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# Women in public relations: The influence of gender on women leaders in public relations

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**Women in public relations: The influence of gender on women leaders in public relations**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

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Program of Study Committee:
Tracy Lucht, Major Professor
Ann Oberhauser
Kelly Winfrey

The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this thesis.  The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to understand how gender has influenced the experiences of women in leadership positions in public relations. Data were collected through interviews with 10 women working in leadership positions in the public relations field and analyzed into themes. The findings revealed six major themes related to the experiences of these women leaders in public relations: (a) promotional barriers, (b) double standards for women, (c) pressure of stereotypes, (d) leadership styles, (e) female competition and bullying, and (f) optimism about the future. Findings revealed that these women think that gender has influenced the challenges and success they have faced in their careers; specifically, the participants described their challenges as promotional barriers as well as inequalities in salary and representation in leadership roles. The findings also indicated that these women think they are perceived as leaders in both a positive and negative light and believe a double standard exists between women and men leaders. Finally, the findings also revealed an issue with female competition in the form of workplace bullying. However, the participants see a shift happening in the field of public relations regarding gender issues, which they believe will benefit women.

CHAPTER 1.  INTRODUCTION

Public Relations can best be described as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6). While women have been a part of public relations since the beginning, it was not until 1971 that the Public Relations Society of America "established a committee on the Status of Women in Public Relations, [which] was tasked with looking into economic and advancement inequalities facing women" (Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2001, p .9). Over the past couple of decades, the number of women in the public relations field has increased dramatically. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor reported 62,000 total people employed as public relations and fundraising managers; more than seventy percent of them were women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2017). While women make up more than half those employed, they are still earning less than men. As reported by the U.S. Department of Labor, the median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, overall across all professions, in 2016 was $969 for men and $784 for women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2017). Men make significantly more than women, illustrating that inequalities for women are still relevant today. According to Grunig et al. (2001), "any field suddenly shifting to a female majority- or even experiencing the hint of more women than men- faces the realities of dwindling salary, status, and influence within the organization." Feminization theory, in relation to the public relations industry is "the impact on the field of public relations that occurs when the number of practitioners who are female is larger than the number who are male" (Heath, 2005, p. 323). The main issue surrounding the idea of feminization is, "the concern that the increasing number of women working in a traditionally male occupation will devalue the profession, resulting in less management autonomy and lower salaries" (Horsley, 2009). A study conducted

by Horsley (2009) stated: "Even though the number of women in public relations was increasing, the pay disparity between men and women, as well as the lack of advancement opportunities for women, prevented women from achieving the same career goals as men in this profession." Research conducted by Toth and Cline (1991) stated that both men and women "agreed that a double standard at work was likely." Even though notably more women agreed with the statement, most men agreed as well. One study found that the majority of men in the public relations field perceive the field to be feminized and that men working in the field work to adjust their behaviors to fit in with the women (Pompper & Jung, 2013). Fitch (2016) explains that "certain kinds of public relations activities are marginalized by an exclusive occupational identifier that hinges on a narrow conceptualization of (professional) public relations." She goes on to explain that this divide in gender roles has created a division in public relations roles, like professional or strategic positions and technical positions consisting of publicity and promotion (Fitch, James, & Motion, 2016).

With the number of women in public relations continuing to grow, it is important to look at the number of women in leadership positions in the field. Considering that women make up the majority of employees, one might expect them to hold a majority of top leadership positions. According to an article on Everything-PR.com, women make up 72 percent of the public relations field but only 30 percent of CEOs at the leading public relations firms (Everything-PR.com, 2015). When women are in positions of leadership, they are not the only ones who benefit. Based on a Catalyst study of Fortune 500 companies, companies that have more women in high-level positions do better financially, suggesting that diversity in leadership and management is beneficial for companies and organizations.

One factor contributing to women's struggle to advance into leadership roles is gender stereotypes. In a study conducted by Aldoory and Toth (2002), participants acknowledged the existence of gender stereotypes and reported it as one of the reasons men were placed in higher roles than women. A study conducted in the United States by Gallup (2014) found that 33 percent of respondents said they preferred a male boss, compared with 20 percent who said they preferred a female boss and 46 percent who said gender did not matter to them. An article in Forbes (Huang, 2016) suggested two possible explanations for the Gallup results: First, women are sometimes seen as confrontational or too assertive in leadership roles, which can make them not well liked. Second, women are sometimes seen as not very supportive of others. A study conducted by Carli (2006) found that, "Women who exhibit exceptional agentic competence may be evaluated unfavorably because such behavior violates prescriptive gender-role norms, particularly in domains such as management and leadership, which are seen as stereotypically masculine." Thus, research and popular opinion suggest perceptions of women leaders contribute to the struggle women face when trying to rise into leadership positions.

Some view women as having different qualities than men, which is why some think that men are better suited for leadership roles than women. According to Rojahn and Willemsen (1994), "Men are believed to be more self-assertive and motivated to master their environment while women are believed to be more selfless and concerned with others" (p.110). Similar to those ideas, Harper and Hirokawa (1988) talk about how men usually show traits of assertiveness and power while women tend to display traits of nurturance and open-mindedness. These are just some qualities or characteristics that are associated with men and women in leadership positions.

Aside from differences in personal qualities, men and women are sometimes viewed as having different leadership or management styles. In a study conducted by Statham (1987) it was

found that, "women use a more task-engrossed and person-invested style, while men may use a more image-engrossed and autonomy-invested style." Basically what the study found was that women focused more on tasks and the people involved, in a collaborative and caring effort, while the men focused on themselves, their power and possible contributions (Statham, 1987). A study conducted by Aldoory (1998) found that women leaders in PR, as opposed to men, tend to use, "a two-way model of communication and tend to emphasize a more humanist approach to staff." Both studies explain how men and women have been known to have different styles of leadership.

Women in public relations deal with additional stereotypes and assumptions regarding industry and common perceptions. In a study conducted by Peters and Froehlich (2006), researchers talked about the, "'PR bunny' stereotype, the marginalization of the public relations function and women's reduction to physical attributes." Peters and Froehlich (2006) went on to explain that, "Female PR practitioners are being ascribed to be the good looking companions of male doers at parties and events with their public relations functions being a trivial 'small talk tool'." The study also talked about how some women feel confined to the "traditional" areas of public relations like fashion or lifestyle because of long standing stereotypes (Peters & Froehlich, 2006). The women explained that to move into a PR role in a male dominated industry, out of the traditional women's industry, would take twice as long.

Previous research has examined the roles, experiences, and attitudes of women in public relations (Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Horsley, 2009; Toth & Cline, 1989; Toth & Grunig, 1993). As society changes over time, it is important to continue examining the status and experiences of women in public relations. It is also important to learn about the experiences of women in leadership roles, given their minority status at that level. This study looks at how gender

influences the experiences of individual women in leadership roles in the field of public relations with the goal of learning what issues these women face, uncovering any problems that may exist, and understanding their work environment. The goal is to shed light not only on the experiences and opportunities of women in public relations, but also on how gender influences the experiences of women with some measure of power and influence in the field.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Major advancements took place in public relations between the 1940s and 1970s, such as the establishment of the Public Relations Society of America, the creation of a public relations code of ethics, and the implementation of an accreditation process for professionals (Horsley, 2009). It was also during this time that women started to enter the field in large numbers. This was due in part to World War II, when women got the opportunity to work while the men were at war and wanted to continue doing so after the completion of the war. "During this time period, there was a remarkable growth in the number of women entering public relations," Horsley (2009) wrote. As men left their positions during the war, women were encouraged to enter the workforce and began to make their way into public relations. When women entered the field during this time, they faced little pushback and few restrictions, but as the war ended and men began to return to the United States the conditions for women changed dramatically. Traditional stereotypes and gender roles re-emerged, encouraging women to leave work and return home. Tuchman (1979) wrote, "Rather than keeping pace with, say, the increased participation of women in the labor force, the media discredit[ed], isolate[d], and undercut" (p.533). This depiction of women by the media continued long after the war. During the postwar period and beyond, scholars have found, the media "systematically underrepresented women on television, in print media and in advertising, and relied on stereotypes when women were represented" (Horsley, 2009). This continued into the 1970s as women struggled to fight for a voice and more professional opportunities amid growing feminist activism. Since then, women have continued to emerge with a growing presence in public relations. According to Horsley (2009), women

continue to make up a majority of the employment in the field but are still marginalized and dominated by men.

<div align="center">Gender and Public Relations</div>

Issues related to gender have created a divide among men and women in public relations. These inequalities came in a variety of forms, including career roles, salary, advancement opportunities, and sexual discrimination and harassment (Aldoory & Toth, 2002). Career roles have been a major source of inequality, with women often put into technical roles rather than managerial roles because of perceptions they "were not good managers, were not tough enough for corporate life, were too emotional, would have children, and could not play the game" (Cline et al., 1986, p. 6-8). These assumptions and stereotypes were a major reason women were prevented from obtaining promotions and getting placed into management positions. Furthermore, Toth and Grunig (1993) found that when women were placed in managerial roles, they were still performing technical roles, whereas men in managerial roles performed mostly managerial tasks and were conditioned to take on more advanced positions.

Studies have reported a salary difference between men and women within the public relations industry over the past three decades (Krider & Ross, 1997; Toth, Serini, Wright, & Emig, 1998; Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Dozier, Sha, & Shen, 2013). In 2002, Toth and Aldoory found that the average man's salary was about $17,000 higher than the average woman's salary. In 2006, Anderson reported that the average salary for men in public relations was significantly higher than the average salary for women in the field. A more recent study confirmed that a salary gap due to gender still exists in the public relations industry (Dozier, Sha, & Shen, 2013). Dozier, Sha, and Shen (2013) found that the mediating variables between gender and pay were career specialization, income-affecting career interruptions, involvement in management

decision making, manager role depictions, and amount of professional experience. In that same study, Dozier et al. (2013) also found "that gender had a significant direct impact on income" and that women in public relations were paid less than men doing the same jobs.

