WOMEN CHIEF HOUSING OFFICERS AT STATE UNIVERSITIES IN THE
NORTHWEST UNITED STATES

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This qualitative study explored the experiences of women chief housing officers (CHOs) at state universities within the northwest region of the United States. The study used narrative inquiry methodology with a thematic analysis approach to investigate how seven female CHOs experience and make meaning of their professional career progression and journey toward becoming and remaining a CHO. Five core themes emerged from the study: (a) understanding housing operations, (b) self-efficacy, (c) gender inequities, (d) relationships with staff, and (e) mentorship. The theme of gender identity suggests that gender does influence how these female CHOs make meaning of their professional experience. The overall results suggest that although the perception of many is that the field of student affairs is wide open to women, in some senior-level positions, such as CHO, gender inequity is prevalent. A factor that may contribute to this inequity is the privatization of housing which calls for a greater understanding of business and housing operations, areas dominated by males. An implication from this study is that an increase in the number of women in the CHO position may only occur when university housing personnel expand professional preparation for mid-level housing positions to include more business-related practices. The mid-level position could then be seen as a step toward desired CHO competencies and toward making the position of CHO more inclusive.
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This dissertation is dedicated to my son Henry Scott Hyatt (2003-2008).

Thank you to my husband Gary for supporting me while I made this dream come true and for your unwavering patience through the years with all of the challenges life gave us. Thank you to my children, Tommy, Henry, and William for being patient with me through your entire lives. Henry, life was very difficult when you left us, and your strength reminded me often to be strong and keep focused.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant shifts in the history of American higher education, in the years after the Civil War, can be attributed to the coeducation of women and men (Thelin, 2011). Oberlin College in Ohio had accepted four women as college freshmen in 1837, and their admission marked a new historical era (Rudolph, 1990). American higher education began with the opening of Harvard University in 1636, but it was not until 1837 that Oberlin became the first college to admit women. This span of time between Harvard and Oberlin marked 201 years of unattainable access to higher education for women. Those new Oberlin students would start the breakdown of gender barriers in academe (Burns, 1962).

While studying gender in higher education, Niddiffer and Bashaw (2001) recognized that there was a disproportionate number of women in administrative positions in higher education compared to the increased number of women who received doctoral degrees. They also noted that, when comparing the number of women in higher education senior leadership positions to the number of men, women held a disproportionate number of mid-level rather than senior level positions. These two factors pointed toward gender inequality in the pipeline of women destined for leadership roles.

Many women in higher education administration today can credit their career paths to a position called dean of women and the development of professional organizations for women in an area that would become known as student affairs. The first dean of women, Alice Palmer, was appointed at the University of Chicago in 1892.
These deans’ positions supervised areas such as women’s housing, etiquette training, women’s self-government, leadership opportunities for women, and women’s intercollegiate athletics. If it had not been for coeducation, these positions, created to accommodate women, would not have existed (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001).

The leadership role of women in higher education was further advanced in 1903, when professional women formed an organization known as the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW). This organization would serve its members until 2000 with the main purpose of managing gender segregation in colleges. Eventually, the NADW evolved into what is known today as the National Association of Women in Education (NAWE). In contrast, the National Association of Deans of Advisers of Men (NADAM) was founded in 1919 and served its members until 1951. NADAM eventually became the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) serving both men and women (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001).

Perhaps as an extension of the first dean of women positions, women established a foothold in the area of student affairs. Early increases in the number of women working in student affairs could be attributed to the need for colleges and universities admitting women to provide an environment that could be monitored more closely, bringing about the position of housemother. Reich (1964) demonstrated this turning point in roles for women in a residential setting in the foreword to his book. In that foreword, the president of NAWE stated:

Although deans of women, deans of men and residence hall directors know well about the job of a housemother, they, as well as potential housemothers, will welcome a concise statement on the subject. The College Housemother (book) will be an asset to them not only because it may well attract more and better workers into the field, but also it will serve as a ready reference for their
recommendation in reply to the inquiries they receive continuously about the
duties of the qualifications for this essential job. (Reich, 1964, p. iv)

In essence, the housemother could be considered the first female housing administrator.

Statement of the Problem

At the time of this study, in the northwest region of the United States, one in four professionals who held the position of CHO was a woman (AIMHO, 2016; NWACUHO, 2016). Specifically, according to the Northwest Association of College and University Housing Officers (NWACUHO) and the Associations of Inter-Mountain Housing Officers (AIMHO) 2016 member directories, the number of women who hold the position of CHO at four-year, state public institutions in the northwest region of the United States demonstrates a significant gap between genders. Based on the NWACUHO and AIMHO directory data, of the six states in this study (Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Utah) there are 28 four-year public state institutions. Of those institutions, seven have female CHOs, representing 25%. This number is not consistent with the population of women in student affairs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women in the position of CHO within the northwest region of the United States. In addition, this study examined obstacles that may restrict women from attaining the CHO profession. In doing so, it is hoped that this study will help answer questions as to why so few women hold the position of CHO; why women in higher education administration, specifically student affairs, pursue the position of CHO, and how and why women remain in the CHO position.
Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer two questions:

Question 1: How do female Chief Housing Officers experience and make meaning of their professional career progression?

Question 2: What influences and experiences contribute to their journey toward becoming CHO's and retaining that position?

Researcher Perspective

I am employed as the director of residence life and new student programs at a four-year public state institution of higher education in the northwest region of the United States. I teach three courses annually in the master of higher education graduate program. I have 21 years of experience working in housing operations at four universities across the country. The four institutions include a Division I, large, state, Research I institution in the southwest; a Division I, small, private institution in the south; a Division II, mid-size, state regional institution in the northwest; and a Division I, private, Ivy League institution in the east. For eight of those years, I served in a senior-level position within the division of student success, with a primary focus on housing operations.

For 21 years I have been active with the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I), which is the premier association for housing officers. I have held positions within the association including women’s issues committee chair, The Placement Exchange chair, housing internship chair, Chief Housing Officers Institute committee member, National Housing Training Institute faculty, and ACUHO-I Executive Foundation secretary. In addition, I have co-authored a
chapter in a book series for ACUHO-I focused on the recruitment and selection of student and professional employees. I have presented at numerous institutions and conferences on generational differences and the impact of those differences on teaching and learning. All of these experiences combined to create a rich career within housing programs across the country. Throughout my career in housing operations, I have never had a female supervisor nor have I worked for a female CHO.

Delimitations

The emphasis of this study is on female CHOs employed at state, public four-year institutions of higher education. The data collected for this specific study will only apply to women working as CHOs at the institutions described. This study is delimited to:

1. Currently employed women administrators that have attained the position of CHO or its equivalent at their current institution.
2. Women CHOs at state public, four-year institutions.
3. Higher education institutions located in one of the following six states within the northwest region of the United States: Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Utah.

Limitations

This study is limited to self-reported data, which may or may not be accurate due to the openness and honesty of the participants. Because I used purposeful sampling, there is a limited number of participants that met the study criteria.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to expand the understanding of specific influences on female chief housing officers (CHO) in higher education. This review addresses the history of women in higher education, the influence of Title IX, the evolution of housing operations, women administrators in higher education, and female administrators.

History of Women in Higher Education

In the early 17th century, American higher education for women consisted mainly of finishing schools which were the only educational option for women (Madsen, 2008). Schools of that period focused on preparing women for marriage and domestic life. The belief was that formal education should be withheld from women due to societal concerns, such as infertility and breakdown of the social order (Chliwniak, 1997).

Rudolph (1990) identified early issues of women’s access to higher education as far back as 1783 at Yale University. Rudolph explained that the general view of women in the Colonial Era was that women were intellectually inferior to men, and that a woman’s place was in the home. Educating women or daughters at this time was rare because the issue of “marriageability caused fear that education would harm a girl for her subservient role as a wife” (Solomon, 1985, p. 6).

Howe (1984) noted that a woman’s vocational goals of teaching became more prominent in the 18th century. At this time, the classroom was seen as the secular wing of the church, and it was acceptable for women to be single and work in the role of a
teacher. Many reasons for accepting women into higher education were rooted in an economic need, not a philosophy of gender equality (Martinez-Aleman & Renn, 2002).

Before coeducation, women’s and men’s access to higher education diverged. Typically, women were sequestered to a section of the university studying feminine-focused academic subjects with inferior resources compared to men (Chliwniak, 1997). Gordon (1990) explained a backlash toward women in the early 1920s, when institutions began to fear feminization. This fear caused an institutional shift toward preparing women for domestic duties. These historic examples indicate that women were not a priority and were viewed as less important than men during the formation of higher education in America.

Factors that promoted women’s education in the 19th century included the establishment of land-grant institutions and women’s colleges. Women’s colleges helped to increase the credibility and standards of women’s education (Rudolph, 1990). Regionally, the growth of women’s colleges was noticeable. Rudolph further explained that women’s colleges in the southern and eastern regions of the United States lagged behind the mid-west and western states, which was attributed mostly to cultural and economic impacts. However, a decrease in women’s college enrollment and academic leadership, in comparison to men, occurred after the G.I. Bill promoted funding and access for returning male veterans (Martinez-Aleman & Renn, 2002).

The 20th century revealed changes that influenced women’s access to higher education. One influence was the women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which improved equality and increased women’s attendance and leadership in higher education (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Coeducation became one of the single
largest catalysts for remarkable changes in higher education. Coeducation brought opportunities to women as the academe began to recognize and accept women as more equal to that of men (Howe, 1984). A book of selected essays, *Myths of Coeducation* by Howe, shared the many issues related to the transition of coeducation in American higher education. Howe first reviewed the core question: Why educate women? This question highlighted the responsibility of higher education to promote an open, democratic society in which all citizens are educated, not just men. Howe expressed the ideals and values of society to be inclusive, while shedding light on overt and covert discrimination against females in education.

Howe (1984) explained another myth of coeducation focused on extracurricular life on campus. According to Howe, immorality became the core concern of coeducation. Fears and concern surfaced that expressed issues related to women and men living to close to each other during marriageable ages. Housing operations at universities and colleges have been concerned with gender since the beginning of coeducation. Those leading housing operations have been an important part of supporting women and men students to be successful in a university setting.

**Influence of Title IX**

Women’s access to higher education is often credited to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX aimed to end gender discrimination in employment, ensure comparable facilities, provide financial assistance, support athletics, and prevent sexual harassment (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Title IX also applied to health insurance benefits, marital parental status, textbooks, and curricular material. In addition, Title IX was amended to include all programs in an educational institution that receive federal
funds through the Civil Rights Act of 1987. Before 1972, women faced inhospitable and sometimes hostile climates due to more stringent college admissions policies favoring men, and women were given limited access to loans and scholarships (Martinez-Aleman & Renn, 2002; Thelin, 2011). The legislation provided a legal means of enforcement of these rights to equality (Altbach, 2011). The movement to advance gender neutrality and/or equality led higher education to become institutions based on function and not gender (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Jacobs’ (1996) research, focused on gender inequality and higher education, revealed a “cumulative disadvantage” (p. 172) to women who were underrepresented in faculty positions. Jacobs discovered that female faculty were deprived at every stage of the career process including, but not limited to, senior level positions of the university.

Specifically related to housing operations, the inclusion of women employees during the coeducation period in higher education intended to shift gender equity as a mandate by Title IX (Hanson, Guilfoy, & Pillai, 2009). They explained further that without Title IX, women were left to overcome structural obstacles such as receiving less access to academic leadership roles. Further, women were often marginalized into societal roles of care-takers rather than roles that involved leadership and decision making (Martinez-Aleman & Renn, 2002).

Title IX also made an impact on the leadership of women in higher education (Hanson et al., 2009). A significant shift in gender representation increased within mid-level position levels after Title IX, specifically in student affairs leadership (Pierce, 2011). While women have made the most strides in executive leadership positions in higher education at community colleges, they have not made the same strides in four-
year universities, which are viewed as more prestigious (Hall, 2010). Women are well represented not only as students at community colleges, but also within the faculty and upper administrative ranks. Martinez-Aleman and Renn (2002) further noted that women were the intended students of the first community colleges.

