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She leads business education: a phenomenological study on the career development of female deans leading AACSB-accredited business schools in America

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SHE LEADS BUSINESS EDUCATION:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE

DEANS LEADING AACSB-ACCREDITED BUSINESS SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Rachel Staples Guettler

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Mark Allen Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

Soli Deo Gloria.

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Gwendolen Selah Guettler, who was only eight months old when I began my doctoral journey. I was a vulnerable new mother when I sat in my first doctoral-level course at Pepperdine University. As I complete the final touches on this dissertation, my daughter is now six years old. I earned my doctorate while adjusting to motherhood during her earliest days of life. Motherhood emerged as a pillar in the lives of many professional women researched in this study. My daughter means the world to me. Being Gwen's mother brings me my greatest honor and sweetest joy.

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, James Terry Staples, for inspiring me to be the best person I can be. My gratitude overflows to my father for teaching me about grace, encouraging me to enroll in the doctoral program when I was admitted, and never giving up on me as I worked to complete the program every step of the way. My father has always been my greatest hero. I hope to have his strength as a parent and as a service-oriented leader. The love and grace of my father has shown me the love and grace of God, the heavenly Father. God blessed me greatly to be the daughter of Jim Staples. Being Jim's daughter inspires me to be great, even when I face challenges.

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, John Casey Guettler. John is the love of my life. John took care of our baby when I was in class, helped get our toddler to sleep when I was in class, and helped me reach the doctoral finish line as our daughter was completing kindergarten. John always helps me to remember what is really important in life, and he has given me the family of my dreams. Being John's wife is my life's greatest treasure and passion.

I dedicate this dissertation to the many women who have been a mother to me by shepherding me at different times in my life when I needed support, guidance, love, and nurturing. Your influence has helped me blossom into the woman I am today. I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Nancy Charles, who reminds me to always reach for more brass rings. I love you. I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmothers, Jeanne and Aline, whose lives impressed upon me greatly and whose souls comfort me always. I dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Nina, someone I have always loved, admired, and seen as a life-long role model. You inspire me. I dedicate this dissertation to my aunt, Beth, who encouraged me with her wit, intelligence, and incredible voice. Thank you, Aunt Beth (aka Great Beth), for helping me edit my dissertation with your brilliance akin to the spirit of my grandfather. I know he would be proud of us. I dedicate this dissertation to my stepmother, Toby, for continually healing us with your love, grace, and commitment. I dedicate this dissertation to my mother-in-law, Diane, and sister-in-law, Bre, godsends in my life whom I love dearly.

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my aunt, Dr. Nancy Staples, who inspired me at a very young age when she achieved her terminal degree. Nancy, you are my guardian angel.

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ABSTRACT

As women advance into leadership roles in America, there is a demand for career development research to deepen understanding of strategies for overcoming obstacles and maximizing opportunities. This study investigated 13.4% of the population of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America through qualitative inquiry. During this study, 157 of 540 American business schools with AACSB accreditation were led by female Deans. A female perspective was interpreted through the framework of Career Development Theory revealing the internal and external forces impacting career development chronology, experiences, contexts, behavioral patterns, beliefs, and leadership of women who have become Deans. Gender-related and industry-related experiences illustrate how the investigated Deans must strategize professionally. The research participants have become business school Deans by being resilient and service-oriented as they lead innovation in business education with a keen sense of collaboration, relationship-building, and decisiveness. The research participants achieved a deanship by responding to challenges and opportunities mindfully as experienced experts who strategically ask, say yes to the right career advancement opportunities, and are proactive when they know it is time to make a move, take a break, or leave. This study reveals insight for career advancement among various positions in academia with some roles offering more relevant experience than others. Additionally, this research uncovers how motherhood can offer a rewarding and grounding identity for leaders in academia. Finally, the women deans investigated in this study value relationships and leverage support networks while maintaining a continuum of life-long learning, self-care, and self-belief.

Chapter 1: The Problem

Introduction

Many people experience career challenges and crisis as rapid changes occur in the diverse and globalized workforce today, creating a high demand for the perspectives of leaders who have had career development success even amid workplace challenges. Women are advancing into positions historically held by men in industries worldwide, and there are emerging stories of women who achieve success in male-dominated roles and industries in America like higher education (Longman & Madsen, 2014). Workplaces are under the microscope because professionals in sectors all around the globe are yearning for systemic changes that offer psychologically safe workplaces with opportunities for career development and growth (Lowe, 2020). The demand for psychologically safe workplaces stems from the experience of workplace challenges that can impact individuals and workplaces, resulting in self-doubt, inferiority, workplace burnout, imposter syndrome, and even self-sabotage (Edmondson & Mortensen, 2021; Lowe, 2020).

Observing workplace challenges that often marginalize individuals and groups within workplaces prompted a desire to embark upon this research. This study aims to satiate a desire to uncover deeper understanding of professional strategies for career development success, even amid workplace challenges.

Since 2006, the author of this research study has coached people who strive to overcome fear personally and professionally, striving to empower people to become authentic leaders with confidence while removing or mitigating toxic feelings of negativity, competitiveness, and self-doubt. Led by a desire to help people succeed with confidence, not only women but all types of people, the author of this research wants to help people overcome workplace challenges that can

marginalize professionals. For example, a challenge such as workplace bias can unfairly

marginalize people, impact well-being, and can even create a snowball effect with the ability to

stagnate a person's personal and professional development impacting career growth (Carmona-

Cobo et al., 2019).

Workplaces are environments that incubate relationships through professional yet social

connections where human beings exchange, communicate, and interact to achieve goals (Ozenc

& Hagan, 2019). Everyone has internal and external biases and judgement (Herring, 2018). This

research began with a curiosity about ways to overcome workplace challenges that can impact an

individual's career development. This study is designed to investigate the lived experiences of

career development in successful people. The focus of this phenomenological study is on the

career development of women who are leading business education in the role of an academic

Dean. Business schools in America accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools

of Business (AACSB), offer the workplace and prestigious academic environment employing

each female Dean participant in this study (AACSB, 2022).

For example, a workplace challenge such as bias has the potential to create a workplace

where the majority of males may advance in their careers. In contrast, the majority of equally-

qualified female colleagues may experience career stagnation in entry-level roles or positions in

middle management. At the same time, there could be female leaders in the same organization

whose career development experiences, patterns, behaviors, and beliefs that may serve as an

example of success, helping marginalized people learn ways to navigate through challenges and

advance professionally.

The higher education industry is in crisis and may be reaching a tipping point with

demands for diversity, the disruptive rise of online learning, and an economic downturn causing a

decline in enrollment as tuition rates rise to unprecedented heights (Barshay, 2021; Bennett & Wilezol, 2013; Christ, 2017; Madsen et al., 2012). As the higher education industry experiences unprecedented changes, the global economic impacts have proven detrimental to student enrollment (Barshay, 2021). Employees from various industries, including academia are expressing career frustrations with workplace challenges and may seek employment opportunities in other industries. Crisis, change, and repeated observations drive this investigation into the career development experiences of successful people who overcome challenges and maximize opportunities within the higher education industry.

The vast majority of senior administrative leadership roles in higher education, especially top-ranked business schools, are occupied by men (Rhode, 2017). Very few women are serving as senior leaders in academia (Madsen et al., 2012; Longman & Madsen, 2014; Rhode, 2017). Women in leadership scholars argue that:

> Higher education should also do more to recognize the importance of diversity and gender in curricular, programming, and research priorities … So too, professional and MBA programs should increase research support for scholars and continuing education for practitioners on equity and diversity. We need to know much more about what works in the world, and academic institutions are uniquely positioned to help fill the gap. (Rhode, 2017, p. 109)

This qualitative research proposal seeks to investigate the lived experiences impacting career development through the collection of interviews with females serving in pivotal leadership roles as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America.

For the past few decades, stories have been surfacing of professional struggles and lacking confidence in potential career growth in the higher education industry, especially the business school workplace (Levsen et al., 2001; Dameron & Durand, 2013; Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019; Krishen et al., 2020). Additionally, many employees are exhibiting frustration, exhaustion, or burnout with institutional restructuring and various industry crises, causing

expense optimization and layoffs (Krishen et al., 2020; Kumar & Sharma, 2003; Hommel & King, 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012).

Women are more educated than ever before in history, and women are surpassing men in the achievement of higher education degrees, yet women are still paid less than men (Elsesser, 2019; Rhode, 2017). Stories of successful women in male-centric industries are emerging, and these stories may offer insights to professionals aspiring to lead amid workplace challenges that influence career development. Women are advancing in leadership roles in businesses all around the globe, in some countries faster than others (Rhode, 2017).

This study proposes to investigate the career development stories of women who have advanced into senior leadership roles as academic Deans at AACSB-accredited business schools in America. The intention of this research is to inspire others with lived experiences of career development and uncover essential themes for strategies and practices that have proven to be successful. Guiding and anchoring this study are the goals of helping people learn ways to develop and grow professionally even amid workplace challenges while creating career development value for others aspiring to lead.

Background of the Problem

Women working in the higher education industry at business schools in America exist at the crossroad of systemic change internally within the institutions they serve and extending out externally with the globalized business marketplace. The globalized workforce is undergoing monumental changes stemming from demands for diversity, equity, and inclusion as the impacts of digitation disrupt many industries across the globe (Krishen et al., 2020; Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019). The higher education industry is no stranger to change and resistance to change (Krishen et al., 2020). Student enrollment in higher education degree programs is on the decline (Deming

et al., 2016; Docking & Curton, 2015; Hoey, 2021). Consumers are demanding equality at all levels of the higher education industry (Hoey, 2021). Furthermore, the higher education industry is rapidly changing with globalization and drastic shifts to online learning (Deming et al., 2016; National Student Clearing House Research Center, 2021).

Even with all the advances women have made in education, female Deans of business schools, especially AACSB-accredited business schools, have been historically rare since the turn of the century and are still very rare today (Levsen et al., 2001; Leander & Watson, 2021). Often when women strive to achieve leadership roles in the male-dominated organizations of higher education, unique workplace challenges and career obstacles can arise (Bierema, 2005; Longman & Madsen, 2014). The career insights of successful female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America can potentially be cultural catalysts of change in uncertain times.

As women advance in leadership roles in America and around the globe, there is a scholarly demand for career development research regarding females who have risen to the top of the proverbial food chain at AACSB-accredited business schools. To accomplish this, the researcher will investigate female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America through qualitative interviews with a phenomenological study design to uncover a deeper understanding of career development for women. The author of this study strives to discover the research participant's self-perceived life experiences of career development. The study's discoveries may provide an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies and practices people can employ to maximize opportunities and overcome challenges in leadership, business, higher education, and professional career development overall.

Sustaining diverse, equitable, and inclusive climates in the workplace impacts individual

careers, teams, and organizations in many ways. Fostering inclusion in a diverse workplace can drive a wide range of benefits, such as well-being and job satisfaction for individuals and groups as various voices and perspectives offer value. Furthermore, leadership is critical in organizational climate, diversity, and inclusion (Key-Roberts et al., 2020). Additionally, the literature reveals a gap in the research regarding a better understanding of the barriers along the path to senior leadership in decanal positions, especially for women (Lavigne, 2020).

AACSB-accredited business schools are prestigious institutions recognized globally for top-ranked degrees in business education and as the premier accreditation for business education programs globally (Reeb, 2005). In other words, consumers of business degree programs in America often seek out AACSB-accredited business schools as the top choice for business education. However, the majority of AACSB-accredited business schools in America have a male-centric leadership, which may affect workplaces and individual employees from the top-down, guided by the influential leader at the helm of the business school in the senior role as Dean (Leander & Watson, 2021). Female Deans represent a much smaller leadership minority regarding the highest administrative position in AACSB-accredited business schools in America and globally. Yet, women hold a substantial majority in the overall staff of AACSB-accredited business schools (AACSB, 2020). Women enroll in higher education degree programs at a much faster rate than men nationwide. Still, women only trail their male colleagues in the distinctive and influential area of the senior leadership role for AACSB-accredited business schools (National Student Clearing House Research Center, 2021; AACSB, 2020).

Positionality Statement

When the researcher began a career at an AACSB-accredited business school, the institution did have a female Dean. However, only a few months after the researcher started in

her role, the female left the Dean position, went to another business school to lead as Dean, and is now leading at another institution as a college president. Since those first few months of working under the leadership of a female Dean, the next eight years of the researcher's career at an AACSB-accredited business school was with a male Dean at the helm of the institution, continually paired with a male serving the university in the role of college president.

Recently the author of this study moved into a university-centric administrative role and is no longer working directly for an AACBS accredited business school. Yet, the direct experience of witnessing changes in the institution's academic leadership, coupled with the personal observations of the majority of senior leadership roles being held by men, an interest sparked for the author of this study to investigate women who lead themselves successful through their career development journey to become one of the few women who achieve senior leadership roles and Dean appointments.

Prior to employment in a university, the researcher was employed at a performing arts conservatory, culminating over thirteen years working in the higher education industry with students striving to achieve the next step in their career through attaining education and training. Underpinning this research is a deep desire to help people grow and develop, which the researcher maintains as integral to this study exploring the career development of people who successfully manage internal and external personally, socially, and professionally.

Thus, the positionality of the author is one with impartial good faith, respecting institutions are made up of the people that lead themselves and others from various positions. The intention of this study is to uncover career development strategies from women who are leading business schools in America. The developing career of the author is one that brings keen interest to the topic and drives the effort to preserve the research focus on career chronology,

patterns, behaviors, and beliefs of each research participant.

Problem Statement

The higher education industry is undergoing rapid change and is experiencing crisis as mental modes shift regarding leadership, gender, workplace systems, and equity (Blustein, 2015; Deming et al., 2016; Leander & Watson, 2021). While females are growing in number as business leaders and more females are enrolling in higher education degree programs, there are still significantly fewer women achieving the influential leadership role of Dean in AACSB-accredited business schools (Dunn et al., 2014; Davis & Geyfman, 2015; AACSB, 2020; Leander & Watson, 2021). All too often, women must face workplace environments that exacerbate bias, gender imbalance, gendered organizations, career development struggles, leadership challenges, and feelings of being an imposter in many settings (Madsen, 2012).

Scholars of organizations recognize the issues in gendered organizations and the challenges that arise from gendered workplace settings (Coleman, 2016; Chavira-Prado, 2018; Tulshyan & Burey, 2021). However, scholars also identify the demand for exploring workplace systems' role in exacerbating feelings of self-doubt (Tulshyan & Burey, 2021). This study presents an opportunity to discover more insight through the lived career development experiences of female Deans who have maximized opportunities and overcome professional challenges to achieve career success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology is to explore and uncover the life experiences of career development from successful female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America to reveal how people are beating the odds in an industry experiencing rapid changes of globalization. Consequently, AACSB-accredited business schools serve individuals,

organizations, and industries all over the globe. AACSB-accredited business schools offer learning and development opportunities with degree programs, educational partnerships, expert faculty consulting, adult learning experiences, and career readiness exchanges such as internships and career placement for students and graduates who are an extension of the business school. Further research could include the external business world outside a business education institution, investigating the impact of institutional leadership and learning within the institution. However, this research proposal aims to enhance understanding of specifically how women leaders capitalize on opportunities and surmount challenges amid career development such that they ultimately have become successful leaders of business education as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools.

The qualitative phenomenology research design allows the pursuit of a deeper meaning derived from the stories, cultural perspectives, and lived experiences of women who develop professionally achieving leadership roles as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America (Creswell, 2018). The study proposes to unearth essential career development themes through the qualitative research interview process to bring more understanding to the social and cultural exclusions or challenges females experience in higher education, in AACSB-accredited business schools, and in business in general.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: "How do women maximize opportunities and overcome obstacles in career development to become business education leaders as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America?"

Research Question 2: "What are the career development strategies and practices employed by women who are Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools?"

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach of this study is one of qualitative research with a phenomenology design, which examines the career development experiences of female Deans leading AACSB-accredited business schools in America. The phenomenology research design leverages the shared life experience data derived from interviews with female Deans, which may provide insights into the career development women in academia. The interview question probing intends to interpret meaning from the lived experiences of how these women have achieved success in their career development journeys amid the organizational, cultural, and systemic challenges that may often marginalize them. Additionally, the data collection proposes offering perspectives regarding career development in AACSB-accredited business schools, as such institutions extend thought-leadership out into the business community.

Researcher Assumptions

There are acknowledgeable assumptions made in the proposal of this research. The researcher assumes the participants self-identify as leaders. It is assumed that the interview subjects are aware of opportunities and challenges they have faced along their career development journey. It is further assumed that the female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools interviewed in this proposed study have experienced some workplace challenges during their career development. It is also assumed that the interviewees have been able to consciously overcome challenges to achieve career success. To rephrase this, the researcher assumes that the data necessary for this study is obtainable through qualitative interviews with female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. However, the author of this study believes these assumptions seem reasonable enough to hopefully not weaken the study.

Moreover, the assumption is made that the female Deans interviewed in this study are emotionally-intelligent women who are self-aware, can self-regulate, and motivate themselves and others. With emotional intelligence, there is self-awareness. Thus, the interviewees need to have enough self-awareness to reflect upon and communicate their life experiences of career development through the interview process. It is assumed that their communication will be reflective and in-depth, providing words, sentences, phrases, and quotes that will be reduced, categorized thematically, and analyzed through the interpretive framework of Career Development Theory such that the two research questions are answered.

Furthermore, this study assumes the interviewees will be open and honest with their answers during the interview, conveying their personal experiences to the researcher without inhibition. Finally, the interviewer assumes the honesty of the interviewees may help uncover successful career development strategies for overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities amid workplace challenges.

Delimitations of Study

This qualitative, phenomenological study proposes a narrowed focus on the strategic insights of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America investigating how leaders experience career development successfully even amid workplace challenges. When students enroll at an AACSB-accredited business school, the students learn a myriad of business, management, and leadership theories. Many students of AACSB-accredited business schools may graduate with new perspectives gained through the applied-learning experiences anchored in faculty scholarship and robust business networks (Vitullo & Jones 2010). These factors can contribute systemically to business and leadership in communities, entrepreneurial endeavors, and growing industries worldwide such as finance, technology, aerospace, education,

and healthcare. In other words, business schools have a substantial and systemic impact on society, communities, and the globalized marketplace.

Potential continued research could involve investigating the trickle-down impact of students who enroll at AACSB-accredited business schools with female Deans versus students attending an AACSB-accredited business school with a male Dean. Continued investigation could seek to determine if there is a relationship between the inclusivity in the workplaces of the entrepreneurial businesses launched by students of AACSB-accredited business schools or maintained by graduates from leadership positions such as Chief Executive Officer or President.

To put it another way, this proposed study is limited to exploring of the career development of the women who participant in this study, and thus does not aim to explore the culture within the collegiate institutions of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. Further research has hypothetical potential to uncover relationships or correlations between the business school leadership and how it may impact external businesses outside of yet connected to the institution. Students, alumni, and various businesses could potentially be researched to understand if there are additional implications extending beyond the classroom through the ideas incubated inside the classroom.

Additionally, this phenomenological study maintains a narrowed lens limited to the self-perceived, shared experiences of a limited number of female Deans in America. However, AACSB is a global accreditation association that accredits business schools around the world with three global offices as well as member organizations in several countries and territories worldwide exhibiting continued growth and industry recognition year over year (AACSB, 2022). This research has the potential for expansion into other countries as well as across the globe. Furthermore, by exploring female Deans from other countries outside of America with AACSB

accreditation, investigation could determine if connections, relationships, or correlations exist between the institutional workplace environments and the culture bred by the governmental leadership of the researched countries. Expressly, potential expanded research could explore how business schools may influence or may have been influenced by the political culture of the geographic region.

Theoretical Framework

Exploring career navigation through workplace challenges that arise during career development is at the foundation of the theoretical framework of this proposed phenomenology. This research intends to explore Career Development Theory in praxis amid challenges that may exist in the workplace of academia. The researcher proposes to learn from exploring potential career development themes derived from interviews with female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. Additionally, how people who develop into leaders in academia self-identify in their career development is critical to the framework of this study. Moreover, the self-identification of career chronology, patterns, behaviors, and beliefs frame this research.

This study aims at seeking a better understanding of career development from a few women who have achieved the senior leadership role of Dean, when men lead as Deans in the majority of AACSB-accredited business schools. Additionally, the theory of emotional intelligence involving self-leadership underpins the research investigation striving to uncover the personal and social competencies leveraged by women succeeding professionally as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America.

Career Development Theory is the interpretive, theoretical framework of this qualitative study. Through the investigation of each participant's career, the process of reducing the data collected through interviews seeks to uncover significant experiences and frequently mentioned

words signaling the self-identified internal and external forces impacting career chronology, patterns, behaviors, and beliefs of women leading business education in America today.

Definitions

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this proposed research:

- AACSB International Accreditation: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business is a global nonprofit association established in 1916 with over 900 accredited business schools worldwide in several countries and territories representing over 1,700 members. AACSB International is globally known for establishing the first set of accreditation standards for business schools and has become the world leader in encouraging excellence through fostering engagement, accelerating innovation, and amplifying impact in business education (AACSB, 2022: AACSB International, 2011).

- Bias: In this study, bias is an example of a type of workplace challenge people may encounter professionally. Humans are social beings that categorize themselves and others into groups in such ways that often negatively impact one group over another, consciously and unconsciously (Adams, 2018; DiAngelo & Dyson, 2018; Perez, 2019; Ross, 2014).

- Career Development Theory: A developmental process that happens over a person's lifetime with a focus on the identity of the self through experiences such as education, occupation, vocation, and lifestyle encompassing career chronology, contexts, patterns, behavior, and beliefs (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2021; Sampson et al., 2014; Tang, 2019; Vondracek et al., 2014).

- Success: In this study, the career development achievement of the senior leadership position of Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school is understood as success.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenology is an exploratory effort positioned to fill gaps in scholarly research by investigating the career development experiences of women Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools. This study seeks to interpret meaning by uncovering the self-perceived strategies for success and the barriers to success through the life experiences of women who have succeeded professionally to the role of Dean despite the challenges they may face. It is noteworthy that the literature uncovers how "effective leaders are highly self-aware, purpose-driven, and authentic. But with little insight on how the leaders became that way, the research falls short of providing realistic guidance" (Ibarra, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, Chance (2021) also argues that more research is needed that can identify and discuss women who are also minorities to uncover the "the experiences, career paths, adversities, resiliency efforts, and leadership development skills of this group [which] is nearly non-existent in the current literature" (p. 602).

The significance of this study has the capacity to extend out to future research regarding systemic effect on the various industries and businesses upon which AACSB-accredited business schools have an impact. However, this study is focused solely on the career development experiences from the perspective of female leaders. This study proposes bringing greater understanding of workplace challenges and potential strategies for overcoming these challenges. Additionally, this investigation strives to achieve a greater understanding of the issues that surface as a result of workplace challenges, such as imposter syndrome and self-sabotage, in the diverse workforce today. Furthermore, this study offers the exploration of the disadvantages women face in the industry of higher education by deepening the understanding of the leadership and career development of women at the crux of the business and higher

education industries serving in the role of Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America.

Chapter Summary

The first chapter of this phenomenology identifies the background issues of workplace challenges that impact career development coupled by the tumultuous changes in the globalized higher education industry. Then, the chapter proposes the exploration of female Deans leading business education at AACSB-accredited business schools in America to investigate the career development and perspectives of these leading women. Additionally, the first chapter offers the problem statement, purpose of this study, and two research questions. Thereafter, is an account of the methodological approach, including the researcher's assumptions and the delimitations of the study. Subsequently, there is a brief introduction of the theoretical framework of this study accompanied by key definitions. The first chapter concludes with the significance of the proposed research and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This study proposes to investigate the challenges and success of women who lead AACSB-accredited business schools in America from the senior level position of academic Dean. Leadership is defined in many ways, and the definition of leadership continues to evolve. This study focuses on women who lead in business education. This study relies on the support of the scholarly literature of women in higher education leadership, workplace challenges such as bias, the theory of emotional intelligence for self and relationship management, and Career Development Theory also known as vocational theory or career theory.

This chapter reviews the literature in four sections. The first section explores the literature on women in higher education leadership. The second section of this chapter details the research on an example of a workplace challenge known as bias, with an expanded exploration on how biases can impact professional career development. The third section explores the leadership of the self and the leadership of others from the perspective of emotional intelligence encompassing self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Lastly, the fourth section presents the literature on the interpretive framework of this study, Career Development Theory. The discussion of Career Development Theory encompasses the stages of career journeys, behavior, and professional success woven throughout various employees and workplaces. The literature review in chapter two concludes with a chapter summary.

Women in Higher Education Leadership

Workplaces, organizations, institutions, and societies are social and professional groups of people. As social beings, humans often view others as either equal or unequal which can

impact the potential leadership ability of persons in the group, workplace, organization, institution, or society (Adams, 2018). Women are an underrepresented group in senior leadership roles in many industries around the globe, and the higher education industry is under pressure to address the necessary changes in response to the demand for equitable gender representation (Khan et al., 2019; Longman & Anderson, 2016; Surawicz, 2016).

Scholars recognize an imbalance in gender representation for women in leadership in the higher education industry (Chance, 202; Khan et al., 2019; Longman & Anderson, 2016; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017). For example, Chance (2021) suggests that Black women in higher education leadership must face challenging career advancement adversity amid significant underrepresentation with attitudes anticipating resilience even with advanced degrees. What is more, the research uncovers that even with women surpassing men as graduates with higher education degrees, women are still not advanced professionally into senior leadership positions in academia with equitable representation compared to their male counterparts with similar education backgrounds (Longman & Anderson, 2016). Additionally, there are subsequent impacts on the underrepresentation of women advancing into senior leadership roles in higher education influencing the critical milestone of scholarly research publication achievements compared to male colleagues. The underrepresentation of women's publications, compounded with other professional inequities, even further impacts many women's ability to advance into senior leadership roles in higher education, causing a conundrum continuum for women who aspire to lead in academia (Chance, 202; Khan et al., 2019; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017).

Even with the significant rise of women enrolled in higher education degree programs and graduating with top degrees in various fields from medicine to government to higher education and beyond, women continue to maintain more middle management roles and lack

notable representation in senior leadership roles (American Council on Education, 2017; Chance, 2021; Khan et al., 2019; Laher, 2014; Surawicz, 2016). Women and minorities are the most underrepresented groups in higher education leadership (American Council on Education, 2017).

Scholars of faith-based institutions recognize "institutions collectively [serving] a student body that is 60% female, [yet] a 2015 analysis of individuals holding 'vice president' or higher titles revealed that women held fewer than 30% of those employed in any particular leadership role, and only slightly over 20% of all senior leadership roles" (Longman & Anderson, 2016, p. 24). Furthermore, Surawicz (2016) argues that nearly half of the applicants to and graduates from medical school are women, and yet "only 21% have reached the rank of full professor and only 16% of medical school Deans" (p. 1433). Chance (2021) argues that women and especially women who are also non-white minorities receive less pay, uncovering how "women and minority administrators are still paid less than others and disproportionately occupy lower-level roles" (p. 604). Additionally, scholars denote that the impact of the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership roles has a different influence on the underrepresentation of published scholarly research authored by women in their respective fields (Khan et al., 2019; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017).

Scholars of gender and race studies in academic leadership uncover how many women, especially women of color, face inequity in the higher education industry where their competence is questioned simply based on gender, race, or both (Allen, 2012; Anthony, 2012; Chance, 2021; Võ, 2012). Achieving degrees in higher education is one way that one can presumably attain greater socioeconomic status and combat inequality, and yet in the higher education industry, there are still many inequities that women and minorities must face (Allen, 2012; Chance, 2021). Chance (2021) uncovers that for many women, especially Black women,

achieving an advanced degree was insisted upon by family members through community efforts to enhance chances at improved career success, and yet ironically, even with advanced degrees, women and minorities still face adversity regarding career development in academia.

The way human beings are socialized uncovers some of the underpinnings of the career development dilemma for women who aspire to lead in academia (Anthony, 2012; Babcock & Laschever, 2021; Chance, 2021; Võ, 2012). For example, Võ (2012) argues that self-promotion is a skill many women must learn because it is a skill often misunderstood as aggressiveness due to "the way we are socialized and its influence on gendered behavior patterns" (p. 94). Furthermore, Anthony (2012) recognizes that people in academia may find it necessary to shift away from their authentic selves, conforming to expectations in the biased workplace settings of higher education in areas such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background.

Scholars acknowledge gender disparity surrounding how women negotiate for professional roles and salaries with hesitancy due to gendered socialization, causing feelings of self-doubt. Yet, men are often rewarded professionally for their strongly socialized sense of entitlement and resulting self-aggrandizement (Võ, 2012). Moreover, scholars argue that women shy away from asking for what they want due to their own assumptions about situations, which has a significant impact on the career development and salaries of educated women in comparison to men who have equivalent educational backgrounds (Babcock & Laschever, 2021). However, Chance (2021) argues that Black women in academia undergo transformative socialization building strong resilience in the face of adversity due to greater exposure culturally and historically to stereotypes, biases, and career development challenges.

Women are the minority in senior leadership roles in higher education institutions (ACE, 2017; Baron, 2015; Feldt, 2015; Leander & Watson, 2021; Phillips, 2015). Scholars who

research women in business education contend that "only nineteen percent of the top one hundred ranked [business] schools in the world have women Deans, with only one woman Dean among the top twenty programs" (Leander & Watson, 2021).   In America, women are also significantly underrepresented as college presidents (American Council on Education, 2017; Phillips, 2015). Additionally, scholars argue that women have the majority at 51% of the overall college graduate population, equally share the workplace with men, are the majority of voters in America at 54%, and yet hold less than 20% of senior leadership positions (Feldt, 2015). Furthermore, the research for diversity in higher education leaders, specifically leadership in business schools in America, recognizes the male-centric statistics in business schools uncovering:

> In business schools, and in business management, men dominate. Women make up only about 35% of the U.S. MBA student population. Among undergraduate business majors, about 43% are women, even though 60% of the students entering the top universities in the U.S. are female. Women in business doctoral programs is also low: 38.1% in the 2013-14 academic year, not much more than the 37.9% ten years earlier. The United Nations reports that women hold 43% of senior and middle management positions in the U.S. but fewer than 5% of Fortune 500 companies have female CEOs. About 19% of board seats in S&P 500 companies are held by women. (Baron, 2015)

In other words, women are working very hard to be more educated and are striving to lead in various industries around the world including higher education business schools in America. Nonetheless, the statistics prove that even with advanced degrees, women still trail behind men significantly, especially in senior leadership roles.

While many scholars recognize that the way women lead is different from men, there are stories beginning to emerge that may offer hope and guidance for women aspiring to lead (Babcock & Laschever, 2021; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Feldt, 2015; O'Reilly, 2015). For example,

scholars exploring the psychology of gendered behavior and traits regarding women in leadership note:

> The psychology that underlies prejudice toward female leaders is driven by conscious and unconscious mental associations about women, men, and leaders. People associate women and men with different traits, linking men with more of the traits that connote leadership. Such beliefs can make people conclude that no woman could have the "right stuff" for powerful jobs. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 83)

Furthermore, the way men and women are socialized from childhood to adulthood is indeed very different. However, even socialization is beginning to evolve as people all over the world work to transform our understanding and relationship with oppression, power, and authentic leadership (Feldt, 2015).

