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The 'Lean In' Theory, Validated by Three Supreme Court Justices

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THE 'LEAN IN' THEORY, VALIDATED BY
THREE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Public Administration

by
Celene Valenzuela
September 2018

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ABSTRACT

The definition of leadership is not gender specific; however, the role of a leader continues to be defined in mostly male terms by society. While, women have outpaced men in gaining an undergraduate education, women are not being hired for top leadership roles. There continues to be a gender leadership gap in both the private and public sector. Women continue to advance in their education and career, yet they are unable to break the invisible glass ceiling and attain top leadership roles.

This study proposes that in order to gain equality and reduce the gender leadership gap, in both the public and private sector, it is up to individual women to seek and attain leadership positions, thereby opening the path for others. The study identified both the internal and external barriers that prevent women from moving ahead in their careers. It also provided solutions that women can adopt to gain top leadership roles, based on Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory, which notes that women can make adjustments and strategies in order to obtain top leadership positions. Women can overcome barriers and move ahead with their careers by increasing self-confidence, balancing roles at home, and setting realistic standards. Women need to also step out of their comfort zone and believe in themselves.

Through a qualitative content analysis, the study analyzed how three women achieved top leadership roles and were successful in applying the concepts of Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory. The study included Associate

Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States Sandra Day O'Connor, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor. The study identified the barriers that they individually faced as they sought their career. The women were selected to be part of the study due to their incredible accomplishments of achieving positions in the highest level of judicial public service, in a male dominated field.

The sampling and collection in this study included the digital autobiographies and biographies of the public service leaders, by creditable sources. The analysis sought to answer the three study questions: What forms of barriers did the Associate Justices face as they advanced in their careers? What strategies and approaches did the Associate Justices take when faced with barriers? How does Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory apply to the Associate Justices? The written autobiographies and biographies of the Associate Justices were analyzed using NVivo, a software that analyzes digital texts. Two coding categories were selected as part of the analysis. One focused on the barriers that the Associate Justices encountered as they moved ahead with their career and the second category focused on the strategies and approaches they used to overcome them.

The study findings demonstrated that the Associate Justices faced a significant number of barriers as they sought to advance in their legal careers. They encountered discrimination, gender bias and the obstacles of balancing their careers and family. The analysis results also strongly conveyed that the Associate Justices used a number of strategies and approaches to overcome the

barriers. They were self-confident and set realistic standards – therefore validating Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory.

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This journey and goal would have been impossible to accomplish without the support of my professors, mentors and family. To my professors and mentors, thank you for your time, expertise and guidance. To my family, thank you for your support and encouragement through this entire process. I am hopeful that I too can become an inspiration to the younger generations in my family and those who I collaborate with in my career, especially the women. To them I say, pursue your dreams and lean in; it takes hard work, dedication, determination and faith to fulfill them

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CHAPTER ONE

LEADERSHIP AND THE GENDER GAP

Introduction

Leadership varies in definition to individuals, organizations and societies. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines leadership as the “capacity to lead” (Merriam Webster Online, 2018). According to Chrobot-Mason, Gerbasi, & Cullen-Lester (2016), “leadership’s defining elements are three collective outcomes: direction, alignment, and commitment” (p. 299). Scholars have also proposed a number of leadership theories. Many of the leadership theories have been gender specific, highlighting the fact that society has and continues to define the role of a leader in male terms. One certainty is that top leadership roles are known to be given to individuals who poses a high level of qualifications. Education is known to be a vital part to career advancement and the qualification for top leadership roles. Since the early 21st Century, women have advanced in their education at higher rate than men; however, the percentages of women leaders in both the private and public sector continues to be significantly lower than men. This is true both nationally and globally.

Theories of Leadership

A number of leadership theories have developed over time, these primarily focused on the actions, behaviors, personalities, characteristics and traits of men. The theories generally associate leadership with skills, traits, behaviors, abilities and the influence process. An effective leader will have specific

characteristics, competencies, communication behaviors and a specific personality. Theories suggest that a leader can learn to be an effective leader while others suggest that a leader is born with such talents.

In the 19th century Historian Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher, proposed the Great Man Theory of leadership (Spector, B., 2016, p. 251). According to Carlyle's theory, leaders can be identified throughout history by their actions. These great men have natural abilities that have enabled them to effectively lead and assume positions of power. Carlyle's theory posits that historical influential men such as Mahatma Gandhi, Napoleon Bonaparte, William Shakespeare and a number of others were born with the leadership traits and that through their intelligence and charisma have naturally led them to act.

The Great Man Theory has been criticized by researchers who question the scientific validity of Carlyle's theory. "Herbert Spencer, a noted philosopher, sociologist, biologist and political theorist of the Victorian era, countered that the Great Man Theory was childish, primitive and unscientific" (Villanova University. n.d.). Spencer contradicted Carlyle's theory by suggesting that great men were a product of their surroundings and environment. Great leaders in Simon's thoughts were formed by society, instead of being born with attributes, they formed their attributes and characteristics based on the influence of society.

Greatly influenced by Thomas Carlyle's Great Man Theory Francis Galton (1869), an English Statistician, further developed the general concept of the trait leadership theory with a focus on individuals' characteristics or traits. The theory

“attempts to explain distinctive characteristics in leader effectiveness through the identification of a set of personal traits” (Goff, 2003, p.4). These traits such as being self-confident, dependable, assertive, responsible and taking ownership distinguished a leader from other personalities, personal characteristics and behaviors. Proponents of trait theory, “which is now considered largely out of date, believe that leadership development consists of identifying and measuring leadership qualities, screening potential leaders from non-leaders, and then training those with potential” (Educational Business Articles, 2016). Some argument against Trait Theory have been that there may be situations and factors that are out the leader’s control, and therefore, regardless of the traits that the leader possesses, a positive outcome may not be achievable.

The charismatic leadership theory was presented by Robert House (1976), following Max Weber’s concept of charismatic authority. House’s charismatic leadership theory focuses on the man that is able to lead because they are greatly admired by their followers. “These effects include devotion, trust, unquestioned obedience, loyalty, commitment, identification, confidence in the ability to achieve goals, and radical changes in beliefs and values” (Miner, 2005, 339). While charismatic leaders may not be naturally charismatic; they can develop the masculine traits and skills needed over time.

Charismatic leaders are known to have strong communication skills, body language presence, and pay close attention to their environments and those that are around them. Charismatic leaders are also able to emotionally connect and

persuade their followers by using logic and intelligence. There have been a number of charismatic women leaders throughout history, however, they are not recognized due to gender stereotypes. Such as Emmeline Pankhurst an activist who helped women in the United Kingdom gain the right to vote, and Shirley Chisholm “the first African American woman in Congress (1968) and the first woman and African American to seek the nomination for president of the United States from one of the two major political parties (1972)” (Michals, 2015). These women have been trailblazers and have open the path for many women along the way. The charismatic leaders “approach has been criticized for its inattention to gender and the leadership styles of great women. Gender biases would favor the leadership of men as more effective, and their masculine traits as more expectable indicators of good leadership” (Chin, 2007, p.5).

Gender Leadership Gap

There is an evident gap in female leadership. Data conveys that women currently represent “50.8 percent, more than half, of the United State population” (Census, 2016) and “57.0% of women participate in the labor force, compared to 69.1% of men” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Women also have higher rates of completing undergraduate degrees in recent years. According to the Center for American Progress, “since 2002, women have outnumbered men in earning undergraduate business degrees” (Killelea, 2016, p. 2) and overall, recent studies show that women earned 57.2% of bachelor’s degrees, 59.2% of master’s degrees and 52.7% of doctorate degrees (U.S. Department of

Education, Fall 2016). Women are advancing in their education; nonetheless, the academic gains have not been translated to leadership positions as compared to men. “Women have indeed been making incredible strides in attaining top positions. However, a closer examination of the data reveals the very real gap that still exists in these top positions” (Hoyt, 2010, p. 485).