Women in Higher Education Administration

Harrow (1993) attributed the lack of women in leadership positions within the academe to a small volume of women in the pipeline. Harrow stated, “men have more opportunities for entrance into top-level leadership roles and have established quality power-bases for career mobility” (p.144). Harrow’s study also showed that women entered leadership positions much later in their career than did men. While these data are over 23 years old, they can help explain why so few women are currently in the position of CHO. Advocating for women to achieve and sustain leadership positions is important in order to encourage women to stay in and become active in higher education. Further, Jacobs (1996) and Keim (2008) found differences between the employment rates of women in senior positions based on institution type. Keim’s study revealed that women held over 48% of senior student affairs officer positions at community colleges, reflecting an increase of 41% from 1980. By comparison, Keim’s research identified that at four-year institutions, women held only 20% of senior student affairs positions.

Understanding the career progression of women in higher education administration is relevant to this study. Madsen (2008) interviewed 10 female college presidents and discovered, “most stated that they began thinking about becoming
presidents when they were vice-presidents” (p. 141). Informal and unintended paths were revealed as opposed to traditional linear intentional career paths.

The literature about the retention of women in higher education administrative positions revealed conflicting information. For instance, Taub and McEwen (2006) noticed that two-thirds of students in student affairs master’s programs were women. Shortly after this research, Bender (2009) indicated that only 28% of female employees intended to remain in student affairs. Many reasons can be given for the attrition of mid-level practitioners in student affairs positions. Rosser and Javinar (2003) revealed reasons for leaving the profession included lack of opportunity and advancement. Lorden (1998) took this research further and identified reasons for low job satisfaction and reasons for departing. These reasons included “burnout, unclear job expectations, conflicts between reasons for entering the field and realities of practice, and low pay” (Lorden, 1998, p. 3). Studies like these support the focus of my research to study women’s attrition and retention in the CHO position.

Evolution of Housing

Housing operations were created to support students’ living accommodations and to bring faculty and students together (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). The collegiate way of life of Oxford and Cambridge, including ways of learning, became secondary to the Germanic models of education, which focused on teaching and research. This shift in the focus of education, Schroeder and Mable explained, created a divide among faculty and administrators that can be seen even today (1994). Less time from faculty was devoted to the whole student, and more time was dedicated to faculty member’s expertise in the subject of their research and teaching.
Blimling (2010) expressed that the most notable change in residential living can also be attributed to the coeducation of universities, with mandated policies for women to live in college housing. Although Oberlin was the first college to admit women, it must be noted that these women were not always on equal footing with the men. Howe (1984) stated:

Oberlin was an effort to found not only a college, but a model society. Students sat opposite each other in the dining hall. And so women had their domestic chores, men their field work, and it was perfectly understandable in those terms that women were paid half or less than half the hourly wages of men. Indeed when one considers that most housework is unpaid labor, Oberlin women were well-off. (p. 209)

The definition of coeducation is stressed even further by Howe (1984):

Myths of coeducation spring from the same source, or at least the pattern is reminiscent of the creations of myths. The prefix 'co' allows women to join with men in an educational enterprise, sometimes a college. Coeducation. The education of women with men. Is that its meaning? Of course, coeds are not men. When a man goes to college, he gets an education; when a woman goes, she gets a coeducation. If a man says, 'I go to a coeducational college,' he means there are women in it. If a women's says, 'I go to a coeducational college,' she means she does not go to Wellesley or some other women's college. (p. 208)

By 1898, coeducation was a predictive factor in the evolution of higher education. For all coeducational colleges, the number of male students from 1875-1900 tripled, and the number of women students increased six-fold. (Rudolph, 1990). While coeducation impacted the demographics of students, it also necessitated adjustments to housing facilities to support the altering institutional and student needs. One of the most rapid expansions of building housing facilities can be attributed to two historical federally-funded pieces of legislation: the G.I. Bill and Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950. The G.I. Bill provided a means for veterans to return to colleges, in most cases with spouses.
and families. This influx of students created the need for family housing funded by universities (Blimling, 2010).

The Title IV Housing Act of 1950 focused on creating as much volume per capita for housing and dining operations to support students’ needs, while keeping housing costs low (Schroeder & Mable, 1994). The Higher Education Facilities Act and the Higher Education Amendments Act of 1962 created more involvement from the federal government (Thelin, 2011). The expansion of the facilities attributed to the concern for the well-being of students’ lives outside of the classroom, which began to expand as residential life programs and staff were created (Blimling, 2010).

Due to women entering colleges and universities, many systems had to adjust for accommodations that were originally created for men. Housing operations were among the first staff to recognize the need to manage the changing demographics the coeducational setting. Some of these demands included: (a) housing separation by gender, (b) staffing of halls, (c) classroom separation by gender, (d) co-curricular separation by gender and, (e) admissions criteria (Howe, 1984). The evolution of residential life programs in higher education evolved to meet student demographics and needs over the decades (Blimling, 2010).

Women Administrators in Housing

In the mid-19th century, higher education leaders began to recognize the need for preparing a society of educated women. As women were admitted to universities in the late 19th century, a new position, known as the Dean of Women, began to emerge (Sandeen, 1991). The Dean of Women position directly created new career opportunities for women in higher education (Blimling, 2010). Not surprisingly, this
position had its corresponding position of Dean of Men. Each position was responsible for “caring for students’ welfare, maintaining control, and promoting activities outside of the classroom” (Burns, 1962, p.144).

According to Nidiffer & Bashaw (2001), the National Association of Dean of Women (NADW) was formed in 1903. The first meeting of the NADW included 17 Deans of Women. At this meeting, the agenda addressed women’s housing, etiquette training, women’s’ self-government, leadership opportunities for women, and women’s intercollegiate athletics. The Dean of Women position provided the historical underpinnings of the profession for women in to student affairs, specifically working in housing operations and leadership positions (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001).

Dean of Women positions began to fade from the organizational structure of institutions after World War II, when institutions combined gender specific programs (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Nidiffer and Bashaw further noted that the positions of Dean of Men and Women were key to the development of the student affairs profession through their standards of practice of working with students. Deans of Women in the 19th century were a focus of advocacy for the improvement of women’s college experiences, while challenging equitable standards in higher education. The increase of women enrolling and achieving administrative positions in higher education was comparable. In contrast, Astin and Scherre (1980) shared:

> Overall, about four in five of the administrators are men, though the sex distribution varies by position. Thus, 88 percent of the vice-presidential officers are male, and there are no female fiscal officers. Of the middle-level administrators, 68 percent are men and 32 percent are women, a distribution that is consistent with earlier findings. (p.42)
Historically, the evolution of residential life professionals working in housing operations can be best understood by starting with the position known as housemother. Reich (1964) best described the issues related to students and professionals working in a residential environment. First, the gender specificity of the position title connotes femininity and a motherly relationship toward students. Reich identified women in the role of housemother as being between the ages of 45-60, and who were without family responsibilities. The gender roles of the mid-century were changing and women began to work outside the home. Reich connected the function of in loco parentis that American universities needed when coeducation occurred. The roles and responsibilities for housemothers ranged from chaperoning women to managing facilities of the dorms, and Greek life (fraternity and sorority organizations). Housemothers were also in a position to influence the morals of the students, and influenced their attitudes and their values. This position started the story of the position of CHO from a gender lens and is relevant to my study related to women running housing operations.

To fully understand housing operations one must understand the current position of CHO. CHOs, or senior level housing officers, are responsible for the overall management of a housing operation at a university or college (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). The responsibilities of a CHO includes, but are not limited to, responsibilities such as supervision, contract and occupancy management, fiscal management, maintenance, strategic planning, personnel, and long range housing planning. Dunkel and Baumann explained the multiple titles associated with CHOs, such as director and executive director of housing and residence life operations.
Organizationally, CHOs reported either to senior student affairs professionals or auxiliary/business operations vice presidents of a university. Auxiliary operations are defined as having self-generated funding, and such operations receive no institutional or state support to operate. The significance of to whom a CHO directly reports is critical to understand the access and control of funds, and more importantly, institutional decision making. Typically, housing operations in universities are considered income sources and at times, are seen as extreme sustainable funding sources that benefit beyond a housing operations scope. CHOs can benefit from management and fiscal experience beyond a student affairs background. For example, the room and board rates or fees that students pay for their housing cover the costs of the housing operation, staffing and help to retire the bonded indebtedness or federal loans (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1990).

Addressing women in higher education is only part of this research; the other critical factor includes the specific competencies and complex responsibilities of the position of CHO. To understand the position of CHO, one must turn to the professional association that focuses on university housing in higher education internationally. The Association of College University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I) is the premier international association focused on university housing operations (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). ACUHO-I created a researched-based competency model for CHOs. The model, developed in 2012, included twelve core competencies for housing professionals in the position of CHO. The twelve core competencies are sub-divided into three areas: direct service function, management function, and strategy and policy function. The twelve core areas include: human resources, occupancy management, fiscal resources and control, information technology, facilities management, ancillary
partnerships, evaluation/planning, resident educational services, student behavior, crisis management, conference services, and dining services (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). The core competencies demonstrate the complex scope of the position of CHO.

Conceptual Framework

Very little research has been done related to women working in housing operations. The research that related most closely to my topic and influenced my research included the following six studies.

First, a study conducted by Creamer and Laughlin (2005) focused on 40 college women. Their research confirmed that the relationship between self-authorship and career decision making are relevant. Using Baxter Magolda’s theory of self-authorship as a theoretical framework, Creamer and Laughlin (2005) affirmed that the subjects’ journeys were relevant to decisions in the subjects’ lives related to their careers. Further, this research focused on three dimensions of self-authorship: interpersonal, epistemological and intrapersonal. While this research was conducted on female students in college, it is relevant to this study as women will be sharing their stories through a narrative of their own decision making of their academic and career progression.

Second, a study conducted by Taub and McEwen (2006) focused on students’ decision to enter the profession of student affairs. Their research recognized a need to understand students’ motivations for entering graduate programs in higher education. During the time of their research, Keim (1991) found that only one third of students entering master’s programs in student affairs were men; thus, two thirds were women. This study focused on 300 master’s students from 24 randomly selected graduate
programs. The study focused on identifying factors that influenced students’ decisions and examined similarities and differences based on race, gender and age. Descriptive findings included: awareness of student affairs as a profession, sources of information about career opportunities in student affairs, influence, confidence and attraction. Two statistically significant differences in gender emerged: that “women were more attracted to student affairs by the desire to provide programs and services for students” (Taub & McEwen, 2006, p. 212) and that women were more attracted “by the desire to continue to learn and develop in an educational environment” (p 212). This study is relevant to my research as women in the CHO position need a master’s degree to attain the position based on the industry standard (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). My research through the participants’ stories through a narrative lens may uncover motivations into the profession as early as undergraduate and graduate school experiences.

The third study that informed my research included the work of Heilman (2001) who studied gender bias and the influences of women’s competencies. Heilman’s theory is that gender prevents women from ascending to leadership positions regardless of their abilities, due to organizational gender prescriptions. Heilman specifically identified performance evaluations in work settings as the catalyst that devalues women’s contributions and the impact of gender bias. This may become relevant in my research when understanding my participants’ narrative stories of support through supervisors in an evaluative process of their positions.

The fourth study that informed my research is by Jo (2008) which focused on voluntary turnover and women administrators in higher education. Jo’s research focused on why female administrators left their institutions. Using a cross-sectional
research method, this research postulated that three key areas impacted voluntary
turnover of women mid-level administrators in higher education: including supervisory
skills, growth opportunities and flexible work/life policies. Jo also discovered a multiplier
effect of turnover, meaning that the more these women experienced supervisor
turnover, the higher impact it had on their decision to leave the institution themselves
(2008). This research is significant to my study because of my focus on the question of
what factors impact a female CHO's decision to remain in the position.