Women are recognized for having transformational leadership styles that are enhanced by strong interpersonal relationship skills inviting the participation of others democratically in today's multi-generational and globalized workforce (Appelbaum et al., 2013; Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1996). Expectations and attitudes are essential when it comes to leadership and influential positions, and society must "transcend conventional attitudes toward the woman's role and the woman's place" (Phillips, 2015, p. 29). Furthermore, leadership scholars argue how, globally, people are taught, through culture and socialization, the different gendered standards for behavior that leave women in an "infamous double-bind" stuck between being seen as overly aggressive or not noticed at all (Ibarra, 2015, p. 144). Additionally, people make assumptions around gender due to socialization, labeling women as more "other-oriented" and men being more "self-oriented," but these assumptions and biases are not always correct (Babcock & Laschever, 2021, p. 63). However, there may be stories of life experiences worthy of sharing from successful women who have faced workplace challenges with a heightened sense of

emotionally intelligent strength leading themselves and others with awareness and regulation through feminine grace, strength, poise, and prowess.

Scholars documenting the journey of women in leadership use metaphors to describe the challenges that exist for women leaders and the hardship women in leadership face, as the glass ceiling or the glass door, while others have called the ladder to leadership for women a labyrinth (Barreto et al., 2009; Davis & Geyfman, 2015; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women are inequitably measured when recruited to lead, while facing tokenism, gender stereotypes, and even sexual harassment (Barreto et al., 2009).

While women's enrollment in higher education degree programs outshines men's enrollment overall nationally, scholars recognize that AACSB-accredited business schools attract more men. For example:

> Women's enrollment decreased slightly and the percentage of female students at [undergraduate business schools] actually fell from 44.7% in 2003 to 41.1% in 2011. If it continues, this enrollment trend may have significant impact on [undergraduate business schools], industry and the national economy. In an initial attempt to understand the trend using a variety of factors that describe school access, educational environment, and women's experience, [Davis & Geyfman] found that (a) economic incentives and socioeconomic conditions play a role in female students' decision to enroll, (b) female student representation is lower at larger institutions, and (c) women-friendly institutional factors have a positive effect on women's representation at [undergraduate business schools]. (Davis & Geyfman, 2015, p. 87)

The research of women in leadership accredits underrepresentation to issues related to biases of individuals in the workplace (Koenig et al., 2011; Surawicz, 2016). Scholars recognize stereotypes as influential barriers for women who aspire to lead (Koenig et al., 2011). Longman & Anderson (2016) argue that if higher education seeks a sustainable and relevant future, the issue of women lacking representation in senior leadership must be reconciled, otherwise, the industry may face an ultimate demise. Thus, researching female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools is a conscious and scholarly effort to uncover insight through qualitative data on

how professionals in academia can thrive even when the challenges of socialized cultural norms may impact career progression of women who aspire to lead. Furthermore, if there are more women in senior leadership roles at AACSB-accredited business schools, in Dean positions and senior faculty roles, this could potentially result in more women-friendly institutional factors, which Longman and Anderson (2016) suggest can influence overall representation of women from student enrollment all the way up to the appointment of the Dean.

Thus, deepening the understanding of the career development experiences of women in academic leadership in the role of Dean may offer insight into overcoming the barriers in the collegial environments. The barriers in this case are workplace challenges that can often unfairly influence a person's career development. These challenges are often fueled by assumptions and biases which continue to drive socialized cultural norms from individuals and private homes into the shared community of higher education, business schools, and the AACSB-accredited business school workplace.

Leadership scholars argue that leadership identity is a social process internalized by people, as is a followership identity, and reflects from people into organizations (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Additionally, leadership theorists argue that the development of leadership identity involves a person's influence, motivation, support, skills, and experiences (Gibson et al., 2018). Moreover, scholars of race and gender recognize the importance of developing a leadership identity, arguing that both genders must work together to reconcile inequity as "partners in a communal struggle against oppression" (McClellan, 2012, p. 89).

Bias as an Example of a Workplace Challenge

In this study, bias is explored as an example of a workplace challenge that professionals may encounter during a career development journey. It is imperative that bias is understood in

the context of this literature review as truly an example that can impact career development, but it is not assumed that the research participants of this study will have experienced bias in their career development. In the spirit of accurate and un-biased research, the data collected in this hermeneutic phenomenology investigating the career development of leading women in business education, the words, sentences, phrases, and quotes of the research participants will be interpreted through the internal and external forces impacting career chronology, patterns, behaviors, and beliefs to deepen understanding of successful career development amid challenges.

People are social beings, and due to socialization, people categorize themselves and other people into groups with conscious and unconscious biases (Adams, 2018; Babcock & Laschever, 2021; DiAngelo, & Dyson, 2018; Perez, 2019; Ross, 2014). People and their biases contribute to their environments, personally and professionally, which further contributes to workplace habits and, ultimately, workplace culture (Perez, 2019). Scholars of women and gender recognize how bias and gender stereotypes influence human behavior. Bias and gender stereotypes influence how many women navigate professional situations and negotiations in the workplace with caution, trepidation, intimidation, fear, and gendered socialization (Babcock & Laschever, 2021).

Scholars of talent management argue that the most valuable resource or asset any organization can possess lies within the people that make up the organization (Allen, 2014). However, people are far from perfect. Through socialization, people define others by the way they look and circumscribe specific roles as either being masculine or feminine (Adams, 2018). Talent management scholars encourage managers to "hire, develop, engage, and retain good people" (Allen, 2014, p. 17). And yet, organizations hire people who bring judgements or biases

into the workplace that can be detrimental and destructive to the organization, the people who work in the organization, and even the customers of the organization (Ross, 2014).

Notably, human beings not only hold biases against other people, humans also have biases and illusions about their own selves and behavior which can lead to misinterpretation of how others are experiencing their leadership style (Ibarra, 2015). Additionally, the way people are socialized may often put women at a disadvantage for the more aggressive, short-term negotiations. However, Babcock and Laschever (2021) argue that "women's focus on cooperation and relationship building can be a huge advantage [for producing] solutions that are objectively superior to those produced by more competitive tactics" (p. 165). Moreover, Ibarra (2015) posits that women are qualified for senior leadership roles, but all too often women do not apply for the job unless someone else encourages them to do so.

The research uncovers that many people are not even aware of the harmful biases and inequitable judgments they have, which result in a social impact on themselves and on other people (Agarwal, 2020; Babcock & Laschever, 2021; Berry, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kaptein, 2013; Perez, 2019; Ross, 2014). For centuries, the origins of biases and stereotypes have evolved from:

> mentally grouping people based on characteristics that they share, often by relying on observable attributes such as sex, race, nationality, and occupation. We then form expectations about how these groups will behave, and we assume that people in the same group will have certain interests and skills that differentiate them from people in other groups. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 84)

Moreover, the neuroscientific responses happening within the human brain drive a human being's initial unconscious reasoning before the cognitive and rational thought processes are engaged (Argarwal, 2020).

Unconscious bias contributes to the career development of people as biases surface through human behavior (Kaptein, 2013). In the workplace, human emotion, perceptions, and unconscious reasoning are often at the root of problems and incidents that arise, causing workplace drama between colleagues (Perez, 2019). Babcock and Laschever (2021) further argue that human beings carry shared ideas around gender roles that push stereotypes on how men and women are expected to behave in the workplace. Often people in the workplace have good intentions, yet unconscious bias can surface spurring impulsive reactions leading to challenges that can negatively impact careers and also have an even wider impact on the overall organizational success (Ross, 2014).

Scholars argue that people must become aware that everyone has unconscious biases, and in addition, bias-consciousness is an important step towards positive change regarding managing biases in the workplace (Perez, 2019; Tsipursky, 2020; Turnbull, 2016). Affinity bias is the part of unconscious biases that drives a person to connect more with people who are similar as opposed to different, which is an extension of the human affinity to socialize and even work with people who are similar instead of diverse, even in a diverse workplace (Turnbull, 2016). Thus, organizational courage is necessary for a healthy workplace, and on the other hand, organizational fear can breed toxicity in the workplace (Perez, 2019). Scholars of cognitive-behavioral therapy uncover how unconscious bias can negatively impact individuals, relationships, culture, workplaces, and ultimately, the world we all share (Tsipursky, 2020).

The research uncovers how conventional unconscious bias training in the workplace can be costly and all too often is completely ineffective (Gino & Coffman, 2021; Perez, 2019; Williamson & Foley, 2018). Williamson and Foley (2018) argue that unconscious bias training in the workplace may even worsen problems instead of improving it. Williamson and Foley

(2018) further recommend that any such unconscious bias training in the workplace must be under heavy scrutiny and should be paired with a cadence of sustained effort to continually address discriminatory behavior and bias. Moreover, scholars of talent management implore that training and development investments must, "deliver a specific business result and be held accountable for achieving that result" (Allen, 2014, p. 80). Thus, one might ask how can the judgements and biases of people even be truly measured with accountable accuracy.

Gino and Coffman (2021) warn individuals and employers of the cultural backfires of conventional unconscious bias training, which can send "the message that biases are involuntary and widespread—beyond our control, [and] in other words—can make people feel [that unconscious biases are] unavoidable and lead to more discrimination, not less" (p. 116). Today's globalized workforce is diverse, and Allen (2014) argues that diversity "can be a valuable asset if managed properly" (p. 112). Moreover, Perez (2019) urges employers to go beyond the mere training and policies to achieve a shared vision or brand for the equity and inclusivity of the organization that employees feel can get excited about with mindfulness around how politically charged the current workplace climate is across many industries and sectors.

Many women who lead and who aspire to lead in academia from the senior leadership role of may Dean face the challenges of stereotypes, criticism, judgment, and biases from both genders (Koenig et al., 2011). These challenges are often due to the nature of stereotypes as well as academic competition for funding scholarly research. Additionally, criticism is an integral part of the scholarly peer-review process, which is undoubtedly a primary part of how many people grow professionally in the higher education industry (Bothwell, 2016; Nguyen, 2013; O'Dea, 2020; Tamburri, 2016). Women in academia who strive to lead from Dean positions are often perceived as having "strong family obligations [which] act as the strongest macro socio-

political cultural barrier to female academic advancement. This 'unwritten rule' places a heavy

burden on female Deans, both physically and mentally" (Nguyen, 2013, p. 134).

From artists to cowboys, the concept of masculinity has evolved over time, and yet (even

though unrealistic by today's standards of equality), these standards of the past still have impact

over the minds of men and women alike. For instance, gender scholars recognize how autonomy

is associated with the concept of masculinity having an:

> uber-emphasis on independence, self-sufficiency and separation from others, [casting] in
> binary opposition values associated with interdependence (and symbolically associated
> with femininity). In consequence, such values as trust, loyalty, friendship, caring and
> social practices, relationships and communities based on cooperation, are systemically
> downgraded, indeed portrayed as threatening, or at the very least, compromising
> autonomy. (O'Dea, 2020, p. 208)

The impact of gender bias is obvious from the leadership statistics in higher education

worldwide (Bothwell, 2016; O'Dea, 2020; Tamburri, 2016). For example, in 2015 Canada had

less than five women serving as university presidents in over 100 institutions with marginal

leadership in faculty roles coupled with little-to-no data on the appointment of female university

Deans (Tamburri, 2016). Furthermore, the literature uncovers that in the past decade less than 20

percent of the top 200 universities around the globe had women at the helm as university

presidents (Bothwell, 2016). Keep in mind, many university presidents ascend to the presidency

after serving as a Dean.

There are high expectations in academia, and when high expectations are co-mingled

with stereotypes that drive conscious and unconscious biases, a recipe for disaster may peculate

(Kupenda, 2012; Koenig et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2013; O'Dea, 2020; Tamburri, 2016). Scholars of

gendered stereotypes recognize:

> Even women who possess outstanding qualifications for leadership may have the burden
>
> of overcoming preconceptions that they are not well equipped to lead. Not only do the

descriptive aspects of stereotyping make it difficult for women to gain access to leader

roles, but the prescriptive aspects of stereotyping could produce conflicting expectations

concerning how female leaders should behave—that is, that they should be agentic to

fulfill the leader role but communal to fulfill the female gender role. (Koenig et al., 2011,

p. 637)

Furthermore, the literature uncovers that the day-to-day experiences in the higher

education industry may be at the root of the various and on-going gender parity which can create

career development challenges leaving women to feel like outsiders in academia and in academic

leadership (O'Dea, 2020). Notably, "publications and developing a national reputation [are]

critical if [one hopes] to be promoted and get tenure" (Kupenda, 2012, p. 22). Moreover, women

who do achieve significant academic leadership success may continue to face "fierce resistance

and criticism" that all too often steers leading women away from the higher education industry

all together (Tamburri, 2016, para. 8). Women in academia, and most especially women of color

in academia, face the multi-pronged challenges of behavioral expectations from male colleagues,

and most especially white male colleagues (Kupenda, 2012). Likewise, the international

research on female Deans and barriers to leadership in academia share that women in higher

education "are thought to be indecisive, less active, limited in thinking, and dare not [to] take

risks" (Nguyen, 2013, p. 134).

The literature uncovers how esteem, legitimization, benefits, and access are anticipated

with a career in higher education leadership. However, for some a career in higher education

leadership can instead deliver an environment wrought with inequities, especially when the

workplace has a significantly dominate presence driving influence, may that dominance be race,

nationality, gender, religion, socioeconomic background, class, or a combination of any of these

potentially observable attributes (Kupenda, 2012; Moffitt et al., 2012). However, when marginalized people share their experiences this act can offer seeds of empowerment for future harvests as these shared stories can contradict bias and can potentially drive transformational change (Moffitt et al., 2012). Moreover, scholars of feminist theory insist how imperative it is to, "engage in collective action and individually participate in political activism for global good" (Moffitt et al., 2012, p. 84). Thus, this study aims to engage in such collective action with scholarly effort to participate in the political activism for global good. In this study, goal is to uncover valuable perspectives and life experiences of pioneering females who find themselves at the crux of academia as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America.

The Theory of Emotional Intelligence

For the past several decades, leadership scholars have posited how imperative it is for leaders and aspiring leaders to understand and cultivate the theory of emotional intelligence (Chance, 2021; Goleman, 1995; Goleman, 2000; Goleman et al., 2004; Hakan, 2016; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). Scholars advocate that emotional intelligence drives human coping mechanisms, and thus, leaders must prioritize being aware of, directing, and managing other people's feelings as well as their own feelings (Hakan, 2016). Additionally, Goleman et al. (2004) emphasize how the most influential leaders approach leadership at a primally emotional level to compel others to follow. Chance (2021) argues that developing a keen sense of emotional intelligence is one of the many keys for women who desire to advance in higher education leadership roles, especially for women of color.

The research uncovers that leaders must cultivate emotional intelligence, especially if there is a desire to rise to and maintain success in an influential senior leadership role (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Goleman, 2000). Mayer and Salovey (1997) recognize

emotional intelligence as a cognition that cogitates emotion. Goleman (1995) illustrates

emotional intelligence as a person's ability to stay motivated and persistent "in the face of

frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress

from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope" (p. 34). Goleman (2000) further

refines the description of emotional intelligence as a person's aptitude for distinguishing one's

own feelings and the feelings of other people, along with self-motivation and the ability to cope

with emotions personally and in relationships with others.

The literature uncovers the significance of examining, monitoring, and balancing one's

impulses, emotions, and responses to others away from discordant or negative reactions such as

fear and anger (Goleman, 2006; Goleman et al., 2004; Ekman, 2008). The development of

emotional intelligence begins in childhood through learning social norms in regards to reactions

that are deemed as either appropriate or inappropriate, including behavior, body language, facial

expressions, verbal reactions, and physical responses to other people and situations (Goleman,

2006). Furthermore, Goleman (2000) emphasizes applying emotional intelligence in the

workplace through five emotional and social competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation,

motivation, empathy, and social skills (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Goleman's Five Competencies of Emotional Intelligence

Personal Competence (self-management)	Social Competence (relationship-management)
Self-Awareness Emotional awareness Accurate self-assessment Self-confidence	**Empathy** Understanding others Developing others Service orientation Leveraging diversity Political awareness
Self-Regulation Self-control Trustworthiness Conscientiousness Adaptablity Innovation	**Social Skills** Influence Communication Conflict management Leadership Change catalyst Building bonds Collaboration & cooperation Team capabilities
Motivation Achievement drive Commitment Initiative Optimism	

Note. The Five Competencies of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2000).

Furthermore, Goleman et al. (2004) identify a course of action for leadership and self-discovery through various notions of emotional intelligence and personal self-inquiry of values, aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, learning schema, experimentation, practice, and the

development of relationships. Ekman (2008) illustrates emotional response highlighting the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism through a conversation with the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who advocates for the recognition and regulation of damaging emotions such as anger as opposed to constructive emotions such as compassion, while also acknowledging the significance of environmental stimulus. Goleman (2000) defines self-regulation as how a person manages "internal states, impulses, and resources" including "self-control: keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check; trustworthiness: maintaining standards of honesty and integrity; conscientiousness: taking responsibility for personal performance; adaptability: flexibility in handling change; and innovation: being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches, and new information" (p. 26). Fortunately, scholars agree that cultivating emotionally intelligent self-regulation is indeed possible, but the development of self-regulation must be driven by motivated effort, mindfulness, and trial-and-error (Goleman et al., 2004).

Leaders must have a foundation of cognizant self-awareness to be able to recognize emotions and develop the skills of self-monitoring and self-regulation of mental states and emotional responses (Goleman, 1995, 2000; Goleman et al., 2004). Scholars agree that leaders must be self-aware and self-regulated otherwise, a leader will not develop empathy, which is the ability to recognize the emotions and feelings of others (Goleman et al., 2004). Goleman (1995) expounds upon how self-awareness begins with the regulation of fear, worry, and anger. Furthermore, Goleman (2000) recognizes emotional awareness, self-assessment, and self-confidence are the aptitudes of authentic self-awareness, which can direct a person's ability to attain leadership success personally and professionally.

Becoming self-aware and preserving self-awareness resides in the neural complexities of the human brain, from conscious and unconscious emotional states to how humans receive and

store information from the visual cortex of the brain to the amygdala eliciting emotional reaction (Goleman, 2004; Goleman et al., 2004). Goleman (2000) suggests that self-awareness involves "emotional awareness - recognizing one's emotions and their effects, accurate self-assessment - knowing one's strengths and limits, and self-confidence – a strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities" (p. 26). Positive emotions develop in the prefrontal brain or the proverbial visionary kitchen, where leaders prepare the fuel for others who have the appetite for the leader's vision (Goleman et al., 2004). Goleman (2000) connects emotions and motivation, contending that emotions feed motivation, motives, perceptions, and actions. Scholars agree that influential leaders can motivate others by stirring emotions in positive ways through optimism, hope, compassion, connection, vision-casting, and positivity (Goleman et al., 2004).

Having self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation as foundational strengths of emotional intelligence can lead to the penultimate development of socially-aware empathy, or the competencies of appreciating, understanding, supporting, and developing diverse people and groups (Goleman, 1995, 2000; Goleman et al., 2004, 2012). Socially-aware empaths have the ability to guide individuals and groups towards achieving goals and sharing values (Goleman et al., 2004). Empathy transpires through the brain's ability to interpret the emotion of others during "amygdala-cortical circuitry, which has a key role in orchestrating appropriate responses" (Goleman, 1995, p. 104). Socially aware and empathetic leaders are capable of vision-casting by articulating the mission, setting standards, and guiding the achievement of goals with encouragement (Goleman et al., 2004, p. 66).

Emotionally intelligent people can sense the emotions of others, even inaudibly, as emotions communicate and affect others, while simultaneously, social skills can either nourish or deplete others (Goleman, 2000). Goleman et al. (2004) portray the most effective leaders as

inspirational and resonant people who engage others by creating synchronous connections that energize optimism. In essence, emotional intelligence encompasses the influential social skills of communication, conflict resolution, leadership through change, relationship nurturing, cooperation, collaboration, and synergizing people and teams to achieve goals (Goleman, 2000).

Suppose it is assumed, as Babcock and Laschever (2021) scrutinize, due to gendered socialization, that women tend to have more other-oriented qualities and characteristics than men, who are often assumed to be more self-oriented. In that case, it is obvious that leaders or aspiring leaders of any gender have areas that need development regarding emotional intelligence. Scholars agree that everyone, no matter how much experience or education they have, struggles with their own self-confidence and feelings of insecurity at some point during in their professional experience. For example, Chance (2021) argues that women who are also minorities that strive to lead in academia must develop "vital skills leaders need to be successful, such as pain tolerance, emotional intelligence, focus/motivation, self discipline, faith/hope, self-esteem, and commitment" (p. 619). Moreover, people can develop emotional intelligence to overcome personal and professional insecurities, strengthen self-confidence, and improve (Gallo, 2019).

Finally, emotional intelligence connects to the data collection Interview Question number seven asked of the research participants which is, "How would you describe how you lead yourself?". Interview question seven relates to Research Question two, "What are the career development strategies and practices employed by women who are Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools?". Scholars of emotional intelligence denote that self-esteem is an aspect of leading the self, and argue that high self-esteem of emotionally intelligent professionals has impact upon a career quality and can potentially lessen career development gaps (Dust et al.,

2018). Furthermore, the literature supports the importance of developing emotional intelligence for self-leadership in order to avoid emotional distress and negative repetitive thoughts which can perpetuate worry, rumination, depression, and social anxiety (Constantin et al, 2019).

Career Development Theory

Career Development Theory is the theoretical framework of this phenomenological study because in today's globalized, multi-generational, and multicultural workforce there are many complexities that a person must face as they evolve along their career development journey (Tang, 2019). Career Development Theory is also known as career theory or vocational theory, and this theory explores how human beings develop and self-identify through their career journeys, behavior, and professional success in various workplaces (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2021; Sampson et al., 2014; Tang, 2019; Vondracek et al., 2014). Scholars of Career Development Theory argue that human beings construct a holistic understanding of themselves through the living system of their life context and behaviors (Vondracek et al., 2014).

Career Development Theory has evolved over time. The theory dates back to the early 1900s. The scholarship of career development connects occupations with personal traits and psychology, exploring personality types for specific work environments and self-efficacy (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2021; Sampson et al., 2014). Career Development Theory is decision-based depending on situations or sociological reasoning, and developmental which examines how a person derives an identity or self-concept over one's life (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2021). Scholars of Career Development Theory argue that there are a few main themes within this field of study, such as: "(a) personal characteristics and states of being; (b) delivery of career resources and services; (c) external factors influencing the

individual; (d) theories; and (e) occupational, educational, or employment options" (Sampson et al., 2014, p. 320).

Keeping in mind that Career Development Theory explores the external factors that influence the individual, women supporting women is a note-worthy factor when it comes to career and salary statistics from the leadership data of women in higher education administration as well as in the private sector (Flabbi et al., 2019; Fuesting et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2013). For example, when an institution has a female president, the data points to more female representation, career advancement, and equitable pay for women in the institution overall. Scholars of the College and University Professional Association of Human Resources (CUPA-HR) report that only about a third of colleges in America are led by female presidents (Fuesting et al., 2022). And yet, scholars of women in leadership in the higher education industry recognize that women are not only underrepresented but are also notably underpaid in most senior leadership positions in academia (Pritchard et al., 2020).

Additionally, scholars researching female Deans argue that "having more women as leaders and managers can promote not only gender equity but also organizational productivity and human capital development, [thus] appropriate measures should be taken to empower female leaders" (Nguyen, 2013, p. 136). Furthermore, the research posits that the majority of higher education leaders tend to follow a career path from faculty or senior faculty roles at the institution into leadership roles such as Dean, provost, and president. Yet, if women are not advanced to senior faculty roles, the likelihood of advancing to senior leadership roles such as Dean are very slim (Pritchard et al., 2020). Moreover, higher education industry research uncovers the inequity in career progression and pay for female faculty, senior faculty, and Deans (Fuesting et al., 2022).

Since the turn of the last century, women have been striving to advance in their careers in higher education leadership, following in the career development footsteps similar to male colleagues, but the results have not been as similar (Kairys, 2018; Longman & Lafreniere, 2012; McTavish & Miller, 2009; Miller & Creswell, 1998; Nguyen, 2013; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017). In America, in 1855 colleges and universities first began allowing women to enroll as students, by 1980 women were graduating from college in higher numbers than men, and by 2008 women lead as the majority of graduates with masters and doctoral degrees (Longman & Lafreniere, 2012). In addition, now women are the dominant force in higher education workforce, and yet senior roles are predominately given to males (Kairys, 2018). Research exploring women leaders in academia at the Dean level internationally suggests that "social expectations of women as dutiful wives and mothers are so strong, appropriate policies and measures must be developed to lessen the time demands of women's domestic work and childcare so that women can invest time as much as men do in their career progress" (Nguyen, 2013, p. 136). Furthermore, Yousaf and Schmiede (2017) conclude that no matter what country or culture a woman lives in or is from, there are many similarities to the underrepresentation of women and similarities in the barriers to career development in leadership in academia, especially senior leadership roles such as a Dean.

There continue to be career development challenges for women who seek to lead in higher education, even with comprehensive education and experience (Bierema, 2005; Kairys, 2018; Longman & Lafreniere, 2012; Vaccaro, 2010). The research reveals that inequality can derive from an organizational structure that influences atmospheres in the workplace that further impact networks and power relations in an organization (Bierema, 2005). Scholars uncover that men and women both recognize that "cognitive, interpersonal, business and strategic skills" are a

necessity for senior roles higher education leadership, but the variant lies in how "gender influences leadership with men focused on task-orientated leadership skills whilst and women focused on relationship development leadership skills" (Kairys, 2018, p. 931). Scholars of women in leadership recognize that women have unique needs and must be offered career development opportunities in ways tailored to support what women need to advance (Longman & Lafreniere, 2012). Scholars urge higher education institutions to invest women by investing in "leadership programs that focus on specific leadership skill development of cognitive, interpersonal, business and strategic skills" (Kairys, 2018, p. 938).

Scholars of gender and career development observe women develop in their careers in phases over time (Longman & Lafreniere, 2012; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). O'Neil and Bilimoira (2005) recognize the impact and context of career development from societal, organizational, and relational. Additionally, scholars posit how women self-identify at "three distinct age-related phases, characterized by differences in career pattern, locus, context and beliefs" (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005, p. 184). Furthermore, O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) argue that these stages for women are:

1. The early-career idealistic achievement phase (ages 24-25) with career choices made in alignment with "their desires for career satisfaction, achievement and success, and their desire to positively impact others … These women have been impacted by negative organizational environments but believe they can rise above them… [These women are] grappling with issues of how to combine career and family." (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005, p. 182-183)

2. The mid-career pragmatic endurance phase (ages 36-45) where women "are operating in production mode, doing what it takes to get it done … They have a high relational context and are managing multiple responsibilities both personally and professionally … These women are most likely to be dissatisfies and disenfranchised with their workplaces and stalled at the middle management level after having worked for 10 to 20 years. The staggering impact of negative organizations and managers, and discrimination and sexual harassment combine to produce a bleak environment for many mid-career women. [And yet they] see their careers as extensions of themselves, and their identities are inextricably

linked with what they do for a living." (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005, p.184)

3. The advanced-career reinventive contribution phase (ages 46-60) with women "focused on contributing to their organizations, their families and their communities. They are most likely to attribute personal and professional others as having had input into the direction of their careers (external career locus) and are likely to reflect a stable, planned career path (ordered career pattern). The women in the reinventive contribution phase have experienced their personal lives being subsumed by their professional lives at some point during their careers." (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005, p. 184)

Thus, with various the challenges in each phase, scholars implore that leadership development for women in higher education must also be offered to women in their various career development stages, meeting women where they are in each stage in their career development journey towards senior leadership in academia (Longman & Lafreniere, 2012).

Every person is unique, and the path to leadership as well as the continued journey to maintain successful leadership can be as unique as the person (Bailey, 2008; Chance, 2021; Lavigne, 2020; Longman & Lafreniere, 2012;). Decanal appointments can come from promotion within academia, re-appointment of Deans from one institution to another, and there are rare appointments of Deans who do not come from academia yet many of these unique decanal appointees do have terminal degrees (Lavigne, 2020). The research uncovers how many college Deans must manage "overflowing workloads, chaotic work pace, and diverse responsibilities" (Bailey, 2008, p. 783). Furthermore, scholars argue that resilience and refraining from a victim-mindset are key elements for success for minority women regarding facing adversity and leveraging the experiences that come with overcoming challenges as a way to thrive in academic leadership (Chance, 2021).

Scholars also find that mentorship can be a key step in career development for developing females who successfully lead in academia (Bierema, 2005; Chance, 2021; Ibarra, 2015;

Longman & Lafreniere, 2012). For example, Ibarra (2015) implores leaders and aspiring leaders

to seek out a network of trustworthy mentors that can give honest yet critical feedback

throughout a career and leadership development journey that can be received in a way that will

produce positive changes and results in the context of trust and support. Bierema (2005)

additionally recognizes the psychosocial significance of finding a strong and actively engaged

network of support, but also questions "whether women's networks encourage female

acculturation to the patriarchal culture [of academia] or if they are instrumental in fostering real

change and opportunity for women" (p. 210). Furthermore, scholars of women in academia urge

women and minorities to build trust with others as a way to influence, drive team success, and

strengthen professional career development in higher education in leadership (Chance, 2021).

Finding balance while juggling a professional career in higher education leadership as a

Dean or an aspiring Dean demands much of one's personal life and professional life

simultaneously and constantly (Bailey, 2008; Bierema, 2005; Lavigne, 2020). Bierema (2005)

posits that women's attitudes amid adversity coupled with awareness and participation can make

or break career development. Moreover, Lavigne (2020) recognizes that there are many

variables that contribute to the career path of a Dean and emphasizes that there is not one clear

path or a one-size-fits-all for career development to become an academic leader in academia as a

Dean.

Notably, scholars of Career Development Theory are critical of the theory for being

predominately oriented in with a masculine, middle-class, Western or American view

exclusionary of diverse groups (Blustein, 2006, 2011, 2015; McMahon & Patton, 2018).

However, McMahon, and Patton (2018) argue that Career Development Theory responds "to

challenges in three key areas: the need for integration or convergence of theories, the importance

of integrating related disciplines into the field, and the increasing influence of constructivism and social constructionism" (p. 230). Furthermore, scholars acknowledge that a convergence of theories is needed in regards to Career Development Theory because today's diverse workforce experiences precipitous and complex change (McMahon & Patton, 2018). Thus, converging the personal and social competences of emotional intelligence with how people self-identify while managing internal and external forces in their career development is pivotal to this study and relevant to the literature.

Many careers in higher education can also be impacted by the flux of the external world outside of the institution (Bailey, 2008; Bierema, 2005; Chance, 2021; Lavigne, 2020; Longman & Lafreniere, 2012). For example, Longman and Lefreniere (2012) recognize that the higher education industry "faces a wide array of internal and external pressures related to current economic realities, trends in globalization and the expansion of technology, and issues related to access and affordability for an increasingly diverse student population" (p. 58). Furthermore, multidisciplinary and international scholars of career development with a focus the careers of women, argue that the voices of older women offer guidance and insight for overcoming obstacles for career advancement through the sharing of their lived social, historical, economic, and political experiences (Blustein, 2015).

Issues such as pay inequity, job insecurity, and labor market barriers are uncovered by scholars of Career Development Theory detailing the persisting obstacles to successful career advancement and development despite the increased educational and vocational achievement (Blustein, 2015). Notably, AACSB International (2011) suggests the most significant influence of change is globalization for businesses around the world, including business education. Additionally, many Deans and institutions work externally with businesses that may hire

students or work in partnership with the institution in various ways (Bailey, 2008). However, Blustein (2015) uncovers how the career challenges women have faced and continue to face are similar to the challenges other marginalized groups face, which are very different from the experiences of middle-class, Westernized men.