Women also reported a glass ceiling within the field, noting that women were usually stopped on their way to the top and were hardly seen in top positions (Krider & Ross, 1997). In a study conducted by Aldoory and Toth (2002), they found that women generally saw a difference in hiring and promotions compared to their male counterparts, and that they were paid less than their male colleagues even after accounting for age, education level, and experience level. Some women reported that there was a double standard between men and women when it came to opportunities in a position (Toth & Cline, 1991).

The issue of sexual discrimination and harassment was another huge problem faced by women in the industry. Aldoory and Toth (2002) found that participants noted that some clients preferred for a man to handle their account, so therefore agencies hired men. In the same study, the researchers found that some companies do not accept women in high positions due to historical stereotypes. Aldoory and Toth (2002) also found that there "was a bias against women who had children. … [T]here is still a perception that if women have children, they are headed for the 'mommy track' and will leave the work force altogether." Their study also found that some men believe that they are better suited for the job and prepared to succeed based on their biological makeup (Aldoory & Toth, 2002). Some women noted sexism in the work environment, explaining that it occurred directly through specific comments regarding females and indirectly by the general behavior of men (Krider & Ross, 1997). According to Toth and Aldoory (2002), women reported that some men viewed their work as less than their own and that some men had attitudes that the work women did could not compare to the work men did.

Leadership and Public Relations

Some female public relations leaders define leadership as having a vision, being passionate, committed, being able to provide guidance and need an understanding for others (Aldoory, 1998). One study by Appelbaum, Audet and Miller (2002) addressed the question of whether or not the leadership style of women is different than men, saying: "Yes, women's leadership style is, at this point, different from men's but men can learn from and adopt 'women's' style and use it effectively as well" (p.49). The researchers went on to explain that effective leadership is not based on gender, saying that either can use it effectively. Some female public relations professionals think the qualities of leadership for public relations are different than the qualities of leadership in general (Aldoory, 1998). The participants in the Aldoory (1998) study explained that leaders in public relations are different than other leaders in that most of the time, "they deal with every part of a company" or they are "independent practitioners" and their role deals with "relationship counseling" (p.87).

Aldoory (1998) also found that most participants said others' perceptions of leadership were different for men and women, and that women in leadership positions were looked at as "different" while male leaders were considered normal. According to Carli (2006), "people judge women's abilities more harshly than men's, holding women to a higher standard of competence and evaluating female managers and leaders more critically than their male counterparts" (p.76). Researchers have found that people expect certain traits, such as "competence and influence" in good leaders and those traits tend to be considered masculine (Rojahn & Willemsen, 1994). When women start to portray the same traits, they are criticized for not being feminine enough. One study found that women leaders "conform to the norm" rather than addressing issues of traditional gender and leadership norms (Vasavada, 2014). Additionally, the study found that

some women leaders use gender as a strategic tool in managing public relations and that women leaders use gender as a way to represent their company or organization to the public (Vasavada, 2014).

Perceptions of women in leadership roles can sometimes prevent women from obtaining high levels of success. According to Eagly and Karau (2002), "prejudice toward female leaders and potential leaders takes two forms: (a) less favorable evaluation of women's (than men's) potential for leadership because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than women and (b) less favorable evaluation of the actual leadership behavior of women than men because such behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men" (p.576). These two forms or explanations suggest that people are less favorable to women because of the characteristics and stereotypes they assign to them and because people have existing ideas about how they think women should behave, based on gender norms and stereotypes.

Men and women in the public relations field tend to think differently when defining influence. Most women said that influence meant having a voice when it came to making decisions and having a position at the management table (Aldoory et al., 2008). In a study conducted by Aldoory, Reber, Berger, and Toth, men commonly defined influence as winning, which the authors assumed was because men already think of having a seat at the management table and women are still working toward that idea (Aldoory et al., 2008). Men and women had different ideas when asked about their most valuable power sources. Women revealed that valuable power sources were at the level of their reporting position and access to decision makers, whereas men referred to data and research results as their most valuable power sources (Aldoory et al., 2008). Aldoory et al. (2008) assumed that based on the data, influence has

different meanings because women may still perceive a need for higher reporting levels and greater access to power. They do not see themselves in that type of position, while men do.

Previous research has looked at the attitudes and experiences of women in the public relations field over the past couple decades, highlighting the major challenges women have faced, but there is less information detailing the current challenges women are facing in public relations. It is important to examine the experiences of women in leadership in the public relations industry in today's society and how gender influences their experiences and opportunities in order to see what issues women are still facing and how to overcome them.

## Theoretical Perspective

This study uses a liberal-feminist theoretical framework. Liberal feminism is used in this study to help understand issues of inequity between men and women. The concept of liberal feminism focuses on equality between men and women and maintains that to achieve such equality requires efforts from not only women but from society as a whole (Tong, 2014, p.46). The Liberal Feminism perspective, "emphasizes social and legal reform through politics that are designed to create equal opportunities for women and to establish individual civil rights so that no one is denied access to the social-economic system because of sex, race, or class" (Freeman 1990, p. 75). Liberal feminism, explained by Steeves (1987), "assumes specific changes within the existing system ultimately can achieve freedom of expression and equity for women." The belief of liberal feminists' is, that when women have the opportunity to pursue their potential for individual development like men and sexist discrimination is eliminated, women's liberation is achieved (Freeman, 1990). Most liberal feminists focus on finding ways to create and support opportunities for educational and professional success (Steeves, 1987).

In addition, feminist standpoint theory will be used in this study to help understand participants' experiences as women working in leadership roles in public relations. According to Swigonski (1994): "A standpoint is a position in society, involving a level of awareness about an individual's social location, from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured. Standpoint theory begins with the idea that the less powerful members of society experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression" (p. 390). Feminist standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s from the Marxist tradition, coming from the analysis of the conditions of the working class (Swigonski, 1994; Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1983). As Wood (2005) states, "[F]eminist standpoint theory draws especially on the Marxist claim that the work we do – the activities in which we engage – shape our identities and consciousness and [are] extensions our knowledge" (p. 61).

Starting out, the theory was a type of analysis, connecting everyday life and politics to understand the oppression of women (Heckman, 2001). According to Harding, "It [Standpoint theory] was proposed not just as an explanatory theory, but also prescriptively, as a method to theory of method (a methodology) to guide future feminist research" (2004, p.1). Later, after the theory was more developed, Hartsock (1983) further explained, "the concept of a standpoint rests on the fact that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible" (p.117). Hartsock (1983) also explained that such a standpoint with regard to women "expresses female experience at a particular time and place, located within a particular set of social relations" (p. 303). Harding (1993) stated, "Starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order" (p.56). The idea was that women had different positions in society

than men and that by starting with them or by trying to understand them, it would shed light on others, those marginalized and not groups of people.

One idea of feminist standpoint theory is that "knowledge is socially located and arises in social positions that are structured by power relations" (Hallstein, 1999). As Hallstein (1999) explains:

> [In other words] feminist standpoint theorists argue that women occupy a distinct position or standpoint in culture because, under the sexual division of labor ensconced in capitalist patriarchy, women have been systematically exploited, oppressed, excluded, devalued, and dominated… theorists recognize that women as a group share the common experience of disadvantage in relation to men as a group.

Another idea, of the theory, has to do with objectivity and location. According to Swigonski (1994), "For a position to count as a standpoint, an objective location is required, such as beginning with the life experiences within a particular group" (p. 391). The idea is that social location, of a woman's life, shapes a person's standpoint (Wood, 2005). Swigonski goes on to explain, "Life experiences structure one's understanding of life. Research must begin from concrete experiences rather than abstract concepts… such as beginning with life experiences" (p. 390).

A few key elements that outline feminist standpoint theory are: 1) "Society is structured by power relations, which results in unequal social locations for women and men: Men are the dominant, privileged, or centered group, and women are a subordinate, disadvantaged, or marginalized group… [and] these common conditions shape the experiences of women and men" Hallstein (1999). 2) Women are "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986), meaning that they have two views of women, one that the culture or society has [of women] and a personal view of what it

means to be female based on their own experiences (Hallstein, 1999). "Subordinate people have the potential for "double vision" a knowledge of awareness and sensitivity to both the dominant worldview of society and their own perspective" (Swigonski, 1994). Given that women can be outsiders within they may be able to see the differences or connections between the dominant view and the view of those on the outside. The dominant group's view has the possibility to be partial and incomplete whereas the the subordinate group's view could be more complete because they tend to care less about upholding social order and have a more open perspective (Swigonski). 3) "Standpoint refers not simply to location or experience, but to a critical understanding of location and experience as part of – and shaped by – larger social and political contexts and, specifically, discourses" (Wood, 2005). Swigonski (1994) states, "Knowledge emerges for the oppressed through the struggles they wage against their oppressors." Swigonski (1994) explains, "Researchers can understand hidden aspects of social relations between marginalized groups and the institutions that structure their lives through their struggles to change those institutions and structures." This knowledge of struggle is needed to be able to try and understand the reality of women, the lesser group. 4) Both men and women can have multiple standpoints and differences due to power relations elements like race and sexual orientation (Hallstein, 1999; Wood, 2005).

Hekman (1997) suggests defining the feminist standpoint "as situated and engaged knowledge, as a place from which feminists can articulate a counterhegemonic discourse and argue for a less repressive society." She goes on to explain, "Women speak from multiple standpoints, producing multiple knowledges. But this does not prevent women from coming together to work for specific political goals" (Hekman, 1997).

