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# Scaling the Maternal Wall: Factors of Success for Female Chief Student Affairs Officers with Children Working at Public Higher Education Institutions

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**Scaling the Maternal Wall: Factors of Success for Female Chief Student Affairs Officers  
with Children Working at Public Higher Education Institutions**

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CAPSTONE PROJECT

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Interdisciplinary Leadership, Higher Education Concentration

Governors State University  
University Park, IL 60484

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# SCALING THE MATERNAL WALL

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## ABSTRACT

The higher education/student affairs administration field has a significant number of women graduating from programs across the country, however those numbers do not translate to the most executive levels, like vice president of student affairs, within this particular field (NASPA, 2014). Many women are placed in entry level and mid-level positions without ever rising to the most senior positions, and others leave the higher education/student affairs administration field for part time work, to raise a family or to go into an entirely different field altogether. While there has been a lot of focus on the leaky pipeline of women in higher education and why women aren't ascending to those senior-level roles, the information is more limited when you look at women, and specifically those with children, who have aligned their professional goals and personal responsibilities from an asset building perspective. Working mothers who want to continue to move up in this field need to understand the factors of success that others have identified in order to have a road map of best practices that they can utilize themselves regardless of any maternal wall bias present. Maternal wall bias is a form of employment discrimination that can be both harmful to the individual experiencing it as well as the institution given high turnover rates of working mothers. While it is important to understand what may be causing this leaky pipeline of qualified women, it is equally as important to understand how the few working mothers who do rise to the Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO) role scale the maternal wall. For this research project, the construct of maternal wall bias in higher education is reviewed through three theoretical frameworks, Gilligan's theory of women's moral development, Holland's person-organization fit, and Goode's theory of role strain juxtaposed against Sieber's theory of role accumulation. In researching this topic through those theoretical frameworks, the



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literature was focused on several areas including motherhood ideologies, working mothers in higher education, resiliency and growth mindset, networking and mentoring of women, maternal wall bias, and transformational leadership styles. This literature helped inform the qualitative research in which five working mothers who have risen to the level of vice presidents of student affairs at public institutions were interviewed regarding how they scaled maternal wall bias on their continued promotion up the triangle of hierarchy to the most pinnacle position in a student affairs division. By identifying these factors, the researcher hopes to build a connection with other entry and mid-level student affairs professionals in higher education institutions regarding the realities of being a working mother and what individuals and the universities can do to better support their employees, specifically those with children. Additionally, this study will provide examples of working mothers who have negotiated their own pathways with a focus on asset building for those individuals who have scaled the maternal wall.

## Chapter 1 - Autobiography/Reflexivity

I graduated from Iowa State University with my Masters of Education in Higher Education Administration. While in graduate school, I worked in the Women's Center conducting educational programs for student organizations and event planning/promotion for the Center itself. Upon graduation, I moved to the Chicagoland area and have been working as a student affairs professional ever since. I currently have over thirteen years of experience in higher education working in academic advising, student organization advising, event planning, orientation and commencement, registrar and academic records, student support services, student conduct, and crisis management. I am now the Assistant Dean of Students at DePaul University where I manage the Chicago Loop Campus operations for the department, liaise with the five colleges in the downtown location, participate in support and advocacy efforts for our students, and adjudicate the Code of Student Responsibility. I am trained in ATIXA Title IX investigations and underwent Gehring Academy training for student conduct professionals.

This specific research is a personal endeavor for me as I am a student affairs professional with two small children who one day aspires to serve as a Chief Student Affairs Officer during my professional career. While I have always been interested in women's issues throughout my formative and undergraduate years, the issues women in student affairs face regarding leadership aspirations were crystallized for me in 2010 when I spoke to my then-supervisor about the possibility of filling a leadership position within the office for which I met the requirements. My supervisor's response was for me to think about what that promotion would mean for me and my child, who was two years old at the time. She asked if I thought the position would be too difficult to manage with a baby at home and if I realized how hard it would be to balance the

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energy of both my professional and personal life. This woman never asked me why I wanted the promotion or discussed with me my prospects for longevity in this career, but rather outlined for me all the reasons why a promotion would not be a prudent decision for me due to the fact that while I could have it all, I certainly could “not have it all at the same time.” Her position seemed to stem from assumptions made by my ability to do my job based on the fact that I had a baby, which I have come to learn is the definition of maternal wall bias, more specifically benevolent stereotyping.

I think relationships are an important part of this context because certainly not all conversations in which employees or supervisors are discussing one’s ability to be successful given certain life events is an example of maternal wall bias. If I had a closer relationship with my then-supervisor and had discussed concerns about balance previously or was visibly struggling at work with my ability to manage both my position and my family then I can understand a genuine concern and discussion about what my career path might look like and how she could better assist me in getting to that place. In this situation, however, that was not the case. I did not have a social relationship with my supervisor nor did I ever speak about or have concerns regarding my ability to balance both work and family. She initiated the conversation and brought my family into the context of my ability to do a Director-level job well, which seemed to be her only concern about my career performance or previous experience. While I think she thought she was trying to help, through this research that is in fact maternal wall bias.

I left that position a few months later for a different institution and a Director-level position. While there, I had my second child and with the help of a support network including my partner, have been able to successfully balance both a career and a family. Now that I am a

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more seasoned professional, that woman's words ring in my head as a reminder never to make assumptions about women's professional lives based on personal choices. I do not want my employees to think there is only one way to achieve success, whatever that may look like for them, in this field. There should be multiple factors of success, and acknowledgement of the multiple roles women play in both their professional and personal lives.

Part of this research is self-serving for me as I want to understand how women who have risen to the upper echelons in the professional arena within higher education have negotiated that work/life integration and managed the perceptions of maternal wall bias from others in order to ascend to a place of professional success within the field. What should I, and others, be looking for in an institution, a supervisor, a network of colleagues, and from our family in order to find support to move to the next level within student affairs? In this discussion of family, I would be remiss if I did not mention my partner, Marc, as he has shared in my personal and professional goals as an equal participant. As with many of my research participants, there was never any formal discussion about supporting me as a working mother because that was just the expectation upon our marriage. Marc understood that part of my personal fulfillment was working, and thus he picked up much of the second shift duties that in many situations fall to women (Wharton, 1994).

These second shift responsibilities that women, in many households, tend to be responsible for include laundry, cleaning, cooking and rearing the children. In our family, however, Marc is responsible for cooking dinner, and as a teacher, he stays home with our children in the summer. He was one of the first men in his school district to take an afforded paternity leave to employees after the births of both of our sons so we could extend the time at

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home with them before daycare, and has since become a role model for other men interested in doing the same. He counsels them on how to submit forms, manage comments from others, and reminds them that they have to do what is best for their family, and that includes supporting a working spouse. Marc understands that as part of my responsibilities I am on call, which means I carry two phones with me wherever I go, and many nights have been interrupted by a 4:00am phone call due to a student crisis. He supports me in this endeavor because he knows I am a better mother, partner, and professional for it, and because I truly enjoy my job within student affairs.

Many of my research participants discussed this need for fulfillment their position gives them, and while some of their transitions professionally and personally were difficult, the wonder and energy that being a part of a college campus provides is enriching for not just them, but their families as well. Because of the close proximity of this topic in mirroring my own personal and professional life, I acknowledge there may be bias, such as interviewer bias, in which I may have given subtle clues about my own personal and professional situation with my questions or tone of voice that would lead my interview subjects to give answers consciously or subconsciously that would be in alignment with what they think I'd want to hear. Researcher bias can distort results and affect the outcome of the research so every attempt has been made to limit and minimize researcher bias through review of the work, unbiased questions, no leading of answers, and peer debriefing (Chenail, 2011).

## Chapter 2 – Introduction to the Project

In today's society, women make up the majority of students in student affairs graduate programs, yet only 23% of college presidents/senior administrators are women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). While not all women aspire to these executive roles, there is cause for concern regarding the "leaky talent pipeline [which is defined by] each transition up the management ranks more women are left behind" (Barsh & Yee, 2011, p. 5). While women may hold multiple roles in their personal and professional life, which can impact their ability and/or desire to transition into more leadership positions on campus, none may be more salient to the overall work-life dichotomy than that of a working mother (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998). Eagly & Chin (2010) indicate that while sexual and racial discrimination is harmful to all women, "studies have shown that discrimination is particularly potent against mothers" (p. 217). Many working mothers have to manage what is called "maternal wall bias" (Williams & Cuddy, 2012, p. 95), which are displaced perceptions of how others in the organization, including colleagues, students and superiors, perceive how women will want to manage their professional lives upon having children and an assumption that all women will want to become mothers therefore subscribing all women to maternal wall bias.

Present day organizational structures have shown that working mothers who have attained the chief student affairs officer position, the highest level in most organizations within the division of student affairs, may face some of these unique challenges and supports. Availability of mentors and networking opportunities may be factors of success for these women as well as campus culture, institutional fit and identification and management of maternal wall bias perceptions as they move into those leadership roles. These women have seemingly attained

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professional success as well as an effective balance between work/family with the acknowledgement that the word effective has multiple meanings given the individual and the situation. The existing body of research shows that we can learn from these women's career paths and review the factors that have played a role in their success within a specific institutional type (Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Schwarz, 1997; Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998; Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, Kicklighter, 1998; Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005; Marshall, 2009; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Twale & Jelinek, 2015). Theoretical frameworks will assist in shaping and influencing the aforementioned research and how it corresponds to this study.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Given the complexity of this topic and the multiple facets associated with women in leadership, maternal wall bias, and the current state of higher education as it relates to women in senior level leadership roles, the theoretical frameworks that will be used in this research project are three-fold. These include the Theory of Women's Moral Development (Gilligan), Person-Organization Fit (Holland), and the Theory of Role Strain (Goode)/Theory of Role Accumulation (Sieber). These chosen constructs name and frame experiences in ways to help make sense of this complex and multidimensional issue. Gilligan's theory discusses ways in which women develop as it pertains to the ethics of care and morality. In the past, women were being asked questions of male researchers regarding their own moral development, and many of their answers placed them on a lower developmental level than their male counterparts (Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan identified this issue as not being one of women's morally bereft compass, but rather the emphasis placed on taking into account the feelings of others over themselves. As

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Gilligan stated this dichotomy showcased a “doubtful voice within herself and consequently struggling between two voices which kept running in and out of one another” (Gilligan, 1993, p. xxi).

In Holland’s theory, personality traits coincide with success in a specific organization dependent upon that organization’s culture and the person’s ability to adapt within. The fit of person and organization is often shown as workplace efficacy (Spokane, Meir, Catalano, 2000). It would be important for both the person and organization to have a successful match as this leads to decreased levels of stress felt by the person, and lower turnover and higher job satisfaction within the organization. A person who finds an organization whose culture meets the needs of that person, are going to be more successful than a person who is employed by an organization that they do not like or care about, therefore causing that person to look elsewhere for employment. If other employment is not realistic or feasible given the individual situation or the economy, underperformance can also occur due to a disconnect within the organization.

The theory of role strain (Goode) and the theory of role accumulation (Sieber) are two theories that have explained the effects of multiple roles on the wellbeing of individuals from two different perspectives. The question asked of both theorists is whether or not multiple roles have a positive or negative effect on the wellbeing of the individual, which is often tied to the first two theories, morality and care and fit. The role strain perspective states that multiple roles can lead to conflict and stress with individuals not able to manage the many responsibilities associated with these roles – both personally and professionally – therefore leading to a breakdown of the individual’s wellbeing as well as work performance (Chrouser Arens & Ryff, 2006). The theory of role accumulation as noted by Sieber in 1974 notes that the rewards



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associated with multiple roles outweighs any potential negative attributes. Of these theories, role accumulation is more widely accepted as numerous “qualitative analyses have indicated that individuals perceive their role identities as sources of existential meaning, purpose, and behavioral guidance” (Chrouser Ahrens & Ryff, 2006, p. 801). In short, an individual who has an effective support structure and can make meaning with each of their roles – both personal and professional - will perform better and have a better sense of their well-being than others whose roles cause strain and stress due to lack of structure and institutional fit.

These three theories intersect in reviewing the research material of this paper as women who are progressing in their lives both personally and professionally need to make the most appropriate choices for themselves and for those around them in utilizing Gilligan’s theory, but in order to do this typically women need to find an organization that meets their requirements for balance and development. As seen by the person organization fit theory, once this match is found individuals flourish professionally, but it also has a result personally as they are able to find meaning in their work and the organization culture itself may allow for the woman to balance the multiple roles she has whether as professional, mother, partner, or child.

These multiple roles if placed in the right organization environment should not lead to role scarcity, but rather role accumulation, and therefore have positive effects on both the woman’s personal and professional identities. There is however, the larger issue of how to find the right organization and whose responsibility it is – the individual or the organization – to make the necessary changes in order to make that relationship an effective one. If an organization is losing employees due to human resources practices and/or inability to move up within an organization, then the organization may need to review their processes in order to help talent stay. These

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theories help guide women's ability specifically that of working mothers, to navigate their own personal and career progression with success, and thus require further detailed review of each.

### **Theory of women's moral development (Gilligan).**

Carol Gilligan began to research women's ways of knowing following the second wave of feminism when women began understanding that their voices could be and should be heard. In her Theory of Women's Moral Development (1993), she describes three different levels of women's moral development including orientation to survival, goodness to truth, and morality of nonviolence. Between each stage are transitions that assist women in acknowledging their power and authentic voice (Gilligan, 1993). The first transition in this theory is noted as selfishness to responsibility of others. This transition from individual survival to the idea that goodness equates self-sacrifice moves a woman from thinking about herself to solely about others and what would be best for them. In the second transition the theory defines this as goodness to truth in which the woman begins questioning why she puts others before herself, and places the woman on a path of transforming her idea of understanding herself. There is an acknowledgement that she is a person too. Ambitions, aspirations and dreams flourish in this stage as women begin to identify their own individual needs, but also understanding that responsibility and care for others may compete with these self needs. There is an adage that women can love both themselves and others. This allows women to make educated determinations about what would be best for themselves and their relationships without immediately self-sacrificing their own goals. Self-preservation is a strength, not a liability, and if a woman can take care of herself, she is better equipped to care for others.

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This theory permits women to visualize motivations from not just a care of others perspective, but a place of justice for themselves. With this justice ethos, comes “power, assertiveness and objectivity, which are also necessary to motivate others and make progress towards a common goal” (Butler, 2010, n.p.). For this research, the moment when a woman chooses to follow her own path and ascend to a position of leadership while also remembering the impact of those decisions on those around her is the moment in which the Gilligan theory is being utilized to its fullest potential. One of the factors in Gilligan’s theory is the examination of adaptability and how the woman relates to those around her and builds relationships through networks and support systems in order to be successful both personally and professionally. In those systems, these women leaders find order in and opportunities for promise in the midst of chaos, and find within themselves a place of power and authority not previously seen through other leadership transitions (Gilligan, 1993). These transitions become easier if the woman feels that her persona, needs and ambitions are acceptable and approved of within the organization that employs her. This organizational fit leads to higher rates of success and a feeling of overall balance for the individual, which are the tenets of Holland’s theory of person organization fit.

### **Person-organization fit (Holland).**

Institutional fit relates to the “compatibility between people and organization [that] occurs when a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or b) they share similar fundamental characteristics or c) both” (Tull & Medrano, 2008, p. 2). The theory raised by Holland in 1959 reviewed six different areas of congruence that could be evaluated including occupational, environmental, skill utilization, aspect-based, which includes economic value, within-occupation, and avocational congruence (Spokane, Meir, & Catalano, 2000). For example, an

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individual who values economic stability in an indoor environment while utilizing their rational thinking skills might be more congruent with a position in accounting rather than as a boat captain.

Initially in 1959, Holland focused on high achieving college men to identify these six areas of vocational interest, and in later years there were concerns on whether or not these theories of person organization fit and vocational choice were applicable to women, adults and others. Since the initial sample was small and only fit a small subset of individuals there were questions on whether this theory was applicable to a larger and diverse group of individuals given the limited opportunities available at the time, specifically for women. In further revisions of the theory, these concerns were put to rest as the support for both men and women within this theory were proven sound by additional studies in 1966, 1968, 1972, and 1973 in which Holland's hexagonal representation of vocational preferences was tested and supported for both men and women.

This theory was not specifically associated to one type of professional environment, but rather allowed for a personality review of the individual completing the assessment to determine what type of environment would be most successful for them. The theory posits that employment choice is an expression of personality, and these six areas of interest, including those environments that would be more applicable to higher education, would allow for a narrowing of professional possibilities to meet the needs of the individual (Gottfredson, 1999). These areas allowed individuals to account for compatibility in the workplace, which in turn increased level of retention and job satisfaction, and decreased costs associated with turnover and low morale. Since "work environments are complex social settings, congruence can be multidimensional, and different {vocational} types may respond to different aspects of fit and/or respond to

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incongruence using different means of altering the work environment” (Spokane, Meir, & Catalano, 2000, p. 169).