Lavigne (2020) urges more scholarly research on female Dean appointments and reappointments (as well as non-White appointments) regarding barriers and access. Chance (2021) argues that women who face adversity from impoverished areas may have a heightened leadership ability to influence diverse populations equipping the leader to reach people on the fringe of society and those in the mainstream. Career theorists argue that women can be a conduit for inclusivity in the workplace, deepening diverse perspectives (Savickas, 2013).

The impact of what scholars call society's gender awareness, also known as "gender consciousness" or "gender unconsciousness," can also significantly impact women who strive to lead in American academia as well as in corporate America regarding gendered power dynamics and relations (Bierema, 2005, p. 219). How people self-identify is a critical element of Career Development Theory, and scholars argue that career identity influences career development (Lysova et al., 2015; McMahon & Patton, 2018)

Thus, deepening the understanding of leading women of business education who are female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools may have potential to begin to fill the gaps in the research to potentially uncover ways to increase gender consciousness and the strategies some women employ during their respective career development journeys.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two of this study discusses the literature regarding women in higher education leadership, workplace bias, the theory of emotional intelligence, and Career Development

Theory, supporting the proposal for investigating female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. An introduction begins this chapter to set the stage for the following literature review. The literature review explores the research of women in leadership in a broad sense leveraging a few different industries, which point to impacts in higher education and scholarly research. Subsequently, the lens of women in leadership is further tailored for this research proposal with a focus on women in leadership in higher education. This chapter also describes the research on the conscious and unconscious biases that may impact people, career professionals, and workplace environments. Then, the literature review offers an in-depth account of the theory of emotional intelligence comprising the theoretical competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Lastly, the final section of the review of the literature explores Career Development Theory (also known as vocational theory), encompassing career journeys, behavior, and professional success as people self-identity through careers development in workplace environments.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

  This chapter presents the approach to research and methodology utilized in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process in an effort to answer the two research questions of this study. This study is a qualitative study with a phenomenological design. The focus of this research study is on deepening understanding of the lived experiences of career development from the perspective of women serving in leadership roles as Deans in the higher education industry at business schools in America. Successful career development in academia, even amid workplace challenges, is an abiding concern to the author of this phenomenological study. Thus, the career development phenomenon researched in this study is that of women who become Deans while overcoming workplace challenges. Career Development Theory will be utilized as an interpretive framework to answer the two research questions of the study, guiding data collection and analysis regarding how participants self-identify in the context of their career chronology, patterns behaviors, and beliefs.

  This chapter also details the data collection of this study. The process of data collection in this study will explore the social contexts or the lived experiences of career development, workplace challenges, and successful career strategies or practices from the perspective of people who are female Deans at AACSB-accredited business schools in America. Workplace challenges such as criticism, doubt, bias, and the various impacts stemming from the flux of change of career development in a globalized marketplace, may often be considered unavoidable and relatively commonplace in the everyday lives of people's careers. However, people can find hope in the success stories of those who have achieved great strides in their career development

and are serving in influential leadership roles are needed, especially aspiring women who seek leadership roles in higher education.

A hermeneutical approach will be taken in this phenomenological study. A hermeneutical approach focuses on the texts or words, sentences, phrases, quotes, and sentiments regarding career development chronology, contexts, patterns, behaviors, and beliefs may emerge and potentially reappear in the transcriptions of interviews with the participants of this study. The words, sentences, phrases, and quotes collected during interviews will be narrowed down to represent the essential lived experiences of career development for academic leaders who are women serving as Deans.

For example, Van Manen (2016) describes a hermeneutic phenomenology as:

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence. The term *method* refers to the way or attitude of approaching a phenomenon. *Abstemious* means that reflecting on experience aims to abstain from theoretical, polemical, suppositional, and emotional intoxications. *Hermeneutic* means that reflecting on experience must aim for discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible. *Lived experiences* means that phenomenology reflects on the pre-reflective or pre-predicative life of human existence as living through it. (p. 26)

In other words, in this phenomenological study, the hermeneutical texts or words investigated and explored will be the data collected through the self-reflections and self-perceptions exchanged through the research participant's answers to eight interview questions. Each participant's responses will be the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted as the lived experiences of the social and behavioral context of self-perceived career development through the strategies and practices for overcoming workplace challenges and maximizing opportunities. The data collected will include a combination of the perceptive reality of participants and their individual experiences regarding self-identified and self-perceived career development.

Next, the hermeneutic data or words, sentences, quotes, and phrases regarding career development will be analyzed, reflected upon, categorized, and interpreted through the lens of Career Development Theory in an effort to understand the phenomenon better. Again, the phenomenon of focus is the lived experiences of women who have been able to professionally achieve, even amid challenges, the senior leadership position of Dean at a higher education institution of business in America with a prestigious accreditation. With Career Development Theory as the interpretive framework, the participants' lived experiences will be analyzed and categorized. The categories will be coded into themes with potential to inform or deepen understanding of the career development of Deans, who are women in this study. In other words, the hermeneutic data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted in an attempt understand better how a human being develops and self-identifies through the lived experience of their career journey, workplace behavior, and professional success.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, scholars of Career Development Theory agree that human beings can construct a holistic understanding of themselves through the living system of their life context and behaviors. Thus, describing the successful career development of women leading at AACSB-accredited business schools in America amid today's globalized, multi-generational, and multicultural workforce may potentially demystify some of the various and numerous complexities or workplace challenges that professionals must ultimately face in many industries and professional contexts.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

Research Question 1: "How do women maximize opportunities and overcome obstacles in career development to become business education leaders as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America?"

Research Question 2: "What are the career development strategies and practices employed by women who are Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools?"

Nature of the Study

The nature of this qualitative study is a hermeneutic phenomenology seeking to uncover useful examples and strategies for career development success, even amid challenges, through the interpretive framework of Career Development Theory. The naturalistic approach in this study stems from the ability to interact with women who are currently serving as Deans. In other words, it is a naturalistic approach since the women are currently serving as Deans and the research focus here is regarding the careers and career development of female Deans. The qualitative interview process will elicit these female Deans to share stories about themselves. The stories they will share in response to eight probing interview questions will be from their perspective and will be the self-perceived experiences of their own career development journey. Each interview question will focus on deriving understanding from the lived experiences of these influential academic leaders.

To that end, this research study would be remiss without the broad philosophical assumptions of a phenomenological study, such as objectivity, reality, and individual experiences. The author of this study approaches the two research questions with a sense of genuine wonder and awe, with a curiosity around how these women have developed their careers at the industry convergence of higher education and business to lead an institution with AACSB accreditation as Dean. In this study, the human subjects investigated will be asked to share their recollections and perceptions of their career development experiences, which are their conscious realities. The search for meaning in this study will be driven by the reduction of data collected

from the interviews to acquire, analyze, reflect upon, and categorize the lived career experiences of women who are currently leading business schools in America as institutional Deans.

The ordinary experience of career development is pre-reflective in this study. The extraordinary experience or phenomenon of career development of an under-represented group in academia amid challenges is the enigmatic phenomenon, cognitive and emotional, worthy of reduction in hopes to reveal valuable meaning and deeper understanding. This study will be a pursuit of human truth or, at the very least, the pursuit of experiential insights from women who are successful academic leaders.

The phenomenon in this study is the social construct of career development amid workplace challenges. The social context in this study is shared experience of career development into a specific senior leadership role in academia from the perspective of under-represented people, which in this study, are women currently serving as a Dean of a business school in America with AACSB accreditation. This study aims to research and better understand the lived experiences each participant may have faced conceptually in their careers and throughout their career development journey. Creswell argues that a "Phenomenology is not only a description but is it also an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences" (2018, p. 78). Moreover, each woman interviewed offers this study subjective or conscious lived experiences by the sharing of stories with the researcher in response to interview questions directed at the unique career development journey of successfully becoming a Dean.

Creswell (2018) further argues that phenomenological researchers find people who all have experienced this same phenomenon that "may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15" (p. 67). Thus, the hermeneutic data collected in the form of words, sentences, phrases, and

quotes will be derived through the sentiments collected in this study's interviews. This study will have a purposeful maximal sampling female Deans at various AACSB-accredited business schools in America, with a minimum number of ten and a maximum of 20 to 25. Notably, scholars recognize the value of purposive sampling in phenomenological studies because the sample population investigated needs to have experienced the phenomenon with an ability to discuss their experience (Gerrish & Lacey). Furthermore, scholars argue that between 10 and 25 research participants sufficient for a phenomenological study, while some scholars recognize that even having three participants may suffice for saturation (Finlay, 2009; Guest et al, 2006; Mason, 2010, 2016). In these interviews, the women Deans will be asked to reflect upon and speak to the recollection of the lived experiences of the contexts, situations, and pivotal decisions they perceive as influential in their career development.

Furthermore, this research intends to deepen career development understanding through the collective experiences of how these women maximize opportunities, overcome obstacles, and employ career development strategies and practices despite potential workplace challenges through the generation of essential thematic material interpreted during the analysis of the statements shared in the interviews. Likewise, the women investigated in this study share the common or mutual experience of leading an American business school that is AACSB-accredited during the year 2022, a time when the higher education industry and the globalized marketplace of business are experiencing significant flux and change.

The data collected through this study's interviews aim to disentangle some career development complexities along the journey to becoming an academic leader during a time when the higher education industry and the globalized business marketplace are experiencing change. The self-identified career development journeys of these leading female Deans will be

categorized, coded, and interpreted through Career Development Theory, exploring essential similarities and differences in career patterns, contexts, and beliefs to reveal insights for navigating a career successfully even amid various workplace challenges.

Methodology

Merriam (2014) defines a qualitative research "inductive" with "the primary instrument of data collection and analysis" and a narrowed focus on "process, meaning, and understanding" (p. 266). With the literature explored in Chapter Two, the research suggests that women who aspire to lead in many industries experience career development challenges. The research further indicates that women who aspire to lead in higher education may experience workplace challenges that may impact opportunities for career development. Moreover, the literature beckons for more research on the appointments of Deans, and the literature beckons even more for more research specifically on the appointments of female Deans. This need for better understanding is especially poignant as women have begun to have a seat at the leadership table in the last century in America. While simultaneously, in some countries outside of America, women are viewed as a man's property, and may not even be allowed to have a job or professional identity at all.

This current phenomenon where women are slowly but surely advancing professionally into leadership in various industries in America, including academia and business, is a focal locus of this research. However, while many women may strive to lead a prestigious academic institution, not all women succeed, but there are some who have proven successful. It is the life experiences of these women who have risen professionally through their career development journey that this phenomenological study seeks to investigate, analyze, and interpret. To put it

simply, the female Deans in this study are what Creswell (2018) calls the "criterion sample" (p. 151).

The analysis approach in this phenomenology will be anchored in the interpretive framework of Career Development Theory and will be holistic in integrating analyzed themes and contextual information gathered. The study aims to explore the interviews to find themes within the analyzed and compared information that may explore the issues or challenges that many people may face during their career development and leadership journeys as well as any potentially shared strategies and practices used to overcome such issues or challenges successfully.

The Structured Process of a Qualitative Phenomenological Study

Creswell (2018) describes as procedures for conducting phenomenological research with eight main steps or stages for describing the lived experiences of the participants researched. See Figure 2.

Figure 2

The Process of a Qualitative Phenomenological Study
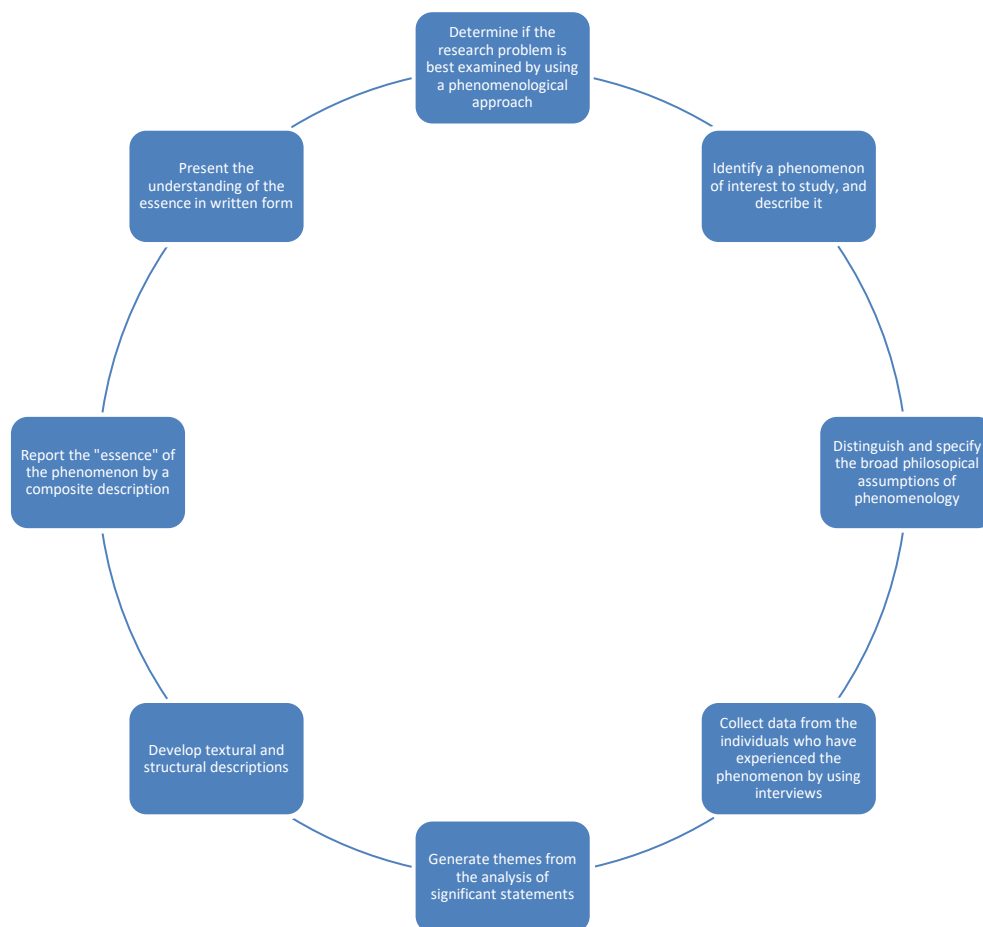
Note. The Process of a Qualitative Phenomenological Study (Creswell, 2018, p. 81).

First, the structured process of this study began with determining what kind of study to conduct. The author of this study reflected and deliberated significantly over the most suitable type of study to conduct. This research's foundational intention began first with reflective curiosity around career development coupled with finding notable gaps in the scholarly literature regarding decanal appointments of women, especially at business schools. Thus, the early stages of this research process began with an intentional desire to collect data to better understand the phenomenon of career development success amid challenges. Ultimately, an important decision

was made to proceed with a research method utilizing a qualitative interviewing process with female Deans. Furthermore, with additional reflection by the author of this study, the research focus narrowed in on exploring the lived experiences of a unique type of person's career development. Reflection led to the researcher hoping that the study will offer valuable insights for leaders who aspire to maximize opportunities and overcome workplace challenges for career development success.

This study aims to build upon the scholarly literature on leadership theory and Career Development Theory by focusing on discovering meaning and deepening understanding of the how each female investigated as become a Dean. To do so this study will utilize a list of AACSB-accredited business schools in America generated through AACSB. Then, the author of this study will go through the list to find each female Dean. Next, she will reach out to the Dean through email to request an interview for the study. Each interview request will state that the discussion is intended to last for at least forty-five minutes to an hour and will be recorded. Please review Appendix A, which serves as a sample of the email requesting participation in this study.

Next, the processes within this qualitative study will involve many steps of robust data collection through one-on-one interviews between the author of this study and the research participants. Once interviews are solidified, the hermeneutic data or shared lived experiences will be collected through interviews will probe the interviewee with a specific set of replicated questions that each female Dean will be asked verbatim. The interviews will take place through an online platform called Zoom, which allows for the audio recording of real-time conferencing.

Each interview will be recorded so the interviews can be accurately transcribed and thoroughly analyzed. Each interview is transcribed and investigated in detail in an exhaustive

effort to uncover any essential career development themes that may emerge. The recorded

interviews will be reviewed multiple times in an effort to delineate units of meaning, which in

this study are words or phrases that appear most frequently throughout the interviews. These

frequently used words and phrases, these units of meaning, will offer valuable insights into the

lived experiences of female Deans. This study will leverage the interpretive framework of

Career Development Theory to better understand the ways leaders maximize opportunities and

overcome challenges successfully. The collected data will be explored thoroughly, categorized

into thematic data, and then discussed. Please see the Data Analysis section of this chapter for a

detailed description of how the data will be categorized thematically.

Appropriateness of a Phenomenological Methodology

Many scholars of qualitative research have explored various approaches to

phenomenological studies. Creswell (2018) details the types of phenomenological studies as

hermeneutic or hermeneutical, empirical, transcendental, or psychological. Van Manen (2016)

offers an in-depth and comprehensive exploration of the methods and traditions of

phenomenological studies for human science research, specifically in lifestyle experiences,

education, psychology, and health. Van Manen further describes hermeneutic phenomenology as

reflective and centered around the lived experiences of human beings. Moreover,

phenomenological scholars agree that these types of qualitative studies investigate the lived

experiences of people to derive or interpret underlying meaning from these life experiences. The

lived experiences investigated such as language, habits, and social interactions might otherwise

be taken for granted (Creswell, 2018; Van Manen, 2016).

The author of this study is inquisitive about how people experience successful career

development amid challenges. Additionally, AACSB-accredited business schools in America

provide a unique type of academic workplace environment that operates in America by designing and delivering business education to adult learners. Creswell (2018) charges qualitative researchers undertaking phenomenological studies to look for people who have experienced the same phenomenon and can share stories of their life experiences in interviews. Women who have advanced professionally to the senior leadership position of Dean at an AACSB-accredited business school in America share the same phenomenon of successful career development while being a part of an under-represented group. Through this study, these female Deans' life experiences regarding career development may offer insights for maximizing opportunities and overcoming challenges with professional strategies and practices.

Research Design

This research distinguishes the broad philosophical assumptions that come with phenomenological studies. In other words, the data collected during the interviews are indeed the self-perceived life experiences of the females investigated and, thus may be "a combination of objective reality and individual experiences" (Creswell, 2018, p. 79). The ten to fifteen female Deans interviewed in this study will represent the criterion sample researched in real-life and in real time. Each interviewee will be with a woman who is currently serving as the Dean at an AACSB-accredited business schools in America during the year 2022. The choice of having multiple female Deans interviewed for this study is purposeful to obtain information from different women serving as Deans at various institutions in America which are business schools with AACSB accreditation.

The data management will be necessary as each participant is interviewed and as each interview will be transcribed. Each recorded interview and each transcription are saved under the number given to the participant for continued confidentiality. Features of the data, such as

the date of the interview and assigned participant number, are stored on a spreadsheet serving as a central database for the data management of this study to relate back to each digital file whether that be the audio or text transcription file. Each file is stored securely on the encrypted computer of the author of this study.

Participant Selection

Creswell (2018) organizes data collection with the foundational step of determining or locating the individuals and the context to be researched. Due to ethical considerations, the author of this study is not researching anyone from the higher education institution where she is currently employed. Nor will the participants of this study be women that have had any previous relationship with the researching interviewer.

As aforementioned in the previous chapter, Leander and Watson (2021) reveal in their research that while women are Deans of top-ranked business schools, less than 20 percent of the world's top-ranked business schools have a female Dean. Furthermore, the research uncovers the number of female Deans is surprisingly on the decline instead of being on the rise. Thus, a subsequent decision was made to research and interview female Deans precisely due to this career development phenomenon of so few women successfully achieving senior academic leadership roles with business schools. In addition, a choice was also made to narrow the focus of this research such that the data collection comes from female Deans in America serving at prestigiously accredited business schools. This choice seemed ideal in the wake of recent world events that have impacted many businesses and industries, including higher education.

Also, Creswell (2018) suggests that phenomenological research may have individuals in the same site or not. For this study, all the women are employed in the same context of an American business school with a globally recognized accreditation. The women studied have all

experienced careers that have developed into a unique role in academic leadership that intersects with businesses and higher education simultaneously. Removing the research of male Deans is not intended to be exclusionary. Instead, it is an intentional choice to study a group of individuals with similar lived experiences.

Human Subject Consideration

In this study, the human beings researched will receive written information regarding the study's structural procedures and their rights as participants in the study. The identities of the women examined remain confidential and will be referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc. This is an effort of caution for validity, offering the women interviewed for this study peace of mind that the detail shared in the interview will not be connected to their identity. A confidentiality agreement will be given to each participant of this study detailing the efforts made to protect confidentiality using alias pseudonyms, making names and institutions generic and unidentifiable. The information regarding confidentiality and the use of aliases will be sent along with the request for interview. This information will be sent at first via email to every female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America from the author of this study (see Appendix A).

Only with the approval and consent from the chair and committee of this dissertation and the Institutional Review Board, will the human subjects in this study be approached to participate in this research. Agreements will be provided to all participants detailing the serious effort made to protect their confidentiality. In the confidentiality agreement, it will be acknowledged that the recorded files will remain password protected on the encrypted personal computer of the author of this study. Furthermore, the agreement will delineate that the data collected will be stored for three years, after which it will be permanently destroyed.

The consent-to-participate request sent will include the elements Creswell (2018) recommends, including:

- The right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time
- The central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in data collection
- The protection of the confidentiality of the respondents
- The known risks associated with participation in the study
- The expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study
- The signature of the participant as well as the researcher. (p. 155)

Additionally, the participants of this study will be verbally thanked for their participation. Handwritten cards expressing gratitude to the participant will be sent by postal mail after each interview.

Data Collection

The sample strategy of this study leverages purposive, criterion sampling. In the year 2022, 540 business schools in America have AACSB accreditation, and 157 are led by female Deans and 383 are led by male Deans. In other words, only 29 percent of AACBS accredited business schools in America are led by female Deans, while seventy-one percent are led by male Deans. Thus, the population in this study is manageable and is in the range suggested by scholars of phenomenology. Creswell (2018) recommends phenomenological research to have "as many as 10 individuals" (p. 161).

If at least ten female Deans do not respond to the first request for an interview, a follow-up request will be sent and a phone call or voicemail will be left for each female Dean who has yet to respond (see Appendix C). The author of this study will send these emails and make any follow-up phone calls as necessary to have at least ten qualified participants.

Each interviewee will be told in advance about having the opportunity to review responses to ensure validity. Once the interviews are transcribed as the data collected, a copy of the transcribed transcript will be sent to the corresponding interviewee for a validity check.

Additionally, the interviewee will be informed that the researcher requests one week for their answer back confirming approval and validating the transcription of their interview. During this time, they may also submit any changes or edits they may deem necessary for validity.

The proposed timeline for each of the data collection steps are as follows:

- Initial contact via email sent to all 157 female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America during the same week in the year 2022.
- Follow up by phone, if needed and a repeat of the email solicitation within three weeks if the minimum of ten participants is not yet achieved.
- All interviews will be conducted within one to two months from the time a potential participant responds to the request of participating.
- Within two weeks from the interview, each research participant will be sent a copy of their interview transcript for a validity check requesting their response within one week. If a response is not obtained, a follow-up email will be sent as well as a phone call, requesting the participant's confirmation validating the transcript of the interview.
- Data analysis of the transcribed and validated interviews will take place over a one to two month period, depending on the number of participant responses (for example, data analysis will be approximately one month with a minimum of ten participants, but could be up to two months with a maximum of 20 to 25 participants).

Interview Protocol

This study includes eight interview questions which are intentionally general and open-ended questions centering around the career development experiences of each academic leader interviewed. Each interview question will focus on understanding the central phenomenon of this study by relating to one of the two research questions or both of the research questions. Additionally, the author of this study spent a significant amount of time deliberating over the appropriateness of each question, ensuring that each of the eight interview questions directly answers at least one, if not both, of the two research questions.

As previously mentioned, each female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America will be approached as a potential research participant for this study. The solicitation will be sent directly to the Dean from the author of this study requesting an interview for this

study. The research topic is briefly discussed in the request for interview with additional statements regarding ensured participant confidentiality. See Appendix A for the Interview Solicitation protocol.

Also see Appendix B for the Interview Confirmation and consent form, which will be sent and collected prior to the start of the agreed-upon interview for data collection. For each interview, the participant is asked to be in a distraction-free location for the virtual interview procedure. In this study, the researcher intends to be as Creswell deems, a "complete participant" who is "fully engaged with the people he or she is observing" (2018, p. 167). Additionally, this allows for what many researchers agree may help establish better rapport with the participants.

Before the interview begins, the interviewer will review with the interviewee:

- The study's purpose
- The time allotment necessary to conduct and complete the interview successfully
- The right each participant has to withdraw from the study
- The plans for using the results of this study to help others with career development and leadership
- An offer to send a copy of the study to each participant once the study is complete

Once the interview is in progress, the researcher will maintain integrity with each participant throughout the interview process by upholding the boundaries listed above. Additionally, the interviewer will refrain from offering personal sentiments and will not ask any additional questions beyond the eight specific interview questions unless a participant needs to be encouraged to share more. For example, requests for a participant to share more will come from the interviewer in the form of basic phrases such as, "Please tell me more about that." The author of this study will sustain a respectful, courteous, and professional demeanor throughout the interview by listening intently to each response without interruption.

The interviewer will also observe each participant throughout the interview and the multiple reviews of the audio recording of each interview. An observation protocol for reviewing the audio recordings of the interviews multiple times will be established for observational note writing. Descriptive observations, as well as reflective observation, may be detailed depending on the observations.

As previously mentioned, the one-to-one interviews will be collected through a computerized medium called Zoom, with recording capabilities. The interviews will be recorded through Zoom for additional potential observational opportunities through a review of the recordings. Plus, Zoom has a transcription capability. The author of this study will review each interview recording several times to ensure correct transcription. Attention will be given to any verbal cues, extraneous words, and utterances. Furthermore, each interview transcription will be sent to the interviewee for a validity check within two weeks of the conducted interview. Participants will also be asked to respond confirming the accuracy of the data collected.

Once each interview concludes, gratitude will be expressed to each participant. Additionally, significant emphasis will be given regarding the next step of a validity check requiring their response and confirmation within the timeframe of one week after receiving the interview transcription (See Table 1).

Table 1

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: How do women maximize opportunities and overcome obstacles in career development to become business education leaders as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America?	**IQ 1:** How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today? **IQ 2:** What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean? **IQ 3:** How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges? **IQ 4:** What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America? **IQ 6:** Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ 2: What are the career development strategies and practices employed by women who are Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools?	**IQ 1**: How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today?
	IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?
	IQ 3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?
	IQ 4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?
	IQ 5: What are pivotal choices you recall making during your career development journey that you believe have led you to the leadership position you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?
	IQ 7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
	IQ 8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

Interview Techniques

From the onset of the recruitment process for participants, the career development phenomenon being researched will be discussed with potential participants. This disclosure choice offers potential participants to begin reflecting upon their own life experiences of the phenomenon even before agreeing to be interviewed. Once a participant agrees with informed and written consent, participant confidentiality will be re-emphasized with the understanding that the interview is to be recorded on the computerized online platform, Zoom, supporting the data transcription and observational aspects of this study.

Scholars of qualitative inquiry agree that interview techniques for hermeneutic studies are unique (Creswell, 2018; Vandermause & Fleming, 2011; Van Manen, 2016). For example, Vandermause and Fleming (2011) argue that interviewers should seek "to uncover what it means *to be* as it shows up or reveals itself through story. As stories are elicited, the interpretation begins" (p. 369). Furthermore, Van Manen (2016) argues that researchers must "instill and internalize a phenomenological disposition and writerly tact for interpreting, seeing, sensing, and reflecting on lived experiences in a phenomenological manner" (p. 375).

Scholars of phenomenology urge researchers to avoid the mistake of simply looking for themes that equate scholarly findings, per se, and instead encourage the act of reflection, not only mentally but also literally or in written texts. In other words, Van Manen (2016) encourages "reflective writing and rewriting of the phenomenological texts" (p. 375). Moreover, a signal for

phenomenologist occurs "when a text acquires a questioning mood, [and] then the words may infect the reader with a sudden realization of the unsuspected enigmatic nature of ordinary reality" (2016, p. 360). Thus, the interview techniques of this study must have the approach that elicits reflection from the researched participants, as each is asked to reflect upon the lived experience of being woman in leadership in the higher education industry who is currently serving as a Dean of a business school.

The first Interview Question, "*How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today?*" relates to Research Question One and Two while also serving as an icebreaker to deepen rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. This question sparks personal and professional reflection while setting the stage for embarking upon a journey through the self-perceived life experiences of career development for each participant. This is an introductory and open-ended question, which is in alignment with what scholars of hermeneutic phenomenology agree is "crucial for the researcher to ask in a way that draws out the story without leading the participant into a set answer" (Vandermuase & Fleming, 2011, p. 371).

Of the eight interview questions, five relate to both research questions, while three only connect to one of the two research questions. Each interview question intends to be appropriately focused on the life experiences of and self-perceived understanding of each woman who has become a Dean. The interviewer will not share any personal experiences with the participants. Thus, the time the interviewer spends with each interviewee will only be for the purpose of collecting data through the eight interview questions. This approach safeguards the interview environment and relationship, as scholars of phenomenology warn against potential for

power imbalance to arise before, during, or reasonably after phenomenological interviews (Van Manen, 2016; Creswell, 2018).

Importantly, once the interview is in progress, the top priority of the interviewer is patient and active listening. Scholars of phenomenology argue that the art of active and attentive listening is imperative to elicit the data needed for hermeneutical studies. Active listening is imperative in this study because "Understanding what is being said and what may be hidden, responding sensitively to the cadence of the interview, and actively acquiescing to the participants' direction is important to the process of moving the interview along with inquiring questions as the narrative text is co-created" (Vandermuase & Fleming, 2011, p. 371).

As previously mentioned, the audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim with aliases such as Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on to remove any potential identifiable content. Observational notes of vocal intonations and gestures may serve as additional interview observation data where appropriate. Scholars agree that capturing observational data such as this "may add to understanding though they are not needed to ascertain an objective representation of fact. They simply facilitate deeper consideration of meaning related to the narrative expressed" (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011, p. 370).

At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer will discuss next steps with each participant providing a reminder that the transcription of the interview is sent to the participant shortly after the interview occurs with a request for a validity check. Emphasis will be shared regarding the importance of the validity check, underscoring the importance of correctly capturing the life experiences regarding the interviewee's career and overall career development. Finally, the interviewer will graciously thank each research participant before ending the interview meeting.

Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias

This study limits itself to the lived experiences of the professional career and career development of female Deans in the context of female Deans at business schools in America with AACSB accreditation. Even with a sample set of women, these women do not represent the life experiences of all women, all Deans, or all women Deans. This study investigates the phenomenon of the life experiences of career development in academia. Furthermore, the particular focus of this study is understanding the career development experiences of women currently serving as leaders in academia at the crossroad of higher education and business as Deans of American AACSB-accredited business schools.

Moreover, this study is limited to the interpretation of the transcriptions. Every effort will be made to bracket away any personal bias of this study's author, and this is the reason each interview will maintain a complete focus on the asked questions and the participant responses. However, with phenomenology, the interpretation of the data represents another set of hermeneutics integrating the understanding of the lived experiences collected through participant interviews.