There have been different questions and complaints throughout the years surrounding this theory. The biggest issue with feminist standpoint theory is the idea of essentialism, or the notion that the theory develops a generalization about women, as though all women are the same rather than acknowledging the diversity exists among women (Wood, 2005). Using standpoint theory to try and understand the experiences of many groups of women because not all women are the same is way to try an avoid generalizing such as the critique suggests. Another criticism is that feminist standpoint theory does not present a sufficiently complex understanding of experience and rests on a dualism between subjective experience and objective truth (West & Turner, 2004). This critique suggests that even when using the theory to understand standpoint or experiences, scholars cannot really achieve understanding because of their presumptions about the nature of reality. Although this critique says that scholars cannot understand another's standpoint because of their previous beliefs, standpoint theory is still useful in bringing to light another person's experience. As Harding (1991) explains:

> Only through such struggles can we begin to see beneath the appearances created by an unjust social order to the reality of how this social order is in fact constructed and maintained. This need for struggle emphasizes the fact that a feminist standpoint is not something that anyone can have simply by claiming it. It is an achievement. A standpoint differs in this respect from a perspective, which anyone can have simply by 'opening one's eyes'.

The goal in using this theory for this study is to learn how feminist standpoint theory can be used to understand the experiences of women in leadership positions in public relations. When standpoints surface, knowledge is achieved. Standpoint theory allows knowledge to emerge from any group of people. Using standpoint allows for new ideas to surface about

marginalized groups rather than those who are in the majority group. Based on the theory, in order to understand a standpoint, you have to be the one who experiences marginalization, so by focusing on those who are marginalized, bias can be identified and new questions can be asked about the experiences of women leaders in public relations. Using feminist standpoint theory is appropriate for this study because the idea is to understand the experiences and the standpoint of women working in the public relations field. In particular, it will be used to seek the answers to the following research questions:

*RQ 1: How do women in public relations describe the success and challenges they have faced in their careers?*

*RQ 2: How do women in public relations think they are perceived as leaders?*

*RQ 3: How do women in public relations think gender influences their leadership style?*

CHAPTER 3.  METHOD

A qualitative research method was used for this study because the purpose of the research

is to understand the roles and experiences of individual women in public relations. According to

Brennen (2013), "qualitative research is interdisciplinary, interpretive, political and theoretical in

nature. Using language to understand concepts based on people's experiences, it attempts to

create a sense of the larger realm of human relationships" (p. 4). Qualitative researchers, as

stated by Creswell (2013), "are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed,

that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p.13).

The type of qualitative approach used in the study was semi-structured interviews. As

explained by Merriam (2009), "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior,

feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p.88). According to Patton (2002)

interviews, "allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p.341). Interviews are an

appropriate approach when trying to look for meaning and understand the experiences of others.

As stated by Lindlof and Taylor (2011), interviews are used to gather in-depth information that

cannot be observed and to gain an understanding of someone else's ideas and experiences.

Qualitative interviewing was a suitable method for this study since the purpose of interviews is

to understand someone else's meaning and experiences and the goal of this study was to

understand how gender influences the experiences of women in public relations. An inductive

approach was used in this study to find underlying themes associated with the data collected.

Sample

The sample strategy for the study was the use of a purposive sample followed by

snowball sampling. This strategy was chosen because there is a specific audience to target for the

purpose of this study. The sample frame for this study was women, any age ranging from 21 to 65, who have a leadership role and who currently work in the public relations field in the Midwest. A leadership position or role was defined as one in which the participant manages and guides a group of individuals other than themselves. A job in the public relations field was described as a position dealing with public relations efforts and a title containing any of the following terms: president, vice president, executive director, public relations specialist, public relations manager, consultant, communications officer, director of communications, public information specialist, public relations coordinator, PR executive, or public affairs specialist. Participants were located in the Midwest and were approached based on mutual acquaintances or recommendations from others. This study included women working in different industries and with different backgrounds to incorporate different perspectives and to increase the validity of the findings.

The sample size consisted of 10 participants. There was no expected number of participants; new participants were identified until saturation was reached, meaning when no new information was being discovered. This matched the approach of Merriam (2009), who wrote that when conducting interviews researchers should sample until they reach redundancy. Though the sample size was somewhat small, saturation was met when the participants all started to provide the same answers to the research questions.

<center>Data Collection</center>

After getting approval from the Institutional Review Board, see Appendix D, and upon getting written consent, the interviews began. Participants were interviewed face to face, except for one participant who was interviewed over the phone. All of the interviews took place in a private location, in the participant's office or at a place of her choosing, in an attempt to avoid

distractions and keep the information confidential. The location of the interview was up to the participant for two reasons: (1) to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible and (2) to make the interview convenient for the participant. If the participant did not feel comfortable talking about her work experiences, struggles, or personal issues in her current work environment, she was able to pick an alternative location where she felt comfortable. The interviews lasted between 40 and 80 minutes. This provided enough time to cover all of the interview questions and allowed participants the opportunity to elaborate in detail. The interviews were recorded, with permission from participants. A set of semi-structured interview questions was developed to guide the conversation between the researcher and the participants, see Appendix A. The goal in using semi-structured questions was to guide the topics while allowing for flexibility in answers, with the hope of promoting or facilitating natural conversation (Merriam, 2009).

This study focused on women's roles, equality in the workforce, and gender and leadership in public relations. There were separate questions for each concept to better gauge the participants' views, attitudes, and experiences with each. The questions were grouped into four categories: opportunities, leadership style, perceptions of women leaders, and demographic questions.

The first section of questions was used to gather background information on the participant, different roles they have had and the different tasks they have performed as well as information about their current career position. This section also included questions about their work environments, colleagues, and opportunities. The next two sections of questions centered on the concept of leadership. Questions asked for participants' views and opinions on the term and its meaning as well as the idea of women in leadership roles compared to men. Due to the

fact that all of these women have been in some type of leadership position, the women were asked to not only explain what leadership meant to them, but to talk about their experiences of being a woman in a leadership position. There were also questions about women in the public relations field in general. These questions focused more on overall views regarding the equality of women, specific challenges they face compared to men, and perceptions of women in leadership positions.

Demographic questions were asked at the end of the interview and in a handout form, which allowed participants to write and/or type their responses rather than sharing them out loud. This was done in an effort to make participants feel comfortable sharing sensitive information such as age and marital status. All of the interview questions were asked to better understand the attitudes, opinions, and values of women in leadership positions in public relations. The full list of interviews questions can be found in Appendix A.

The participants in this study are anonymous. Due to the nature of the study, asking about roles and experiences that these women have or are currently dealing with, some of the information may be sensitive and private information. Measures taken to ensure the privacy of participants included conducting interviews in a private location, destroying recordings after they were transcribed, storing transcriptions of the recordings on a password-protected device, and using numbers to identify participants rather than using names.

<center>Analyzing Data</center>

The researcher used an inductive approach to analyze the data after it was collected. Before the data analyzing began all of the interview recordings were transcribed. Strauss and Corbin's constant comparison process steps were followed as cited in Creswell (2013): "open coding, axial coding and selective coding" (p.86). After the recordings were transcribed, open

coding was used to find common ideas throughout the data. Previous literature provided sensitizing concepts relevant to this, but open coding was used to start. The researcher printed and read the ten transcripts several times to make sense of the data, marking significant ideas with different colored pens. After the initial round of open coding, the data was reviewed a second time to start grouping similar ideas. The researcher used index cards to identify significant ideas from the printed transcripts. Next, axial coding was used to create categories for the groupings of open codes, or similar ideas (Merriam, 2009). The researcher sorted the hundreds of index cards into categories based on similar ideas and continued to reorganize the cards until the strongest categories were identified. Lastly, in selective coding the researcher grouped the strongest categories together to tell the larger story of the data and to show the connections among emergent themes (Creswell, 2013).

To enhance the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis, reflexivity was used to acknowledge the researcher's biases and position. According to Maxwell (2013), even though researcher subjectivity cannot be eliminated, researchers should understand how it might influence a study and its conclusions. The researcher, a woman with a degree in public relations but not a woman in a leadership position, was both an insider and an outsider in this study. The shared characteristic of being a woman could have had a positive effect on the information gathered from the participants, who might have felt comfortable opening up and sharing more freely. However, to ensure the researcher did not let her personal beliefs interfere with the analysis, the findings focus solely on the data. The researcher has tried to be transparent regarding the study's findings by providing clear information and direct quotations from participants that indicate how the conclusions were formed.

About the Participants

The participants in this study were women ranging in age from 35 to 60 who hold a leadership position in public relations (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

**Participant Demographics**

| Participant | Title/Role | Age | Race/Ethnicity | Married | Kids |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Executive Vice President | 53 | Caucasian | Yes | 0 |
| 2 | President/Owner | 41 | Caucasian | Divorced | 2 |
| 3 | Vice President of Member Development/Programs | 44 | Caucasian | Yes | 2 |
| 4 | Executive Director of Public Relations | 49 | Caucasian | Yes | 2 |
| 5 | Communications Consultant | 45 | Caucasian | Yes | 1 |
| 6 | Manager of Public Affairs | 35 | Caucasian | Yes | 0 |
| 7 | Marketing/Communications Director | 42 | Caucasian | Yes | 2 |
| 8 | Vice President of Corporate Communications | 45 | Caucasian | Yes | 0 |
| 9 | Vice President of Media Relations | 56 | African American | Yes | 2 |
| 10 | Executive Director | 58 | Caucasian | Yes | 3 |

*Participant 1* is the executive vice president and part owner of a marketing and communications firm. Some of her previous roles include director of communications, director of external communications, chief speechwriter, and account supervisor. She has worked in government, nonprofit, corporate, and agency settings. Throughout her career she has held numerous leadership roles where she has spent a majority of her time leading, managing, and supervising teams of individuals. In her current role, as an executive-level professional and consultant, she is able to focus her time on projects she truly enjoys such as strategic planning, crisis communication, and brand management.

