CHALLENGES WOMEN FACE

IN SMALL BUSINESS

LEADERSHIP ROLES

A Project Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Stanislaus

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

By
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November 2017

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

A special dedication to my daughter, Chevelle Reyes for her unspoken gratitude and patience. She is my primary motivation to work towards making this world a better place for her future and for the future of a new generation of women leaders.

I would also like to dedicate this to my parents, Eloy Ruiz and Silvia Ruiz, my sisters and brothers, Crystal Ruiz, Cynthia Ruiz, Eloy Ruiz Jr., and Charles Ruiz, for always pushing me towards my education and for always believing in my ability to succeed. A special thanks goes to my graduate school peers and my amazing coworkers who believed in me.

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ABSTRACT

Despite previous efforts to increase and encourage more women in businesses and corporate leadership roles, women are still disproportionately underrepresented, especially in small businesses. Women are continuing to find it difficult to be in leadership roles in workforces that are predominately run by men. Challenges such as society stereotypes, social norms, the glass ceiling, and the glass cliff add to challenges of discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, which have created barriers that discourage women from moving upward. Studies show that the absence of women in leadership roles affects not only businesses and corporations, but also the community, the family, and the economy. An increase in data and research has shown the positive effects of gender equality that precipitate when both genders combine their unique perspectives and move towards solution-based and problem-solving techniques. Although research has increased awareness, slow progress in the efforts of gender equality in business have barely made any changes in women's experiences in the workforce. A variety of strategies are presented in this paper to continue awareness of this issue through the experimental use of small businesses working towards gender equality and influencing other businesses to take a similar approach.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States is the most diverse country in the world, yet in a country that does well economically, environmentally, and educationally, it still struggles with the concept of women in leadership roles; especially in the small business world. In recent years, small efforts have been made to change the way businesses encourage gender equality and diversity in their workforce, which presents a challenge for not only women, but for the economy, the work environment, and the family structure. In 2012 in the United States, more than 9.9 million businesses were owned by women. Out of these businesses, $1.4 trillion was generated in sales (McManus, 2017), and the businesses employed 8.4 million people ("Women-owned Businesses," 2012). The role that women leaders play in the workplace is critical to the work environment and its employees in the long-run.

In this paper, further research and data will be presented to obtain a view of the effects of the lack of women in leadership roles and encourage an awareness of the positive outcomes that occur when both men and women work together as a unit. Small businesses can partake in these productive techniques by modeling a behavior that encourages gender equality, diversity and growth and allows women to test the grounds to succeed and influence change that would assist employees to innovate and thrive in their workplace. Furthermore, this foundation would encourage more young women to see themselves in the shoes of other successful women.

Society Stereotypes and Bias of Women Leaders

Stereotypes are defined as a set of beliefs and expectations of a specific set of groups (Lippman, 1922). In order to obtain a greater understanding of stereotypes, it would serve first to understand the psychological reasoning for why stereotypes exist in the first place. Stereotypes are a "….fundamental part of our ability to process, remember, plan, and act and as such, stereotypes are regarded to be byproducts of basic processes of perception and categorization, learning, and memory" (Stevens, p. 15102, 2001). It assists the brain in creating shortcuts much like filing cabinets are used to file and organize, we program our brains to categorize groups of people to save time from cognitively processing groups individually or by person. Unconsciously, these stereotypes without intention have trained women to perceive their role as being primarily at home, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. It is further emphasized on television ads of cleaning and cookware products where women are primarily used as models to aim and reinforce the role of a woman. Children are taught at a very young age that pink is for girls and blue is for boys. Toy products are predictably geared towards appealing to the girls in play cookware, baby dolls, toy cleaning supplies, and playhouses. Cars, toy construction materials, toy guns, toy weapons, and science games are geared towards boys. Again, marketing is reinforcing stereotypes that encourage boys to build and cognitively use their imagination while women are encouraged to cook, clean, and play house. These associations can become heavily ingrained in our subconscious and are often reinforced in school. Eventually, the stereotypes can keep both men and women from
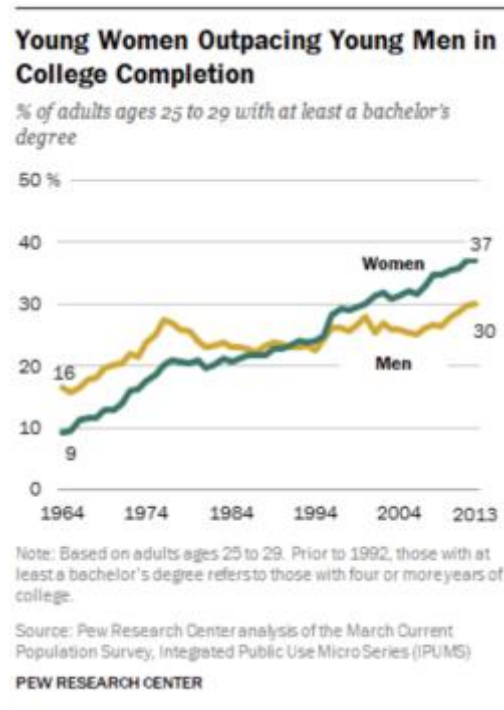
progressing in the workplace. For girls, being a leader falls out of reach. If a girl is outspoken, confident, or gives orders she is called "bossy." If a boy is outspoken, confident, or gives orders, he is the boss and is described as a leader (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). Furthermore, these stereotypes hurt women by keeping them from moving forward due to the biases of men and women.