There are opportunities for career advancement for employees who understand the language and behavior that is expected within a particular work environment, and how systems reward people who adopt and adapt to its culture, norms, and practices. Employees come to know this information from their supervisors who should at the outset describe the values of the institution as well as be transparent about their own supervisory style (Tull & Medrano, 2008), and employees need to find their voice and ask these important questions so a decision can be made about what will be best for the individual prior to employment. This is especially important for those individuals who want a culture that emphasizes respect for the whole person, including but not limited to, family or parental status. Specifically, women whose multiple identities are linked to their role within an institution are more likely to be committed to the position than someone who values just the general professional tenets of the organization (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinkowski, 1998). For example, a working mother in higher education who is employed by an organization that values work-life balance and thus has a flextime policy that allows the woman to attend school functions for her children during the day is more likely going to be more committed to her position than a woman who must use vacation or sick days to spend time at her children’s functions. The cost may become too great to bear and that woman may decide she needs to look elsewhere for an organization that allows for this balance, which increases turnover rates for the organization.

There are different types of congruence within the work environment that may rise to levels of importance for individuals at different times in their lives. Women who are ascending to

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leadership positions within student affairs at higher education institutions may need to negotiate in the hiring process certain aspects of their employment package to account for the importance of both their personal and professional obligations in order to find some sense of person-organization fit as this may weigh on their ability to be successful. A balance between the woman and the institution needs to be found. While change may occur within the institution itself to allow for flexibility, adaptability and recognition of the individual's multiple roles, this change may be slow in coming to fruition so therefore the individual needs to be able to negotiate for themselves what is most salient to them in their place of employment. This recognition or lack thereof of the multiple roles individuals' hold is directly related to Goode's theory of role strain and Sieber's theory of role accumulation.

### **Theory of role strain (Goode) and Theory of role accumulation (Sieber)**

Role strain refers to the idea that each person only has so much energy to devote to certain types of activities, and the more roles one person holds, the less energy will be devoted to each component. Role accumulation, on the other hand, indicates that multiple roles serve both the individual and their multiple roles in a positive fashion and this enhances the mental health and the psychological wellbeing of the individual, which greatly impacts society around them (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer & King, 2002). In comparison to their male colleagues in more recent studies, researchers found that women leaders find that "role conflict and ambiguity were significant contributors to job satisfaction and the propensity to leave the profession...women may be particularly affected by role conflict and role strain" (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998, p. 87) due to their dual focus on both professional and domestic responsibilities.

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Conversely, this research also focuses on the benefits of role accumulation as seen by women in a personal and professional context. Women leaders in student affairs, as learned from the research participants in this paper, tend to use lessons learned as a mother when “mothering” the students on campus. The professional field of student affairs focuses on the ability for practitioners to be adept at “sensitivity to and skills in those areas traditionally seen as feminine in nature, that is traits that are supportive, relationship oriented, affiliative and social in nature” (Hughes, 1989, p. 21). These areas, in which women are grouped more heavily at in higher education organizations, including career placement and counseling, counseling services, academic advising, and other support services where there is a focus on counseling a student, nurturing them for academic and personal success, and close connections the student can lean on in times of celebration and defeat.

Women have an obligation to be role models in practicing what they preach to students about how to lead fulfilling and balanced lives both professionally and personally, and show how to be cognizant of the obligations to themselves and how they define success (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005). These dual roles can complement one another and provide a greater sense of fulfillment from both a personal and professional standpoint. Working mothers may be able to take advantage of diverse opportunities, create a social supportive network, and bring forth leadership skills to the workplace learned in other personal roles, which enhances the experience for all (Ruderman, et al., 2002). Findings resulting from this research show that women in these managerial roles seem to have a higher threshold for stress and are already competent individuals as shown by their career trajectory. Employers can embrace these positive aspects of a working mother’s life by providing a more holistic approach to employment where

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workplaces do not force severe compartmentalization, but rather allow for more fluidity between the career and personal choices a woman has made (Bailey Mills, 2008).

### **Statement of Purpose of the Study**

Women are not seeing the realization of professional progress in the higher education field as evidenced by the high numbers of women in graduate higher education programs to the very small number of women who actually progress up to the senior student affairs officer level and higher. Whether by choice, lack of options, or because of the organizational culture, this issue is one worth examining, specifically as it pertains to working mothers in the field. By and large, the women who do make it to that most senior level within an organization are not mothers so for women who want to have children and/or a family balance there are a lack of role models for them at the pinnacle of most organizations. It is important to clarify and define for working mothers in this field who have aspirations of professional growth best practices for how to advance in a field with potential for progress. Through the lens of scaling maternal wall bias, this study will focus on asset building and career progression for women who have children and also hold the title of Chief Student Affairs Officer.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Given the lack of research on this issue, an examination of maternal wall bias in higher education and the management of this bias for those women with children who have risen to the most senior position within the student affairs division requires further study. The following research questions will guide this inquiry of study. To what extent have these factors of institutional fit, mentoring/networking opportunities, personal experiences, and campus culture played a role in maternal wall bias for the successful ascension of female chief student affairs



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officers (CSAOs) with children? What personal and professional attributes do these women leaders have in common and to what extent does institutional fit and organizational structure support these women's career pathways as they manage their personal and professional obligations?

### **Definitions**

*ATIXA Title IX Institute:* The Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) offers various seminars and conferences on the subject of Title IX for which one can receive certification.

*Burnout:* Burnout is defined by a state of fatigue arising from unrealistic demands on individual resources, which leads to physical and mental exhaustion (Guthrie, et al., 2005).

*Chief Student Affairs Officer:* The National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA), the premier professional organization for higher education professionals, defines a chief student affairs officer as someone who leads their divisions and their institutions during periods of transformational change in higher education. In the majority of situations, this position will report to the President and sits at the same level as other institution division leaders.

*Gehring Academy:* The Association of Student Conduct Administrators (ASCA) offers training over the summer for student conduct professionals called the Gehring Academy in which topics such as student conduct processes, legal implications, and sexual and relationship violence are discussed.

*Glass ceiling:* A term used to describe the barrier that keeps minorities and women from achieving success in executive level leadership positions (Williams, 2004).

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*Institutional fit:* Institutional fit is defined as an environment “when an organization satisfies an individual’s values” (Tull & Medrano, 2008, p. 1), and is a key component of job satisfaction, retention and values.

*Leaky talent pipeline:* This general Human Resources term is defined by the loss of high potential and high performing female leaders for various reasons throughout the course of their career (Barr, Gonzalez, & Wanat, 2008).

*Maternal wall bias:* Maternal wall bias is a legal term that was coined in 1971 during Phillips v Martin Marietta Corp, and refers to stereotypes encountered by working mothers and mothers seeking employment. These displaced perceptions of how others in the organization perceive how women will want to manage their professional lives upon having children are enforced by gender expectations and employer stereotypes (Bornstein, 2013).

*Mommy tracked:* According to Parents.com (Martinez, 2013), the term mommy tracked refers to a woman being placed on an alternate career path after having children that results in less promotions, a decrease in salary and concern about family work balance.

*Mothering:* The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2015) defines mothering as the nurturing and raising of a child or children by a mother.

*Scaling:* Defined as managing, identifying, strategizing, and overcoming stereotypes associated with working mothers in the workplace (see maternal wall bias). These terms will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

*Second-shift:* The labor performed at home in addition to that which one gets paid for outside of the home and typically performed by women (Biernat & Wortman, 1991).

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*Second wave of feminism:* This wave of feminism that began in the 1960s through the late 1970s had a focus on sexuality, the workplace, family, reproductive rights, and legal inequalities (Evans, 1995).

*Third wave of feminism:* Feminists that began in the early 1990s and continuing through today with a focus on inclusivity and as a response to the failures of earlier waves of feminism (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000).

*Work-Life Balance:* Work-life balance is defined by achieving equality between time spent working and time spent on one's personal life (Guest, 2002), although many of my research participants would use work-life balance and work-life integration interchangeably.

*Working mother:* A working mother is someone who raises her children while also holding additional employment external to the home (Working Mother Research Institute, 2010).

## Chapter 3 – Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to review maternal wall bias in higher education as well as management of that bias by women with children who have ascended to an executive position within the field through the three theoretical frameworks discussed previously. In order to explore the dynamic of maternal wall bias in higher education and management of that bias, it was important to better understand the following themes through the literature: motherhood ideologies, working mothers in higher education, resiliency and growth mindset, networking/mentoring of women, maternal wall bias, and transformational leadership of women.

The concept of motherhood ideologies is important to understand in order to give a framework of how working mothers have been viewed through the years in all fields. A closer review of working mothers in higher education is integral to the research given the participants field of employment and my focus on working mothers in this field. I looked for ways in which the higher education field may be similar or different to other industries and how that played into the concept of balancing personal and professional obligations. Resiliency and growth mindset as well as networking and mentoring are topics that came from my findings of the research participants, which required a more detailed literature review to better understand these concepts and their impact on women's progression in the field. Maternal wall bias is important to detail given that is the lens through which I am looking at the ascension of women with children within the field of higher education. It is also a relatively new concept in employment discrimination law, and one that not everyone is aware so providing some context around this central term was integral to my study. As for my research, it is important to recognize whether or not perceived and/or actual maternal wall bias played a role during the research participants' professional

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journeys, and how the interview subjects identified, managed and negotiated that bias along the way. Most of the participants identified transformational leadership as a leadership style that was conducive to them scaling the maternal wall, and thus further exploration was considered.

Transformational leadership was reviewed as a leadership style that women have successfully utilized in order to change people's minds not only about what it means to be a working mother in the higher education field, but what higher education can do as a field to adapt to the needs of their employees, and specifically those with children. While this style is relational in nature, there is power in effectively changing an institution given one's position within the organization. To understand the ascent of working mothers in leadership roles it is integral to identify and clarify historical motherhood ideologies.

### **Motherhood Ideologies**

#### **Progression of working mother history.**

If one is to understand a working mother's status in society and why maternal wall bias plays a role in current organizational structures, it is important to recognize where the perceptions of working mothers initiated. In the mid-eighteenth century, the United States began revaluing motherhood as a religious reformation swept the country. Women were thought to uphold an "ideal human femininity...by becoming a productive housewife who showed the same divinely-sanctioned obedience to her husband, father, or master, as she did to her Prince and her God" (Yeo, 2005, p. 4). In the eighteenth century and in Colonial America, the highest praise a woman could earn on her gravestone were the words "ever obedient" (Yeo, 2005). A woman was not valued unless she was a mother focusing all energy and time on her children, her husband, and her homestead. During the nineteenth century, medical advancements in obstetrics and

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gynecology mandated women to allow their bodies to be used as vessels to test reproductive treatments, female diseases such as feminine hysteria were defined in medical books, and the science of race improvement known as eugenics focused on women as livestock for producing superior children (Yeo, 2005).

The tides began to turn during the twentieth century, when women began mobilizing for rights associated with safer birth practices, the safety and security of their children, and the right to vote. Additionally, women were expected to begin holding paying jobs in typical masculine areas like farming and banking to secure America's position as a leader within the industrial revolution, and because so many working men were either drafted or enlisted in the armed services during World War I and World War II. "Angelic motherhood did not fit well with this [new] reality" (Yeo, 2005, p. 8), and thus women negotiated the new ideology in different ways by focusing less on obedience and more on management of the household by necessity. When men returned from war, however, women were removed from the workplace and put back into the homes. In order to comfort any woman who felt slighted, the culture began to once again revere and idolize that of the position of mother (Harp & Bachmann, 2008). Women, out of necessity, got to explore versatility in employment during this time, but also their identities as women and because of this they were forever changed, which led to further revolution. Women had the opportunity to challenge traditional norms, practices, and expectations that were socially constructed for women and to see how they – not only men – upheld those values. That power, as many women discovered, could not be ignored and the revolution was part of their experience as well as the men and children in their lives.

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In the 1970s, several changes occurred that pushed women into the workforce in escalating numbers, including that of men's wages stagnating, new opportunities for women in the workforce (Harp & Bachmann, 2008), and the second-wave feminist movement which began by using their positions as mothers to revolutionize and mobilize on behalf of fighting for their family (Yeo, 2005). Now, in the twenty-first century, working mothers who make up a majority of female employees have still not risen to the relative percentage of executive leaders in any field. This is based in part on ideologies that have arisen in our cultural landscape that serve to "define the patterns, beliefs, ideas, opinions, and values that are used to create meaning [and] are from neutral as they serve to legitimize and delegitimize social and political behaviors" (Harp & Bachmann, 2008, p. 3). Women have been traditionally seen throughout society in the home or caring for children, and thus the idea of working mothers as professionals is a fairly new concept as seen by the fanfare, confusion and criticism over individuals like Sheryl Sandberg at Facebook or Marissa Mayer at Yahoo.

We have also seen a third-wave of feminism, which is more inclusive of race relations and other diversity than previous iterations of the feminist movement. This is important because division against race or class lines is detrimental from an external perspective (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). When groups of individuals with the same core values or mission engage in infighting it only detracts from the real issues at hand and makes the group, as a whole, seem splintered, isolated, and less powerful therefore not a group that has any authority or ability to make change. This is true in race relations as noted above as well as division and competition as it pertains to parenting styles. This division only serves to further separate mothers from the very real issues affecting all families and the ways in which mothers could come together as a whole

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to support one another rather than tear each other down. These detrimental divisions can be seen in the parenting styles of intensive parenting vs superwoman models.

### **Intensive parenting vs superwoman.**

Intensive parenting is the dominant ideology in modern-day motherhood. The belief states that raising children is something done primarily by the mother, and that all energy and focus must be consumed with child-centric activities and involvement (Liss, et al., 2013). Intensive parenting relies on three main components in that there is first “a conviction that parenting is done best by mothers because they have an inherent skill in parenting...second, mothering is deemed to require time intensive methods...to meet the child’s individual needs...finally, children’s inherent goodness led to childrearing being perceived as having a special, revered status” (Liss, et al., 2013, p. 622). The stress intensive parenting ideology places on mothers in general is difficult to manage, but if a woman either chooses to work out of desire or for economic necessity, societal frameworks do not allow for much reconciliation between those two paths.

Working mothers who embrace intensive parenting may do so with a lot of guilt about how their working outside the home may cause disrepair to their children, and tend to engage in all-consuming involvement and behavior when they are at home to make up for the time away (Liss, et al., 2013). The success of a working mother in her career also “implies a deficit in the attributes believed to be essential for being a good mother. This can produce a lose-lose dilemma for working mothers” (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012, p. 705). Women who work are deemed less maternal often by themselves, which is reinforced by external factors such as work, family, friends, and media messages, and therefore not as good of a mother as those women who stay-at-



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home. When a woman works because of her desire to do so rather than economic circumstances, the perception of that woman's parenting is even more negative (Mottarella ,et al., 2009). Yet, a woman who does work and is satisfied with her decision, may positively impact her children as the "maternal role satisfaction is an important variable in that the mother's satisfaction influences parent-child interaction including maternal interactive behavior, child behavior, mood and overall psychological adjustment and parenting" (Mottarella, et al., 2009, p. 225). While it is important to look back at historical ideologies and divisions amongst women and mothers, it is also important to focus on the evolution of motherhood into the current state of working mothers in society, and therefore within the higher education field.

### **Working Mothers in Higher Education**

While many mothers find themselves working in higher education, it is rare to see a mother also holding a dual role as a senior leader within the organization (Supple, 2007). According to the American College on Education (ACE) report in 2007, 68% of female presidents had children compared to 91% of male presidents. Research has shown that these men often have support at home in the form of spouses/partners, finances for domestic assistance, no children or other responsibilities that call for divided attention from work, which allows men to excel in executive leadership positions. However, given the aging population of senior leaders in higher education, there should be space for turnover to account for gender diversity in the future. In the same ACE report, it was noted that 45% of all senior administrators are women (Marshall, 2009). "The numbers suggest that colleges and universities have an existing pool of qualified, experienced women to tap into to enhance gender diversity at the presidential level...but those

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women who do assume the presidency...a disproportionate number remain single or childless compared to their male counterparts” (Marshall, 2009, p. 190).