Imperatively, with each research question and corresponding interview question, the phrasing must be direct and without any "subtle persuasive questions, responses, or explanations" (Creswell, 2018, p. 173). In other words, none of the interviewer's career development life experiences will be shared with participants during the interview. Additionally, each participant will have an opportunity to review the transcription to ensure capturing each word, sentence, phrase, and quote accurately with validation from the research participants.

Epoche

Phenomenology is a pursuit of human truth which combines reality and individual experiences (Van Manen, 2016). Additionally, scholars of research perception, asymmetry, and objectivity argue that, "expectations and contextual factors combine with needs and motives to determine, and at times distort, what people notice and how they interpret what they see and hear" (Pronin et al., 2004, p. 784). That said, in an effort to maintain transparency and accuracy that does not deviate away from the human truth of the research participants in this study the researcher will maintain piqued conscientiousness to "undertake all possible actions to reduce and minimize the deviation from the truth" (Simundić, 2013, p. 12). In this study, the truth is the lived career development experience of the participants researched, uncovered through the words, sentences, phrases, and quotes shared during the data collection process of interviews regarding career chronology, patterns, behaviors and beliefs of the participants.

The author of this study strives to set aside her own experiences as much as possible in a genuine effort to approach this research with an unsullied perspective to examine the phenomenon of successful career development for women in a prestigious academic environment. While many scholars agree that perfecting the art of removing oneself from the research, when it is indeed a matter of interest, can prove challenging. Thus, the potential profound learning opportunity maintains this necessary distance.

To maintain an integral step in this phenomenological research design, the author of this study must suspend, or at the very least reduce, any suppositions regarding her own life's experiences of career development in academia away from the sample of female Deans researched. Maintaining the bracketing out of the personal views, preconceptions, or life experience of the interviewer from influencing the interviewee will be of utmost priority. Thus, the interview requests will be solicited to female Deans with the sole purpose of uncovering the

interviewee's life experiences of career development with a focus on how she recalls overcoming challenges and optimizing opportunities which has ultimately led her to her current position leadership as a Dean.

In spite of this, in the introductory chapter of this study, the author clearly states her positionality. The positionality of this study is one of a female researcher with over a decade of employment in the higher education industry. There is also acknowledgement regarding the effort to approach this research with a perspective that is separated from this study's participant perspectives before and during the data collection phase. Therefore, the participants will be approached for this research study with the understanding that the interviewer has a keen and particular interest in discerning career development as it pertains strictly to the lived experiences of the participating Deans.

It is worthy of note, however, that to fully describe the phenomenon, the author of this study is determined to approach this research by bracketing out, as much as possible, her own career experience in higher education while analyzing the data collected, yet still acknowledging her own relationship to the topic. To put it differently, the author of this study is determined to maintain, as Creswell (2018) suggests, "a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and [balance] the parts of the writing to the whole" (pp. 76-78). Additionally, Creswell encourages transcendental phenomenological researchers to "set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (p. 78). Nevertheless, for this study, a hermeneutical approach to phenomenology will be taken. The study will investigate the abiding concern of career development in academia through interpreting the essential themes derived through interviews recounting lived experiences of career development from the research participants.

Phenomenological scholar, Van Manen (2014) argues that, "codifications, conceptual abstractions, or empirical generalizations can never adequately produce phenomenological understanding and insights" (p. 319). Furthermore, he urges hermeneutic phenological researchers to explore themes and insights by treating texts "as sources of meaning at the level of the whole story; at the level of the separate paragraph; and at the level of the sentence, phrase, expression, or single word" (Van Manen, 2014, p. 320). To put it another way, phenomenologist must ask questions how meaning is captured from the data collected, what words are essential to revealing the phenomenon, and what clusters of words reveal essential experiences of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014).

Data Analysis

The author of this study will read through each transcription several times. Notes will be taken, reflected upon, summarized, and saved as a memo according to assigned participant number. These reading memos create a digital audit trail. Next, the interview data will be organized and analyzed through the progress of reduction, which involves, "reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes" (Creswell, 2018, p. 78). In other words, the transcribed interviews will be read profusely with an intent attention to detail and a narrowed focus upon data collected regarding career development in the form of texts, words, sentences, and phrases or quotes.

Additionally, each interview transcription will be read through several more times in a more skimmed fashion for a broad view of the text. With each read-through, the information will be reduced categorically in alignment with the elements of the research questions which address the career development strategies for maximizing opportunities and overcoming challenges in the workplace. The words reduced into such categories will be coded and

condensed into segments. Each initial code will be named and categorized. The coded segment

will be interpreted for the study's discussion regarding career development findings with any

potential themes for analyzation. The analyzation of the texts, words, sentences, phrases, and

sentiments shared by participants will be examined directly and comparatively. Direct and

comparative analysis will explore each participant's holistic understanding of themselves

through the living system of their life's experiences of career development such as context,

patterns, behaviors, and beliefs. Additionally, the examination will directly and comparatively

explore the collection of self-perceived experiences regarding how participants recall

maximizing opportunities and overcoming challenges professionally.

The words, sentences, phrases, and quotes of the research participants in this study will

be collected as data uncovering essential career development experiences. Next, the data will be

categorized into significant or frequently mentioned words or statements from the literal content,

which will be attuned to the number of times a delineated or significant unit of meaning arises

during the interviews. Again, the units of meaning in this study are the essential similarities and

differences categorized from the hermeneutic data or words and sentiments expressed by the

study's participants regarding their self-perception of their own career development experiences,

patterns, contexts, and beliefs.

Next, the units of significant meaning recognized will be categorized as data clusters or

groups with a goal to elicit or uncover potential significance to deepen understanding of the

central career development themes expressed. During this stage, the discovered thematic

material is reduced as the researcher returns again and again to the recorded interview data

continually looking for valuable career development clues towards chronology, experiences,

career patterns, contexts, and beliefs. In this study, the reduction of the data will be a process

that reduces words and phrases into categories aligned with the elements of the research

questions addressing career development strategies for maximizing opportunities and

overcoming challenges in the workplace.

Subsequently, a summary of the units of meaning and central career development themes

derived from this study will provide the findings for this study in the form of a descriptive

analysis of the ways in which the careers of women who become female Deans develop. Data

collected regarding the shared workplace context or environmental setting of each participant's

career, which has developed into the senior leadership role of a Dean of an AACSB-accredited

business school, will also be described in the discussed findings of this study. Furthermore,

while the personal experience of a career in academia of this study's researcher inspired this

research and is acknowledged in the beginning of this study only, and it is not, however,

intermingled with the descriptive summary of the analyzed data collected.

A report detailing the essential discoveries will follow, giving this phenomenology what

Creswell (2018) coins a "composite description" providing an "essential, invariant structure (or

essence)" for the study (p. 80). This study's findings will leverage interpretive

phenomenological analysis with an integration of participant life experiences, and will attempt to

better understand how people make sense of their careers personally, socially, and

professionally. Interpretive phenomenological analysis involves the coding of initial themes

discovered regarding "individual experiences and the context of those experiences" (Creswell,

2018, p. 1293).

In this study, the data analysis incorporates the processes of organization and analytical

decision-making through the interpretive framework of Career Development Theory. Each

participant will be asked eight interview questions, of which each evokes responses regarding

self-perceived understanding of each participant's lived experiences from the context of professional career development.

In this study's case, the individual participant experiences coded will be any uncovered stories recounting career development experiences, patterns, contexts, and beliefs regarding career strategies and practices for maximizing opportunities and overcoming challenges. The coding process will begin with establishing no more than thirty categories derived from the exhaustive review and reflection of the data collected. The various categories will be reduced to a more manageable number of codes representing no more than six essential themes uncovered in the research. The researcher will then create a codebook to define the boundaries of each code. The codebook will name each of the *in vivo* codes, which means each code will be reduced down to the exact words used by the participants. Scholars of hermeneutic phenomenology recognize the use of *in vivo* coding as, "coding any word, phrase, sentence, or group of sentences" (Tan et al., 2009, p. 10). The codebook will also define any boundaries of each distinctive *in vivo* code. Additionally, each code listed in this study's codebook will include examples directly from the data collected in this study.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of a phenomenological study extends through the data collection and data analysis. In this study, the data collection and data analysis will guide the discussion of the essential features and connections of women's lived career development experiences. The transcriptions will be read through several times by the researcher, but also at least once by each participant during the validity check. Transcription validity checks made by each participant will support the reliability of this study. Thus, the data in this study will have

face validity and prima facia validity because the data in this study are the words said by the participants, and the participants will confirm the words of the recorded transcripts.

In phenomenology, scholars agree that the study needs to evoke contemplation and wonder (Creswell, 2018; Van Manen, 2016). Thus, this study will focus on the career development of women in specific leadership positions in academia. The study's discussion of the analyzed data will seek depth in interpretation and rigor of career development amid challenges that is distinctive. This phenomenological study seeks to communicate the essence of the experiences of women who are currently Deans. Moreover, this study does assume that human experiences of career development will indeed be understood by the participants such that these life experiences will be shared during the interviews in response to the interview questions.

Lastly, with the analyzed, categorized, and interpreted data, this study will conclude with the researcher's findings through description. First, the findings will begin with a brief textural description of the study. Then, the brief textural description will be followed by a detailed structural description of the phenomenon. The detailed structural description will explore career development from the perspective, strategies, and practices of female Deans with a focus on overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities in their career journeys.

Summary

The purpose of this study to explore and reveal the lived career development experiences of a purposeful sample of successful women leading as Deans. Moreover, this study proposes to investigate the career development experiences and leadership perspectives of women Deans who serve the higher education industry in AACSB-accredited business schools in American colleges and universities. The research methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology reinforces the purposes of this study. To put it differently, this qualitative study will focus on gathering

phenomenological data regarding lived career development experiences derived through interviews with leading female Deans of prestigious business schools in America.

Importantly, Creswell (2018) argues that phenomenological research may be "valuable for groups" and "can involve a streamlined form of data collection including only single or multiple interviews with participants" (2018, p. 80). This study intends to deepen understanding of a career development phenomenon of a few women with shared life experiences in the context of academia. However, the study's findings may have the potential to add value for women in various workplace settings beyond academia. Moreover, the findings of this study may provide career development strategies for overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities. Thus, this study may also have the potential to add value to any person who encounters challenges and opportunities in the workplace.

Finally, this study will essentially discuss the holistic understanding of a career development phenomenon through an investigation into the lived experiences of a few females in academia who have successfully risen to the influential leadership position of a Dean. The self-perceived career development strategies and practices of the female Deans that will be researched in this study may offer insight into the living system of a female Dean's career development contextually and behaviorally.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted through interviews with a sample of the population of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America during the year 2022. The content of this chapter includes descriptions of individual career development and leadership perceptions from the women Deans interviewed for this study. The words, sentences, phrases, and quotes shared by the research participants represent the hermeneutical data collected through qualitative interviews to uncover essential lived experiences of career development from the women Deans of this study to reveal their career strategies and practices for overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities.

In this chapter, a description of the sample population of Deans offers a textual description of the phenomenon studied. Next, a structural description explores the emergent thematic findings from the qualitative interviews interpreted through career development chronology, experiences, contexts, behavioral patterns, beliefs, and leadership. Finally, the chapter summary provides a segue into the final chapter encompassing this study's interpretations and conclusions.

Description of the Sample

21 women serving as Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America are the participants of this phenomenological study investigating the career development of women leading business education ($n = 21$). No demographic data was formally collected. However, some of the research participants chose to share their demographics in response to some interview questions that did not directly ask about demographics. The data collection process

consisted of eight interview questions in a recorded one-on-one interview including audio and visual recording on the online platform Zoom.

Participants were purposefully selected using maximal, purposive, criterion sampling of women with career development matching the phenomenon investigated, meaning the research participants had to be women who were currently serving as a dean of an AACSB accredited business school in America. Of the 157 female Deans currently serving AACSB-accredited business schools in America during the year 2022, 156 were solicited for participation in the study ($N = 157$). One female Dean from the total of 157 Deans had a prior connection with the author of this study. Thus, she was the only female Dean who did not receive the email soliciting participation in the study. Ultimately, 13.4% of the population of women Deans actively serving at the helm of AACSB-accredited business schools in America participated in this study. See Figure 3.

Figure 3

AACSB Deans in America During this Study
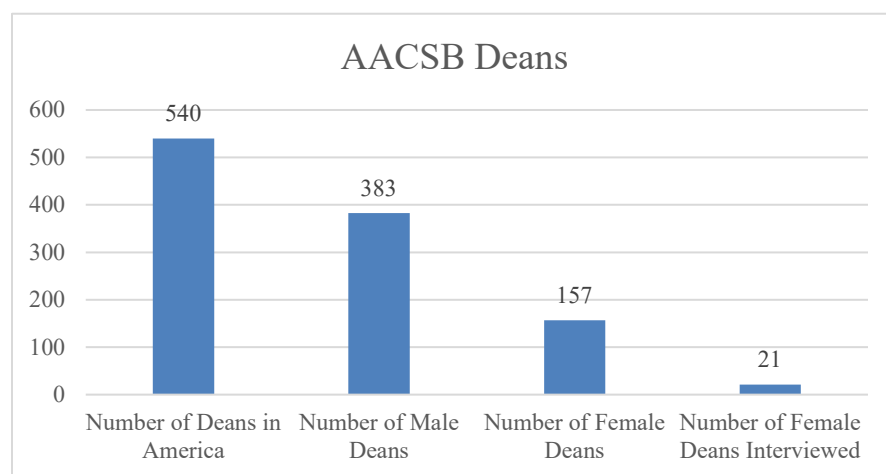
The researcher received an overwhelmingly positive response to the solicitation for research participants in this study and consequently scheduled 21 interviews. Only one initial

email solicitation had to be sent out, with no need for follow-up emails or phone calls to achieve the necessary number of research participants for this study. The number of research participants necessary for saturation in a qualitative phenomenology has been debated by many scholars with roughly ten to 25 participants being acceptably sufficient for saturation (Finlay, 2009; Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010; Van Manen, 2016).

Many female Deans responded to the solicitation with excitement and an eager willingness to participate in the study, expressing interest in the research topic. Notably, an additional thirteen Deans responded positively to the solicitation to participate in the data collection interviews, but were not utilized simply because the maximum number of participants necessary had already been achieved. Thus, 34 Deans responded willing to participate in the study, but only the first 21 Deans were scheduled for an interview. The researcher expressed gratitude to the excess number of Deans who articulated an interest in participating in the study. Additionally, the excess number of Deans were also provided with a thorough explanation for no longer needing their participation due to the study exceeding the minimum necessary for participation within less than one week of the email solicitation being sent.

Most of the interviews took approximately one hour, but a few were shorter due to the schedule of each Dean who participated. Each interview followed the protocol outlined in Appendix B with eight interview questions. Each research participant was sent the Informed Consent Form to complete before the interview, and only four of the 21 research participants still needed to submit the Informed Consent Form at the time of their interview. In these few cases, the researcher gave time before the interview for these research participants to complete and submit the Informed Consent Form. Thus, all research participants submitted their completed Informed Consent Form prior to the data collection.

The interviewer told each research participant that she would take handwritten notes during the interview. The researcher emphasized this to make sure that the women interviewed on Zoom did not assume the interviewer looking down and away from the camera was any implication of disinterest or distraction. Additionally, the interviewer advised each research participant that very little commentary would be given between the eight interview questions, and noted that this did not mean the interviewer was not inspired, intrigued, or even wanted to ask more. However, only passive yet gracious responses such as "thank you" would be given between each question to maintain a neutral position throughout the data collection process. Furthermore, the interviewer emphasized that the interview questions did relate to each other, and assured each participant that if an answer to one of the upcoming interview questions was already given in a prior response all eight questions would still be asked, even if seemingly redundant.

Each participant was reminded before the onset of the interview that a transcription of the interview would be sent to them shortly after the interview, with the interviewer's request for them to review the transcription to validate the data collected. The handwritten notes taken throughout each recorded interview accompanied the transcription data, allowing for research reflection caught in real-time during the interview.

Significant effort was made by the author of this study to remove any identifying information in the transcription while capturing the verbatim words, sentences, phrases, and quotes collected. Each interview was listened to exhaustively while the interviewer combed through the data to ensure transcription accuracy as best as possible before sending it to each research participant for them to review for data validity.

In total, it took approximately two months to complete all of the interview transcriptions and get confirmation from each participant on the data validation. Only a few research participants responded with minor corrections or slight changes to the data collected. Most of the research participants responded in a few days with a validating confirmation of the data. Admittedly, a few of the research participants had to be reminded through an email or two from the interviewer. However, this is very understandable with a Dean's busy schedule and the length of each interview transcription (which were generally more than ten pages each with the shortest being five pages and the longest being 12 pages, single spaced). Only one of the research participants said she did not have time to fully review the transcription, but still felt comfortable with approving me to proceed while expressing interest in seeing the data analysis.

With the 21 transcribed and validated interviews, the researcher created a codebook leveraging *in vivo* codes interpreted through career development chronology, experiences, contexts, patterns, beliefs, and leadership. Each of these areas relates back to and represents the career strategies and for maximizing opportunities and overcoming challenges from the self-perception of women Deans currently leading AACSB-accredited business schools in America. See Appendix F for the codebook.

Findings: Career Development Chronology (Advanced Education and Roles)

Thematic material emerged in this study regarding decisions made early on in the career development of women Deans. The research participant dialog collected in this study in response to the qualitative interviews exposed answers to both Research Questions 1 and 2 regarding higher education achievements and professional roles along the path to the deanship. Specifically, master's degrees and doctoral degrees are a part of the vast majority of the early to mid-stages of a career development chronology for women Deans. Additionally, the data

brought to light particular roles, both academic and non-academic, that have the potential to advance a woman to the position of Dean.

The interviews uncovered the career-steering choices of research participants regarding advanced degrees. Of the sample interviewed ($n = 21$), a significant majority of eighteen, or 86%, had Ph.D. degrees. Additionally, two of the female Deans interviewed, or 9.5%, had doctoral degrees that were not Ph.D. degrees but possessed a different type of doctoral-level, terminal degree. However, one did not have a terminal or doctoral degree but did have an MBA. Thus, all but one of the participants, or 95%, had a terminal degree. Seven of the women Deans interviewed, or 33%, had achieved an MBA degree. One of the female Deans interviewed had two non-MBA master's degrees, and 12 of the sample had one non-MBA degree (which totals 14 non-MBA master's degrees from the sample but is representative of thirteen women). See Figure 4 ($n = 21$).

Figure 4

Advanced Degree Types
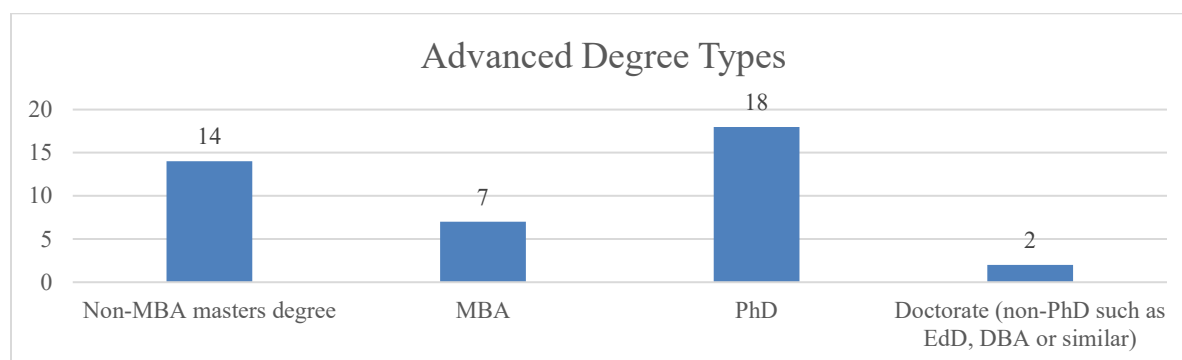
In other words, a career development chronology theme emerged, revealing that the vast majority of women Deans leading AACSB-accredited business schools in America pursue advanced education, of which a significant majority have achieved terminal degrees. Furthermore, all of the Deans interviewed for this study possessed at least one advanced master's

degree and a doctoral degree, while one had two master's degrees and a doctoral degree. This theme exposes a career strategy directly related to Research Question 2. Female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America prioritize higher education. Furthermore, this theme of higher education also hints towards answers for Research Question 1 with ways women overcome obstacles and maximize opportunities by becoming credentialed experts in their field.

Another chronological career development theme revealed as imperative for the journey toward a deanship involves specific leadership roles. Most of the discovered leadership roles along the path to a deanship are academic roles, but some were also non-academic roles. For example, 12 (57%) of the women Deans interviewed for this study discussed their careers being that of a traditional academic path, including roles as professors and higher education administrators leading up to becoming a Dean. However, seven (33%) of the women Deans interviewed for this study had a combination of careers in industry combined with an academic career. Two (9.5%) of the women Deans interviewed for this study shared their career path as being non-traditional with little academic experience beyond their own advanced education journey to achieve their credentials. See Figure 5 ($n = 21$).

Figure 5

Career Path Types
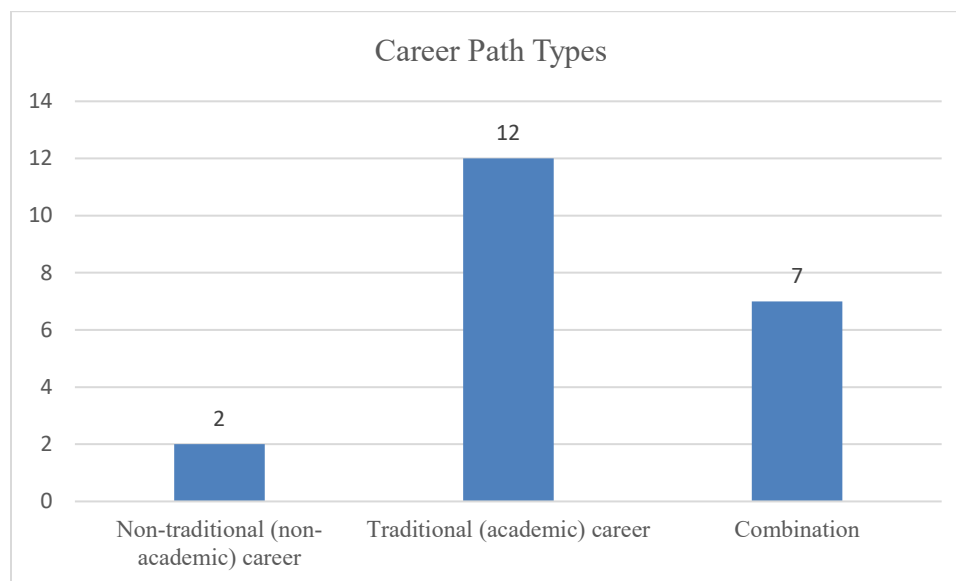
To highlight an example from the data collected regarding non-traditional Deans, Participant 1 shared her experiences.

- IQ1: How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today as a Dean?

  Participant 1: I know I'm not the only non-traditional female Dean out there. There's a growing number of non-traditional business Deans. I do know that it's something I've researched as a part of my search. Obviously, my journey has been very different, but I think what allowed me to seek and then get this position as Dean of a business school was the career that I developed as a business person outside of the university, probably to some extent enhanced by the fact that I knew this particular university very well.

Thus, the data reveals that women Deans come from careers that developed outside of academia, yet their career development still strategically led to a deanship position.

On the other hand, a significant number of the women Deans interviewed shared about various academic roles during their career development that ultimately led to their deanship. For example, 12 of the sample interviewed (57%) shared career experiences in administrative roles such as an Associate Dean, Senior Associate Dean, or Interim Dean. These types of roles

exemplify the type of experience that often leads to position as a Dean (except for one of the women who shared that she is currently serving as a Dean with an Interim Dean title at the time of the interview, but in merely a few short months from the time of the interview she was promoted to the official role of Dean). Additionally, eight women interviewed (38%) spoke about other distinctive administrative roles in their career development leading to their deanship with titles such as Department Chair, Chair, or Assistant Chair. Furthermore, eight women interviewed for this study (38%) mentioned prior roles as an Academic Director or Executive Director. See Figure 6 ($n = 21$).

Figure 6

Mentioned Past Academic Roles
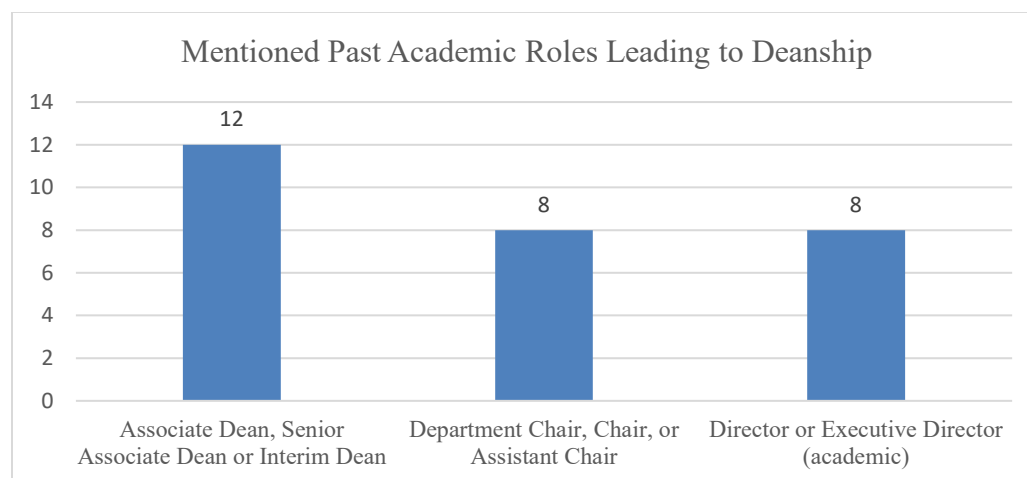
Representative of the data collected regarding the myriad of administrative roles along the path to becoming a Dean, Participant 5 discussed her chess-like experience in various positions, which ultimately led to her becoming a Dean.

- IQ1: How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today as a Dean?

  Participant 5: I was asked by the then-Dean if I had any interest in moving into administration, and he followed me up to my office after a meeting one day. And I said, "Well, I don't know. Why do you ask?" He said, "Well, I'm just curious to find out who is

interested in leadership roles and that sort of a thing." I said, "Yeah, I would be interested in learning more about leadership in higher education." He said, "Why don't you join us for our executive committee meetings over the next year or so?" Well, three weeks later he announced his resignation. My Chair moved into the Interim Dean slot, and I was tapped to be the Interim Department Chair of [academic area], and the rest is kind of history. I served [for a few] years as a Department Chair. So Interim first, and then moving into the role permanently. We filled the slot of Interim Dean with a permanent Dean from outside of higher ed. He came in, assessed the state of the college, and felt like a better structure would be Dean and Associate Dean. He asked me to move forward as Associate Dean. The other Chair moved back into faculty. Then he left, and I served for him as Associate Dean for [nearly five] years. He left. I was asked to serve for a year as Interim Dean.

Regarding the various academic, administrative roles in a typical career chronology towards becoming a Dean, with intriguing insight, Participant 19 shared her career development and her opinion of the expectations for people who aspire to become a Dean.

- IQ1: How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today as a Dean?

    Participant 19: I worked my way up through the ranks as Assistant, Associate, Full Professor, while a faculty member in Management at [University] … I didn't want to be an Associate Dean. And so, I'm a little bit different in that I've never served as an Associate Dean. It wasn't a role that I felt that I would really, really enjoy. Navigating from a Department Chair to a Dean is more uncommon. And, to be frank, most of the professional search firms don't [prefer this]. It's just an additional barrier in navigating. They often prefer candidates with Associate Dean or Dean experience, but my experience has been that the role of a Chair is actually more similar to a Dean than an Associate Dean. So, I find it sort of an interesting observation when we think about career development, search firms like you to have the Associate Dean experience, but I'm not quite sure why.

    Furthermore, Participant 21 responded to Interview Question 2 with additional insights regarding different positions in academia. She shared her beliefs about the importance of mindset for navigating considerations for career advancement as a professional woman in academia.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role you have today as Dean?

Participant 21: I think a challenge for me was changing my own mindset about how I look at my career advancement. I think I'm not that much different than other people in that I tend to, or not that much different in thinking than other women I should say, in that I tended to, when I finished my doctorate, I thought, "Well, I have to be an Assistant Professor, and then an Associate Professor, and then a Full Professor, and I can't do anything until I achieve those milestones," and that really was not the case. Women, in my opinion, we tend to look at our careers, as you would imagine a staircase, and you have to step on each stair. But in my opinion, men do not do that. Men have no problem starting at the bottom of the staircase and stepping up to the third step. And I think for me, it was getting around that mindset to skip a step or two if I felt I was ready, or even if I didn't feel I was ready. That was probably, I think the challenge was with me, and not necessarily with my environment.

In other words, the data collected revealed examples of typical internal and external career expectations chronologically for people in academia, and in this case, the Deans investigated. The data uncovered a recurrence of traditional and non-traditional leadership positions along the journey to becoming a Dean exposing thematic material regarding chronological career steps. Thus, the thematical material disclosed some of the research participants' experiences with expectations and mindsets regarding the path to becoming a Dean, including hurdles extending externally with search firm expectations and the internal limitations of mindset, which can either inhibited or propelled the research participant into the leadership role of a Dean.

In answering both Research Questions, the path to deanship can include various career steps or positions. Yet as per the data and beyond popular belief, a woman can strategically take career leaps into higher roles or even a deanship. Therefore, she does not have to step upon each step of the career advancement ladder to become a Dean. Expectations of Dean search committees or search firms, as well as internal mindset, may present obstacles to overcome strategically by maximizing opportunities for optimal career growth.

Findings: Career Development Experiences and Contexts (Gender-related and Industry-related)

The research participants of this study shared various gender-related and industry-related episodes of career development experiences and contexts throughout each interview. Much of these episodic experiences and contexts included the types of challenges that can arise during the career of a woman who eventually becomes a Dean, as well as the ways successful women navigate career advancement, even amid various challenges.

Firstly, regarding gender-related experiences and contexts, the data collected brought to light the magnitude of pregnancy and motherhood in academia, which was shared in various ways by 13 (62%) of the 21 research participants in this study. See Figure 7 ($n = 21$).

Figure 7

Experiences of Pregnancy or Motherhood
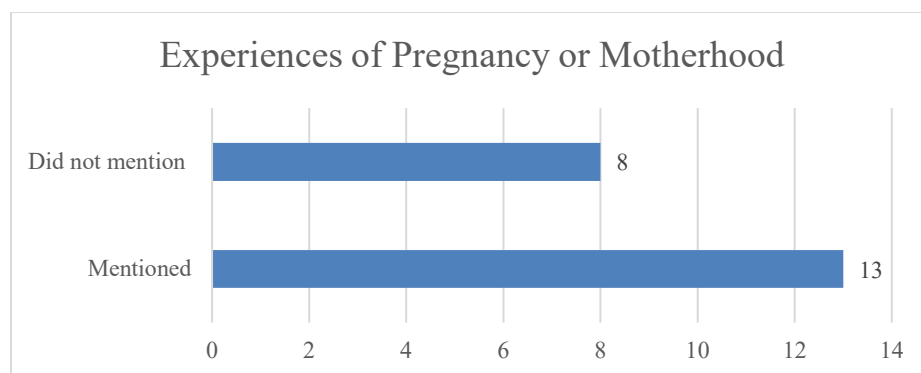
For instance, two of the research participants spoke about overcoming the workplace challenges of becoming pregnant while working in academia during their careers when not all universities in America had maternity leave policies.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

  Participant 14: I went into the Dean and said, "Hey, I'm pregnant and we are expecting this baby next summer, just wondering what the maternity leave policy is." He said, "Oh, I don't know. Nobody's ever had a baby." They did have a couple of women faculty who had kids, but they had come to the business school after their kids were born, and I was literally the first female faculty member they'd ever had who had a baby, and so he didn't know what the policy was. He said, "Let me check on it." He came back to me a couple

of weeks later, and the answer was, "There is no policy. We don't have a policy." That meant that they basically weren't going to do anything. So, there was no teaching reduction or anything like that. I ended up having the baby in [a summer month], which was fortunate timing, and the next year I taught my full, regular teaching load that anyone else would teach. [A few years] later, by the time I had my second baby they had implemented a maternity leave policy that included a teaching reduction, which is now pretty standard at universities. I hadn't planned on being a pioneer on that front, but this was back when universities were starting to put maternity leave policies in place for faculty. That was a challenge being the first, and not getting much support institutionally for having kids.