A case study conducted by Flynn and Anderson at the Harvard Business School, later known as the Heidi & Howard syndrome, focused on measurements of success and the likeability of women in leadership roles (McGinn & Tempest, 2000). In this study, both professors split the class in half and described of a real-life successful venture capitalist named Heidi Roizen. Heidi Roizen is described to the first test group as a successful entrepreneur whose success was primarily driven by her likeable personality and her great networking abilities. The second test group described Heidi again, except the name was changed to Howard. Afterwards, both groups were asked for their opinions about the individual. Both groups replied that both characters were equally competent, however generated comments where some students described Heidi as being "selfish" and "not the person you would like to work for or hire" (McGinn & Tempest, 2000). Although both groups had the same individual described, both generated very different responses; Howard generated the most positive and Heidi the most negative, further reinforcing the stereotypes that women who are leaders are portrayed by society as negative, and men who are leaders are portrayed as a positive. Men are portrayed as showing signs of power, prestige, and control when they are bosses and leaders; therefore, men enjoy an

increase in likeability by those around them. Women bosses, managers, supervisors, or leaders are strongly perceived as a negative to society. There is a positive correlation for men to become leaders and hold power, while women in power are perceived as negative and their level of likeability is decreased. This double standard has become problematic in the workplace, especially in small business organizations or industries that are male-dominated or primarily run by men. Stereotypes become an extra barrier and wall for women, especially women of color. Assumptions further raise the wall women must climb in order to get to the top. Women have created many of these barriers for others and themselves. In the aforementioned study, women were also part of the group describing Heidi and Howard. Women unconsciously put other women down and discourage the need for other women to succeed in the business world. These extra barriers make it more difficult for women to break into small businesses. Because people become so wrapped up in the fast-paced world the battle to move upward becomes a struggle which further leads to complacency for women working minimum wage jobs as secretaries or assistant roles. Another study conducted by the Pew Research Center Women & Leadership (2015) concluded that 43% of women felt that one of the many reasons they held themselves back from top leadership roles was because they were held to a higher standard than men. Even today, only 32 women CEOs led companies on 2017's Fortune 500, which is the highest number of women on the list in the last two decades (Zarya, 2017). Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the amount of
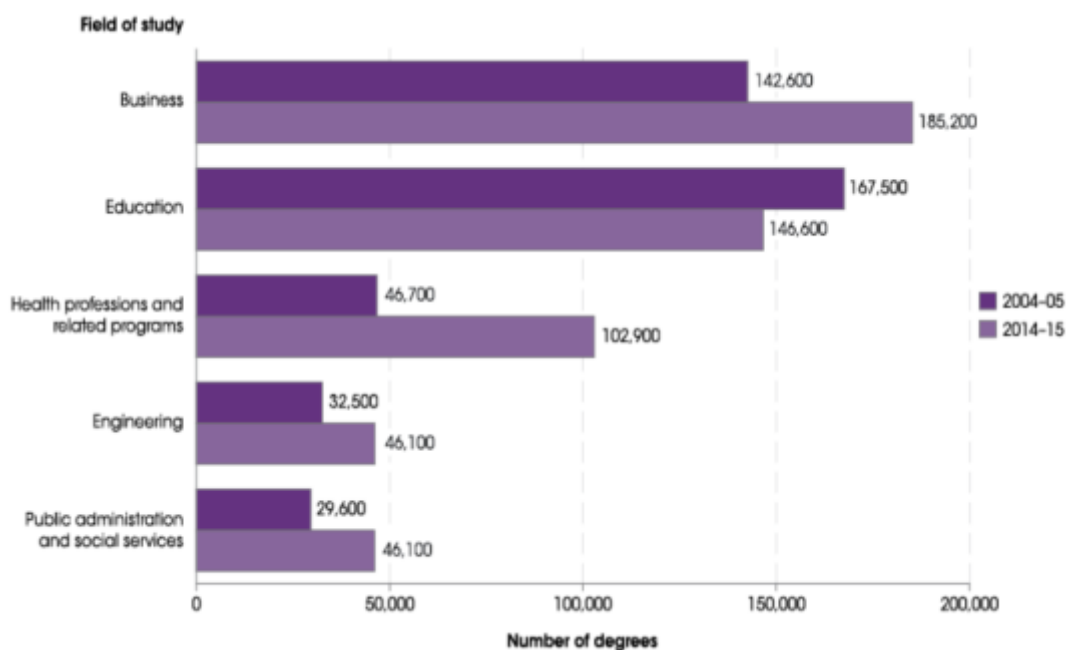
degrees obtained by women, yet when compared to how many businesses are ran by women, it still is disproportionately unbalanced.

Recent studies have shown that women are continuing to outpace men in education (Figure 1). More women now are also more likely than men to continue their education after their bachelor's degree. In the year 2015, the Pew Research Center Women & Leadership recorded women earning about 36% of the Master of Business in Administration (MBA) degrees (Pew Research Center, 2015). The chart derived below from the Pew Research Center shows a steady increase in women obtaining their bachelor degrees over the years (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Young Women Outpacing Young Men in College Completion

% of adults ages 25 to 29 with at least a bachelor's degree

Note: Based on adults ages 25 to 29. Prior to 1992, those with at least a bachelor's degree refers to those with four or more years of college.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the March Current Population Survey, Integrated Public Use Micro Series (IPUMS)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1. Since 1964, women are outpacing men in college degree completion, earning bachelor's degrees at a higher rate. Adapted from Pew Research Center (2015)

Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics recorded an increase in women obtaining graduate degrees and an increase in doctorate degrees by women (Figure 2).

Field of study

Figure 2. From the periods 2004 to 2005 and 2014 to 2015 the rate of doctorate degrees for women had increased by 26,500 women or by 39% ("The Condition," 2017).