Women are not making progress and making it to the top of private and public industries. While leadership is associated with having specific characteristics and competencies, that provide them with the capacity to lead an organization, gender remains a significant obstacle for women seeking to obtain leadership positions. According to Growe, Roslin, Montgomery and Paula (1999):

The under representation of qualified women in leadership positions has created a gender gap that exists in many areas of the workplace. Society has determined that only males make good leaders; therefore, it continues to deny easy access for women seeking leadership roles because they do not fit the norm. (p.2).

This makes it challenging for a woman to attain a leadership role. They are being judge for their gender and disregarding their education, training and competencies.

The gender leadership gap in higher ranked positions, in both the public and private sector, results in fewer women being represented in private and public industries. “Elite-level leaders in business and government make significant and far-reaching decisions influencing many facets of society.

However, relatively few of these powerful positions are held by women” (Hoyt, C., 2010, p. 484). Women have made significant strides; however, they still lag behind men when it comes to the private and S&P 500 labor force. One goal of this study is to figure out the reasons for this disparity.

In the private sector, according to the 2017 Catalyst Pyramids, “while overall representation in leadership positions, management, board of director seats and CEOs is close to parity, men are overrepresented within the upper tiers” (Catalyst, 2017)” Women are attaining success in obtaining “supervisory and middle management positions in rates proportional to their representation in the workforce, access to the upper echelons of leadership still remains relatively illusive” (Gipson, 2017, p. 34). Women hold 5.2 percent of CEO positions, 21.2 percent of board seats, 26.5 percent of the executive and senior level positions and make up 44.7 percent of the total S&P 500 work force (Catalyst, 2017).

There are a number of fields in which women are predominantly in management and leadership positions: human resources (73.3%); social and community service (70.2%); medical and health services (69.9%); and education administrators (64.2%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). While women seek to reach parity in the S&P 500 workforce, “in the largest corporation’s women hold less than 0.5% of the highest paid management jobs” (Oakley, 2000, p. 321).

The numbers in the public sector are not much better, women continue to remain a minority. According to United Nations Development Programme data, the number of women in the field of public administration in the United States is

43.2% (The Women in Public Service Project, 2018). “As of March 2018, per the U.S. Conference of Mayors, of the 1,365 mayors of U.S. cities with populations over 30,000, 21.6%, were women” (United States Conference of Mayors, 2017). According to the Center for American Women and Politics (2018), the number of women elected to state-wide offices in the United States includes six women serving as Governors, twelve as Lieutenant Governors, two as State Comptroller/Controller, eight as Chief State Education Officials, eight as Attorney Generals, two as Commissioner of Labor, eleven as Secretary of State, one as Corporation Commissioner, three as Public Service Commissioners, eight as State Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer, one as Public Utilities Commissioner, one as Railroad Commissioner, nine as State Auditor, and one serving as Commissioner of Public Lands. Out of the 535 seats in the United States Congress, 23 women hold seats in the U.S. Senate and 84 hold seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The proportion of women among state legislators has increased over the years, but are still only a quarter of the elected representatives in states. In 1971, 344 of the legislators were women. Two decades later in 1991, 1,368 women held state senate seats. In 2009 there was a significant increase, 1,797 legislators were women. Almost a decade later, in 2018, this number has not increased much more with “approximately 1,874 women served in the 50 states and made up 25.4 percent of all state legislators nationwide” (National Conference of State Legislators, 2018). In 2018, the United States ranked 100 of

193 (Inter-Parliament Union, 2018) countries of women's representation in parliament.

In the federal executive level, there have been no women elected to the position of President or Vice President of the United States. Since the 1980s, only two women ran for Vice President, democrat Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 and republican Sara Palin in 2008 (Center for American Women and Politics, 2008). Geraldine Ferraro was questioned directly during the election regarding her ability to be strong if there was a war and her ability to control her emotions. There have been fourteen women presidential candidates and "in June 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be a major party's presumptive nominee for president" (Center for American Women and Politics, 2008). This was a major victory for women, even though Clinton lost the election. It also showed the great resistance to having a woman be the leader of the United States as many of the comments against her, were based on her gender.

According to psychologists at Rice University:

Despite being described by former U.S. President Barack Obama as the most-qualified presidential nominee in U.S. history, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lost the 2016 campaign for the highest office in the land. That outcome may have been the result of systemic gender discrimination. (Rice University, 2018, p.1).

The 2016 Presidential Election may be a case in point of the gender bias that exists in the United States against women leaders by both female and male voters.

Globally, the gender leadership gap in the private and public sectors is similar to the conditions in the United States. Women have been outnumbered in senior positions and middle management positions in most countries (Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000, p.145). In the public sector, in 2017, 15 countries had women leaders, eight being the first woman to lead their nation. “While the number of current female leaders – excluding monarchs and figurehead leaders – has more than doubled since 2000, these women still represent fewer than 10% of 193 UN member states” (Geigerm, 2017, p. 4).

Study Outline

The gender leadership gap continues to exist in both the public and private sector. The study provided an review of the internal and external barriers that that women encounter as they seek to push ahead to attain leadership roles, these are enacted by society and are self-imposed. It identifies adjustments and differences women can make in order to attain a leadership role. The study discussed the methodologies used to analyze the text and the reasons for the women’s success. It validates Sheryl Sandberg’s ‘Lean In’ theory, of perseverance and pushing ahead with their careers, by conducting an analysis of the barriers that were faced by three Associate Justices of the Supreme of Court and focusing on their strategies and approaches to overcome them. The written

autobiographies and biographies of the Associate Justices demonstrate that barriers can be overcome. The study also provides recommendation for further research.

Conclusion

In both the private and public sector there is an evident gender leadership gap as the majority of leadership positions nationally and globally are occupied by men. The definition of leadership is not gender specific; however, leadership society and leadership theories have defined the role of a leader in male terms. Moreover, the continuous lack of gender diversity has allowed society and organizations to determine that a leadership position is best occupied by masculine traits. This has resulted in the development of external and internal barriers for women due to their gender.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Since the 1940s and with the Second World War, the role of women in American society has been changing. The war years brought a time when women were expected to help the nation win the war by working in factories and other jobs that were typically held by men. This initial liberation led many women to move away from their traditional roles as wives and mothers to begin working in more professional careers. Over the years, women are employed in more management positions, have advanced their education, and as a byproduct, many have delayed starting a family. Even with these societal changes, women still lag in leadership roles in the private and public sectors. Women continue to be held back in their careers as they face obstacles that keep them from moving ahead and gaining top level leadership positions. These obstacles are composed of exterior challenges and inner struggles, and both are barriers to women achieving top leadership positions.

The external challenges are difficult for an individual woman to overcome; however, it is possible for a woman to overcome their own internal struggles. For this, Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operation Officer at Facebook, has proposed the “lean in” theory. Sandberg’s theory posits that women need to “lean in” to overcome their own internal barriers that limit them moving ahead with their careers. This chapter is a review of the literature on the internal and external

barriers to female leadership attainment and identifies additional differences and adjustments woman can make in order to achieve leadership roles.

External Barriers

External barriers are created through power relationships among different groups of people. Traditionally, men have held leadership roles in society and have been reluctant to give those roles up to women. One reason is due to the leadership conversation using masculine terms which has created a cultural perception that a strong leader is assertive, confident of their decisions, and ready to fight anything that comes their way. These traits that are generally seen as masculine or part of being a man. As society continues to be “very male dominated, and as such, structurally and culturally, men's methods of decision-making have created a myriad of challenges for women” (BlackChen, 2015, p.2). Women are perceived in terms as being emotional and easy to cry under pressure, hormonal with a monthly cycle, and physically weaker. If they start a family and stay home in the early years of the child’s life, it takes them away from their career and makes them less competitive. Women are seen as being slow to make decisions and to take action – a perceived additional weakness.