Participant 19: I'll share with you, when I started out as a Visiting Assistant Professor in [year] and I became pregnant with my first child, and went to my Department Chair and said, "I'm going to be gone for a few weeks because I'm going to go have my first child. He said - What would you like me to do with that information? …" [The climate] is definitely not a supportive environment for work-family balance for women in the workplace. I think it's gotten way better, and I do my part to ensure that both men and women in my ranks have the support that's needed when they have these awesome life experiences. But it's disappointing just to be reminded especially early on … I had another faculty member who asked me, he said, "Well, you're not going to stay are you? You're going to quit and stay home with your child?" It just was very challenging very early on as I was one of very few women on the faculty, let alone women of child-bearing age and activity.

Interestingly, the data also revealed that while work-life balance as a mother presents various

challenges, motherhood offers significant benefits in the overall livelihood of women in

academia because mothers have an opportunity to develop a unique identity beyond academia.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

Participant 17: I don't see having children as a challenge. It's rounded me out, but I've always worked, and I've always found a way to find a balance ... I had one Dean actually [who] once said to me, you know he was trying to be kind and empathetic, and he's still a great friend. He said, "Look, you know, when you're up for tenure, I'll count every child as a publication," and I said to him [laughing], "Don't ever do that," because as a woman you want to get to where you got to on merit, and we don't want any allowances made from your circumstances. And so, while he was trying to help, and [while] I respect him [and] his kindness, I was quite shocked too. So, juggling, gaining qualifications, and while I had children, I did a graduate degree in [academic/business field], and I went on and did my Ph.D.. I was publishing like crazy. I got promoted. I was a director of [department], and I raised [number] beautiful children. We made it work for us. It's not always easy, and my adult children are my greatest gifts that have been given to me.

- IQ5: What are pivotal choices you recall making during your career development journey that you believe have led you to the leadership position you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

   Participant 19: Their identity was really tied up in their position, and I mean, I really enjoy my role as Dean. I don't want to do anything else right now, but I also have a very healthy identity in being a wife and a mother, and taking time away from my job, and also being engaged with not just how people are performing, but how are they doing.

Consequently, these responses uncover insights related to both Research Questions of this study. The academic workplace environment has evolved over recent years and is still evolving for women who are of childbearing age that experience pregnancy and motherhood along their career development journey. Pregnancy is an extremely vulnerable time for professional women and families. The gender-related theme of pregnancy and motherhood discloses both career development obstacles and challenges as well as incredible career development opportunities for women. The lacking workplace support through pregnancy, maternity leave, and motherhood expose gender-related career development challenges for some of the research participants. Nevertheless, also birthed through this research is insight into the opportunities that motherhood can present for women to develop dynamic and rewarding identities resonating beyond academia.

On another note, the gender-related experiences of bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, and bullying were discussed by a significant number of the research participants. For example, 12 out of 21 (57%) described career development challenges directly related to gender-based bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, or bullying. See Figure 8 ($n = 21$).

Figure 8

Career Challenges

Career Challenges

As an example of the many frustrating instances revealed, one participant shared her lived experience of career challenges of bias, harassment, stereotyping, and even bullying, which led her to a choice. Ultimately, she chose to leave the workplace environment as a result of these challenges.

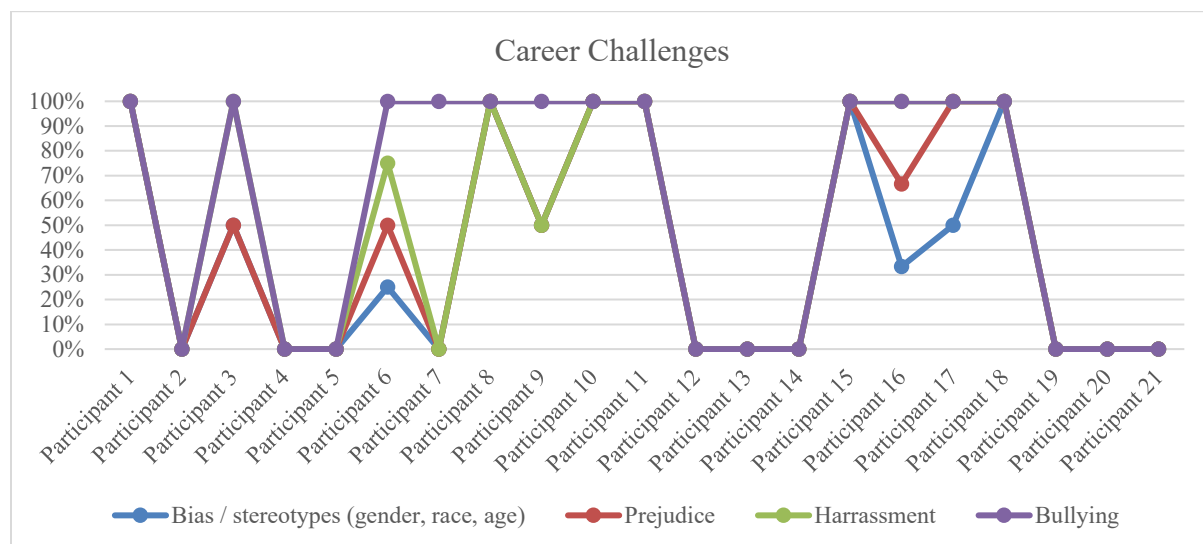- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

  Participant 6: It has to be something out of the 'me too' playbook. I was in corporate work, and I don't think I ever had a job where I did not have to struggle with men making passes, wanting to do more, threatening me, all sorts of things. So, it was hard to be a woman coming up in the [decade] and [decade] just getting started. Men just really had an attitude about what they could do and how they could do it. And so, I often left companies because I just couldn't deal with that.

  Notably, another Dean shared how experiencing implicit gender-related bias led her into leadership because of her competencies which were complimented by her personal style of extending trust.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

Participant 1: I'd say the other way that I've overcome – so some of it was, again, the position. Where are you going to work where you can be successful, but you aren't directly confronting these problems. The other was just a personal style. I, very early on, and maybe it's natural, who knows what was natural when you first start working, but I, very early on, decided that my personal style was not going to ever really deal with this gender issue, never really sit in a meeting and say "Well, I don't think women are being treated fairly." Again, when I got much later in my career and had significant leadership responsibilities, then it was my job to stop that sort of implicit bias. But early on, I just tried to make it a non-issue, probably like every woman that you've talked to, [I] worked very hard, determined that I had to the best person in the room to have any kind of seat at the table. Competency was clearly very, very important. I think I always have tried to, whether I should or not, knowing that this sometimes comes back to bite you, and I've talked about this with people that I've managed in leadership positions – my personal style is to assume good intentions on the part of the other people that I am working with, and to provide trust and give trust before I expect trust in return.

Likewise, Participant 3 shared how leveraging her hard work and expertise has helped her gain

respect and rise professional into the leadership role of Dean.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

    Participant 3: I did early on, especially have challenges related to my gender. I like to ignore gender to be honest with you and just do the work, but they're undeniable. The interesting piece is that when I came in as a young, untenured professor, one faculty I remember called me 'hon' and 'sweetheart.' He wasn't there for long, but he did. I was called 'Hot [animal body part]' by another faculty, amongst other things, and then I became their Dean. So interesting dynamic. Right? But that's actually where I feel like I was respected, I think, for my expertise at that point, and not my gender. The irony being, once they realized I wasn't going to punish them for their gender, being male, then we got along just fine.

Furthermore, Participant 3 continued her response sharing how she has had success with

mitigating gender-related bias by having open conversations with people as she strives to build a

stronger workplace culture.

    Participant 3: I would have to still be the strong Dean, which goes against the activation of the stereotype. Let's have this hard, one-on-one conversation, "You cannot tell jokes like that in class. You can't single out this particular group of people for that purpose." Then it dawned on them, "Wow! We've never had these conversations before. This is a totally new thing." We've gotten to the point after a couple of years, where I think it's become much more obvious. It's being built into the culture. Where now it will become, and it has become, the norm in the new organization. I'm sure, I'm almost certain, it's de

facto, because I am a female, but I'm sure that they attribute that to my gender, that that's why we can't talk about women like that anymore, too, [with] a female Dean. You know, I'm sure! I'm sure that's what it is. When in my mind, it's just what's right. Right? It's just was is right. Any Dean, regardless of the gender, should be having those difficult conversations with people. And, I don't actually see it as a challenge, making culture change. As long as there's a positive attitude in the receiving end. When those conversations are had the light bulb goes off, it's like, "Oh, my gosh, you're right! I'm so sorry. That's terrible! I can't believe I've never seen it like this before." Then that's great. That's a win moment.

Moreover, Participant 8 discussed how women are still a minority in business schools, yet she has faced marginalization head-on by being blunt and quick-witted. She also offered insight into higher education's role in society, helping women embrace power.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

    Participant 8: I'm in a college of business. I'm still at a minority. We're still a minority in Deans, but there's a lot of us that are Associate Deans because we get things done. I guess one of my frustrating things was even just as an Associate Professor serving on a committee as Chair, and they look to me to take the notes because I'm a woman. Number one, I have horrible handwriting. Number two, I'm the Chair. I don't take the notes. So, I still think there are times there's a bias … I served on a committee, and they were concerned their language was too bad that I might be embarrassed. And I'm like, "I'm okay." So, the challenge is being taken seriously. And can you be an effective leader at the 2500-foot level. It still concerns me that higher ed should be the model for a microcosm of society. And yet women, still, particularly in business colleges, still are the minority, even my students. So, that is in itself a challenge. That I, in both my institutions at [institution] and at here at [institution], students are first gen [first generation], and I think we need to do a better job in terms of getting women to feel like they can embrace the power and not be called a bitch or aggressive. Which, I've been called both, and I'm okay, I've slept at night, so I'm okay.

    Then again, some of the participants shared experiencing contexts of hostility or bullying.

For example, one shared how even as a Dean, she continues to have to manage people she observed as being bullies in the academic workplace. She took notice of how bullying in the higher education workplace causes negative impacts on the faculty environment while also negatively impacting the students in the classroom environment. She noted her efforts to

mitigate bullying behaviors by being innovative and leveraging technology to de-escalate

bullying tactics.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 9: I've been the first in several situations, so this is my [ordinal number] Dean's job, and it's the [ordinal number] time I've been the first female Dean. About a third of my faculty are seventy years old or older, and all male, and they are very entrenched. They are they happy, happy, happy with the way things have been. I was in a meeting yesterday at the university-level with two of them, and they were proud to tell us they've been here [nearly fifty] years, and so we are very happy for status quo. My biggest challenge is just moving them, change management, moving the faculty as a whole off-center [is] one of the things that we have to do is we have to … and many of these folks are bullies. I mean, and by bullies, I mean they get in faculty meetings, and they are very loud, and they're very negative, and basically, "Don't disagree with me, or it'll be bad for you," kind of thing. So, we're going to have electronic voting in our faculty meetings so that faculty can vote the way they want to. But there's one thing, if I could wave the magic wand I would say, "I need a faculty who's much more interested in doing what's best for our students, and not doing what's best for themselves as individual, maintaining the status quo."

Moreover, a few participants shared brazen gender-related discrimination experiences.

For example, one Dean discussed being told she was hired because at least one woman needed to

be added to the faculty. However, she out-witted him, proving her strength through capability.

In addition, another Dean shared being under-estimated in male-dominated workplaces, while

another woman detailed a traumatic experience of being harassed with sexist remarks and

hostility.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

  Participant 9: There's always been some folks who really weren't sure about why I needed to be there. I was told by my Department Chair a year or so after I arrived at that school as a newly minted Ph.D. that, "We only hired you because you were a woman, because fifty percent of our majors on marketing background. So, fifty percent of our majors are female, and we had no females." I remember saying to him, "Well, I guess I have to prove to you that you didn't make a mistake." I think that whatever hand you're dealt, you just kind of have to decide how you're going to respond to it.

Participant 10: The biggest workplace challenges I often found were either culturally, racially, or gender-wise related, being underestimated as a woman, particularly in spaces that were so male-dominated.

Participant 16: [He said] very sexist things, and what would happen, he started badgering me and talking to about me to other faculty members. Then it started going into the students, so I would go into his office and confront him on it, and he would tell me, "[Name], that's a compliment. You have beautiful [color] eyes." And I would say, "You know what, that's not a compliment. It's very degrading. I work really hard …" I had approached him numerous times to stop, and he wouldn't, and he would say sexist things in the classrooms to the female students as well. I had confronted him about that, and I finally, at the end, went into our human resource office and told them about my long history with this fellow … I met with him and the Dean, and confronted him on all of the allegations that he had made against me … and the Dean was completely on my side, which is something I'm extremely grateful for today, to have an advocate that understood. And I had been upfront with the Dean. I had told him all of these incidences. So, he knew the history.

Also, Participant 17 shared examples of how she has experienced the challenges of bias and prejudice during her career development, yet her response highlights her resilience and tenacity while emphasizing how women must prove themselves and are not promoted based on potential.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

  Participant 17: Anyone who is qualified should think that they can apply, and they should be included in the process and fairly evaluated. When I was waiting to become Dean, and I felt ready to become Dean, I got overlooked twice. Once because the university decided to go external, and I get it because sometimes universities will look inside. They just go through crossroads. Sometimes they feel they need to bring an outsider, and sometimes they think the need to bring in an insider. But then the second one that they appointed I just cannot for the life of me understand why the guy got the job, except that I think he curried favor with the administration, and was put in without any process, and I was asked if I wanted to be his Associate Dean. To which I asked, "Oh, are you asking me to do the office housework?" Because I was quite annoyed and I refused to be the Associate Dean because I didn't think this guy was up for a job. And, he got fired, and eventually it became my turn to be the Dean. So, I think the point I've made … I have been overlooked when I felt ready to rise up. And I think a good leader should always pay attention to the processes you run for hiring to see who does put their hand up and says, "I want to do more. I want to take one more responsibility," and even if you don't give the person that chance that time, I think it's on you as a leader to make sure

that you have been developing that person and providing things for them to do that would allow them to be satisfied that they're developing.

All this to say, women have experienced and still experience gender-related bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, and bullying in the workplace. However, the data revealed that successful women navigate and overcome these challenges by how they respond to it. A woman in the current American workplace has choices and often can influence and possibly make greater cultural changes.

Moreover, this research uncovers career strategies in how women can choose to respond to gender-related bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, and bullying in the workplace by leaving an organization or even an industry. Women can also respond by ignoring gender-related issues and choosing to work hard despite the challenges to earn respect. Furthermore, this study renders how women can respond with action for leading change, leveraging technology, or encouraging and initiating open conversations with people to improve a workplace culture. Also, a woman can respond by seeking out the council of a human resources department or her supervisor for guidance on navigating situations that may become unbearable. Conclusively, the gender-related thematic experiences and contexts disclosed in this study uncover how successful women Deans make choices during their career development journey and choices for how to respond to the experiences of bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, and bullying. These choices in how a woman responds can genuinely set her apart as a leader and even, in due course, prepare and lead her to become a Dean.

On the other hand, industry-related themes emerged from the research participant interviews, including toxic workplaces, existential threats to higher education, and socio-political climate challenges in academia. Of the 21 participants, three (14%) spoke about toxicity, individually and culturally, in academia as they serve in the role of Dean. Moreover, nearly half

(43%) of the Deans interviewed spoke about the existential threat or higher education crisis they currently face. Additionally, socio-political issues arose in discussions with 13 (62%) of the Deans interviewed. See Figure 9 (*n* = 21).

Figure 9

Industry-Related Challenges
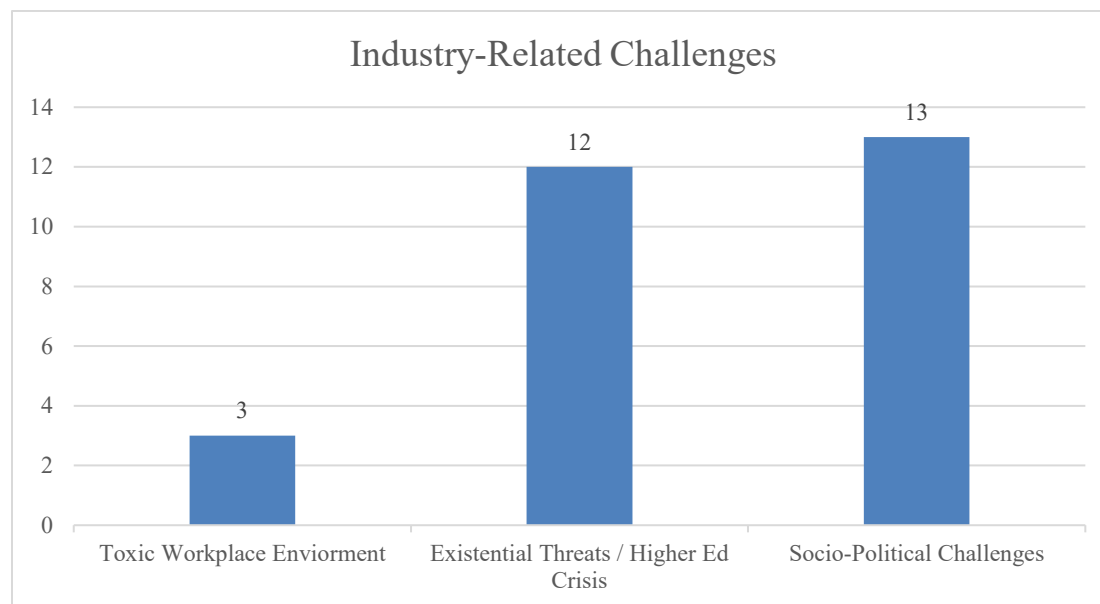
The women interviewed offered insights into strategies for toxicity while serving in the role of Dean by taking the high road, knowing not everyone will be pleased with decisions, developing a liberating self-identity outside of academia, and working to assess and identify cultural gaps in the team.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 11: It's 10% of the people [that] create 90% of real challenges, toxic individuals, just really unhappy [people]. And, boy, I've tried really very hard to engage and support and be transparent. And, it's hard to please everybody. And in fact, I know you can't. I'm not really even trying to. I don't worry as much about satisfying or even appeasing these difficult people. I worry about the people around them … it really can build in a toxic environment if you cannot at least take the wind out of those sails a bit. The last thing I want is to see negativity spread when things are going well. You have to

manage this really careful balance of being private. I know their disappointments, it has nothing to do with what they are mad about … And so, you have these things come up where it's like, "Oh, how do I take the high road here and protect all the people around and try to do the best I can with individuals who I'm quite sure won't be satisfied."

Participant 18: Within our unit we have some pockets of toxicity that I don't fully understand … I have a suspicion, that it interferes with the college being everything that it can be. It interferes with people being happy about showing up to work every day. I sensed and felt the tension very much so, and it interfered with my ability to be productive and kind of have a sense that I was happy to show up to work every day. In fact, I remember that at that point, parking in the parking lot and thinking, "Oh, God, I don't want to go in there." Then one day, having an epiphany that, "Well, you know, my profession does not have to define me. This doesn't have to be everything of my identity, because when I retire I don't want to be one of those professors who doesn't know what to do with themselves, because they've never done anything else." So, I kind of had this moment of just allowing myself to get liberated from being too strongly identified with the professor role or the department chair role. I think, having had that experience then, makes it a little bit easier for me to show up every day at work and be excited about what I'm working on, because I really do believe in what we're capable of doing … I think some of the cultural issues that I mentioned, is that some people just don't know how to get out of their own way because they are bogged down in uncertainty or fear, or a history of feeling mistreated or something. One of the things I'm doing about that right now, though, is I am having a culture consultant come in and do an assessment of the culture. And the outcome of that will be I will get some one-on-one coaching from her about how to start to address some of the cultural gaps that she identifies.

Thus, answers to both Research Questions emerge thematically in that leaders must seek ways to overcome or navigate toxicity by developing a self-identity beyond the workplace while simultaneously being engaged and supportive. Furthermore, responding proactively by hiring a cultural consultant to assess and assist in addressing pockets of toxicity is a practice that women Deans can leverage for continued career success.

12 (57%) interviewees shared higher education industry-related existential threat concerns. Many of the research participants verbalized struggles with traditional competition for students, faculty, and resources. At the same time, some spoke about the recent rise of un-traditional forms of competition impacting enrollment and retention. Various participants discussed un-ending challenges related to lacking resources and fundraising issues. Several

shared issues facing business schools regarding the MBA product and its viability in today's

workforce as technology advances while faculty struggle to develop relevant curricula.

Poignantly, a few interviewees imparted the unique challenges in the higher education landscape

caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

    Participant 2: [Challenges with] ongoing lack of resources, a challenge with fundraising. I think the pocketbooks tightened up a bit during COVID. So, ongoing resource challenges. Of course, we had to pivot from face-to-face, learning to online. We are in the process of growing our online programs. All of our graduate programs now also have an online option. So, to be responsive to the workplace and student demand, and what students want, I think is important. So, we're always having ongoing enrollment challenges, retention challenges. We're always creating new programs, new degree programs. We started a new honors program to attract the higher-end student, and that actually has been one of our most successful endeavors.

    Participant 6: We're all facing a moment of crisis of identity. Who are we? How are we going to redesign our ourselves? What do we do well? Everybody, everybody is having to pull up curricula by the stakes and really examine what we teach. What I realized is that in 1985, if you graduated with your MBA, you could ride that MBA into the sunset. That MBA was good with your entire career. It was valued. Your corporation paid for it … None of that is true anymore. So now, because of technology, AI [Artificial Intelligence], machine learning, IOT - Internet of Things, blockchain, all of these new technologies and ways of managing, your MBA program is going to last you between three and five years. So, is an MBA worth it? Well, I think so because it gives you a ground floor. But what all of us in the business world have come to realize in business schools, is that you have got to keep coming back. There's got to be stackable credentials, all of those things. Now, making those available is not hard. Getting your faculty to go back to school and learn what the heck blockchain is and how do I use that, and how do I combine fintech and cyber security. I'm asking people in their mid-to-late sixties to go back and learn this stuff. And I think it's great, but they don't.

    Participant 15: I don't think the challenges I'm facing now have much to do with my gender. I would say I have the same challenge as any business school Dean the moment. There's a sort of this existential threat that the MBA isn't as valuable as it once was. So, I experienced that as a challenge. How do I create a different story around that? I would say, as we are also struggling with trying to provide flexibility in the workplace for our staff. That's a challenge, but that has little to nothing to do with by being a woman. I would say, sort of thinking through the role of technology and education right now is a challenge. On the one hand, you create so much greater access, but on the other hand,

you can potentially lose some of the culture and community that you build. And so, trying to work through what the right balance is of that is a challenge.

Simply put, these few examples highlight multiple instances of current woman Deans discussing the volatility facing business degree products in the higher education industry and how each Dean must work through this uncertainty and fear while driving transformational change. With 43% of the research participants emphasizing a crisis of resources, including funding, student enrollment, and faculty development, the data proves that women must be able to lead their institutions by successfully re-imagining business education. Such creative efforts offer solutions for overcoming industry-related challenges and maximizing opportunities to survive the fast-paced changes facing higher education today.

Additionally, the data revealed various impacts of socio-political issues in the academic workplace. For example, Participant 20 shared how complex the educational environment is right now due to socio-political challenges triggering protests, sexual harassment cases, and declined engagement from not only students but also faculty, especially in the current post-pandemic reality.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 20: I would create a bucket of just, call them socio-political challenges. The world is absolutely, I don't know, my first word was going to be *crazy*. It's on fire with issues right now. It is so political. There are so many third rails. There's so much around freedom of speech, or who's tweeting what. Or, are the students going to protest, or who's getting cancelled, or what did someone say? I mean students can put a case for sexual harassment into "the system" just because someone said one sentence somewhere. Like it's … it's just a thicket of political, socio-political issues around just, kind of, living-the-day, that implicate freedom of speech, academic freedom, cultural climate, and it's getting more and more difficult to navigate, I think. That is a huge challenge. Then, I'll give you another bucket of workplace challenges and all kind of put it on the heels of COVID, I guess, but engagement, faculty engagement. I think students are engaging more, and I'll get to a fourth bucket for them later. But faculty, engagement, especially Research Faculty, and I am one, remember, so I know all these.

Notably, yet not directly quoted, Participant 7 shared cultural issues which drove her to accept a role on a task force to help her team overcome these challenges, ultimately preparing and positioning her for her future deanship. Moreover, Participant 16 noted the direct relationship AACSB accreditation standards have regarding the impact on the overall culture at the university among various faculty members. Also, Participant 19 elaborated on how working styles and mediocre leadership negatively impact higher education. She also described her life-long learning prioritization. She shared how she asked for professional development opportunities to deepen her skills with new ways. She communicated how life-long learning felt right for her as a proactive and responsible way for determining ways to navigate and personally overcome the industry-related challenges she faces in academia.

Thus, the data collected signals insights for both Research Questions. The responses reveal people in academic leadership who face industry-related challenges of toxicity, existential threats, and socio-political challenges that must be handled mindfully to successfully navigate and hopefully overcome them. These socio-political challenges arise and can threaten the leader, the institution, and the individuals impacted by the Dean. Women Deans today are stretched very thin and must remain vigilant through the storm as they continue to lead.

Career Development Findings: Behavioral Patterns

Despite of all the challenges women Deans face today, many research participants shared ways to overcome obstacles and maximize opportunities with strategic career development advice. The behavioral patterns shared represent ways women Deans can strive to navigate career development. The behavioral career development patterns of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools uncovered during this study involve ways to mindfully say yes to opportunities and illustrate the importance of having a support network. Additionally, behavioral

career patterns also emerged regarding the importance of relationships, self-care or work-life balance, learning, research, asking, and taking risks.

Seventeen of the research participants (81%) mentioned saying yes to roles or assignments, and many shared how saying yes directly impacted their career development in a highly positive way. 16 of the women Deans interviewed for this study (76%) mentioned how much they valued having a support network. 19 of the research participants (90%) declared the importance of relationships. 11 of the women Deans interviewed (52%) stated the value of self-care and work-life balance with examples of taking a sabbatical, maintaining healthy habits such as exercise, and being mindful about how they choose to use their time. 12 of the research participants (57%) communicated the significance of learning opportunities shaping their career development from formal training and leadership programs, learning from others, and learning from mistakes. Seventeen of the interviewed women Deans (81%) shared how research and publishing impacted their career development. Nine of the women (43%) shared vital experiences of asking to learn more or asking as a way of raising their hand when they desired to take on a new role or a project which reaped benefits to their careers. Lastly, six of the research participants (29%) mentioned the significance of taking risks during their career development which has influenced their professional journey in noticeably meaningful ways. See Figure 10 (*n* = 21).

Figure 10

Behavioral Patterns
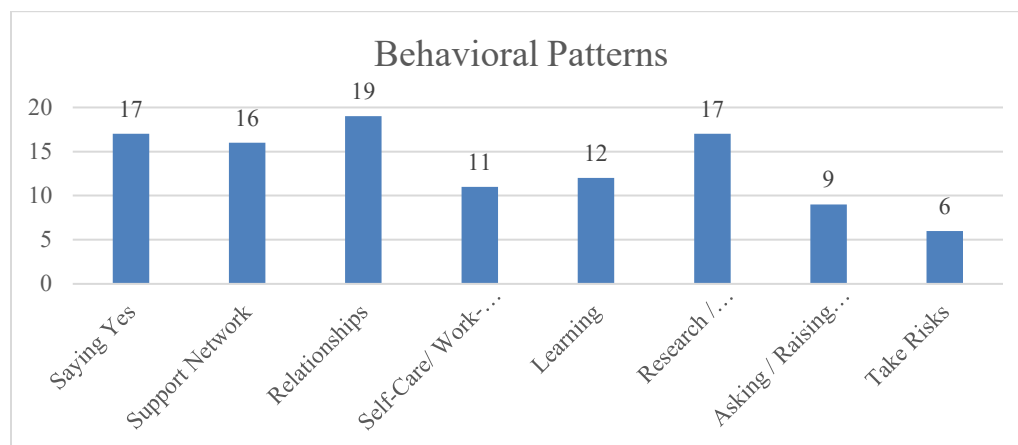
Below are a few examples of their responses to some of the interview questions regarding

saying yes, even if they did not know how they would be successful.

- IQ5: What are pivotal choices you recall making during your career development journey that you believe have led you to the leadership position you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 3: So, on the one hand, they tell women, and they tell everybody to say, "No. Right? Learn to say, No." But I feel like I don't say no very often {laughs}.

  Participant 11: I think the choice to accept that major project, because I didn't ask for that major project, it was offered, was a really pivotal decision. It's was very pivotal.

- IQ3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?

  Participant 5: I'm the person that will do practically anything. I found that if you are the person that will step forward, then there's usually a return on that, and it may not be immediate, but down the road there's going to be a return.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 9: I think that the thing that I've done to maximize opportunities has been me saying yes, when I really had no business to say yes, or I didn't think I had any business saying yes. But it turned out, every one of those situations turned out beautifully for me,

and hopefully for others as well, and I grew, which I think is a huge part of what we were supposed to be doing, using our talents and growing throughout our career.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

    Participant 21: I was asked to do an AACSB peer review visit, and I have been involved in AACSB accreditation with my own university, but I hadn't visited anywhere else. And, my inclination, my very first instinct, was to say, "No, ask me next time," but I didn't. I made myself do it, and I'm glad I did, because I met [a few] fabulous Deans as a result of that, and I got great experience. So, I think it's a matter of just forcing myself to do things like that. It's easy to get comfortable, you know.

Another repeated solution for successful academic career development that the research

participants shared was the importance of a having strong support network communicated by

sixteen participants (76%), and many spoke specifically about the value of the AACSB network.

- IQ3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?

    Participant 3: I am certain that my network, again, has been helpful to my mental health, and the fact that I can find other Deans and people that I can call and conferences that I can go to, to commiserate. Like, "Oh, you've faced this!" Working with difficult people, same types of issues that I have, Title IX issues. "You've faced the same thing, trying to get people back to re-qualified for AACSB purposes." Not being able to motivate tenured faculty. Right? Like just normal Dean challenges. So, the pandemic was a thing in and of itself obviously, but having that network, I am certain is helpful to me, and I take advantage of it, certainly. And, I just put my head down and I work. I do whatever needs to be done. And so that means I try not to dwell, but instead problem-solve. What are potential options that could be a win-win? And I create a team, my leadership team, where that is part of their culture. So, I actually have an external network, and I have an internal network as well where we can talk about these challenges, treat it like a brainstorm, and look for opportunities that could emerge.