The imbalance of such statistics brings into question why women are still disproportionately underrepresented in the business world and why women are not landing more corporate or business leadership roles even after statistics have proven that more women are obtaining more educational degrees at a higher rate than their male counterparts. Asking these questions is just the beginning of awareness and a link to further research. Although women are not proportionately landing leadership roles at equal rates compared to men, education has provided the needed assistance for women to stand out in the workforce. A collection of unforeseen barriers that are

uniquely felt by women is known as the glass ceiling. These invisible forces, if not recognized, carry detrimental effects that create challenge and discouragement for women even though their education may suggest a move towards a leadership role.

The Glass Ceiling to the Glass Cliff

The glass ceiling is a metaphor that is used to describe the unforeseen or the invisible barriers that keep women from moving up the corporate or business ladder (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009). Society's perception of what gender a leader should be is heavily intertwined with stereotypes. These stereotypes include men being leaders, and women being nurturing, stay-at-home mothers. These stereotypes contribute to male leaders being positively viewed as successful, powerful, and likable, whereas women leaders are seen as negative, less liked by their peers, and selfish. These perceptions and biases can be used to prevent women from moving forward and inhibit them from trying to take lead positions. In small businesses, where male dominance is prevalent, it becomes even harder to speak up, and perceptions of leadership can silence women through a fear of speaking up and, even worse, being wrong. It becomes easier to cocoon the ego instead of gaining momentum by moving forward, learning from mistakes, and improving.

These perceptions and unconscious stereotypes not only damage women but the United States' economic growth. On average, women are still earning less than men, even though many are equally qualified and skilled. Low pay rate is still an issue even in instances where the job requires more out of the female employee. In the United States, on average, women are still being paid 80 cents to the dollar, black

women are paid 63 cents to the dollar, and Hispanic women only receive 54 cents to the dollar compared to non-Hispanic white men ("America's Women," 2017). A total of $840 billion every year is lost to these wage gaps for women. This hidden wage gap poses an unforeseen hidden risk to businesses and the economy. The wage gap affects the family's ability to contribute to the economy and further invest for their future, since "more than 15 million families in the United States are headed by women" ("America's Women," 2017, p. 2). Globally, a study conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2015 compared the wage gap between men and women, where women today are earning what men earned 10 years ago at $11k, compared to the men who now earn $21k (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2015). These statistics are unavoidably perpetuated in small businesses. This treatment of women is an issue for small businesses because the less a small business respects the need for female leaders, the lower the glass ceiling is for the women who work there.

So, what happens when a woman breaks the glass ceiling and reaches their potential? The potential of falling off the glass cliff becomes the "new" barrier to women in leading roles. The glass cliff is best described as the cliff to failure. As soon as the woman breaks the glass ceiling and becomes the lead manager, supervisor, or CEO, a new set of challenges and fears exist: the fear of failure; the fear of losing the position; and the fear of proving society right, that women are not meant to lead or hold higher positions of power. The glass cliff is described as a position for a woman in a leadership role where the likelihood of failure is higher

than the likelihood of success. The glass cliff ultimately pushes women out of their leadership position due to lack of support and understanding and sets a woman up for failure. This technique can also be used as a sexist approach to further restrict women from being in leadership roles. Some studies even suggest that women may be put in positions of power during times of crisis in companies because of their nurturing, compassionate, and interpersonal skills. When these skills do not work, they become replaced by white men, part of the "savior effect," who represents the original image of what a leader should visually look like (Haslam, 2009). Again, reinforcing to the public to believe that women are just not equipped to lead.

Another concept derived by Ryan Haslam, "think crisis-think female" which describes the need for women during crisis moments for their female attributes to put a team back together (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). Also, described as a call to women during the time of chaos in a company (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). The invisible challenges women face can keep employees from innovating and prevent companies from attracting the best talent. Some would argue that they exist because of discrimination and harassment.

CHAPTER II

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment in general has evolved over the years. In many ways, it has evolved to accommodate the ever-changing obstacles that businesses have to encounter to remain innovative and ahead of the market. One of the many changes that has taken place over the years has been the integration of women in the business world. Although positive changes have taken place to include more women in leadership roles, discussions and issues such as discrimination and sexual harassment are still prevalent issues that continue to exist. Due to these reoccurring issues, legislation has been introduced to protect both women and protected classes from being discriminated against and being sexually harassed in the workplace.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 established clear guidelines in an effort to dismantle and prevent overt discrimination in the use of gender and to deter companies from basing their hiring decisions on race, gender, and ethnicity. Title VII recognized the need for such guidelines to assist in the protection of minority individuals because it clearly recognized the repercussions discrimination would carry out in the workforce. Not only has discrimination and harassment formed barriers, it has also contributed to the creation of challenges that women face in the workplace. Discrimination in the workplace can be even more dangerous for smaller businesses that have no human resources department to assist them with proper investigation and justice.

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as an unfair and prejudiced treatment based on a person's ethnicity, race, age group, or gender. Discrimination presents a barrier in an organization due to the block of advancement in a small business. Discriminatory practices affect the way people are hired and promoted. A decision that is based on gender can create a roadblock for women wishing to move up the ladder and creates disadvantages for further training and education within the workforce.

