graphically observe

where these individuals are placed within their institutions. Basic information about each institution, including year of founding, year of alumni association's founding, size of living alumni population, and current student enrollment, was also collected in case these structural differences could explain some of the discrepancies that were uncovered. Founding dates of institutions and alumni associations are withheld in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees. Size of living alumni population and current student enrollment are reported as averages and are found in Chapter 4.

Additionally, the organizational chart for the department of alumni relations and/or the alumni association was solicited, along with the departmental/association budget, as this information provides additional insight into the scope of each individual's responsibilities. A current resume was requested from each interviewee, since written documentation can supply information not shared during the interview process. Seven participants provided resumes and three provided brief biographies which were located on their association's websites. Interviewees were also asked to provide a written job description and/or the position announcement that listed their current position, if appropriate. This broad array of documents and information was assembled to triangulate interview data; according to Denzin (1989) this valuable strategy adds strength to qualitative social science research. Note that participants were asked to provide these documents if they were not available in the public domain. Some participants provided all information that was requested regardless of its public availability and in other cases the information was collected via an internet search or email follow up with the CAOs' administrative assistants or other staff members. The selection process for the individual's current position – and specifically the title and

gender of the individual chairing the process – was also considered. Collectively, these documents provided insight into organizational structure, hiring process, and institutional culture, all useful for understanding the duties and achievements of these CAOs.

Coding Techniques

Coding is an important aspect of data analysis, especially as related to qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The data set for this study consisted of the transcribed interviews, along with documents obtained during the data collection process. Owing to its flexibility as a coding technique, an emergent design was used (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Saldaña (2013) advises that coding takes on a personal approach and offers that there is no one best method to employ in the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. He further suggests that there are instances where coding is not the appropriate or ideal choice for analysis.

According to Saldaña (2013) many researchers code during the data collection phase, rather than waiting until all data are collected to begin the coding process. Such was the case with this study. Beginning with the second interview, themes began to emerge regarding the questions under exploration. The coding process commenced by incorporating the theoretical frameworks underpinning this research (see Table 3.2). Some coding occurred during the interview itself when I wrote down field notes about key words and themes that were recurring among participants. Particular attention was given to responses that pertained to the theoretical frameworks described in Chapter 1 and recapitulated in Table 3.2. As the findings will demonstrate, similarity existed among participants' answers regarding career paths, college majors, and preparation the next generation of CAOs will require in order to achieve success.

Table 3.2

<i>Theoretical Frameworks Pertinent to the Interpretation of Data</i>	
Name of Theory	Key Features or Emphases of Theory
Liberal feminist theory	Focus on achieving fairness between genders and value for women as human beings
Social comparison theory	Comparison of oneself to a similar other, preferably using clearly articulated standards
Equity theory	Comparison of inputs versus outputs
Signaling theory	Use of educational achievement and employment experience by a potential employer as evidence of applicant's capabilities

Following each interview, the recording was downloaded to nonotes.com for transcription. The transcripts generally arrived within three days and were immediately reviewed against the field notes to confirm the emerging themes and to emphasize other key points shared. These key points were transferred to individual notes which were color coded by participant and then grouped together by theme in order to have a visual expression of the central findings.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is often criticized for its failure to meet scientific standards of validation and reliability. As with many areas of research, however, qualitative research can incorporate a variety of concepts and perspectives to help validate the research findings (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Of the perspectives most commonly used, those of Eisner (1991) apply most to this study. Eisner prefers a focus on the credibility of qualitative research and has developed a set of credibility-ensuring standards, including the concept of consensual validation. Consensual validation occurs when participants in the study are assumed to be competent individuals offering veracious interpretations of the situation under investigation. In this study, the

CAOs who were interviewed bring a wealth of experience to their positions, several having spent three decades in the positions. Their length of service provided a valuable perspective; and, if the observations and assessments shared during the interview process expressed agreement, consensual validation has occurred.

Due to my role in the field, clarifying researcher bias from the very beginning of the study was critical. This was accomplished in the form of an author's note, which follows this chapter and explains the experiences along with the biases that likely affect the approach to this study, the interpretations of the findings, and the recommendations for improving the status of women in the field (Creswell, 2013).

Author's Note on Potential Bias

In August 2015, I began my 24th year in alumni relations. This is not a career that one dreams of in the days of answering, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" In fact, many of my peers agree that we will have arrived as a profession when young children aspire to be alumni directors in the same way they desire to be doctors and lawyers. It is indeed a profession with tremendous rewards.

These years, however, have resulted in bias toward the way the profession is viewed – on and off campus. From the notion that alumni professionals are glorified party planners, to the frequent comments including, "You don't work in summer, do you?" this profession is not widely understood, and the value of those working in the field, along with their many contributions to the university are often underappreciated.

In conducting this research, I was mindful of my personal bias, particularly around the central question regarding the underrepresentation of women at the highest level in the most prestigious public universities in the country. During my 10-year

tenure as executive director at the University of Georgia, I had the honor of being a member of this esteemed group of alumni professionals. Sadly, there were many years when I was one of three or four females in this group. During my appointment as associate vice president for alumni relations and annual giving at the University of Louisville, I found myself again in a minority of women. Of the nine alumni directors at the ACC public universities, I was the sole female. Never would I have imagined that such gender inequity would still exist in the 21st century.

It was my intention during the research process to put aside the frustration with the status quo and attempt to discover any patterns that would indicate why this inequity persists, along with gathering valuable insights from some of the leaders in the field regarding potential activities to bring about change.

As one of my participants shared, “more needs to be written and said about the lifelong connection of alumni,” the importance of this work to our institutions and the value brought by those professionals and volunteers who are engaged in it. It is my hope that I have succeeded in contributing to the body of knowledge in our field and that in some small way, this work will enhance opportunities for the next generation of alumni directors.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from this study's interviews and document analyses in four sections. The first section will discuss the educational and academic profiles of the participants, detailing the variety of paths taken to achieve the CAO position. Given the number of CAOs who entered the position from the corporate sector, an overview of the benefits shared resulting from this experience is included. The second section will report on the findings as related to recruitment, selection, and compensation of the study's participants. The third section provides an overview of the structural differences among the organizations led by participants, along with their views on women's issues and the role of mentors. The chapter concludes with the participants' thoughts on the future of the alumni relations profession and opportunities for cultivating the next generation of CAOs.

Educational and Academic Profiles of CAOs

Many Educational and Career Paths Lead to this Destination

As Bolman and Gallos (2011) observed, there are a multitude of paths leading to careers in higher education administration. The findings of this study support their thesis. Given the nature of the academy, with its focus on credentialing of faculty and the clear career trajectory toward tenure, an interesting finding of this study is the absence of shared educational preparation or career path among the participants interviewed. While administrative roles differ from those of faculty, many administrative career paths in academia require certain educational qualifications (certain degrees) or employment

experiences in order to ascend the career ladder. This has not proven to be the case for those occupying the CAO position in the *USNWR* Top 25 Publics. Former University System of Georgia Chancellor Erroll Davis (2008) noted the lack of a clear path to leadership in higher education to be in stark contrast to that which he experienced in his career in the corporate sector and suggested that the academy could benefit greatly by applying industry's methods of training people in the art of leading and encouraging them to aspire to leadership positions, while establishing a transparent leadership trajectory.

In order to maintain the promise of anonymity, much of the information gathered has been aggregated and cannot be reported with specificity as doing so would potentially expose the respondents to identification. Although the complete set of interviews was conducted with 10 of the CAOs, the remaining 10 directors were contacted to determine their career paths to the CAO position. Note that during the data collection period, four positions were vacant, and the University of Connecticut was not contacted due to the recent dissolution of its alumni association.

Of the 10 interview participants, college majors varied greatly. Business and political science were best represented in the group, but there were no majors that represent a majority. About half the members of the group hold only a baccalaureate degree. Respondents were overall appreciative of the value that their pursuit of higher education and the degrees earned provided to them. Highlights mentioned by most CAOs included acquiring problem-solving skills, learning the power of persuasion, dealing with a diversity of opinions, and cultivating the ability to communicate verbally and in writing at a very advanced level, along with gaining an understanding of the world in its broadest sense. One female respondent offered that her undergraduate preparation taught her “to

develop a methodology to solve a problem or come up with a solution...to go through a process to get to the answer.” Another female suggested,

I think it’s helpful to have an understanding of the world and of history and how things work and why because it helps you in dealing with people. (In our jobs we have to be externally facing and to be externally facing you have to be comfortable with people and getting to know people and being willing to explore their interests with them so that you understand what really drives them so you can connect with them in the right way...in the way that’s most meaningful.

More than 50% of those 20 CAOs contacted entered higher education from external fields including politics, corporate leadership, and journalism. Among the 20, five noted active involvement with the alumni association and/or the university prior to assuming the CAO position. One male respondent noted that he “had been a very active volunteer with my alma mater – and specifically with our alumni association – for nearly ten years before coming on board in a full-time capacity.” Several respondents had served in key volunteer leadership positions, including alumni association board president, prior to joining the professional staff. Of the 20 CAOs contacted, seven are career higher education professionals, yet only three worked their way up from entry-level alumni relations positions to their current position as CAO. Note that all responses from this point forward will pertain to the 10 CAOs who participated in the interview process.

Benefits of Business Experience

Universally, the 10 interviewees believed that their formal education provided good preparation for their careers, though a few mentioned that far more education

occurred on the job – whether that was within higher education or an external field prior to joining the academy. Given the number of respondents who entered the CAO position directly from a corporate career, their reflections on the value of this experience warrant attention. Unsurprisingly, those who entered the profession from the corporate world felt that their experience brought tremendous benefits. One respondent shared the training received in the corporate arena, specifically as related to sales and marketing, and its benefit to alumni relations work:

If you are trying to sell a product or service or something, you're trying to get somebody to do something. I don't care whether it's for profit or non-profit or higher ed. We cannot advance what is against it. You cannot advance, make better, progress, grow, improve, any organization unless the engagement – call it 'fertilizing the soil,' call it marketing, call it communication, call it relationship building, call it affinity building whatever you want to call it, you cannot advance any organization unless you have targeted your audience. You're cultivating in a way that motivates them to either want to buy the product, or invest in something, or exhibit some behavior that helps the organization. In our case, an institution.

Business careers were noted to be particularly helpful in providing opportunities to learn the logic, processes and vocabulary of industry, which continue to seep into higher education. Marketing was mentioned by nearly all the respondents, particularly those who had previous experience in business; several noted that corporate experiences in marketing proved to be the best preparation for the CAO position, which requires competence in both mass marketing and building individual relationships.

One respondent indicated that experience in industry allowed for greater comfort in articulating issues surrounding compensation, observing that those who come up through higher education are not exposed to such training. Experience in the corporate world provided one interviewee with exposure to a values statement and organizational loyalty, which were found to be important components of organizational success. When making the transition to higher education, these experiences were incorporated into the new environment.

Another benefit of a CAO coming from industry according to one female participant is that most alumni work in for-profit industry. Alumni, therefore, often appreciate the opportunity to interface with someone who has experience they can relate to. She shared,

Why would they [alumni] ever think that we [the alumni association] had something, a program or a person that could deliver programs that would be of value to them, if the person providing them has never walked a mile in their shoes a day in their life? That's a tough sell.

She concluded that perhaps alumni relations professionals need “to look a little bit more like them (alumni) and a little less like higher ed.” Another respondent indicated that corporate executives who make the switch to higher education are often challenged by the environment of higher education, where “every group believes themselves to be the center of the universe and the sun revolves around them.”

The Training Issue

Those possessing corporate experience mentioned one aspect of professionalization frequently enough to warrant further attention and investigation.

Specifically, respondents recognized the training programs that appear to be constant throughout industry as key to their professional development. One female respondent noted,

I was really, really fortunate to start out at one of the best companies in the world. I had free training from day one, . . . great sales training, training in how to identify needs, how to speak to those needs, great role modeling, great women in sales leadership positions. . . . [In a later position with that company] I got even better insight and coaching on how to be a professional...all of that has informed who I am as a professional and has been absolutely relevant to working in this field [alumni relations].