In the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) census from 2014 it was noted that women working at public, 4-year institutions made up 34% of the vice president of student affairs positions as compared to 61% of men who reported their positions (NASPA, 2014). Those that do find themselves in a senior leadership role must find a way in which to balance their respective roles along with those of the institution. A chief student affairs officer typically has responsibilities associated with supervision of the division of student affairs, including student conduct, university counseling, campus activities, orientation, veteran student affairs, and student affairs assessment (NASPA, 2014). Women trailblazers in roles such as Vice President of Student Affairs, Provost or President have indicated initially they would hear comments regarding their inability to do the work and the assumption that the school, state, students, faculty or other stakeholder were not ready for this type of change, but once they were in a position of power, the men in the organization saw them as an inspiration for their own personal growth with regards to how they viewed their own partners and other female colleagues and employees (Lively, 2000; Williams & Cuddy, 2012).

Women CSAOs have indicated that when they are at the table, their ability to influence and impact not only others perceptions of what it means to be leader on campus, but also the policies that can benefit everyone has the potential to be great. As Reiss (1999) indicated, “what’s good for women is generally good for most people. New scholarship on women and gender has invigorated academic discipline. More student-centered teaching has improved the quality of learning for everyone. Day care centers, family leave policies and grievance

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procedures for sexual harassment have created a more humane working environment for both men and women” (p. 3). It is these women at the table utilizing appropriate leadership styles for their institutional culture who have the ability to transform the organization, and it starts with the reality in the vision of seeing women at the table. The women currently holding these leadership positions felt they showed colleagues, superiors and employees that maternal wall bias can be disproven, but they do not spend time mentoring women in the field due to the demands of the positions, and many stated their mentors were men who suggested and recommended career growth (Lively, 2000). Men can be valuable allies for working mothers especially if they grew up with a working mother or saw the value in the work that their mothers did both in and outside of the home.

Women working in middle management positions, specifically, have an interesting balance to keep as they not only need to manage up to their supervisors, but also manage down to their employees. These women can hold a variety of positions as role in institution typically depends on institution size rather than position title (Fey & Carpenter, 1996). Studies have shown that these women indicate personnel management, leadership and communication are the most important skills for their areas, and that skills involving interacting with and providing leadership and direction are key in order to move up the triangle of hierarchy in higher education (Fey & Carpenter, 1996). Additionally, fiscal management and other “hard” skills are necessary in moving towards more executive roles, but women in these mid-management roles find it difficult to get the necessary professional development required as their positions, which tend to tilt towards advising and counseling with a focus on softer skills, do not lend themselves to having the space or time required to obtain the appropriate breadth of responsibilities (Fey &

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Carpenter, 1996). Additionally, mothers working specifically in higher education in middle management roles who aspire to move upwards have identified that “childbearing had a negative effect on their careers...including problems with professional advancement, delayed entry into careers, limited career options, and limited mobility” (Supple, 2007, p. 51).

When a mother does choose to work, they may be faced with policies and practices in the workplace that are not conducive to striking a balance between home and work, and are not conducive in allowing women to support other women. The campus culture as it stands at most institutions is 24/7 (Mitchell, 2011), and many individuals must be on call at all times. This type of atmosphere can produce high levels of stress and low levels of energy, which limits the availability women have to network with and support one another. Additionally, in college environments where fiscal constraints are increasingly prevalent causing individuals to do the work of more than one person, there can be increasing competition amongst women to keep their positions and livelihoods. Therefore, success in these positions may depend on having a partner who can assist with personal responsibilities, and many studies have found that men in academia who have ascended to an executive level of leadership typically have partners who do not work outside the home. This is more unusual for women who have reached senior level leadership positions (Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2013). Rather than shine a light on hostile work environments for mothers, women who leave their positions, not by choice but because of the environment, serve as more evidence as to why managers should not hire working mothers in the first place (Williams & Cuddy, 2012). As one manager stated, “first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes flextime and a baby carriage” (Williams & Cuddy, 2012, p. 96). Managing

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these multiple roles can be difficult especially when employees find themselves in an institution with a culture that does not match with what they personally need from their position.

### **Role accumulation and conflict.**

While it can be difficult to manage multiple roles, working mothers also identified that their role as mother gave them so much personal satisfaction that it was easy to outweigh the negative costs in the workplace (Ruderman, et al., 2002). Much of the literature regarding working mothers in higher education indicates that women have mixed feelings about their ability to manage multiple roles successfully. While it may be difficult to juggle these responsibilities especially in the 24/7 campus culture these women currently experience with limited or restricted leave policies, lack of child care or lactation centers, and minimal to no mentoring geared towards working mothers, many have developed systems for balance and integration. These systems include a trifecta of responsibilities in that women value motherhood, work, and self, similarly to Gilligan's Theory of Women's Moral Development. Women who have found this balance between themselves and those around them have risen to the highest level state of consciousness in Gilligan's theory, which is morality of nonviolence, and therefore can appreciate the multiple roles for which they serve as seen by Sieber's theory of role accumulation. Because they have been able to identify ways in which to balance and integrate their personal and professional responsibilities, the multiple roles they have acquired make them better mothers, partners, and professionals because of rather than despite of these roles.

Setting expectations with family, colleagues, and supervisors as well as identifying integral support systems, women found they were able to be more successful at managing all of their responsibilities (Ruderman, et al., 2002). Families, like the university, need to understand

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that women have desires within and outside of the home and support is needed in order for women to achieve balance and success. Working mothers who succeed in higher education find they do so by surrounding themselves with supporters either through partners, childcare assistance, family help, managing the day-to-day logistics of time management, and utilizing technology to the best of their ability in helping ease the stress of caring for their children and caring for their work (Supple, 2007).

Working mothers in higher education positions have also tried to find their own ways of meshing the responsibilities of their personal and professional lives; some of have set up cribs in their office, others have offered up creative ways in which to make flextime work for the institution and for their family. Women in these roles have indicated they need a way to not artificially compartmentalize their personal and professional roles, but rather have more fluidity between, which may include feedback on human resources policies, lactation stations, and child care centers. In other words, “given the diversity of ways in which these women achieved a comfortable fit between their roles, the academic institution can best support working mothers by giving her freedom to choose how she will combine them” (Hall & Anderson, 2004, p. 51). It is important for working mothers in higher education to challenge those dichotomies that state one can either be a good mother or a good employee, but not both, and instead value the richness of the diverse roles that one can entertain to make them more productive individuals (Bailey Mills, 2008). If this balance does not occur, then burnout may lead to the woman leaving the profession altogether resulting in higher turnover for the organization or underperforming in her current professional position due to stress and a lack of support/balance.

### **Burnout and balance.**

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Extant literature on work-life balance in higher education exists, and much has been written about this change in the profession from a workaholic attitude towards a work-to-live attitude, however burnout remains high, specifically with women, introverts and younger student affairs professionals (Guthrie, et al., 2005) due to the high-intensity, time-consuming and emotionally-draining entry-level positions within higher education, such as student involvement, Greek affairs, or residential education. Student affairs values individuals who embrace a “yes I can” work ethic, and “this involves not delegating, becoming a mentor for all students and colleagues in need, not using the word ‘no’ as often as they should, or feeling that sense of accomplishment is synonymous with exhaustion and fatigue” (Guthrie, et al., 2005, p. 111). The stress higher education professionals feel and what resolution will come from continued pressures are predicted by personal characteristics, organizational structures, number of years in profession, and commitment to the institution (Howard-Hamilton, et al., 1998). In short, controlled chaos is to be expected, but questions arise when you throw socially constructed expectations for women/working mothers into an already congested mix.

Balance, contextually defined from a number of factors including, but not limited to, individual, institutional culture/fit, ways of knowing/moral development, networking, and support systems, can be achieved over time under certain conditions through self-knowledge, intentionality of choices, commitment to self-care, and reflection (Guthrie, et al., 2005). While these are personal responsibilities for the individual, part of the balance needs to come from institutional commitment to value women leaders in terms of salary and number of employees assisting in the daily operations. Men in executive leader positions reported being twice as likely to have salaries exceeding \$45,000 than women and supervising almost twice as many

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employees, which could be a reason why women feel they need to leave the profession as it “seems men have more support staff, full-time and part-time, available to assist with various tasks” (Howard-Hamilton, et al., 1998, p. 90). In a quantitative study done of student affairs professionals, nearly 60% of the women surveyed stated they had been paid less than their male counterparts and another 20% indicated they had been passed over for a promotion because of their sex (Blackhurst, 2000). In the same study, 28% of female respondents indicated that the reason why they would leave the profession was because of burnout, and this was the highest value associated with any reason (Blackhurst, 2000). Becoming a mother may make the abstract search for balance more difficult, however organizations need to begin reviewing their practices so as not to lose a talented, diverse and experienced pool of talent within the organization (McNair, Miguel, Sobers-Young, Bechtel, & Jacobson, 2013). Part of overcoming some of these obstacles so that it does not lead to burnout and therefore turnover is recommending proactive measures through a growth mindset to offset, head-off, or reduce burn out, which will be explored in the proceeding section.

### **Resiliency and Growth Mindset**

There are certain attributes that were accounted for in my research and one of those that required further explanation and review was the idea of resiliency and a growth mindset. The women I interviewed all discussed overcoming obstacles and barriers, whether that was identifying and learning how to scale and/or manage the maternal wall bias or a difficult family transition or a childhood incident. This innate desire to move through an obstruction is considered resiliency inquiry. Resiliency inquiry is designed to “explore personal and interpersonal gifts and strengths that can be accessed to grow through adversity” (Richardson,



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2002, p. 307). This inquiry has three stages. The first is resilient qualities, which are the personality characteristics and support systems that assist someone in overcoming the obstacle. The second is the resiliency process in which the manner by which individuals process change that can be either disruptive or positive depending on the mindset of the individual. The third stage is considered innate resilience. When an individual is able to sufficiently cope with setbacks and move through the disappointment, it becomes part of their personality traits (Richardson, 2002). This leads to self-actualization, which is also similar to Gilligan's end stage of her theory in woman's moral development.

This personality trait is typically accompanied by a growth mindset, which is the antithesis to a fixed mindset. A fixed mindset is one that says life is hard, things will not get better, and there is no improvement whereas a growth mindset is one that believes in development of themselves, their talents, and their abilities. A growth mindset is a resilient mindset in that these individuals do not believe everyone has a fixed amount of potential, but rather hard work, dedication and practice can change the outcome of a situation. Talent and career progression is something that one builds upon (Dweck, 2007). These areas of personality development are seen in individuals who excel in their professional fields, which accounts for the interview subjects in this research commenting on both their resiliency and growth mindsets as they have attained the most senior level position within student affairs. The confidence in a female leader who believes in herself and who uses that belief to advance in her field is a key part of being resilient. This confidence can also be correlated with genuineness. Recent studies have shown that female leaders "are not constrained by the feminine gender role...and that opportunity does exist for women to be both effective and liked, or favorably

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evaluated... Women {do not need} to find themselves in a double bind” (Kawakami, White, & Langer, 2000, p. 61). While personality traits have something to do with success, there is also a lot of credence given to the idea of mentoring and networking in order to attain success in higher education. It is important to consider this idea of nature vs. nurture in terms of what one is born with or what one is being taught through mentoring and networking with others in terms of how to be resilient and/or possessing and practicing a growth mindset.

### **Networking and Mentoring**

The interview subjects in this research also identified networking and mentoring as being factors in their ability to be successful in this field. Networking is the act of “exchanging information, services, support, and access through an informal collection of acquaintances...but does not constitute as adequate substitution for a mentoring relationship” (Kelly, 1984, p. 49). Networking is important, however, as that is where mentoring relationships can be formed. In 56% of primary mentor relationships, networking was the primal cause of the initiation process (Kelly, 1984). Additionally, the informal networks on campus and professional associations play a central role in career advancement (Earwood-Smith, Jordan-Cox, Hudson, Smith, 1990). Once a professional network is established, a mentor or mentee relationship can be established. For a mentee, this typically occurs early in their career in which a more senior-level administrator or someone who may be in the line of work the mentee aspires to do one day is sought out for a formal relationship (Twale & Jelinek, 1996). Mentoring relationships can be varied and include a traditional mentoring model that is more hierarchical in nature as well as a co-mentoring relationship, which utilizes non-hierarchical relationships and may be beneficial to underrepresented groups, including working mothers (Tenney, 2014).

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A mentor is someone who can offer both emotional and functional support to the mentee in the form of career advice or professional opportunities. Women are more likely to receive emotional support, while men receive more functional support from their mentors (Kelly, 1984), which could be considered in and of itself some sort of bias depending on what the woman hopes to get out of the mentoring relationship and the assumptions of their mentor. The number of women entering the field is increasing and therefore competition for mentors from the upper echelons of the administration is increasing, therefore women are advised to seek out a mentor early if they believe this individual will be able to help them both personally and professionally (Twale & Jelinek, 1996). In a qualitative study done in 1996, it was noted that women do mentor other women, and are most likely to do so if they had a mentoring relationship themselves (Twale & Jelinek, 1996). A mentor who offers functional support helps to make the transition up the professional ladder easier and is someone the mentee can go to if or when they experience any sort of obstacles on their career pathway, including that of maternal wall bias.

### **Maternal Wall Bias**

#### **Definition.**

Part of balancing these multiple personal and professional roles may be that of identifying, establishing, confronting, and scaling maternal wall bias within the confines of higher education, which is a pervasive bias and stereotype against working mothers that can come from men, women, or embedded systemically in the institutional policies and practices. Maternal wall bias is defined by a documented gender stereotype, which can be triggered when an employee announces her pregnancy/adoption, when the employee returns from maternity

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leave, or if the employee requests a modified or flexible schedule as noted by qualitative studies done by interviewing over 50 professional-class, married mothers (Bornstein, 2013).

Experiments conducted at Cornell University found that mothers, on a whole are offered \$11,000 less in salary and were 44% less likely to be hired when compared to equal non-mother candidates, and mothers were deemed “less competent and less committed to their jobs, judged by harsher standards, and seen as less suitable for management positions than women without children” (Andronini & Katz, 2007, n.p.). A review of employment discrimination cases shows that position evaluations drop dramatically once a woman announces her pregnancy and/or returns from maternity leave, which may be accounted for by an assumption by others in the organization of a woman’s heightened emotionality and a decrease in her rationality (Williams, 2004). While my research focused on mothers with children at any age, in a qualitative study done of 10 women in student affairs who were new mothers, it showed there was a level of “greater scrutiny by colleagues who questioned whether the women would return to the same level of productivity after becoming mothers” (Nobbe & Manning, 1997, p. 105).

Employers fearing that women, upon becoming pregnant or having a baby, will not want to work any further or ask for what they deem to be extreme flexibility demands, may not want to hire any women of childbearing age for any open positions (Williams, 2006). Because the organization may be built upon a hetero-normative, masculine structure, women – and especially those with children – may not fit what the institution determines as an ideal worker (Williams, 2003). Because many higher education professionals are currently living in a crisis culture in many of their institutions, which requires rotating on call duty, management of campus crises after workday hours or on the weekends, and 24/7 accessibility, it has left many front line

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professionals tired and burned-out (Mitchell, 2011). In turn, working mothers in this field are determining whether or not they can or want to balance the personal and professional responsibilities that are required of both their family and their position, while organizations are concerned that they will be unable to do so given the constructs of the maternal wall bias.

While this is not to say that some higher education institutions have made inroads in allowing for certain benefits to the employees, including onsite childcare centers, policies on paternity leave or extended maternity leave pay, in a recent survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education, a majority of respondents were against any sort of privileges for working mothers, including flexible schedules, position sharing, or availability for children's activities (Ravizza & Peterson-Iyer, 2005). In this type of environment, it's no wonder that one out of four women, during their career building years of 25-44, leave the workforce and those that remain, by and large, work less than full-time (Porter, 2006). It is important to recognize that maternal wall bias either by others or by systemic policies can come in various forms, either outright comments or questions about a woman's ability to do their work or more benevolent offerings to assist a woman who has had a child as it pertains to, for example, travel or promotion opportunities. Both are cases of maternal wall bias, and need to be further explored.