This form of discrimination can be done unintentionally, including through the simple drafting of a job description and how it reads. Most job descriptions are written mostly by men and geared towards a male audience. Those who create the job descriptions are heavily comprised of men because they make the majority of the management team in small and large businesses. This imbalance is also problematic because men in higher positions generally tend to hire other men who resemble themselves without even being aware that they are doing so (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009). Once a female miraculously beats the odds by being a part of the team and wants to advance, she must go through the same rigorous process to stand out from the rest. Discriminatory obstacles are stacked against her, and her success becomes more of a struggle than an accomplishment. Although unintentional or intentional discriminatory actions have been brought into the light in the past few years, progress has not moved as fast as many women in business wish it would. "At our current pace of change, it will take 100 years for women to reach parity in the system" (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). Many more women and minorities will have to endure

discrimination before a large change takes place. Additionally, discrimination has not been the only overt form of oppression towards women. Women also experience sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment

In the business world, sexual harassment is defined as an unwanted sexual advancement by a superior without consent. Another controversial form of sexual harassment includes *quid pro quo*, which is something that is given or asked by someone in power with the promise of exchange for something else. This exchange can be through a demand, threat, or manipulation (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002). A woman's low status and low power in the workplace, wage gap, and occupational segregation makes them a perfect target for sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is just another form of discrimination that falls under the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although it was not what it was originally intended for, Title VII came to be used as a sword of protection against sexual harassment in the workplace and in the education sector. The U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) continued by adding clear guidelines against sexual harassment in the workplace. Both topics included *quid pro quo* and hostile work environment as two existing types of sexual harassment in the workplace (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, 2002).

Unsafe work environments add to the stress women face in today's workplace. Many women hear subliminal messages from male counterparts or managers who blur the lines between what is and is not sexual harassment. Although, Title VII

created guidelines to reporting, the legislation cannot prevent situations such as these from occurring. Women still fear the repercussions if they were to report sexual harassment and the stigma that comes along with reporting. They fear retaliation and the loss of their job or career (Vijayasiri, 2008). Women fear they will not be believed; they blame themselves; or more egregiously, their work environment blames them. Due to a concern over legal battles, studies have also shown that some companies have discouraged reporting to avoid legal repercussions and to avoid public attention. At times, companies informally discouraged reporting by having the victim confront the harasser, which further discourages the victim from moving forward and makes the reporting process unsupportive of potential victims (Vijayasiri, 2008). Ultimately, the lack of trust in the reporting process may be a deterrent to reporting sexual harassment in the workplace. Business size can become a barrier due to a lack of people to guide victims in regards to identifying and supporting them through the reporting process, if it is available. Large businesses have human resource divisions that can create a separation in ways that assist in reporting whereas smaller businesses do not.

Another barrier exists as women rise higher in the management grid because less women are around them, and low numbers can create isolation that makes for an ideal environment for sexual harassment to go on behind closed doors. A survey conducted by the National Association of Female Executives in 1991 recorded 53% of women in executive positions had been sexually harassed in the workplace (Galen, Weber, & Cuneo, 1991). The study does not exclude executive men, where in this

study, 26% of men reported that they had also experienced some form of sexual harassment in the healthcare field. In some instances, women executives described, "the higher up you climb, the worse the harassment gets" further deterring women from moving to the top (Bell, McLaughlin, & Sequeira, p. 70, 2002). Under these circumstances when women look for support, only a handful of women are available as guidance, and only a very few can offer advice. Awareness and education serve a progressive purpose, but with a lack of women and men working together towards resolution, very little change is likely to take place.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM WITH A LACK OF MENTORS

Women in the workplace look up to people who resemble them and share

similar goals and aspirations. Due to a lack of women in leadership roles, women in

small businesses lack support and guidance from other women due to a scarcity of

women leaders around them. Others argue that mentors should not only be made up

of women only but could include men and other lower level employees (Sandberg &

Scovell, 2013). Many argue that gender should not be a determinant of what makes a

great mentor, but instead the collaboration and unique experiences that contribute to

the development of a successful woman in a leadership role. Other efforts have been

established by companies to integrate programs that assist in the mentoring and the

support of women in leadership roles.

The Lack of Women Mentors

Barriers and challenges that women face today have contributed to a lack of

women in leadership roles, which has affected the number of women mentors in the

workforce. This lack of female role models also means less women mentors can offer

support and a chain of network available to women, especially in small businesses.

Women who do not see women role models are less likely to be inspired to see

themselves as leaders or have a harder time of envisioning themselves in management

positions (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hageman, & Josephson, 2017). The impacts of

women mentors can impact other matters such as sharing of experiences on policy

changes, work-life balance, maternity and/or parental leave, and other supportive policies that can benefit both men and women (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hageman, & Josephson, 2017). Studies have also shown that women are more likely than men to prioritize these issues as it is a perspective most men have not yet come to realize. A lack of mentorship can decrease innovation and other missing problem-solving techniques that are crucial in an ever-changing society. Men benefit immensely from other male leaders because they carry an abundance of experiences and approaches that can be useful when handling difficult situations; however, others may argue that male experiences are not always different from what a woman would experience in regards to work-related issues (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). In fact, interactions with both male and female role models can create for a more well-rounded individual.

People tend to gravitate towards those who carry the same similarities. The same would go for finding mentors who are the same gender. It is easier to talk to someone who understands the existing challenges and barriers that a woman faces, rather than having to re-explain those challenges and feelings in detail with a man who has never experienced such unique difficulties. It is easier to start with someone who has been there and experienced these challenges firsthand as a woman (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hageman, & Josephson, 2017). As noted before, women tend to carry deeper connections with those they work with. They go beyond the ego and deeply connect at an interpersonal level more often than men do (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2015). The connection can apply to a mentor who would work as a team to face challenges together. While many women

have agreed that the lack of mentors has been an issue, others have moved towards action by beginning their own mentorship programs that have assisted them with finding alternative answers to their struggles.

<div align="center">**A Mentor and Mentee Web-Based Program**</div>

Women seek mentors to guide them and support them through the difficult barriers and challenges that exist especially if she is thinking about moving up the ladder in a small business world. In the book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and The Will to Lead* by Sheryl Sandberg (2013), she describes the need to end the search for a mentor and focus on moving forward by allowing oneself to learn from other employees, peers, and those around the workplace. Studies have also supported Sandberg's (2013) belief that protégés are selected based on their current performance, potential, will to learn, and lead (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997). While others agree with the same notion that women must redirect their focus on the search for a mentor, others have learned to redefine and reshape mentorship programs that have contributed to success.