    Participant 11: Finding the AACSB networks, for example, and again, I'm doing pre-Dean, building a network. I got really close to all the Associate Deans at my university, and in fact, I don't think it's surprising that my [several] closest Associate Deans all ended up in Dean's role roles at the university, and now it's incredible, like we're in a network together. So, the both of those and then the other piece was, really good mentors. And again purposeful, sometimes purposeful on their part. I had the first woman president of my university who joined just as I became an Associate Dean, and she took me under her wing, and then I just leaned into it. She was amazing, and then my [family member] was amazing, too. But I think that sort of purposeful learning really helped, because it was also then a support network when the failures did happen, the challenges happened. I had people I could talk to, and who were living the same thing.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 5: But certainly, getting involved in the AACSB network has been huge for me.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 9: I've created a network of colleagues off my campus, who I can call on, and lean on, and use as my I'll call my support network, the group that I vent to.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

  Participant 3: I build networks of people, and that's how I need to operate. Whether that is, at the technical level with my leadership team, we're building a network, for when we work as one, and we move forward, and we make joint types of decisions, and that is the preferred way that I like to lead. So that is where myself feels more comfortable. And I have the network of Deans that I turn to you, and often I speak to daily or weekly, and that probably is also decompressing to talk to other people, and that's useful in terms of managing my own stress and anxiety.

Again, nineteen participants (90%) of the women Deans interviewed for this study shared the importance of valuing and managing relationships with stakeholders, mentors, community members, and other leaders in the AACSB network.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

  Participant 13: The biggest challenges I think, and maybe females are more likely to do this, but there's so many stakeholders involved. There are so many stakeholders that we need to keep happy, that you want to be pleased, that you're doing things for and they don't even necessarily know or wouldn't know you're doing them. But when you think of all the stakeholders that the Dean has to interact with - students, faculty, staff, the community, alumni, donors, potential students.

- IQ3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?

  Participant 20: You never overcome challenges in hiring. You never overcome challenges in retaining faculty. If you're doing your job in hiring great faculty, they will

always be sought after by others. So, I don't think you overcome them. I think you navigate them. And so, if the question then is how you navigate those challenges, I think then you get into some big leadership kinds of lessons, maybe about relationships, collaborations, partnerships … Strong relations, and then the relationship word is huge … You have to have strong relationships.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 13: I think the biggest way I've done that is through relationships, mentoring relationships, and learning from people … I mean, you can have great candidates for Dean jobs, and those relationships make the difference. If you have somebody willing to vouch for you, and you're willing to vouch for other people, that's so valuable because there could be ten people qualified to be the Dean of a given opening, but having people that are respected by others also vouch for you, I think is a huge dynamic. So, I've been very intentional, I think, in a very authentic way, at always appreciating and developing networking and relationships. I don't think many of us would be in these roles without them, and I think that's even more so for females.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 2: You know there are three different types of management. There's managing up - managing with the President, supporting the President, supporting the Provost. There's managing sideways. How you interact and collaborate with the other Deans is incredibly important. And upper-level management. And then there's managing down. There's managing the associate teams, and all three are equally important. An adage that I heard years ago that I follow is, "It's okay to have (I don't know if battle is the right word), but perhaps with one of those three levels. But it is NOT okay to have issues with more than one level."

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

  Participant 5: I obviously I have connections here on campus. I wouldn't say that I have a lot of mentors here on campus. I value the AACSB network and the women there-in, especially, the women there-in, as my mentors.

Furthermore, many of the women Deans interviewed for this study emphasized the

importance of self-care and work-life balance with examples of spiritual practices, exercise,

nutrition, taking a break, taking a sabbatical, and spending time with family.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you

describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

Participant 17: I get up six [in the morning]. I make sure I do strength-training, and I do that [several] mornings a week. I do yoga, and once a week I have my private class with my teacher, face-to-face. I walk a lot on the weekend. I'm really happy if I just spend time with my husband and walking our dog. I don't need to be entertaining and going out all the time because it's just, the day itself is busy enough. There are enough meals and eating out. So, I have a really good life, and I'm grateful for the life I have. I eat healthily. I have a KPI not to put weight on. So, I'm pretty disciplined about what I eat. I'm pretty healthy. I don't starve myself, but you know I'm careful with my food choices. I make sure I work out. I make sure I have time with my husband, but I enjoy being outside. I think I've struck a good balance, and I've been around long enough to see Provosts come and go, and Presidents come and go, and Chief Marketing Officers come and go. And you might not agree with what they're saying today, but tomorrow will be something else. So, I really just, I keep it in perspective.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

Participant 2: I think it's important to have a reset every now and then. I think it's important to make sure [faculty and staff] are healthy, physically and mentally. I think those summer holidays are important, to get away and recharge the batteries … It is family, and making sure that your family's healthy, that you're seeing your family, you're spending time with your family, and I think folks don't take that for granted anymore, and that is pretty high in the decision making now for faculty, too.

Participant 10: The way that I describe my own [self] leadership is grounded. I am very much a fan of, and a practitioner of, spiritual practices, reflective practices that allow me to show up in a grounded way. So, every day, before I even set foot on the floor I do my daily Scripture readings. I do my daily meditations, I do my prayers. I and set myself in a place that I can be my best self, and that makes a difference for me each and every day.

Participant 15: I had a colleague who described leadership as first managing energy in yourself and then managing it in others. So, I love this question because it does highlight the fact that you can't be an effective, credible leader, if you don't also understand what it means to yourself. And so, I think for me, I am really clear about wanting to be consistent. Meaning, I have to walk the talk. So, if I'm teaching leadership, I actually have to do the things I teach. If I talk about work-life balance being important, I actually have to try to demonstrate work-life balance in my own life. If I talk about the importance of executing on a strategy, I have to think about what it means to execute on strategies that I have for my own life.

Participant 21: I am a pretty good people person, but I am definitely an introvert. So, I can't do people 24/7. It exhausts me. It wears me out. I could be on for a day, or I can be on for a few hours, but then I need to recharge by myself. So, for me it's carving that

time out for myself, and it's also making myself step out of my comfort zone and do something I'm not comfortable with, and I consciously make myself do that.

Various forms of learning emerged as a career development behavioral pattern valued by women Deans and was mentioned by 12 (57%) of the research participants. Below is one example from the research participants that well-represented the sentiments expressed regarding the importance of learning.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 1: Now, you know, if somebody told me 20 years ago, you know, I'd be a full time higher ed administrator, I might have been surprised, but learning has always been a key part – not just even just a career journey, I just enjoy learning. I am a learner. I like learning. I probably like change more than most people do – whatever that says about my personality. Very early on I realized that the person that was most responsible for my career was me. That doesn't mean that I didn't have help along the way, doesn't mean that I didn't have mentors – although I didn't have any one or two people who proactively guided me. I had people that I would reach out to that would guide me, but I had this position that I owned my career, and so I sought changes many times in my career. If I saw a position that I wanted, or if I just felt that I was getting stale in a job that I was in, I was pretty well known for raising my hand and saying, you know, that I'd like that position.

As discussed in the literature review, academics must actively research and publish in order to advance in their careers, which was echoed by seventeen (81%) of the research participants. Below are a few examples of how publishing research is fundamentally critical for people who aspire to lead in academia as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools.

- IQ1: How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today?

  Participant 12: I stayed in, got all through my degrees from [university], and started in an academic career, pushed the publish or perish. I really liked the publishing. I like the writing.

- IQ2: What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?

Participant 11: I kept my research going, but was kind of going to take it to the next level and get fully back engaged, and did talks across the [international country] about my research, and ended up finding myself more interested in the business schools sometimes than the research and ended up becoming a Dean in [international city]. And that was strictly because of connections I made, and an opportunity that was offered to me. I mean an opportunity to an interview, right, and then I got it, and so I find that those kind of pivot moments that were really at a time when I was looking for greater impact and meaning, served me really well.

Participant 17: I was publishing like crazy. I got promoted.

Asking questions or asking to take on a new position, project, or an assignment may be daunting. However, several of the women interviewed in this study shared instances where they were brave enough to ask for what they wanted professionally, thus disclosing that the art of asking is of utmost importance for career advancement.

- IQ3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?

  Participant 2: Ask a lot of questions. I always tell people, a sign of leadership is asking, and is actually understanding that there's a lot we don't know … I think it's very important to reach out and admit there's a lot we don't know and ask a lot of questions. I think we really have to be coachable, be willing to be coached and mentored because there is a lot to learn in the transition … So, you have to admit, as a full professor, that there are a lot of things about being a Dean that you may not know and seek advice, seek counsel. And there was a lot of advice taking and a lot of learning that went on in how to improve myself as a manager.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 1: I had this position that I owned my career, and so I sought changes many times in my career. If I saw a position that I wanted, or if I just felt that I was getting stale in a job that I was in, I was pretty well known for raising my hand and saying, you know, that I'd like that position.

  Participant 10: Maximizing opportunities meant looking for ways at every stage to leverage the network that I had, whether that was meeting with decision-makers that were a level or two beyond where I was. Volunteering or asking for additional opportunities to show myself, additional projects that would stretch me and grow me. Opportunities to speak or write and be seen as a thought-leader. Just never turning down those kinds of

opportunities. Invitations to teach, or to lecture, or to develop materials, invitations to write. I've taken advantage of all of those things so that I could stretch.

Several of the women interviewed for this study are self-proclaimed risk takers. The behavioral pattern of taking risks was worthy of note for at least six of the interviewed participants. Below are a few examples derived from the data collected.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 1: I am a huge believer in managing the risk in your life rather than avoiding the risk in your life. I think that most people, not necessarily people that just rise to certain positions, the people that are successful in the position in which they have arisen, do it because they have a greater tolerance for risk than people that don't.

  Participant 11: One is putting myself out there, and the other is taking risks.

  Participant 15: I was willing to sort of take the risk and put myself out there. And I think that's a clear way in which I tried to maximize opportunities, not letting opportunities go without my at least investigating or looking into them. And then sometimes I was very proactive in identifying something that I wanted in sort of asking a lot of questions.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

  Participant 8: I am a calculated risk-taker. And, women typically aren't the risk-takers. But if they do, they're calculated and that's what criteria … But the idea of putting myself out there, moving away, taking a risk, but I also know that in the end, in all of this, even with AACSB, it begins and ends with me. I take the responsibility, and I'm going to have to let some people go, and that's going to be tough.

Consequently, the responses of the participants uncover insights into behavioral patterns clearly offering resolutions for Research Question 1 and Research Questions 2. Women who rise to the leadership position of an AACSB Dean overcome challenges and maximize opportunities by mindfully saying yes to the right opportunities. Additionally, the value of support networks through impeccable networking and the value of relationship-building emerged as imperative career strategies and practices employed by women who rise to the leadership position of Dean.

Moreover, self-care and work-life balance are imperative for achieving and maintaining successful upward career momentum and longevity for women Deans. Conclusively, the continuum of learning, publishing, asking, and taking risks proves vitally integral for many women Deans, imperative for overcoming (or navigating) obstacles and maximizing opportunities on the path to leadership.

Career Development Findings: Beliefs

Themes materialized from the data regarding the beliefs of women Deans proving to be impactful for career development, including self-beliefs and action-oriented beliefs. What emerged from the data collected was the importance of having self-belief or developing self-confidence being of value shared by nine of the women Deans interviewed for this study (43%). Relatedly, expert power (known as competence driven by hard work) materialized from the data collected with eleven Deans interviewed (52%). The action-orientated belief in the importance of service in the form of serving on boards and serving in the community was critical for 13 women Deans who participated in this study (62%). Additionally, consciously knowing when it was time to leave a position or make a move away from a workplace environment was noted by 12 of the women interviewed (57%) who found this action-oriented self-belief as essential for career development to the deanship. See Figure 11 ($n = 21$).

Figure 11

Beliefs
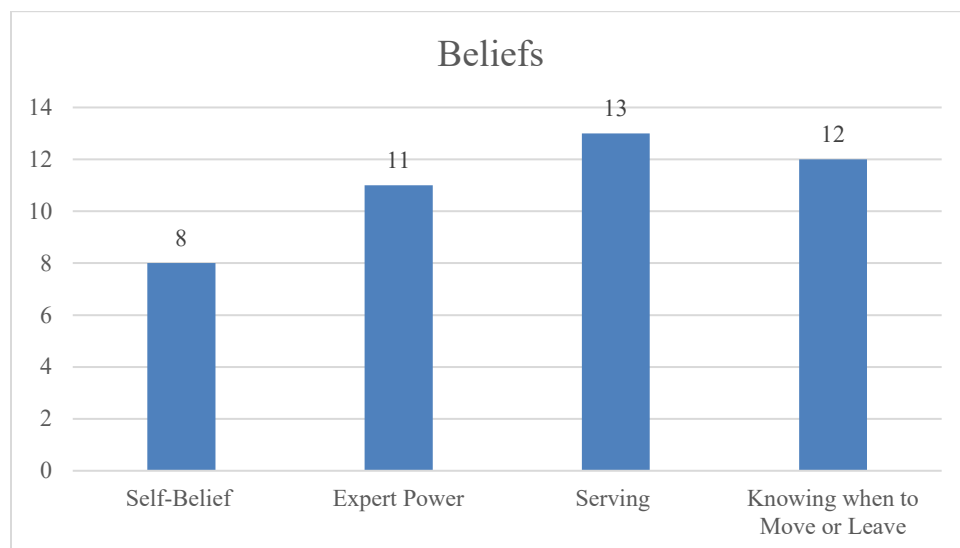
Beliefs

Several Deans spoke about how developing self-confidence and self-belief helped them to move forward professionally, even in hard times. Below are a few examples from the interview responses.

- IQ3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?

  Participant 17: I always talk about having pockets of self-belief, and it's like running a ledger … You can imagine an ocean wall, and if the wall is built strong enough and high enough, it can withstand some knocks, and I always think of that with leadership. That if the wall is high enough and it's built high enough, because you've had success, and you've had good things that have happened, and if you've had accomplishment, you can take a few knocks a long way, and you've got to remind yourself about the good things you've done, and how you've had success. I think having those pockets of self-belief are important … So, I do have self-belief. I know I'm a good Dean. I would not have probably said that to you five years ago, but I would say it, and I believe in myself. So, that's something I've had to learn. I'm fiercely determined, partly because I do believe that I'm very good at what I do, and I have got to where I am because I've worked really hard, and I believe I'm the best candidate for role.

- IQ4: What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-

accredited business school in America?

Participant 1: You call it confidence. It is partly confidence. Although, I am a big believer that you fake confidence in the beginning and then it becomes natural after a while. People would never believe it now when they see me in a business setting, but I can remember the first few times I made my own independent visits to a prospective client, that I would set goals for myself that I wouldn't leave the room for thirty minutes. I would make myself stay in that room with another person that I'd never met before asking them questions for thirty minutes. And, it's true that when you do that often enough it becomes natural. I think that maybe there's an element of faking confidence until you develop it.

Participant 11: In some ways the biggest challenges were to my confidence and development and kind of a belief that I could do this, and I was ready for it, because I tend to really be a very innovative leader. It's my go-to, and when you innovate, you fail sometimes, and that certainly happened, and I took on really big projects.

- IQ5: What are pivotal choices you recall making during your career development journey that you believe have led you to the leadership position you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 15: I was very young when I got my Ph.D. I was [mid-20s], and I was teaching in that first year MBA students, all of whom were older than me, and so it felt very intimidating, in a classroom as the instructor as a professor, having had less work experience, and fewer years than everyone I was teaching. So, I found that was a challenge for me, but largely one that was in my head. I was making up the narrative that I wasn't as qualified, or I wasn't good enough.

Relatedly, expert power or competency driven by hard work, as many of the participants

shared, can elevate self-confidence. Moreover, having expertise offered legitimacy to women

along their journey to becoming Dean and while currently serving as a Dean.

- IQ3: How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?

  Participant 1: You know, worked very hard, determined that I had to the best person in the room to have any kind of seat at the table. So, you know, competency was clearly very, very important.

  Participant 10: Mostly by having to be smarter than everybody else in the room. When you are underestimated, when you're marginalized you have to work harder. Those are the things that are always told to African-American children, anyway, that we have to be smarter and work harder. I went to school and then earned another credential every time

I ran into an obstacle to help me move beyond. So, I had to do those kinds of things to help me get to where I wanted to go.

Participant 13: I think educating myself, or becoming knowledgeable. I think that if you're in a room and you have the knowledge necessary, at least what I find is, that I don't think much at all about the challenges or any of the social dynamics. Right? I'm the expert in the room, and that sounds arrogant even saying that now. Right? But if you're the Dean, or if you're the director and you're the one in the room that has the knowledge, there's an incredible amount of confidence and just calming effect that that brings.

Participant 3: So externally building that reputation externally is important. So, and it feeds into itself, to become an expert. And I know the research, old-school research, from when I was in grad school, that "expert power" is one of the best types of power for women in particular to demonstrate.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

  Participant 20: I've accomplished things, and I think it also reflects another part of one of my key values, which is part of that momentum. Let's keep going. We can always be better … You know, you work. You work, you get. I don't know, that's the deal. My father used to say that all the time, "You want, you work, you get." That's a big thing for me. And, I feel like for the school, you know, if we want it, we just have to work at it. It'll come, you know. Hard work begets, you know. But it is … It's like we're kind of doing it.

Notably, 13 of the research participants (62%) specifically mentioned how they believed in the action of service. While service is a behavior, the conviction that service is integral to the path to deanship is a belief. Furthermore, many of the research participants shared various forms of service that ultimately aided in their path to the deanship, such as the importance of service in the community, on task forces, and in volunteer roles. The belief that service is essential emerged because service is interconnected for business schools due to the relationships with the external business community.

- IQ1: How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today?

  Participant 1: So, that trajectory of entrepreneurship, external facing, community involvement, and a lot of strategy was a good catalyst for this particular school dealing with all the changes that all business schools are going through. I don't want to over

simply the difference between the business world and the academic world, they are significant, but for-profit businesses just like not-for-profit business are suffering with strategic challenges that are caused by demographic shifts, behavioral shifts in your primary universe, whether it's students or clients, unparallel competition and competition that comes from non-traditional sources and the need to address that level of change and at the same time, position yourself so that you can get support from your community … part of my personal position was as a civic leader in our community – so, sat on a number of boards, chaired a number of boards, and in the process developed a deep set of connections with the business community that went beyond customer relationships, more, as I used to put it, more having a seat at the table rather than trying to position yourself to sell to the table, it was actually having a seat at that civic table. And one of the things that this school is doing is to kind of re-engage their own community as being an anchor institution in the city that we are headquartered in. So that civic leadership position dove-tailed nicely with this re-focusing on acknowledging that any university is an anchor institution in the communities that they work in.

Participant 4: But what I found that was really key for me is participation, and serving as a leader on boards of directors, and also on boards of professional associations, which have been very key to what I do. In fact, I can tie every speaking role, every board position I have now, not maybe not every but probably at this point ninety percent of them back to being very involved with, you know, for professional leadership organizations and board service.

Another integral belief combining self-belief and action-oriented belief shared by 12 (57%) women Deans that participated in this research is the self-awareness tied to knowing when to leave a position or move away from a workplace environment. These responses below highlight the belief in knowing when the opportune time to make a move away, either by taking a break, taking a sabbatical, or leaving a role or workplace.

- IQ5: What are pivotal choices you recall making during your career development journey that you believe have led you to the leadership position you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 15: One of them was the decision to take a leave of absence from my then current institution and go to another institution, and I took a year, and in that year my goal was to write a book. I had to teach only one class. It was a very light teaching load, but I wanted to spend that year writing a book … And so, the decision to actually go there and push through my own fears was what changed the course of my life. It changed what I felt what it meant to be a professor. That year, I did write a book. It was the first book I wrote, on [leadership topic], that changed the trajectory of my research career.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

Participant 11: Even when I took that sabbatical, it was me taking a pulse and looking at the [life] plan and kind of feeling, and apologies if it sounds arrogant, I'm like, "I've done it." I kind of was like, "Okay, either I go up to Dean or I go back to faculty, but as a kind of leading researcher," and I was positioned to do either one of them, but the reason I took that pause is, I didn't have a plan. Right? I mean I had great options, but I didn't have a plan, and so I think that my self-leadership is having that clear sense of vision, and then having a plan always in place, and I know when I don't have it, because I feel kind of lost.

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

Participant 4: I mean, this is the best career decision I ever made, is the current one that I'm in. It's really been awesome, but I might be, I might be, I think, I might be ready, for, you know, that next level, which is probably not a business school Dean. Maybe looking at a provost or a presidency at a small school. In fact, I've been looking at those opportunities, and I've been interviewed right now, just in the last couple of weeks for a few of those, so we'll see. But, but they need to, they need to feel right, you know. It needs to feel like it's good. But that is important, because I think if you stay on something too long as a leader, I think it, it really wears on you. You know, some people say seven, eight, 10 years, you know, as their time period. I was Chair for seven years, and in that seventh year I was ready to be done. Definitely ready to be done and ready to go on to the next thing. Then you have to also think about, if you don't have that opportunity because there's not a good position to move on to, how do you keep things fresh and exciting for yourself, so that you feel like you're putting that really good positive energy into things.

Conclusively, overcoming obstacles and maximizing opportunities for the research participants include self-beliefs and action-oriented beliefs. Research Question 1 investigates how women who become Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools overcome challenges and maximize opportunities. This study uncovers how vital it is for a woman to believe in herself, even amid the obstacles that will undoubtably arise. Being an expert at the table, or rather, the best expert at the table, can develop confidence and safeguard chances of success. In response to Research Question 2, serving on boards, in the community, and even as a civic leader is a career practice that women Deans actively deem imperative for career development. While service is crucial, also knowing when it is time to stop serving, leave an organization, take a

sabbatical, or take a break is also revealed as a critical component to action-oriented self-understanding essential for career development of women Deans.

Career Development Findings: Leadership

Each of the women interviewed for this study embodies various leadership styles. The participants were probed to discuss self-leadership and their perception of their leadership style for leading others. What emerged from the interviews with the research participants are examples of leaders who typify collaboration, participation, decisiveness, a service-orientation, and innovation or risk-taking. See Figure 12 ($n = 21$).

Figure 12

Leadership
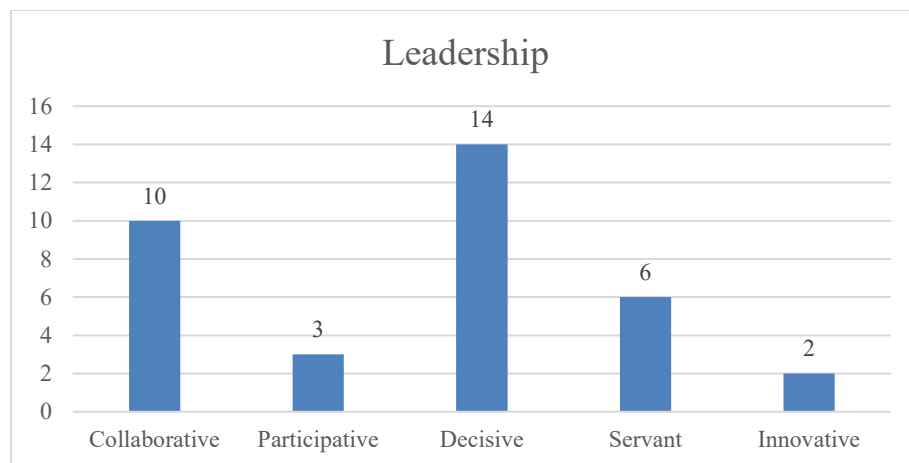
While the responses varied, 10 research participants (48%) mentioned the importance of having a collaborative leadership style or being collaborative as being important for their career development journey. Scholars recognize collaboration as essential for teams, especially in education. Scholars recognize that collaborative leaders, "believe in a high level of transparency and honesty, and have a high level of performance due to the help of stakeholders who feel they have a voice in the process" (DeWitt, 2017, p. 139).

Three of the women Deans highlighted the perception of their own leadership style as being participative. The research shows participative leadership is dynamic can drive broader participation, keeping teams engaged being helpful during ambiguity, offering clarity necessary for achieving goals and creating opportunities for learning (Grasmick et al., 2012).

However, 14 women (67%) shared in various ways why it is essential to be a leader who is decisive, even in a multitude of situations where the opinions of others are valued. Decision making and facilitating decision making is a necessity for leading teams and especially for leading institutions. Women who rise to the deanship must be decisive while avoiding what scholars warn women on the rise against, which is the "disease to please" (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018, p. 136). In other words, the research participants understood that they cannot please everyone, but also that decisions must be made to move a group, team, organization, or institution forward, even if the decision may ultimately prove to be wrong. The leaders investigated are Deans who understand that decision making involves risk-taking.

In many ways decision making is a form of driving innovation. Similarly, two of the women Deans (9.5%) shared why they feel being an innovative leader has been vital to their career development journey, so much so that they recognize their leadership style as being innovative. Furthermore, innovation is critical for leaders and business schools striving to survive in a complex and competitive world.

Significantly, active service and the belief in the importance of service was stressed many times throughout many of the interviews. Six of the women Deans interviewed (29%) described their perceived leadership style as being a servant leader. Scholars define servant leaders as ethical people who build strong relationships with empathy and by caring for others first. Servant leaders are often recognized as being Christ-like, with Christ being the ultimate servant

leader (Patterson, 2020). The participants researched understand the value of servant leadership and build relationships well in their careers, communities, and organizations.

Being collaborative and prioritizing collaboration is key for women Deans. Interviewees discussed the importance of collaboration amid workplace challenges.

- IQ6: Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?

  Participant 4: I put as our strategy in the business school one of our key strategic goals is collaboration and collaborating across campus and across the system.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

  Participant 1: I tend to think it's more because I truly believe that collaborative leadership is much more productive than non-collaborative leadership. And clearly that's one of the beliefs that allowed me to get this job, because academia is very much about collaboration and very much about respecting the wisdom and experience of others. And so, that piece of moving into higher education just comes very naturally to me. It fits my management style, which is to be collaborative.

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

  Participant 2: I do have a collaborative style. I have learned that when making decisions, especially important decisions, put a task force together, a committee together, and get a critical mass of faculty on your side. I've made use of that quite a bit here at [school name], and that has helped me make some tough decisions. Whether it was closing programs or closing campuses or adding new programs or shifting resources. I think that that's really helped. I am collaborative, and yet I'm not afraid to make decisions.

  Participant 3: But, the fact that I'm leading through consensus and collaboration the great majority of the time enables me to make authoritarian decisions when necessary to do so, because they believe that I'm doing so in the best interests of college and the institution, and not for personal reasons.

  Participant 9: I really try to be a collaborative leader, and I know everybody says that, but I really try to do that. Hear all the voices, ask all the stakeholders, hear all their voices, but at the end of the day make the decision if I have to make it. And, I'm not unwilling to make a decision, and I'm certainly not unwilling to say that I made a mistake.

  Participant 10: I am a collaborative leader. I often see myself as one who holds the space so that others can be their best selves.

Participant 15: I think my leadership style is inclusive and collaborative.

Many of the women Deans interviewed for this study shared instances of being

participative. Three specifically recognized themselves as being a participative leader. However,

collaboration is a key element of participative leadership; thus, collaboration and participation

are intertwined. This research uncovers how participative leadership represents a way for

overcoming workplaces challenges.

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

    Participant 12: I think I am more coaching or participative. I'm willing to get in there
    with you. Get my hands dirty. Come, sit with you in your office and help you … I try to
    lead by example.

    Participative 21: I perceive [my leadership style] as participatory, because I do not try to
    operate under cloak and dagger. I do try to keep things transparent. I do not think I have
    a difficult time making decisions and communicating the decisions, but I really do try to
    get input first. So, I think it is participatory. It may not go always go the way a faculty
    member wants it to go, but I think at the end of the day I don't think there's any faculty
    member who can say they did not have a chance to be heard.

The role of any Dean includes making decisions. For example, Deans must routinely

make decisions regarding budgets, hiring and firing faculty and staff, fundraising priorities, and

curricula changes. Accordingly, 14 of the Deans interviewed (67%) expressed the importance of

decision-making. Furthermore, many of the Deans lamented how challenging coming to a

decision amid bureaucratic academic settings can be. Thus, to be a Dean, one must be able to

not only make decisions but also drive teams to make decisions, even if all group members are

not satisfied.

- IQ7: How would you describe how you lead yourself?

    Participant 1: When push comes to shove, I will strongly encourage people to make a
    decision and to not just discuss it endlessly, despite more governance committees than
    you can shake a stick at, I've learned.

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

Participant 2: I think the consensus-building was the old term, and now collaborative is probably the new term. What's interesting though, is whenever we're interviewed, a typical interview question is, "Will you make the hard decisions? Tell us about a decision that wasn't easy for you that you had to make as Dean." We get that asked a lot. I think we still have to be decisive. So, it's a balance between being collaborative and yet being decisive.

Participant 6: My leadership style is inclusive. It's open, open-minded, caring. My leadership style is never top down, but I can make a decision. And what I mean by that is, if we have taken a topic and bounced it over the net 12 times, I'll say, "Okay, I've heard both of you. This is the way we're going to go because we got to move along."

Participant 14: I'm also decisive. I'm not someone who wants to sit on something for months and months and months. So, I'm not afraid to make a decision, and even though I like having everyone on board, if a decision needs to be made, I'm willing to take a risk and make a decision, even if someone might be alienated. Usually that works out okay.

Deans serve many stakeholders from students, faculty, staff, university leaders, donors, alumni, community members, and much more. Many Deans interviewed in this study detailed the importance of serving on boards, associations, community organizations, and other types of service-related projects. Likewise, six of the Deans shared their perceived leadership style as being that of a servant leader.

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

    Participant 4: [My leadership style is] definitely servant leader. But, I also am a process leader. I try to lead charismatically and energetically. But, at my root I'm a servant leader, because I like to demonstrate and set a good example. Actually, I told somebody this yesterday. There were two things they needed to do to solve a problem. One is, I said, "Offer to show them how to do it and do it for them. But then also, after that, teach them how they can do it next time." Right? So, the teaching part of it -- to enable and empower others. You can be a servant leader, and it's important to know when to serve and how to serve, but you also have to create other leaders.

    Participant 7: I see myself as a servant leader. That model is how I see it. My job is to help others be successful. I need to make things better for my faculty, so that they can do their job better, and then they can help the students. I need to do things to help the students to make their lives better. I see myself as, that is my role. My role is, if you were to give you an org chart, I would put myself at the bottom with department chairs and then faculty above that. Servant leadership is really important to me, and that's actually

the way I define servant leadership is, your job is to help others, and your job is to help them shine and help them grow and help them develop.

Participant 18: I mean kind of the cliché, servant leader. I serve the college and my job is to be an advocate for the faculty and staff, but also to be the visionary leader, and to move us in a direction that makes sense for the kind of work that we want to be doing, in the context that we can do it.

To face all the fast-paced and often tumultuous challenges in higher education and businesses today, leading with innovation can be a key way to succeed. Furthermore, successful innovation can prove transformative. Being a change agent involved in change management is part of the way many Deans lead. Two women Deans interviewed for this study (9.5%) distinguish themselves as innovators.

- IQ8: What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?

Participant 11: I think I would be described as a very innovative. Maybe the better word is kind of transformational, because I really want to leave a place and the people better. So, transformational, really fueled by innovation and by collaboration.