Although there is no evidence of the advantage between a female and male leader; the truth is that becoming a leader involves more than a title, it is a mind-set for both leaders and followers. According to Baker (2014), the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions “is a consequence of cultural beliefs surrounding gender and structures that favor men in leadership

positions in the workplace” (p.333). As women progress in their education and careers, they face stereotypes, bias, organizational culture, and other external challenges that prevent them from moving ahead. Women are often overlooked because of their gender instead of their capacity to lead “highlighting the fact that the competition for educational and economic opportunities is neither neutral nor fair, as women are judged by standards irrelevant to the competition” (BlackChen, 2015, p.2).

As women advance in their education and career, they are also faced with gender stereotype challenges. Often women “believed that in order to climb the corporate ladder they must model their characteristics after the patterns of men” (Vanderbroeck, 2010, p.764). The concept of gender stereotype is defined as “a generalized view or preconception about attributes, or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by men and women” (Eagly and Mladinic, 1989, p.1). Gender stereotypes are often “one-sided and exaggerated images of men and women which are deployed repeatedly in everyday life” (Dictionary of Sociology, 2018). In some instances, gender stereotypes may be viewed as a negative and a positive, while still favoring men for top leadership roles. Stereotypes, “portray women as communal which is characterized by concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness and nurturance – conversely, men are depicted as being agentic; displaying confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness” (Canfield-Davis, Tenuto, Joki and Hadley, 2011, p.4).

To convey behaviors that are less feminine, a woman seeking a leadership position may try to downplay feminine qualities and feel pressured to “develop a style that their male colleagues feel comfortable around” (Bartol, 2003, p.16). This is generally the case for women who move up in the organization hierarchy. Women who identify with the masculine model of leadership and reject the feminine leadership traits that they previously developed in order to convey less attention on their gender. Conversely, as women undertake leadership position and “behave agentially, they can be subjected to denigration and backlash for violating the prescriptive stereotype of being communal” (Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Research conveys that the issue is not as easy for women to adopt and convey a masculine leadership role. While women must demonstrate leadership, they are reprimanded for violating the gender norms. “Women are expected to be feminine, and those that show toughness, decisiveness, and assertiveness (all “male” traits) are not well accepted by their peers” (Broughton and Miller, 2009, p. 7). On the other hand, when women who do not show enough of leadership “characteristics, are deemed not suitable for the top positions. It is obvious that women are in a double bind” (Eagly, 2007, p. 8).

In many instances, women who do achieve management roles and sit at conference room tables are marginalized by a work situation characterized by mostly male peers. This is “especially true of women in senior management

positions who often lack peer support and mentorship” (Davies-Netzley, 1998, p. 341). Women, like men, without mentorship feel lost in new leadership positions. Due to the lack of female leaders, women lack the proper support and guidance from another woman who has succeeded in their career. Instead women develop mentorship relationships with male figures who serve as remodels.

According to Sandberg and Scovell (2014), success and likability “are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women” (p.50). When women are successful and advance to a leadership role, they are liked less. When men are successful in a less managerial role, they are liked more by both women and men. When women are competent, they are considered to be unkind and when a woman is kind she is considered to be less competent. In addition, “females and males in leadership roles are evaluated similarly by their subordinates, except, when behaving in an authoritarian manner, females are evaluated more negatively. In this kind of leadership behavior, females thus are discriminated against” (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2000, p. 151).

In a study conducted by Frank Flynn, an organizational behavior professor at Stanford Business School, the notion of success and likability based on gender was tested and proven to be a significant factor in female leadership. Professor Flynn provided students with the same case study. With one different word, the first name of the leader. Half of the students received a case study with the name Heidi Roizen and half of the students received a case with the name

Howard Roizen. Students perceived both Heidi and Howard to be equally competent and have the same ability to be a good leader; however, believed that Howard was a more appealing leader. For men, demonstrating power and confidence is perceived as a positive. On the contrary, the more that students found Heidi to be assertive and confident, the more they rejected her as a leader. Students perceived Heidi to be selfish and not fit for the title. The students proved that although the case study presented was about the same leader, being male is more desirable for the leadership role.

Women also find it difficult to move up within an organization and gain comparable salaries with their male counterparts and those seeking the same positions. When women seek leadership roles, they tend not to negotiate for themselves as they believe that it could backfire. This is true for both salary and position advancement. Women tend to believe that they will be compensated based on their resume and hard work when on the contrary, women are often paid a lower salary due to the lack of negotiation. In a study of alumni students “that looked at the starting salaries of graduate students at Carnegie Mellon University found that 57 percent of the male students, but only 7 percent of the female students, tried to negotiate for a higher offer” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p.57). Often, women do not negotiate their salaries or positions, as this can be seen as advocating for themselves and violating gender norms. These are clearly unfair expectations. Additionally, in the study conducted by Professor Flynn, it was determined that when it comes to gender discounts and negotiation,

women pay a professional value for being too cooperative instead of negotiating for themselves.

Women are also faced with organizational and institutional challenges. Opportunities for women in organizations is dependent on the overall gender make-up and the type of work conducted (Yoder, 2001 p.149). If the work is seen to be more female oriented, then, there are greater possibilities for leadership roles. Unfortunately for many women, there are a limited number of organizations and jobs that fit the confines of femininity. Institutional barriers are linked to historical hierarchical structures that organize people and can box them in to certain positions (Hesselbein, 1997, p.4). The institutional barriers encompass mediocracy, sexism, limited accountability, “lack of sharp differentiation between governance and management, and between policy and operations, with no clearly defined roles and responsibilities” (Hesselbein, 1997, p.5). Organizational and institutional cultures are difficult to change, making it more difficult if not impossible for women to perform at top levels.

In public sector organizations, gender plays an essential role in leadership. “Public organizations may actually be more culturally masculine than other organizational types given that the influence of the ‘manly’ Weberian bureaucracy and its undervaluation of the culturally feminine” (DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, Pandey, 2006, p.873). The policy making process is commonly perceived as more masculine, with women historically excluded from the political and governance process. The administration of the public sphere is dominated

by male standards and points of reference, even though women are employed in a variety of positions and growing in importance (Durbin, Ospina, & Schall, 1999). This is seen not only on the administrative side but also in the political positions. “The exclusion of women has resulted in the continuing domination of men in politics, leading the message that politics is about men and for men” (Elder, 2004, p. 40). The underrepresentation of women significantly impacts the ambition to seek participation in a male-dominated sector.

Internal Barriers

The internal barriers that prevent women from gaining top leadership roles are self-imposed and can be controllable by the individual. Internal barriers can significantly affect the women’s career advancement. These self-imposed barriers are developed from a young age and are often a result of culture and society – linking the internal barriers to external barriers. From a very young age, girls are taught to act and approach situations differently than boys. Girls are less encouraged from family and those around them to be outspoken and be physically active. While, boys are encouraged to be active and demonstrate a tougher character.

Women are often exposed to less dangerous games since childhood; instead they are exposed to games that conform to what is expected of their gender and in less leading roles. According to Aina, Olaiya and Cameron, Petronella (2011), “the early experiences that children encounter shape their access to education equality and participation in the corporate work world” (p.11).

Growing up, women are discouraged from speaking out and acting too assertive, a trait that is encouraged among men. In adulthood, women who speak out without raising their hands are seen as breaking the gender norm. These differences create an internalization of “societal cues about what defines appropriate behavior and, in turn, silence themselves” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p.27).

Women often lack self-assurance, which diminishes the opportunities to attain leadership positions. Self-assurance is defined as “confidence in one’s own abilities or character” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Women tend to lack the determination and confidence to continue growing in their careers. According to Sandberg (2014), when women are “afraid to do something, this is usually because she is not good at it or perhaps she is too scared to try” (p.75). When women lack the confidence and assurance, although they have the same skills and experience as their male counterparts, they are less apt and hold themselves back. Women have the knowledge and capability; however, they question their own competence, feeling like they are under a microscope, and perhaps even feeling unable to meet the demands of leadership positions. As a result, women miss out on building the relationships and workplace brand that can put them where they want to go and give them the confidence they need to take risks, believe in themselves, and perform to their potential (Killelea, 2016, p. 5).