*Participant 2* is the president/owner of her own full-service marketing agency. In her current role, aside from running the agency and leading her employees, she does all of the public relations work for clients. She has worked mostly with nonprofit organizations and in state department or government jobs. Her previous roles include health educator and marketing coordinator.

*Participant 3* is the vice president of member development and programs of a business organization. Her previous roles include leading multiple statewide events and programs with key activities surrounding event planning and communication efforts.

*Participant 4* is the executive director of public relations for an advertising agency. She has worked in a variety of settings, including at an agency, at a nonprofit, in public affairs, and in corporate communications. Some of her previous roles include marketing coordinator and project manager. In her current role as a department head, she supervises a team of account managers.

*Participant 5* is a communications consultant working in the retail, tech, and corporate industry. She has experience working in agency, corporate communications, and public affairs contexts with roles ranging from account supervisor to vice president of communications and public affairs.

*Participant 6* is a manager of public affairs for an agricultural-based company. Her previous roles include internal communications and reputation management for agricultural-

related corporations and trade associations. Her current role focuses on managing global external communications, and she has several people who report to her on a daily basis.

*Participant 7* is a marketing and communications director for a government organization. Her previous experience is in investor relations, consumer marketing, and media relations for government agencies and statewide/financial organizations. In her current role as director, she oversees a department and team of employees.

*Participant 8* is the vice president of corporate communications. In her current role she oversees communication efforts for multiple departments. Her previous experience includes a variety of corporate communications-related roles in the energy and tech industries.

*Participant 9* is a vice president of media relations for a financial company. Some of her previous positions include senior vice president, director of corporate communications, and media trainer. She has worked in corporate and agency settings mainly in the business and financial industry.

*Participant 10* is the executive director of an awareness program for a community organization. Some of her previous roles include assistant press secretary, media relations director and public relations director. She has worked in government, corporate, and agency settings serving a variety of clients such as financial and retail companies.

CHAPTER 4.  FINDINGS

As participants spoke about their experiences as women in leadership positions in public relations, their narratives centered on 17 initial themes. Those themes were then refined and organized to form six overarching themes: promotional barriers, double standards for women, pressure of stereotypes, leadership styles, female competition and bullying, and optimism about the future. A description of each theme is listed in Table 2. A full version of the themes can be found in Appendix B. All direct quotations come from the transcribed interviews.

**Table 2.**

**Themes**

| Theme | Description | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Promotional barriers | Talks about different barriers that the participants think impact advancement for women | 1.1 "The Old Boys' Club"<br>1.2 Male-dominated<br>1.3 Fear of women<br>1.4 Impact of children |
| Double standards for women | Talks about how the participants think there is a difference in the views, expectations and treatment of women and men | 2.1 Negative associations<br>2.2 Amount of effort<br>2.3 Favoritism and harassment<br>2.4 Unequal pay |
| Pressure of stereotypes | Talks about the different ways participants feel they must act or perform in the workplace or as a leader because they are women | 3.1 Display of confidence<br>3.2 Capability<br>3.3 Compassion |
| Leadership styles | Talks about how participants view leadership | 4.1 Different types of leaders<br>4.2 Definition of leadership |
| Female competition & bullying | Talks about how women are not receiving support from other women and are experiencing issues with bullying | 5.1 Unsupportive females<br>5.2 Workplace bullying |
| Optimism about the future | Talks about how participants think there are positive aspects to being a woman in PR and that overall workplace conditions are changing and will continue to do so in the future | 6.1 Positive associations<br>6.2 Advantages of being a woman<br>6.3 Shifting perspective |

Promotional Barriers

When explaining what the participants think about the opportunities available to them, they talked about different barriers that they think impact advancement for women in the public relations field. The participants highlighted specific ways they felt gender influenced their opportunity for promotion, including an "old boys' club," a male-dominated industry, a fear of women, and the impact of children.

Participants talked about there being restricted access for women and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in public relations. The following comments are representative of this theme:

Participant 1: "It was difficult to work within the boys' club, because there were opportunities where they would go golfing and wouldn't invite us, that typical kind of stuff."

Participant 3: "I'm not sure if it's the old boys' club mentality or if it's the—who gets that invitation to the inner office. I think many times males are asked in and females have to ask to get in."

Participant 6: "I do feel like there is almost unspoken access for men just because they connect on different things than we do, but I don't feel like access is closed. I feel like a female can break into that if you don't let that bother you … and just go for it. So I think we have to work harder."

Participant 9: "I think men tend to be able to access the funds, the money to build large businesses … I think women have the power of verbal, written communication and relationship management skills that can often trump access, if the access is equal. If women had greater access, then we'd have even more power."

Some participants referenced the glass ceiling when talking about the struggle for women to reach top positions. Participant 4 explained: "If we are talking about [women being represented equally in leadership in] internal PR for companies, large corporations, probably not because the further you get up the ladder, it is harder for women to get there than men." Participant 8 said: I used to have a woman boss, and she broke the glass ceiling here. So if you think about it … there was never anybody at that level who was a female; think about that, she is pretty tough. I would say people feared her [for that]."

Participant 5 said: "I am someone who has not felt the pressure of the glass ceiling in my career. I recognize it's there, and I am fully aware that it is there."

The participants also talked about the reality that the top-level roles in public relations are filled with men. The participants acknowledged the past trends of men in management roles, and some recognized that men are still in those roles. More than half of the participants mentioned that they think women are not represented equally in leadership roles in public relations. Participants 1 and 8 said [leadership is] "still male dominated." The following comments are also representative:

> Participant 3, speaking of a corporate realignment she had witnessed: "It ended up that all of the males had the primary roles and would be tasked with more important relationships, and all of the females were in lesser roles."
>
> Participant 5: "Let's be honest: It's a male industry. It was built by men."
>
> Participant 8: "It's definitely more skewed toward men in management, like the leaders, and in PR [the] tactical people that are actually doing work are more female."

Participant 9: "[T]he predominant gender in leadership roles at the largest agencies in the world are men, and the leaders of the holding companies are men."

The participants also talked about how they think that some people fear women in leadership or powerful roles and that fear can influence their opportunity for advancement. Participant 8 said, "I would say that men are concerned that women know a lot … and they feel threatened." Participant 1 explained, "I would say [industries with fewer opportunities for women] corporate and government, because they are traditional male dominated industries, sometimes fear women in leadership." Participant 5 explained: "I have been passed over for a position that I was, in some cases, already doing the work and doing it well, because my promotion would have potentially threatened a supervisor." Finally, Participant 2 stated: "I think that [women in high-level positions] can definitely be intimidating to some people."

Another issue that multiple participants addressed was the work-life balance issues they experience and how having children impacts their careers. Participants talked about the struggles they have experienced or have seen other women experience after having children. The following comments are representative:

Participant 2: "Being a single mother in a leadership role is difficult. I probably feel a lot more guilt when I have to stay home with the kids than employees do … I worry about getting invoices out or getting checks to the bank if I am home with the kids."

Participant 3: "I've not been penalized for putting the priority on my children because I've been able to still produce really strong results, but I certainly have seen other people whose careers have been completely derailed because of kids or because they didn't have spouses who understood sharing the workload at home."

Participant 4: "I would say women who have kids and are trying to get ahead in their career and try and balance a home is a struggle. It is a daily struggle."

Participant 8: "The one thing that's really difficult and I think you have to keep balanced if you are in the PR world, is work-life balance. And it is very hard to do."

Participant 9: "In the nineties and probably early 2000s, a number of women were convinced that it was OK to pursue the mommy track while you were working in an agency or possibly even corporate, and that meant you could take a three-day or four-day work week and you could maintain your momentum in the agency in terms of promotions, raises, responsibilities and so forth. … It didn't take me long to realize that was actually not true. You were sending a signal in a way to your management team that you were willing to sacrifice growth for flexibility. That's an OK sacrifice; you just need to go into it with your eyes wide open."

<div align="center">Double Standard for Women</div>

Within this theme, most participants brought up differences in the views, expectations, and treatment of women and men in leadership roles in public relations. More than half of the participants said they think a double standard exists when it comes to women and men in leadership roles in public relations. Multiple participants noted the difference in how people view the personalities of women and men in leadership positions and the different expectations they feel that people have for women and men. The participants also said they feel like they are treated differently because of their gender.

When the participants were asked if they felt people would respond to them as a leader the same way they would respond to a man, many said no. The following comments illustrate this perspective:

Participant 1: "In my twenties I may have been called brash, where a guy in his twenties may have been called ambitious. In my thirties I may have been called a bitch, when a guy in the same position would have been defined as strong."

Participant 2: "I think there are certain personalities that don't jive well with a woman coming in and giving advice, even if it's on a subject they know nothing about, like marketing or PR. Some people don't accept that, but there are also females that don't accept that."

Participant 4: "The double standard on how you are viewed – a man being firm and direct and then a woman just being a bitch. That is just a cultural thing."

Participant 6: "If I were a male I think they [my colleagues] would be like, 'Oh, okay,' instead of pushing back on me in front of other leaders."

Participant 9: "I've seen women sink or swim around things like appearance, behavior at social events, and attire. I've seen things like that and I don't know if men would suffer the same consequences."

Participant 10: "I think there are definitely times when there is a double standard. … It just depends on who you are dealing with from a generation standpoint and industry."

Participants also talked about negative characteristics they think people associate with them or with women leaders, in general, in public relations. Participant 7 said: "I think my peers perceive me as more aggressive than necessary or confrontational when I am just trying to be collaborative." Participant 8 explained: "I'm not as chit-chatty with my employees… and I think as a female I'm probably perceived as cold in that regard." Participant 4 said: "If you seem overconfident, you can have a negative connotation. … If you are too firm, everybody is going to

think you are a bitch." Participant 6 said: "I think that [being supportive] is something that people expect of you when you are a female, and when that nurturing, like 'Come tell me about what is going on in your life,' style isn't natural to you at its best I think people are just disappointed and at its worse it gets you labeled as a bitch or hard to work for."