Similarly, a male respondent noted that training obtained in prior positions helped him learn

that you didn't need to know it all but you had to be accountable for it all so how do you . . . you've got to be responsible for it all and ultimately accountability will rest on your shoulders, how do you balance that; the way you do that is build trust. And good relationships with all the people that are working for you so that they trust that you have their back and they'll do the best they possibly can.

Upon arriving in higher education, the CAOs from industry were surprised by the low quality and ineffectiveness of professional development opportunities available at their respective institutions compared to those they had experienced in their corporate careers. These findings support the scholarship cited in the literature review. Several respondents noted the irony of the situation, expressing the expectation that higher education, which according to Wolf (2013) is not just the largest industry in the U.S., but

the biggest on the planet, and which plays a central role in developing management theories and educating business leaders and scholars, would have superior training programs for its employees. Each CAO who benefitted from a corporate training opportunity indicated that this experience was critical to development as a professional, a manager, and ultimately, a leader.

Those CAOs coming from industry noted that higher education, although non-profit, has the need to exercise financial propriety, and they find it puzzling that higher education in practice remains managed in a decidedly un-businesslike manner (Keller, 1983). In some form, many of the participants observed that management of colleges and universities faces perennial criticism for its failure to employ those practices and concepts that have proven effective in other industries.

Recruitment, Selection, and Compensation

The Path to Alumni Relations

Respondents also named diverse origins for their interest in alumni work. These ranged from spotting the ad for the position to being moved internally from another department at the university, as well as several variations in between. In some of the cases, involvement as a student and/or graduate of the university prompted someone from the institution to ask the interviewee about interest in such a position, which adds credence to the value of mentors, sponsors, and advocates – although none of the participants characterized their specific interactions in these terms. In a similar fashion, there were CAOs who indicated that initial interest came through an executive recruiter who had been either a colleague or classmate. Here again, one notes the professional importance of creating enduring relationships and networks.

Many of those CAOs whose career paths began in industries outside higher education, including some of the 10 who were not interviewed in depth, said they never sought out their CAO positions, but were independently approached about those jobs as well as other positions they had held in their careers. Those with higher education careers that began in other areas of the institution universally mentioned someone within the university suggesting (or perhaps requesting) that they consider this opportunity, believing the skills that they would bring to the position would greatly enhance the alumni association and therefore the university.

When reviewing what initially attracted interviewees to the CAO position and/or alumni relations field, one respondent discussed specific problem-solving competencies that had been developed during positions held prior to serving as CAO. During the recruitment process for the CAO position, the respondent discerned that there were problems in the alumni relations office that needed to be addressed and the opportunities offered by this challenge consequently increased the respondent's desire to obtain the position.

Thus the predominant finding is that among this group of CAOs, there is no clear pathway to the position. Of greater note, perhaps, is that working one's way up through the alumni relations ranks appears not to be the ideal or preferred pathway to the CAO position, at least within the *USNWR* 25. Lest the value of working one's way up in the field be overlooked, one respondent likened such experience to that of military generals, with the emphasis that the leader has been on the front lines and well understands the challenges present at the lower levels of the organization. Such experience brings with it

a unique level of credibility. For those who have spent a lifetime in the profession, there was an unshakeable belief that this experience is without equal.

Is Gender Inequity Really a Pipeline Issue?

Because the majority of the 10 CAOs interviewed entered the profession directly into this top position, and because most benefitted from myriad prior professional experiences, it is safe to conclude that, among *USNWR* 25 publicists, the absence of women in the top position may not be a pipeline issue. One respondent, for example, offered that rather than pipeline problems, there have simply been few opportunities to hire women due to the long tenure of men in these positions, although at least one other participant asserted that gender bias in selection still exists in the top job. There may well be a plethora of capable women in the alumni relations pipeline who have not been able to ascend to leadership positions and roles for reasons including the long careers of men noted above and/or the tendency to hire CAOs from outside the profession.

For some interviewees, the imbalance of women and minorities in the profession is more than a pipeline issue, and several respondents lamented the challenges of recruitment and retention of talented professionals, regardless of gender. One male respondent shared,

One of the challenges we have in this profession is all the shops are small. People who get into this business are ambitious. They don't have easier ways to move up the ranks unless they move someplace else, . . . so I lose these people to other operations because they don't have the patience to stay around. I understand that. That's not a knock on them.

This observation offers another possible explanation for the underrepresentation of women at the CAO level.

The Searches

Respondents reported scattered results about the search processes employed in their selection. Some reported that no formal search process was employed, and that the focus of the leadership was on securing them for the position. Some were approached about the job – whether by a search firm, a member of the board, or an institutional leader.

Some CAOs who have occupied their positions for decades were selected by all-male search committees – a fact that is not entirely surprising. Several remarked that, today, their campuses currently have policies in place to ensure diversity in all institutional searches. Some of the participants from the self-governing associations noted that their bylaws did not require a campus representative on the search committee. Several participants stressed, in the modern era, the important participation of the institution's senior development officer in the search process, along with involvement from key campus departments that regularly interface with alumni relations. In the future, participants stressed, alumni relations will increasingly need to collaborate with other campus departments regardless of whether they are self-governing (and therefore self-sustaining) or interdependent.

Salary Equity and other Equity Issues

As reported in Chapter 2 the disparity of salaries with regard to gender remains an issue for CAOs in the *USNWR* 25. Of the 10 respondents, the average annual salary is \$291,800. The average salary for women is \$275,600 and that of men, \$308,000. It

should be noted that several respondents were not able to provide an exact salary, but estimated their annual earnings.

In looking at the salary discrepancy relative to age, the average age of all 10 respondents is 59.1 years of age – women, 57.6 years of age and men, 60.6 years of age. The average years in the CAO position for both genders is 15 – 9.7 years for women, 20.4, years for men. Thus, the salary discrepancy may be able to be explained by length of time in CAO position and/or age of individual. If age proves to be the significant factor, one might assume that the women would need to achieve fairly significant raises to earn the same as men at a comparable age. If length of time as CAO is the more significant factor, then with fairly modest annual raises, women could reasonably expect to be at a comparable salary level when they achieve the same level of time in position. One female CAO interviewed mentioned that women in the profession need a “viable champion” who will be willing to take on this issue, and referenced the work of internationally known tennis champion Venus Williams as related to her advocacy for equity in the purse women received for winning Wimbledon.

One respondent characterized the issue of salary equity as “a numbers game,” indicating that it starts with organizational culture, which is further amplified by the numbers. This individual said that there are more men in the pipeline because “culturally, historically, and traditionally men have held the higher-paying jobs.” This assertion was supported by another male respondent who believes that regarding salary inequities, “some are due to history and some with scale.” These opinions are supported by a 2014 report from the White House Council of Economic Advisers which offered the possibility that generational trends are the best explanation for the persistent wage gap,

because the consequences of the historical disparities found in educational attainment, job choice and length of time in the work force will all take time to be eradicated (Bidwell, 2014).

The question was raised by one male participant as to whether a woman in the position would be as “savvy and aggressive” about her salary as he has been about his. When asked about salary, one of the female respondents immediately began to justify her own wage, and then chuckled at her realization that this was a stereotypical female response, perhaps subconsciously rooted in the idea which she expressed as, “I really don’t deserve to earn this amount of money, so let me justify it to you.”

Although the importance of salary equity for women should not be downplayed one male respondent offered the sage advice that “if you won’t be content until no one on the planet who does what you do earns a penny more than you do, you will lead a life of great disappointment.” One of the females interviewed talked about the risk associated with being the highest earner in that people “expect that you are better and make no mistakes” – she then wondered out loud if a man would have the same concerns.

The reaction to salary inequity for women in the profession, despite its annual reporting by Council of Alumni Association Executives (CAAE), is of particular interest, and the respondents’ questions and comments that emerged during the interviews suggest that the resolution of this issue will be complex. One male respondent finds it “intellectually hard to accept that someone would knowingly decide to pay less to a woman.” Two of the respondents indicated that upon assuming the CAO position, salary equity issues were apparent; in both cases, these CAOs made it a priority to correct these quickly.

It was suggested that CAAE begin digging deeper into the salary issue to uncover what salary the CAO was earning prior to the current position to determine if that might play a factor in the uneven nature of compensation. One reason for investigating this metric is to uncover any correlation between entering the CAO position from industry and amount of compensation relative to the sector's averages. The need to look at the age of the female cohort in relation to the male was also discussed; it is possible that the female cohort is younger, which, although it would not fully explain the salary difference, may be a contributing factor. It is also possible that age is not the determining factor, but rather longevity in the position which explains the salary discrepancy. The information gathered from the participants in this study supports these assertions regarding the need for more detailed research in the area of salary equity.

In addition to the discussions on salary inequity, respondents commented on the unequal representation of women in the CAO position among the *USNWR* 25 and in the workplace in general. More than one male respondent indicated a belief that gender inequity is not an issue any more and expressed some surprise at the question, even with a reminder of the CAAE data that is shared annually. This is consistent with the literature that there are those, generally men, who believe that the issues surrounding gender disparity have been resolved (Pasque, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2014; Grose, 2014; Allan, 2011; Bloom, 1987). One respondent referenced gender as being a social issue (also in accord with the literature review) and indicated a commitment to paying women what they are worth. One admitted to being a critic of affirmative action and felt it far more important and impactful to inspire equal representation by giving a platform to role models. One participant shared that it was hard to fathom that inequities around race, age, and gender

still exist, but expressed hope that the current college age generation will change things. Concern was raised about the importance of hiring people because of their ability to do their jobs, with allusion to the effect it could have on a person if they were to learn that they were only hired to fulfill criteria, while another expressed being personally gender-blind and committed to assessing and hiring the best person to get the job done. One female participant offered that “equal is in the eye of the beholder” and felt that the composition of any search committee would definitely play a role in the outcome, due to the filters each member brings to the exercise.

As reported in Chapter 1, equity issues also exist with regard to volunteer representation. For some of the long-serving CAOs interviewed for this study, the recruitment of female board members was an important activity. One reported the importance of accurately representing the constituencies they serve. Another mentioned female board members expressing their belief that there was “still glass to shatter.” Whether being responsible for recruiting a first-ever female board chair or insuring the presence of successful females in the board chair pipeline, every CAO was consciously and deliberately working to achieve equity in the volunteer ranks. One CAO proudly shared that currently, all of the most coveted student leadership positions on campus were held by females.

Current Issues in CAO Position and Role

Structural Differences in Universities

A review of university documents and information from the participants gave no indication that either size of the staff, budget, age of the institution or age of the alumni association had any effect on the selection of male versus female CAOs. Twelve of the 20

CAOs in the 2015 *USNWR* 25 are alumni of their employing institutions. One respondent mentioned a belief that “the alumni board (at that particular institution) would likely prefer to have a graduate in the job.” Another respondent offered that alumni status may be more important at older schools, where a deep understanding of university traditions would play a more prevalent role.

Although nationally women comprise the greater percentage of those holding degrees, as was reported in Chapter 1, the 10 institutions featured in the study remain slightly male dominant in terms of living alumni population. The overall average for the 10 universities is 55.08% male and 44.92% female alumni. The five institutions with male directors are skewed a bit above this average – 58.76% male and 41.24% female. The five institutions with female directors are slightly below the average – 51.42% male and 48.58% female.

Also of note are the percentages by gender of the current student populations at the 10 institutions under study, which are also slightly below the national average. Overall, women comprise 51.4% of the current student population, men 48.6%. For the five institutions with male CAOs, the averages are 49.72% and 50.28%, respectively. The five institutions with female CAOs feature 53.07% female and 46.93% male students. This information serves to illustrate the change in gender distribution that is being experienced by these universities, a change that will ultimately skew the alumni population to majority female over time.