According to Kay and Shipman (2014), “most women aren’t comfortable dominating conversations, throwing their weight around in a conference room, interrupting other, or touting their achievements” (p. 29). Similarly, when considering a job promotion or career advancement, women do not speak up and seek the career progression if they feel that this may harm their chances of gaining the position. In a study conducted by Hewlett Packard, the researchers determined that women apply for an open position “if they think they meet 100 percent of the criteria listed. In comparison, men apply if think they meet 60 percent of the requirements” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 79). Women tend to believe that they must meet all qualifications and that promotions will be granted as a reward for good performance. The “founders of Negotiating Women, Inc., describe this notion as the Tiara Syndrome, where women expect that if they keep doing their job well, someone will notice them and place a tiara on their head” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p.80).

Marriage and family are two main internal barriers for women. By the time women enter college, they start “thinking about the trade-offs they will make between professional and personal goals” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p.117). While woman can balance work and life as much as their male counterparts, women more than men believing that they must make decisions to choose family over seeking an education and career. Often women leave before they leave, and when it comes to integrating career and family, (women) plan too far in advance (which) can close doors rather than open then (Sandberg and Scovell,

2014, p. 117). Women tend to take steps backwards instead of forward when asked to be part of a major project and tend to volunteer for less visible and important projects than men. Women also tend to accommodate spouses' careers and sacrifice their own future.

Often women who choose to balance a career and a family, the responsibilities of the household also take priority over career. According to Surawicz (2016), women are overlooked for leadership roles "due to nanny calls or partners being out of town" (p.1436). Employers have the notion that women will often choose family over a major project. Analysis shows that "when a husband and wife are both employed full-time, the mother does 40 percent more child care and about 30 percent more housework than the father" (Sandberg & Scovell, 2014, p. 134).

Society and culture have designated women as the primary caregiver. "Public policy reinforces this gender bias. The U.S. Census Bureau considers mothers the 'designated parent,' even when both parents are present in the home" (Sandberg & Scovell, 2014, p. 135). Policy is played out in reality as found in a survey conducted by graduates of Princeton from the classes of 1975 and 2006. In 1975, 54 percent of the women graduates believed that work and family would conflict, compared to 26 percent of their male counterparts. In 2006, these numbers rose to 62 percent of women and 33 of men. (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 126). Throughout society, women and men must make compromises when it comes to family and a career, but the brunt is placed upon

women. Thus, the work and family balance continue to be one of the obstacles for women's career advancement.

'Lean In' Theory

Sheryl Sandberg has been one of few women who have overcome barriers and achieved top leadership roles in the technology industry, a male dominated field in the private sector. In her experience, attending top business meetings and interacting with high ranked professionals, there have been fewer and fewer women joining her in the conference room tables. According to Sandberg, women hold themselves back when they should be leaning in. Sandberg proposes the "lean in" theory, suggests that in order to achieve leadership positions women need to persevere and individually overcome their own internal barriers and move ahead with their careers.

Sandberg makes a number of suggestions that women can take in their lives to achieve leadership positions. These include improving self-confidence, engaging their partners in more responsibility at home, and setting realistic standards for themselves (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p.11). Sandberg's "lean in" theory suggests that as each individual woman overcomes internal barriers, one woman at a time, the percentage of women on top leadership positions will increase. Gender equality will be achieved one person at a time with individuals working to overcome their own internal barriers. "Conditions for all women will improve when there are more women in power in leadership roles giving strong

and powerful voice to their needs and concerns” (Sandberg and Scovell, p.117 p.9).

Some of the major criticisms of Sandberg’s lean theory have been of the idea that overcoming internal barriers will allow women to gain top leadership roles. According to Linda Gordo, professor at New York University and author of *Feminist Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women’s Movement*, “for most women the way to get ahead is through powerful women’s movements pressing for cultures and policies that respect and support women” (Gordon L.,2014). Gordon believes that gaining confidence will not overcome the gender discrimination that prevent woman from advancing in their career. Another critic of Sandberg’s theory, Rosa Brooks professor at Georgetown University, argues that instead of leaning in women should focus on gaining the right to get equal result as men and not having to work harder than them both in the workplace and in the home. Brooks believes that “women will disproportionately hurt when both workplace expectations and parenting expectations require ubiquity” (Brooks, R., 2014).

Self Confidence

The suggestion of self-confidence in the lean-in theory is an area where women can succeed the most. Statistics convey that there are significantly more women graduating and obtaining college degrees in comparison to their male colleagues; thus, to move ahead with careers women should visibly convey that they have the skills and competencies to perform the work, especially for

positions that are instrumental to attaining roles on the top. “Women need to shift from thinking I’m not ready to do that to thinking I want to do that – and I’ll learn by doing it” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 79). More men than women take risks when it comes to their career, “in business, and very likely in all fields, being risk adverse can result in stagnation” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 78).

This lack of confidence plays out in the corporate boardroom conference tables. As female executives progress in their career, there are fewer and fewer women sitting at the conference room tables. In board meetings, the conference room tables are male dominated as women make subservient decisions to sit on the sidelines and not at the table. This creates a self-fulfilling reality as women sit in the back and do not actively engage, they show that they should not be in the meeting, when in reality they have every right to be there and participate. The end result is that the women are not seen as leaders by the counterparts and internally women hold themselves back in their careers (Sandberg & Scovell, 2014, p. 34).

To breakthrough internal barriers that prevent women from choosing seats at the table, Sandberg’s suggests to “fake it till they feel it” (Sandberg & Scovell, 2014, p. 42). “Feeling confident or pretending that you feel confident is necessary to reaching opportunities” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 43). Men normally convey such confidence and are able to seek and move further in their careers at a faster rate. When women lack the confidence, they unintentionally hold themselves back and it is extremely important that women seek to move forward

and take risks as all industries are moving forward at fast rate. Not moving along with industries can be a halt in careers for women. Women should keep their hand up and sit at the table.

Self-confidence is also important when it comes to salary and position negotiations. Harvard Lecturer and expert on gender negotiations and leadership, Hannah Riley Bowles, recommends for women to do two things: first, “come across as nice, concerned about others and ‘appropriately’ female.” Second, women must “provide a legitimate explanation for the negotiation” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 59). Leaning in under this context means conducting research, citing industry standards, knowing what the next career step is, and deciding on the desired salary. Understanding what you want and where you want to go creates self-confidence, which comes across in the negotiations. The difference for women is that they need to also be nice, caring, and pleasant. The style of relentlessly pleasant was proposed by Mary Sue Coleman, a former president of the University of Michigan. The idea is to do a combination of kindness with insistence and assertiveness. For the style of identity integration, women should regard their success, professionally identify their gender and show warmth and perseverance.

Partners Stepping Up to Help

The next step to overcoming internal barriers is to get partners to do more at home. Women must have the focus and willingness to balance roles, both at home and in the workplace, sacrifice certain things, prioritize, and relax. Women

can balance work and family with support from their partners, family, and friends. They need to seek out this help instead of holding themselves back. Women can have a family and a career. “In the last thirty years, women have made more progress in the workforce than in the home” (Sandberg & Scovell, 2014, p. 134). Additionally, gender studies suggest that women and man have different strengths to manage family and career responsibilities, these diverse traits should be allowed to flourish. While there are external obstacles erected by society, women can take action in their career and personal lives. Sandberg uses the phrase of “don’t leave before you leave.”

Setting Realistic Standards

To move ahead women can use some career enhancing techniques.

Techniques include:

Availing themselves to mentors, utilizing sponsors, role models, and networking, which allows women a means for getting advice, moral support and contacts for information and providing constructive ways of dealing with frustration, sharing feelings about their work, and providing encouragement. (Crampton and Mishra, 1999).

The importance of finding sponsors, role models and mentors is significant to career advancement, studies have “showed that women who found mentors through formal programs were 50 percent more likely to be promoted than women who found mentors on their own” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p.93).