The participants in this study highlighted the amount of work and effort women put in to be successful. Some participants noted that they feel that because they are women they have to "go above and beyond" (Participant 1) to get recognition. Participant 10 said: "Women have to work harder than men in order to get a role, and may even be more qualified." Almost every participant brought up their work ethic and stated that they "work hard" (Participant 5) and "set high standards" (Participant 3) for themselves. Participant 7 explained: "[When I was working from home part-time] I worked more hours, because I didn't want anyone to perceive that I wasn't working as much or enough because it was important to me that I was still holding my own and maybe even more so than normal, just because I felt like they were doing this very special thing for me."

The participants described incidents when they were treated differently because of their gender, including cases of gender bias, and favoritism. Several participants mentioned dealing with offensive conversations, sexist comments, and sexual harassment when attending mostly male events or meetings (Participant 8, 2 and 1). Participants also noted that at times they felt they were not taken seriously as a leader because they were women. The following comments are representative:

Participant 2: "I had a client that had all men managers, and I ended up refusing to go to those meetings because they wouldn't even look at me."

Participant 4: "We had a new business opportunity … and a new guy was put on the job instead of me … to please the client. … It was blatant bias."

Participant 6, discussing a particular view of the female staff: "[A]t its worst it was, 'You guys are cute, that's fun, you're entertaining—now let the grownups talk about real issues."

Participant 9: "A senior manager actually looked me in the eye and said, 'you're young, you're female and you're black. I don't know if we can put you in front of our clients.'"

Participants also talked about how they were treated differently when it came to salary. Some participants said they thought they were given the same opportunities in hiring as their male colleagues, but almost every participant mentioned they were not given the same salary as their male colleagues at some point in their career. Participant 8 said: "I would say in hiring and promotion, absolutely [there is equity], but not in salary. And I would say that I'm paid less than male counterparts or people that have the same title." Participant 4 stated: "I was treated differently in regards to my pay. … I was grossly underpaid. It was ridiculous." Participant 1 stated: "In salary and promotion . . . there is a bias and I had access to being in leadership roles. I had access to salary tables, criteria for performance and management systems." Participant 10 also said she had access to salaries as part of her recent senior leadership roles: "I would actually see salaries when I was looking at financials, and absolutely men are still paid more and you can look across the nation … women are significantly paid less than their counterparts."

Pressure of Stereotypes

Many participants talked about how they feel like they have to act a certain way, like more professional or confident, in the workplace and as a leader because they are women. Participants explained they must show they are confident and prove they are capable before others will take them seriously. One participant also mentioned the need to act more compassionately because she is a woman. Several women talked about feeling like they need to act more professionally as a woman leader. Participant 1 stated: "I always had to be more professional, more formal; it has to do with establishing your presence and your reputation." Participant 7 said: "If I do not show confidence in my own decision, then it is hard to get everybody else on board."

When asked specifically about whether they felt pressured to model a certain type of behavior in the workplace, most participants said yes. The following comments are representative of this type of response:

Participant 2: "I think only when it comes to emotions. Like if I am upset and I want to cry … and there have been instances where I wanted to, or I have, and I have gotten really mad at myself.

Participant 3: "I definitely feel like you can't show the humor side until generally people know you're capable."

Participant 6: "I think that an expectation of me is that somehow I have more compassion or understanding for mothers than other leaders do, but I don't know what it's like to be a mother and I don't think I need to, to be an effective leader."

Participant 9 talked about the expectation of appearance, saying: "The beauty bias, the notion that women are always expected to present [in] a certain way, look a certain way, sound, dress and smell a certain way." Some participants talked about the importance of having role models and mentors in the workplace and that there is not enough of those for women. Participants said they felt the need to be a "role model" (Participant 2) and "set an example" (Participant 9) for other women, including younger women and women of color, to show them that they can be successful in the workplace.

Most of the participants also said that in some way or another they had to earn respect before they were trusted. Participant 8 stated: "I've always felt respected … but when you're first starting a role and you're new, regardless of what level you are, you still have to earn that respect." Participant 6 said: "I feel like I am respected in some areas of the organization more than others … [and] that have to do with who I've had an opportunity to work with and whether I've had a chance to prove myself as a leader."

Leadership Style

Throughout the study participants talked about leadership style and in what ways they think gender has an influence on the leadership style of women in public relations. When talking about the different ways they think gender can influence leadership, participants, talked about what made a good or bad leader and male versus female leadership. In general, the participants described a good leader as someone who is encouraging, someone who builds trust, and someone who is a good listener (Participants 10, 5, 6 and 1). When describing a bad leader, participants used terms like "unsupportive," "managerial," "patronizing" and "insecure" (Participants 6, 4, 8 and 2). When asked whether they thought their previous supervisors had influenced their own leadership style, all of the participants said yes. All of the participants reported having both

negative and positive experiences with former supervisors, both male and female, and all except one of the participants said they have had a woman supervisor or leader at some point in their career. More than half of the participants thought there were different leadership styles for men and women, while others thought there were different leadership styles in general (good and bad) not related to gender. Participant 8 explained: "I think that men think differently than women. I think women are much more relational and more detail-oriented opposed to men. … [T]hey are probably more narrow[ly] focused and process-driven." On the other hand, Participant 4 said: "I would say there are good leaders and bad leaders across the board. … I would say that a man or a woman can have the characteristics of a good leader." All of the participants agreed that different leadership styles can be effective regardless of gender. Participant 7 stated: "I think that leadership styles are effective in different ways for different people."

The participants also discussed the concept of leadership and what it means to them. Interestingly, all of the participants had very similar ideas of what leadership is. When asked to describe leadership, almost all of the participants used the same phrases such as having a clear vision, working together, and working toward a common goal/objective. Participant 4 said: "[Leadership is] building trust, seeing a vision, and supporting the team … and giving them the tools and opportunities to make your vision happen." A table with all of the participants' definitions of leadership can be found in Appendix C.

<center>Female Competition and Bullying</center>

The interviews with these participants revealed an issue of female competition that suggests several of these women had experienced incidents of bullying in the workplace. Several participants mentioned that one obstacle impeding women's advancement is other women. These participants talked about how they felt a lack of support from other women. The following are

representative: Participant 1 stated: "Women do not support women." She went on to say "the bar is set higher for women, and it's usually set higher for women by women … You have to do something to break out or you have other women hold you back and they just set the bar higher." Participant 5 described a concrete example: "I had a boss who pulled my team to get in kind of a meeting with her while I was on vacation because she wasn't happy with my project and how I had done it. She had not yet told me she wasn't happy with it; she told my team. That was very irritating and I felt like that was a power move." Participant 1 also described bullying from women: "One organization had several female executives and while they like to say they support other female leaders, they did not. They tended to advocate for other young men. They felt threatened by other women … they isolated other young female leaders." Participant 10 agreed: "I would have to say the most disappointing thing to me even to this day is the fact that women do not support women. Women are awfully competitive with each other and instead of upholding, supporting and trying to really put somebody up to the next level and help them grow, we sometimes take credit for what they are doing or pull them back and not really support them in the manner that they should be."

Throughout the discussion, the participants also touched on the issue of bullying in the workplace more broadly. Almost all of the participants mentioned that they have experienced bullying from a male or female at some point during their career. Participant 6 said: "Sadly I have felt it [bullying] more from other females than males. Little gestures and comments to make sure I understand my place versus their place." Participant 4 said of her previous supervisor: "He was just a bully. He would tell you one thing and then turn around and do something else." Participant 7 said: "I felt like his feedback was negative 364 days a year and then we would get to my review … and he'd be like, 'You're great.'" Participant 2 said: "My

first female boss was a bully. Just the way she talked to me … and her and her assistant would sit at their desk and talk; you knew they were talking about other people."

## Optimism about the Future

Despite their experiences with gender bias and bullying, throughout the interviews participants expressed a sense of optimism for women in public relations. Participants spoke positively about being a woman in public relations and said that overall, workplace conditions were improving. They believed those changes would continue into the future. Every participant listed at least one positive characteristic they attribute to women leaders. Participant 1 said: "I think people see women as strong communicators, empathetic, creative, and good listeners." Some participants went on to offer positive perceptions they think others have of them, including people who report to them, their peers, and their supervisors. Participant 8 said: "I think if you'd ask the people that work for me they'd say I like to have fun but I'm intense … [M]y peers would think that I'm probably a collaborative leader." Participant 3 stated: "I think I am viewed as a person who is highly capable and definitely has the organization's goals in mind." Participant 5 mentioned: "I have been told that I shoot straight and that I am optimistic." Participant 4 said: "Nobody as of yet has ever really circumvented me or gone around me. They know I listen, but they also know I am decisive."

All of the participants also said that overall they think people have positive feelings about women in leadership roles in public relations, and some participants perceived their gender to be an advantage. The following comments illustrate this perspective:

Participant 1: I don't see it [being a woman] as a hindrance any longer. It can be an

advantage sometimes because I think sometimes women are underestimated and so I can

be quiet and reflective in a meeting but then speak up and people pay attention, too."

Participant 4: "I think more and more we're seeing that women do have the makings of a good leader and they're showing it. More and more, seeing women leaders coming into that C-suite, really showing that they can lead a country or state, lead a company, a global company, and be successful at it."

Participant 5: "Yes, I think there are positive feelings. … I think that we're at a place where we [women] can really represent well what we contribute. I think that we have an opportunity to help change the idea of the role of communication because of the heightened interest in having more women in leadership roles."

Participant 6: "What I like about [being a female leader] is that there are opportunities to break out and surprise people with the confidence you have or your capability. Sometimes I do think we get opportunities that men don't; you just have to know how to use it in a way that is beneficial."

Participant 9: "I think women have the power of the verbal skills, the written skills, the communications skills and the relationship management skills … that give them a lot of power."