The fifth study that impacted my research included a study by McEwen, Williams,
and Engstrom (1991). Their research focused on examining a notion that the field of
student affairs has a feminine lens. The study used a cross-sectional sample of 25
professionals in student affairs to investigate the environmental conditions, ramifications
of feminization, effects of workplace, attributes demonstrated, and action steps to create
supportive work environments. Findings from their research uncovered student affairs
attributes that were characterized as nurturing, care oriented, and facilitative, thus
creating a bias towards women to enter the field. While this study did include both
genders, the findings are still relevant to my study, as the voices of my participants may
have insights into the feminization of the profession of student affairs.

The sixth, and final study that influenced my research was by Rosser and Javinar
(2003). Their research focused on mid-level student affairs leaders and their intentions
to leave their positions. They examined the quality of leaders' professional and
institutional work life by focusing on job satisfaction and morale issues. Their study
included 4,000 midlevel leaders randomly selected through a national population of over
11,000 from both public and private institutions within five Carnegie classifications. They
used structural equation modeling and tested conformity factor analysis (CFA). The CFA model involved individual perceptions of work life, satisfaction, and morale. Findings included an examination of demographic variables associated with years worked at the institution attributed to overall morale both significant and as a negative impact. In addition, participants that were paid higher salaries had a negative and statistically significant impact on morale and intent to leave. Professionals in student housing were among their research participants. The study of mid-level professionals interested me because the position of CHO is one to which someone ascends, yet the work done within the mid-level position influences how one does the work as a CHO.

These six studies provided a rich synergy related to the focus of my research because they include both qualitative and quantitative research findings and theoretical analyses related to educational attainment, motivation success factors within the mid-level positions in student affairs, impact of supervisors related to retention in the profession, and an interesting look at the feminization of the field of student affairs. They all provided conceptual framework that guided my study.

In conclusion, throughout history, women have impacted higher education significantly. Coeducation of women entering the academe required changes in many operations of the university setting. In addition, the role of women in colleges and universities has evolved, ranging from ineligibility to access higher education toward holding positions of leadership. The lack of literature focused on women in housing operations within higher education advances information about women in student affairs and academic leadership as to the importance of studies like the current one. Most of the literature on women in higher education administrative positions centers on the
positions of president and senior student affairs officers. This review of literature was meant to uncover specific areas focused on the historical understanding of women in higher education, the influences of Title IX, the history of housing operations in higher education, and women serving as housing administrators in leadership positions.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study used narrative inquiry methodology. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative approach that engages the participants in conversation (Creswell, 1998). This method was chosen because personal narratives can capture a truth about lived experiences (Riessman, 2008) and because one’s life story can provide an opportunity to reflect upon transition and self-empowerment (Nash, 2004).

Creswell (1998) explained that qualitative research helps to understand the meaning people give to individual problems. The process of narrative inquiry and analysis requires attention to detail when gathering data. The interview process demands a listener/researcher who can remain aware of multiple perspectives: the narrator’s, the conceptual framework, and the reflexive process of working through the specific data (Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach, & Xilber, 1998).

Population and Sample

This study used purposeful sample selection. There was a total of seven female CHO's within the region of my study at the time this study was conducted. Patten and Bruce (2012) explained that a purposeful sample should be used when a researcher selects people believed to be able to provide the best information relevant to the topic at hand. Participants were chosen based on their current position, interest in the study, professional experience level, and type of employing institution. A pseudonym is used for each subject, institution, and location.

The states selected are in two regions affiliated with the Association of College and University Housing Officers (ACUHO-I). The states of Washington, Oregon, and Alaska are affiliated with the region of Northwest Association of College and University
Housing Officers (NWACUHO). The states of Idaho, Montana, and Utah are affiliated with the region of the Association of Intermountain Housing Officers (AIMHO).

Participant Selection

The process of participant selection was achieved through utilizing the member directories of two ACUHO-I regional associations: Northwest Association of College and University Housing Officers (NWACUHO, 2016) and Association of Intermountain Housing officers (AIMHO, 2016). Reviewing these directories provided a list of the institutions that met the criteria of four-year, public, state institutions in Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Utah. Each institution’s housing operations website was used to identify the CHO or Director’s position name and gender. After that process, a cross-reference of the list with the associations’ member directories confirmed titles.

The criteria for participant recruitment were:

1) Participant identified as a woman;
2) Participant was currently employed as a chief housing officers (CHO);
3) Participant is employed at a four-year, state public college/university;
4) Participant is employed in the northwest region of the United States;
5) Participant has been employed in as a CHO for at least three years.

Of the 28 people holding the position of CHO, only seven women met the criteria at the time of this research. The institutions were located in the following six states: Alaska (0), Oregon (2), Washington (2), Idaho (1), Montana (1), and Utah (1).
A recruitment email (see Appendix D) and IRB consent form (see Appendix E) were sent to each of the seven participants inviting each to be a part of the study in compliance with the UNT IRB policies. Each participant responded within 1-5 days of the invitation, and all accepted the invitation. Once the participant accepted the invitation to the study and a signed copy of the consent form was returned, a link to the demographic survey (see Appendix G) was sent via SurveyMonkey to each participant to complete. At the end of the survey was a request to send a copy of a current resume.

Data Collection

This study took place within a three-week time frame within the months of June and July 2016. It is a conclusive study because all seven women participated.

For data collection, I used a demographic survey (see Appendix G) and a semi-structured interview format. The questions began more broadly, with the intent to gain trust and rapport, before asking more potentially intrusive questions. The demographic
survey was requested of each participant after the consent form had been signed and returned to me at least one week prior to the first interview. Consent forms and surveys were received electronically through email attachment.

At the start of the first interview, I explained the consent form (see Appendix E). In addition, I briefly explained my research before receiving the participant’s signature approval on the consent form. During the interviews, I completed member checking by asking clarifying questions and checking for meaning. After all transcriptions of audio recordings were completed, I sent the participant the original transcription for approval of the accuracy of the interview. At the conclusion of the study, I emailed and called each participant to thank them for their participation in this study, to share with them individually my findings, and to seek feedback through the audit review process method of member checking.

Data were collected through two, 60-minute interviews of each participant using Skype technology, based on mutual agreement between the participant and researcher. The initial interview reviewed the following: background and life story, including review of current resume; journey into higher education; journey into housing operations; reasons that sustain them as CHO; and relevant memorable experiences and critical incidents.

The questions for the first interview provided context for the participants’ experience in working in housing operations in higher education (see Appendix B). These questions also supported an open and relaxed atmosphere in which the participant shared their stories and experiences. The first interview focused on eight questions that were approved by UNT IRB (see Appendix F). The questions pertained
to member checking from demographic survey and resume and discussing factors that contributed to the participant’s success as a CHO. Each interview was scheduled using Skype technology, except for one participant who did not have access to Skype technology. In this case a phone call was used as the method for data collection.

The second interview focused on member checking from the first interview (see Appendix C). The content for the second interview was derived from the analysis and interpretation of the first interview results. This interview was designed to share the themes found from the first interview and discussing with each participant whether or not they agreed with the themes. Each participant conclusively agreed with the analysis and affirmed the assessment. The question for each participant during the second interview asked whether they knew why there were so few women serving as CHO in the Northwest United States. This question served as the capstone of the discussion and study for each participant, and gave me as the research and opportunity to review potential reasons for these phenomena.

The relationship between me and each participant seemed to be open, trusting, and affirming. The evidence of a trusting relationship with each participant was identified through the openness of the participants to share personal stories of their professional and sometimes personal lives, and their comments to me of their comfort with me through this process. The data are trustworthy as each participant has reviewed and been a part of the analysis and meaning making of the research questions. Notes were taken during the interviews and utilized when analyzing responses for common and divergent themes.
As stated above, data collection was primarily through semi-structured interviews. Fontana and Frey (2003) stated that basic elements of interviewing should be taken into account when using the semi-structured interview method. These methods include: (a) accessing the setting; (b) understanding the language and culture of the respondents; (c) deciding on how to present oneself as a researcher; (d) locating an informant; (e) gaining trust; (f) establishing rapport; and (g) collecting empirical materials. These guidelines were the bases for the interview semi-structured approach.

An audio recording device was used during the interviews. I employed the services of Paxton Transcription Services, as approved by the IRB at UNT, to transcribe each recorded interview. Paxton Services’ timeframe for turn-around ranged from eight hours to three days for each recording. After I received the transcription the transcript was sent to the participant for review and feedback for editing and/or analysis. Each participant responded within 72 hours of receiving the transcript. Any feedback was discussed through a telephone call. After data collection was finalized, each participant received a copy of her section for final approval and acceptance. Each participant was very open and showed genuine care and interest in the topic and the research. The quick response from each participant was an example of the interest and attentiveness to the research study.

Each participant mentioned the impact on her professional and personal reflection that this study provided. Moustakos (1994) explained that the method of reflection provides the logical and coherent means needed to attain descriptions of experiences. This process allowed for such an outcome for these participants based on their feedback.
Ethical Issues

Research requires the utmost standard of ethical practices. Protecting confidentiality and minimizing risks to the participants is critical. No monetary incentive was offered to study participants.

Protecting Confidentiality

Informing participants of prospective risks was accomplished through consent to participate in the study. Informed consent is fundamental to protect confidentiality in research studies. Informed consent forms (see Appendix E) and field notes have been kept in a locked file cabinet in my office on the campus where I am employed.

Because there are only seven female CHO’s working within the regions I selected, it was important to conceal identities. I made certain that my calendar did not have any identifying markers as to with whom I was meeting for Skype interviews. I made certain that my calendar was not accessible to anyone. I took time off work and conducted the Skype interviews from my office.

To maintain confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used for their names and the names of their employing institutions. Using pseudonyms protected the participants of this study and their institutions. Each participant was included in the selection of her own and the university pseudonym, which adheres to the guidelines of UNT IRB. I used the title of Chief Housing Officer (CHO) as a general term.

Audio recordings along with digital and handwritten notes taken during the interviews were kept on a password-protected flash drive. All data and files were kept in a locked file drawer in my office on the campus on which I was employed at the time of this study. Both data sets will be kept for two years after the dissertation is published.
before destruction. Data will be deleted from all electronic files as noted in the IRB protocol.

*Human Subjects and Informed Consent*

An application for approval from the UNT Institutional Review Board was submitted and approved prior to conducting the research (see Appendix A). Questions asked of each participant were approved prior to conducting the interviews (see Appendix E).

**Data Analysis**

The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using the narrative analysis research method and thematic analysis. Riessman (2008) stated that narrative analysis allows a researcher to identify what might otherwise be random and highlights disconnected patterns that may be meaningful. Due to the approach of collecting narratives of the subjects' stories, holistic and categorical content was the preferred method for uncovering a contextual framework. Lieblich et al. (1998) explained that this approach allows for special focus areas of content or themes in the story as it evolves from the beginning to end. Further, the specific thematic analysis examined the approach to what was being said and was ideal for analyzing collected data through narratives (Riessman, 2008). Thematic categorizing was done by mapping patterns to label data. The thematic framework was done by reviewing transcripts and notes seeking emergent issues and reoccurring patterns that were similar and divergent. A summary of emerging themes, meaning, and follow-up questions from the first interview concluded the second interview and the collection of data for the study.
Criteria for Trustworthiness

Creswell (1998) identified multiple methods of establishing criteria for trustworthiness. The method to which I adhered utilized member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, “member checking is both informal and formal, and it occurs continuously” (p. 314). I routinely reviewed content with the participants during and after interviews.