### **Maternal wall stereotypes.**

In organizations, maternal wall bias has typically two different types of stereotypes that can be experienced. The first is that of benevolent stereotyping. This is defined by assumptions that are made on what a woman who is either pregnant and/or returning from maternity leave will want out of her career now that she is a mother. A supervisor who advises their employee to work shorter hours, dismisses the idea of travel for the woman, or who does not offer a

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promotion for which the woman is eligible for under the auspices of they were sure the woman would not want to do any of those things because of her status as a mother are examples of maternal wall bias (Williams, 2005). An employer may mean well, but these types of stereotypes regardless of intent, have an impact on a woman's ability to continue progressing into more senior-level leadership positions as well as reinforces the stereotype that a working mother is not able to hold these types of positions and should be seen as different specifically if the above effects of having a baby are employer initiated rather than employee initiated. Some working mothers may not want to travel or go for a promotion at the time because of their choice, but women need to feel like there is a choice to be had within the confines of their employment. Working mothers faced with maternal wall bias should understand they have rights and if internal mediation and negotiation does not work, they have been suing organizations for employment discrimination. It should also be noted that "juries are increasingly inclined to award them large settlements if gender bias appears to have played a role in derailing their careers" (Williams & Cuddy, 2012, p. 95). While this may be good news for the woman bringing the case, it can also have a silencing effect as settlements may be written as confidential and word could spread further alienating working mothers who stand up for themselves.

The other type of stereotype that can occur is that of hostile prescriptive stereotyping. This type of stereotype is more direct in that the employer and/or organization does not believe the woman can continue in her current position because she is a mother regardless of the age of children. These organizations believe that a woman cannot balance work and family responsibilities, are less valuable because of their family obligations, are vocal about stating mothers should be happier in the home than at work, and that a woman is hurting her family

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because she is working (Williams, 2006). These types of remarks and beliefs affect not only working mothers, but any woman regardless of child-rearing status because there is an assumption, given that 80% of women will become mothers at some point in their lives that all women will behave in this manner (Porter, 2006). While these studies were conducted in the legal workplace at law firms, other research within the higher education field including that of academic affairs (Williams, 2004; Williams, 2005) has shown similar results. Additionally, reviews of other fields including business, law and medicine show similarities with regards to maternal wall bias prevalence (Williams, 2005).

However in higher education that number may be much lower when reviewing for senior level leadership positions. The higher percentage of women without children in higher education could be the result of “bias avoidance {which is an} attempt to avoid the maternal wall by deferring or avoiding having children” (Williams, 2004, p. 16). Supple (2007) reported that while only 10% of male presidents reported not having children, almost 51% of the women who hold the same position were childless and over 50% of tenured female faculty have no children (Williams, 2005). While it may be that these women chose not to have children, there is also a responsibility on behalf of any higher education organization to ensure that all women, mothers included, have the same opportunities as those of their male peers. Women in the organization need to move away from deficit thinking and towards asset building and action, and can utilize transformational leadership styles to do so.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Due to the storied history of women in the workplace and the social assumptions made by others in the organization, the percentage of women leaders in senior-level positions in all

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organizations, but in terms of this research within the field of higher education, is still relatively small compared to the numbers of women in graduate programs and employed in entry level and mid-level positions (Collay & Cooper, 2008). “Women are still considered an anomaly compared to men when in high positions of leadership” (Chin, 2011, p. 2), and this is also true in the higher education field, but there are some who are changing this trend. Those women in executive roles can not only model leadership for younger women in the organization, but they can also help to make policy decisions in the best interests of those within the organization while amending bias and stereotypes of what it means to be a woman and a leader. Leadership theories from a gendered perspective have been reviewed, but the emergence of transformational leadership as one of the most effective and studied leadership theories shows there is a natural crossover with women’s leadership and developmental theories given that many aspects of the transformational leader are historically feminine in nature (Dahlvig, 2013). This concept of leadership theory will be utilized to explore maternal wall bias against working mothers.

Transformational leadership calls for a change in approaching leadership from a place that values “change, empowerment, and relationships. In this sense then women’s ways of leading may be more suitable in today’s organizations...as leaders, women are more transformational than their male counterparts” (Zulu, 2011, p. 840) in terms of relational communication, respect for diversity of experiences, and support to employees. Generally, research has shown that women lead from a place of consensus, collaboration, and encouragement all of which can be considered transformational leadership (White & Riordan, 2012). Women who attain a leadership position within an organization and do so from a place of transformational leadership have the ability to make real change for all women within the



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campus community. Transformational leaders can assist working mothers in higher education attain visibility, balance, and role accumulation for both their personal and professional positions.

### **Characteristics of transformational leadership style.**

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers, and in doing so encourage individuals to collectively pursue goals for the good of the organization (Jones & Rudd, 2008). Transformational leadership, which is usually juxtaposed with transactional leadership, relies on four different elements: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Dahlvig, 2013). These elements involve “a mutual exchange of resources in which both or all parties involved are transformed by their interactions” (Fennell, 2008, p. 606). The idea of transformational leadership is a moral one in which all behaviors and expectations are raised by everyone in the hopes of goal consensus, equitable and supportive treatment of all participants, and vision and growth for the organization (Fennell, 2008). Transformational leaders have a relational way of doing business and typically score higher on emotional intelligence scales.

These leaders understand the importance of relationships with their followers, and the relationship is typically characterized by charisma and inspiration. The building of community through relationships and being collaborative in these efforts are traits that are considered strengths in the higher education field (Styles Hughes, 1989). These leaders do well within the organization by setting an example for others and being effective in positively promoting change (Fennell, 2008). For example, a female vice president of student affairs with children who is active in a parents group on campus is showing others that it is okay to bring the personal in to

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transactional leadership style that focused on hierarchy and demands, which may be in response to trying to assimilate to the aforementioned male normative leadership behaviors. While the subjects in my study are not current presidents, they all indicated their aspirations to become one at some point in their career trajectory. Due to the Western-cultural view of history and patriarchy that can be found within some higher education institutions, a woman may feel like they are an outsider looking in and thus believe the only way they can succeed is to adopt overly masculine tendencies even if they do not necessarily fit with how she would lead in a different organization (Dahlvig, 2013). It may be difficult for women to adopt an authentic style of leadership in that they become constrained over what is and is not appropriate within the higher education field due to the social construction of gender and roles assigned to women and men, which transcends the workplace. For example, “if men deploy aspects of femininity to make them more caring managers, they are rewarded, if women employ femininity in the same way, they are just seen to be doing what they are expected to do” (White & Riordan, 2012, p. 297). That being said, there are a variety of benefits to utilizing a transformational style of leadership for women leaders.

### **Strengths of successful female transformational leaders.**

While it may be difficult to present a transformational leadership style, women who do and do so with success, have power within an organization in which they can influence others and effectively make change for other women. The transformational leadership style infused with the work of Gilligan, Holland, Goode, and Seiber is a response to identifying and scaling maternal wall bias in higher education administration. Female leaders understand that transformational learning can occur from sharing their stories and authenticating their own

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nature and is desired in the workplace, there are obstacles – from colleagues, the institution and the women themselves - when women utilize a transformational leadership style.

### **Barriers for women as transformational leaders.**

While it would seem that women as transformational leaders are the most effective within an organization, there are several barriers for women, both internal and external, in successfully transitioning into a transformational leader. The power structures created within a higher education organization have traditionally been initiated from a White male perspective, and “in higher education...men dominate presidencies in all categories or types of institutions, thus men’s methods of leading, organizing, and decision-making tend to be normative” (Dahlvig, 2013, p. 94). Additionally, men hold more Board of Trustee positions as well as Chief Academic Officers, which is the position where most presidents are recruited (NASPA, 2014). Women as leaders can be perceived as incompatible with the institutional culture or with her employees given gender stereotypes, such as women not being ready for the position or lack of trust in her judgment, regarding women in positions of power. These stereotypes can extend to how followers feel about a woman at the helm in that women leaders tend to be evaluated on different parameters than their male counterparts and these were done less favorably even when exhibiting the same type of leadership behavior as men (Chin, 2011). Even when a woman was utilizing transformational leadership behavior, the more she utilized individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation behavior the less favorably she was viewed by the male subordinates in her organization due to role congruence theory (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

Some of the barriers women face in leadership positions are initiated internally. Dahlvig (2013) found that women in presidential roles within higher education actually relied on a more

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the workplace and offers support and resources on career pathways for those in entry or mid-level positions. While transformational leadership as a whole is considered to encapsulate more feminine characteristics, there are also differences in who actually utilizes transformational leadership as a practice.

### **Transformational leadership and gender.**

Transformational leadership is more closely connected to feminine characteristics, and because women tend to score higher on emotional intelligence assessments, women are found to subscribe to transformational leadership styles more often than men (Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero & Martos, 2012). Behaviors that are indicative of transformational leadership, including nonverbal emotional cues and gaining the trust and confidence of their followers, are “more advantageous for women and may allow them to be outstanding leaders...as women are more socialized [from birth] in feelings and are more expressive than men” (Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero & Martos, 2012, p. 100). These roles are difficult to challenge later given the systemic and endemic social constructs of the sexes. It would seem that utilizing transformational leadership, or these “soft” skills, would assist women in producing higher degrees of employee satisfaction and employee performance. Women who adopted this leadership style typically attributed their success to luck rather than their own hard work or perseverance, which is akin to the Good to Great model of leadership development within an organization (Collins, 2001). For example, women who claim they were in the right place at the right time in order to obtain a promotion focus less on their ability and more on the fluke of current position placement. While transformational leadership is thought to be more feminine in

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voices in the organization, and this process in and of itself is combating sexism and gender role stereotyping (Collay & Cooper, 2008). Women who can talk about their intersecting identities makes it easier for other women along with others who have dual or multiple roles and/or consider themselves as “other,” to begin having conversations related to “challenges of work-family balance, caretaking responsibilities, gender role expectations, connectedness and affiliation with multiple communities while exercising their leadership” (Chin, 2011, p. 4). In higher education this means giving space to discuss reasons why women are leaving the field, why women may not be pursuing senior level leadership roles, why there is a leaky pipeline from graduate programs to executive leadership positions, ways in which transformational female leaders can change the organizational culture for the betterment of all women, and how to assist women balance multiple roles and identities.

The literature review including the history of motherhood ideologies, working mothers in higher education, resiliency and growth mindset, networking and mentoring, maternal wall bias, and transformational leadership styles help to inform the concept of working mothers in higher education through a lens of asset building by overcoming obstacles, such as maternal wall bias. These themes found within the literature are in no way exhaustive of all the material currently published on these topics and those on the sub themes, such as burnout and balance, maternal wall bias stereotypes, and role strain and accumulation, it does offer a picture of the current status of working mothers in higher education who are managing not only their own personal and professional choices, but also with that of an institutional culture that may have systemic workplace discrimination policies. There is a lot of focus on the idea of a leaky pipeline in higher education in that an assessment of why women are not moving into senior roles within an

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organization, but there is limited information on what the factors of success have been for women who have scaled to those pinnacle positions. Given this gap in the literature, there was a place for further review to be done on working mothers with children who are current vice presidents of student affairs at public institutions using a qualitative research model.

## Chapter 4 – Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this study is to review factors of success for women with children who are current vice presidents of student affairs at public institutions. The inquiry will examine the impact maternal wall bias in higher education has had on their career progression as well as their identification and scaling of that bias through other means including networking, mentoring, resiliency, ambition, and childhood socialization. Qualitative research is used to review societal issues regarding behavior and values that cannot be conveyed through quantitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Tobin & Begley (2003), “the evolution of qualitative research has been discussed as a methodological journey...offer{ing} a picture of epistemological, philosophical and methodological developments of qualitative research methods...validity and reliability as concepts” (p. 389). This type of research allows for interviews, observations of people and activities, analysis of documents and artifacts, all of which can be used to triangulate and provide validity of the data collected (Sandelowski, 2002). This type of inquiry allows for the researcher to be able to summarize the thoughts, feelings and statements from the interview subjects in a cohesive manner to review the data, concepts and categories. These categories can then be the basis for a new theory for which there is a lack of information in current research.

### **Qualitative Approach to Inquiry**

For the purpose of this research, I utilized qualitative data sets based in grounded theory through a naturalistic paradigm. Grounded theory is a type of research methodology that begins with a question, and then uses the themes found within the interviews and other qualitative reviews to code those themes in order to generate a systematic theory. In this research the grounded theory outcome would be akin to identifying best practices and processes in scaling

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maternal wall bias for women with children who aspire to be chief student affairs officer. This will allow the author to begin with questions for the participants, and then review the data collected to code for similarities and differences based on responses in a natural setting (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

Additionally, the naturalistic paradigm allows the author to convey that subjective and multiple realities exist for the participants because the personal and professional experiences of individuals is socially constructed based on the context of interactions, specifically in this research the interaction will be with the specific institution (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Tobin & Begley (2004) indicated the focus on reliability, validity, and generalizability that the naturalistic paradigm allows for helps ensure the process is a credible one, and that qualitative measures are just as rigorous as that of quantitative studies. In the end the data collected through these interviews should help lead to concepts and categories that can be reviewed from a grounded theory perspective in identifying new ways to think about the information collected that is not currently in the research.

Through colleagues in student affairs and professional associations, I utilized purposive sampling to identify a pool of female vice president of student affairs working at public institutions who have children. As the focus is on those working at public institutions, the sample was limited, but from the initial three identified participants, the researcher was able to identify two additional women who fit the criteria through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a widely used method in qualitative research in which a sample is yielded through referrals from those with interest in the research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Specifically, the method is used



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when the subject matter is private, “and thus requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study” (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 103), which was the case in this research study.

### **Description of the Participants**

From this sample group, five women were identified who fit the criteria. As in most qualitative research, the small size is indicative and consistent with quality, in-depth discussion and analysis therefore increasing the confidence and validity in this type of research (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). The five women selected are all current vice presidents of student affairs working for public institutions. The institutions are not grouped together by geographic location, and are spread out across the country. They include two large universities (student populations of 40,000 and 38,000), two mid-size universities (student populations of 15,000 and 7,500) and one small university (student population of 2,500), and their career spans ranged from 14 – 39 years . Four of the five were Caucasian and one was African-American. All five were married and in heterosexual relationships. All five of the women’s partners were employed full time, and in addition those that had minors still living at home had outside help in the form of childcare. The subjects also spoke of additional help they utilized in order to make their lives more manageable. Some of these support systems included a housekeeper, dry cleaner, grocery delivery system, and lawn care. As one of the criteria for participating was having children, two of the five participants had older children defined as being in their twenties. One participant had middle-school age children. One participant had elementary-school age children, and the last participant had a newborn. Four of the five participants had two children, and one participant had one child.

Anne\* (note these names are pseudonyms) is a sixty-something professional and has been working in higher education for the past 39 years. She was promoted to her current position 12

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years ago when her two children were in their twenties. She was determined to be place-bound by geography given her and her husband's connection to the Southeastern state they live, and in doing so she stated that she stayed in positions longer than she intended. While she had no initial aspirations to be a CSAO, an opportunity presented itself at her home institution, and she found herself in a position where she had the experience and credentials for the position. She was legitimately surprised when she actually received the news that she had been hired.

Beth has been working in higher education for 34 years, and while she advanced in the field had two children who are now in their twenties. While she initially ventured south for her first professional experience following graduate school, she made her way up to the Northeast where she has stayed for the past 33 years. She positioned herself for the CSAO position by effectively changing her current roles and expanding scope to the point where she was creating her own positions when there was a need.

Carrie has two children, both in middle school, and had them in her 40s, which is what she termed an "older mother." She has been working in the field for 28 years, and had leadership aspirations to be a CSAO since her first position in higher education. When she realized she also wanted children, her husband and she decided to make some geographic changes so that she could become a CSAO at a large, public institution in the northern Midwest.

Debra began her first Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) role in 2006, and is currently in her second VPSA position at another institution. Her children are both in elementary school as she also decided to have children later in life in order to establish her career progression. She and her husband were very diligent in looking for career opportunities and made these decisions around the age in which their children were going into elementary school

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so the stress of change on them would be lessened. While they both grew up in the Midwest, and worked for the majority of their lives on the East Coast, they knew the West Coast was where they eventually wanted to be, and that is where her current role is located.

Emily is in her mid-thirties and ascended to a Vice President role two years ago. While she was in the role, she became pregnant and currently has a 7-month old. Emily states that her ability to move up in this field was due to her willingness to move around the country, and she has worked in the South, Southeast, and along the East Coast, which is where she is currently located at a mid-size public institution.

The interview subjects while diverse in geographic location and at different places in their personal lives were in the same positions across a variety of different institutions. The age of children seemed to have the biggest impact on the propensity to move upwards in the higher education field, and for those with younger children there was a recognition of sacrifices that had to be made in order to accommodate job growth through moving, partner's employment change, and children's school change. For those with older children, it was apparent that their career progression was in part determined by their family's needs, which caused some of the women to stay in positions longer than they anticipated. All of the women were proactive in their job searches, were self-motivated to progress professionally in this field, and had supportive partners who accommodated their desire to take their current vice president positions. As some of the information shared regarding children and partners was sensitive, the interview subjects all received confirmation of successful IRB completion for this project and the ability to provide ethical considerations for the data collected. Research records were stored securely on a

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password protected personal computer and hard copies of transcripts and other documents were kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal office of the researcher.