Frustrated with the lack of men and women mentors Xerox's Women's Alliance created a new way of connecting mentors and mentees through a web-based technological system. This system links mentors and mentees through a creation of profiles. These profiles assist both mentor and mentee to navigate and find each other based on interests, expertise, and desired areas of development (Carvin, 2009). The mentor and mentee then make time to meet in-person to gauge and make connections. A five-year study of 1000 participants in the technological programs found that

mentees were 5 times more likely to be promoted and mentors 6 times more likely to be promoted as well (Carvin, 2009). Additionally, 71% of the Fortune 500 businesses have technological mentorship programs that assist in linking appropriate mentors and mentees together. The success of the mentor relationship is correlated to the proper networking tools and the ability to seek and connect with a mentor that fits each other's needs (Carvin, 2009).

Much like a dating game, the negative to the technological mentor program is the amount of time it takes to make a match. A match can take up to a few hours to a few weeks. The challenge of finding a match has been geared towards allowing men to be a part of the solution because women are still finding it hard to find time to be mentors (Laff, 2009). Due to a lack of women mentors, males have stepped up to the plate to assist women. During the first year of opening to men, some mentorship programs found an influx of men willing to help (Laff, 2009). Although women face different experiences in regards to gender, the experiences of business challenges are still very much aligned, regardless of gender. Coincidentally, in some mentorship programs, women felt just as comfortable and open about discussing their challenges with men, like they did with other women. When both men and women join forces to combat discriminatory acts and understand the purpose and benefits of an inclusive and equal work environment, more benefits follow these decisions for all.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENCE & THE MODERN-DAY WOMEN'S

MOVEMENT

External barriers and challenges are mechanisms of oppression whose

solutions take time and effort. People often concern themselves with the outer layer of

a problem because it's tangible and visible. However, people have a tougher time

analyzing themselves and looking within. Only a person living through a situation can

learn how to adjust and best motivate themselves. Historically, men and those in

control are considered responsible for placing a belief of limitations or inability upon

women. While some women rebelled against this taboo, many found themselves

complacent with the thought. Those who found themselves rebelling against the status

quo were part of the women who began the Women's Suffrage Movement and with it

the Women's Right Movement. These movements set a platform to empower women

and served as a way to remind women to continue pushing forward, not only for

oneself but for the greater good of society.

Reviving the Women's Movement

The Women's Suffrage Movement and the Women's Rights Movement were

instrumental in recasting the narrative of women's lives in the early 20th century. A

strong will to succeed and be heard encouraged the birth and enactment of the 19th

Amendment to the United States Constitution as a right for women to vote. The 19th

Amendment also made society more aware of the challenges and barriers women

faced. "The movement brought about major changes in the lives of many women, and also in everyday life in the United States" (Epstein, 2001). This movement continued its momentum well into the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

The movement that allowed for awareness and action soon saw a quick decline in the 21st century. Unfortunately, in some instances the word feminism has become a negative term and social conservatives have historically discouraged women from speaking up by playing on their fear of being labeled a feminist (Epstein, 2001). Women are now living in a modern age where progress is slow and over time it has slowly declined. As Sandberg, CEO of Facebook makes mention in her book "Lean In," the world of feminism has seen a decline over the years (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). The movement that once moved mountains is now what students read in history books. The business success that most women have obtained, have been attributed to the battles women activists have fought in the past, and Sandberg (2013) reminds readers that their fight must always be remembered as women move forward. Reviving the women's movement could encourage more women to make change for their families, the next generation, and set an example for the world. It may encourage other women to find their voices and be equals in the business workplace and at their homes. It would support small businesses run by women and hopefully see a growth in our economy with more jobs and diverse work settings. The work of the Women's Movement has not finished, and there is more work that needs to be done. Women carry potential and strengths that are unique to women. These strengths and potentials also need the recognition just as women did in

the 1920s, women today should be reminded to build on their strengths and continue giving voices to not only themselves but to women around the world.

Recognizing and Building on Strength

Sometimes a woman's worst enemy can be herself. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, women were found to be more honest and ethical in leadership roles and supported the act of fair benefits and pay. They were more socially conscious whereas men focused more on "negotiating profitable deals and more willing to take on more risks" (Pew Research Center, 2015). Overall, women were seen to be more passionate and men more decisive. This Pew Research study also found that 66% of women rated "success in a high-paying career" as being important to them (Pew Research Center, 2015). Another study also found that "…24 percent of men were more likely than women (17 percent) to say they describe themselves as a leader" (Goux, 2012). The reluctance of women to consider themselves a leader is an internal issue and shows the lack of confidence women have in themselves. This low confidence can also affect the way they portray and see themselves now and in the future—essentially holding themselves back from seeing themselves in leadership roles.

Along with the notion of women not seeing themselves as leaders, many women hold a sense of fear. A fear of being a failure, being judged, being a bad mother or wife (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). This fear also holds women back from putting forward their best potential. It does not allow for making mistakes but encourages a pattern of seeking perfection which is unattainable and unhealthy. This

thought process is counterintuitive as it sets women up for failure, instead of success. It is well known that mistakes are what breeds success, and if women are not moving forward through failure, it will not allow them to persevere and learn from mistakes to succeed and create tougher skins. This fear also clouds women's vision and their ability to aspire to do better. Instead of embracing their differences, women have constantly tried to fit in and be like men in leadership. However, by doing so, women have failed to realize that their uniqueness and their different perspectives are also needed in the workplace to innovate.