Participant 10: "I think a woman can bring a different perspective than a male."

Participants also mentioned a shift in perspective and described how the workplace is changing and benefiting women. Multiple participants noted there is a "changing dynamic" (Participant 8) and a "generational difference" (Participant 1), both of which, they believe, are expanding opportunities for women. Participant 10 said: "I've worked in smaller firms. … In that particular situation, those people in leadership that were partners were actually younger than I was. It was a very different generational thing and mentality, and they actually treated us more

equally, which was very refreshing." The participants believed that as society continues to change, women will get more opportunities because of their gender.

Participant 5: "I think there are internal factors that will aid that shift. I think that we certainly are more than ever … understanding the more aesthetic side of business, and people want to feel good about relationships with the organization. I think that in that light, in that respect, you're going to see more opportunities for women, also more opportunities for people of color."

CHAPTER 5.  DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to examine how gender has influenced the experiences of a
select group of women in leadership roles in public relations. This study focused on the
participants' previous experiences as well as their thoughts and opinions in order to understand
how they think gender impacts women in leadership positions in public relations. Six overall
themes emerged from the findings: promotional barriers, double standards for women, pressure
of stereotypes, leadership styles, female competition and bullying, and optimism about the
future.

Based on the findings, it can be said that this group of Midwestern women in public
relations think gender has had a significant impact on their experiences. All of the participants
described incidents throughout their career that were directly related to gender, consistent with
Hartsock's (1983) concept of feminist standpoint as one that explains a "female experience at a
particular time and place, located within a particular set of social relations" (p. 303).

The findings in the study seem to go against the ideas of liberal feminism. One of the
main ideas behind liberal feminism is that once things are made equal for women and men in the
public sphere, politically and socially, women would be able to succeed like men. Based on the
participants' experiences this is not the case. There have been laws passed and policies formed to
create equality for men and women, especially in the workplace but it is evident that gender
discrimination still exists. Participants talked about different promotional barriers that they
thought had impacted opportunities for women in public relations. Similar to findings by Krider
and Ross (1997), this research found that women still acknowledge the existence of a glass
ceiling as a promotional barrier. Participants also mentioned feeling like there was restricted

access for women leaders. When participants were asked if they thought they were given the same opportunities in promotion and hiring as their colleagues, many said yes; however, many of those participants went on to describe different barriers they saw impeding the advancement of women.

Another concept of liberal feminism that does not match the findings is that sexual discrimination would be eliminated when women's liberation is achieved (Freeman, 1990). This is not exactly true as sexism still persists. The participants in the study talked about how they were treated differently because of their gender. Similar to the research conducted by Krider and Ross (1997), which found sexism in the work environment, the participants in this study also mentioned incidents of sexual harassment and sexist comments in the workplace.

Liberal feminism also focuses on creating opportunities for success for women, although it seemed that most participants talked about how women were not supportive of other women. It was evident that women were not supportive when it came to other women, based on the experiences and interactions the participants had with their female bosses or coworkers. The participants talked about the issue of female competition, something that Dalton (2007) calls the "queen bee" behavior. Dalton (2007) describes "queen bees" as, "women who achieve success then effectively build a moat around themselves rather than build bridges to enable and mentor other women." Several participants in this study talked about how women were not supportive of other women. Some participants mentioned that in the "old boys' club," men were supportive of one another and helped one another succeed, whereas women are perceived as competing with one another. Others went on to explain that men are advocates for other men, which helps them to be successful and rise to the top, while women might have mentors but not advocates; no one is advocating for them, helping them move to the top. Dalton (2007) goes on to mention:

One theory advanced to explain queen bee behavior is a belief that the number of positions available to women decreases exponentially at higher organizational levels and that this reverse funnel effect is far more pronounced for women than it is for men. Thus, the number of positions available at the upper echelons of organizations is far more constrained for women than for men.

Similarly, a study completed by Farrell and Hersch, looking at women serving on the board of Fortune 500 companies, found that the chances of adding a woman to the board if a woman currently serves on the board had a probability of 0.109 and again if two women served on the board the probability of a third being added was even lower closer to zero (2005, p.100). This example supports the reality of the struggle for women to reach high levels of an organization and could also support the claim that when a woman is already present in a high level it is even harder for other women to achieve that level. What is the reason for this female competition? Could it be because in today's society leadership opportunities for women are hard to come by or could it be that women have been conditioned, by society, to believe that there is only one spot for a woman at the table?

Participants also mentioned that they think that sometimes people fear women in leadership or other powerful roles. Some participants described situations in which they were passed over for a promotion because they might have been perceived as threatening to someone in a higher position. This fear could be in apart to the gender stereotypes that are assigned to women. Women are sometimes seen as aggressive when trying to be firm and decisive, which conflicts with men and other women's perceptions of how women should behave, this is what some scholars call "role incongruity". Eagly and Karau explain, "Incongruity arises because social perceivers typically construe leadership roles in agentic terms, whereas they expect and

prefer that women exhibit communal characteristics" (2002). "Women whose leadership style runs counter to female stereotypes often experience resistance or backlash. In addition to being overlooked for advancement, fear of backlash can discourage them from actively pursing opportunities" (Hill et al., 2016. p. 25). Some participants mentioned that the fear of women sometimes comes from other women. Hill et al., (2016) reported, "Men are not alone in these biases against women in the workplace. Researchers have found that women workers in particular show evidence of implicit bias against female bosses… Women are especially biased against older female bosses" (p.25). This bias could be a result of women fearing other women, fearing them because they are the "mean girl" or a fear that they will be unsupportive as boss or colleague.

The strengths and weaknesses of feminist standpoint theory can be used to explain the experiences of women in public relations. Hallstein's (1999) main concept of the theory—that "society is structured by power relations resulting in unequal social locations for men and women, with men being the dominant and women being the disadvantaged"—provides an explanation for why men dominate high-level positions and hold a greater share of power in public relations even though there are more women in the industry. Based on this idea, the gender bias and pay gap reported by these participants make sense. If men are seen as dominant, it is understandable that women are constantly being compared to men, that women face more obstacles when trying to succeed, and that women are paid less than men.

In line with previous research, many of the participants noted that they did not think women were represented equally in leadership positions in public relations, especially the top management positions. Participants also mentioned that men still dominate the top positions, just as the research from Horsley (2009) stated. While some participants did mention that they are

seeing more women running agencies and public relations firms, they made sure to point out that in those particular situations women had the opportunity to start their own businesses rather than work their way to the top of a corporate ladder.

Participants talked about the pay gap between women and men, stating that women were still paid less than men. Participants also mentioned issues of gender bias and men filling certain positions before or instead of women, similar to a study by Aldoory and Toth (2002) in which participants noted that some clients preferred male representatives to female, so agencies hired men.

The idea within feminist standpoint theory of women being the "outsider within" rationalizes the feeling of needing to act a certain way. Under the assumption that women have these two views of women, society's view and their personal view, it makes sense that women leaders in public relations feel the pressure of stereotypes and expectations to act a certain way. They feel like they need to be nurturing and easy-going leaders—not too harsh because that would not be expected of a woman—compared to some other traits they have experienced from their previous leaders, who have been decisive and firm. The participants explained that even though some have had leaders, both male and female, who were strong, confident and decisive, they felt like they had to make sure they came across as understanding and in some ways motherly as leaders because they were women.

Similar to the research conducted by Aldoory (1998), this research found that women in leadership positions are looked at differently or negatively while men in leadership engage in behaviors considered natural for men. For example, one participant explained that while a woman might be called a bitch, a man in the same position might be seen as strong. When participants were asked whether they thought people would respond the same to them if they

were male, most answered no. More than half of the participants in this study said a double standard exists, agreeing with the previous research conducted by Toth and Cline (1991). Participants in this study also emphasized the amount of effort they had to put it. Many said they felt they had to work harder than men to be taken seriously or to get a promotion.

The participants in this study described feeling pressure to act a certain way because they were women. This is an example of prescribed gender norms that Eagly and Karau talk about in their study "Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders". As Eagly and Karau (2002) explained, "women may behave gender stereotypically because of having internalized aspects of gender roles, especially if situational cues make these aspects particularly accessible." Several participants said they had to act confident and more professional so they would be taken seriously. Others talked about how women leaders felt the need to hide emotions in order to succeed, similar to the study conducted by Cline et al. (1986) that talked about women being placed in specific roles because of certain perceptions. In both of the studies women talked about feeling expected, to behave, respond or work, in a specific way because of their gender, like act serious so they were seen as firm and decisive, not emotional or soft.

The participants also discussed different styles of leadership. All of the participants noted they had experience with both good and bad supervisors, male and female. Participants addressed differences they saw among men and women leaders as well as good and bad leaders. Although some participants thought leadership style was related to gender and other participants did not, similar to the findings of Appelbaum, Audet and Miller (2002), all of the participants agreed that different leadership styles can be effective for different people regardless of gender. Much like the research conducted by Aldoory (1998) that found female public relations leaders defined leadership as having a vision and providing guidance, almost all of the participants in

this study used phrases such as "clear vision" and "working together" when describing effective leadership.

The key idea of standpoint referring not only to location or experience, but to a critical understanding of location and experience as it relates to the bigger picture in society, would suggest that women in public relations understand how gender plays a role in their everyday lives, at work. The problem with this is that a lot of the participants were upfront about some ways in which they were disadvantaged or treated differently, but they were quick to write off the notion of sexism as not applying to them. Many participants did not seem to be aware of or fully grasp the ways that gender played a role in their lives or careers. For example, when one participant was asked if she had ever felt discriminated against because of her gender she said no but within minutes provided a description of discrimination without identifying it as such. Can participants really be said to have a standpoint regarding their experiences if they do not articulate key aspects of the theory? Another thing to consider is how useful this theory is if women do not want to talk about gender. Based on the interviews with these participants, it seemed as if they did not want to talk about gender issues.