As stated previously, this research focused on female CSAOs experiences at large, public institutions. Public institutions typically have missions where there is a focus on personnel development, and the large numbers of staff and faculty provide built in networks for working mothers. On the other hand, large, public institutions also have “deeply, entrenched traditions that are hard to change” (Hirt, 2009, p. 55), which could cause patriarchal systems to subsist where women remain at entry level or mid-level positions. Some of the participants had only worked at public institutions and others had worked at private and public institutions during their professional career. The experiences of these women from diverse backgrounds as it pertained to institutional type was interesting and something that was explored during the interview with regards to whether or not they felt working at a public institution helped or hindered their ability to move up the executive ladder. Many of the women felt it helped, and that their education and experiences were considered in a different way than those who had worked at private institutions where other factors – alumni status, donation, gender – may have been a factor in choosing a leader.

### **Consent and Ethical Considerations**

The research was IRB approved in September 2015, and the researcher considered consent and ethical considerations as well as confidentiality. Participants and their current place of employment were assigned pseudonyms. There were no direct benefits to the participants, only that information gathered through the research may be able to assist higher education institutions in addressing issues and concerns for women with children who want to attain higher

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leadership roles within the organization. There were zero to minimal risks involved in participating in this research, and participants were issued informed consent letters prior to the interviews. Participants knew that at any time, they would be able to withdraw from the study. While some of the information discussed was private and could be considered sensitive as the research focused on children, marriage, career advancement, and childhood socialization, the participants understood the themes of the interview and all agreed to participate and be candid in their responses.

### **Data Collection Method and Procedures**

The researcher conducted Skype/telephone interviews using a semi-structured, open-ended format. Semi-structured interviews allow for there to be a formal interview, but with the questions noted as more of a guide rather than a specific order (Rapley, 2001). The open-ended format provided flexibility if there was an area I wanted to investigate further with the participant. Standard questions were developed prior to the initial interview to ensure consistency during all interviews and spanned five different topical areas including background of participant, networking and mentoring, resiliency, duality of roles, and institutional fit. The open-ended format allowed the freedom to explore ideas or themes raised (Sandelowski, 2002). As these interview participants were in different geographical locations across the country, the use of a semi-structured format of questioning helped the participants feel more comfortable and allowed for a more free flow of ideas while still providing a framework for all participants to answer the same types of questions. All participants allowed the interviews to be recorded to assist in later transcription and for inclusion of direct quotes throughout the analysis in this paper. I, in accordance with research best practices, also “recorded participants’ reactions and

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comments, their preliminary thoughts on the themes that emerged, and a review of emerging concepts” (Nobbe & Manning, 1997, p. 103).

The interviews themselves took approximately 90 minutes, and all participants were willing to participate in any needed follow up conversations and/or email discussions to member check the information along with a document analysis of institutional information. Member checks verify the credibility of the information recorded to prove trustworthiness of data and rigor of paradigm (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Specifically, in this research I followed up with three of the five interview subjects in order to ask additional questions that were raised in other interviews and for clarification on responses in order to establish integrity of the responses to ensure I captured what they shared with me appropriately (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, peer debriefing was utilized to “support the credibility of the data in qualitative research and provide a means towards the establishment of overall trustworthiness of the findings (Spall, 1998, p. 280).

Peer debriefing allows the researcher to review findings with an impartial peer to discuss the research and findings, and how researcher bias may or may not be a factor in outcomes. Peer debriefing helps to keep the researcher in check and on track for a valid and credible project as well as allowing for personal support to the researcher to be shown (Spall, 1998). In this research, I utilized a colleague at my place of employment to assist in peer debriefing. The colleague is a senior level administrator who also has children so understands the concepts of what I am researching. Given the fact that she has a shared understanding of the focus of research, time was better spent not on introducing the field, working mothers in student affairs, and the experiences of those women, but rather on the exploration of what I found. She had the

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ability to provide insight on ways that I could enrich my work and gave me a different perspective from her vantage point as a senior level administrator. She is also familiar with qualitative research as her doctorate was completed several years ago, and she has a background in this type of methodology. She has provided personal and professional support throughout this endeavor and who I have a high level of trust, which are all important facets of a peer de-briefer (Spall, 1998). Following the data collection and peer debriefing, there was a thematic analysis based on the information provided during the course of the research.

### **Thematic Analysis**

As the data was collected, themes and concepts developed and were grouped together in a way that allowed me to make sense of the information. In doing this, “the process involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of data...to form a pattern recognition” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). After the initial interviews in which new themes were developing, I made note to ensure the same questions and potential responses were gathered from the remaining participants. The flexibility and fluidity of the questions that were borne out of the snowball sampling allowed for more insight into these women’s personal and professional lives. Transcribed interviews allowed the information to be viewed from a holistic perspective and the information was then coded, categorized, and analyzed. After the data was grouped together, an audit trail was established (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). The participants were given the opportunity to clarify information collected and were willing to answer any follow up questions from the research. Once the study concluded and data had been collected and thematically grouped, the research moved into the outcomes phase with results and findings. The results were grouped into five main themes based on the categories and concepts through the

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coding process including childhood socialization, maternal wall bias, mentoring and other support systems, transformational leadership, ambition and resiliency, and institutional fit and role accumulation.



### Chapter 5 – Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate ways in which women with children who are current vice presidents of student affairs at public institutions managed maternal wall bias in the higher education field, and what factors of success were identified to support these women with both their personal and professional responsibilities. It was interesting to see the commonalities and differences amongst the women's answers and to review whether or not those differences came with the age of the women and/or the age of the children at the time of promotion to vice president. Based on the interview subjects' answers, I was able to identify the specific aforementioned themes in their responses that helped form the basis of the findings in this research.

The women interviewed in this research study have, from an external perspective, been successful both in their professional field as well as in their personal lives with the ability to balance having a family with that of being the chief student affairs officer. Because of the previously established leaky pipeline, it was important to review what factors helped lead to the success of these women. In other words, to what extent have the factors of institutional fit, mentoring/networking opportunities, personal experiences, and campus culture played a role in the alleviation of maternal wall bias for the successful ascension of these women to the positions of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs)? Are there personal and professional attributes these women leaders have in common and to what extent did institutional fit and organizational structure support these women's career pathways as they manage both their personal and professional obligations? While the focus of this study was to review for maternal wall bias and how these women addressed this construct in their professional lives while balancing or juggling

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family obligations, it also serves to clarify and define, for other working mothers with aspirations of professional growth, how to successfully scale maternal wall bias. In analyzing these themes, I reviewed for childhood socialization, maternal wall bias, mentoring and other support systems, transformational leadership, ambition and resiliency, and institutional fit and role accumulation.

### **Analysis of Research Themes**

#### **Childhood socialization.**

The childhood socialization of the women interviewed impacted their ambitions and eventual professional aspirations. While birth order is certainly not the only determining factor of leadership success, it is interesting to note that four of the five women interviewed were the oldest in their family and that these women came from larger families (>3). Research has shown that birth order does impact an individual's ability to see themselves as leaders in that "a combination of positive parental attention and high parental expectations lead first born children to setting higher standards for themselves. As a result, first born children developed higher education aspirations and a higher degree of achievement motivation than later born children" (Kleihauer, Stephens, & Hart, 2012, p. 65). The four women in this study found that by having to care for their younger siblings and take on that "mothering" role within their family unit they were more responsible and seen as a leader by others at a younger age, which assisted them in progressing within their profession. "I made the choice to go away to college...I was responsible, first born – I had those traits. I always felt different than my family in that regard, sort of seeing more and wanting more," stated Carrie. It wasn't incongruent for them to be leading a group of individuals whether that was in the home or in the workplace. As Anne noted, "I'm the oldest of five girls so I've been a leader since I was about four...I've been in charge a long time." As it

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pertains to Gilligan's work, these women looked at themselves as leaders from a very early age, and therefore could have had a shortened pre-conventional stage and moved more quickly into the conventional stage in which there is an emphasis on thinking about others, and therefore moved into the third post-conventional stage at an earlier age thereby tying leadership potential to the ability of caring both for themselves and others (Gilligan, 1993).

It is also known about first-borns that they identify more with their parents than younger siblings who might utilize older siblings as their comparison (Kleihauer, Stephens, & Hart, 2012). The parental connection and relationships, specifically with mothers and daughters, can be "central to the effective development of an individual's feelings of success, competence and confidence...and the strong educational background and community commitment of others provided a powerful model for women" (Kleihauer, Stephens, & Hart, 2012, p. 66). The women in this study all had mothers who worked outside the home at various points in their childhood, and were integral to how they saw themselves and what aspirations they set for themselves. As Beth indicated when describing her mother, "my mother has been working since she was fourteen years old and she was not your stay at home mom type of person. While she didn't have a college degree, she had trained as a bookkeeper. I saw both my parents going off to work."

Mothers play a significant role in the development of the self-esteem of their daughters more so than fathers do (Kleihauer, Stephens, & Hart, 2012), and certainly in this research it is apparent there is a connection between what these women witnessed during their formative years with their mothers, and how that helped to shape their ability to be a leader in later years. Debra indicated:

I saw leadership...church leaders, civic leaders, and my mother's friends. I saw them balancing their dedication to all the loves of their lives – their children, their work, the

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community, whatever project they had taken on at the time. It was important to be a servant leader and be informed, interested, articulate, and polished.

These women were able to identify at an early age that holding multiple responsibilities was actually a benefit to the individual as in Sieber's theory of role accumulation, and made for a more well-rounded life. Additionally, these women were witnessing their mothers giving of themselves to their family, but also having ambitions of their own and therefore noting that attainment of Gilligan's post-conventional stage was possible. While mothers play a significant role in this development, the drive to succeed can also be shaped by other childhood experiences as it was in Emily's situation when her father passed away when she was five. Emily witnessed her mother leave her career to stay at home when she was little, but when her father passed, her mother went back to work.

My mother had to go back to school and establish a career later on because she had given up her career for him. In the back of my mind, I knew to prioritize my own career, and make sure I had the degree or certification that I would need to make sure I could support myself.

In Emily's situation, she realized that she did not want her identity to be solely wrapped around other people, that thinking of yourself was not selfish, but rather very smart, and therefore allowed her to transition from goodness to truth where there was more emphasis on the pre and post-conventional stage in Gilligan's theory rather than remaining in the conventional stage as many women do (Gilligan, 1993).

### **Maternal wall bias.**

The women in this research study seemed to understand the prevalence of maternal wall bias in higher education, if not by name, then by the subtle ways in which discrimination can be presented in the workplace either through benevolent stereotyping or prescriptive, hostile

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stereotyping (Williams, 2005). This discrimination can be implied or written, but these women learned how to identify and scale the bias successfully. While the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2007 denounced maternal wall bias, in which employers could deny women promotions or professional growth because of their status as mothers, a subtle, more pervasive and deeply embedded bias still exists in the workplace (Shellenbarger, 2009). These subtle biases can be apparent in others thinking a women is going to become “too emotional” when she announces her pregnancy, assumptions of what a women will want to do upon having a child with regards to limiting travel or other professional responsibilities, and/or the assumption that all women want to become mothers and therefore subject all women, regardless of their own personal decisions to have or not have for children, to these stereotypes and bias (Williams, 2005).

While she sees where things could be better for women with children working in the higher education field, Anne, who has been in the field almost 40 years, believes that things are better than they used to be. “It used to be very rare for women, who advanced, to have children. I can’t think of any in my career who were mentors who had children. It was pretty unusual,” she said. Beth, who is also an older professional, thinks the bias used to be much more “in-your-face” than what it is now, and she personally experienced this form of discrimination twenty years ago:

In my second job, I was there for about a year, and it was an environment where they were giving out raises. My immediate supervisor reported to the dean, and the dean told him that I wasn’t getting a raise because I was getting married, and the guy in the other part of our division had kids. He needed that money to take care of his family.

The assumption was that Beth would not need the money as she was going to be supported by her husband and possibly quitting to have children so why would the organization “waste” their

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money on her. While her direct supervisor went to Human Resources to advocate for her, the experience still left her feeling undervalued, and she moved on. This idea of “moving on to move up” is common in maternal wall bias research (Williams, 2005). Additionally, Beth stated that while she believes it makes sense to focus on women’s professional development, at a previous institution several years ago there was less inclination to do so because of the predominantly male leadership within the cabinet, and an unspoken culture of not speaking up for others within the organization. Men and women on the cabinet, who may have been personally inclined to do so, did not feel comfortable speaking out about advancing women leaders.

Carrie and Emily both expressed that they are the only Vice Presidents in their Cabinets with younger children, and while many of their colleagues have children, the children are older and so the experiences of having younger ones can be lost on them as Carrie shared:

So often your choices feel like they’re between being with students or being with family because I could be at a student event every night. So there will be subtle criticism of ‘oh, we don’t see you out enough’ or ‘we didn’t see you at that event the other night.’ And I look at my colleagues on Facebook, and I’m like ‘oh my god,’ but then remember they don’t have kids.

Emily mentioned a similar experience with the Cabinet members at her institution. Emily is a younger professional, and she believes there was an assumption that she wasn’t going to have children given her leadership position as Vice President. When Emily did become pregnant, there was a hesitation to tell others:

Nobody said it couldn’t happen, but it was implied [that I wouldn’t have kids] like ‘wow, you work all the time, you’re always here.’ As others were becoming pregnant in the division and telling their bosses or the cabinet, one cabinet member that was meeting with me said ‘oh, so and so is pregnant. Great. I don’t know what I’m going to do.’ I thought to myself, what about when I tell my boss that I’m pregnant, what will she say?

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The hesitation was probably warranted after Emily was also privy to another Cabinet member commenting on the number of women pregnant in the division as “this is what happens when you hire young women.” While Emily loved the organization, she began to feel incongruent with the institutional culture given the recent changes in her own personal life and the comments made by her peers. Rather than decide that this was no longer a good fit for her and move on, she decided to remain at the organization in large part to show others that it could be done, and there did not need to be a fear around the idea of working mothers, even those with vice president in their title.

All the women experienced feeling like because they had children, there was extra pressure on them to perform at a higher standard when they returned from maternity leave in order to meet not only society-imposed standards, but self-imposed standards. Carrie noted that even when there are events on campus in the evening, her colleagues have no problem attending, but they forget that she has to pay a babysitter “an extra \$50-100 so I’m paying to work, while they’re not. I try to balance my communication on those things with my colleagues, but also not use that as a crutch for worry they will think that I’m not performing as well.” Anne believes that while this discrimination can be subtle, it does still exist especially when others can’t imagine women in leadership roles. Carrie and Emily stated similar beliefs in that Carrie said she “tries to be a crusader to say ‘look at me.’ I have no peers at the vice president level with children, and very few peers nationally...I don’t have role models out there that I can say ‘oh yeah, that affirms for me how to get it done.’” Emily when interviewing for her current position came up against this bias of visualizing a woman in a senior leadership role when one of her interviewers

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said “you don’t look like a vice president, and I said ‘well, what does a vice president look like?’ and that made him backpedal a bit.”

This construct of maternal wall bias within higher education has been experienced by all five of the women interviewed for this study. There is a push amongst these leaders to make situations better for those coming behind them. Beth noted that within her division, there was a baby boom, and several women in one specific area were all pregnant at the same time. Beth, as Vice President, went to Human Resources to campaign and advocate for these women so they could experience some flexible schedules and job-sharing. Beth stated it was difficult to accomplish, but “I did it because it seemed like the reasonable thing to do for parents.” This act may have allowed those other women to feel a higher sense of affinity towards the organization as there was recognition of the whole person, and not just the professional self. This relates directly to person-organization fit whereas Beth may have saved the organization money in turnover costs should those women have decided to move on because of the lack of value placed on their new roles as mothers.

### **Mentoring and other support systems.**

This idea of making things better for younger professionals in the field was a common theme in this research. All five women are very active in the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), which is the largest professional organization for higher education professionals. Within the field, the women have held different professional development roles whether as their state higher education association leader, as faculty mentor at the NASPA Alice Manicur Symposium for Aspiring Chief Student Affairs Officers, which I had the privilege to attend, or attending institutes at institutions focused on female leadership like the



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Hers Institute at Bryn Mawr College. Additionally most were involved in informal networks on their own campuses.

The ability to mentor others tends to be driven from one's own experience with their mentor. All five women had mentors they could specifically name and draw upon experiences and opportunities presented to them from those mentors when they were younger professionals that assisted them in later years. These relationships opened up the possibility of not having to "remain dependent for promotion upon formal bureaucratic procedures that often favor men" (Twale & Jelinek, 1996, p. 203). Anne noted that her mentor was the Vice President of Student Affairs at her home institution when she was in her thirties.