Subject Biographies

Subject biographies of each participant were provided, with identifying details changed. Biographies were developed through the demographic survey and interview summaries.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study investigated the experiences of seven female CHOs in the northwest region of the United States working in higher education at selected state institutions. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women in the position of CHO. In addition, this study examined obstacles that may restrict women from entering the CHO profession. This study explored why so few women hold the position of CHO, why women in higher education administration, specifically student affairs, pursue the position of CHO, and how and why have they stayed in the CHO position as a career. I present five core themes that emerged from the data: (1) Understanding Housing operations, (2) Self-Efficacy, (3) Gender Inequities, (4) Relationships with Staff, and (5) Mentorship. The results will be presented by theme.

Participant Profile Summaries

This study focused on seven individual women with lived stories of their professional, and sometimes similar personal experiences. Each woman approved the inclusion of her pseudonym for her name and university in this study.

Participant A: Leslie at Pine University

Leslie currently serves as the CHO at a large Research I institution in a rural setting. She has served as CHO for three years at Pine University. Leslie identifies as a Caucasian/white woman and is within the age range of 45-54. She is married with no children.
Participant B: Kate at Cyprus University

Kate currently serves as the CHO at a mid-sized public institution in a rural setting, and has been in this position for six years. Kate answered the question of her relationship status as “single, but cohabitating with a significant other. She identifies as a Caucasian/white woman and is within the age range of 45-54.

Participant C: Stephanie at Oak University

Stephanie currently serves as the CHO at a competitive mid-sized public state institution and has been in the position for 19 years. Stephanie has had a rich career serving her entire professional career of over 27 years at Oak University. Stephanie identifies as a Caucasian/white woman within the age range of 45-54. She is married and has no children.

Participant D: Christina at Cedar University

Christina has been serving as the CHO at a major regional institution and has been in this position for over 8 years. Christina identifies as a Caucasian/white woman within the age range of 35-44 and is the youngest in the study. She is married with no children.

Participant E: Kelly at Hemlock University

Kelly currently serves as the CHO at a major Research I flagship institution and has been in this position for over eight years. Kelly has had a rich career serving 14 of her 20 years of her full time professional career at Hemlock University. Kelly identifies as a Caucasian/white woman and within the age range of 45-54. Kelly is married and has two children under the age of 11. She chose to have children when she was in the mid-management level of her career serving as associate director.
Participant F: Jill at Spruce University

Jill currently serves as the CHO at a mid-sized regional institution and has been in this position for over 10 years. Jill identifies as a Caucasian/white woman and within the age range of 45-54. Jill is married and has one child that is four years old.

Participant G: Elizabeth at Maple University

Elizabeth currently serves as the CHO at a major research one, flagship institution and has been in this position for over seven years. Elizabeth identifies as a Caucasian/white woman within the age range of 45-54. Elizabeth is married and has no children. Elizabeth is the only participant who holds a doctorate degree.

Common Themes

Several commonalities emerged based on the participants’ lived stories, specifically with the questions that were used in the demographic survey (see Appendix G), which included each of the participant’s current resumes. The common themes that emerged from the demographic survey included age range, ethnicity, personal partnership, and educational attainment. All but one participant were within the same age range of 45-54 (see Table 1). All participants identified as White/Caucasian women (see Table 1). Six of the seven identified as married and one as single, yet cohabitating with a significant other (see Table 2).
The women in this study had similar career paths in housing. All of the women worked in higher education, specifically in housing programs, throughout their careers. Most of the women in the study held an assistantship in housing while in graduate school. Each held mid-level housing positions such as assistant or associate director for residential life and/or housing operations prior to becoming a CHO.

The women in this study have been in a CHO position within a range of 3 years to 13 years. Of the seven women, only one has been a CHO at more than one institution. Four of the seven participants in this study earned a bachelor’s degree in education. All participants in this study earned a master’s degree in college student personnel administration in higher education. Only one of the participants has earned a Ph.D. in Education as the terminal degree.

Five of the seven participants were originally from the mid-west or the east coast prior to their professional journey after graduate school, and in most cases their mid-level position led them to the northwest region of the United States. Two of the women spent the majority of their careers (20+ years) at the one institution, while moving up to
the position of CHO. Three of the women held interim senior student affairs positions, showing how each progressed faster in their careers.

All participants are involved in their pertinent regional and national associations. Specifically, participants are involved in AIMHO and NWACUHO as regional housing associations, and have been involved within their career, with ACUHO-I being the premier international housing association. Four of the seven participants have served as president for their member regional association for housing (NWACUHO, NWASAP, and AIMHO respectively).

Only two of the seven participants had children. Of the two with children, the children were under the age of 11 at the time of this study, and thus the participants indicated they had their children during the mid- to senior levels of their careers. When asked “what stage(s) of your career did you have children?” each identified mid-management and later in their career while serving as CHO.

Five Core Themes

Using thematic analysis of the demographic surveys, full transcriptions of each interview and resumes, along with member checking with each participant, five core themes emerged. Specifically, the themes which emerged from the narratives of these women related to their journey as CHO were: (1) Understanding of Housing Operations, (2) Self-Efficacy, (3) Gender Inequity, (4) Relationships with Staff, and (5) Mentorship.
Figure 2. Data collection five core themes.

Theme 1: Understanding Housing Operations

Understanding housing operations became a core theme as each participant shared that her lived professional journey focused almost solely within housing systems in higher education and more specifically mostly progressing up through residential life positions. Participants identified housing operations as a complex and dichotomous profession. Specifically, the core housing operations competencies that emerged focused on financial experience, facilities and operations, residential education, and strategic planning.

Kate was reflective on the impacts of the CHO position, which requires an understanding of business operations balanced with the institutional educational values, specifically residential education. Jill shared that she had intentions to be a teacher until
many mentors in her undergraduate career encouraged her to consider higher education, specifically housing, as a profession and to move on to graduate school with an assistantship in housing. Leslie served for over a year in an interim role in a senior level leadership vice president position while maintaining her CHO position and responsibilities. Leslie worked her way into the CHO position after serving nine years in the associate director level within housing at Pine University. Her entire history of education and career experience is within the northwest region of the United States at three institutions. Leslie served as president of her member organization within the northwest region, which is focused on student affairs professionals.

Kate advanced to the position of CHO by serving in multiple positions within housing and residence life. She has also worked in family housing, and for five years she held a position as a university judicial coordinator. Kate held the associate director of housing position at two large Research I institutions prior to becoming a CHO at Cyprus University. One of the institutions at which she served as associate director was within the northwest region of the United States. Kate's journey to complete her master's degree was done while working full time for three years as a residence hall director in a nine-story residence hall building. She has served as president of her regional association related to housing and participated in the ACUHO-I Standards Institute. These professional experiences demonstrate leadership and competency development within the housing profession. Kate shared the comparison of skills for housing operations in this way:

It often takes longer for women to get into the senior housing officer role than it does men. I mean part of it is that many of us have to sort of come up in residence life if you don't have the educational part. We're not always perceived as having strong budgetary skills and experiences and that we aren't as politically
savvy as our male counterparts. So I think it’s hard for us and we have to try harder.

Stephanie progressed to the position of CHO by working in multiple residence life and housing positions at Oak University. In addition, as an undergraduate student, Stephanie served as a resident assistant and later went on to graduate school in higher education. Her career has been solely within the northwest region of the United States. Much like Kate, Stephanie worked full time as a residence hall director while attending graduate school for three years. Also, during her career at Oak University, Stephanie once served as the interim vice president of her division so that her vice president could participate as the senior administrator for student affairs for Semester-at-Sea. Stephanie has served as president in her regional association related to housing and served in an executive-level position within ACUHO-I.

Christina’s career has been focused on housing, with only a two-year separation during which she served as a director in a department that serves grant-funded student success initiatives. Christina completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees outside of the northwest region of the United States, yet all of her professional experiences are from universities within the northwest region of the United States.

Kelly worked her way to the position of CHO by serving in multiple residence life and housing positions at Hemlock University. Kelly completed a coveted ACUHO-I housing internship during her undergraduate career before attending graduate school for her master’s in student personnel administration in higher education. Kelly also served as her regional housing association president. Kelly reflected on having not yet earned her doctorate. She shared that her partner graduated with his doctorate two
years ago; and it was a ten-year process that put a strain on the family. She has chosen delay the pursuit of her educational goals until some of the debt incurred is paid.

Kelly shared comments related to housing competencies in this way:

Getting through construction is an interesting world where I don’t have direct background. Definitely takes research, time and effort to figure it out and figure it out in advance. We had a great contractor who also when I asked questions about budget and timeline and things like that, was willing to share the information.

Jill has completed the ACUHO-I National Housing Training Institute and the ACPA Mid-Level Management Institute. Each of these associations provide a comprehensive program to support the leadership and competency of university housing professionals. Jill reflected on needing a strong work ethic and patience within her professional life to be successful as a CHO. She explained that the person in the position of CHO is expected to know so much that it is nearly impossible to keep up with the demands of the micro- and macro-level crises that occur daily. These crises inhibited the process of long-term strategic planning. She explained that the systems and the people eventually evolve and change, so one needs to be patient to determine priorities within the CHO scope of responsibility. When asked what she would have told herself in the past considering what she knows now about being a CHO, she replied. “I would have applied to be a CHO sooner.” She felt she waited too long in her career and reflected that low self-efficacy played a factor in her decision making of when and where to apply. In contrast, she identified that the stage in her career that she had her child was while serving in her senior role as CHO at the age of 40.
Elizabeth has had a rich career serving at many institutions in several regions of the United States in full-time professional positions in housing operations and briefly within career services. Elizabeth has a history of leadership within ACUHO-I which is foundational to premiere programs, including being the co-developer of the National Housing Training Institute and the Chief Housing Officer Institute. She has held faculty teaching appointments at previous institutions while serving in her role as CHO. Elizabeth has an impressive career that includes multiple published journal articles, books and manuscripts. She is the only CHO in this study with a terminal degree, a Ph.D. earned over 17 years ago. Elizabeth is the only participant in this study that has served as a CHO at more than one institution. She participated in the development of Core competencies for the CHO position within ACUHO-I.

Elizabeth discussed a growing trend in housing operations regarding privatized housing operations in contrast to housing systems within the institution, by stating:

If you look at a publication or a directory of the major players in the privatized student housing, almost all of their principles are white men. So, taking that to a little bit of an extreme, I think if institutions are interested in making sure that their housing operation is sort of doing its part from a business and financial point of view, I think there could potentially be a bias to pull people who have backgrounds in business and finance. Now, that’s not to say there are not women in that area, but in terms of people who are in the privatized student housing space they are predominantly men.

In addition, Elizabeth revealed an issue of whether or not there may be a shortage of opportunities for women to gain facilities and budget skills while working in residential life, which is the typical pipeline into the housing operations CHO position. She stated:
You may spend a lot of time if your career becoming expert and credentialed in the resident education student development arena, but then seemingly at the same time need to also become knowledgeable and credentialed in the business enterprise piece of it.

Stephanie identified issues related to understanding housing operations in this way:

Who is in the position is also dependent upon who they report to. So if there reporting to more the administrative or facilities side of the house, then there is an emphasis on someone having a background in facilities and operations and business versus the more traditional residential life piece. To get to a CHO level the latter, facilities and business operations, is going to override the former, in terms of the person with facilities experience.

Christina brought up competencies she received through working at a university in which housing operations were both private and public.

The university I worked for had two separate housing programs. One was run by a private foundation and the other by the university system. I worked for the private housing foundation. I got a lot of great knowledge and experience working with budgeting and the business side of running a department and realized very quickly I do not want to work in the private sector due to the lack of university rules and regulations governing the housing program.

As mentioned earlier, to understand the position of CHO, I depend on the professional association that focuses on university housing in higher education internationally. ACUHO-I is the premier international association focused on university housing operations (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). ACUHO-I created a researched-based competency model for CHOs. The model, developed in 2012, included 12 core competencies for housing professionals in the position of CHO. The twelve core competencies are sub-divided into three areas: direct service function, management function, and strategy and policy function. The twelve core areas include: human resources, occupancy management, fiscal resources and control, information technology, facilities management, ancillary partnerships, evaluation/planning, resident
educational services, student behavior, crisis management, conference services, and dining services (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). The core competencies demonstrate the complex scope of the position of CHO. This research supports the attention to many of the core competences that ACUHO-I models the CHO competency development model around. Each core competency was brought up during the data collection from the participants.