Women not only face fear but also the feeling of being a fraud. Even when someone praises women for doing a great job they may feel as though they just got lucky or they faked it well enough to get by another day. The praise does not feel like an accomplishment because the whole time self-doubt and guilt is eating at them psychologically. This feeling can be felt by both men and women, but especially women. Furthermore, this feeling, known as the impostor syndrome, can disable women from achieving their true potential. Instead of accepting the grace of their success and achievements, they guilt themselves into believing their accomplishments and recognitions were pure coincidence and luck. This hurts women in a sense where they are less likely to ask for help (Laff, 2009). Women also tend to seek approval before moving forward with an idea and lack the self-confidence to believe in themselves or trust their decisions. This lack of confidence is reinforced by society's lack of trust and belief that women should be in leadership roles.

Many successful women owners, CEOs, and entrepreneurs have contributed their success to taking risks. Empowering women to take risks has shown to be as beneficial for them as it has been for men. Encouraging more women to take risks includes being willing to take on new tasks even when they are not comfortable doing it (Harr, 2015). The ability to take on new tasks is a challenge that yields results like learning new things and turning a negative into a positive. The taking of risks has assisted more women in moving forward and allowing them to land in leadership roles (Harr, 2015). Women who take more risks tend to be more assertive and willing to learn and become a part of the solution in the business they are in. This empowerment and willingness to learn has also further opened doors. Women should be encouraged to take on more risks and be supported in their will to succeed despite the barriers and challenges that still exist. These internal and external factors must be recognized as part of the problem keeping more women from succeeding. In addition to building on one's strengths internally, the assistance of more women building on each other is also something that could build confidence all around. Women are also less likely to say no, even when they have taken on too much in order to appear being able to do it all. Along with the fear of failing and looking like an impostor, women can feel guilty for working and leaving their partner or children behind. Women tend to lower their expectations and are more likely to internalize negative society messages. For these reasons, they are less likely to take on risks. At times, they may not seek promotions for fear of being too outspoken and overconfident. This concern has become an issue because it further sets women up for failure and contributes to

the failure of more women from moving upward. Fear has hindered the confidence of women and applied the movements for the equality of women in the workforce to become stagnant. It is important that women not allow fear and reluctance to also hinder their ability to believe that anything is possible. Women have strengths that need recognition. Studies have been conducted to assist in the differentiation of men and women's strengths to look to the future. Providing researched based evidence can educate women on how to see their strengths in different perspectives as tools to progress.
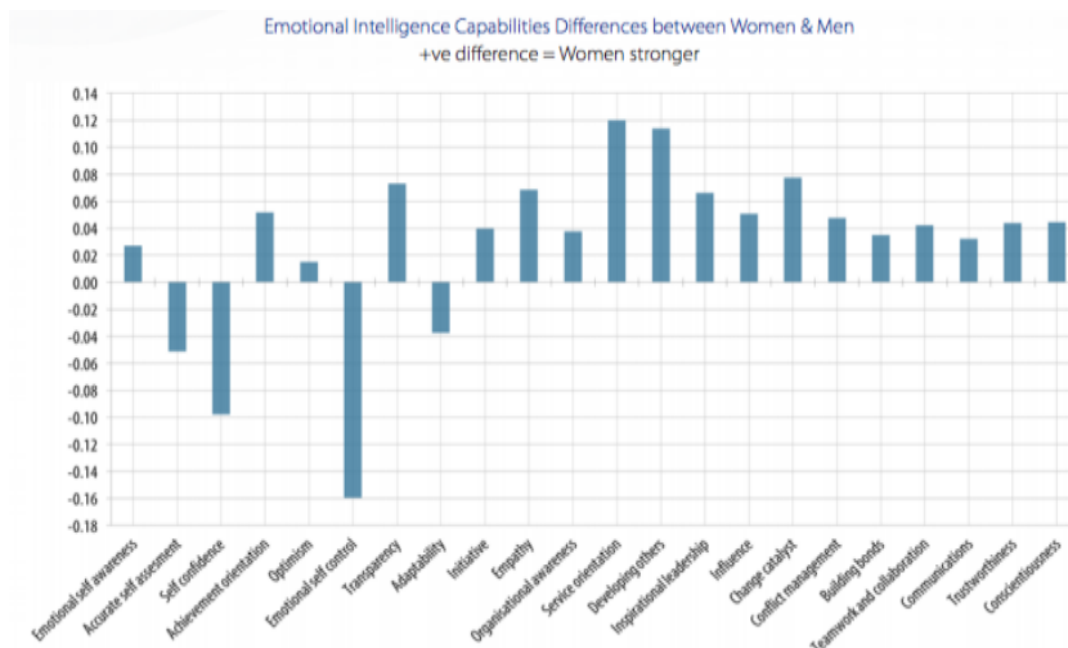
Women have unique strengths that are not always found in men. In order to look at what people perceived to be a leader, without considering race, a survey conducted by Women & Leadership 2015 (*Figure 3*) polled a group of individuals and asked the question, "Which leadership traits matter the most?" (Pew Research Center, 2014)

Which Leadership Traits Matter Most?

% saying it is absolutely essential for a leader to be ...

Trait	Percent
Honest	84
Intelligent	80
Decisive	80
Organized	67
Compassionate	57
Innovative	56
Ambitious	53

Figure 3. The percent of individuals saying it is absolutely essential for a leader to be honest, intelligent, decisive, organized, compassionate, innovative, & ambitious. Adapted from Pew Research Center (2015)

Many participants rated honesty, intelligence, decisiveness, organized, compassionate, innovative and ambitious as the top characteristics to describe someone in a leadership role. In an article written by Young (2015), *Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century*, 161 subjects, 40% being women and 60% men, were assigned to take the Leadership and Emotional Intelligence Performance Accelerator test. The results it generated were not what was expected. The men scored high on the emotional self-control, self-confidence, self-assessment, and adaptability. Women, however, scored high in service orientation, developing others, as well as change catalyst, transparency, empathy, and inspirational leadership. Women performed low in emotional self-control, self-confidence, and accurate self-assessment. *Figure 4* from LeaderShape portrays a visual result of the data (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2015). The results generated from this test also concluded that men and women carried few distinct key attributes, yet in many parts were also very much alike (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2015).