Mentors play many different roles as women seek an education and career. In a study of female mentorship:

The most influential mentors were seen as sponsors first, then counselors, coaches, and teachers. When these same women became mentors, they saw themselves as counselors first, then teachers and coaches. Most of these women had many mentors, both male and female, but more males were available earlier in their careers. (Block and Tietjen-Smith, 2016, p. 312).

It is also essential for women to “plan their careers, working toward the long-term and short-term or 18 months objectives” (Sandberg and Scovell, 2014, p. 68). It is important to set goals as they can provide direction for moving forward, seek out diverse experiences, and provide the opportunity to improve skills. Women should seek to take risks when setting long-term plans as these will benefit their careers. It is also important to choose companies and careers that have the potential for growth.

Stepping Out of The Comfort Zone

There are additional strategies and approaches that women can adopt in order to lean in and step out of their comfort zone, gain leadership roles and help reduce the gender leadership gap. According to Surawicz (2016), women need to be aware of their strengths be proactive and seek self-development in order to “succeed in breaking the glass ceiling and patching the leaky pipeline” (p. 1437). Women should seek to step out of their comfort zone, challenge themselves, and

ask for promotions when it comes to their career. In addition, to gain equality and become competitive for top leadership roles, it is necessary for women to take risks, become fearless and convey a confident executive presence.

According to Dagley, Gaskin and Kaiser (2014):

Executive presence is based on audience perceptions of the characteristics of particular people, and 10 core characteristics affect executive presence (status and reputation, physical appearance, projected confidence, communication ability, engagement skills, interpersonal integrity, values-in-action, intellect and expertise, outcome delivery ability, and coercive power use). (p.197).

According to Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist, women can train themselves to develop a stronger presence at business meetings and in their professional career. To achieve leadership positions and reach for success, women can focus on presence and the body language that they are conveying. Cuddy's power of posing theory suggests that through the "Wonder-Women-in-the bathroom" technique, women can increase self-confidence and reduce anxiety in stressful situations women can become more confident and convey that confidence. The Wonder-Women in the bathroom techniques is a power pose simulating the power stand of female worrier, which women can use to feel powerful and in control. According to Cuddy, women can also "fake it till they become it" (Cuddy, 2015). It is also important to develop self-affirmation, becoming our best self, which requires women to "focus less on the impression

that we are making on others and more on the impressions that we are making in ourselves” (Cuddy, 2015, p. 4). By practicing presence techniques, women can alter the way in which they feel internally and ultimately develop a power presence both internally and externally.

Self-affirmation is important to becoming our best self. The “boldest self emerges through the experience of having full access to values, traits, and strengths and knowing that you can autonomously and sincerely express them through actions and interactions” (Cuddy, 2015, p. 6). In 2012, Cuddy presented her research on body language at the TedGlobal, and being self-confident and assured in your actions, leads to success. Those who are successful entrepreneurs work hard, take initiative, persist over obstacles, display enhanced thinking and creativity, and are able to identify novel and good opportunities.

According to Courtney Baker, Doctoral Student at Pepperdine University, women need to take an inventory of their skill sets and continue to develop them. Thus, to progress as leaders, it is imperative that they establish and cultivate their own styles, without comparing themselves to the styles and characteristics that comprise men. Women should acquire skills to succeed in their career and “never stop learning, whether it is formally, in a classroom or informally, on the job. Put in extra time and effort on every job” (Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1992, p. 8).

Conclusion

Gender barriers are critical factors to female representation in top leadership roles. According to Sheryl Sandberg's "lean in" theory, women must adopt different strategies and approaches in order to move ahead with their careers and overcome their internal barriers; while still having to overcome the external barriers that are created by society. Overcoming the odds, a number of women, such as Sandberg, have achieved leadership roles even with the barriers set in society. The next chapters identify and analyze how women have been successful, applying the concepts from Sandberg's "lean in" theory. It is through this analysis that more women can understand the steps they can take to find additional success in their careers. Additionally, the validity of Sandberg's theory will be reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study sought to identify significant factors that helped women, appointed to top leadership roles in the highest levels of judicial public service, overcome barriers to obtain leadership positions. Using the stories of the women who have been successful and finding the factors that led to their success is the goal of this study. Because of resource limitations, the lives of three of the four women United States Supreme Court Justices were reviewed through a careful reading and analysis of their autobiographies/biographies. The following chapter provides an overview of the methodologies used to analyze these texts and fully understand the reasons for their success.

Internal and External Resources

To this day, there have only been four women appointed to the highest levels of public service, in the judicial branch of the United States government. Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 to be the first woman justice in the history of the United States Supreme Court. It was twelve years later, when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was appointed to the Court in 1993. It was another sixteen years later until the third woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court by President Barack Obama in 2009. Associate Justice

Sonia Sotomayor was the third woman and first Latina to become a Supreme Court Justice.

Female Associate Justices

Retired Associate Justice O'Connor grew up in a rural cattle ranch in Arizona. She had to travel a long distance to attend school. She was a bright and dedicated student beyond her age. Her parents send her to live with her grandmother in El Paso, Texas where she attended high school. In her pursuit to further her education she applied to Stanford University. While she was a bright and great student, it was very unlikely to be admitted because she was a woman. However, she was admitted and graduated from Stanford University one-year earlier than most students, she received her law degree with high honors.

Justice Day O'Connor became an attorney at a time in when only there were a small number of female were attorneys. Throughout her career she experienced gender discrimination, yet she had the confidence and self-motivation to overcome the barriers. She was first hired by the City of San Mateo as a Deputy County Attorney; however, she did not receive a salary for her work and was not given an office. Ultimately, she moved to Germany where she became a civilian attorney abroad United States Army site. She latter return to the United States and opened her own law practice.

Justice O'Connor was the first woman to serve as the Majority Leader in 1969 to the Arizona State Senate. In 1981, President Reagan nominated her to serve in the Supreme Court, becoming the first women to be confirmed in the

Supreme Court. Being the first women to be nominated and confirmed was not a simple process. In a number of interviews Justice O'Connor has shared the difficulty and unpleasant process of being confirmed to the Supreme Court. As a reflection on the difficulties, she shared that there were a limited number of women restrooms near the courtrooms the courthouse had not been built with women judges in mind. Reflecting on her journey and experience, in a radio interview with NPR, Retired Associate Justice O'Connor stated that she bore a responsibility of being the first women elected to the Supreme Court, stating that:

I felt a special responsibility ... as the first woman. I could either do an adequate job, so it would be possible for other women to be appointed without [people] saying, 'Oh, see, a woman can't do it,' so it became very important that I perform in a way that wouldn't provide some reason or cause not to have more women in the future. That was very important to me. (Gross, 2013).

Associate Justice Bader Ginsburg grew up in Brooklyn, New York in a low-income household. She experienced a number of setbacks as she pursued her education and career. Her mother, who was her role model, was very hardworking, confident and selfless. Sadly, she passed away when Justice Bader Ginsburg was about to graduate from high school. Nonetheless, Justice Bader Ginsburg pushed ahead and continued to pursue her education. She got married and a year later in 1954 she had her first child. Her husband was soon

drafted to serve in the military and she became the sole care taker of her child. She continued to pursue her education at Harvard University, where she was one of few women in her class, and where she experienced gender discrimination.

Later in life, Justice Bader Ginsburg considered to place her education on hold to take care of her husband when he became ill with cancer. Nonetheless, she decided to balance both her family and education. Upon graduating from Columbia Law, she had difficulty finding a job as an attorney that paid the same salary as her male counterparts. Therefore, she became a clerk at the United States District and then a professor at Rutgers University Law School. She was also the Director of the Women's Rights Project at the ACLU.