This woman suggested that I put my name in the hat to be president-elect and then the president of the State Association of Women Educators. It never occurred to me. I was probably one of the younger women in the group, but she was very good about – and I think this is what mentors do – they help the mentees see themselves in a different way.

Beth also had a female vice president of student affairs as her mentor, and when she was at her previous institution for three months, this woman suggested she attend the three-week Hers Institute at Bryn Mawr College for female leaders. Beth thought this was crazy. "I was like 'you're kidding, I have a three-year-old and a six-year-old. I'm thinking about how am I going to do this, and my husband said 'how are you not going to do this.'" Emily also had an experience in which a female vice president was instrumental in connecting her to professional opportunities and in believing in her when she had questions, concerns, and moments of fear about her ability to succeed. This primary mentor tends to be the one who assists their mentee in reaching their full potential by assisting the individual through significant crossroads and in supporting their personal and professional development (Twale & Jelinek, 1996).

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While the primary mentor relationship is important, it's also of interest to note that many mentoring relationships are not as formal. Debra experienced a situation in which there wasn't just one mentor, but "different people around each stage, and people who made more of an impression on me when I was trying to figure out what kind of work I would do." Emily also has found solace in connecting with peers through NASPA that were in similar positions. "These women ended up being a sounding board for me about where I wanted to go, what experiences I needed to get to the next steps, and also how to handle different things that happen in my current role."

While the women interviewed for this research study have been on the receiving end of positive mentor relationships, they have also tried to give back with their time and energy in mentoring others albeit not necessarily in formal ways. Only two of the five women interviewed have formal structures for their mentoring relationships, and the women, specifically those with younger children, lamented about the inability to give more time to mentoring. There was a common theme of trying to find diverse ways in which they could connect with others in the field including being open with their experiences, speaking about their family in the work settings which may allow others to feel more comfortable asking them questions about their career and family path, and "give in the context of what I can give," as Debra noted. She also stated that "What I could do twenty years ago, I can't do now. It's just a different level of access, a different time." In this she was referring both to her position responsibilities as Vice President, but also with younger children who equally demand time of her. Again, there is an emphasis on the ability to recognize the relationships around themselves, as Gilligan did in her work, and provide for others what time, space and energy there is to give.

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While professional mentoring relationships have been a support to these women, other types of support has proved to be integral to the women's success. While all the women interviewed had partners who also worked, there was a common theme of shared responsibility on the home front. Beth stated, "The bulk of my support that I get really has been from my husband along the way." With the women interviewed, there was never a real discussion with their partners about their decision to be a two working-parent household, it was just the assumption that they would all work and be professionally ambitious.

In almost all of these cases, there were discussions about whose career they focus on now, who has the ability to be more flexible in their positions, and how much does professional success weigh in on the happiness at home. These were difficult conversation as Carrie can attest. Carrie had the support of her husband and family when she received her current position hundreds of miles away from their previous home and employment, but when it was time to move, reality set in and there was tension in the family. The strain of carrying multiple roles was difficult in that Carrie felt like significant conflict between her role as a professional and wanting this new position and her role as a partner in listening to her husband's concerns (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, King, 2002). Carrie told her husband:

I'm moving, we're moving. The children and I are moving, you can keep working over there, but we're moving. It was hard. It was awful. He couldn't find a job for a while and I do think that's where higher education needs to be more accommodating with partner placement. I was ready to go to my president's house and say we're leaving because if he's not happy, we're not happy at home, which means I'm not happy at work.

In Carrie's situation, her husband did find eventual employment within the university, but gave up his law career to do so. Emily, who has a newborn, stated that her and her husband haven't quite figured it out yet. When Emily started her doctorate, there was this idea that more attention

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should be diverted to her career path, and her husband's job was remote so he could work from anywhere, but when they had a child, it became more difficult. "I think that was a struggle for us early on, looking back, because before you have children, you can equally invest in careers."

Additionally, all the women stated they would be remiss if they did not mention their other support structures outside of their husband and mentor. Debra indicated that "It's about the village, but also the understanding of how broad and deep the village has to be and it's not always the people at home, sometimes it's the people at work too." Given their position within the institution, all women have executive assistants who play a key role in managing their calendar, scheduling time for family and work responsibilities, and the reliance on these individuals is high. Anne also acknowledged that "the other strategy is hopefully, as you advance, you make more money. You can make some choices financially about services you purchase that you don't have to do personally," and mentioned dry cleaning, nannies, grocery delivery services, and cleaning assistance as examples.

### **Transformational leadership.**

While not specifically asked about transformational leadership in the interviews, it was certainly a theme that arose during the discussion with all of the women both in how they see themselves, but also how others perceive them. The traits of a transformational leader include the ability to motivate followers and inspire others, and the ability to go beyond self-interests to pursue a collective goal or value (Jones & Rudd, 2008). Research has shown that while transformational leadership is more connected to female constructs of leadership, there is an idea that by being a woman actively using transformational leadership traits that she would be

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capitalizing on her gender and therefore would not be taken seriously in the workplace. This was not a concern for the women interviewed. Anne had this to say:

I think that people would consistently say that I put people first. That my mode of operating and being is through relationships and whether it be within the division of student affairs or other aspects of the university or the state, I go to great lengths to build the relationships so that we can work together and benefit from each other's gifts and talents. I try to do that with staff. I try to be appreciative and acknowledge their contributions along the way.

Debra acknowledged the importance of others around her, which is a classic trait of transformational leadership, "I was raised in a village, so I'm a pretty good village builder. I knew that I was going to need help, and it was going to have to come in a variety of forms." This ability to be a transformational leader is important when knowing your strengths and challenges within the vice president position. Beth stated that she had done Strengths Quest, and so had a good grasp of her top five leadership traits, including learner, achiever, and strategic. "I never met a job, I couldn't do. And if I didn't know how to do it, I didn't worry about it – I knew I was going to learn how to do it, and I would try to do it by developing my own strategy," she stated. She also acknowledged those around her in assisting with the learning about her position and how she utilizes everyone within the division to make sure voices are heard so best practices can be followed.

### **Ambition and resiliency.**

The idea of ambition and resiliency also came up with a number of the women interviewed. When asked if they considered themselves a trailblazer, considering their professional position, and the fact that very few women who have ascended to their roles have done so with children, the women seemed surprised to be considered in that way, but all indicated that they wouldn't be where they were today if there wasn't an internal drive and focus

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to ascend professionally while also keeping those ambitions in check with their ambition to have a family. There was some internal struggle both with their partners and children regarding their professional ambitions, but not one of the women was apologetic for being driven professionally, which would be an example of growth mindset. In fact, they believe this makes them not only a better worker, but a better mother. As in Sieber's theory of role accumulation, there is an emphasis on the ability to obtain and maintain multiple roles for the betterment of the individual's wellbeing.

Beth's current position caused her and her husband to pick up and move across the state. She indicated "I make more money than he does, and have for the most part, and that doesn't seem to bother him that much. I mean he's doing what he likes to do, but now he doesn't have a job – he's subbing in the school system. So we're hoping he can find something [more permanent] fairly soon because that's a stressor for me." On the flip side, though she stated she would never have given up having a family to have a career. "I do know a lot of women who are 8-10 years older than me that didn't have children and advanced in certain positions. I don't know if they advanced because they didn't have children...but for me there was no alternative."

Carrie had an opportunity to advance earlier in her career to dean of students at a different institution, but also knew she wanted children, and thought it would be too hard so she moved laterally for her husband. When one of her colleagues was a dean and had twins, Carrie was shocked in that she didn't realize one could do that. In hindsight, Carrie wished she would have been more selfish in this instance and tried to make it work. "I think we make assumptions and decisions about those things – some are accurate and real, and some are in our own head." She also indicated that when one talks about advancement, there is a notion of being selfish. For

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her current position, she made her family move. While her children, who were in elementary school, thought “their lives were over,” they’re now fine with the decision. “It’s about balancing your career choices, what’s right for you, and what you want to do with the impact on those around you. So there are times when it feels really selfish.” This balance is akin to Gilligan’s theory of women’s moral development in that women move from this pre-conventional or selfish stage into and through the post-conventional stage where there is a balance in both the selfishness combined with the care for others on how one’s decision may impact them and whether or not that risk is justified.

Emily doesn’t think there is anything wrong in being selfish. Seeing her mother have to start over after her father died at such an early age, impacted Emily’s perspective about career progression and family responsibilities.

My husband would say that I’m selfish. I say that, and I don’t think that’s a bad thing. I think it comes back to seeing my mom put someone else’s career first and not being able to take care of herself that I don’t know if I could now be brave enough to say [to my husband], ‘let’s keep investing in you, and I’ll take the backseat. I do think we’ve struggled a little bit because we had to come to terms with, I’m selfish in this way, but not because I don’t care or love you or want you to have great things, but I need this for me, and it’s good for us as a team.

Debra believes it comes from being an older parent that has allowed her the confidence to take stock of what she has, and be clear with those around her what she needs. “I’m probably a bit more comfortable in my own skin than if I were 30 or 25. And so in that way, the gift is that I don’t have a problem...clarifying what’s comfortable for me.” With age, Debra says, comes the confidence to take stock of the situation and self-reflect. “I talk to people and ask them to slow down in every season and reflect on how well it went the past semester. How did it go as a working mother this fall and what do you want to change next semester? We can storm through

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years and years and years, and we don't take any time to slow down." To Debra this was important to her in thinking about and articulating what she needed and wanted from her institution and her supervisor.

### **Institutional fit and managing multiple roles.**

This research only looked at women in vice president roles at public institutions, and therefore there was a desire to see whether or not the type of institution played a role in supporting women's progression to senior leadership roles. Mission statements help identify what is similar about colleges and universities. These institutions that "share elements of a mission likely share other characteristics – they can be considered a group. Collectively, they form an institutional type, and the type of institution where one works influences one's professional life in multiple ways that make a real difference in the daily lives of administrators" (Hirt, 2009, p. 46). Public institutions, specifically, can address change and need through a political lens more effectively given the close connection with state and federal governments. Research also suggests there are more internal hires and promotions within a public institution than one may see in a private institution (Baier, 1992). This coordination may allow for facilitation of the "accomplishment of affirmative action goals, increase student access to and between constituent campuses, and provide greater opportunity for professional growth, in-service training and advancement for all campus-based student affairs practitioners" (Baier, 1992, p. 197).

For the women in this research study, their experiences mimic that of the above consideration of benefits of working in a public institution. Anne, who has never worked for a private institution, believes there are protections and policies, including state guidelines,



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affirmative action, and federal guidelines for Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) that are helpful to women educators and administrators. “There is recourse in public institutions. People can’t discriminate against you for sex or gender. At private institutions, you’re not as well protected.” Beth, Debra and Emily have all worked for both private and public institutions, and have also recognized some differences between the two institutional types. Beth feels that at a public institution “there was more support and push for professional development to advance women within the institution. A public institution wants to dot their I’s and cross their T’s.” Debra had similar feelings about these differences.

I think there’s more parochial behavior in private institutions, particularly when there is a thread of religion. I spent a good amount of time at a certain HBCU (historically black college or university), but I’m not naïve about the fact that you needed to be a black man to be in charge there because of the institution. They have a few women, but not many. Sometimes private institutions also have to do with the culture and the alumni. Did you go to school there? There are just a lot of other parameters to advancement at a private institution that have nothing to do with your intellect or skills.

While there does seem to be a difference in these women’s experiences between public and private, there was a consistent thread of feeling accomplished by being able to have role accumulation and role clarity in their position. Three of the five women who were interviewed, were in their first few years of the Vice President role, but all spoke about having supportive supervisors, who set agendas, made clear the expectations, and let these women run with their initiatives and ideas. Being a working mother only assisted these women in their roles in terms of advocating for students, “mothering” students through care and compassion, and being cognizant of what it means to send a child to college. Emily acknowledged this by stating:

I have such a greater appreciation for the work we do, knowing what it means to actually let your son or daughter go away to college, and they’re going to be much older than my baby is now, but kind of being in the hands of someone else and what a privilege that is. I

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think that has given certain elements of my job so much more importance, but also stresses what a great responsibility.

The ability to time manage and organize a household also proved to be helpful when organizing and managing employees within the institution, and allowed these women the ability to connect with others in their division. As Emily stated, “I think I can connect with women better now that I am a mom and can understand how tough it can be, the challenges, and when something is wrong with your child, it takes all of your attention and you need to take that time to worry about your family when something that is happening at home.” This idea of utilizing both the role of mother and higher education administrator to consistently achieve in both parts of their identity was consistent throughout the interviews, and allowed the participants a chance to clarify the importance of things in their own lives. As a new mother, Emily saw this first hand as she stated “{having a baby} has given me...some clarity on what’s important and what really matters, and it’s no longer about me and getting everything checked off on my to-do list. Sometimes it’s about coming home and playing with the baby. I didn’t have that clarity before or the desire to have a full home life and a full work life.” One helped the other be better, and that could only be done with the support structures, the resiliency shown by these women, and their personal ambitions and dreams in defining their own success personally and professionally. Despite how busy their lives seem to be in balancing both personal and professional responsibilities, there never seemed to be a great strain in the roles they play as in Goode’s theory of role strain, but rather they focused on their ability to hold multiple roles as a benefit to both their personal and professional lives.

These themes are the factors of success for these working mothers, and they account for both internal and external considerations. There needs to be institutional fit, acknowledgment of

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role accumulation, and mentoring and other support networks in place in order for these women to be successful within their multiple roles, but there is also an internal drive and growth mindset brought about by their childhood socialization, which focuses on resiliency, self-reliance, and ambitions. These factors together have allowed women to create and cultivate their ability to be transformational leaders on campus, which in part is how they have scaled any maternal wall bias they may have faced. The next section will be an analysis of these findings and future directions in more detail as it relates to both the literature review and theoretical frameworks.

### **Chapter 6 – Analyzing the Findings and Future Directions**

#### **Findings of the Study**

These five women included in this research have ascended to a pinnacle of their professional development by becoming the chief student affairs officer responsible for a division of student affairs. In doing so, they've also been able to successfully find ways in which to have children along this journey, which is not the experience of many female senior administrators (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). While maternal wall bias is a real construct, and one that has shown to be present within the confines of higher education (Williams, 2004), these women have found ways in which to scale the wall through their own perseverance, support structures and institutional culture. As Anne stated, we have come a long way in the field of higher education and in seeing representations of diverse experiences in senior leaders, but there is still an undercurrent of bias towards female leaders as well as mothers, which is articulated in Emily's most recent experiences of having a new baby while being a Vice President.

Research has shown there are steps women can take to assist in overcoming this maternal wall bias including letting people know that commitment to work remains, relishing in the diversity of experiences that can generate happiness in families including having both parents work, and getting over the social pressures and motherhood ideologies that are designed to make working mothers feel guilty and stressed (Williams & Dempsey, 2014). This was a theme throughout the research in that some of these biases and feelings of being undervalued and anxious were being generated from the women themselves. They found ways in which to overcome these feelings through talking with their mentors, receiving support from their partners

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or children, and looking within to find the place of strength akin to what their mothers may have found when they were faced with challenges raising children and working.

Women leaders, specifically working mothers, do have a position from which they can lead in showing others how women do not have to choose between two identities – professional or personal – that they can have both, which is what these women have done. There are benefits to this role accumulation as seen by the ability in “planning and prioritizing multiple tasks at home [being] good practice for juggling multiple managerial responsibilities” (Ruderman, et al., 2002, p. 374). As Carol indicated when she stated she tries to be a crusader and calls out for others to look at her as a role model. That’s not to say that these women did not find the journey difficult, in fact there were many stressors along the path of motherhood and career aspirations, including and primarily negotiating when to have children, how many children, and partner employment. Anne had indicated that “at different points in time we talked about a third child, but I think we both decided informally that was more than we could handle” with professional aspirations. Two of the three women with younger children were older mothers as defined by having their first child in their forties, allowing them to be established within the profession, before receiving their first Vice President role and birthing their first child. This move was done strategically and with great thought as there was uncertainty how having children younger may have impacted their ability to go after different positions. Emily, the thirty-something subject who just had her first baby, is starting to recognize this as she stated:

It’s going to be a little different when I would think about picking up and moving for another opportunity. So I could imagine what age and where your kids are, there’s a lot more factors now that you have to weight to advance and it lessens the jobs you would be willing to consider and there are fewer opportunities for advancement.