Challenges Specific to Women

While neither gender has a monopoly on a superior work ethic nor other characteristics positively correlated with success, both male and female respondents

commented on the benefits women bring to the workplace. Their observations support much of what is found in the relevant literature (Slaughter, 2015; Sandberg, 2013) – that women work harder, get more done, take their work seriously, encourage others and often deflect a great deal of credit to others. One male respondent offered that in his experiences working with women he has found that “women (are) much more competent to do what I call unbiased analysis and very detailed analysis. They tended to be more confident than some of their male counterparts.” The latter comment is of interest when considered in the context of the predominant literature reviewed earlier, which indicates that women are often less confident than their male peers.

Participants had varying opinions about issues surrounding qualified women, with one female commenting that gender imbalance is “a debate for the ages.” One female expressed sentiments akin to Slaughter’s (2015) concept of the “Great Stall,” which posits that women have a challenging time ascending to leadership roles, and that in most cases the presence of women in leadership stalls out at approximately 20-25 percent in any industry that is not traditionally dominated by women. One offered that while we as a sector

have turned the corner on this...in all fairness, I am not so sure that it is necessarily a conscious discrimination (against women) as much as it was the pool was not yet developed to the point where you heard women of an age who were having nothing to do with children who would have the professional experience and credentials that would be viewed as on par (with a man).

One respondent asserted that there are enough qualified women for these positions; the question is how senior leaders in the profession can encourage women to consider taking

on ultimate leadership positions, and specifically asking what tools are provided to help them to prepare. Given the aforementioned issues of substandard training and development in many university campuses, where will higher-caliber training for women come from?

Younger Advancement Professionals

Respondents also wondered whether the younger generation of women, including those in second-tier positions, are even interested in moving up to CAO positions, and whether they imagine themselves as potential leaders in the profession. One female suggested, “I think that it would be interesting to talk to younger females in the business . . . about what they’re thinking career wise, do they see themselves being an advancement leader?” One male participant suggested that “women self-select in a lot of ways to be in leadership roles,” noting that “it takes a big sacrifice” to be leaders in these organizations. As Bolman and Gallos (2011), Keller (1983) and others have noted, the schedules in higher education administration are exceptionally demanding – there is no such thing as an 8-to-5 workday. One female respondent in particular mentioned the time-consuming nature of the work, but was quick to confirm that “if I’m going to work this hard, I’m blessed beyond measure to be able to do it for an institution that I care so deeply about.” Another male expressed the belief that many women drop out of the workforce because they cannot get the flexibility they need, especially as related to caregiving roles, a sentiment borne out in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. He observed that while alumni relations positions often do not pay “market rate” – i.e., a salary comparable to what the professional might earn in industry – alumni relations work can generally offer the flexibility that many corporate jobs will not.

One respondent talked about the issues women face in some organizational cultures particularly, and to an extent the entire United States generally, saying “I kind of feel that if the President of the United States is a woman this will kind of unlock (gender bias). There’s a bias in this country that in a very big upfront representational position the bias is towards a man.” One male reported that he advised his daughter “never to drop out of the workforce, as time and again it has been proven that a woman will lose status for doing so.”

Mentors, Sponsors, Advocates

When questioned about the role that mentors, sponsors, or advocates played during the career, and in particular, as related to obtaining the CAO position, nearly all participants recollected those who have helped them along the way. The need for support from people who are in positions to help is certain, and examples were provided of mentors in a variety of contexts, from those who have been helpful in the specific and recent circumstances, to those whose relationships with respondents have spanned decades. From the examples of those who were contacted by a former classmate – or other individual with whom one had an existing relationship – to those who inherited the position upon the retirement of their predecessor, access to information is critical. This access can be gained through the careful and deliberate nurturing of relationships over the course of one’s professional career. One male participant mentioned the valuable relationships a CAO or junior alumni professional can have with the volunteers and specifically acknowledged that there were many that he “looked to, that had a personal interest in me...the people that meant the most to me were the ones that took an interest

in me as a person.” He specifically mentioned one individual who “in a very quiet and unassuming way, was always encouraging and inspiring to me.”

In several instances, respondents listed supervisors, past and present, among their key mentors; one respondent indicated the value of being “stretched to respond and perform” under the leadership of the current supervisor, who stands out as “demanding and exacting, with a strong emphasis on a strategic, deliberate, and thoughtful approach” to the work the respondent had not encountered previously. There were two participants (one male, one female) who indicated that their fathers were among their most important mentors, and one who offered that mentoring does indeed make sense for the alumni relations profession.

For those participants who have had lengthy careers in alumni relations, some of the long-serving alumni directors of the previous generation were revealed to be important mentors. These include: Eustace Theodore, who led the alumni relations effort at Yale for many years, prior to becoming president of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE); Bob Forman of the University of Michigan, Dan Heinlen of Ohio State University, and Bill Stone of Stanford University.

One of the female participants noted that most of her mentors have been men and fondly recounted excellent advice from one male mentor that, had she taken it, would have preempted a costly mistake. She also referred to a lifelong career mentor, a male engineer who taught her “to quickly tell my story and look for ways that I would help people understand here is a value that I would bring.” This lesson has been particularly useful to her and has helped her to avoid the stereotypical over-explaining often associated with women. Another female referenced the benefit of the mentoring

relationship with a male CEO for whom she worked: “(He) was a fantastic mentor...just literally stepped out and said, ‘I want to make sure you get exposed to as much of the business as you are interested in so that you can go do whatever you want afterwards. (This was) hugely impactful, (he) gave me every opportunity.’” The experiences shared by these women is consistent with the literature, which has revealed that quite often, men serve as important mentors for women.

One male participant responded to the question by sharing the feeling of being “blessed to have worked with great leaders – people who are communicative, have a vision for what they want to accomplish, and want people who can get the job done.” One participant acknowledged the role of several key mentors, but clarified that even with the existence of these relationships, there was much more “finding my own way.”

Loosely related to the notion of forming and nurturing relationships with mentors, sponsors, and advocates, is mindfulness of one’s professional reputation, particularly for those whose entire career has been in higher education. One respondent recollected a misstep early in the career path, which at a later date prevented the respondent’s selection for a desired opportunity. Though this individual had grown and changed as a person and a professional since the unfortunate incident, the hiring supervisor was not willing to take the risk or appreciate the likelihood that professional maturation had occurred. Relative to this topic of professional reputation one male respondent offered: “The bolder you are, the more risk you are willing to take, the more opportunities are going to come your way.”

Key Campus Roles

The experience of the participants relative to key campus roles is also mixed, owing to varying organizational structures (self-governing versus interdependent) and individual institutional practices. Several respondents mentioned the benefit of particular campus committees to which they were appointed – presidential search, presidential inauguration, and other ad hoc committees formed to deal with specific key issues.

While some of these CAOs are members of the institution's cabinet, others are not. Cabinet status is withheld in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees. Some of those who hold cabinet positions indicate its benefit in foreseeable terms – having the “seat at the table” and validating the work of alumni relations by being present at these gatherings. Cabinet membership also permits regular interaction with other campus leaders, helping to build those relationships essential to integrating the work of the alumni association within the campus at large. An additional benefit of the cabinet role can be found in its effect on the alumni association's volunteer board. Having the association's lead staff member as a part of this prestigious president's group makes it clear to the volunteer leadership that much is expected of their organization.

Those CAOs who are not members of cabinet often still benefit from significant access to and contact with their university presidents, and several noted that their presence is requested at the table when key issues are discussed. All interviewees emphasized the importance of a sound working relationship with the university president, making certain to note that the alumni association exists to support the university and cannot do so without a clear understanding of presidential and institutional priorities.

One respondent noted that a “huge challenge to the alumni relations profession is the reality that many university presidents lack the confidence and security to accept alumni involvement because they cannot control it.” This condition has, on some campuses, led to CAOs not being considered of the status to be in a key campus role and therefore excluded from the various committees and dialogues important to achieving success in the position.

Related to the historical issue of development officers moving around as reported earlier by Worth (2002), many respondents discussed the importance of leadership stability, especially since in their organizations the CAO occupies a key campus role, and particularly when considered against the continued decline in tenure of college presidents. Several of participants have been in the position in excess of 15 years and noted other key campus colleagues with similar lengths of service, noting the value that is brought by those who possess significant institutional knowledge and experience. The emerging trend among some alumni relations professionals “looking for the next job” and the deleterious effects that this condition is having on the profession was noted by a few of the participants.

Future of the Profession

Several issues emerged during questions and conversations relative to the future of the profession. These include whether or not credentialing would be of benefit, the role of professional development programs and the importance of the professional organizations, most notably CASE and CAAE. Robust discussion occurred regarding the next generation of CAO and what experiences and qualifications these individuals would be wise to possess. Additionally given the ever-changing landscape of higher education

there was dialogue surrounding the viability of alumni relations and alumni associations in the future.

Credentialing and Degrees for the Profession

All CAOs interviewed expressed concern with the future of the profession, which includes conversation about what qualifications the next generation of CAOs will need in order to succeed. Related to this discussion is the status of the alumni relations profession in the higher education landscape. Alumni relations positions, unlike faculty positions and administrative positions such as Dean of Students, lack clear educational and career pathways. One respondent who entered the profession at the CAO position, upon reflecting upon the issue of career paths, felt that a direct path to any career is nearly impossible, due to the many twists and turns life takes.

Respondents' opinions regarding the creation of an alumni relations certificate program or major were varied. One thought that sufficient opportunities exist to develop needed skills, and that a curriculum is therefore not the answer to this issue. Several suggested that such a credential would have more value on campus than among the alumni, but that, given the importance of working collaboratively with campus colleagues, such a credential could still raise the status of the profession. It was additionally noted that, in some cases, credentials can vary in value and emphasis based on the individual campus, and in particular, one participant noted that women, rather than men, might have more to gain from the attendant benefits of credentialing.

Regarding the idea of developing a curriculum, one CAO cautioned that it is difficult to establish norms for this profession. The knowledge of one institution or one alumni association is just that – the knowledge of one. While there are some constants,

the varying nature of organizational arrangements makes universal conclusions challenging. It was suggested that it would be rather difficult to build a program that would address this diversity.

When discussing the academic preparation that would benefit CAOs, marketing as a major came up in nearly every instance. Comments expressed that alumni relations professionals serve in the marketing business in a field that is all about sales. Several respondents mentioned the value of a degree in sociology or psychology, in order to better understand human behavior. One respondent mentioned that an accounting degree may be valuable, while another suggested a fund raising degree. Nearly half of respondents claimed that the next generations of CAOs especially will need an MBA. One CAO noted, in particular, that MBAs may be essential for those who lead the self-governed alumni associations.

The need for an interest in people was repeated by nearly every participant, and across a variety of questions and comments in the various topics under investigation. This priority came up even in discussion of particular degrees as preparation. One respondent asserted that the need to be interested in people trumps any particular degree. Another offered that success is less “about academic discipline and more about a skill set that focuses on excellent interpersonal skills.” Another participant offered, “It’s called alumni relations for a reason.” Although the need for outstanding communication skills was universally discussed, no respondent offered the option of a communications degree as being potentially solid preparation.

Professional Development Programs

All respondents were asked about the idea of an apprenticeship program to train junior-level alumni relations professionals interested in CAO positions; overwhelmingly, respondents thought such a program would be challenging to develop. One CAO, however, believed an apprenticeship program would enable younger staff to investigate different aspects of alumni relations. Quite often, staff members are specialists who occupy one particular area – e.g., reunions, student programs, young alumni engagement, and the like. By taking opportunities to apprentice in other departments within the organization, this individual believes a junior staff member would gain valuable exposure to the varying areas that comprise a large alumni relations operation.

One male CAO offered that the development of a training program to resemble the White House Fellows program, which, on an annual basis, recruits 15-20 highly qualified individuals for intensive training, to be of benefit. The expectation would be that upon completing this program, the individuals would be prepared to compete at the highest level in the alumni relations field. Another respondent suggested that the ability to forge a mentoring relationship with someone from another campus would be of particular benefit to younger staff who demonstrate great promise.