Theme 2: Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy was a common theme that emerged in each participant interview. Women in this study lacked confidence in their own abilities in comparison to how they perceive the abilities of their male counterparts. All of the women explained the need to first have experience in all aspects of the housing operations to be competitive to even consider to seek the position of CHO. Elizabeth observed that, in her experience, men tend to jump into CHO roles with confidence even if they do not have very much experience.

Elizabeth revealed her self-efficacy by stating:

I'm at a point now where I definitely have days where I wonder, do I know what I'm doing but it's a different kind of doubt. Because I know I can learn what I need to learn, I know how to ask questions, I know how to use resources.

Stephanie expressed her self-efficacy by stating:

The biggest lesson I have learned about myself is my lack of confidence. Especially early on and in some cases now when I'm in a new situation. Knowing that I had the confidence but not convincing myself that I did have it.

Jill explained self-efficacy and the impact she has on women colleagues in this way:
A lot of times I tell my women colleagues to apply for other positions sooner than you think you are ready for them. It’s often virtue of being a female, that your humble so you don’t think your good enough for that position.

Christina discussed self-efficacy in this way:

I have struggled in my career when I became a CHO at a very young age. I think that my colleagues had a hard time seeing that I fit at the table, especially sitting as a CHO with folks who had been in the field a lot longer than I had.

One of the lessons I have learned as I have faltered and made poor choices or have driven the department in a direction that is maybe not where we need to go. As a I reflect back and I look back and realize a lot of it was that, a) I did not trust my gut and, b) I did not sit back and look at the bigger picture.

The participants selflessly credited their success to others rather to themselves. Many participants questioned their own self-efficacy in their meaning making. Lacking self-confidence was not necessarily in the findings, but rather the lack of self-promotion was prominent. Women in the study were hesitant to claim or boast about their professional journey with high self-assurance. The female CHOs shared many times the need to be at the table with men and be effective based on competencies that are traditionally male-focused, such as facilities and budgets. For instance, Stephanie found herself in the senior level positions of CHO and interim vice president within an all-male group each time. She shared that she assumed she needed to prove herself to these groups. Later, she demonstrated expertise leadership style, and competency, and Stephanie noticed a difference in her effectiveness with the groups. She expressed this by sharing:

I rejoined an all-male group when I was acting vice president because they were all men at the table. They were great because I had relationships with them, they knew me and trusted my experience but again it’s interesting to me when I look around and the experiences I have had how many times I’ve encountered groups where I am the only woman. Initially, I have to prove myself in situations.
II think just having to prove myself I think in the beginning those to me were the things that uninhibited my success and I think it took me a while to really establish who I was as a leader because I was trying to figure out what I should be doing to prove myself. You get so caught up in proving yourself part that you forget about why you’re doing it right?

**Theme 3: Gender Inequity**

Gender inequity is a core theme to this study. Women identified how their gender is perceived and how they believe it has influenced their success in the position of CHO. Each shared struggles associated with being in and around settings as a CHO where they were the gender minority and shared feelings of pressure to defeminize their leadership styles to be effective.

When answering Question 3 (see Appendix F), focused on the impact of being a woman in her professional experience in housing, Kate shared the following related to gender equity and the comparison of gender competencies.

I think as a woman in this role or not just in student affairs, in residence life I think we have to work harder than our male counterparts. I think we are expected to do so much in our roles and what we do and how we do it; that the expectations for us are very high. You really have to work hard and put other things on hold in respect to your personal life, family and friends, if you want to get to where you are. It often takes longer for women to get into the senior housing officer role than it does men. So I think it’s hard for us and we have to try harder.

Stephanie addressed gender in her professional career by reflecting in the following ways:

So I did a lot of my own research. I didn't actually reach out to for their support. You know I think initially - so here I am saying to you that I don't really think my gender had anything to do with it but at the same time I recognize that I probably had to do more to prove myself because I was coming into a group that was well formed and they were all men. Yeah. So yeah there was some level of extra preparedness I felt like I had to do a little more to prove myself.
I think it was early on in my career when I had to build relationships and prove myself over and over and over again. I do not know if I was intentionally tested although I think there were probably people out there who did.

Stephanie further discussed gender inequities when comparing her past supervisors.

There was a male supervisor who was very catholic and very misogynistic and very close minded and he was very difficult to work for. I would say that my personal relationship with the 2 women supervisors was probably the strongest you know and professionally felt like they understood me more because of my gender. I do not think that he provides the emotional support that I get form the 2 women that were my supervisors.

Kelly reflected within her professional journey the following related to gender equity about how being a woman impacted her professional experiences in housing:

I would say that there has been several times that individuals outreached to me with a hand up as far as providing information and personal feedback. I would say that I'm not sure I would have received it otherwise. So while the director was out there offering or looking at some interim individuals he actually ran by me like, hey I'm looking at these folks to potentially be interim. I was like, what about me? He was like; I heard you're not interested! Those types of things happen and more, definitely I would have no doubt would have happened at that time had I have been male or identified as male.

Kate focused on an awareness of gender injustices and the ways she has managed to maneuver within a male-dominated culture related to being effective as a CHO. When asked what factors most inhibit her success, Kate responded by saying:

I think as women, we are viewed as the touchy feely parts of our department and I think when you have to say no to something or have to be direct to something that that's very difficult for people to see and to hear and to take that now. When we are direct and when we want something, that we're seen as a bitch. I don't like this term at all, I don't use this term. We don't have the ability to say no and no one will question it and they won't question the authority that they have. But when we do say no there's always going to be an expectation of touchy feely but we're being firm and saying no is a bad thing for us to do. Expectations of how we say things, versus our male counterparts is an issue.
Leslie shared that the majority of her supervisors throughout her career have been men. Further expanding on this, Elizabeth brought up this idea of the return of the glass ceiling in this way:

Without a credential, you may not appear to know or have the knowledge necessary so there could— That could be problematic because some folks have been very thoughtful and have in fact sought and MBA for example, but that’s not true for most of us. I think it’s a real challenge and I think it could maybe re-establish a little bit of a glass ceiling. Perhaps less because of gender bias and more because of an interest in the financial and business expertise, which I think still has a bit of a glass ceiling.

Elizabeth went on to share her experience with gender related to confidence:

It was really my doctoral program and specifically the dissertation that showed me my capabilities in terms of learning. I don’t want to overly simplify this but the tendency of women generally feel they really can’t take on the responsibility unless they’ve had that same experience. Generally speaking, men don’t hesitate. You know, will say “I absolutely can do this.” regardless of the fact that they have no experience directly related to the responsibility but perhaps similar. Gender inequity was further explored when reviewing Elizabeth’s professional journey in this way:

There have been some very specific points in time in my career where I do believe that gender played a very big factor. You know it’s a story you have probably heard many times and people tell many times is when you look around a table and you’re the only woman you can’t help but think how is this impacting the conversation. How is it impacting how what I'm having to say is being perceived and being received? Is it being received seriously? Are people politely acknowledging and then not really caring. You can't help but think about that and I know everyone - anyone who’s in a position where they are sort of in the minority have talked about that kind of feeling so I don't think its unique to me.

Jill recognized a combination of themes including self-efficacy and gender inequities in this way:

Facilities work is mostly done by men. Having to know electrical and engineering you don’t need to know as much detail that a lot of engineers need to know. I think sometimes men might look at you as a women who doesn’t, or wouldn’t, expect you to know. So I had to learn the lingo pretty quickly and walk around the job sites. Really just paying attention to the cues so at least I understood and sitting through some of the ongoing meetings, I don’t think as a CHO you need of
know some of the things people expect you to know but that gives you a lot more respect for the job. I think this has impacted me being a woman.

The women in this study mentioned spending significant effort, work, time, and energy to prove themselves as competent CHO's predominantly working with men in their position.

The fact that only two of the seven women had children could also be an example of gender inequity as it relates to achieving the CHO position as a complicated high demand position in comparison to men.

Elizabeth expressed the role of women in housing in this way:

I think people may be quite inclined to see women in a more educational function such as residential life, residential education. You know, places where there is a high degree of staff supervision and less likely to see women in positions where there’s a business and facilities function to the extent that a CHO role includes those things, I would speculate you may be less likely to see a female.

Stephanie discussed issues related to understanding housing operations, and the relationship with gender inequity in this way:

CHO's typically come from the facilities side of housing and residence life female and generally speaking and I am not trying to stereotype this at all but I think generally speaking males seem to gravitate toward the facilities side more so than females and therefore the people selected for CHO generally come from the facilities side I are more likely going to be male over females. The knowledge of facilities is valued higher than the knowledge of residential education.

Christina discussed issues related to gender inequities in this way:

I think that even in this day and age the choice to have a family is, someone has to carry said baby for 9 months, which falls on us. My colleagues are not actively going after a CHO role until later in life when their kids are out of the house. Women do not want the pressure of time and commitment split between job and family. I see women staying in the assistant director level position if they have children.

Although Jill is one of only two participants in the study that has children she
shared that she did not have children until later in her career when she had ascended to the CHO position. Jill discussed family as a gender inequity as well in this way: I think an inhibitor to being a CHO for a woman is having a family. It makes it harder to become a CHO. Having a family is a great challenge and it takes a lot of time.

**Theme 4: Relationships with Staff**

Most of the women commented on the importance of their staff and varying ways to connect and build relationships as the leader of the unit. Strong leadership supervision and mentorship emerged as a theme both received and given by each of the women. For instance, Stephanie explained, “I also think the ability to have formed my own team you know, a team that shares my values and challenges me and understands how to work together to achieve our goals.” Kelly further explained regretting not taking time to build deeper relationships with her staff:

I would say that if I were to turn back the clock to make sure and delegate more and spend more time on building deeper relationships with staff. I would say I have acquaintance relationships with all of our staff but when there’s personnel issues I find it to be more effective as a supervisor to have those deeper stronger relationships with staff and I would have done that earlier.

Stephanie reflected on the relationships with her staff and supervisor(s) as critical to her development as a CHO:

Also I think who my supervisor is certainly plays a role and I’ve had really incredible supervisors while I’ve been at Oak University and I’ve had a couple supervisors that weren’t incredible, let’s just say that. So I think all of those pieces play into it.

Each of the women identified the role that her staff have had in contributing to her professional success as a CHO. Most credited the relationship with their staff more than mentors as supportive persons within their professional journey.

Elizabeth reflected on the relationship with her staff and the optics of keeping up with the priorities of the position responsibilities:
Connecting the dots. Knowing who to communicate with when you know and knowing who has information that you might need or benefit from. So when I say communication its maybe more communication awareness. I think that's huge. I think that hiring good people. It doesn't take much for an organization you know, you make 1 or 2 notable mistakes or drop the ball on stuff you should have seen coming and people are going to start questioning your leadership.

Christina explained her relationship with staff in this way:

I surround myself with people I can trust. I surround myself with people I enjoy being around. I have a lot of conversations with my full-time staff about their own balance and their own ability to make sure they're doing what they need to do in order to be happy and healthy.

I trust my gut and surround myself with people I can work with and can get along with, that doesn’t mean I surround myself with people who are just going to tell me yes. I have to make sure I surround myself with staff that are strong enough to tell me that’s not where we need to go or need to do.

Stephanie expressed the relationships with staff in this way:

I am fortunate because I work with people and I worked with them for a long time. Maybe it would be different if I went to another university and had to establish relationships but because I’ve been here so long and so connected to people that work here, I get a lot of respect from people for the work that we do in housing. I really do think housing is respected at the university because of the relationships we’ve established with the rest of campus.