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On the other hand, the dual-career and working mother paradigm is also not as difficult as Emily had anticipated. “When I’m at work, I’m at work, and when I’m home, I’m home. I just don’t think it’s as difficult...I don’t feel haggard.” This may be made easier by not only the aforementioned support structures, but also the institutional culture of the institution (Blackhurst, Brandt, Kalinkowski, 1998). All five women work at public institutions, and few mentioned issues with being able to combine the professional and the personal with regards to policies, processes, and culture. This person-organization fit as described by Holland allows for these women to identify more strongly with their institutions and thereby increasing the levels of commitment to their position and employer (Blackhurst, Brandt, Kalinkowski, 1998). Some institutions had fantastic policies and structures in place to support as in Debra’s case where her institution offers a Children’s Center on campus for faculty, staff and students alongside a reasonable flexible schedule, and ample holidays. Others were still struggling with what structures would be helpful on campus. Beth indicated that while there are professional development opportunities for female leaders, and there is flexible time – it’s often not taken by women in the community. This is indicative of the paradox of flexible schedules have with flexibility stigma, which is “the bias against workers who take caregiving leave or take advantage of flexible work policies” (Bornstein, 2013, p. 391).

There was a realization by these women that not every women in the field has the opportunities they have had with supportive mentors, generous supervisors, and the type of perseverance required to achieve in a triangle of hierarchy that is not always comfortable with female leaders at the helm. What they all suggested was for ways in which the institution could better support women on campus through partner placement, childcare centers on campus,

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flexible work policies that are actually encouraged to be utilized, changes to maternity leave policies that may be more progressive than the standard Family Medical Leave Act, professional development opportunities focused on women leadership, and availability of mentorship for younger women. These findings highlight both the strength of this research as well as some of the limitations as it pertains to participants and institutional type.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

While this research was conducted with an extensive literature review and has very real implications for best practices within higher education in support of working mothers, there are also limitations to the research. This research focused on public institutions and is therefore not a review of all types of institutions nor is it meant to generalize in terms of what public institutions do or do not do in terms of working women and career advancement in student affairs thus further research could be completed on those experiences at private institutions or community college systems to review for similarities or differences with public institution systems.

Additionally, while there was an initiative to obtain a pool of diverse experiences within the CSAO role, the interviewees were largely heterosexual, Caucasian, and all had supportive partners living at home. Further research should be implemented to review for differences and similarities of experience for working mothers of color, women in same-sex relationships and/or one-parent households. The constructs of oppression, inclusiveness, and social change may be very different for mothers from a variety of backgrounds. It would also be of interest to note those working mothers without partners as there was a very specific support structure built into the household for the interview candidates in this research. If there was not a partner living within the same house to support the woman, that experience may look vastly different than

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those from two-parent households. Economic justice is another area that could be reviewed as institutional resources vary and therefore some women may not be able to afford outside assistance in the form of childcare, cleaning service, grocery delivery, etc. Women who ascend to a CSAO position need to ensure there is an economic support system in taking a position that demands time and energy spent in the professional setting.

There would also be reason to investigate maternal wall bias that occurs earlier in a woman's career prior to the point of reaching the senior level leadership as it did in my own journey. In this study, I did not ask the research subjects to recall their mid-level experiences, which could have provided more data that would allow me to include additional discussions or recommendations for women who are currently at a mid-level position. While the focus of my research was on asset-building, the scope of my questions to the participants did not prohibit them from speaking about barriers in the institution through policies, practices, and pedagogies, which may have inhibited women from mobilizing either informally or formally on campus.

### **Future Directions: Research**

There is more work to be done in this area of maternal wall bias and overcoming maternal wall bias for more women – and more working mothers – to engage with and entertain promotions within the field of higher education, and student affairs specifically, to get to the top level and to know that doing so is a real option or choice. Future studies may focus on the partners of these women as in what the characteristics are of these individuals, and how they have been able to navigate their own professional journey within the shadow of very high-profile women. Additionally, it would be of interest to speak with the children of these women to see what type of impact, if any, there has been on these individuals in thinking about their mother's



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journey, and if any of them have ideas about what parenthood and professional success means for them. Conducting research on women at mid-level positions in higher education/student affairs would be another possibility as it could strengthen the pipelines of women from entry level through female CSAOs.

There would also be future implications in reviewing higher education human resources policies within specific institutions versus the actual practice of those policies as it relates to flexible schedules, maternity leave, and telecommuting. These policies are only beneficial if individuals utilize them and show others that they can be utilized without impact on service to students, employment, penalty to career, or life at home. Another aspect of this study as it pertains to policies is the utilization of men in the organization. As men play a larger role in the home, some may want to be more present at home or with their families and also experience some sort of paternal wall bias as it relates to, but different from, maternal wall bias. While these are possibilities of future research, there are also best practices that can be attributed to this research, which can be utilized by working mothers as well as institutions.

### **Future Directions: Best Practices**

The landscape for working mothers is important to recognize given the rise of family responsibility discrimination cases. Liability claims across all fields involving maternal wall bias rose 400% in the past decade, and “plaintiffs are significantly more likely to have a favorable outcome in family responsibility cases than in other types of employment discrimination, winning on average \$100,000” (Andronici & Katz, 2007, n.p.). Given these liability concerns and because it is the right thing to do in the current landscape of higher education in order to shore up the leaky pipeline, it is important that organizations recognize maternal wall bias within

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the organization, and address it where needed. Female leaders who have risen to an executive position within higher education can utilize the leadership methods of relationship building, connectedness, and collaboration in order to initiate change for working mothers on campus, which is known as the feminization of student affairs (Styles Hughes, 1989).

These female leaders can help others within the organization rethink some of the field's best practices as it relates to human resources policies by bringing vision and charisma to the conversation. They can assist others in rethinking the idea of a traditional workday. Does the organization have to set schedules from 9:00 – 5:00 p.m. or can there be some flexibility attached to certain positions? Certainly, students do not operate within the 9:00 – 5:00 timeframe so there could be room for employees to adapt their own schedules so that positions are no longer defined by hours in the day, but rather work completed and goals achieved (Peters, 2007). There is a need to change the perceptions of what it means to have flexible time. Taking time off to attend a child's school program or remain home when they are sick becomes less burdensome to the individual when the stigma of what it means to be a working mother is removed. This helps when a woman has a supportive supervisor as those individuals play key roles in helping women successfully manage work and family.

Supervisors who can empathize with working mothers in allowing them flexibility to leave when needed for family responsibilities makes for a more committed employee (Marshall, 2009). This flexibility includes both human resource policies as it relates to flextime, telecommuting, or university committee opportunities as well as the culture of the workplace, and in not providing this type of work environment then it should be known that “inflexibility of a woman's work environment plays a casual role in pushing her out of the labor force after

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motherhood” (Leber Herr & Wolfram, 2012, p. 949). These improved work-family policies and/or changes to institutional norms may mean that a smaller number of working mothers exit or opt out after having children. Women can feel more supported by their institutions and colleagues and in turn can “aim to change the organization itself, in such a way, that both genders’ experiences, problems, conditions, and life situation are incorporated into its basic norms” (Viefers, Christie, & Ferdos, 2006, p. 18). They can encourage human resources professionals to audit all existing benefit policies as it was found that over a third of higher education institutions have policies that were in violation of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (Williams, 2005). When these types of benefits are offered, institutions will see lower turnover and higher job satisfaction.

Once the appropriate policies are in place, these leaders should encourage other women in the organization to take advantage of the current policies including that of flexible schedules, telecommuting, and family medical leave. They can support women in managing flexibility stigma by being a role model and taking advantage of these policies themselves (Bornstein, 2013). For example, Florida State University (FSU) offers three onsite childcare facilities for students, staff, and faculty with discounted rates for FSU community members. DePaul University offers lactation sites on campus for nursing students, staff, and faculty. These sites are designed to be comfortable, private and secure for women to nurse while on campus if they have chosen to breastfeed. The California State University system offers telecommuting options to their staff and faculty so they may arrange a schedule that is most beneficial to them both personally and professionally. Additionally, partners of these women should also be encouraged

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to support their partners at home and in their careers so this becomes a shared responsibility of career management and support on all fronts (Biernat & Wortman, 1991).

Some other ways in which institutions can assist in this quest for balance is by instituting mentoring programs for women and allow for time and resources to be utilized in this important endeavor (Hall & Anderson, 2004). Mentoring provides key emotional support to women, and while it's important for male mentors to be involved, same-sex pairings seems to provide additional emotional support not found elsewhere (Twale & Jelinek, 2015). 80% of women in senior leadership positions serve as mentors to either graduate students in the field or new professionals, and there is data to suggest that those women mentored early in their career will, upon climbing the administrative ladder, "realize a need for others to be identified and mentored to as early as possible" (Twale & Jelinek, 2015, p. 213). This type of professional development should include trainings, conferences and sessions on mentoring as well as confidence building.

While women in senior level leadership positions may feel, due to the small numbers of women at that level, like the outsider looking in given the numbers of men around them. In some instances, these women have chosen to stay silent on the topics women in the organization face so as not to be seen as solely promoting women's issues, but they have to understand the gravity of the situation facing other women in entry and mid-level positions related to this struggle between balancing work and family, and commit to enacting change for the betterment of all. They have a seat at the proverbial table so use their experiences and of those around them to advocate for organizational practices that are fair, equitable and supportive of a person's life both inside and outside the organization. They can model for the others at the table what a successful

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female leader can look like and how role accumulation is a positive component to their position and for the organization (Ruderman, et al., 2002).

Female leaders who utilize these elements can and should mentor other women within the organization in order to cultivate the trust and visibility many women are looking for within higher education, specifically those women who aspire to more senior level positions. These individuals given their role in the organization have the power to enact change, and thus have a responsibility to address bias and stereotypes when they occur in a way so that others will walk away from the encounter feeling educated and positive. For example, open office hours with the vice president could be held in order to allow employees to have a way in which to connect with the leader of their division, and do so in a manner that is discreet.

Women do not need to adhere to a masculine notion of an ideal worker nor do they need to be “mommy tracked” if that means part-time work and opting out of the organization, what they require is equality in practices and processes (Williams, 2003). One way to achieve this equality within an organization is to address maternal wall bias. It’s been said that women will bump up against the maternal wall before they ever hit a glass ceiling (Williams, 2003), and with liability concerns related to family responsibility discrimination, universities must take notice of this issue and address the concerns from a leadership perspective. “Academia despite its lofty ivory towers, is not immune from gender stereotyping and cognitive bias,” (Williams, 2005, p. 102) and one way in which to combat these stereotypes and bias against working mothers is by incorporating appropriate leadership practices into the organization. Female leaders can inspire and motivate others to address maternal wall bias in action, and can champion a woman’s ability to lead within the organization regardless or rather because of her status as a mother. Women in

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the organization need to move away from deficit thinking and towards asset building and action, and can utilize transformational leadership styles to do so. The responsibility does not lie solely on the shoulders of these women, but also in the culture of the institution. The culture must be supported and promoted by people, which means that policies and practices can be challenged and changed. When women do challenge the status quo, through transformational leadership or otherwise, more opportunities are given to all and every woman in the organization flourishes because campus culture, which can be slow-moving given traditions and bureaucracy, can change to allow for the vast and multiple roles women have and show them they can do each successfully (Belch & Strange, 1995).

### Chapter 7 – Conclusions

This research examined the personal and professional experiences of five working mothers who reached the pinnacle in the student affairs/higher education administration hierarchy by becoming Chief Student Affairs Officers. Rather than focus on the leaky pipeline out of the student affairs/higher education field, in which qualified and educated working mothers are leaving the field for other opportunities of their own volition or because they feel there is no place for women who need and want a balance in their personal and professional lives within their campus culture (Marshall, 2009), this research focused on the scaling of the maternal wall through asset building and success stories of those who reached the highest position within a division of student affairs. By exploring theoretical frameworks like Gilligan, Holland, Goode, and Sieber that assist in naming and framing women's experiences as they move up the professional ladder, including the theory of women's moral development, person-organization fit, and role strain and accumulation.

The women in this study lived across the country, working at different institutions, and having varied background experiences, but who all shared the fact that they did experience maternal wall bias in various forms throughout their professional journeys, whether through benevolent stereotyping or hostile prescriptive stereotyping. They managed to overcome that bias through their ability to be resilient, ambitious and to not be ashamed of nor afraid of change or desiring change for themselves personally and professionally, even if that meant transitioning out of a work environment that was not a good fit for their station in life (Spokane, Meir, & Catalano, 2000). This process was not always easy for them. There were difficult conversations with employers and employees, partners, and children, and there was some self-doubt along the

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way. However given these women's commonalities with regards to childhood socialization in how they viewed the limitless opportunities for women mainly generated from their relationship with their mother, a supportive partner and family, and an internal tenacity to achieve their personal and professional goals by being proactive in their attempts to manage maternal wall bias and upwards mobility, they became a role model to younger women and men in the organization who learned to appreciate, if they had not before, the multiple and diverse roles working mothers and leaders can bring to an institution.

Practically speaking, there were things these women did to ensure management of this maternal wall bias as they became mothers in a professional environment. First, they felt comfortable having frank conversations with their supervisors, who for the most part were supportive of their ability to balance being a mother and a professional, and helped them regulate their commitment to the position. There did not seem to be a time table in feeling comfortable with their supervisors in having these conversations, but something these women negotiated when they were offered and accepted the position. This ability to speak up for themselves was paramount to their establishing boundaries and therefore enacting success both in the workplace and at home. In these conversations they discussed what was comfortable for them from a schedule perspective. For example, Debra told her supervisor how many nights working and how many early morning meetings she could manage in a week given her family responsibilities. These conversations helped the women feel more comfortable about being at work and needing to take time off for a sick child or for a flag football game. Second, they compartmentalized their mindset when they were at work and when they were at home. Carrie references that when she



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gets home for dinner, even if she has to attend an event later in the evening, her cell phone will be placed on silent so she can be present and enjoy her time with her family.

Third, they ensured that just prior to maternity leave there was a plan in place prior to departure. They did not want an appearance of their work suffering because they were pregnant. Emily indicated that when she came back from her leave she also felt a self-imposed mandate that her work be accurate and on time as she did not want any perception of not working hard or not being as committed. Fourth, they utilized their transformational leadership skills to build relationships with others in the university to not only make effective change in policies as Carrie did at her institution in advocating for a flextime policy for women in her division, but they are also vocal about their position as a working mother to encourage conversation around the topic. This in turn can and does lead to larger institutional change. Finally, the women spoke about being aware of the importance of institutional fit in one's ability to be successful, and while this research solely focused on public institutions, many of the women recognized that working at a public institution gave them opportunities and benefits that might not be available at other institutions. Many of the women interviewed believed that public institutions, given the federal laws and oversight, were places where they could be judged on their merit and work more so than at private institutions (Baier, 1992).

The research in this study can also help inform institutions and those in power in higher education/student affairs settings to make changes within their own culture to better prepare women and working mothers who aspire to attain leadership at the vice president level. An organization that expects a 24/7 commitment to the job is not going to be a welcoming environment for a women who, through societal socialization, is supposed to also be committing

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to her children 24/7 (Liss, 2013). Institutions need to not only review their human resources policies with regards to family medical leave act, flextime and telecommuting, but also how they bridge the more informal and formal networks for women who aspire to leadership positions. This can be seen by giving grants to attend events like the NASPA Alice Manicur Symposium for Aspiring CSAOs conference, creation of campus women leadership employee resources groups with a focus on networking and leadership development, and in trainings for managers on maternal wall bias.

While other scholars have reviewed what maternal wall bias is and have defined it for business and law fields, the information about this bias in higher education organizations specifically is somewhat limited. While there are similarities to these fields of study in terms of prevalence and types of maternal wall bias, what prompted this research was the triangle of hierarchy that is visible with higher education/student affairs graduate programs graduating female students at a much higher rate than men, however as one moves up the triangle of hierarchy from entry level, mid-level, senior level, and executive level positions the numbers of women represented in the most executive level positions, like vice presidents, are a far smaller percentage than women in the field (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012)

This lack of female representation in executive leadership positions within the higher education/student affairs field, and even fewer mothers in those positions, along with the exodus of women from this field for a variety of reasons, has implications for everyone in the campus community (Supple, 2007). Women in executive level positions are examples for others in the organization of what can be achieved. If entry level and mid-level professionals, who are predominantly made up of women, do not see themselves represented higher up the triangle of

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hierarchy it only creates additional frustration with the higher education/student affairs field with what women can do and be therefore decreasing motivation and increasing turnover. A balance of perspectives, experiences, and leadership styles is imperative in running a high performing organization, and this balance needs to come from, in part, gender diversity. Given the importance of this research, the implications stretch both personally, professionally, and organizationally.