Another training program external to higher education is Leadership at the Peak, an intensive program offered by the Center for Creative Leadership (“Leadership,” n.d.). Those respondents who have participated in this program, reported it to be one of the most important training and professional growth opportunities of their careers. Several CAOs have made this opportunity available to senior leaders in their organizations; thus, a more in-depth investigation of this program and its possible application to training the

next generation of CAOs deserves attention along with the other recommendations made in Chapter 5. It may be that the general principles of this program could be adapted to alumni relations, either into a stand-alone training program offered by CASE or CAAE or incorporated into an alumni relations certificate or degree program. Development professionals have the opportunity to pursue Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) certification through the Association of Fund Raising Professionals. One interviewee suggested that the creation of a corollary certification for alumni relations be explored.

During conversations around this question, participants were asked about the CAAE fellowships, which are offered to junior members of the profession. These are competitive fellowships, each named in honor or in memory of a former (male) CAO, with nominations being reviewed and selections made on an annual basis by a committee of CAAE members. The Forman Fellowship is the oldest of the group with 34 fellowships being awarded since 1996. Of these 34, 22 (65%) went to men, with the remaining 12 (35%) being awarded to women. The Tardy Fellowship began in 2002, since that time 17 fellowships have been awarded. Greater gender balance has been achieved with the Tardy Fellowship – 9 men and 8 women have received this opportunity. The Preo Fellowship was introduced in 2015 and the recipient for the year was male.

Respondents discussed the possibility of creating a separate fellowship that would be awarded only to women, and perhaps named in honor of one of the women who have blazed a trail in the profession. The opinions were scattered, as several participants, male and female, expressed concern regarding these types of awards and the optics surrounding them, i.e., women need special consideration when competing with men.

There were several who thought that regardless of purpose, the creation of such a fellowship honoring a woman would be an important addition to the CAAE Fellowship program. Additionally, nearly all respondents believed that the selection committee should be more intentional when selecting fellows and do everything possible to ensure gender balance.

The importance of CASE/CAAE

Respondents had mixed responses to the value of participation in CAAE, CASE, and meetings of CAOs from the same athletic conference. Participants from self-governing alumni associations noted such gatherings of their group were the most valuable. Some indicated participation in the professional networking opportunities offered by CASE, CAAE and the like to be of huge importance. CASE and CAAE, though, have also been subject to recent criticism from many CAOs, who believe that these organizations are not listening to their constituents. One participant shared that CASE and CAAE are “not the voice for alumni relations” and that “the focus of alumni relations and the ultimate benefit of what it could mean to higher education deserves a laser focus.”

As a result, some of the respondents have ceased participation in CAAE in particular, noting that the membership dues continue to increase (dues are currently \$2,500 annually) and that the return on investment does not justify the expense. One participant termed participation in these organizations as a “letdown” and “unimpressive,” though another offered that participating in CAAE proved to be “invaluable due to the tremendous knowledge existing within the group.” This participant stressed that “asking questions of long-time CAAE members can provide

more information than reading volumes” (provided one could find volumes written about alumni relations), and that the relationships formed through participation in CAAE proved to be very helpful in solving problems.

The difficulty of balancing attendance at conferences with responsibilities to one’s position was also mentioned by several respondents. Time away from campus and job duties to attend conferences can pose challenges given the demanding nature of the CAO position. If a CAO were to attend the CASE Annual Summit, the appropriate CASE District conference, two CAAE Institutes, and the meeting of the CAOs of one’s athletic conference, this cumulative commitment would represent nearly a month out of the office. Thus, although participation in these organizations helps to provide a general understanding of the marketplace and facilitates valuable relationships with professionals at other institutions, participants noted that such professional development value must be weighed against the time commitment. Some respondents find it far more valuable for themselves and their staffs to spend professional development resources on visits to other campuses, which allow for more immersive experiences.

Further, as several respondents noted, supervisors often poorly understand the value these organizations bring and thus fail to account for leadership participation in these organizations during performance evaluations and the like. One respondent mentioned that most university presidents are unaware of CAAE, suggesting that the organization needs to be more impactful and better demonstrate its value to higher education as a whole. A few respondents discussed the benefits that would accrue from moving the CAAE Institutes to Washington, DC, and using these meetings to engage with the national leadership in higher education policy. Thus, contributing to one’s field

does not appear at the surface to be valued as an important activity, a reality that contrasts with the expectations of academics, who are assessed largely on their contributions to bodies of disciplinary knowledge.

The next generation of CAOs

Some of the participants referred to the changing nature of the CAO position over the last two decades, specifically the migration from an emphasis on planning functions and making connections to running a complex business in a hyper-political environment. Respondents felt it will be imperative that the next generation of CAOs have firm understanding of budgets – having business experience and perhaps an MBA, will be helpful. As noted earlier, an entrepreneurial spirit/talent – a visionary leader, someone who looks at things differently, someone who is a student of the marketplace and clearly understands alumni work as a relationship business – will be the fittest variety of CAO in the future. One respondent specifically mentioned observations of the younger generation, finding that they “feel called to serve and often prioritize making an impact on society over making money.” Given this condition, it was offered that there is great opportunity for alumni relations to “recruit a new generation of service-driven people to the profession.”

An awareness of current research into trends in sales, marketing, human behavior, and advances in technology that facilitate engagement was noted to be of importance, and it was said by nearly every participant that it is imperative that anyone aspiring to this position possess a firm knowledge of the use of metrics, which are essential to communicating the value the alumni relations efforts brings to the university. One respondent described the set of leadership skills that will be essential to future

success as “phenomenal” and “eclectic,” – varied skills that, based on this individual’s testimony, are of a greater level than that expected of today’s CAOs. Another CAO shared from experience that organizational leadership roles generally require the incumbent to serve as more of a general manager, so it is important to have broad knowledge of all of the areas that comprise the organization.

Success now, and in the future, requires the desire to be a lifelong learner, as the alumni relations field must continually adapt to new trends in communication and engagement. One male respondent offered, “Your passion to continue to learn is going to be more important to your success than your major.” It will be imperative that the individual have the ability to convey an authentic relationship online and master both mass-marketing and individual relationships. One respondent made mention of the Obama campaign of 2008, which realized outstanding fundraising success by securing many small gifts. It was suggested that alumni relations professionals need to do a better job applying this model to the work in order to maximize engagement.

Most of the participants addressed the concept of adding value to the university. One summed up an important role that leaders in the profession must play, now and into the future: that of influencing presidents. It is critical that university presidents accept and appreciate the important role of alumni relations, the voice this department represents, the value of alumni engagement, and the funds brought to support the institution as a result of a robust alumni relations effort. It was noted that most universities’ capital campaigns offer terrific opportunities for alumni associations to demonstrate their relevance by taking on a leadership role in the endeavors. Given this reality, the next generation of CAO will require a working knowledge of capital

campaigns and may be called on to assume more of a direct fundraising role than those who have come before. Additionally, there exists a trend toward merging alumni relations offices with annual giving; the CAO of tomorrow, therefore, must be comfortable working in this fundraising environment. The ability to collaborate across campus departments and to form partnerships with campus colleagues was also mentioned as being essential to success.

The Role of Women in the Future

One respondent shared the belief that the CAO position among the group of universities under study will be dominated by women in two decades, and, further, wondered if women dominate the sector as a whole even now in terms of raw numbers. This respondent indicated that perhaps the *USNWR* 25 represents a subset that is an anomaly.

Several CAOs were proud to share statistics surrounding the number of women on their staffs, along with the percentage of females holding leadership positions in the department, in some cases as high as 60%. In a related issue, one respondent also expressed concern about the exclusively female staffing of very small alumni relations shops located at co-ed institutions and the possibility of men feeling marginalized in such settings.

While this research has revealed at least some recent trend toward hiring individuals with corporate experience, participants discussed the need to possess volunteer management skills. One specifically mentioned the particular benefit of experience running a non-profit. Another noted that the next generation will be hired on

motivation and attitude ahead of pedigree and emphasized the need for a highly developed interpersonal skill set and outstanding abilities in the area of external relations.

For those CAOs who are employed by self-governing associations, passion for lobbying and legislative issues is critical, as they and their organizations are frequently called upon to engage in advocacy activities that university employees are prohibited from. Those CAOs who are state employees must know how to navigate the political landscape of policies and regulations and marshal resources and support for the institution's benefit.

Benefits to Self-Governing Associations

Several of the respondents were CAOs of self-governing associations (see Appendix D for a list of self-governing associations). In total, nine of the *USNWR* 25 feature self-governing alumni associations. These respondents shared some of the unique aspects of that organizational structure which are discussed below.

Among schools with interdependent alumni associations, most alumni relations departments are cost centers for the university, not profit centers. The self-governing associations, by nature, need to be profit centers, or at the very least, must break even. One respondent reported awareness of cases where self-governing associations return \$70 for every dollar spent on alumni relations. Self-governing associations were considered to be more agile, their non-profit corporate status allowing them to employ more market focus and become more relevant to the life of the university. The self-governing associations are also able to assist with initiatives that the university itself cannot champion, including the funding of certain scholarships and political advocacy activities, as reported above.

The gender imbalance, however, is even greater among the 19 self-governing associations, with only two women in the CAO position. One participant wondered whether these entities, as separate corporations, are prone to the gender disparity that is more reflective of the corporate world than higher education.

Will There Even *Be* Alumni Directors in the Future?

In light of the ever-changing landscape of higher education, several participants raised questions about the future of the profession, noting the vulnerability of alumni relations as inessential to the overall operation of the institution. Those holding this opinion, though, were quick to point out that the decision to eliminate an alumni relations office would likely be politically unwise.

Though the profession for decades has espoused the concepts of alumni as customers and alumni as the only lifelong constituency, nearly all respondents expressed the reality of the modern era that it is far more critical for the CAO to demonstrate value to the university. Several respondents believe that those CAOs who survive in the next generation will be the most entrepreneurial leaders, those who work tirelessly to create and communicate this sort of value. One respondent, in particular, noted the ongoing challenge of succeeding inside and outside the academy – observing that these goals are not always one and the same.

Perceived Benefits of the Position

Lest this analysis lead to the conclusion that alumni relations work is an all-consuming endeavor for which CAOs are inadequately compensated and under-appreciated, it is important to share the multitude of positive feedback provided by the participants. Those fortunate enough to work at their alma maters universally mentioned

that this role was the job of a lifetime; many noted being profoundly grateful to be able to make contributions to the institutions that played such important roles in their lives. Even for those employed at institutions from which they did not graduate, the important work of advancing higher education, providing opportunities to our citizenry, and cultivating enduring relationships to benefit these universities – many of which hold significant places in our national history – were all noted as being key reasons for enjoying the work.

One respondent offered, “Getting into alumni relations was the best thing that ever happened to me,” a sentiment while not repeated exactly by the other nine, was implied by their equal enthusiasm. No one expressed any remorse about taking on the role, or any desire to seek other opportunities outside the field. Another participant mentioned one canard that alumni relations work provides a good place to get a professional start, implying that one should desire to move on from alumni relations into development, which is widely considered to be more prestigious and is very often better compensated. This same individual, however, believes that “alumni relations is not only a good place to start but a great place to end as well.”

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present exploratory study focused on investigating the career paths of CAOs at *USNWR* 25 institutions to determine why women are underrepresented in these positions. The study further sought to gather the opinions of these professionals regarding the preparation and experience that will be essential to success in these positions for the future, with an eye to those activities that might prove to be of benefit in correcting the existing gender imbalance. As women continue to represent the majority of the college-going population and as research presented earlier in this study has indicated that many women desire to support organizations that are sensitive to gender equity and other women's issues, this work is rather timely. Additionally, at the time of this research, there are several CAO positions open in the *USNWR* 25 and several may become available in the next five to ten years, as a number of the current CAOs of the baby boomer generation approach retirement.

Status of the Profession

As a member of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) since 1992 and a member of the Council of Alumni Association Executives (CAAE) since 2004, I have been part of many conversations lamenting the lack of alumni relations research as a whole, and numerous discussions that bemoan the lack of status for this profession, due in part to the lack of research and scholarship that would guide its development and justify its legitimacy.