Figure 4. Levels of emotional intelligence capabilities differences between women and men. Women increased ability to develop others, are service oriented, and transparent. (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2015)

The attributes that describe a transpersonal leader are much of what describe a woman today. It is a leader who believes in building strong connections with people who care about their job and what they do. It goes above and beyond the ego. Much of today's businesses are focusing on bridging the gap between higher management and their employees. Much of the older methods in business are being challenged today as new generations have new approaches to leadership.

Millennials are beginning to realize that they need more than just a job; they want a career that cares for them and provides them with meaning. The business world is no longer based only on competition and ambition. Rather, it can also be connected to caring for the environment and sustainability. It moves beyond just the

internal factors but the external factors that suggest implications for the future. The new trend in business is moving towards caring for employees and providing ethical beliefs in the organization that contribute to pride and a motivated workforce. Businesses contribute to the success of their employees by equipping them with tools, proper training, and guidelines that will protect the employee rather than just a replaceable piece of property for the business.

The creation of win-win solutions among men and women in leadership can lead to successful partnerships and not competitions. This equitable approach would also need to be recognized by men in leadership to succeed. In small businesses, this holistic view of learning to embrace women's differences and positive attributes would not only be used to carry an edge over competitors but would contribute to more business success. Women can assist in areas where men may lack skills and vice versa. Equal leadership can also create a greater knowledge in how to market to the female customers. In a world where more than half of the population are women, and where more than half make up the customer base, a business that employs and encourages women leaders can tremendously benefit from a woman's attributes and opinions to assist in the growth of a business (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017). It is definitely an insight that can assist in the innovation of new products and ideas for the future.

CHAPTER V

THE BENEFITS OF GENDER EQUALITY

While, much of the challenges and barriers were discussed in the previous

chapters, these last two chapters will focus on possible solutions for small businesses

to start implementing and integrating change in an effort to remain progressive,

innovative, and ahead of the market. For many businesses, change is the catalyst to

learning and moving forward. While many large companies have been faced with

ethical dilemmas in recent years due to fraudulent motives and greed, new ways of

thinking have been encouraged. These new ideas are encouraged by stakeholders and

holding businesses accountable for treating customers with compassion and forward

thinking towards sustainability. Millennials are now searching for more careers that

give meaning to their life and give them purpose as well as careers that provide them

with interpersonal skills, employee relationships, and support (Goux, 2012). Women

need more jobs that assist them in meeting both career and family needs, while also

allowing men to help around the home, especially when children are involved. This

can benefit the family and society.

Small businesses can also recruit women to diversify the workforce and to

start experimenting and reaping the benefits of hiring women in leadership roles. The

challenges and barriers women have to face in modern-day economy can potentially

be alleviated by the assistance of small businesses where leverage and change can be

made less complicated. A small business can assist in setting an example for bigger

businesses. There is no better place to support, cultivate, and encourage the growth of

a diverse environment better than inside a small business. Small businesses benefit

from not having so many restrictive guidelines and procedures to make large changes,

which at times can be a barrier to change. Big corporations, political parties, and

governmental agencies have policies that may stymie change. Other studies have

recently tracked the growth of small businesses owned by women where change can

be an advantage in positive ways for the society and the economy. A 2012 national

study conducted by the National Women's Business Council stated that

> …there are 9,878,397 women-owned businesses in the United States. That's
>
> an increase of 2,086,282 businesses, or 26.8%, from 2007. In 2012, of these
>
> firms, 89.5% had no employee's other than the owner. These firms have
>
> receipts of $229.2 billion. In 2007, 88.3 of women-owned firms were sole
>
> proprietorships with receipts of $182.2 billion. The remaining 10.5% of firms
>
> employed 8,431,614 people in addition to the owner. In 2007, they employed
>
> 7,520,121 people in addition to the owner. In 2012, women-owned employer
>
> firms paid their employees $263.7 billion, a $47.0 billion or 25.8% increase
>
> since 2007. Women-owned firms with employees generated $1.2 trillion in
>
> receipts." ("Women-owned Businesses," 2012)

This national study is hopeful step towards encouraging more women in leadership

roles to improve the lives of many Americans by starting out in small businesses.

Women in leadership can add tremendously to the economy and provide a step

forward towards a new trend of hiring practices that encourage women to sit at the

table. Changes in small business can include safer work environment, more innovation, and disruptive breakthroughs that can only be accomplished through integrative work environments. A few efforts can be implemented in small businesses by having more women in leadership roles with the goal of reducing sexual harassment and discrimination, maintaining or encouraging mentoring programs, and recognizing the need for women in leadership roles through educating women and the workforce.

Creating a Safe Environment for All

The existing barriers that prevent women from moving up the ladder can also contribute to discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Studies show that an environment that does not tolerate any form of harassment and/or discrimination has higher employee morale, standards, respect for its employees, and a positive image in the public eye. Studies have also shown that a need for women executives and management teams can assist in combating sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace because it allows those with a deeper understanding the ability to enforce change. Other studies have shown that employees who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace are more likely to suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, the lack of ability to function at work, reduced productivity, increased stress-levels, and a perception that the company and their superiors failed to protect them (Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2016). Women who have been exposed to sexual harassment and discrimination are more likely to suffer health problems due a heightened stress level (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009). These health problems

can detrimentally hurt the company in the long run and increase job dissatisfaction, turnover and a lack of performance among the employee and the employees around them (Willness, Steel, & Kibeom, 2008). Creating a supportive and trustworthy investigative process would create a trust in the reporting process. Eliminating these barriers would not only create trust but it would also decrease sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace from occurring in the first place (Galen, Weber, & Cuneo, 1991). Often, employees see sexist jokes and language as not being an issue; however, studies have also shown that this can create a hostile work environment that would allow for perpetration of harassment in the future. Downplaying sexual harassment could create an environment that would blanket sexual harassment when it happens and victims would be less likely to report for fear of going against the current (Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2016). Finally, women who are employed in male-dominated work environments are more likely to experience sexual harassment and discrimination (Gruber, 1998). The efforts of small businesses to combat sexual harassment and discrimination are crucial step stones in providing a safe environment for its employees and all to work in.