### **Implications of Study**

#### **Personal.**

For myself as the author and researcher of this study, this work was a labor of love. As a working mother myself who aspires to be a vice president of student affairs, and have been strategically making career moves to best position myself for that role one day, I have wondered how best to juggle all of my personal and professional responsibilities. My role as a mother and partner, and the time and energy to my family is more important to me than my professional obligations, but that being said, I want to do and have both. I want to be able to show other women who are questioning whether or not they can have a family and career in this field that it can be done as well as strategies to make it work. This would be with the adage that what has worked for me along the way, may not work for everyone, but as I found when interviewing these women, it was a delight when there were similarities between our journeys.

When Anne spoke about being geographically bound and continuing to find positions in and around her current location that allowed for professional growth, it helped me feel more comfortable with my own situation in that I am also place-bound. She offered specific advice that I obtain my doctorate and any other credentials that I could because I would want to be

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prepared should something open up in my area that felt like a positive career step. She indicated the worst feeling is having the perfect position be available where you want it to be, but not being able to apply for it because there is a lack of education or experience. Those credentials can be placed on a resume and the act of receiving them can open up additional networks of individuals.

It was also nice to have a feeling of solidarity after speaking with these women in that what happened to me at my previous place of employment in which it was stated that I should not apply for a director position because I had a small child at the time was an example of maternal wall bias, and to know others had experienced the same kinds of bias along their professional journeys and overcame it to become vice presidents. There is strength in numbers, and where there are numbers there can be change. If we continue talking about these experiences, my hope is that I, in my circle, and Carol in her circle, and Beth in her circle, and so on can begin making local levels of change where we know have the knowledge to name and identify the issue along with ways in which to make the environment safer and more inclusive of all stories and experiences. These discussions about maternal wall bias can go beyond the actual moment of bias, and transition into action paving the way for others and securing the journey for those women currently on their own career path. This idea of self-care and self-authorship speak to the theoretical frameworks and literature review included in this research, and these continued conversations are powerful. This research not only has personal implications for me as the author and researcher, but also has implications from a professional perspective. It is important to note that these areas can be fluid and interchangeable like women are and have had to be in blending the personal and professional in their own lives so there may be some overlap between the two.

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### **Professional.**

As stated previously, the level of study on maternal wall bias within the higher education field, and specifically with staff positions, has been somewhat limited in terms of articles and research. It is my hope that this research can serve as a springboard for best practices at institutions that identify there is an issue of female turnover and/or gender diversity in senior level leadership roles. The field of higher education can do better with its practices in supporting working mothers on campus, and can find ways to cultivate mentoring opportunities amongst women on campus, educate hiring managers on discrimination law and expand supportive resources for working mothers on campus, including childcare availability, flextime and job sharing policies, and family leave.

It is important for our profession to remember that “not all happy families look alike. Different things work for different families” (Williams & Dempsey, 2014, p. 296), and so our practices must be flexible as well. My hope is that this research also shows working mothers as well as supervisors that women can and should take advantage of these practices available to her, and to not be penalized when doing so. This field asks that we care for and cultivate minds into great leaders, and yet the personal sacrifice that can come with higher education positions can be great (Guthrie, 2005). Specifically, we as a profession should look to the professional women in mid-level positions who are on the cusp of making significant personal and professional decisions as they are the precursor for the pipeline to executive positions, and where there is potential for the most impact to be had with regards to culture, growth, balance, and burnout. We must, as working mothers and as seen by the women in this study, care for ourselves as well.

### **Interdisciplinary leadership doctorate program/organizational.**

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The Governor's State University (GSU) Interdisciplinary Leadership Doctorate (INLD) program has been a support system for me and this research the past three years. The unwavering optimism of my Capstone committee, and the constructive feedback given has only helped this research become stronger and has assisted me in clarifying my purpose of study. The anticipated follow up to this research as well as potential for scholarly articles to be written and conference presentations to be given is great, and would be seen in the GSU portfolio of work from their doctoral graduates. This research on working mothers in executive leadership roles in higher education/student affairs administration is bringing into light an important and needed discourse within this higher education/student affairs administration field, and am pleased that it was taken seriously by the INLD program. There is hope for continued research collaborations with colleagues and faculty in the GSU program, NASPA, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and other more informal women networks.

I also suggest that as a working mother and partner with two small children in this field, and who worked full time while obtaining my doctorate full time, that my story can benefit other prospective doctoral candidates in this program. As one of my mentors once said to me, "if you don't have the degree, you can't sit at the table." And we need more working mothers sitting at that table to share experiences, provide feedback and to be a beacon of hope for others who aspire to have success both personally and professionally.

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**Table 1**  
**Demographics Profile: Consenting Participants**

Name	Age Range	Ethnic/Racial Group	Highest Degree
Anne	60-69	White, non-Hispanic	EdD
Beth	50-59	White, non-Hispanic	PhD
Carrie	40-49	White, non-Hispanic	PhD
Debra	40-49	African-American	PhD
Emily	30-39	White, non-Hispanic	EdD

**Table 2**  
**Descriptions/Characteristics of Institutions**

Number	Size	Location	Highest Degree Awarded	Size of Student Affairs Staff
Anne (1)	40,000 students (large)	Southeast, urban	Professional/Doctorate	11 departments
Beth (2)	2,500 students (small)	Northeast, rural	Masters	11 departments
Carrie (3)	15,000 students (mid-size)	Midwest, urban	Doctorate	16 departments
Debra (4)	38,000 students (large)	West, urban	Doctorate	27 departments
Emily (5)	7,500 students (midsize)	Northeast, suburban	Masters	16 departments

**Table 3**

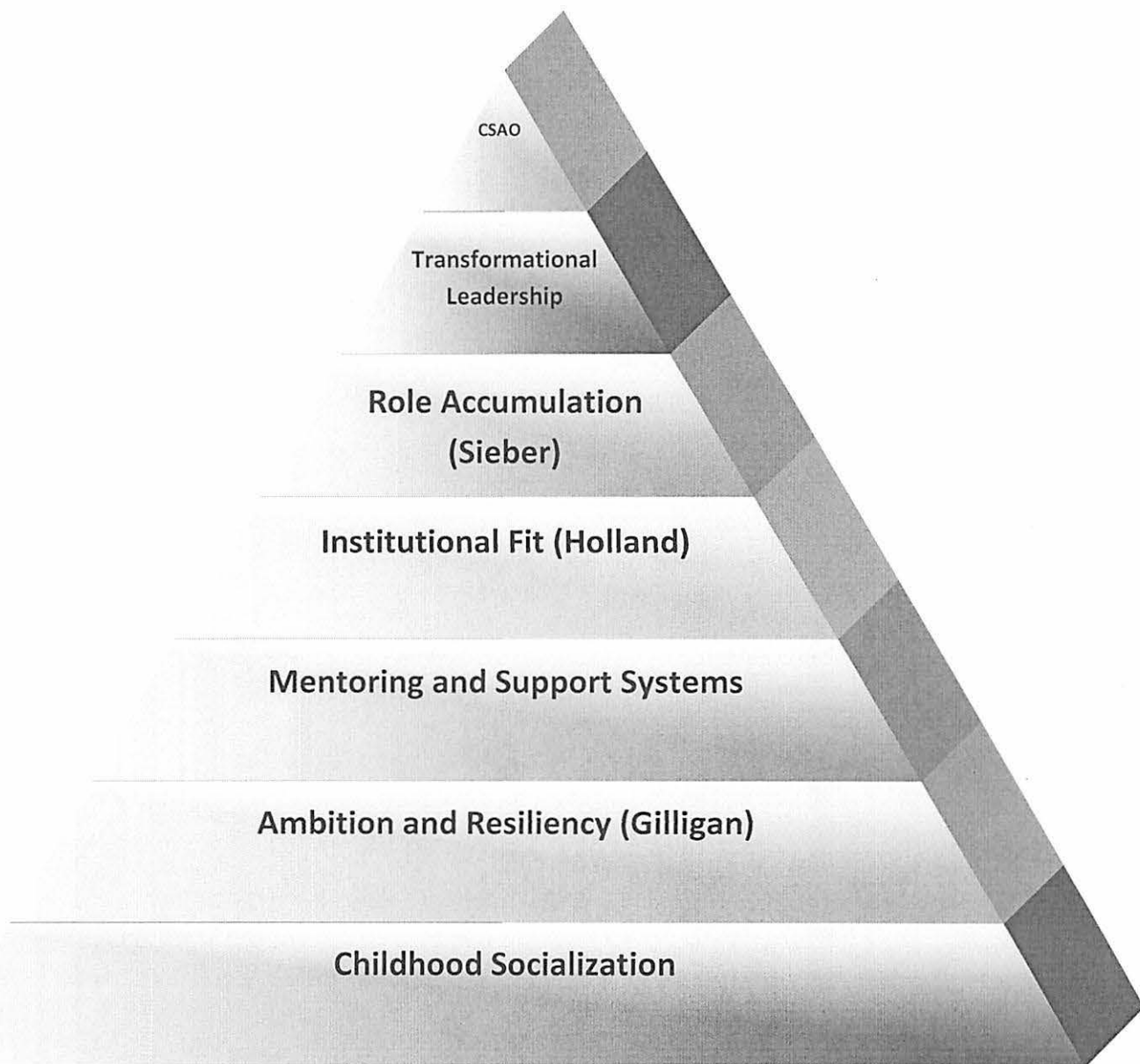
**Institutional Human Resources Policies Related to Work/Life Balance**

	Family Medical Leave Act compliant	Childcare Centers	Flextime/Telecommuting	Women Leadership Groups
Anne (1)	X <i>(employees entitled to 6 months of parental leave)</i>	X – 3	N/A	X
Beth (2)	X	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carrie (3)	X	X – 1	X	X
Debra (4)	X	X	X	X
Emily (5)	X	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 4

**Grounded Theory: Scaling the Maternal Wall**

**Higher Education Triangle of Hierarchy**



## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

*The following questions will be used as a guide by the researcher. The actual questions may vary depending on the participant's situation and not all questions may apply. Follow-up questions may be asked to clarify any points made by the interview subject. The sessions will be recorded so that themes can be identified. Responses shared by the interview subjects will only be identified in the form of a pseudonym for the basis of the final report. This is noted in the consent letter each participant received. Should the information be utilized in another capacity, interview subjects would approve and it would be at their discretion.*

#### Interview Questions:

##### **1. Background of Participant:**

- a. To what extent did your childhood socialization affect your view of women as leaders?
- b. How did your mother or mother-in-law figure define success through words or actions?
- c. How early did you define your career path and were your educational goals always tied to those aspirations?

##### **2. Networking and Mentoring:**

- a. Do you find there to be value in networking with other professional women? Where do you find your support system in the professional environment?
- b. Did you have a mentor as an early professional and if so, to what extent did your mentor assist you in formulating your personal and professional goals?
- c. What type of professional development opportunities have you been involved with and have these opportunities assisted you in achieving the level of success within your own organization?
- d. Are you able to mentor others in your current position? Is this something that you strive to do?

##### **3. Resiliency:**

- a. Have you ever had a time in your professional life where you weren't sure you could manage both work and family? If so, how did you overcome this? If not, what factors were in place for you to find success in both?
- b. Can you relate any feelings to your career advancement and how those choices have impacted your ability to balance work and family?
- c. Have you ever been faced with adversity related to your role as a woman and/or mother?

##### **4. Duality of Roles:**

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- a. In your current position, do you feel like there is role clarity? To what extent does this factor into your ability to be a successful CSAO?
- b. Have you had situations in which your role as a mother and role as a professional have been in conflict and/or in harmony?
- c. What do your children think about you being a successful professional in this field?
- d. Can you define sacrifice? What kind of sacrifices and choices have you had to make and how have these decisions impacted both your career and family?

### **5. Institutional Fit:**

- a. What type of resources are available to you on campus to support working mothers?
- b. How have others described you and the type of work that you do and the way in which you work? Some might say that women in your position are often called trailblazers, do you see yourself that way? How so?
- c. How do you feel working at a public institution has helped or hindered your ability to be promoted to the CSAO position? What barriers, if any, have you encountered throughout your professional trajectory?



## **Appendix B**

### **Participant Information and Letter of Consent**

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding factors of success for women chief student affairs officers with children. You were selected due to your role as a Vice President of Student Affairs/Chief Student Affairs Officers. The purpose of this research is to gather information aimed at answering questions about women's career paths in higher education, and the ability to balance both personal and professional responsibilities while addressing maternal wall bias in the workplace.

As part of this study, you are being asked to participate in one 90-minute interview that will be conducted during the fall semester 2015. In addition, you may be asked to participate in member checking of the information received from that initial response through a follow-up interview of no more than 60 minutes. Member checking will verify the credibility of the information recorded to prove trustworthiness of data and rigor of paradigm. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by Shealyn Wolfe, M.Ed. and doctoral candidate at Governors State University and Dr. Lynette Danley, Assistant Professor and Concentration Coordinator of Higher Education Administration, Interdisciplinary Leadership Doctorate Program, Division of Education.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study, we would ask you do the following things:

1. Participate in one 90-minute interview in Fall 2015 that will be audiotaped and transcribed; and
2. Be available for one follow-up interview of no more than 60 minutes; and
3. Provide institutional artifacts such as mission statements, institutional programs or initiatives that have supported women leadership on campus, and/or employee resource groups on campus that act as mentoring networks, which would illustrate institutional support through document analysis.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. Pseudonyms will be given to participants to protect their identities. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely on a password protected personal computer and hard copies of transcripts and other documents will

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be kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal office of the researcher. Only researchers will have access to these records. Records will be maintained for two years. For educational purposes, data may be maintained beyond the two year period with the approval of an extension from the Institutional Review Board at Governors State University.

### **Compensation:**

There is no compensation for participating in this research study.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

### **Benefits and Risks:**

There are no direct benefits to the participants, but information gathered from the findings in this research study will assist higher education institutions in addressing issues and concerns for women with children who want to attain a higher leadership role within the organization. There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research. There are no identifying markers used in the collection or analysis of the data that would reveal your identity.

### **Statement of Consent:**

Your decision to respond to the questions in this research study will indicate you have read and understood the informational letter and you have agreed to participate in this research.

### **Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact: Shealyn Wolfe, Doctoral Candidate, at [REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact either of the following co-chairs of Governor's State University's Institutional Review Board: Dr. Praggyan Mohanty – p [REDACTED] or Dr. Renee Theiss – r [REDACTED]

**Appendix C**

**Coding Instrument for Reflective Statements**

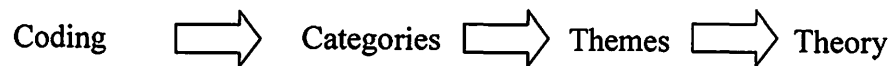
Identifier	Response Text	Coding
#		
		Childhood Socialization Family Structure
#		Partner and Support Systems Maternal Wall Bias
#		Mentoring and Professional Associations Transformational Leadership
#		Selfishness/Ambition/Resiliency Institutional Type
#		
#		
#		
#		
#		
#		
#		
#		
#		
#		

**Appendix D**

**Saldana's (2012) Coding Instrument and Guidelines for Assessing Quality of Research for Interviews**

These guidelines will be used to assess the research and data collected:

1. Coding for patterns
2. Coding for filters
3. Coding is heuristic
4. Coding is linking
5. Coding is cyclical



**Appendix E**

**Lincoln & Guba's (1985) Trustworthiness and Rigor Template for Qualitative Inquiry**

Lincoln and Guba state that trustworthiness in a research study is important in evaluating its reliability. This involves establishing:

- **Credibility** - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings
- **Transferability** - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts
- **Dependability** - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated
- **Confirmability** - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

**Appendix F**

**Demographics Profile Data Sheet**

Dear Participant,

Please note the following information will be collected in order to obtain additional data so as to better understand your reflective statements.

1. I am a female: \_\_\_\_\_
2. My age range is:
  - 20 – 29 \_\_\_\_\_
  - 30 – 39 \_\_\_\_\_
  - 40 – 49 \_\_\_\_\_
  - 50 – 59 \_\_\_\_\_
  - 60 – 69 \_\_\_\_\_
  - 70+ \_\_\_\_\_
3. My ethnic/racial groups:
  - African-American \_\_\_\_\_
  - Asian \_\_\_\_\_
  - Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_
  - White, non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_
  - White Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. My highest degree is:
  - BS/BA/BSN \_\_\_\_\_
  - MS/MSN/MA \_\_\_\_\_
  - PhD/EdD \_\_\_\_\_
5. My current job title is \_\_\_\_\_