In the last decade, I have witnessed a change in the composition of the profession. When I joined the field in 1992, directors usually spent their careers at one institution; now, they often move from leadership position to leadership position. As Worth (2002) reported, alumni secretaries (as the CAOs were originally named) were often figures of particular renown on campus, who served their institutions for long periods of time. This practice was in contrast to the fund-raisers, who were likely to come from outside the academic world. These fund-raising professionals by design moved from institution to institution during the course of their careers. This pattern continues to the present, although it must be noted that there are exceptions to every rule, and there are development professionals who remain at one university for their entire careers. In the modern era, many CAOs are following the pattern established by their development colleagues and are demonstrating similar mobility in their career paths. Universities also increasingly accept non-alumni being chosen for these leadership positions. Although there are still a few associations whose bylaws prohibit a non-graduate being selected as the CAO, many programs, including some in the *USNWR* 25, are led by individuals who are not graduates of their employing institutions at the time of hiring. Many CAOs view the opportunity to pursue advanced degrees at their institution as an additional benefit.

In 2013, CASE celebrated *100 Years of Alumni Engagement* in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Alumni Secretaries. Throughout the year the significant changes the profession has undergone in the last century were discussed by alumni directors from institutions across the U.S. These changes have required current CAOs to be far more adaptable than their forefathers, especially as related to the fast paced technology innovations that are constantly creating new methods

for alumni engagement. Additionally, the budget constraints which are the present reality of higher education have caused CAOs to rethink the traditional business model and rely much more heavily on assessment to demonstrate the value their work brings to the institution. At the core, however, alumni relations professionals have always needed to be excellent communicators who are able to craft a compelling vision for maintaining lifelong relationships between alumni and their alma mater (Pulley, 2013).

This chapter will first share direct reflections on the findings and the research literature and discuss how these relate to form key conclusions. When considering these aspects of the study, it appears that the theoretical frameworks and the structural differences which were expected to be of consequence were, in fact, only of marginal importance. The larger issues to emerge were the concerns regarding training available for those in the alumni relations sector and the challenges pertaining to the relevance of alumni relations in the higher education landscape. Also, the desirability of these positions to women was brought into question and is a key finding which deserves further inquiry. Next, recommendations for practice will be reviewed. These include the creation of a mentoring program; the development of degree, certificate or credentialing opportunities; the need to demand more service and advocacy from the sector's professional organizations; and the importance of looking to successful examples from industry as related to diversity and workforce training. Again, these recommendations were alluded to in Chapter 4 as the participants shared their observations regarding their experiences and thoughts on the profession. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research.

Applicability of Theoretical Frameworks

While this study incorporated theoretical frameworks including liberal feminism, social comparison, equity, and signaling, the majority of the findings reported in Chapter 4 do not fit neatly into these categories. All respondents expressed views consistent with liberal feminism and its goal of achieving fairness between genders. Discussions of representation expanded beyond gender to race and the challenges many respondents experience relative to recruiting and retaining talented minority professionals. Overall, the CAOs comments demonstrated attention to these issues along with consistent efforts to remedy the situation.

Few CAOs reported any behaviors or activities associated with social comparison theory. None mentioned a desire or need for clear standards by which to measure their personal progress or that of their organization against any other in the *USNWR* 25. Anecdotally, the men interviewed reported more instances of consulting with other CAOs. It should not be assumed that the women did not seek advice from other alumni professionals, but this activity was not reported in answer to any of the questions. Although this observation has only tangential relevance to social comparison theory, further investigation might lend additional support to the applicability of this theory.

Although some CAOs acknowledged it more directly than others, the difficulty in comparing between institutions due to heterogeneity across myriad metrics made the employment of equity theory challenging. Still, the limited data generated through the annual CAAE survey, along with research initiatives conducted by CASE, are considered valuable for their ability to assist with benchmarking. As noted above, the CAOs'

consultation with one another supports this theory's relevance, as these conversations feature discussions of inputs and outputs, which form the foundation of equity theory.

The most robust discussion was related to signaling theory, particularly as applied to the investigation of what experiences and skills the next generation of CAOs will need to possess. Though there was a lack of unanimity regarding any particular educational background, the consistency with which certain degrees and disciplines were referenced – e.g., MBAs and marketing – would suggest that an individual seeking a CAO role might find the pursuit of these degrees beneficial. The conversations surrounding the concepts of an alumni relations certificate or major also demonstrated some agreement on the value brought by academic credentials and the signals they provide to a potential employer.

Absence of Queen Bees and Tiara Syndrome

After reviewing the findings vis à vis the theoretical frameworks, findings were considered with regard to the concepts of queen bees and the tiara syndrome as reported in Chapter 2. Only one female participant had an anecdote that applied to the queen bee stereotype, yet she was uncomfortable with it being shared in this study due to the possibility that the details necessary to convey the story appropriately would compromise her anonymity. Of interest are the findings reported by Columbia Business School covering a 20-year period of 1500 companies and their top management teams. These researchers found reason to conclude that queen bee syndrome may be more of a myth than a representation of reality due to evidence they uncovered which revealed that female CEOs demonstrated a greater likelihood to hire women for senior positions (Knapton, 2015). None of the females interviewed in this study shared any experiences or

attitudes that would be consistent with the “tiara syndrome” described in Chapter 2. The career paths of participants in this study, as documented on resumes and bios along with the information revealed during the interviews, suggest that this particular group of women knew the importance of serving as one’s best advocate. However, it is possible that in interviews of longer duration with questions and discussion that would have probed more deeply, some examples of instances of queen bees and the tiara syndrome may have been revealed.

Review of Structural Differences

The research did not uncover any structural differences that would indicate a preference with regard to gender of the CAO, although caution must be employed when considering the findings given the size of the sample and the small subset of alumni relations professionals who participated. Within the group of 10 CAOs interviewed, there was great variety in educational background and career path to the achievement of the CAO position. Participants readily acknowledged that this group may well represent an anomaly within the larger profession since the universities and alumni associations they represent more closely reflect the structure of the corporate sector, thereby making candidates from industry more attractive for their leadership positions. Further study would be needed to determine whether the group under study is or is not reflective of CAOs across higher education.

The only aspect of the investigation into structural differences that was of potential consequence was the possibility that the self-governing alumni associations – 9 of which are in the *USNWR* 25 – may be more reflective of the gender disparity that exists in the corporate sector, as only 2 of the 19 self-governing associations are led by

women. This subgroup may warrant further study as its gender imbalance is substantially greater than that of the *USNWR* 25. The issues surrounding salary equity call for additional investigation in order to determine what criteria (if any) can be shown to be correlated with the lower salaries being paid to women in this sector. The findings present two possible explanations – that of age of CAO and that of length of time in the CAO position – as being explanative of the existing discrepancy among this group.

An Exploration of Whether Women Want these Positions and Roles

A primary issue that emerged from analysis of the data includes the consideration of whether women are even interested in the CAO position, and if so, the activities the profession should undertake to prepare them for success. One potential method which will be offered for consideration is the organizational development model as suggested by Lattuca and Stark (2009). In undertaking this research, an assumption was made that women desire the CAO positions at the *USNWR* Top 25 Publics. Further research is needed to determine if indeed women want these jobs, are applying for them and not being selected; or, if in fact these positions are not attractive to many females because of their extensive demands or other related issues.

In summer 2014, *Time* magazine, along with *Real Simple* magazine, conducted a poll on women and success and found that “75% of women said they would not want their boss’s job, and unlike men, wouldn’t take it if offered” (Gibbs, 2015, p. 2). As noted above, possessing a clearer understanding of the scope of the problem, i.e., the percentage of women in the field who are interested in the CAO position, would be beneficial to the development of programs and other remedies designed to address the issue of gender imbalance.

Employing the Organizational Development Model to Effect Change

If further research reveals that women want these positions but face significant obstacles as they try to attain them, it would also be important to determine if the lack of women in CAO positions constitutes an impenetrable barrier in achieving equity. In the likely event that underrepresentation of women in CAO positions proves important, it may be worthwhile to apply an organizational development (OD) model, which focuses on diagnosing problems and searching for solutions. In this model the diagnosis and proposed solutions represent ongoing practices, not immediate or occasional remedies. The OD model applies specifically to the present research, as it “focuses on understanding the attitudes of organizational members such as staff, administrators, and faculty as well as the role of organizational norms in hindering desired changes” (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 312). This study has merely scratched the surface of the myriad factors affecting the current underrepresentation of women at the highest levels of alumni relations leadership, but it does highlight the importance of the OD model in searching for remedies since this approach works from the most basic organizational level and strives to enact lasting change.

Interaction of Professional Work and Other Roles

Along with the potential research noted above, another aspect of women’s underrepresentation warranting further investigation is the evidence that women are leaving the work force. In fact, one of this study’s participants noted taking a leave of absence to care for an aging parent. Women often step out of the work force due to child care or other caregiving issues, coupled with inflexible job demands that prevent women from managing both professional and caregiving responsibilities. Presently, 69% of

American women between the ages of 25 and 54 are in the work force, which is down from 74% at its peak in 1999 (Slaughter, 2015; Miller & Alderman, 2014; Matsa & Miller, 2011). It seems that the struggle of balancing work and life may deter many women from considering positions of increasing responsibility.

This reality is unfortunate for professional organizations because teams with more women have proven to outperform those composed mainly of men, due in part to women's possession of greater empathy (Wooley, Malone, & Chabris, 2015; Gerzema & D'Antonio, 2013). Further, a recent McKinsey study revealed that companies with greater gender diversity outperform those with low levels of gender diversity by 15% (Krawcheck, 2015). Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) surveyed 64,000 people worldwide regarding gender and success and found that "men and women needed to meet the challenges of life with a predominately feminine set of skills, traits, and attitudes" (p. 23). Their book, *The Athena Doctrine*, delves deeply into the concept of feminine leadership and concludes that the traditional traits associated with women are more deeply valued in the modern workplace worldwide.

The challenges for working women have been part of the conversation for decades; however, the narrative has changed. Until the mid 1990s, the focus on unequal representation of women in top positions centered on issues surrounding sexism and harassment. Later shifts in the narrative focused on the exclusion of women in what is popularly referred to as the "old boys' club," and then, in the early 2000s, on the impediment children pose to women reaching the top of their professions. This family concept has been expanded in recent years to account for not only children, but others

needing care and the overall juggling of familial and career responsibilities (Miller, 2015b; Miller, 2014b).

In her interviews with female doctoral candidates in STEM fields, June (2015b) found many unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve success in the academy. The path to achieving tenure appeared to be a tumultuous one, and female mentors in the field corroborated this belief with stories of the sacrifices they had to make to succeed. As a result, encouraging more women into STEM field pipelines may not successfully diversify these disciplines, as women often elect to pursue other career opportunities that allow them to use their educational experiences and achievements in jobs outside of academic research. Further exploration is needed to determine whether this condition translates into alumni relations where women are underrepresented, and, if so, what steps might be taken to address the situation in the workplace.

Thus, an important interpretation of the findings is the overwhelming need for societal change – an easy conclusion to make, but a complex issue with no easy solutions. In her report from the 2015 World Economic Forum (WEF), an annual meeting of rich and powerful people from around the world, held in Davos, Switzerland, *Time's* Rana Foroohar shared that including more women in the workforce reliably achieves economic growth. The 2015 WEF meeting featured 17% female participation, an increase from 9% in the early years of the 21st century. The WEF has reported that if present rates of change remain constant, women will not reach economic equality with men for another eight decades.

Foroohar (2015) finds that the persistence of women's inequality has resulted in a cottage industry devoted to gender-parity consulting. She suggests, in agreement with

Slaughter (2015), that the answer lies more firmly in efforts to value the role of care-taking and to create programs that provide support to families. A related issue is the culture of overwork, sometimes referred to as a “24/7 work culture.” Slaughter (2015) and many other scholars who have done research in this area conclude that remedies are needed that address both genders, although their findings demonstrate that this phenomenon burdens women inordinately. These remedies need to move beyond family-friendly policies to address the culture of overwork (Miller, 2015b; Miller, 2014a).