Theme 5: Mentorship

Most of the participants in this study mentioned that a professional mentor in the field of higher education encouraged them to enter and/or continue in the housing profession. Surprisingly, only two of the seven women focused on their career mentor during their interviews. Mentorship was threaded throughout each woman’s lived experiences as a theme. The importance of having support of other professional women or enlightened supervisors emerged. Recognition that others have played a role in their journey and success became evident. The lack of mentorship was keenly felt when women in the study lamented on their journey to become CHO. For example, Stephanie
was quick to share that the largest impact in her professional career was attributed to
the mentoring from a specific woman in her career. The mentorship and support she
shared were pivotal in her development in the profession. When asked about the factors
that most contributed to her success as CHO, she shared the following:

When I'm in a situation where I'm having to problem solve or resolve something I
think what would my mentor do? I use a lot of what I learned from her even
though it was now 27 years ago. She was the one that helped me kind of build
my foundation. So, that's certainly a huge factor.

Elizabeth shared the impact of professional women mentors in her career in this way:

I am fortunate in my current position to be surrounded by women leaders and
you know it's actually something I noticed when I got here to this institution and
still find myself going wow! We have a female President, we have a female
Athletic Director, the Dean of the Law school is female, and about three other
deans are female. There are very influential people on the campus.

In conclusion, the very last question of the second interview, was: Why do you
believe there are so few women serving as CHOs in higher education in the northwest
region of the United States? The first response from each woman showed a sense of
wonderment of the phenomenon. Christina cited decisions of family, pressures of time
and commitments and concern for added stress that mid-level professionals witness of
their CHO. Leslie cited an assumption that the northwest would be more liberal to
gender issues and ought to be more represented of the equality within the profession,
yet was surprised when the data were shared of women numbering only 7 of 27 CHOs
within the northwest. More than anything, what struck me was the fact that these
women have experienced uncertainty about this question and that they have not
automatically recognized that they are pioneers within the profession.

All seven participants have had careers solely in higher education at the time of
this study. Each were passionate about the housing profession and had positive
remarks about staying in the CHO position. Many similarities emerged with the
identification of the need for gender equity within their role of CHO. Several participants
commented on having to find the confidence and increase their self-efficacy when
working in what they identified as a male-dominated culture that is focused on the
business/financial operations and the facilities management aspect of the housing
operation responsibilities.

This chapter provided an understanding of five core themes that existed for these
women in this research study. The five themes are; (1) Understanding Housing
Operations, (2) Self-Efficacy, (3) Gender Inequity, (4) Relationships with Staff, and (5)
Mentorship. In addition, the demographics of the participants were discussed with a
focus on the commonalities related to age, education, and marital status. Understanding
the commonalities both demographic and thematic provides meaning when unlocking
the motivation to be CHO as a woman.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As presented in this study, five core themes emerged from the data collected using thematic analysis. This chapter reviews each theme from this research study as it relates to the literature, and provides discussion topics for future research to understand women in housing operations in higher education. Further, this chapter provides a discussion of limitations of the study, a discussion of impacts to higher education based on this study, and recommendations for future research.

Figure 3. Five core themes.
Theme 1: Understanding Housing Operations

Understanding housing operations is one of the themes that emerged in this research study. To fully understand housing operations, one must understand the current position of CHO. CHOs, or senior level housing officers, are responsible for the overall management of a housing operation at a university or college (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). The responsibilities of a CHO include, but are not limited to, supervision, contract and occupancy management, fiscal management, maintenance, strategic planning, personnel management, and long range housing planning. CHOs face these complex responsibilities on behalf of the university. Examples of the complex issues include facilities, budgets, deferred maintenance, staffing and long term planning, to name a few. Each woman in this study expressed the need be given specific training to demonstrate competency in facilities and business related areas to be successful in the CHO position.

This study is in line with the research of Taub and McEwen (2006). Descriptive research findings included awareness of student affairs as a profession, sources of information about career opportunities in student affairs, influence, confidence, and attraction. Two statistically significant differences in gender emerged: that “women were more attracted to student affairs by the desire to provide programs and services for students” (p. 212) and that women were more attracted “by the desire to continue to learn and develop in an educational environment” (p 212). My study supports this research as women in the CHO position need a master’s degree to attain the position based on the industry standard (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013). My research, highlighting
the participants’ stories through a narrative lens, uncovered motivations into the profession as early as undergraduate and graduate school experiences.

Theme 2: Self-Efficacy

The reluctance of these women in this study to articulate their stories and boast about their accomplishments was palpable. Self-efficacy emerged as a theme because the majority of these women lacked confidence in their abilities and lacked self-promotion.

Literature that supports these results includes the Creamer and Laughlin’s (2005) study, which confirmed that the relationship between self-authorship and career decision making are relevant. Using Baxter Magolda’s theory of self-authorship as a theoretical framework, Creamer and Laughlin (2005) affirmed that the subject’s journeys were relevant to decisions in the subjects’ lives related to their careers. Further, this research focused on three dimensions of self-authorship including: interpersonal, epistemological and intrapersonal. While this research was conducted on female students in college, it is relevant to this study as women shared their stories through a narrative of their own decision making of their academic and career progression.

Elizabeth revealed her self-efficacy by stating:

I'm at a point now where I definitely have days where I wonder, do I know what I'm doing but it's a different kind of doubt. Because I know I can learn what I need to learn, I know how to ask questions, I know how to use resources.

This study connects self-authorship and career decision making. As each of these women shared their lived stories focused on their career progression, each included interpersonal and intrapersonal motivations that impacted their decision making. For example, the reflection process to make meaning of their journey toward becoming a CHO was explored by each in a meaningful way through their educational
journey. While only one of the seven participants has completed a doctorate, each participant identified her educational accomplishment of their master’s degree and their assistantships, which gave her credentials and confidence in their abilities. In addition, each participant commented on her own personal drive that sustained her confidence in roles and responsibilities that they had to, in most cases, teach themselves.

Theme 3: Gender Inequities

Gender inequity is a core theme to this study. Women identified how their gender is perceived and how it has influenced their success in the position of CHO. The participants in this study cited ambivalence as to why women are not equally represented at the CHO level. Each shared struggles associated with being in and around settings as a CHO where they were the gender minority and shared feelings of pressure to defeminize their leadership styles to be effective. As women came to understand their own identity through this study, they brought up the issues of inequity coupled with gender. Gender inequity refers to the differences in power structures and prestige women and men have in groups. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men (Niddifer & Bashaw, 2001). Fairness strategies need to be available to compensate for women’s historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on level playing fields.

The study by Heilman (2001) on gender bias and the influences of women’s competencies align with my research findings. Heilman’s theory is that gender prevents women from ascending to leadership positions regardless of their abilities, due to organizational gender prescriptions. Heilman specifically identified performance evaluations in work settings as the catalyst that devalues women’s contributions and the
impact of gender bias. This connects to my research when understanding the participants' narrative stories of support through supervisors in an evaluative process of their positions.

McEwen, Williams, and Engstrom (1991) focused on a notion that the field of student affairs has a feminine lens. The study used a cross-sectional sample of 25 professionals in student affairs to investigate the environmental conditions, ramifications of feminization, effects of workplace, attributes demonstrated, and action steps to create supportive work environments. Findings from their research uncovered student affairs attributes that were characterized as nurturing, care oriented, and facilitative, thus creating a bias towards women to enter the field (McEwen, et al., 1991). While this study did include both genders, the findings are still relevant to my study, as the voices of my participants had insights into the feminization of the profession of student affairs. For instance, Kate shared the following related to gender equity and the comparison of gender competencies.

I think as a woman in this role or not just in student affairs, in residence life I think we have to work harder than our male counterparts. I think we are expected to do so much in our roles and what we do and how we do it; that the expectations for us are very high. You really have to work hard and put other things on hold in respect to your personal life, family and friends, if you want to get to where you are. It often takes longer for women to get into the senior housing officer role than it does men. So I think it’s hard for us and we have to try harder.

Gender inequity was further explored when reviewing Elizabeth’s professional journey in this way:

There have been some very specific points in time in my career where I do believe that gender played a very big factor. You know it's a story you have probably heard many times and people tell many times is when you look around a table and you’re the only woman you can’t help but think how is this impacting the conversation. How is it impacting how what I'm having to say is being perceived and being received? Is it being received seriously? Are people politely
acknowledging and then not really caring. You can't help but think about that and I know everyone - anyone who's in a position where they are sort of in the minority have talked about that kind of feeling so I don't think it's unique to me.

Kate shared the role of CHO and gender inequities in this way:

You have to watch how you say things and what you say because your intensity is interpreted differently as a woman than it would be as a male and that you are termed as aggressive if you say it with passion. Sometimes it's about holding back that part because then people are having an emotional argument and I have been accused of that so I feel a double standard with men. We have to restrict ourselves from coming from an emotional place and have to come from a place of logic to compete with men, otherwise we are interpreted in a completely different manner.

After comparing literature and my research findings, I found that the connection to women with careers in housing has relevance for the future of the profession of housing. Women may be forced to manage both feminine and masculine styles of leadership. Fitzgerald (2014) defined this phenomenon as a double bind. For instance, women need to present themselves as likable while being competent, capable and talented, while also being decisive. My study affirms this concept, as evidenced by the participants’ responses. The participants’ comparisons to men and identifying examples of gender inequity evolved as a common theme within my research. This theme emerged when participants discussed the need to have competence in understanding housing operations, demonstrate experience, and achieving credentials in comparison to men and areas of gender inequities that they cannot attain. Male privilege is the concept used to examine strategies or rights that are made available to men solely on the basis of sex (Niddifer & Bashaw, 2001). The title Chief Housing Officer denotes male or gender bias which is part of the social and political advantage on the basis of sex. The participants discussed the question of whether there were privileges granted to men over women and whether a dial was moving towards male dominated roles in
society through this position. Short of sharing examples of micro-aggressions or examples of indignant behavior from others during their professional experiences, there were areas that these women shared that identified a chasm of privilege associated with males. According to Case, Iuzzini, and Hopkins (2012) privilege is recognized as an automatic unearned benefit based upon perceived members of dominant groups based on social identity. Furthermore, Case, et.al., (2012) and Coston & Kimmel (2012) discussed male privilege benefiting and reinforced by androcentric social norms based on patriarchal design and historical binary developed by and for men. For example, when tasks are delegated, gender stereotyping with skill delegation development emerged toward gender abilities. De-myth and gender scripts or stereotypes are relevant as a theme of this study from these women’s experiences through gender inequity. These areas are the participants perceived expectations that are different for men and women as CHO's. As mentioned before, the areas of business, finance and being politically savvy are necessary to be successful of which these women articulated from their shared lived stories which indicated an understanding of typical male competency dominant areas.

The women in this study mentioned spending significant effort, work, time, and energy to prove themselves as competent CHO's predominantly working with men at all levels in their position. A common example had to do with gender roles and responsibilities of time away to work, motherhood and family when considering a terminal educational degree. Participants brought up the demands of being a woman in comparison to being a man in this area as a barrier. This is an example of gender inequity. Only one of the seven participants earned a higher education degree within the
northwest region of the country as defined in this study. None of the participants were working on their doctorate at the time this research was conducted. Throughout the interviews, only one of the participants without a doctorate addressed any context to earning their doctorate as a contributing factor in their professional journey as CHO. For instance, Kelly shared:

    My partner graduated with his doctorate two years ago but that was like a ten-year process, for us and our family. I’m not at a point to be able to dive in and make that priority. We have to pay off his doctorate first. I think the doctorate is probably the biggest inhibitor, I see that growing.

    The fact that only two of the seven women had children is also an example of gender inequity as it relates to achieving the CHO position as a complicated high demand position in comparison to men.

Elizabeth expressed the role of women in housing in this way:

    I think people may be quite inclined to see women in a more educational function such as residential life, residential education.