Participant 16: I'm very innovative. I don't like complacency. I don't like being stagnant … especially in this world where things are changing every day, we've got to make sure we're aware of our environment. What are our employers wanting from our students? What are employers wanting? So as a leader, I feel it's important for me to make sure that we are always progressing. We're always trying to be a little better. And that might mean that we are looking at our curriculum, making sure it's relevant. So, one of my things is innovative.

Each woman interviewed for this study is a leader, leading business education in America as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school. The women investigated in this study lead with collaboration, participation, decisiveness, service, and innovation. The leadership styles of the women researched have shaped them into the leading Deans they are today, and each woman's leadership style offers insight into how she has overcome obstacles and maximized opportunities during career development. Furthermore, the data collected illustrates the career

strategies and practices of women Deans who are collaborative, participative, decisive, service-oriented, and innovative leaders navigating internal and external forces striving for success.

Internal Study Validity

The internal validity of this study is triangulated with clarification of researcher bias, researcher participant collaboration, and a thick or rich description of the phenomenon investigated. Notably, scholars argue that validity in qualitative research, and especially phenomenological studies, because it is limited to subjectivity (Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). In other words, this study has limitations because the findings only represent the subjective reality expressed by the research participants. Scholars also argue that phenomenological studies do not offer generalizability (Atieno, 2009). In other words, this study does not represent all women deans and only represents the sample of the population of women deans investigated. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized for the entire population of women, women deans, or AACSB accredited deans who are women in America.

Firstly, the author of this study fully disclosed that she is a woman who has had a career in higher education with over 14 years in the field, some of which included working for an AACSB-accredited business school in America. Admittedly, her experiences and observations shaped and propelled her desire to study the career development of women Deans. However, serious effort was made to bracket out the feelings, experiences, and opinions of the author of this study. Creswell (2018) argues that this type of qualitative validity is a strategy that encompasses how the researcher clarifies any bias through the disclosure of "understandings about the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study from the outset of the study" (p. 261).

Secondly, the research participants of this study collaborated with the researcher. Scholars of qualitative inquiry argue that engaging research participants that are a part of a community and inviting them to participate or collaborate in various ways during the study can enhance the research process (Hacker, 2013). The stage was set at the onset of scheduling a research participant for an interview that shortly after the interview, the transcription of the interview would then be sent to the research participant for her review, welcoming any corrections or edits to the transcriptions to validate the data collected. The investigator requested participant feedback, asking each participant to confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions. Furthermore, not only did the researcher ask each research participant if the data collected was accurate in the transcription, but she also asked if the research participant was comfortable with what was collected upon review.

Many of the participants of this study shared traumatic experiences that were emotional. Some of the women in this study had prepared notes for the interview, while others just spoke in a very open and free form way. This led to some of the data collected being extremely sensitive and personal. Some of the research participants shared personal information that could have exposed their identity by sharing. Some of the research participants mentioned how many children they had, specific places they worked or places they had lived, businesses they had run, the names or acronyms of associations or boards on which they had served.

This study's data are the hermeneutics or words, sentences, phrases, and quotes collected during the interviews. Furthermore, this study used frequently spoken words and significant experiences shared to analyze and code the data collected. All of this identifiable information was removed from the transcriptions. For example, brackets were put around the words "ordinal number" when a research participant shared how many children she had in an effort to make it

less obvious which female dean might have shared the sentiment should it be cited in the

findings of this study. Extensive effort was made to remove any identifiable information shared

by the research participant making these data points generalized to maintain confidentiality.

The transcriptions were read exhaustively by the researcher. Additionally, the

transcriptions were read at least once by each participant during the validity check. However,

one of the women Deans said she did not have time to read over the complete transcription in

detail but trusted it was fine after a quick skimming of the transcription. That said, the

participant transcription validity checks offered a conscious, communicated, participatory, and

collaborative effort to support the reliability of this study. In other words, this study has face

validity and prima facia validity simply because the data in this study are the words said by the

participants. The validated data were then analyzed through a theoretical framework to deepen

understanding of the career development of female Deans.

Lastly, this study included great detail offered by the investigator to describe the

participants of this study, who are all women leading business education as Deans of AACSB-

accredited business schools in America. This study also provides robust detail of the

accreditation distinction of AACSB, helping to clarify the type of academic institution each of

the research participants are leading. Furthermore, to accompany the findings in this study, the

author leveraged detailed quotes to offer the reader various ways to digest the findings with a

rich description. Scholars argue that a truly rich description creates connections and

interconnected details in the study (Stake 2010). The description explored female Deans'

perspectives, strategies, and practices focusing on guidance and insight for overcoming

challenges and maximizing opportunities during career development. Furthermore, the multiple

and detailed quotes offer this study an in-depth exploration of the industry-related challenges the

research participants share. The rich description of the industry-related challenges in higher education create an interconnectedness of the hermeneutics, and offer a vivid picture of the socio-politics and existential threats which result in a stressful atmosphere or climate shared by the research participants.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study reveal answers to both Research Questions. This study illustrates how ways in which the research participants have maximized opportunities and overcome obstacles during their career development to becoming deans. Furthermore, this research offers the career development strategies and practices employed by the participating deans investigated.

Research Question 1 asks how women overcome obstacles and maximize opportunities in career development to become Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. Through the collection of findings derived from shared stories of the research participants, business education leaders are depicted overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities by being educated and experienced professionals who are collaborative yet decisive. Additionally, the findings illustrate how the research participants overcome obstacles and maximizing opportunities by knowing when to ask, say yes, make a move, take a break, or leave. Importantly, this study exhibits how the research participants are women who are capable of leaping forward several positions during career advancement and do not have to step on each position along the leadership ladder to reach the top.

Research Question 2 asks what strategies and practices are employed by women who are Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. This study's participants exemplify the career strategies and practices of innovative women who maintain strong relationships and

networks with a service orientation. Moreover, the women Deans examined portrayed a strong sense of self-identity beyond academia, such as the identity of being a wife, a mother, a friend, or a mentor, thus offering a depth and dynamics even amid professional peaks and valleys. In addition, this study offers career strategies and practices specifically regarding the mindful understanding of institutional structures that may differ from institution to institution, but illustrate how some professional positions in academia offering significantly relevant experience for people who become Deans. For example, some of the Deans shared the value they found in roles such as a Department Chair, while feeling less relevant experience in roles such as an Associate Dean. However, it is important to note that the relevance of a Department Chair verses an Associate Dean is not generalizable for academia as a whole, or even for the all of the research participants. However, the broader understanding is that some roles along the path to a deanship may offer more relevant experience while others may not.

This study's findings explore the dynamics of the career development phenomenon of women Deans through the perceptions and subjective reality of the interviewees researched. The data collected, transcribed, validated, and analyzed affirms thematic material with insights into career development chronology, experiences and contexts, behavioral patterns, beliefs, and leadership styles of the participants of this study serving in business education leadership roles as Deans in AACSB-accredited business schools in America.

The findings of this study highlight the research participants as leaders who chose to prioritize advanced education, with all having at least one master's degree and a substantial majority of the participants also having terminal degrees. Additionally, this study reveals participating Deans from various backgrounds, including traditional academia, non-traditional or business industry-related, and a combination of both academia and industry.

Also, the findings offer valuable career insights from the participants of study who discussed achieving the role of Dean after serving in positions such as an Associate Dean, Senior Associate Dean, Interim Dean, Department Chair, Chair, Assistant Chair, Academic Director, and Executive Director. In other words, this study showcases women who have achieved advanced degrees, overcome challenges with expert credentials, and strategically moved into roles that propel them toward becoming a business school Dean.

Furthermore, this study uncovers specific insight into the career development experiences and contexts of gender-related and higher education industry-related challenges experienced by the research participants. The deans interviewed shared various ways of developing professionally by choosing how to respond to various obstacles, challenges, and opportunities. In this study, the research participants strategically said yes to career advancement opportunities, support networks, and valuing relationships. Also, the research participants are Deans who shared the importance of prioritizing self-care and work-life balance while seeking opportunities to learn, research, ask, and take risks.

This study offers insight into the path to a deanship while disclosing specific behavioral patterns, beliefs, and leadership practices of a sample population of Deans leading business education with collaboration, participation, service, decisiveness, and innovation. See Figure 13.

Figure 13

Pathways to Deanship
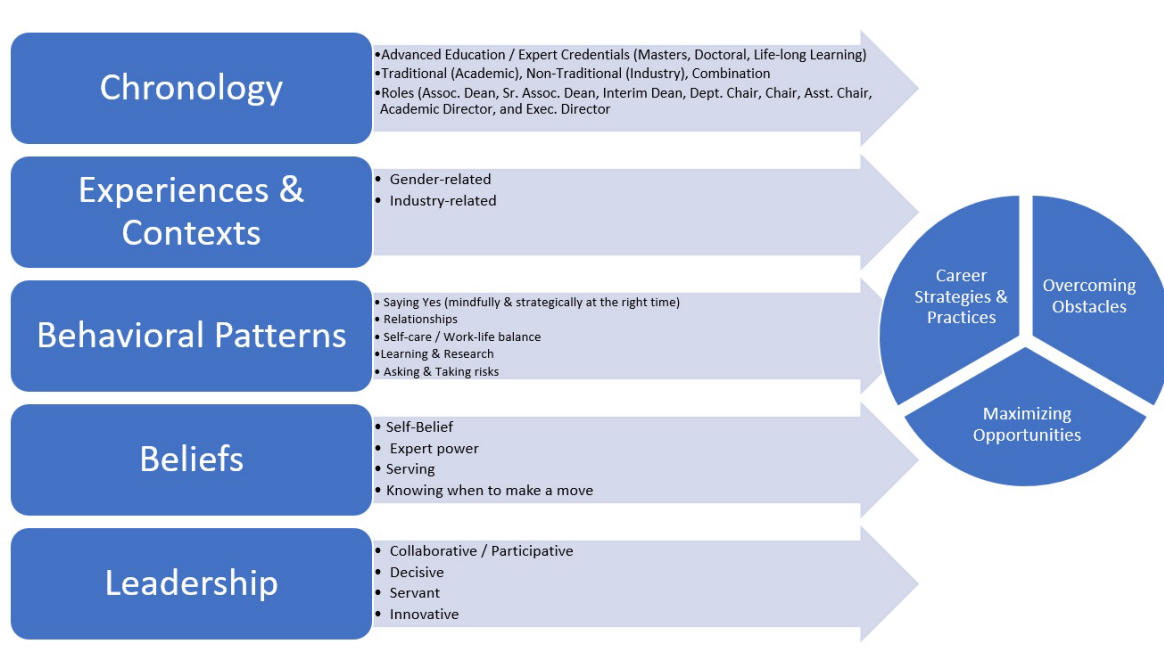
The following chapter discusses the interpretation and conclusions of this study with summaries of the underlying study issue, theoretical framework, methodology and methods, and critical findings. Chapter 5 details this study's conclusions and describes implications for scholarship and practice. Furthermore, the final chapter of this study explores the study's limitations and validity with recommendations for future research, and concludes with reflections from the author of this study.

Chapter 5: Interpretation and Conclusions

**Summary of Research Study Issue**

The purpose of this research was to answer the two Research Questions by determining how the participating women Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America overcame obstacles and maximized opportunities in career development, and what career strategies and practices they employ. By investigating the career development phenomenon of a few women leading in business education as Dean, this study derived reflective, self-perceived, and text-focused meaning from individual experiences, perceptions, and subjective reality of the women Deans who participated in this study.

Individuals in today's workforce need ways to overcome obstacles and maximize opportunities to achieve career satisfaction and successful career advancement in the fast-changing, globalized world (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018). Workplace challenges are prevalent in the diverse and globalized workforce, including issues related to individuals, teams, industries, environments, and cultures (Allen, 2012; Anthony, 2012; Chance, 2021; Võ, 2012).

The investigator of this study desired to reveal a female perspective of career development from the investigation of women Deans in AACSB-accredited business schools in America. This study uncovered distinct perspectives from the research participants by providing understanding of how women evolve professionally to become leaders in the business education industry while also detailing realistic career development guidance and insights. See Figure 14.

Figure 14

Including Female Perspective for Deanships
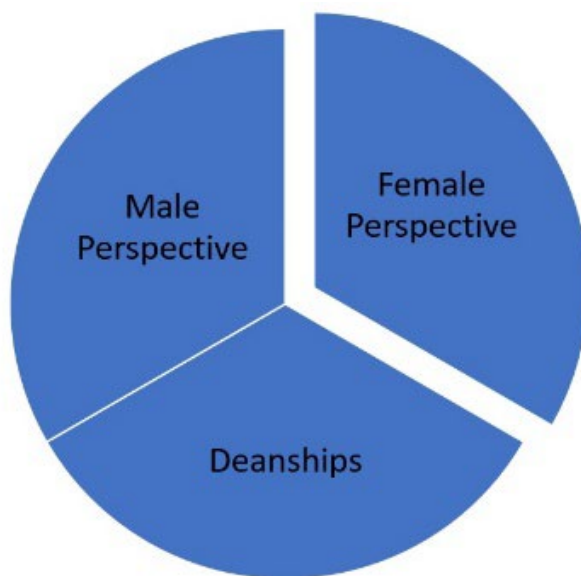
In addition, this research investigates career development from a female perspective. Notably, scholarly critics of Career Development Theory, such as Blustein (2006; 2011; 2015) and McMahon & Patton (2018), argue that much of the literature of the theory offers a one-sided masculine perspective. As a part of the diverse and globalized workforce, the investigator sought to uncover ways to empower people through stories offering guidance and insight from the research participants, female Deans leading in business education, to contradict bias and drive transformational change. Consequently, this study's findings increase the understanding of career development from a female perspective with career experiences, guidance, and insight from women leaders.

During this study, there were 540 business schools in America with global accreditation from AACSB, and 29% were led by women Deans. Subsequently, the investigator interviewed 13.4% of the women Deans actively leading AACSB-accredited business schools in America. See Figure 15.

Figure 15

Male and Female Deans in AACSB-Accredited Business Schools in America

540 Total
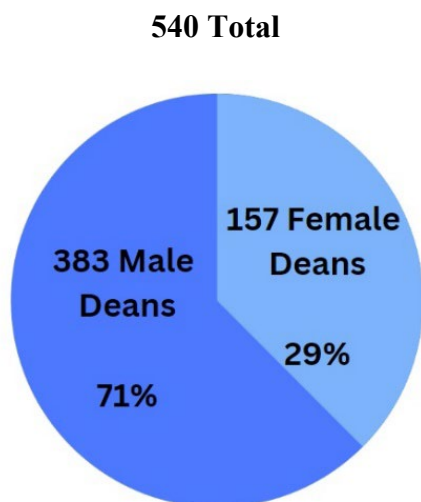
The interviewer queried each participating Dean about her career development journey experiences. The eight Interview Questions related to one or both of this study's two Research Questions to uncover specific career development strategies and practices of women Deans leading business education in America. The interviews explored workplace challenges that occurred on the participants' way to becoming Deans, ways to overcome challenges, ways to maximize opportunities, current workplace challenges, pivotal choices, self-leadership, and self-perceived leadership style. Also, this study investigated the participants to deepen understanding of female deans with specific examples of how these leaders maximized opportunities and overcame obstacles during their career development.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

The literature of Career Development Theory offered a male perspective historically (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, 2011; Blustein, 2015; McMahon & Patton, 2018). However, the author of this study still chose to utilize this decision-based, identity-derivative, and self-

conceptual framework in a conscious effort to expand the understanding of Career Development

Theory from a female perspective.

Career Development Theory guided the investigation into personal characteristics, states

of being, career resources, and external influences on participants' careers while aiding the

discovery of occupational, educational, and employment options for the research participants,

women who have become Deans. The interpretive and theoretical framework steered the

investigation into professional settings, challenges, opportunities, and forces (both internal and

external) shared by each research participant contextually. The findings reveal perceptions and

realities, signaling self-identified, self-perceived, and decision-based career impacts.

Methodology and Methods

Hermeneutic data (words, sentences, phrases, and quotes) derived from the qualitative

interviews were collected from the 21 participating female Deans of this study. The investigator

pursued a living system of human truth to answer the study's two Research Questions to increase

understanding of a career development phenomenon of a rising number of women Deans in

business schools. This research offers reflective and self-perceived meaning derived from the

subjective reality and individual experiences of the women Dean participants. Further, this study

illustrates how women maximize opportunities and overcome obstacles in career development

while illustrating insights into career strategies and practices employed by women who

participated in this study and who have become Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools

The validation of data collected in this study came from each research participant

confirming her interview transcription was indeed accurate and precise. It took several hours to

transcribe each interview, and the transcription capabilities of Zoom created more problems by

incorrectly transcribing words. For example, Zoom often transcribed the word "dean" as the

word "bean." Thus, much care was taken to review the recording of each interview and prepare the transcription as accurately as possible before it was sent to a research participant. Some of the participating women deans sent corrections to the transcription. Some mentioned that their transcription represented their free form speaking, and asked to make a few corrections to make their sentiments more precise. All of the requested changes were received by the investigator and the updated transcription was utilized.

Next, the transcriptions were analyzed utilizing a Career Development Theory framework through multiple interpretive, reflective, and exhaustive reviews. The investigator reduced the data into five key thematic areas, including career chronology, experiences and contexts, behavioral patterns, beliefs, and leadership. A digital spreadsheet file was used to track when a research participant mentioned something of significance or mentioned something that arose frequently by other participants. Appendix F details these frequent words and significant experiences such as words like pregnancy, motherhood, bias, bullying, existential threats, crisis, toxicity, service, and innovation. In total, 28 codes emerged from recounted experiences of significance and frequently mentioned words which were then analyzed and compared. For example, discussions of pregnancy or motherhood were mentioned by thirteen participants in a total of 14 times. Concepts of bias and stereotypes were mentioned by nine participants in a total of 10 times. Four participants spoke about experience of prejudice a total of four times. See Table 2.

Table 2

Frequencies

Theme	Career Development Experiences and Choices	Frequency
4	Pregnancy or motherhood	15
5	Bias / stereotypes (gender, race, age)	12
6	Prejudice	3
7	Harassment	3
8	Bullying	4
9	Toxic environments or individuals	3
10	Existential threats to higher education / crisis (resources, enrollment, competition for students/faculty)	9
11	Socio-political climate / culture	16
Theme	Career Development Behavioral Patterns	
12	Saying YES / accepting roles	22
13	Support network	23
14	Relationships	22
15	Self-care (time / break / sabbatical / work-life balance)	15
16	Learning	16
17	Research / publishing	16
18	Asking / Raising hand	9

Theme	Career Development Experiences and Choices	Frequency
19	Take risks	6
Theme	Career Development Beliefs	
20	Self-belief / Confidence	8
21	Expert power (Competency / Hard Work)	11
22	Serving (university, community, boards, projects)	14
23	Knowing when to make a move / leave	12
Theme	Leadership	
24	Collaborative	12
25	Participative	3
26	Decisive	16
27	Servant	6
28	Innovative	2

The interview recordings and the validated interview transcriptions were reviewed multiple times. The frequently mentioned words and significant experiences were counted several times by the researcher and tallied on a digital spreadsheet file. Then the codes that were similar, such as leadership styles and practices for example, were grouped together and analyzed to derive meaning from the human truth expressed by the research participants individually and collectively.

For example, combining the frequently mentioned and significant discussions the research participants shared regarding pregnancy or motherhood (15), bias or stereotypes (12),

prejudice (3), harassment (3), and bullying (4), ultimately led to the reflection of sub-theme of

gender-related contexts within the greater theme of career development experiences or contexts.

Additionally, the sub-theme of industry-related experiences or contexts derived from the frequent

and significant discussion of the research participants detailing toxic environments or individuals

(3), existential threats to higher education or crisis (9), and socio-politics (16) within the greater

theme of career development experiences or contexts.

Reviewing the recordings of the interviews exhaustively as well as the transcriptions of

the interviews revealed frequently mentioned behavioral patterns, which were reflected upon

with significance by the participants in response to the research questions. The behavioral

patterns of saying yes (22), having a support network (23), valuing relationships (22), self-care

(15), learning (16), research or publishing (16), asking (9), and taking risks (6) represented

frequently mentioned behaviors that had significant impact on the research participants' career

development.

Beliefs throughout career development emerged frequently and were significant in the

research participants' journey to the deanship. The most frequently mentioned, significant

beliefs of the research participants included self-belief or confidence (8), expert power in

competency and hard work (11), service (14), and knowing when to make a move or leave (12).

Leadership was discussed in great detail in the interviews of this study, and the

participants frequently mentioned aspects of leadership including how their perceived their own

leadership style, their self-leadership, and their experiences as leaders became an overall theme

of leadership. Collaboration (12), participation (3), decisiveness (16), active service or servant

leadership (6), and innovative leadership (2) were frequently mentioned as the research

participants described themselves as leaders and the elements of their leadership style.

While combing through the interview transcriptions, the frequency chart was constructed by the researcher. Then, the frequent and significantly mentioned words or concepts were categorized within the guiding framework of Career Development Theory. Meaning was derived from career chronology was represented by the credentials held by each research participant. Meaning from the findings was further developed to encompass the frequent discussions by the research participants regarding the value of their formal education, expert credentials, lifelong-learning in formal and information ways, and the importance of research and publishing. Next, the research began to make connections and weave together additional discussions regarding the significantly and frequently emphasized importance of driving learning in their community, including the students, staff, and faculty of the business institutions where the research participants.

Thus, the value of education and learning, personally and for their community, became a finding of this study. The women who participated in this study are deans who value education and learning, they have maximized opportunities and overcome obstacles in their career development because they value education and learning. Moreover, the findings of this study show the participants to be capable experts who are able to leap forward in their careers, often being motivated by self-belief. Again, the connections were made in the findings by making connections from the data through the guiding framework of Career Development Theory, and in this case, from a female perspective.

Similarly, the value of relationships and developing a strong support network became a finding of this study because of the significant discussion of the importance of relationships, a support network, collaboration, service, and overall teamwork was woven significantly throughout and represented by the frequencies in the data. In other words, the women of this

study overcome challenges and maximize opportunities through the way they value relationships and have prioritized developing a strong network.

Additionally, the career strategies and practices of the participating women deans of this study leverage the resources they develop in their relationships and support networks. Additionally, the women of this study are collaborative yet decisive. The frequently and significantly discussed importance of collaboration and service helped to drive meaning behind these career development behaviors of the leaders in this study.

While pregnancy and motherhood were frequently mentioned by the research participants and was emphasized by the participants as being significant in their lives and during their career development, these discussions included challenges and rewards. Thus, meaning was derived from pregnancy and motherhood as being important for some of the participants in this study. The researcher of this study made connections between the components of Career Development Theory, internal and external forces, of experiencing pregnancy and motherhood as creating friction due to male-dominated workplaces while also creating opportunities for a more dynamic identify beyond the career in academia. Furthermore, the participants of this study discussed overcoming obstacles and maximizing opportunities through being wives, mothers, mentors, and friends, all of which are developed identities beyond academia creating grounding balance in their work and lives.

The data collected in this study portrayed the participants of this study as purposeful. Meaning was derived from the data illustrating how purposeful the participants of this study are as decision-makers, when they serve, how they network, how they build relationships, and the choices they make, such as when to say yes or when to say no by making a move, taking a break, or leaving. Moreover, meaning developed from the data exhibiting the women dean participants

of this study as being leaders who prioritize collaboration, self-care, service, learning, research, asking, and risk-taking. Ultimately, the women investigated in this study overcome obstacles, maximize opportunities, and strategize in their careers by being collaborative yet decisive, service-oriented, innovative, and resilient.

Finally, this research study offers a rich description of the phenomenon, which explores perspectives, strategies, and practices for career development from this study's female dean research participants. The interpretive framework of Career Development Theory guided the description of the phenomenon encompassing. The higher education data and various career backgrounds of research participants represented the theme career chronology. The theme of career development experiences and choices which were gender-related and industry-related including pregnancy or motherhood, bias, prejudice, harassment, bullying, toxic environments or individuals, existential threats or crisis in higher education, and socio-politics. The career development behavioral pattern theme consisted of saying yes, support network, relationships, self-care, learning, research or publishing, asking or raising one's hand, and taking risks. The theme of career development beliefs included the mentioning of self-belief or confidence, expert power, serving, and knowing when to make a move or leave. The theme of leadership included research participant expressions of being leaders who are collaborative, participative, decisive, servants, and innovators.

Notably, risk taking and innovation are in separate themes but are similar, as servant leaders and the belief in service are also similar but are in separate themes. The reason for this distinction arose from the context in which service was discussed as a belief and practice, while servant leadership was discussed as a self-perceived leadership style. Furthermore, the act of risk taking was discussed by several of the research participants, yet only a few defined

themselves as innovative when discussing their self-perceived leadership style. The

methodology and methods discussed in this chapter detail the approach taken to achieve a more

holistic understanding of the career development phenomenon investigated. Furthermore, this

research anonymously details the lived experiences of the research participants who are women

that have risen to an influential leadership position as a Dean in an American business school

with top accreditation. Utilizing such methodology and methods proved successful in examining

female Deans who offered this study self-perceived career development guidance and insight.

Key Findings

This study explored the phenomenon of career development of a sample population of

leading women in business education, offering essential discoveries detailing the participant

realities and perceptions of career development chronology, experiences, behavioral patterns,

beliefs, and leadership. The findings illustrate leading women who are highly educated and

experienced, coming from various backgrounds, including traditional academia, industry, and a

combination of academia and industry. Notably, motherhood also emerged as significant for

some of the research participants, offering a rewarding identity beyond academia. Furthermore,

this study highlights how women are capable of leaping forward in career development and can

jump over roles along the leadership ladder on their way to the top.

This study portrays the participating women Deans of this study as leaders who have

developed professionally through the strategic prioritization of mindful and purposeful decision-

making, networking, relationship-building, self-care, service, learning, research, asking, and risk-

taking. Furthermore, this study depicts the women deans of this study as decisive yet

collaborative, service-oriented, innovative, and resilient. Furthermore, this study highlights how

some institutional structures offer positions which can benefit career development, preparing one

for a deanship while other positions within an institutional structure may not offer as much relevance for a deanship.

This study exposes how choices shape people, teams, organizations, and culture while revealing the significant impact of decisiveness on career advancement. Some participants in this study admitted that they never originally planned to become a Dean, and some shared about early stages of their careers when they did not even know what a Dean did professionally. However, the educational and professional choices each woman made, the relationships they built, and how they served others around them helped define how each ultimately came into leadership as a Dean in business education.

This study illustrates three types of professional backgrounds from which women Deans typically come: traditional (academic), non-traditional (industry), or combination (academic and industry). See Figure 16.

Figure 16

Professional Backgrounds of Participants
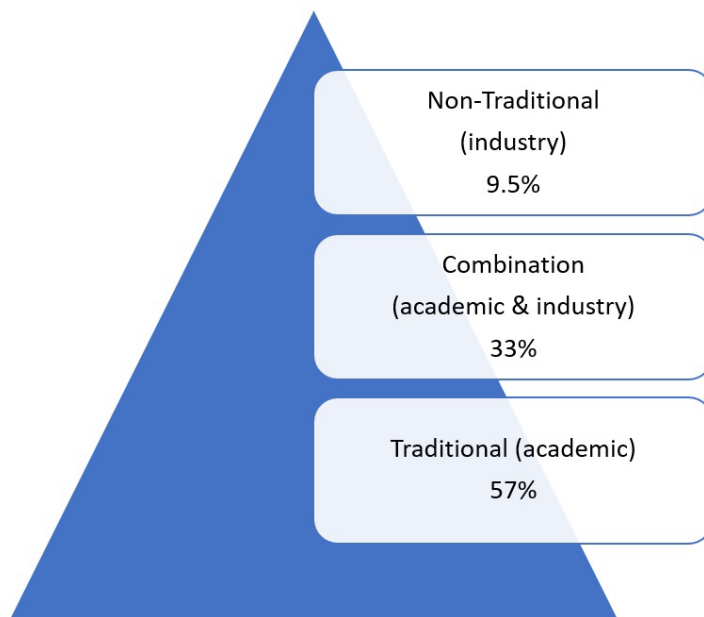
In other words, this study revealed that, for the research participants, there was not one specific career development path for becoming a Dean, and instead illuminates a variety of ways a woman's career can evolve into a deanship. To that end, this study's participants also exhibit how strong business acumen and substantial higher education are reasonable expectations for today's senior leaders in the business education industry.

This study showcases the advanced education choices and achievements of the research participants by illustrating business education leaders with master's and doctoral degrees. See Figure 17.

Figure 17

Advanced Education of Participants
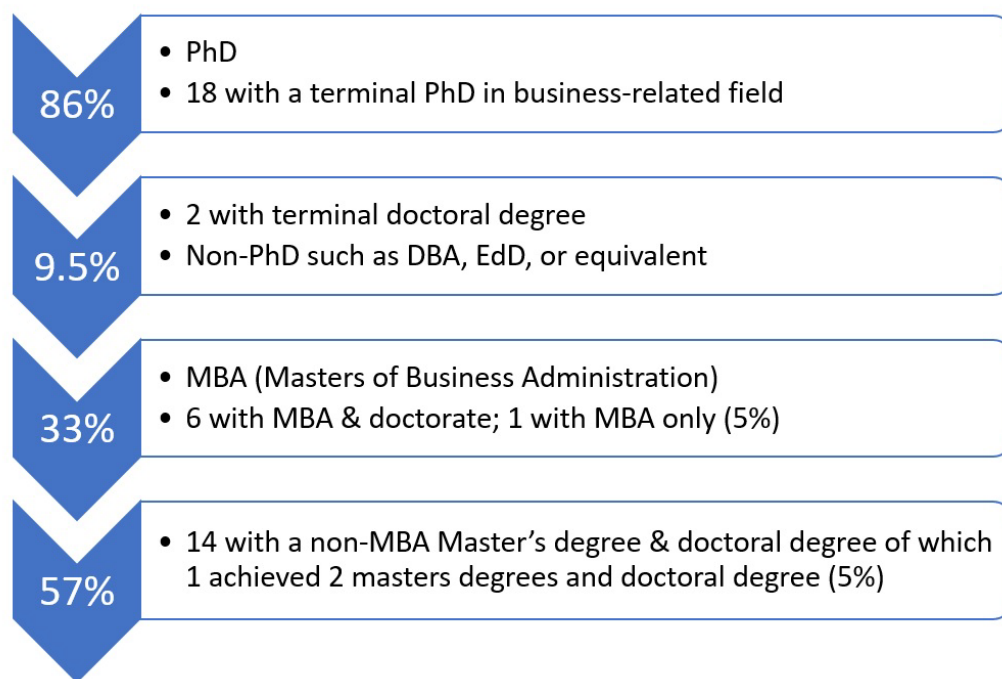
These academic choices demonstrate the research participants as being women Deans who are highly educated people and who have significantly prioritized higher education. However, these key findings also posit that there are several higher education paths one can take

along the journey to becoming a Dean, which may include master's degrees, Ph.Ds., and other terminal degrees. Furthermore, this study further shows the women Deans of this study giving precedence to the importance of their life-long learning and credentialing. Notably, the interviewed Deans emphasized the value of lifelong-learning for people in the higher education industry in general. Distinctly, the women Deans of this study stressed continued challenges with getting business education faculty, especially tenured faculty, to proactively value continued education because faculty must create relevant curricula, lead diverse classrooms, and prepare students for today's fast-changing globalized world.

This study details the careful yet strategic choices the research participants made when accepting roles during their career development, such as Associate Dean, Senior Associate Dean, Interim Dean, Department Chair, Chair, Assistant Chair, Academic Director, or Executive Director. Which roles and when to accept specific roles proved significant for the research participants.