Scholars suspect the culture of overwork described above, and reported in the findings, to be keeping high-achieving, high-ability women from pursuing top jobs, perhaps even CAO roles. Additional research, as suggested by several participants, is needed to more accurately determine how many women aspire to these positions but doubt they will achieve them for any number of reasons – among them, the previously described punishing hours. Only with a clearer understanding of the issues can sound solutions be proposed to address these real or perceived obstacles.

While one participant specifically mentioned the ability of alumni relations to provide greater flexibility than many areas of academe, and certainly more than industry, my experience suggests that such flexibility is often handled in informal ways. Many professionals in higher education are exempted from the policies of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and – again, in my experience – have been informed that no official policies exist regarding compensatory time. Given the human dynamic present in organizations, alumni relations in particular would do well by its employees to make attempts to better operationalize the time flexibility issue. Transparency about time flexibility may go a long way to eliminating some of the destructive behaviors exhibited

toward some employees (largely female) who flex their time in order to excel in both their professional and personal lives. To further support the recommendations above, Harvard Business School professor Kathleen McGinn (2015) has studied the impact of working mothers on their children's future career earnings. In particular, she found that "after controlling for demographic factors, daughters of working mothers earned 23% more than daughters of stay-at-home mothers" (as cited in Miller, 2015a, p.5). These findings suggest that the presence of more working mothers would have a positive impact on the economic status of women in the coming generations.

Possibilities for Mentoring in Alumni Relations

Ferrazzi (2005) suggests, "No process in history has done more to facilitate the exchange of information, skills, wisdom and contacts than mentoring" (p. 274). The examples previously provided support Ferrazzi's sentiment and the material contained in the literature review surrounding the value of mentoring, as well as participants' opinions about the importance of mentoring, regardless of gender. The specific idea of a mentoring program for junior females in alumni relations warrants further discussion, and several of the participants have offered to take part in a working group focused on establishing more formal methods for identifying women interested in CAO positions and then providing them with opportunities for mentoring from the profession's most seasoned veterans.

After considering participants' suggestions about mentoring, it will be important to create a program to provide mentoring opportunities that accounts for the time constraints of sitting CAOs. One idea, borrowed from Walmart U.S. executive vice president and chief operating officer Gisel Ruiz (2014), is that of a mentorship circle.

Modified for the purposes of alumni relations, a mentorship circle could consist of several CAOs, who would each advise multiple mentees without crowding their already solidly-booked calendars. This approach benefits both parties: the CAO is able to make a contribution without investing inordinate amounts of time, and the “mentee” is able to benefit from a multitude of opinions and experiences. Ruiz also advises that women create networks of advisors, rather than seeking out a single mentor; the approach described will achieve this aim. The majority of the CAOs interviewed referenced the value of networking with other professionals. Though they did not specifically indicate that this activity was more valuable than mentoring, networking was mentioned more frequently. Therefore, an initiative that combines both activities is likely to yield greater benefit.

Borrowing Some Ideas from Other Areas of the Academy

In other areas of higher education where women are significantly underrepresented, bold thinking has yielded tremendous results. One example can be found at the University of San Diego where 60% of STEM majors are female. Due to concern that the percentage of women faculty in these disciplines poorly reflected the population being served, eight female STEM professors were hired under the leadership of Biology Professor Lisa M. Baird (2014). Following the receipt of a \$600,000 NSF grant, Baird and her colleagues were able to conduct campus climate surveys, create a formal mentoring program for women faculty, and creatively restructure several positions to make them more interdisciplinary in nature. Stressing that the initial application process was gender-neutral, Baird indicated that, when faced with two equally qualified candidates, women were selected over men. This bold and potentially controversial

action may well represent the essential steps to fielding a workforce that accurately represents the population it serves.

In related work, deans of the top U.S. business schools gathered in August 2015 at the White House to discuss making their programs “more accessible and appealing to women” (June, 2015a, p. A14). One key challenge is the dearth of female faculty members. Some of the shortage results from the lack of PhDs awarded to women in certain disciplines, i.e., finance and economics. Alison Davis-Blake, dean of the University of Michigan’s business school, created some novel methods to try to ameliorate the situation. She found that quite often males would occupy the top three finalist spots in faculty searches, but that in many cases women would appear fourth and fifth on such lists. She employed the “nudge theory, which calls for making small changes, rather than direct instruction, to influence decision making and behavior” (June, 2015a, p. A14). Her recommendation: bring the top five candidates to campus, thereby giving women an opportunity to interview in person. Incorporating these concepts from the academic side of higher education may yield more diverse pools of candidates for alumni relations positions.

A decade before the work of Baird and her colleagues, Blau, Currie, Croson and Ginther (cited in Wolf, 2011) sought to study the impact of mentors on female assistant research professors. After separating their subjects into three cohorts, the randomly chosen treatment group received formal mentoring. After following the women for five years, it was found that those who were mentored averaged more grants and more publications than those who were not (Wolf, 2011). Mentoring may then prove essential to advancing women in alumni relations.

Women Need to See More Leaders who Resemble Themselves

While mentoring will provide individual interaction with women who desire to occupy leadership roles, another important way to ignite progress toward equity will be to have more women in visible leadership roles. Shirley Tligham, the first female president of Princeton, indicates that it is important for the student bodies at our universities to see women in positions of authority, and she comments that women are achieving success as higher education administrators (Myers, 2008). This concept was shared by many of the CAOs interviewed regardless of gender.

As Myers (2008) found, “before most people can imagine themselves in a particular role, they need to see other people who look like them doing something similar” (p. 199). Myers goes on to suggest that “the more women see other women succeeding, the more they are drawn to the business, and the cycle of success continues” (p. 207). She believes it will be important to include enough professional women so that no one feels compelled to count the number of women in the room. This notion was also expressed by the study’s female CAOs as they pondered the question of how to bring more women to senior leadership positions in alumni relations.

Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) are among the many scholars who attribute the lack of diversity in hiring to the fact that people like to work with people who are like themselves, despite volumes of research demonstrating the robust environment and resulting success often created by a heterogeneous team (Morley, 2012; Featherman, 1993). Cornell professors Williams and Ceci (2014) reported, among a variety of findings about college women selecting traditionally male math and science majors more, that women who take math and science courses taught by women early in their college careers

are more likely to choose these fields as majors. Applying this concept to alumni relations leadership it could be concluded that if junior women were exposed to more senior women in the profession these junior women might more easily visualize themselves in such positions.

Author Gillian Flynn suggested in a 2015 interview, that women should not be intimidated by the boys' clubs. Flynn shares,

I've gone to lots of meetings where I'm the only person in a skirt, and I deal with that by plowing through it. Media is male-dominated; Hollywood certainly is. I remember I'm there because I'm a writer. The more women see other women in high-profile, powerful places, the more those women are going to see that they can [achieve]. (Flynn as quoted in Majewski, 2015, p. 75)

Flynn recalls a talk she heard given by Billie Jean King, from which she took the quote, "'You have to see it to be it', and she concludes, it's important to see women in positions of power" (Flynn as quoted in Majewski, 2015, p. 75). Movie producer Nina Jacobson agrees, sharing that she will not be satisfied until 50-50 gender equity is achieved across positions of influence: "White boys beget white boys. The more women and people of color who find positions of influence, the more women and people of color will find positions of influence. So we need critical mass, and we're still working toward that" (Jacobson as quoted in Brodesser-Akner, 2014a).

The thoughts offered by the women above, across a variety of fields, serve to reinforce the concepts of social comparison theory and further the importance of the currently sitting female CAOs marshaling their strength and experience to help junior women envision the future success that is well within their grasp.

Ideas for Training and Leadership Development

Respondents' concerns about the inadequate training opportunities warrant further investigation; prescribing improvements could benefit employees far beyond the alumni relations unit and would serve to enhance the proposed mentoring program. The most obvious need, based on the feedback received from the CAOs interviewed, appears to be related to leadership development, which is a complex area.

During my tenure at UGA, the Division of Finance and Administration developed a fellows program that allowed promising junior professionals to explore a variety of campus departments, and to spend significant time interacting with the leaders of various areas. This experience could easily be replicated for alumni relations and would resemble one respondent's suggestion regarding an alumni relations apprenticeship program. While that suggestion usefully highlights the various facets of alumni relations administration, the findings of the study indicate that the CAO of the future will need a broader understanding of the entire college and university in order to form relationships essential for collaboration and for achieving major objectives.

Challenges with Female Stereotypes

Another area pertinent to women and alumni relations leadership revolves around some of the calcified stereotypes of women. While no person can effect universal change regarding these stereotypes, they do warrant further attention for the role they may play in Slaughter's (2015) "Great Stall."

It is suspected that those in a position to nurture, train, and cultivate future leaders may, as mentioned several times throughout this study, overlook women due to personal assumptions that women do not want the top job due to the sacrifices such a position will

require (Myers, 2008). There is also evidence of the “unspoken assumption that, for women, work is a choice and a luxury” (Wolf, 2011, p. 20). Alumni relations work calls for long hours, frequent travel, and many events during evenings and weekends – all of which result in less time to spend on family and leisure.

According to Sarah Thebaud (2015), University of California at Santa Barbara assistant professor, “Women have to work harder to convince others that they have what it takes to be successful” (as quoted in Simon, 2015, p. B7). Fordham University’s Elizabeth Keenan (2014) found that when pursuing tenure, women need to be more productive than men, a challenge given the reality that women are often engaged in greater amounts of service work. In the findings of this study, the women interviewed did not indicate receiving an unusual amount of institutional committee assignments relative to those described by the male participants.

Nancy Lee (2015), Google’s director of diversity and inclusion, shared that in her experience, “Being a woman and being Asian was a double bind. Women are already seen as less assertive and not as leader-like, and then Asian women tend to be quieter and more deferential” (as quoted in dellaCava, 2015a, p. 6B). As a result, Lee found herself overcompensating by asserting herself more than she found comfortable in order to overcome these stereotypes.

On the more positive end, women are generally stereotyped as loyal, more empathetic, better at building consensus, and better at nurturing relationships – traits that benefit alumni relations professionals (Gerzema & D’Antonio, 2013; Rosin, 2010; Barsh & Cranston, 2009). Harvard’s David Deming, who conducts research relative to the

increasing importance of social skills in the workplace, has found that women are adapting better than their male counterparts to the changing landscape (Flowers, 2015).

One recommendation is offered by Barsh and Cranston's (2009) model of "centered leadership," which they developed especially for women following their research on successful professionals of each gender. Their work offers much for consideration, as they determined that "there are more differences between individuals than between genders" (p. 14). However, they also found that the successful women in their study not only demonstrated those leadership traits considered to be traditionally male, but also that extraordinarily effective women leaders tend to demonstrate other characteristics – specifically, a sense of meaning and connectedness. Their model employs theories from a wide variety of fields, including management, leadership, neuroscience, and positive psychology—a subdiscipline whose focus is on what allows people to flourish. The centered leadership model includes the concepts of Meaning, Framing, Connecting, Engaging, and Energizing. Barsh and Cranston assert that women who pair talent and desire to lead with a tolerance for change make a strong impact in the context of this model. Considering this work, coupled with the concerns regarding the quality of training available to higher education professionals, the concepts associated with centered leadership may prove to be useful as the aforementioned mentoring program is developed; this model provides the necessary framework to carefully consider the positive attributes women bring to leadership roles and to create opportunities for women to enhance their leadership skills.

Personality Types and Other Traits

The exploration of personality types is another area beyond the scope of this research; however, it is worth considering traits that are predictive of successful leaders, especially as related to female leadership, as employing this information in the aforementioned mentoring program and other proposed remedies could yield many benefits. Additionally, demonstrating concretely to women in alumni relations (and other professions) how the specific characteristics they bring to bear relate directly to those required of successful leaders may increase confidence levels and encourage more women to envision themselves in the CAO role.