As reported in the findings section, most participants acknowledged gender, but they also seemed to find excuses or were quick to defend certain actions that disadvantaged them. One participant talked about how she was passed over for a promotion, which was given to a male counterpart even though she had basically already been doing the work. She continued to say that she was not picked because it would have threatened someone in a higher position, but she believed the decision was due to workplace politics, not gender. Some participants, when asked questions directly relating to gender, said that "gender issues" simply did not apply to them because of their industry or life experiences. One participant said that she did not have to worry

about gender because of the type of industry she was in, explaining those issues didn't happen at government jobs. Many participants recognized that gender differences and bias existed in some industries or work environments, but most did not want to admit or accept that it had happened to them or where they worked. Through additional conversation it was made clear, for some, that they dealt with issues of gender, but others did not go into detail about their experiences and moved on to a different topic.

All of the participants mentioned that they think in general people are supportive of women leaders in public relations and that more women are rising into leadership positions and showing that they are worthy and capable. Similar to previous research conducted by Vasavada (2014) that said that women leaders use gender as strategic tool or a way to represent their company, this study also shows that some women leaders view their gender as an advantage and feel that they can use it to benefit themselves or their company. One participant explained that because she is a female agency owner, she attracts female-owned or -run clients. Others said they feel they bring more to the table as a woman and can be more impactful in public relations than a man. Finally, participants said they see change coming to the workplace and they see this shift as a benefit for women. Those who mentioned change attributed it in part to the ideas and mindset of a younger generation. As participants were discussing some of the struggles that women face, some tended to follow up with positive statements or reassurance regarding the future. It seemed as if participants wanted to shed a positive light on the topic even if they were discussing negative treatment or inequities that women face.

Overall, most participants wanted to keep the conversation positive by focusing on the "changing times" or other positive aspects of their careers rather than talk about how they may have been treated differently because of gender, even those participants who explained in detail

an instance where they experienced gender bias. It appeared as if the participants wanted it to seem like they were apart of new "time" and that gender issues were a thing of the past. Across all scenarios most of the participants avoided or excused gender discrimination in the workplace. It could be because of the idea of feminism or being a feminist. The word feminist can have a negative connotation (Huffingtonpost.com) and for that some women do not want to be labeled as such. In an article in The Atlantic, Kaminer, states, "If widespread support for some measure of equality reflects what women see or wish to be seen, society, their unwillingness to identify with feminism reflects the way they see themselves, or wish to be seen by others" (1993). This can be true of participants in this study, they all may know that it, gender bias, exists and not agree with it but their unwillingness to identify with it could have to do with how they want other people to view them.

Participants also mentioned the issue of work-life balance and the impact that children have on a woman's career. Most of the women mentioned that having work-life balance is important but difficult, especially with children. Just as Hill et al., (2016) found, "Women are usually the primary (if not the only) parent caring for children and other family members during their peak years in the workforce" (p.18). Multiple participants stressed the challenge that having children presents to a woman's career. The ideas of the participants in this study differed slightly from previous research by Aldoory and Toth (2002), which found a perception that women who had children were headed for the "mommy track" and were expected to leave the workforce altogether. Where as Hill et al., (2016) reported, even though a majority of women struggle with the idea of going to work after having children, "many women do continue their careers and many who leave come back within a year or less" (p.19). In this study, participants did say they thought women could be successful and have children at the same time; they just noted it was a

struggle. Participants explained that in order to have a career and family there needs to be balance. One, participant, suggested that a woman has to be willing to give and take during different parts of her career such as working less at times. Parker (2015) with the Pew Research Center found that in 2013, "About four-in-ten working mothers (42 percent) say that at some point in their working life they had to reduce their hours in order to care for a child or other family member" (2015). Though women may have to deal with the struggle of work-life balance, studies show it is not preventing women from having children. Livingston (2015) from Pew Research Center found that the percent of women aged 40 to 44 with a master's degree who are childless in 2014 was 22 percent compared to 30 percent in 1994 and those women, 40 to 44, with a M.D. or Ph.D. who are childless in 2014 was 20 percent compared to 35 percent in 1994.

Another issue brought up by participants was the issue of bullying in the workplace. Almost all of the participants mentioned some experience with bullying at some point in their career, from both men and women. The 2014 Workplace Bullying Institute survey reported that 27 percent of employees have experienced bullying in the workplace. A few participants said they had experienced more bullying incidents with females than with males, although participants talked about occurrences with both genders. The participants also treated bullying as if it was normal and to be expected much like that of being treated differently because of gender. Participants seemed to consider it part of the workplace. This is not a surprise considering the 2014 Workplace Bullying Institute survey reported, "72 percent of the American public is aware of workplace bullying."

To answer the first research question—*How do women in public relations describe the challenges and success they have faced in their careers?* — these women leaders talked about how gender has influenced the challenges and success they have faced in the careers. Participants

addressed inequalities in salary and representation in leadership roles as challenges they experienced in their career. The participants talked about promotional barriers that limit or prevent advancement. The participants in this study also described the amount of effort that they felt they had to put in to receive opportunities as challenging because of their gender. Participants explained that some of their success is due in part to a shift in perspective in the workplace. Participants mentioned experiencing, more recently, a more accepting work environment for women due to a different way in thinking, which they believed has been and will be beneficial for women and would result in more opportunities for women. Some participants viewed companies or clients recognizing and valuing their (a woman's) perspective as a success. The participants talked about how they started to view their gender as an advantage when it comes to leadership and they think that there can be positive aspects to being a woman leader.

In response to the second research question—*How do women in public relations think they are perceived as leaders?* —these women thought they were perceived in both a positive and a negative light. The participants thought women leaders in public relations were seen as worthy and capable of being a successful leader and believed that in general people think positively about women in leadership roles and the future of women in leadership roles in public relations. They also talked about how they feel respected as a woman leader and they think they are seen as a respected leader. Some of the participants mentioned that some women in leadership roles are perceived as intimidating, saying that some fear women in high-level positions. Participants mentioned that they think the perception of women leaders is different than the perception of men leaders. This aligns with what Eagly and Karau (2002) said about the different perceptions of gender, "The activation of beliefs about women and men by gender-

related cues thus influences people to perceive women as communal but not very agentic and men as agentic but not very communal." The participants also think that a double standard exists, which influences how women are perceived as leaders. Eagly and Karau (2002) explain that people tend to believe that some behaviors are only appropriate for certain sexes. These expectations in a way lead to stereotypes and this gendered way of thinking.

To answer the third research question—*How do women in public relations think gender affects their leadership style?* —these women think that gender influences their leadership style. The participants overall said gender impacts how they act as a leader, describing different ways they feel they need to act, like confident and serious, and how they respond to others as leader, saying that they feel as a woman they have different qualities that make them a good leader, like listening and communication skills. Participants in this study mentioned that they feel pressure to act a certain way because of gender stereotypes. The participants also discussed the different types of leadership styles and how effective different types of leadership are. They think that women naturally have skills that make them better suited for a leadership position, such as listening, communicating and managing.

This study contributes a relevant and qualitative understanding of the experiences of women in leadership roles to existing literature. The findings of this study contradict the idea of liberal feminism that states by making changes in the "system", women will achieve equality. The findings insist that inequalities still exist for women in the workplace, which raises the question of whether liberal feminism can still apply. This study highlights the strengths and weaknesses of feminist standpoint theory. Showing the importance of trying to understand women's' experiences to show, in particular, what issues women leaders in public relations are still experiencing, acknowledging that previous issues of inequalities and work-life balance still

exist. While also shedding light of more recent issues that women leaders in PR are facing, in the workplace, such as female competition and bullying. Alternatively, one must ask how useful is it to use feminist standpoint theory to understand women's experiences if women do not want to talk about gender or recognize the role it plays. This study also points out the question of why women don't want to talk about gender and the need to continue the dialogue about feminism and the feminist label.

There are ways that society and women can work toward achieving equity for women. Society as a whole can continue the dialogue of equal rights for women and expand the conversation to issues of gender bias not only in the workplace but in society in general. Working to break down gender stereotypes can help bring acceptance of different roles for those of either gender. Developing a mentor program for women in leadership roles to connect with those women in high school or college could be a way to show young women that women do have a spot in leadership and to help create advocates for other women. Creating support groups for women where women can focus on supporting other women to try and break the cycle of "mean girls" and unsupportive bosses. Another thing that could be done across all work environments is starting or in some instances continuing the conversation of bullying. It is important to bring more awareness to the issue so people know it is not something that they should just expect or accept, and can work to find ways to stop it from happening

This study has some limitations that should be addressed. The sample for this study was a limitation, in that participants did vary in terms of professional experience but lacked diversity in terms of race and geographical location. Another aspect of this study that influenced the findings was that all of the participants were female. The study focused on the experiences and perceptions of women; however, additional studies of gender should include men, as well.

Another limitation of this study was the method that was used. Qualitative methods are interpretive and focused on meaning and understanding experiences rather than quantitative methods which are systematic and mathematical. When using a qualitative method, the researcher is the instrument, this can lead to bias and subjectivity because all of the understanding and interpretation is coming from the researcher, compared to using a quantitative method which involves numerical data and testing the relationship of variables to find the outcome of the research. While a qualitative method was a suitable method for the purposes of this study, its limitations should be recognized.

There are several opportunities for future research to further develop these findings and to arrive at a greater understanding of women in leadership roles in public relations. One particular area could be to open the study up to include both male and female perspectives regarding women in leadership roles. Another area could be to dive deeper into the issue of interpersonal relationships within the workplace and specifically look into female competition and workplace bullying. This study found that gender has influenced the experiences of a select group of women leaders in public relations in a variety of ways, such as salary, promotions and expectations. It is likely that gender will continue to impact women's experiences until equity is achieved.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Note to interviewee:*
"I am conducting interviews for my thesis research. The research topic is women and public relations. The interview is expected to about an hour and will include questions about women in public relations, women leaders in PR, and perceptions of women leaders in PR. If at any time during the interview you wish to not answer a question, you are free to do so. Your name will not be used in any way when the findings are reported. Quotes used from the interview will be identified by a number and not by the name of the participant. You have already signed a consent document. Given that information and what I have told you today, are you willing to continue with this interview?"