Winslow’s (2010) research provided insight suggesting that academia is built on a male worker norm. Further explaining that women in academia report issues of discrimination based on family demands and are viewed less qualified or less committed. Winslow postulates that women’s gender obligations to family are embedded in organizational structures. Contributions to this theory relate to allocating one’s free time and preferences may shape women’s schedules concerns with families. In comparison, Winslow’s (2010) research discovered similar inequalities with women faculty members and gender scripts. Using Hakims preference theory, Winslow provided understanding of women given “genuine choices” within the employment experience. In this study primary factors related to research vs. teaching
were the reward structures that differentiated genders. Cress and Hart (2009) found that women faculty members feel less included, less respected, less valued as academic researchers and less likely to be taken seriously than men. Is it possible that the gender differential within the CHO position exist due to of ‘genuine gender’ roles?

My research supports this theory using residential education vs housing facilities experiences as a contributing factor supporting gender inequity scripts of this position and women ascending the role of CHO. My study adds to the body of knowledge that expresses concerns with the many challenges women face when managing multiple shifts in their lives which connect to gender inequity.

Theme 4: Relationships with Staff

The participants’ relationships with their staff evolved as a common theme in this research study. Each participant mentioned the respect and dependency that they had on hiring and retaining good staff to help them be successful in their position as CHO.

Rosser and Javinar’s (2003) research focused on mid-level student affairs leaders and their intentions to leave their positions. They examined the quality of leaders’ professional and institutional work life by focusing on job satisfaction and morale issues. The findings identified individual perceptions of work life, satisfaction, and morale as reasons they intended to leave their positions. Professionals in student housing were among their research participants. The study of mid-level professionals relates to my findings of this theme of the relationship with student staff because the position of CHO is one to which someone ascends, yet the work done within the mid-level position influences how one does the work as a CHO. Thus the CHO's in this study
are focused on retaining the mid-level staff by improving work life and morale for instance, so that they, in turn, can be successful in their positions.

What I learned from my study related to the way these participants focused on the relationship with their staff is that these women show support and respect for their staff and directly attributed their success as CHO to their team.

Theme 5: Mentorship

A common theme that the participants in this study identified was the importance of mentorship. Research that supports my findings include a study by Jo (2008), which focused on voluntary turnover and women administrators in higher education. Jo’s research focused on why female administrators left their institutions. Using a cross-sectional research method, this research postulated that three key areas impacted voluntary turnover of women mid-level administrators in higher education: including supervisory skills, growth opportunities and flexible work/life policies. Jo also discovered a multiplier effect of turnover, meaning that the more these women experienced supervisor turnover, the higher impact it had on their decision to leave the institution themselves (2008). This research is significant to my study because of my focus on the question of what factors impact a female CHO’s decision to remain in the position.

What I learned from my study is that these women identified both mentors and supervisors that impacted their decisions often. Specifically, these mentors and supervisors were identified as significant influences on these women to enter and even consider the position of CHO within their career. Further, these mentors and supervisors impacted the journey of these women to keep them in the position as they served as
their support person to navigate the position and complex roles. Mentors were not exclusive to one gender in this study as well.

Research Questions

Based on what my findings uncovered, my two research questions were answered in multiple ways. As a reminder, the central questions of this study centered on developing a profile of women chief housing officers. The two research questions were to explore (a) the meaning making of these women’s professional career progression and, (b) the influences that contribute to their success and retention in the position.

Research Question 1

_How do female chief housing officers experience and make meaning of their professional career progression?_ This question was answered by this study in a few ways. The way women made meaning of their professional career progression was through direct self-discovery of their gender identity and professional self-efficacy working in housing operations. Participants shared many factors that contributed to their meaning making of the various ways they found success in their career progression. Themes that emerged specific to these ways included (a) understanding housing operations, (b) self-efficacy, (c) relationships with staff, and (d) mentorship. These themes were connectors that each touched on within their narratives. This study revealed that the participants were intentional in their professional career progression. Each participants’ entire career has been focused on housing operations, including assistantships in housing during graduate school. What also became clear is the career
progression as it relates to educational credentials beyond the master’s degree. Only one of the seven participants had completed a terminal degree (Ph.D.)

Research Question 2

What influences and experiences contribute to the participants’ journeys toward becoming CHOs and retaining that position? Results from this study indicate that women self-reported positive experiences of their past career decisions focused in housing operations. Themes emerged that contributed to their journeys toward becoming and retaining their position of CHO. The influences that contributed to their journey are both internal and external, such as their gender and the impact of male privilege. Women in this study expressed overt and covert levels of discrimination with which they learned to live. These women did not use gender as an excuse for their performance standards, yet expressed that they find themselves de-feminizing their own work styles to assimilate into traditionally the male gender roles. The 21st century movement in higher education to move towards the privatization of housing operations may be a contributing factor to this. A strong emphasis on housing as a business enterprise may actually serve to reinforce a glass ceiling for women who want to be CHOs. Women in this study expressed an internal passion and desire for housing operations as a dynamic and self-fulfilling career. Each woman shared stories that focused on their own self-efficacy of their desire to improve and achieve success in their CHO position.

In conclusion, there are surprises in my findings. What caught me off guard were two findings that emerged from my demographic study. First, only two of the women had children, and when they had their children, it was later in their careers as they
ascended to the position of CHO. This is interesting, as there may be a connection to personal family responsibilities pulling at women to consider or not consider aspiring to a CHO position. Women within mid-level positions of housing, such as assistant directors of residential life and housing, may be finding the ability to balance their careers, yet see that the CHO position is not one that supports having children. Cornwall (2007) created a conversation about the ‘gender agenda’ which relates to the rhetoric of de-feminization. Cornwall discussed gender myths of women being feminized as less powerful than men, and as poor and marginalized within roles of society norms. Thus the reverse of de-feminization related to women who demonstrate masculine characteristics in order to be perceived as effective in roles that are predominantly held by men. This finding further develops the idea of how gender and equity make meaning throughout this study. Do men have to be considerate of having children during their career like women do?

The second finding that surprised me is that only one of the participants in this study had achieved a terminal degree, specifically a Ph.D. I had believed that a way for a woman to increase her credibility in a male dominated profession was to seek advanced educational credentials. In addition, none of the women had studied business in their academic careers. This was surprising, as the CHO position is business focused with much needed knowledge, education, and competencies that business degrees provide. The reasoning of the participants to not pursue a terminal degree was due to the demands of the position related to time and the level of their commitment roles they serve to family. Niddiffer and Bashaw (2001) recognized a disproportionate number of women in administrative positions in higher education compared to the increased
number of women who received doctoral degrees. Also noted was the fact that when comparing the number of women in higher education senior leadership positions to the number of men, women held a disproportionate number of mid-level rather than senior level positions.

As a woman in the housing profession attempting to finish my doctorate while working full time and being a wife and a mother, I do not disagree with the reasons these women had to not pursue a terminal degree, as the costs of time and money are demanding. However, the one participant who did achieve her terminal degree does not have any children. Is the CHO position unrealistic for women with children?
Implications for Practice

Understanding the emergent themes in this study may enhance the experiences women have as CHOs. Emergent themes indicated that gender does influence how these female CHOs make meaning of their professional experiences. This research provides an in-depth look at how women in higher education experience their professional journeys and provides lessons for women who aspire to be CHO.

This study has many implications for several stakeholders in higher education. First, women interested in this profession can benefit from these women’s stories. Second, this research provides a lens of inclusivity related to senior administrative leaders who oversee housing programs who hire CHOs. This research can provide supervisors of CHOs some insight into what women experience so they can better recruit, train, support, and retain women into the profession. Implications exist for universities to consider the impact to housing operations as auxiliary units that report through business auxiliaries. Professional development plans need to be strategic for women in the profession of housing to have pathways related to business operational functions. Examples include apprenticeships, internships, and summits to gain valuable experience.

In addition, coeducation has impacted higher education profoundly. Studies like this demonstrate the importance of women in all ranks of the administration and leadership. Increasing access to women in the CHO position provides a pathway to senior administrative leadership positions that are predominantly held by men. Women leaders in housing operations are valuable and important for the profession of student affairs. The value is placed on the network of women managing complex systems and
responsibilities and inroads to a rich, yet demanding, profession. Most gender-dominated fields face issues relating to a lack in diversity and lack of contributions that increase the future of that field, this research is no different. Without the understanding of the shared stories of women in the CHO position we are unable to have an impact on recruiting, training and retaining women into the profession.

Further implications to higher education include the legitimacy of professional associations, such as ACUHO-I, that provide specific training of competencies focused on the CHO position. Without these associations’ focus on training, the CHO position could suffer deficiency of representation of not only women, but of competent and skilled persons for the profession of CHO in general.

Related to the emergent theme of self-efficacy, master’s level programs and assistantships have a significant relevance to the meaning making of women’s lived stories. The lack of self-efficacy and self-promotion are barriers to women’s success to move forward in any profession, and the CHO position is no exception.

If gender issues within the housing profession are not addressed, there may be an impact on future generations of women and whether or not they consider the CHO position as a career. Women in higher education have been credited for the feminization of student affairs and yet the CHO position may not be at pace with the gender representation of women and values of feminization. The housing profession must uncover the full scope of gender equity issues in the CHO position in order to be inclusive and accommodating to women for future generations. The de-feminization of the profession of student affairs, in general, must be addressed in order for student
service areas, such as housing departments, in higher education to be inclusive and competitive in the future.

The implications of this research are both hopeful and discouraging for women in higher education. Although the perception of student affairs is that the field is open and amenable to women, results suggest that in some senior level positions, such as CHO, gender inequity is alive and thriving. An increase in the number of women in the CHO position may only be noticeable when the industry of housing operations changes the preparation and practices of the mid-level housing position in step with the CHO position competencies. The climate of the organization related to issues of gender are significant in shaping participants meaning making of their experience as CHO. Implications of this study contribute to higher education and housing by providing a much needed body of knowledge related to women working in higher education, and their roles specifically within the housing position of CHO. Specifically, this research has given voice to the lived experiences of female CHOs in the northwest region of the United States at selected state public institutions that has not previously been studied.

Recommendations

Based on the implications presented above, the following recommendations could support and promote the success of women in the position of chief housing officer:

1) Senior student affairs officers should develop mentoring programs and succession plans for women to consider the position of CHO. Participants explained the technical skills or hard skills necessary to be a CHO. These skills should be incorporated into succession plans and professional development systems within each
university’s housing operations. For instance, when delegating tasks, housing staff should be made aware of gender stereotyping and its impact on skill development to avoid bias.

Professional organizations, like ACUHO-I, should stretch beyond an annual CHO training institute to provide more opportunities for professionals aspiring to CHO positions. Professional organizations should deliberately assess their professional models of training to be gender inclusive. For instance, historically, positions trained in facilities, deferred maintenance, and long term planning lack female representation and are often male dominated. When do people, specifically women, during their careers in housing, have the opportunity to be educated in facilities and maintenance operations? Professional organizations should strategically address the chasm of credentialing of when and how competencies are developed within a career in housing operations.

2) Gender identity and inclusion climate studies from human resources departments should be implemented within housing operations. Conducting climate studies can shed light on staff experiences within an area or the whole of the university. Perceptions, attitudes, and expectations studied in campus climate surveys provide data about how members of the university are valued and are experiencing their own reality. Data collected from climate studies can significantly impact institutional changes, such as improving the quality of work life balance, structures of organizations, sacred cows, recruitment, retention, and issues not otherwise noticed. For example, gender gaps may be noticeable within climate studies.

3) Specific cross-training of housing facilities operation and budgeting should be provided for women working in mid-level housing operations in order to be prepared for
a CHO position. Attending the CHO institute from ACUHO-I is imperative for all mid-
level and standing CHOs to be proficient and competent in the housing profession.
Meanwhile, each specific campus should create an institute that provides training for
facilities, operations, construction, budget and strategic planning at all levels.
Supervisors of CHOs have a responsibility to consider the type of tasks delegated and
the preparation development models for success in the position.