Insightfully, many of the women interviewed in this study shared that some roles in academia can better equip someone for the role of a Dean. Conversely, this study also revealed undue industry expectations around certain roles. For example, some participants of this study chose to decline offers for Associate Dean positions during their careers and yet still became Deans without ever having served as Associate Dean. A few participants even shared insights into how some roles do little to prepare one for the demands of a true deanship. To put it differently, the women researched for this study revealed industry insights and career guidance about the value of specific roles in academia, which may vary from institution to institution.

Prominently, this study also uncovers critical findings regarding the numerous types of gender-related and industry-related career development experiences and contexts of the research participants.

The gender-related findings of this study articulate the unique experiences that some women, in particular, have faced and continue to face during career development in various industries including academia. For example, some of the participants shared experiences of pregnancy and new mother during a time when their workplaces lacked maternity leave policies, or when they were the only women on the faculty of child-bearing age. However, the mothers from this study prove how woman can emerge resiliently in the face of hardships during a most vulnerable time of new motherhood. In addition, the participants of this study shared how women can become grounded with a more dynamic sense of self as a mother which can offer a deeper identity beyond a professional identity. Participants of this study shared how an identity can be deepened by being a wife, mother, mentor, or friend. Furthermore, the illuminated resilience of each participant represents a collective exhibition of practical career guidance and insight for women by exemplifying opportunities for success through vulnerability.

This study exhibits how women in the workforce have faced and continue to face unfair gender-based bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, and bullying. Significantly, as one of the research participants said at the close of her interview (not in response to an interview question, but in her parting words), "We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go."

Furthermore, several of the women Deans in this study described various ways for responding bravely and tactfully to gender-related challenges while also driving positive change with other individuals, teams, and within institutional culture. Inspirationally, while the participants of this study recounted inequities women often face professionally, they also

highlighted the ways women can succeed even in the face of obstacles. To that end, this study reveals how women can choose to respond when facing inequitable situations as being especially quintessential for success amid hardships. This study highlights women who rise resiliently choose to respond to challenges strategically by seeking out supportive relationships and networks, and by asking poignant questions in the face of challenges. Furthermore, the women in this study expose ways women can rise in the business education industry by knowing how to assess situations and decide when to say yes, when to make a move, when to take a break, or when to leave.

Scholars of leadership reason that change can breed self-doubt or imposter syndrome, but maintaining a solid self-concept is integral for leaders, even "if it feels inauthentic at first" (Ibarra, 2015, p. 19). One study participant even offered how often people have to "fake confidence in the beginning, and then it becomes natural." The theory of Emotional Intelligence was discussed in the Literature Review of this study. Overcoming insecurities is a sign of emotional intelligence (Chance, 2021; Gallo, 2019). Moreover, developing self-confidence is a personal competency for managing the self (Goleman, 2000).

Some of the women in this study shared their individual experiences as unexpected pioneers in the face of gender-related injustice. However, this study uncovers how gender-based bias, stereotyping, prejudice, harassment, and bullying continue to breed toxic workplaces that are unhealthy for everyone, both those creating the toxicity and those who must endure the toxicity.

Despite toxicity challenges, the women Deans in this study discussed a myriad of ways to combat toxic people and cultures by leading through change with expert power, self-belief, collaboration, relationship-building, and participation. Moreover, the participants of this study

shared stories of rising into leadership through honest conversations, innovative risk-taking, and utilizing valuable resources such as cultural consultants, support network guidance, or human resources departments.

Scholars agree that good relationships hold the key to future success. Additionally, scholars argue that "good leadership depends on having the right network of professional relationships … beyond the strong and comforting ties of friends and colleagues to connect to people who can help you see your work and yourself in a different light" (Ibarra, 2015, p. 17). The women in this study have been successful in their careers because they understand, value, and utilize connections with others. Emotionally intelligent people are socially competent by understanding others, being collaborative, communicating well, being politically aware, and having empathy (Goleman, 2000). The women deans investigated in this study discussed the importance of recognizing the socio-politics in higher education while managing these issues proactively, effectively, and authentically with collaboration, decisiveness, and risk-taking innovation.

Furthermore, this study also exposed essential findings related to some of the industry-related challenges people may face in the higher education industry. Notably, three main industry-related challenges surfaced from the experiences and contexts shared by the women Deans in this study: existential threats, socio-political issues, and toxic workplaces. This study showcases an ongoing higher education industry crisis wrought with challenges from declining enrollment and resources, on top of competition from traditional and newly emergent and non-traditional competitors. However, by being collaborative yet decisive and strategically relational, the women of this study exhibited how they continually strive to reinvigorate and even reinvent business education. Additionally, while this study highlights how socio-politics can

create a complex web of damages to university culture, protests, and even lawsuits, the research participants shared how they face these daunting realities daily with the understanding and courage to drive change as decisive, service-oriented collaborators.

Even amid the gender-related and industry-related complexities the women Deans in this study have faced and continue to face, this research explores how women can choose to respond to challenges. This study reveals how a woman responds to challenges can ultimately shape, prepare, and guide her into the leadership role of a Dean. The women Deans interviewed in this research expressed many stories showcasing their resiliency even amid challenges by being experts willing to serve their community while developing a solid network and proactively learning. Moreover, the current career status of the research participants as Deans further emphasizes and highlights the proof of their living resilience, expertise, service, and network inside and beyond the institution.

Valuably, the women Deans investigated in this study shared experiences that helped them to overcome the rocky landscape of seemingly unending gender-related and industry-related challenges by making mindful decisions on how to respond. Women can respond by saying yes to new opportunities at the right time in their careers. In addition, women can respond by deciding to make a move, take a break, or leave. Likewise, women can choose to accept or decline roles offered to them during their career development. For example, a few of the research participants shared experiences of declining career advancement opportunities or assignments. However, 81% of the research participants communicated the fundamental career development impact of saying yes to various roles or assignments leading to a deanship. The data of this study further uncovers that saying yes to specific professional opportunities can offer

multi-pronged rewards to career development ranging from career advancement, learning, and networking. See Figure 18 (*n* =21).

Figure 18

Knowing When and Deciding
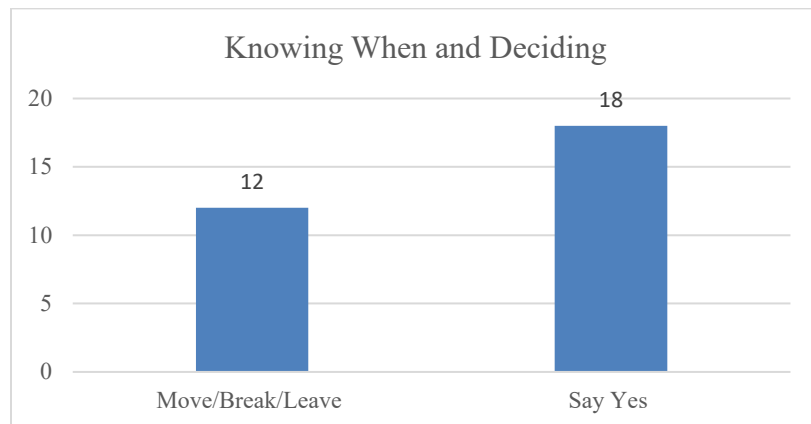
Speaking of networking, 76% of the research participants emphasized the imperative value of having a support network. Several also specifically spoke about the value of networking with other Deans within the AACSB network, sharing this network as a critical lifeline during challenging times. Hence, women can seek counsel during gender-related and industry-related challenges with a peer support network for guidance on how to respond. Imperatively, women who strive to become leaders and who are currently leaders must prioritize having a strong support network inside and outside of their organization. Ibarra (2015) agrees that "experienced leaders understand, lateral and vertical relationships" (p. 16).

The behavioral patterns of the leaders researched offered insight into career development strategies and practices for circumnavigating the challenges that may arise along the journey to becoming a Dean. The patterns of choosing to value relationships, self-care, work-life balance, learning, research, publishing, asking, and taking risks transpired as integral for successful career development.

Additionally, beliefs shaped the reality of the research participants as many shared the importance of choosing to have self-belief, positing self-belief and confidence as pillar for career progression. Emotionally intelligent people are optimistically motivated (Goleman, 2000). The women Deans in this study personified optimistic motivation, achievement drive, and initiative by exhibiting and expressing self-belief.

Furthermore, believing in the importance of expert power emerged as a valuable choice exhibited by competence, hard work, or both, proved integral for career development stamina of the research participants. Whether serving in the community as a volunteer, a civil servant, a board member, or on a task force, the belief in service was substantiated as imperative for business education leaders. Intriguingly, self-awareness for when it is time to say no (or no more) by leaving a position or moving away from a workplace environment emerged as significant, proving this action-oriented self-understanding as essential for many participant career triumphs. Self-awareness is key for socially intelligent people even amid trial and error situations (Goleman et al., 2004). See Figure 19.

Figure 19

Valued Beliefs of Participants

Self-Belief / Self-Confidence 43%

Expert Power (hard work & competence) 52%

Service 62%

Knowing when to move, take a break, or leave 57%

Finally, the women interviewed for this study are leaders. Some of the women deans of this study discussed how their self-leadership can impact how they lead others. Interview Question 7 inquired about self-leadership, and Interview Question 8 inquired about the self-perceived leadership style of each participant, while both related to Research Question 2. The answers of the women Deans interviewed revealed leaders who are decisive while being collaborative. Furthermore, having a service-oriented career surfaced with many of the research participants, while a few specifically disclosed having a servant-leader leadership style. Additionally, many spoke about the importance of avoiding stagnation and taking risks, while some of the women Deans in this study viewed themselves as innovative leaders.

Notably, the leading Deans in the business education industry who participated in this study leverage innovation to transform the business schools they lead while ultimately striving to sustain the business industry. In addition, nearly all the participants discussed change management and driving change. Conclusively, the research participants strategized through change by serving as change-agents with an innovative spirit in an effort to keep themselves, their careers, and the institutions they lead on an upward continuum. See Figure 20.

Figure 20

Leadership Styles and Practices of Participants

Decisive 67%

Collaborative
48%

Servant
29%

Innovative
9%
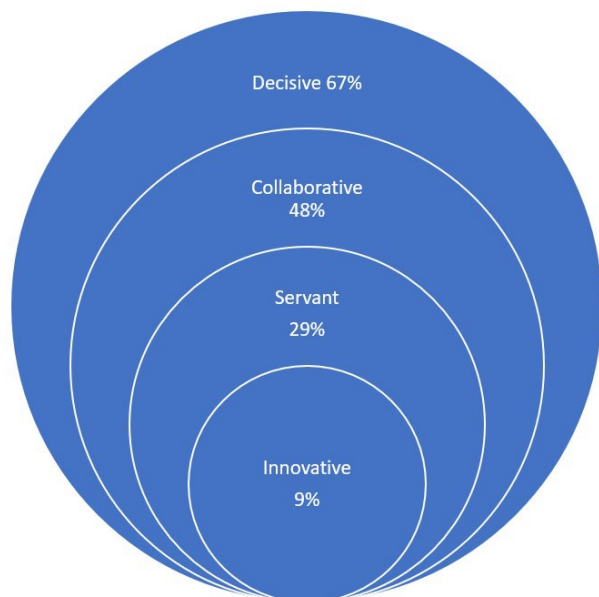
Study Conclusions

In conclusion, the people in today's globalized workforce must face many obstacles and opportunities during career development. This study illustrates how the various choices one makes can ultimately impact and shape career development outcomes. This study investigated the career development of a sample population of women Deans, revealing a recollection of the lived experiences driven by the choices each participant made while facing career development challenges and opportunities.

Notably, some scholars argue that Career Development Theory is male-normed (Blustein, 2006, 2011, 2015; McMahon & Patton, 2018). However, this study offers a female perspective that fits the framework of the theory. For example, the research participants of this study spoke about their career development including stages of their career development such as early, mid, and late. Also, the framework of Career Development Theory has an emphasis on internal and

external forces which impact a career, and the research participants of this study shared many examples of internal and external forces in their careers and institutions further echoing the sentiments of scholars of higher education research such as Longman & Lefreniere (2012) regarding internal and external pressures such as technology, diversity, and globalization.

The highest accreditation a business school can have globally is AACSB, and 29% of AACSB-accredited business schools in America are led today by women Deans (AACSB, 2020). With 13.4% of the population of women Deans from AACSB-accredited business schools in America participating in this study, valuable career development guidance and insights reveal how these women are leading in business education today collaboratively and decisively while valuing strong relationships, support networks, learning, expertise, self-care, and self-belief.

The women participants of this study leading business education in America today thrive with resilience along their career development journey, even amid constantly surfacing gender-related and industry-related issues. With attuned mindfulness and strategy, this study's participants made wise choices regarding how to respond professionally to the obstacles and opportunities they encounter. All of the women who participated in this study understand the value of hard work, and each Dean who participated in this study proved through what they shared that becoming a Dean is not an easy task. Working in higher education, especially business education, means one may encounter bias, toxicity, crises, and socio-political concerns. However, many of the women who become business school Deans in America today achieve such leadership positions because they brilliantly respond well to the issues of bias, toxic environments, existential threats, crises, and socio-politics.

The women participants of this study who have achieved the leadership role as a business school Dean know that responding to individuals, groups, cultures, and situations can make or

break their success professionally and personally. This study's research participants are women who respond to challenges by knowing when to say yes, when to ask, and when to leave. Additionally, the women Deans who participated in this study value others, prioritize relationships, and deliberately seek out strong support networks. The mentors and support networks of the researched women Deans have significantly influenced women who become and are Deans during their most pivotally challenging experiences.

The women Deans investigated in this study understand the importance of self-care, especially during the tumultuous challenges that can arise throughout career development. The participants of this study emphasize self-care as not only being vital for themselves personally and professionally, but also self-care surfaced as a concern many Deans have for the people employed by business schools they lead.

The women Deans researched in this study are highly educated, value life-long learning, and are expert scholars who have published and often continue to publish scholarly work. Further, the women Deans investigated in this study have a plethora of professional experience with traditional and untraditional industry-related backgrounds. This study highlights how the backgrounds of research participants illustrate no one specific academic or professional path to becoming a Dean.

In conclusion, the women researched in this study are business education leaders. The leadership of the women investigated in this study is decisive yet collaborative and participative. The participants of this study are women who have risen to a deanship because they are service-oriented leaders who serve their institutions and communities innovatively and are not afraid to take risks. Importantly, the women deans who participated in this study lead through change by leveraging resources such as relationships, education, consultants, coaches, support networks,

and Human Resources departments when necessary. Furthermore, meaning is derived from the data collected and analyzed, showcasing how the women who participated in this study exhibit expert power, self-belief, collaboration, decisiveness, relationship-building, participation, honest conversations, and innovation or risk-taking.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study offer people, not just women, various ways to respond during career development obstacles and opportunities. For example, this study provides insight into how leaders of business education today can have a variety of backgrounds and degrees, revealing many options along the way to the top. Applying this research, people who aspire to lead in education may better understand the importance of choosing to achieve advanced degrees such as master's degrees and terminal degrees. Importantly, this study reveals industry insights regarding the relevance of various roles in higher education leadership leading to a deanship, which may vary from institution to institution.

On another note, this study exposes the harsh realities practitioners in the higher education industry must face with toxicity in the workplace, emergent competitors, and resource constraints. However, this study illuminates examples of leaders who approach challenges with a spirit of collaboration, participation, decision-making, service, and innovation who can lead change while leading through change.

Study Limitations

This study does not represent the experience of all women, all Deans, or all women Deans today. This study is limited because it only encompasses the words, sentences, phrases, and quotes of the female Deans who participated in this study. However, this study does capture a significant sample of the population of a specific type of female Dean in America today.

Furthermore, this study is limited to the interpretation of the data collected through a Career Development Theoretical framework, and no other theories, such as Feminist Theory, for example. However, since demographic data was not collected in this study, demographic elements such as race, age, and geographic location are beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, it is important to note that there are some limitations of the Career Development Theory that could be informed by broader theories.

The interviewer gave minimal commentary during each interview. The interviewer also interpreted the data collected. Each research participant was told before the start that minimal commentary would transpire between the eight interview questions, thus allowing the participant to speak freely without any persuasion. Only after the interview concluded did the interviewer share more about herself with the interviewee or answer their questions. In other words, every effort was made in this study to be transparent and accurate while not minimizing any possible deviation from the human truth shared by the research participants.

That said, Interview Question 7 stumped or puzzled two of the research participants, who requested clarification on the question. Despite this, the interviewer did her best to keep the interview on track by responding simply with phrases like "think about self-leadership here." In response, one of the participants said she had never heard the term "self-leadership" before the interview. However, the interviewee did offer a reply after she took some time to ponder the question. Conversely, another Dean who participated in this study shared how much she "loved" this specific question (Interview Question 7) because she believed that "the only way to lead others is by first leading the self."

Next, there is no comparative data in this study with, for example, the same eight Interview Questions being asked of male Deans. Similarly, there is no comparative data is being

asked of people who hire Deans, such as college presidents or provosts, or people who report to Deans such as Associate Deans, Assistant Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty. Moreover, this study offers no comparative data on women Deans from other types of business schools beyond AACSB-accredited business schools, nor is there data from women leading business schools outside of America.

This qualitative study is not a mixed-methods study with a demographics survey asking each research participant details about her age, ethnicity, city, region in America, or her place of origin, such as her home state or country (if from outside of America). To that end, this limited study, and future research on this topic could be expanded with a mixed-methods study investigating the research participants seeking any possible correlations between the location, origin, ethnicity, or age of the participants with the various types of responses or the foci of the responses. However, this study was limited to qualitative interviews, validated by the participants, and analyzed by the investigator with Career Development Theory as the interpretive framework.

Lastly, as much as possible, the researcher bracketed out her views and experiences during this study. However, one interviewee asked if the interviewer had any children when the interviewee was sharing her experiences as a mother. In response, the interviewer did share that she is the mother of one daughter, who was five years old at the time of the interview. Beyond that, the interviewer did not share personal information until all of the eight Interviews Questions were answered by the participant. Then, and only then, did the interviewer answer questions about her life and career, and this only occurred if the interviewees asked her questions at the conclusion of the meeting. The verbal exchange after the eight interview questions was not used

as data collected in this study, even though the entire interview meeting was recorded and transcribed from start to finish.

Recommendations for Future Research

The literature review of this study recounts the previous research on women in higher education leadership, workplace bias (as an example of a career development challenge), emotional intelligence, and Career Development Theory. The findings and conclusions of this study uncover ways to overcome bias and other workplace challenges through elements of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills throughout the development of their careers.

The participants investigated in this study offer female perspectives otherwise lacking in previous research framed by career development theory. Furthermore, the perspectives exposed in this study shed additional light on deanships and the appointment of Deans, which future literature should include. With a diverse and globalized workforce, this study expands the literature on understanding how people evolve to become leaders and also expands understanding with practical ways for overcoming or navigating challenges in the face of marginalization.

This study supports the previous research of women in higher education leadership, providing lived experiences of women with various advanced degrees and significant work experience, including traditional and non-traditional backgrounds. Additionally, this study reveals instances where workplace challenges such as bias occur but also expands on choices people can make to navigate or even overcome these challenges. Moreover, this study exposes workplace challenges that are beyond gender, including the many industry-related challenges such as the existential threats to higher education which many of the participants shared as being

a constant concern during their career development and currently as Deans leading business education.

The author of this study recommends future research in academic career development. For example, future research is appropriate to compare women Deans to male Deans, Deans from different disciplines, women Deans in America with Deans in international business schools, and Dean insights with the insights of other leaders in higher education such as college presidents, chancellors, and provosts. Additionally, future research recommendations include investigating Deans' demographics of women who rise to the leadership position to better understand the implications of various factors such as age, region, origin, and ethnicity.

The author of this study recommends future research outside of academia with women leading in male-dominated industries such as engineering, technology, and medicine. Comparative data could be explored to see if women leading in other industries outside of academia face similar issues as women leading inside academia.

Additional studies could also be done on new research participants to further deepen the understanding of career development beyond the role of Dean. For example, some of the women Deans may rise to the role of a college president, while some may step down from being Dean to return to teaching and research, while others may even retire. A study of this nature could also provide additional insight into what happens to women who become Deans and deepen career development understanding regarding the career sustainability and longevity of people who become Deans.

Closing Comments

People in any industry face obstacles and opportunities during career development. Leaders in the fast-paced, diverse, and globalized workplace today can offer insights into ways to

navigate a career development journey with success. The incredible women who participated in this study offered valuable insights and guidance for anyone of any gender through the shared stories of their career development experiences.

The participants of this study made wise choices that impacted their careers. Discerning when to say yes to an offer or an opportunity versus when to make a move, take a break, or leave is very valuable for anyone in any industry. Furthermore, these are challenging decisions to make on one's own. Thus, valuing relationships and having a strong support network is vital for valuable for people of any industry in today's diverse and globalized workforce.

In the business education industry, there are obstacles and opportunities. Leaders in many industries must navigate the obstacles and opportunities during career development. This study offers practical career strategies for leading through change.

Researcher Reflections

As a researcher, a woman, a mother, a professional, and a scholar, this study offered much insight into strategies and practices for career development in the higher education industry. The stories shared by the participants in this study were personal, as each woman was willing to be vulnerable about their past. Each woman offered the researcher pearls of wisdom that she will value forever. Each story shared encompassed pain, struggle, and inspiring resilience.

Some of the most surprising aspects of this study included how quickly women responded to the participation request, how available they made themselves, and how open they were during the interviews. Many also made suggestions for the researcher, encouraging specific women they believed would be valuable for the study. In other words, the support

network of women Deans in the AACSB-accredited business school community is alive, active, and strong.

So many women who participated in this study talked about being collaborative, participative, decisive, and service-oriented. Their mere decision to participate in this study also reflected these values. Each woman had a different background, yet each woman faced similar challenges in the higher education industry, especially in managing change while being proactive in driving change successfully in a complex environment.

Just over one hundred years ago, in 1919, the 19th Amendment to the constitution granted women in America the right to vote. At that time, most women, especially women who became mothers, rarely held professional careers beyond secretarial-type jobs. Also, at that time, only a few women attended college, much less went on to hold leadership positions. Today, however, women in America have many options, not only on voting ballots. Women in America today have choices regarding having an advanced education, serving in the community, and having a leading career in addition to having a family. Women today can go to college to achieve advanced degrees and terminal degrees. Women today can be mothers while making career shifts, from academia to industry and back to academia, if they choose.

Women have gained a seat at the table and are now leading organizations and institutions. Moreover, women are achieving leadership roles in business education as Deans with great depth in their professional experiences, further shaping how they lead business schools across America. Each woman who shared her stories for this study offered hope to the researcher for how to navigate career development in the complex, diverse, and globalized workforce.

Reflecting on the women investigated for this research, the author of this study was able to deepen her network, ask for guidance, and advance her education while learning from women

leading in higher education. Each Dean who participated in this study impacted the life of the researcher in a significant way, opening a door of possibility through shared stories of obstacles, challenges, opportunities, success, and values.

Lastly, many of the research participants encouraged the researcher, expressing support for the study and interest in the findings with a deep desire to know what other Deans shared in response to the interview questions. Several participants also inquired about the long-term career goals of the researcher after the interview had concluded. Many gave unsolicited encouragement and boosting reassurance, remembering their dissertation process, and expressing how they found this research topic intriguing and necessary. These signals empowered the author of this study and offered a sense of spirited sisterhood and connection fueling the energy of this research.

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APPENDIX A

Research Participant Email Solicitation Protocol

Research participant email solicitation protocol:

Dear Dean [name],

My name is Rachel Guettler and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study which investigates the career development of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America, and I need your help! I am seeking volunteer study participants for a one-hour interview to be conducted via Zoom with eight interview questions regarding how you have maximized opportunities and overcome challenges along your career development to become the Dean you are today. Your participation in the study will be video and audio recorded on Zoom, and is anticipated to take no more than one to one and a half hours maximum.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the time that study data is collected. Strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. During and after the study the interview data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study. The data will be kept for three years after the study is complete. Your data will be saved in a confidential manner removing any identifying information.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in this study, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your participation,

Rachel Staples Guettler

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Doctoral Student (EdDc)

Office ###-###-####

Cell ###-###-####

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol: She leads business education

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interview Questions:

1. *How would you describe your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today?*
2. *What workplace challenges did you face in your career as you worked to achieve the leadership role of a Dean?*
3. *How would you describe the ways in which you have overcome workplace challenges?*
4. *What are ways you believe you have maximized opportunities during your career development journey to achieve in the role you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?*
5. *What are pivotal choices you recall making during your career development journey that you believe have led you to the leadership position you have today as a Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?*
6. *Do you believe you currently face workplace challenges, and if so, how would you describe some of the workplace challenges you face in your career currently as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America?*
7. *How would you describe how you lead yourself?*
8. *What do you perceive your leadership style is and why?*

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your confidentiality is of utmost importance, thus alias pseudonyms are used such that no identifying information is used in this study. Additionally, the validity of the data collected is also of utmost importance. Thus, in two

weeks or less, a transcription of your interview will be sent to you for your review and approval.

Please complete and return the attached consent form.

APPENDIX C

Participant Follow-up

Follow-up phone outreach to solicit research participants, if needed:

Phone Connection Script: Hello Dean X! My name is Rachel Guettler, and I am a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology seeking to complete my doctoral dissertation with a qualitative research study on the career development of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. How are you today? I am reaching out in hopes to have you participant in this study. I also sent you an email on X date. I am seeking a minimum of ten female Deans, and I would be honored to have your participation. Your confidentiality as a participant in this study is of utmost importance. Career development guidance and insights from leaders like you are imperative for this study. Should you agree to participant in this study, I will send you a confirmation email with a copy of the two research questions and eight interview questions that will be asked of you during the interview. After the interview, all participants of this study will be given an opportunity to review and validate the transcription of interview. After I have shared the interview transcription with you, you will have an additional week to review the interview transcription to ensure validity of the data collected. Then you will be asked to approve the transcription or send back any comments, edits, or changes. Throughout the study, you will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants of this study will also receive a copy of the study's findings, intending to fill a gap in the research regarding the career development strategies and practices of women appointed to the leadership role of Deans in academia. Are you open to participating in this study? What date and time might work best for you? Thank you so much! I look forward to connecting with you on X date at X time. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Voicemail Script: "Hello Dean X! My name is Rachel Guettler, and I am a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology seeking to complete my doctoral dissertation with a qualitative research study on the career development of female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. I tried to reach you via email on X date to request a Zoom interview with you, and I am reaching out again to you now by phone in hopes to have you participant in this study. I can be reached at ###-###-###. I hope to hear from you soon, as I am seeking a minimum of ten female Deans, and I would be honored to have your participation. Your confidentiality as a participant in this study is of utmost importance. Career development guidance and insights from leaders like you are imperative for this study. Again, I can be reached at phone number ###-###-#### or by email at Rachel.Guettler@pepperdine.edu. Thank you!

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Formal Study Title:

She leads business education: a phenomenological study on the career development of female

Deans leading AACSB-accredited business schools in America.

Authorized Study Personnel:

Principal Investigator:

Rachel Guettler, MM, EdDc, Office ###-###-#### and Cell ###-###-####

Key Information:

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- o Female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America
- o Procedures will include a Zoom interview including eight interview questions regarding your career development which will be recorded and transcribed, which will take approximately one hour
- o One visit in the form of an online interview is required
- o This interview will take approximately one hour
- o There is minimal risk associated with this study and confidentiality is a top priority for this study
- o You will be not be paid for your participation
- o You will be provided a copy of this consent form

Invitation:

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help

you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a female who is currently serving as an institutional Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

This study presents an opportunity to discover more insight through the lived career development experiences of female Deans who have maximized opportunities and overcome professional challenges to achieve career success. Women who are currently serving as Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America may be able to offer career development insights for professionals aspiring to lead.

What will be done during this research study?

You will be asked to participant in an interview through the online platform of Zoom. This interview will take approximately one hour and will include eight interview questions that seek to discover insight into your career development journey that has brought you to where you are today as a female Dean of an AACSB-accredited business school in America. Within two weeks after the interview, you will be provided a copy of the interview transcriptions, from which you can review and check for validity.

How will my interview data be used?

Your interview data will be collected. Any of your personal information that could identify you will be removed. After your interview, the transcription of the interview will be sent to you for an opportunity to validate the data collected. After the validity check, your interview data will be analyzed and coded by the researcher regarding the words, sentences, phrases, and quotes in an effort to uncover essential career development experiences utilizing Career

Development Theory as an interpretive framework. Direct and comparative analysis will explore the living system of your life experiences regarding career development such as context, patterns, behaviors, and beliefs.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

There is minimal risk to participate in this study and every effort will be made to maintain your confidentiality. This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality and minimal emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involved asks questions about your career development journey. You will be given the two research questions and eight interview questions prior to your interview.

What are the possible benefits to you?

Participants could benefit from this study after receiving a copy of the study manuscript once the study is complete, as the proposed findings may offer you additional insight into your continued career development.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

Other people may benefit from the proposed findings of this study, which may offer insights into how people can overcome challenges and maximize opportunities amid career development.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

The alternative to being in this study is non-participation in the study.

What will being in this research study cost you?

There will be no cost for you to participate in this study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

You will not be compensated for participation in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the major concern of the researcher and of Pepperdine University, the institution where the researcher is conducting doctoral research. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact Principal Researcher listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study. The data will be stored for three years after the study is complete. Your data will be saved in a confidential manner removing any identifying information.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Name:

_____

Name of Participant: Please Print

Participant Signature:

_____

Signature of Research Participant Date

APPENDIX E

Participant Post Interview Follow-up Email

Post interview follow-up email:

Dear Dean [name],

Thank you for participating in my doctoral research study on female Deans of AACSB-accredited business schools in America. As promised, attached please find a copy of the transcription of your interview. Please review this transcription to ensure validity. I would like to ask you to please respond to me within the next week to confirm your approval of the data collected during your interview and validate the transcription of your interview. During this time, I welcome you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You may also submit any changes or edits you deem necessary for validity.

Thank you so much for your insights into career development. I appreciate your time, energy, and efforts very much.

Sincere gratitude,

Rachel Staples Guettler

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Doctoral Student (EdDc)

Office ###-###-####

Cell ###-###-####

APPENDIX F

Codebook from Interview Data

Code #	Code (bold) / Definition (numbered areas)
CDT Framework	**Career Development Chronology (education and roles)**
1	Degrees (MBA, Ph.D., etc.)
2	Academic roles / traditional
3	Non-academic roles / non-traditional
CDT Framework	**Career Development Experiences and Contexts (gender-related and industry-related)**
4	Pregnancy
5	Bias / stereotypes (gender, race, age)
6	Prejudice
7	Harassment
8	Bullying
9	Toxic environments
10	Existential threats to higher education / crisis (resources, enrollment, competition for students/faculty)
11	Socio-political climate / culture
CDT Framework	**Career Development Behavioral Patterns**
12	Saying YES / accepting roles
13	Support network
14	Relationships
15	Time / Self-care / break / sabbatical / work-life balance
16	Learning
17	Research / publishing
18	Asking / Raising hand
19	Take risks
CDT Framework	**Career Development Beliefs (self-beliefs and action-oriented beliefs)**
20	Self-belief / Confidence
21	Expert power / Competency / Hard Work
22	Serving (university, community, boards, projects)

23	Knowing when to make a move / leave
CDT Framework	**Leadership**
24	Collaborative
25	Participative
26	Decisive
27	Servant
28	Innovative