Eagly (cited in Wolf, 2011) has extensively researched the question of whether one gender makes better leaders and found conclusively that leadership depends on the individual and not gender. Her findings further indicate that the trait of extraversion most effectively predicts success in leadership, and that this trait occurs equally in men and women. Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) and Matsa and Miller (2011) find that skills generally associated with women can be more beneficial in certain environments.

Women are also stereotyped as overcautious, a notion that hampers their ability to rise to positions of senior leadership. Alexis Herman (cited in Myers, 2008), who served as the first African American secretary of labor, believes that women are great risk takers, but that through engaging in "protective hesitation" they fail to perceive their own high tolerance for risk. Her assessment is that the average woman occupying a leadership position today had to take many risks and endure many difficult situations before achieving that success, which perhaps affects the average woman's appreciation for all that she has accomplished.

Research has found many advantages women bring to decision making, including their ability to make better decisions under stress. Such cases heighten women's tendencies toward empathy, contributing to more effective decision making. Additional research bears out the risk associated with these findings: namely, these strengths have subjected women to a "glass cliff," in that they are often selected for leadership positions in times of crisis, thereby reducing their chances of success (Huston, 2014; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011).

It has also been posited that women are held back by their fear of criticism, and subsequent need for praise. Mohr (2014) suggests that "women today inhabit a transitional historical moment. We have tremendous new freedoms and new opportunities, but the legacy of a very different past is around us and inside us. Learning to respond to praise and criticism – without getting hooked by it – is for most of us, a necessary rite of passage" (p. 8). As leadership training and mentoring programs for junior women in alumni relations are developed they will need to address women's struggles with receiving criticism and help them to frame criticism in constructive ways.

Finally, as related to personality and other traits, I find it rare to encounter an alumni relations professional who has not been subjected to any number of personality inventory instruments. From Myers Briggs, Strengths Finder, DISC, Birkman, and several others used by consultants, coaches and other conference facilitators, it is safe to conclude that there is tremendous emphasis on understanding one's own traits, strengths, and methods of expressing authority as one moves along the path to leadership roles. This reality points to the need for additional scholarship in this area to uncover any

commonalities related to the outcomes of these instruments and success in leadership roles.

For Further Investigation

Rhoads, et al. (2014) noted that “one of the most important values of a scholarly work is . . . to raise critical questions” (p. viii). Throughout the investigation, these words rang true. Although this study began as an exploratory study with no particular thesis to be proven, the process of reviewing literature, interviewing my colleagues and analyzing the information they shared, yielded many more critical questions that will form the basis for future research.

What Is the Role of the Professional Organizations?

It has been suggested that a fundamental and comprehensive review be undertaken to examine the relationships which alumni relations professionals (and particularly CAOs) cultivate and sustain over the long term, along with an investigation of the dividends these relationships return to the university. Such information would prove exceptionally valuable to the profession as a whole, and may well serve to demonstrate the tremendous contributions women make to these positions and their institutions.

One of the respondents suggested that the field’s professional organizations such as CASE and CAAE have a responsibility to make a difference with regard to the critical issues in the field. Questions of what role CASE and CAAE should specifically assume in assisting the profession with gaining relevance fall largely beyond the scope of this study. However, the frequency and thoughtfulness with which participants commented on this need demonstrate the critical importance of alumni relations’ status among key

university administrators, especially presidents. Further investigation is needed to determine an appropriate course of action to remedy the lack of leadership demonstrated by these professional organizations. It is safe to conclude that clearly communicating the relevance of alumni relations work to those in institutional leadership roles would lead to a better understanding of the CAO position, its roles, and other qualifications likely to insure success. CASE's 102 year history place it in the unique position to be able to chronicle the development of the profession and discuss how it has arrived at its present state of maturity, along with the implications for the sophistication that has been realized over more than a century. Germane to this study would be how the profession's longevity may be contributing to the CAO role.

Another important area for further research relative to the role of CASE and CAAE relates to the need for these organizations to conduct more comprehensive surveying (qualitative and quantitative) of the professionals in alumni relations. CAAE's annual survey is narrow in scope since it only includes data from its member organizations. CASE has not conducted a salary survey in several years. When considering the frequency with which the CAOs in this study referenced the need to be more metrics-driven in the approach to alumni relations work it would seem incumbent upon these organizations to provide substantial and timely data pertaining to the sector as a whole in order to assist professionals with benchmarking and assessment of their individual programs.

Are the U.S. News & World Report Top 25 Publics the Anomaly?

Given the size of the population sampled, there are obvious limitations to the study and the findings and recommendations should be considered within that context.

Notably these findings may not be generalizable to a larger population of alumni associations and CAOs and the differences existing among even the 10 institutions in the study make the application of equity theory challenging. As was reported by one respondent the knowledge of one university (or one alumni association) is just that – the knowledge of one. In this reality it is worth considering that the public institutions on the *USNWR* 25 list may be anomalies in terms of alumni association leadership. Therefore, an investigation of schools in the next tier, or grouped in other ways – e.g., Top 25 Privates, Top 25 Small Privates, etc. – may yield data that demonstrate more favorable opportunities exist for women in other sectors of alumni relations. Additionally, it must be noted that in the recent release of the 2016 *USNWR* Top 25 Publics (see Appendix E) the number of women remained static at 8 out of 19 positions. With several key vacancies at the time of publication, there is an opportunity for women to achieve greater equity within this group.

An Alumni Relations Major?

The proliferation of women's studies programs has been characterized as beneficial to advancing the cause of equity for women in higher education in the United States (Featherman, 1993). According to historian Barbara Berg (2015),

The case for women's studies has long been clear. The first programs were founded in the 1970s during the height of the women's movement. They served as a kind of academic arm to the era's political struggle. Women's studies produced research, theory and activists who worked to write women into the history books from which they'd been largely omitted. It's safe to say that

without women's studies, we would not have many of the gains that women have made over the last 45 years. (Berg, as quoted in Bennett, 2015, p. 7)

Catherine R. Stimpson (2015), dean of the graduate school of arts and sciences at New York University and one of the pioneers of women's studies programs, offers,

Our job was to give people new ideas and to persuade them that they were true. It was to prove the pay gap between men and women, and to show the disparity in money spent on men's and women's health. The mere fact that we count the number of women in state legislatures – that we go through that exercise – is because of women's studies. (Stimpson, as quoted in Bennett, 2015, p. 7)

Applying this lesson to the alumni relations field it is possible that the creation of an alumni relations college major would contribute to the legitimization of the profession demonstrating the value this field and those who work in it bring to the higher education enterprise. Several respondents described the entrepreneurial nature of alumni relations work; indeed in the cases of the self-governing associations, these individuals are actually running corporations. Thus, if an alumni relations certificate or major is to be developed, the specific concepts and skills germane to entrepreneurship as related to the alumni relations profession must be discussed and determined (Lattuca & Stark, 2009).

One of the respondents indicated that a great opportunity exists for some institution to develop a revolutionary academic program in alumni relations. Such a credential may prove to be of benefit, as “credential” appears to be a new buzzword surrounding employment and aligns with the signaling theory discussed in Chapter 2. In September 2015, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* devoted a special section to the

issues surrounding credentials and their increasing popularity among employers (Blumenstyk, 2015; deBotton, 2015).

In light of the success of women's studies programs in bringing issues of gender to the forefront, it merits consideration that similar benefits may result from the development of a formal curriculum in alumni relations. Literature and findings suggest that, while the benefit of a formal academic program would accrue to the profession as a whole, women may stand to benefit more from such a program than their male counterparts.

Women and Philanthropy

As was noted in earlier chapters, the extant literature in alumni relations is quite sparse. There exists a multitude of opportunity for higher education scholarship in this field, especially in light of the ever-increasing need for external funding to colleges and universities, public and private. Many institutions struggle with declining alumni giving percentages. However, for those with the entrepreneurial spirit that will characterize the CAO of the future, there exists tremendous untapped potential as related to alumni and philanthropy. As Sallie Krawcheck (2015), owner of the women's networking community Ellevest has revealed, it is her passion to invest in those businesses that are succeeding in advancing women. This sentiment may well translate to the higher education arena; as was stated earlier in this study, higher education is, after all, a big business.

Regarding alumni and philanthropy as related to women, and referring back to the work of Dvorak and Toubman (2013) noted in Chapter 1, some of the specific characteristics of women as donors merit additional study in order to develop alumni

engagement plans that will engender additional support from female graduates. As Kaminski (2002) reported, today's women have more control over money than ever before. Some inquiry into the general area of women and philanthropy has revealed that women are motivated to give for many of the same reasons as men. Women, however, tend to desire deeper connections to the organizations they support, and often prefer opportunities to commit their time as well as finances. Also germane to alumni relations is the finding that, in general, women support education for its critical ability to advance and improve society. Kaminski suggests that advancement professionals consider making at least half of their calls on women. The employment of an intentional goal such as this has the potential to yield tremendous benefit for alumni relations.

The Trend toward Bringing in Non-traditional Candidates

As the findings of this study demonstrated, there exists a significant number of cases where the CAO in the *USNWR* 25 entered the profession from a position outside of higher education. Given a recent report in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* which revealed the increasing trend of colleges selecting candidates from outside of higher education to fill leadership positions, this area may warrant further exploration. Simon Newman (2015), president of Mount St. Mary's University, has found his experience in the investment world to be of particular benefit in his new role, in particular due to the college's need to both save and make money. He says "academe is a world that desperately needs help, but its leaders haven't reached out to the appropriate people for that help" (quoted in McIntire, 2015a, p A4). Newman asserts the value of skills he honed during his business career in a variety of areas, including fund raising, strategic planning, and fiscal management, along with experience in direct marketing, which bears

resemblance to enrollment management. Worth note regarding McIntire's piece is that it featured three male presidents, although there are opportunities to feature females who have become college presidents from outside academe, including Young Harris College's Cathy Cox.

If the new reality of higher education includes more emphasis on filling administrative vacancies with professionals from outside the academy, this is a situation that will have significant impact on the advancement opportunities for those professionals who have spent their careers within higher education. Further investigation of the prevalence of this situation is necessary to determine its scope and potential actions to be taken that would allow career higher education professionals to remain competitive when leadership positions become available.

First-Generation Graduates and Second Tier Professionals

The interviews conducted herein did not inquire whether any of the participants were first-generation college students, which might prove another interesting data point to analyze in relation to educational background and career path. As I delve more deeply into this area of inquiry, I am interested to learn more about qualified professionals occupying the second tier of the profession. In particular, it seems important to investigate women's success at that level, which would raise the possibility that women struggle to break the final barrier into top-tier jobs.

These ideas have relevance to a number of the concepts discussed earlier as there exists the possibility that either first-generation or second tier could impact the ascension to the CAO position. It is outside the scope of this study to discuss the many findings relative to first-generation college graduates and how the experiences of these individuals

shape their career aspirations. As acknowledged earlier in these recommendations, a more thorough analysis of those professionals in the second tier of the alumni relations sector is likely to prove illuminating as the profession seeks to fill current and future vacancies at the CAO level since focusing on only those professionals at the top levels in alumni relations does not provide a full understanding of the many positions that contribute to the success of an alumni relations department.

Conclusion

Emory University Professor Melvin Konner (2015) says “women are not equal to men; they are superior in many ways, and in most ways that will count in the future” (p. B11). Yet, gender inequity persists, according to the author Cheryl Strayed (2015), owing to the reality that “we live in a patriarchy, which means that everything we observe, desire and consume is in some essential way informed by gender assumptions that privilege men” (p. 35). She refers to “an almost fill-in-the blanks predictability” (p. 35) surrounding the volumes of recent work on gender equity, which collectively concludes that one’s chances of success are far greater if one is male.

Former CNN executive and author Gail Evans (as cited in Wolf, 2011) offers the notions that “every woman must play on the women’s team” and that “every time any woman succeeds in business, your chances of succeeding in business increase. And every time a woman fails in business, your chances of failure increase” (p. 59).