4) The results of this study uncovered a lack of diversity among the women
holding this position of CHO in the northwest. Administrators in higher education should
establish studies to investigate reasons for the shortage of women in complex
leadership positions as CHO.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a result of these implications professional organizations such as ACUHO-I,
NASPA and ACPA, should provide specific plenaries on gender, business practices that
focus on facilities, budgets and strategic institutional operations. These
recommendations to our practice in housing are critical to the health and future of the
profession. There is a significant breadth of literature committed to women in higher
education, yet there is very limited research and literature on women in higher
education working in housing operations. This dearth research provided an opportunity
to build this study, yet more studies should be conducted to understand the micro and
macro level impacts to women and housing operations.

This study provided a platform for female CHOs to share their personal
experiences as they journey through their careers in higher education, specifically in
housing. The women in this study provided insights rich in advice, and shared potential
hesitations for women aspiring to careers in housing as CHOs. It is important to examine the ways that the mentorship from these women currently in a CHO position are encouraging other women to consider moving into the position.

The serious lack of diversity of these women in this study within the northwest holding the position of CHO was significant to the study findings. Understanding the reasons for the lack of diversity is important for further studies.

Limitations exist when assessing findings within a research study. Considerations for further studies should take into account the limitations of this research. For example, interviews were conducted via Skype technology rather than in person with each participant. The timing of this study came at a time when each CHO was finishing their academic year and gearing up for summer conferences, housing fiscal year-end reports and debrief, summer conferences beginning, the need for vacation time, and also addressing their responsibilities to their universities’ orientation needs from housing. Most of the women in the study mentioned a level of fatigue and exhaustion they were feeling and mentioned a high work ethic and need for stamina to be successful in the CHO position. Further research that relates to resiliency and work ethic of persons in the CHO position should be conducted.

This study was restricted to a small number of women due to the six states of focus in this study. Further research beyond the northwest region of the United States would provide a broader scope of understanding of women in the role of CHO.

We need to explore what the family and educational capacity in the role of CHO as a woman. Recognizing the demographics of the participants in the study, particularly related to being married and their status of having children, became a significant factor.
that emerged. Two of the seven participants had children, and they had them in the mid-to late stages of their careers. This was not explored as thoroughly as it could have been within this study due to the constraints of the themes that were emerged from the narrative interviews. Further studies should consider the status of relationship status and children as female CHOs.

While gender was the core principal theme of this study, sexual orientation was not mentioned by the CHOs. Little research has been conducted on women in CHO position as stated before, yet now more than ever research on minorities such as sexual orientation other than heterosexual, is critical to understand the next generation of housing professionals.

We need to partner with privatized housing operations to uncover the themes brought forward in this study. We need to understand business practices and the avenues for cross training to support both public and private agencies missions.

My role is to educate and advocate for women in the position of CHO including women aspiring to the position. Our professional associations, beyond ACUHO-I, need to design educational plenaries on gender, business practices, facilities, budgets and strategic master planning within housing operations. We need to understand resiliency and work ethic of all persons in the CHO position.
Conclusion

As a woman, as a researcher, and as a practitioner currently working in housing operations in higher education, I believe that the connection between me and the participants had meaning. I believe this connection was based on the openness, accessibility when faced with busy work and life schedules and the sincere interest in the topic of the research that each expressed during and after the study. Their stories offer a dynamic view of women in the CHO position. In addition, this study is conclusive, whereby all participants that fit the criteria participated.

Recently, the climate of leadership for women provides examples of women achieving top positions in politics, like presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton. While I do not postulate that the position of the president of the United States is equal to the CHO position, I do claim that women have pioneered into the top positions amongst a historical hierarchy of male-dominated leadership roles. These female CHOs in this study are also pioneering a generation of women to see the possibilities of achieving the CHO position within higher education. The current national discussion based on our presidential candidates and conduct is centered on gender competency, gender inequity and gender bias. This research is relatable, timely, and important to the conversation and climate of the United States.

This research is valuable because it provides insights of women in the CHO position. More opportunities exist for women in housing operations in the CHO position as perceived gender minorities. Higher education has a disparity of representation within genders in the CHO position in the northwest region of the United States. Women in higher education have been credited for the feminization of student affairs and yet the
CHO position may not be at pace with the gender representation of women and values of feminization. It is imperative for leaders in the housing profession to address the issues brought forward in this study in order to support women holding the CHO position. These women are living pioneers in the field of higher education within housing operations, which provides hope for women aspiring to be in housing as a career.

Finally, the time has come for another transformative shift for greater gender equity in higher education. As a reminder, one of the most significant shifts in the history of American higher education, in the years after the Civil War, can be attributed to the coeducation of women and men in the academe (Thelin, 2011). It is noteworthy to provide context to the length of time of 201 years of unattainable access to higher education for women. Women in higher education administration today can credit their paths to a leadership position known as Dean of Women. The main purpose of their occupation was to manage gender segregation in colleges. Eventually the organization of NADW evolved into what is known today as the National Association of Women in Education (NAWE). In higher education administration, women established a foothold in the area of student affairs. Early increases in the number of women working in student affairs could be attributed to the need for colleges and universities admitting women to provide an environment that could be monitored more closely. *The College Housemother* by Reich (1964) demonstrated this turning point of more inclusive roles for women in a residential setting. The role of the college housemother has changed as universities and student demographics have evolved. There have also been significant changes in the roles of women in higher education working in housing operations.
Studies like this demonstrate a much needed call for another shift in higher education today, such as in the coeducation of professional positions like that of CHO.
APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
June 14, 2016

Dr. V. Barbara Bush
Student Investigator: Jenna Hyatt
Department of Higher Education
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 16-250

Dear Dr. Bush:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled "Women Chief Housing Officers at Select State Higher Education Institutions in the Northwest United States." The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh these risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only, June 14, 2016 to June 13, 2017.

Enclosed are the consent documents with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and use this form only for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications. If continuing review is not granted before June 13, 2017, IRB approval of this research expires on that date.

Please contact The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Chad Trulson, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

CT: JM
APPENDIX B

EMAIL INTRODUCTION FOR RECRUITMENT
Dear XXXX,

I am a doctoral candidate in the University of North Texas Higher Education Program conducting research for my dissertation. My topic is women chief housing officers at selected higher education institutions in the northwest United States. I am writing to request your participation in my study. I will be interviewing up to seven women chief housing officers (CHO) working at state, public four-year institutions in Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Utah. Because you work at such an institution and identify as a woman who holds the chief housing officer (or its equivalent) title within those six states, your participation is valuable to my research.

I plan to conduct my research in June 2016. I will send participants a demographic survey after the consent form is signed and before the interviews. There will be two interviews scheduled for 60 minutes each. Each interview will take place using Skype technology. Each interview will be arranged in advance, based on your availability. I will ask questions to understand your career path in the profession.

Confidentiality will be maintained through several means. Each interview will be audio-recorded. Recording is for data collection purposes, and all recordings will be secured for privacy and confidentiality. I will assign numbers to participants’ names and use pseudonyms for institutions. Also, I will use the generic term of CHO for each position title. The utmost care will be provided with all data collection and security of data. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas.

Please let me know if you can participate in this study. My deadline to finalize participants is June 11, 2016. I can be reached for questions via e-mail name@domain@com and by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hyatt
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
STUDENT INVESTIGATOR - INFORMED CONSENT NOTICE AND ADULT SUBJECTS

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Notice

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: WOMEN CHIEF HOUSING OFFICERS AT SELECT STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE NORTHEAST UNITED STATES

Student Investigator: Jenna Hyatt, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Higher Education. Supervising Investigator: Dr. V. Barbara Bush.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore the career paths of women in the position of chief housing officer (CHO) at select higher education institutions in the northwest region of the United States. This study will also explore why so few women hold the position of CHO and why they have remained in the position.

Study Procedures: For data collection, I will use a demographic survey, document analysis (review of your resume and directory information), and a semi-structured interview format. First, I will request your informed consent. After informed consent is received electronically, I will send you a link to a demographic survey and make contact to schedule the first of two, 60-minute interviews.

Interview data will be collected through two, 60-minute interviews using Skype technology.

The interview questions for the first interview will provide context to your work experience in housing and higher education in general. The first interview will include member checking from the survey. Interview will be scheduled for 60 minutes.

The second interview will be more in-depth and derived from analysis and interpretation of the first interview results. Interview will be scheduled for 60 minutes.

Follow up contact will be made with each participant by phone, skype and/or phone for member checking of transcription analysis and approval.

In the study, only pseudonyms will be used in reference to your name and institution.

This study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the department of counseling and higher education at the University of North Texas.
**Foreseeable Risks:** No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

**Benefits to the Subjects or Others:** This study may create new knowledge about the career trajectory of females in higher education that might benefit future generations of females seeking the CHO position as it relates to understanding the skills needed for the job as well as strategies for career advancement.

**Compensation for Participants:** None

**Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:** An audio-recording device will be used during the interviews. Audio recording using digital and handwritten notes taken during the interviews will be kept on a password-protected flash drive. All data and files will be kept in a locked file drawer in my office on the campus of Central Washington University. Data will be stored with the Higher Education program at UNT with Dr. V. Barbara Bush. Both data sets will be kept for two years after the dissertation is published before destruction. Data will be deleted from all electronic files as noted in the IRB protocol.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree possible given the technology and practices used by the online survey company. Your participation in this online survey involves risks to confidentiality similar to a person’s everyday use of the internet

**Questions about the Study:** If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Jenna Hyatt at [contact info redacted] or Dr. V. Barbara Bush at Barbara.bush@unt.edu or 940-565-4288.

**Review for the Protection of Participants:** This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants’ Rights:**

Your participation in the survey confirms that you have read all of the above and that you agree to all of the following:

- *Jennifer Hyatt* has explained the study to you and you have had an opportunity to contact him/her with any questions about the study. You have been informed of the possible benefits and the potential risks of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You understand you may print a copy of this form for your records.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCRIPTS
INTerview script

15 MIN SKYPE/PHONE

I. INTRODUCTION OF MY TOPIC AND MYSELF

II. CONSENT FORM REVIEWED AND SIGNED (SIGNATURE/FORM RETURNED THROUGH SCAN DOCUMENT 1 WEEK PRIOR TO INTERVIEW)

III. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY & RESUME (REQUESTED RETURN ONE WEEK BEFORE FIRST INTERVIEW)

IV. FIRST INTERVIEW

60 MIN SKYPE

1. Follow up questions for member checking of demographic survey and resume as needed.
2. Please describe your professional journey that has led you to the position of chief housing officer (CHO).
3. How has being a woman impacted your professional experiences in housing?
4. What are the factors that most contribute to your success as CHO?
5. What are the factors that most inhibit your success as CHO?
6. What is the biggest lesson you have learned about yourself on your professional journey?
7. If you knew then what you know now, what would you tell yourself about being a CHO?
8. Specifically, what keeps you in the position of CHO?
V. SECOND INTERVIEW

60 MIN SKYPE

1. Member checking for relevant patterns from first interview.
2. Ask additional questions raised by recurrent theme(s) from first interview.
3. Why do you believe there are so few women serving as CHO\s in higher education in the northwest region of the United States?
APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
1. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older

2. Do you identify as woman?

- Yes
- No

3. What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- White / Caucasian
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

4. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?
Married
Widowed
Divorced
Separated
In a domestic partnership or civil union
Single, but cohabiting with a significant other
Single, never married

5. Do you have children? If so gender, age(s) and number of children.

6. If you answered Yes to question #7, what stage(s) of your career did you have children?

7. Please list all professional associations with which you have been affiliated over the course of your career.

Thank you very much for taking the time to be a part of this research study.

To finalize this demographic data collection would you please upload a copy of your resume and/or vita and email to hyattjenna@yahoo.com as soon as possible.
REFERENCES


University.


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Winslow, S. (2010). Gender inequality and time allocations among academic faculty.

*Gender and Society, 24*(6), 769-793.