In 1993, Justice Bader Ginsburg was appointed to the United States Supreme Court by President Bill Clinton. Since then, Justice Bader Ginsburg has become a icon and a pioneer for gender equality. She believes in the power of women helping other women and in the need for women to be an independent and a strong, in a quote she shared:

My mother told me two things constantly. One was to be a lady and the other was to be independent, and the law was something most unusual for those times because for most girls growing up in the '40s, the most important degree was not your B.A. but your M.R.S. (Pullman, n.d., p. 3).

Associate Justice Sotomayor grew up in the Bronx, New York in a moderate-income home. She is the oldest of two children and was raised by a single parent after her father passed away when she was nine years of age. During her childhood she experienced discrimination based on being of Puerto Rican descent; however, this barrier did not stop her. After graduating from high school with honors, she was admitted to Princeton University where she struggled with her writing and lower grades than what she was used to. She worked hard to improve her grades and writing skills.

Justice Sotomayor graduated from Yale Law School and obtained an attorney position at a private law firm. She then married her longtime boyfriend. As she worked at the law firm she moved up in rank and soon became a successful partner. She then served in a number of committees and provided pro bono services to low income clients. Justice Sotomayor was nominated to serve in the United States District Court in 1991. She was very successful in her career; however, seven years after marriage, she and her husband decided to divorce.

In 2009, Justice Sotomayor was appointed to the United States Supreme Court by President Barack Obama. Becoming the third woman and the first Latina to be appointed to the Supreme Court. In her childhood, Justice Sotomayor experienced discrimination based on her race and as an adult and career woman she experienced gender bias; however, she had mentors along the way. In a talk at the University of Albany she advised women to “navigate the world accepting that it’s part of your challenge. Be prepared to take action when it’s

necessary,” she said. “And be prepared to turn to others to help you” (Carroll, 2017, p.9).

Research Process and Data Collection

This study used content analysis and deductive reasoning to review and analyze the digital autobiographies and biographies. Qualitative research allows the analysis of limited resources to identify groups and categories, which are a form of data to be analyzed. It provides a method for carefully reading the material to ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the research. Additionally, content analysis is considered to be “a research method that provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314). Through deductive reasoning, the study sought to validate Sheryl Sandberg’s ‘Lean In’ theory, based on the Associate Justices barriers and lean in experiences.

Table 1. Study Questions

Barriers	What forms of barriers did the Associate Justices face as they advanced in their careers?
Strategies and Approaches	What strategies and approaches did the Associate Justices take when faced with barriers?
‘Lean In’ Theory	How does Sheryl Sandberg’s ‘Lean In’ theory apply to the Associate Justices?

Table 1 above notes the main questions that this study sought to answer.

Sampling and Data Collection

The sampling and collection in this study included the digital autobiographies and biographies written about the public service leaders, by creditable sources. The list of biography books included:

- *Lazy B* by H. Alan Day and Sandra Day O'Connor,
- *Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice* -- by Joan Biskupic,
- *My Own Words* by Mary Hartnett, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Wendy W. Williams,
- *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* by Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik, and
- *My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor.

The online digital biographies were published by biography.com, britannica.com and oyes.com.

The digital autobiography of the Associate Justices were selected to be part of the study include *Lazy B* written by H. Alan Day, Justice O'Connor's brother and Justices O'Connor. This written autobiography conveys the story of Justices O'Connor's childhood and what it was like for her growing up in a remote cattle ranch. It touches on her conviction to seek an education regardless of the distance that she had to travel to attend school, including living apart from her parent and moving in with her grandmother. There are many women who can identify with her childhood. The study also includes *Sandra Day O'Connor: How*

the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice written by Joan Biskupic. The written biography highlights the experiences that Justice O'Connor encountered in her life as a wife, jurist and finally being appointed into the Supreme Court.

Two written autobiographies of Associate Justice Bader Ginsburg were selected. The first is titled *My Own Words* written by Mary Hartnett, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Wendy W. Williams. The autobiography contains a mixture chapters containing information on her actions on gender equality, speeches, tributes to those who helped her in her career an Justice Bader Ginsburg selected for this study was *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* written by Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik. It was important to include this biography as it provided a view of her life and her beliefs of gender equality. The biography notes her intellectual ambitions and highlights her determination to use the law to make a positive change. The authors Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik seek to provide a tribute to her work and accomplishments with the biography.

The autobiography that was selected for this study of Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor is titled *My Beloved World* written by Sonia Sotomayor. The autobiography conveys the story of Justice Sonia Sotomayor's childhood and what it was like growing up without a father. The connection she had with her grandmother, mother, family, friends and her experiences growing up in The Bronx. She talks about her self-discovery, strong will and her conviction to

become a Supreme Court Judge since an early age. In addition to her childhood, she discusses her pride in being a Latina and her experience being a first-generation college student, and her graduation from Yale Law School with honors.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor's autobiography shares about the troubled marriage due to spending long hours at work and the obstacles of balancing family and her career. She writes that she was discriminated against due to her gender and strong personality, a personality that is normally characterized to be less feminine. In this autobiography, Justice Sonia Sotomayor conveys a story that is relatable to other women.

Categories and Coding Scheme

The written autobiographies and biographies were analyzed using NVivo, a software that analyzes digital texts. The individual autobiographies and biographies were uploaded into three data files. One file contained the digital autobiographies and biographies for Sandra Day Justice O'Connor, a second data file contained the digital autobiographies and biographies of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the third file contained the digital autobiographies and biographies of Sonia Sotomayor. When coding, two main categories were selected as part of the content analysis. The first category identified the barriers and the second identified the strategies and approaches to move ahead with their careers.

Five subcategories were selected under the barriers main category, these included:

- organizational and institutional culture barriers,
- success and likability barriers,
- stereotypes and bias barriers,
- work-family balance barrier, and
- self-assurance and self-imposed barriers.

The description for organizational and institutional culture barriers in NVivo was described as what is expected by an organization or institution, thus affecting leadership opportunities based on gender. The description for success and likability barriers was described in NVivo as women who become successful are liked less. The description for stereotypes and bias barriers was described in NVivo as the underrepresentation of women and women violating gender stereotypes in professions. The description of work-family balance barrier was described in NVivo as having balance of professional and personal lives and feeling that they have to choose. Finally, the self-assurance and self-imposed barriers were combined and described in NVivo as the lack of confidence and external barriers that do not allow women to take risk.

Four subcategories were selected as part of the strategies and approaches category. These included:

- owning one's own success,
- taking risks and developing a stronger presence,
- taking-action in one's own career and personal lives, and
- seeking a mentor and becoming one.

The description for owning one's own success in NVivo was described as acquiring educations, skills and pursuing achievements. The description for taking risks and developing a stronger presence in NVivo was described as taking risks, making choices and developing a strong presence. Acting in one's own career and personal lives was described in NVivo as balancing both career and personal life and making difficult decisions between them. Seeking and becoming a mentor was defined in NVivo as seeking mentorship, becoming inspirational figures and becoming a mentor for other women.

Conclusion

Using content analysis and deductive reasoning, the study identified the factors that helped Retired Justice Day O'Connor, and Justices Bader Ginsburg and Sotomayor become appointed to the highest level of judicial public service. Qualitative researched provided the study with capability of analyzing data using two sub categories – barriers and strategies and approaches. Due to limited resources the biographies and autobiographies, the lives the women were reviewed through a careful reading and analysis of their autobiographies/biographies Additionally, through the use of deductive reasoning, the 'Lean In' theory was validated by the perseverance and approaches that the women used to facilitated them to achieved top leadership positions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Through qualitative content analysis, the barriers, strategies and approaches of the women leaders were identified. The following chapter provides a detailed overview of the results of the analysis, which sought to answer the study questions of *What types of barriers did the Associate Justices face as they advanced in their careers? What strategies and approaches did the Associate Justices take when faced with barriers? and How does Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory apply to the Associate Justices?* Two word frequency queries provided numerical and visual representation of the results. A careful reading of the autobiographies and biographies also supported the study results.