The interview questions will be divided into four sections surrounding opportunities, leadership style, perceptions, and then demographic. There are no wrong responses, I am just trying to understand your thoughts, ideas, and experiences.

1. **Opportunities available to women in PR**
- Can you tell me about your current position and how you got here or some of your previous positions leading to this? (background info)
    o What types of roles and tasks do you perform now and have in the past?
    o Over your career, do you feel like you have been held to the same standards as your colleagues (both male and female)? Do you feel you have been given the same responsibilities and both been given meaningful work or assignments?
    o Have you ever experienced a time (in school or your career) where you felt you were treated differently because you were a woman?
- Do you feel you have been given the same opportunities in hiring, promotion, or salary as your colleagues (male and female)? Why or why not?
- Do you tend to see more women in a specific role compared to men, within the public relations industry? Why do you think that is?
- Do you think, overall, women have the same opportunities in hiring, promotion, salary in public relations as men?

2. **Leadership style of women in PR**
- What does leadership look like to you?
- How many of your supervisors have been female?
    o Has this influenced how you are as a leader?
- Do you think there is a difference between male leaders and female leaders?
    o Do you think one leadership style is more effective than another (lets say male or female)?
- Do you think women are represented equally in leadership positions in PR?
    o Why or why not?

- o Do you think women leaders have the same access or power as men leaders? Why or Why not? Or can you explain more?
- Can you tell me about, what it is like being a woman in a leadership role in PR?
  - o What do you enjoy?
  - o What do you dislike?
  - o Are there obstacles that you face?
  - o Do you ever feel like you have to act a certain way, because you are a woman leader?

3. **Perceptions of women leaders in PR**
- Do you feel like you are respected as a leader?
  - o Are you taken seriously? Are you treated with respect?
  - o Throughout your career have you ever experienced bullying, by male or female, in your position as a leader or before?
- How do (you feel) people respond to you as a leader? (From those you lead or manage, those equal to you, and those above you) What makes you think that?
  - o Do you think it would be the same if you were a male? (Do you feel there a double standard)
- In general, do you think there are positive feelings associated with being a woman in a leadership position in PR? (What type of feelings are associated, positive, negative or is there a difference)

Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you would like to add? Or something I didn't ask you about that you think I should?

Is there anyone that you can think of that I should talk to or that would be a good fit for this study?

4. **Demographic questions – Handout, for written or typed responses**
- What is your age?
- Are you married?
- Do you have children?
- Where did you grow up?
- Where do you currently live? (City/State)

Thank you very much for participating and taking the time to share your experiences and ideas with me. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPENDIX B

THEMES

| 1- Theme: Promotional Barriers | | |
|---|---|---|
| Description: Talks about different barriers that the participants think impact advancement for women | | |
| **Theme** | **Description** | **Example** |
| **1.1 "The old boys club"** | Talks about how participants still feel the effects of the old boys club | P1: "The old boys club" P4: "Promotions didn't happen, people at the top never changed, all male." P5: "Have not felt the pressure of the glass ceiling, but recognize it is there" |
| **1.2 Male-dominated** | Talks about how men dominate top level roles | P5: "it's a male industry, it was built by men" P3: "Men placed in primary roles and females in lesser roles" P9: "Women are not represented equally, men are the dominate gender in leadership roles at the largest agencies" |
| **1.3 Fear of Women** | Talks about how people fear women in leadership/powerful roles | P8: "Sometimes people fear women in power" P5: "Passed for a promotion because it would potentially threaten a supervisor, so gave it to someone less threatening." |
| **1.4 Impact of Children** | Talks about how having kids can impact your career | P2: "Being a mom you have other responsibilities to juggle" P4: "Work-life balance was very difficult" P9: "Misconception that is was ok to take the mommy –track and nothing would change" |

| 2- Theme: Double Standard for Women | | |
|---|---|---|
| Description: Talks about how the participants think there is a difference in the views, expectations and treatment of women and men | | |
| **Code** | **Description** | **Examples** |
| **2.1 Negative Associations** | Describes negative personal traits and feelings of women leaders | P7: "Peers think I am aggressive & confrontational, just trying to be collaborative" P4: "If you are too firm you are a bitch" |
| **2.2 Amount of Effort** | Talks about the amount of work and effort that women put in to be successful | P7: "I worked more hours, because I didn't want anyone to perceive that I wasn't working as much or enough because I was working from home part time." P10: "Women have to work harder than men and may even be more qualified in order to get a role." |

| | | P1: "Women have to go above & beyond" |
|---|---|---|
| **2.3 Favoritism and harassment** | Talks about issues of gender bias, sexism and favoritism | P4: "It seems like the favorites are generally boys"<br>P1: "Sexual harassment, advances by men"<br>P3: "Men placed in primary roles and females in lesser roles"<br>P9: "I've seen things happen to women because of appearance/behavior don't know if a man would suffer the same consequences."<br>P2: "clients would respond differently to a male leader (both male & female clients)" |
| **2.4 Unequal pay** | Talks about the difference in pay | P4: "I was grossly underpaid"<br>P8: "I would say that I'm paid less than male counterparts or people who have the same title" |

**3- Theme: Pressure of Stereotypes**
Description: Talks about the different ways participants feel they must act or perform in the workplace or as a leader because they are a woman

| Code | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **3.1 Display Confidence** | Describes the need to show you are confident | P7: "You have to be confident" |
| **3.2 Capability** | Describes the need to prove yourself | P3: "Can't show humor side, have to show you are capable first."<br>P5: "Women thinking they need to act like men in order to succeed." |
| **3.3 Compassion** | Participants feel like they have to show a soft side because of gender | P6: "because I am a female leader, I think that there is an expectation for me to have more compassion or understanding for mothers than other leaders" |

**4- Theme: Leadership Style**
Description: Talks about how participants view leadership

| Code | Description | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **4.1 Different types of leaders** | Explains the different types of leaders | P7: "Leadership style can be effective in different ways for different people"<br>P4: "Good boss vs. Bad boss, more effective in shaping as a leader."<br>P8: "Men think differently than women, narrow-minded & process driven as women are more relational and detail-oriented." |
| **4.2 Definition of Leadership** | Talks about the way all of the participants view leadership | P5: "it's a male industry, it was built by men"<br>P3: "Men placed in primary roles and females in lesser roles" |

| 5- Theme: Female Competition & Bullying |||
|---|---|---|
| Description: Talks about how women are not receiving support from other women and are experiencing issues with bullying |||
| **Code** | **Description** | **Examples** |
| **5.1 Unsupportive females** | Talks about how women are not always supportive of other women | P1: "Other women are the ones who do not support women." <br> P5: Women not supportive of other women – snide comments about dress & facial expressions during meetings" |
| **5.2 Workplace Bullying** | Talks about cases of bullying in the workplace | P1: "Bullying from other women, women execs felt threatened" <br> P6: "Experienced bullying, sadly more from women; make sure I know my place" |

| 6- Theme: Optimistic about the future |||
|---|---|---|
| Description: Talks about how the participants think there are positive aspects to being a woman in PR and that overall workplace conditions are changing and will continue to do so in the future |||
| **Code** | **Description** | **Examples** |
| **6.1 Positive Associations** | Describes positive personal characteristics and overall general feelings of women leaders | P1: "I think people see women as strong communicators" <br> P4: "Yes, I think there are positive feelings in PR but also in general, more and more we are seeing a lot of women do have the makings of a good leader and they are showing it." |
| **6.2 Advantages of being a women** | Talks about the positive aspects of being a woman leader | P10: "Women can bring a different perspective than males" <br> P6: "More impactful to be a female in a male dominated industry; opportunity to surprise people." |
| **6.3 Shifting Perspective** | Describes how the work place is changing and benefiting women | P5: "We are at an evolution point. Change is emerging. Factors like the # of women with degrees & the % of women who are the bread winners in their home" <br> P10: "Working with a leadership team that was younger than me… it was very different, a generational thing and mentality. They treated us more equally which was refreshing." |

APPENDIX C

LEADERSHIP DESCRIPTIONS

| What does leadership look like to you? |
|---|
| Pull out potential of individuals, set objectives and make a difference |
| Serving and leading by example, open to feedback, recognize strengths of others, make sure they know what they are good at, guide them |
| Big picture, how can everyone work together and grow and succeed, a daily vision and having a larger picture |
| Build consensus and trust, seeing a vision, supporting the team, provide tools and opportunities to make the vision happen, communicate |
| Having a clear vision, working toward a goal, the difference between why and how, being able to articulate that to the people who work for you, being a compass and leading the rest of the team, want them to understand how they are helping us get there |
| Having a vision to where you want to go, working with the people around you to identify capabilities to get there as a team |
| Common, articulated goal, how everyone can bring their skills together to get to the goal, lead by example, it's important to know what individuals on your team need |
| Vision, what is good for the company, where do you see yourself down the road, articulate that for your team and work together to get there, help your team understand how they add value |
| Figure out the talent of everyone and recognize how to work together |
| Listening, bring people together collaboratively, provide a good vision, be promoting and motivating to employees let them have an opportunity to be successful |

# APPENDIX D

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515-294-4566
FAX 515-294-4267

Date: 2/10/2016

To: Elizabeth Krugler
101 Hamilton

CC: Dr. Tracy Lucht
111 Hamilton Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Women in Public Relations: The Influence of Gender on Women's Leadership Experiences

IRB ID: 16-035

Study Review Date: 2/9/2016

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**

- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

  Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

  **Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form.** A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption,** even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.