Society is currently demonstrating marked sensitivity regarding the inequitable treatment of women and its pernicious effects. It is suggested that measures including those suggested throughout this study be enacted to take advantage of this heightened interest (Truitt, 2015a). Throughout all phases of this research, it has been apparent that

many feminists assume a posture of guarded optimism as related to the achievement of equity, yet this is a propitious time for furthering that which is long overdue.

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Appendix A

Recruitment and Consent Letters

Sample Recruitment Letter

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Libby Morris (lvmorris@uga.edu) in the Institute of Higher Education at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled Gender Representation in Alumni Relations Leadership. The purpose of this study is to explore the educational and professional backgrounds of at least five female and five male directors presently employed in the top alumni relations role at *U.S. News & World Report (USNWR)* Top 25 public institutions to determine if there are particular experiences while in a junior role, or other preparation, that would explain why women are underrepresented in these roles. We obtained your contact information from your alumni association's website. You are eligible to be in this study because you currently serve in the top alumni relations role at your institution and you are 18 years of age or older.

Your participation will involve an interview, likely lasting two hours. The interview can take place in person at your office, or other arrangements can be made to accommodate your schedule, including the option for a phone or Skype interview. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to provide the following information *if it is not available through the internet or other public sources*: your current vita; your current job description or position announcement if more appropriate; organizational charts for your institution and alumni association/office of alumni relations as appropriate; gender

composition of your institution's senior administration and alumni association board; the year of your institution's founding and year of your alumni association's founding; the budget for your alumni association/alumni relations department; the size of your living alumni population, broken down by gender; and the size of your current student enrollment, broken down by gender.

The foreseeable risks to participation center around your being the only person with the position at your institution, and since the study will involve only the *USNWR* Top 25 public institutions, information that is identifiable may be inadvertently released. For example, an anecdote or story may include something very specific to you or your university, and those close to you may be able to identify you. A member check will be conducted to allow you one last look at the data to see if there is anything you would like me to change or remove for that reason. The member check will consist of my emailing you with pertinent sections of my dissertation. It is estimated that your review of this material would take approximately one hour.

There will be no compensation for participation in the study. The findings from this project may provide information on how we can work together to help more women achieve success in the executive director role.

If you would like additional information about this study, please feel free to call me at 706.372.0777 (cell) 502.852.7686 (office) or email me at Deborah.dietzler@louisville.edu

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Deborah Dietzler

Standard Consent Letter

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Libby Morris (lvmorris@uga.edu) in the Institute for Higher Education at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled Gender Representation in Alumni Relations Leadership. The purpose of this study is to explore the educational and professional backgrounds of at least five female and five male directors presently employed in the top alumni relations role at *U.S. News & World Report (USNWR)* Top 25 public institutions to determine if there are particular experiences while in a junior role, or other preparation, that would explain why women are underrepresented in these roles.

Your participation will involve an interview and should only take about two hours. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to provide the following information *if it is not available through the internet or other public sources*: your current vita; your current job description or position announcement if more appropriate; organizational charts for your institution and alumni association/office of alumni relations as appropriate; gender composition of your institution's senior administration and alumni association board; the year of your institution's founding and year of your alumni association's founding; the budget for your alumni association/alumni relations department; the size of your living alumni population, broken down by gender; and the size of your current student enrollment, broken down by gender.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise

entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

As you are the only person with the position at your institution, and the study will involve only the *USNWR* Top 25 public institutions, information that is identifiable may be inadvertently released. For example, an anecdote or story may include something very specific to you or your university, and those close to you may be able to identify you. A member check will be conducted to allow you one last look at the data to see if there is anything you would like me to change or remove for that reason. The member check will consist of my emailing you with pertinent sections of my dissertation. It is estimated that your review of this material would take approximately one hour.

Interviews will be tape recorded, but notes on paper will also be taken. All paper will be stored in a secure, locked environment at my home office. All electronic files will be stored in a password protected environment. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. The published results will be presented in summary form only.

The findings from this project may provide information on how we can work together to help more women achieve success in the executive director role. As described above, the risks or discomforts associated with this research center around the possibility that an anecdote or story may include something very specific to you or your university, whereby those close to you might be able to identify you. This risk will be mitigated by the use of the member check, also described above.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 706.372.0777 or send an e-mail to Deborah.dietzler@louisville.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Deborah Dietzler

Appendix B

2015 *U.S. News & World Report* Top 25 Public Universities

with Gender of Chief Alumni Relations Officer and Vacancies at Time of Publication

1. University of California – Berkeley	Vacant
2. University of California – Los Angeles	Female
2. University of Virginia	Male
4. University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	Male
5. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	Male
6. College of William & Mary	Female
7. Georgia Institute of Technology	Male
8. University of California – San Diego	Vacant
9. University of California – Davis	Male
10. University of California – Santa Barbara	Male
11. University of California – Irvine	Male
11. University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign	Male
13. University of Wisconsin – Madison	Female
14. Pennsylvania State University – University Park	Vacant
14. University of Florida	Female
14. University of Washington	Male
17. University of Texas – Austin	Female
18. Ohio State University – Columbus	Vacant
19. University of Connecticut	/a*

20. Clemson University	Male
20. Purdue University – West Lafayette	Vacant
20. University of Georgia	Female
20. University of Maryland – College Park	Female
20. University of Pittsburgh	Male
25. Texas A&M University – College Station	Male

Source: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/top-public>

*University of Connecticut disbanded its Alumni Association in Summer 2015.

Appendix C

Dissertation Interview Questions

Section 1. The Person

1. I see from your vita that you majored in (insert field/s here). Why did you choose this field (these fields) of study? Do you feel that your academic background provided good preparation for a career in alumni relations?
2. *(For those whose career has been solely in alumni relations/advancement/higher education)* a. How did you become interested in a career in alumni relations? b. At what point did you decide that you were desirous of the CAO role? c. Were there particular programs or initiatives you spearheaded that you believe were instrumental in your success? d. Were there mentors/sponsors/advocates from within the university who provided assistance with your achievement of the CAO role? If so, can you describe these relationships and how they were helpful, or not helpful? e. Were there any people outside the university who served in the mentor/sponsor/advocate capacity? If so, can you describe these relationships and how they were helpful or not helpful? f. Did you serve on any campus committees that proved to be beneficial in your career progression? If so, what were these committees and how did your participation benefit you? g. If you recall some of the specific events surrounding your pursuit of this job, would you kindly share them? For example, your predecessor left/retired and you knew you wanted to succeed him/her, or, someone encouraged you to apply, etc. h. On what campus committees

- do you currently serve? Do you see this participation as being an important component of your success in the CAO role? Why or why not?
3. *(For those who had a career outside of higher education PRIOR to entering alumni relations, i.e, there are several CAOs who obtained the position after retiring from a corporate career.)* I see from your vita that you did not begin your career in higher education/alumni relations. What caused you to become interested in alumni relations work? *(Depending on the answer to this question, the items in Question 2 a-h will be asked in a manner that will make sense given the participant's background.)*
 4. Were there particular jobs that helped to develop your skills as a leader that you found particularly beneficial once you became a chief alumni relations officer? What were the aspects of these roles that served as the best preparation for your role as a CAO? For those who have spent their careers in alumni relations/advancement/higher education, Did participation in CASE or any other professional organization in this field play a role in your professional development, desire to become an alumni relations leader, or provide beneficial relationships that enabled you to achieve this role? If so, please describe.

Section 2 – The Position and the Context

5. If you are able to recall, what was the composition of the institutional leadership, association leadership, and search committee leadership that selected you for this role? Through my years in the profession, several of our alumni relations colleagues have suggested that the composition (role in organization, gender, etc.) of the search committee and others involved in the search process affects the selections made for

our roles. If you are able, please describe your thoughts on how the groups noted above may have affected the hiring choice in your case. As you know, the overall purpose of my research is to explore the gender inequity in the CAO role, in particular at the *USNWR* Top 25 Publics. To that end, please discuss any thoughts you have on the role of gender equity in the recruitment process and how (or if) it affects outcomes.

6. I can see from your organizational chart that your office/association sits (describe placement) at this place in the institution's framework. Do you feel that your placement in the university and your reporting line are commensurate with the importance you and your office play in the life of the university? Why or why not? If not, have you and/or your volunteer leadership taken any formal steps to augment your organization's position? What were the outcomes?
7. Going back to some of the specifics of my research, the budgets and staff sizes of your organization and those of the other participants, along with gender composition of living alumni population, and position on the university organizational chart are varied. I have found (insert findings here as related to gender differences). Please share any thoughts you may have to explain these differences, and how (if at all) you believe these affect the selection of the CAO.

Section 3 – Advice and Speculation

8. Given the many changes occurring in higher education, a. what do you believe are the essential qualities for the next generation of alumni directors and how do they differ (or not differ) from what it takes to be a successful CAO today? Do you have

- thoughts regarding career paths that would be more likely to lead to success? b. When we meet at our various conferences, we often lament the status of our profession as related to the rest of the higher education landscape. Do you believe that a formal academic program to prepare future alumni relations professionals would elevate the status of the profession? Why or why not? Related to academic programs, do you believe there are any that lend themselves more directly to success in our field? If so, what are they? c. If you do, would you then see this preparation being a mandatory requirement to enter the field? Why or why not? d. How important do you think participation in the various professional organizations – Council of Alumni Association Executives, Council for the Advancement of Support and Education, and the various groups arranged around athletic conferences, the self-governing model and private colleges – is for success in the field?
9. In the same vein as what we just discussed, do you believe that an apprenticeship or highly formalized mentoring program for junior members of the profession would be beneficial in the overall status of the profession and perhaps also assist in achieving equity in areas such as gender and salary?
 10. What are your thoughts regarding the underrepresentation of and unequal compensation for, women in the profession and what ideas do you have or steps have you taken or do you plan to take to enable women to achieve equity in both areas?
 11. To enable me to better interpret the data and draw meaningful conclusions, would you be willing to share your age or your general age range? Would you be willing to share your salary or general salary range?

12. As we conclude, and I do want to thank you for your time, as I deeply appreciate how full our days are in this role, I'd ask you to share with me any additional thoughts you may have about this topic, including items I may be overlooking that you see as important in this analysis.

Appendix D

2015 Self-Governing Alumni Association List

with Gender of Chief Alumni Relations Officer

Georgia Institute of Technology	Male
Iowa State University	Male
Kansas State University	Female
Louisiana State University	Male
Oklahoma State University	Male
Purdue University	Vacant
Texas A&M University	Male
Texas Tech University	Male
University of California at Berkeley	Vacant
University of Illinois	Male
University of Kansas	Vacant
University of Maine	Vacant
University of Michigan	Male
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	Male
University of Texas	Female
University of Virginia	Male
United States Air Force Academy	Male
United States Naval Academy	Male
West Point	Male

13 male

2 female

4 vacancies

Source: Amy Button Renz – Kansas State University

Appendix E

2016 *U.S. News & World Report* Top 25 Public Universities

with Gender of Chief Alumni Relations Officer

1. University of California – Berkeley	Vacant
2. University of California – Los Angeles	Female
2. University of Virginia	Male
4. University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	Male
5. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	Male
6. College of William & Mary	Female
7. Georgia Institute of Technology	Male
8. University of California – Santa Barbara	Male
9. University of California – Irvine	Male
9. University of California – San Diego	Vacant
11. University of California – Davis	Male
11. University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign	Male
11. University of Wisconsin – Madison	Female
14. Pennsylvania State University – University Park	Vacant
14. University of Florida	Female
16. Ohio State University - Columbus	Vacant
16. University of Texas – Austin	Female
16. University of Washington	Male
19. University of Connecticut	/a*

19. University of Maryland – College Park	Female
21. Clemson University	Male
21. Purdue University	Vacant
21. University of Georgia	Female
24. University of Pittsburgh	Male
25. University of Minnesota – Twin Cities	Female

*University of Connecticut disbanded its Alumni Association in Summer 2015.

6 vacancies (including Connecticut)

8 females

11 males

Source: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/top-public>