Data Analysis

This study has worked to identify the interior and external barriers and the strategies and approaches that allowed three women leaders overcome these barriers. Using qualitative content analysis, of the autobiographies and biographies, a significant number of factors were identified. Two visual summaries of the results were generated for each of the categories, representing the higher and lower count of words, see Figure 1 and Figure 2.

In word clouds, those words that are more numerous than others are represented in larger fonts. Those that were represented in smaller fonts, represented a lower count of words with a lower weighted percentage. The following provides a summary of the word frequency query results, for the two categories, and it provides a discussion and interpretation of the results, based on the sources.

Barriers Results

The barriers word frequency query sought to answer the study question of – What types of barriers did the Associate Justices face as they advanced in their careers? The word cloud query identified a number of factors. Based on the query results, the following subset factors represent the types of barriers that the women faced as they advanced in their careers, from highest weighted percentages:

- school (0.92% weighted percentage)
- women (0.73% weighted percentage)
- life (0.64% weighted percentage)
- work (0.51% weighted percentage)
- gender (0.48% weighted percentage)
- discrimination (0.48% weighted percentage)
- become (0.47% weighted percentage)
- equal (0.33% weighted percentage)
- children (0.26% weighted percentage)

Strategies and Approaches Results

The strategies and approaches word frequency query sought to answer the study question of – What strategies and approaches did the Associate Justices take when faced with barriers? The word cloud query identified a number of factors. Based on the word frequency query results, the following subset factors represent the types of strategies and approaches that the Associate Justices took when they encountered barriers as they pursued their careers, from highest weighted percentages:

- school (1.01% weighted percentage)
- woman (0.71% weighted percentage)
- gender (0.60% weighted percentage)
- discrimination (0.48% weighted percentage)
- become (0.43% weighted percentage)
- work (0.49% weighted percentage)
- position (0.41% weighted percentage)
- challenges (0.33% weighted percentage)
- confidence (0.27% weighted percentage)

Discussion

The word frequency queries provided visual and numerical representations of the barriers encountered by the Associate Justices, and the strategies and adjustments that they made in order to achieve leadership roles. In interpreting the results, the data strongly conveyed that the Associate Justices

faced a significant number of barriers as they sought to advance in their career. The analysis results also strongly conveyed that the Associate Justices persevered and took to a number of strategies and approaches in order to overcome barriers and pushed ahead with their careers, validating Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory, and answering the study question of – How does Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory apply to the Associate Justices?

According to the results of content analysis and supported by a careful reading of the text, the women in this study became leaders because they “leaned in.” They shared a number of barriers, such as accessing higher education; family (life/children) and work balance; and gender discrimination (women/equal). In interpreting the data, Associate Justice O’Connor experienced the barrier of school both at an early age and in adulthood. During the early part of her childhood, she lived in a rural area where there was limited access to school. In her autobiography she shares about her long commute, limited options, the train journey to get to school, being far away from home, and finally moving in with her grandmother to be closer to school. Sharing: “My parents decided to send me to Redford School for Girls in El Paso. They thought that I would receive a better education there. Grandmother would drive me to school... I was glad I lived with my grandmother” (Biskupic, and O'Connor, S, 2005, p.116). As an adult, she feared that she would not be accepted at Stanford University, because of the prejudice against woman, but she was one of few

women accepted. After graduating from law school, she was not treated as an equal and had difficulty being hired to practice law.

In interpreting the data, Associate Justice Bader Ginsburg experienced the barrier of school access when she put her education on hold for her first child. In her autobiography, Justice Bader Ginsburg shares:

Marty was fulfilling his obligation to the Army as an artillery officer at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. By the end of 1954, my pregnancy was confirmed. We looked forward to becoming three in July 1955, but I worried about starting law school the next year with an infant to care for. (Ginsburg, R., Hartnett, M., and Williams, W., 2016, p.16).

Ruth Bader Ginsburg also experienced difficulties with accessing school when she attended law school, and at the same time her husband became ill with cancer. She attended Harvard Law School in a time where the school environment was hostile to female students, as the field continued to be very male dominated. At the same time, she had to balance school and taking care of her family, especially a very sick husband. According to her biography:

Personal struggles neither decreased in intensity nor deterred her in any way from reaching and exceeding her academic goals ... Ginsburg took on the challenge of keeping her sick husband up-to-date with his studies while maintaining her own position at the top of the class. (Bader Ginsburg. n.d., p. 2).

In her autobiography, Justice Sotomayor shared about her barrier to access a quality education. She was a first-generation college student, and the only one in her family to attend college. She first considered applying for college as she watched a movie. In her autobiography she shares that "...there was something on the screen that mesmerized me even more...The college campus where the movie was set, supposedly Harvard, seemed a wonderland" (Sotomayor, 2014, p. 147). Justice Sotomayor had no guidance from family on how to take the next step in her education when she was in high school and had to figure it out on her own. In her first years at Princeton she felt home sick and that she did not belong there. In her autobiography she notes that:

Whenever I felt out of place or homesick, I took refuge at Firestone Library. Books had seen me through an earlier time of trouble, and their presence all around me was both a comfort and an answer to why I had come here. (Sotomayor, 2014, p.162).

Sonia Sotomayor also shared with her readers her struggles with the English language. "My English was weak: my sentences were often fragmenting; my tenses erratic; and my grammar often just not grammatical" (Sotomayor, 2014, p.134). Spanish is her first language, and it was difficult look to family for support. She felt intimidated by her classmates, not only for her poor written English but because she thought she was accepted to the school because of affirmative action policies and not by her merit.

The second significant barrier for women on the Supreme Court was gender discrimination. Justice O'Connor also experienced gender discrimination based on gender discrimination throughout her career. Upon receiving her law degree in 1952, she was unsuccessful in being hired as an attorney in the United States. "Despite her impeccable qualifications, Sandra Day O'Connor struggled to find employment in the legal field due to a heavy bias against women as attorneys" (Sandra Day O'Connor., n.d., p.2). In 1954, she had to move overseas to secure a job in the legal. She later returned to the United States, opened her private practice, and in 1969, was hired as Arizona's state assistant attorney general. During this time, it seemed as though she was being judged due to her reputation and skills, rather than her gender. Even with this changing situation, one of the main reasons why President Reagan appointed her to the Supreme Court, was due to her gender. In doing this, he was keeping his political promise to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court.

Justice Bader Ginsburg describes in her autobiography, which is supported in her biography, that she experienced gender bias, was often discriminated against, and not treated as an equal. Justice Bader Ginsburg was one of just a few women attending law school when she was at Columbia. After graduation, she could not find a job "even (with) her exceptional academic record ...until a favorite Columbia professor explicitly refused to recommend any other graduates before U.S. District Judge Edmund L. Palmieri hired Ginsburg as a clerk" (Bader Ginsburg, n.d., p.3).

Justice Sotomayor encountered gender bias and discrimination due to her strong character. As a young adult, when she was in a debate group, a fellow classmate shared with her how her character was not like a girl. Her fellow debate team member assumed that because she was exhibiting a stronger presence, she had masculine traits. Later in her career, when she worked at a private law firm, her secretary shared that she was intimidated by her strong attitude. These two instances confirm the notion of success and likability, Sonia Sotomayor was competent, however was considered to be unkind, because she was driven and strong. At a different stage in her life when she worked as a District Attorney, she experienced sexism and gender discrimination. During her time at the DA's office, "women were only begging to enter the legal field profession in significant numbers. Fewer still were those practicing in criminal law...I saw many women who were no less qualified wait much longer than men for the same advance" (Sotomayor, 2014, p. 296).

The barrier of family and career balance was present in all of the women on the Supreme Court. In her autobiography, Justice Sotomayor shared about the long hours she had to work at the District Attorney's office while being married. The long hours minimized the time spent with her husband, and she grew apart from him. In addition, at one point her husband shared that it was hard for him to keep up with her.

I was always proud of you," he said, "but it was hard not being able to keep up....but I always figured that I was smart enough to make it up. I

always had an excuse, always believed I could fix things later....but it's finally sinking in: even doing the best I can, I'm not going to catch up with you. (Sotomayor., 2014, p.222).

A short time after that conversation, they divorced. For Justice Ginsburg's the barrier of family and career, along with education, came when she married. She put her career on hold to start a family. A second occasion when she faced the barrier of balancing family and career was when her husband became ill with cancer. She often felt that she needed to balance herself between the family that she loved and doing what she cared for.

The findings from the study and analysis of the digital autobiographies and biographies validated Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory. Amidst barriers, the women Justices developed strategies and approaches to overcome barriers and achieve top leadership roles. These women leaders overcame challenges of discrimination (women/gender), and access to education, through self-confidence, perseverance and stepping out of their comfort zones.

Justice O'Connor was the first woman to be appointed into the United States Supreme Court. Her confidence and determination were key for such an achievement. As discussed, she faced many barriers to achieve a top leadership position in her career. First, as a child, having to travel a long distance to attend school. The moving in with her grandmother and living away from her parents. Then, as she progressed in her career she faced many cases of gender bias and discrimination. Yet, according to her autobiography and biography, she

persevered. “At sixteen, she was admitted to Stanford University...In 1950 she was admitted to Stanford Law. During her time at Stanford Law... she completed law school in just two years as opposed to the usual three” (Day O'Connor., n.d., p. 2). She is an extremely talented woman who persevered to achieve her goals. As she overcame her own barriers in a male dominated world, she opened the path for many more women to enter the area. She served as a mentor and a role model for other women.

In her autobiography, Ruth Bader Ginsburg describes how Justice O'Connor in a sense became her mentor, welcoming her into the Supreme Court. “She told me what I needed to know when I came on board for the Court’s 1993 Term – not in an intimidating dose, just enough to enable me to navigate safely my first days and weeks” (Ginsburg, R., Hartnett, M., and Williams, W., 2016, p.90). Associate Justice O'Connor also wrote a note to Associate Justice Bader Ginsburg upon reading her first opinion. The note of encouragement stated: “This is your first opinion for the Court, it is a fine one. I look forward to many more” (Ginsburg, Hartnett, M., and Williams, W., 2016, p.91). The barriers faced by Associate Justice O'Connor did not define her. She understood her position and what it meant for her to overcome challenges in a time when women were expected by society to not work in a professional job.

In her own words, for both men and women the first step is getting power is to become visible to others and to the put on an impressive show... As women achieve power, the barriers will fall. As society sees what women

can do, as women see what women can do, there will be more women out here doing things, and we'll all be better for it. (Bader Ginsburg, R., Hartnett, M., and Williams, W., 2016, p. 91).

Regardless of the barriers that she experienced, Justice Bader Ginsburg was always confident with a strong sense of conviction. She was determined to push ahead and beat odds. "Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a woman who, to use another phrase that mattered a lot to her, defined stereotypes...a woman who beat the odds to make her mark" (Carmon, I., and Knizhnik, S., 2015, p.11). Justice Bader Ginsburg's decision to study and practice law in a time when there were limited number of women in this field, demonstrated her self-confidence and conviction. She was attracted to being a lawyer because she felt it was an "opportunity to be a professional and help society at the same time" (Carmon, I., and Knizhnik, S., 2015, p.30).

Justice Bader Ginsburg considered her career choices to be significant not only for her family or herself but also for the women who would come after her. In her autobiography, she shares: "as a young lawyer living in Sweden, Ruth Bader Ginsburg came across the word Vägmarker, which translated literally as pathmaker or wavepaver" (Ginsburg, R., Hartnett, M., and Williams, W., 2016, p.63). She wanted to lead the way for other women and future generations. Throughout her career, Justice Bader Ginsburg has been an advocate for equality and just as Justice O'Connor had done for her, she sent the

same note to Justice Sotomayor and Justice Kagan after she read their first opinions.

Sonia Sotomayor has also demonstrated her perseverance and self-confidence by sharing in her autobiography the following quote: “The challenges I have faced—among them material poverty, chronic illness, and being raised by a single mother—are not uncommon, but neither have they kept me from uncommon achievements” (Sotomayor, 2014, p.2). One particular vulnerable and self-defining moment for Justice Sotomayor was during her freshman year at Princeton, when she understood that her deficiency in written English was not based on her ability to learn or intelligence, but because of her social class and cultural background (Sotomayor, S., 2014, p.171). She overcame her educational barriers, and graduated in 1976 from Princeton, with honors of summa cum laude. She also earned the Pyne Prize, the highest academic award given to undergraduates” (Sonia Sotomayor Biography, 2018, p. 7). Sonia Sotomayor overcame the external barriers of gender bias, and discrimination, as well as internal barriers that existed within herself. She noted that:

Looking back today, it seems a lifetime ago that I first arrive in at a place of belonging and purpose...With each of my own small, steady steps, I have seen myself grow stronger and equal to a challenge greater than the last. (Sotomayor, 2014, p.381).

There were many instances in her career where she demonstrated confidence and determination, regardless of the barriers that she encountered.

Conclusion

The women who were selected for this study strongly validate Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory. They overcame both the external barriers that continue to exist in society and their own internal barriers. Their achievements have demonstrated that it is possible for woman to attain a leadership role, through determination, self-confidence and perseverance. The following chapter provides a closing to this study and recommendation for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study focused on what individual women can do to overcome internal and external barriers, and strategies and approaches that prescribed Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory. The study conducted a qualitative content analysis to identify crucial factors, found in digital autobiographies and biographies that helped three women – Supreme Court Justices Day O'Connor, Bader Ginsburg and Sotomayor – to overcome barriers and become appointed to the highest levels of judicial public service. The study results convey that all three women encountered significant barriers; however, they pushed ahead. By overcoming internal and external barriers, they accomplished their career goals and through their appointment they ultimately shattered the glass ceiling in the legal profession.

The career paths of the Associate Justices have facilitated the paths for future generations. Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory is validated by their life stories and actions to overcome barriers. Early in their childhood, these women had limited resources to education; yet, they pushed ahead, and all graduated from Ivy League Schools. When each of the women graduated from law school there were faced with limited opportunities for employment due to their gender. Day O'Connor and Bader Ginsburg were also expected by society to focus on building a family ahead of their careers.

Critics of Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory may argue that there are more than barriers that need to be overcome by an individual woman, and that the problem is with policy. However, progress has remained slow and the gender gap continues to exist. Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory provides a solution. Women can seek to overcome barriers and move ahead with their careers by persevering, stepping out of their comfort zone, increasing self-confidence, and setting realistic standards.

Recommendation

This study and research conveyed the importance of obtaining an education for women in order to advance in their careers; however, women continue to face discrimination barriers that are out of their control. It is important to focus on the barriers that each of the Associate Justices overcame. While each woman's personal history is different, they all overcame the barriers that exist in a society still dominated by masculine definition and culture. The focus should then be on the great possibility of individual woman individually seeking and attaining leadership roles in their field, and how each of them can facilitate the path for another.

It is recommended, for future study, to focus on how the gender leadership gap can be reduced one woman at a time and what this really means for different sectors. Each of the women in this study have been pantmakers for other women and future generations. Thus, it is also important to focus future research

on the significance of women helping other women advance in their career and what this means for the gender leadership gap.

Conclusion

Women continue to face external barriers that are uncontrollable by a single woman; there continues to be a gender leadership gap and the glass ceiling has not been completely shattered. Sheryl Sandberg's 'Lean In' theory provides a solution and opportunity for women who face barriers as they try to reach their career goals. When opportunities are limited, and individual women cannot change the views of society, a single woman can make the difference – in such a way Justice Day O'Connor, Bader Ginsburg, and Sotomayor have done.

The current underrepresentation of women in the public and private sector should not deter an individual woman from moving ahead. To gain top leadership positions, women should overcome their own interior barriers, build their self-confidence, know what they want for their personal and professional lives and lead the path for other women to follow.

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