Sustaining a Network of Successful Women Leaders and Employees

A challenge that persists today is the unconscious behavior that management hires or supports based on the potential that a man can become a good leader or manager, whereas women are only hired, supported, and even considered when they come with a leadership background (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). Allowing and encouraging the integration of more women in businesses leadership roles, which are

primarily held by men, would allow for more opportunities to learn and grow, while also modeling and encouraging the growth of more women in leadership roles. Encouraging more men and women to work together would allow for more innovative thought processes and ideas. Not only would both men and women learn from each other but working together would encourage others to collaborate regardless of gender and without the bias that exists when both men and women are mentoring each other. Removing the stigma of men mentoring women is also a barrier that still exists. A Harvard Business Review recorded 64 percent of men in management roles reported that they were hesitant to meet one-on-one with a woman for fear that people may perceive it as an affair, relationship, or dating (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2010). A possible solution would be for management to switch from informal meetings to more formal meetings that encourage mentorship in an open environment where everyone can participate and share ideas at the table. By providing an open environment to learn, it can generate a successful networking process that is inclusive to all genders (Sandberg & Scovell, 2013). Removing the awkwardness from mentoring the opposite sex can be encouraged through the modeling of upper management to send a message that employees need to work together regardless of their gender to benefit from the opportunities of working with others who carry unique characteristics and bring value to the business. Being able to work with others who do not share the same thought processes are less likely to groupthink which can benefit all (Tavakoli, 2015).

Embracing Differences in the Workplace to Innovate

A new way of thinking and innovating would be to train, seek and educate more women to take on the role as lead. Embracing the skills of women and merging them with the skills of men would be a holistic and healthy work environment. Now it's up to women to continue to pave their way to success and equality through small business settings as a testing ground to a more diverse future. As previous studies mentioned, the 21st century needs more compassionate leaders who carry fresh, new perspectives and views. As a study found that more women than men have a natural intuition in helping others and the ability to identify and inspire its employees in their work environment (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2015). Men outperform women in negotiating profitable deals, and men are willing to take on more risks. (Pew Research Study, 2015). The skills and attributes that women encompass can lead to better outcomes. Men also carry beneficial skills and combined with the skills of women can lead very productive and innovative businesses. Women's ideas and attributes can provide problem-solving solutions by being encouraged to sit at the table to contribute their thoughts and ideas.

Although women are called during crisis situations in a business or corporation, the undeniable attributes that women contain hold value for all. Transpersonal leadership is defined as the building of teams and the holding of collaborative relationships with team members to the extent that it assists in positive performance and upholds ethical values. This type of leadership attribute goes well beyond stroking the ego and goes to the root of the individual to motivate and inspire

them to contribute their best. The needs and benefits of women in leadership roles extend to their natural state of transpersonal leadership, which can assist in benefitting a small business.

Allowing women to be part of the solution and encouraging them to take risks will allow them to compete for leadership roles and allow a more equal environment. If a woman is fortunate enough to make the cross-over in becoming a leader in a small business, it will allow for her to make greater changes that would positively influence equal representation or carry different priorities that may matter in the workplace. Leading a team through equal representation would not only include just placing a woman in power but would include the need for the encouragement of the work team, the public, and the implementation of equality policies in the workplace.

CHAPTER VI

MOVING FORWARD: OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Small businesses could be used as experimental tools to catalyze change. Women are good at being service oriented which could lead to better knowing their customers (Women, Naturally Better Leaders for the 21st Century, 2017). Also, innovative products or services can develop through the use of inclusion and policies that help women to work in environments that are mostly male dominated. Small businesses can work towards integrating more women in leading positions to work hand-in-hand with men where their talent can be put to good use for improved services and other benefits to its employees. These models in small businesses would be a part of a disruptive, innovative tactic that would challenge old business beliefs and models. It would create an example for others to pay attention to and follow. This new business model of gender equality would attract stakeholders and customers and gain a momentum in the world of ethical business practices. More men and women would be more willing to work for a company that cares for them and considers work life balance. Additionally, it would attract the millennial generation, which now makes up more than half of the American workforce (Pew Research Center, 2015). Although companies have struggled in the past to provide an inclusive work environment, below are some possible solutions and strategies that can be implemented by small businesses in an effort to innovate and become examples for others to follow.

Small Businesses Setting the Tone for the Future

Changing preconceived biases and stereotypes at work can be accomplished with a supportive and educated workforce (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). The benefits of educating employees and top management in bringing awareness to the challenges that women face in the business world can improve circumstances for women. Offering evidenced based training could work towards breaking stereotypes and bring awareness to barriers and challenges that exist for women employees and leaders. This new approach can be done by creating a dialogue on the benefits of gender equality and allowing for uncomfortable conversations to take place in a safe environment (Whitehead & Richtermeyer, 2017). This dialogue can encourage conversations to take place that otherwise would have not taken place if it were not encouraged. These dialogues would also influence and implement a new way of thinking and interaction (Whitehead & Richtermeyer, 2017). Creating this form of discussion can also improve employee relationships that indicate that the company cares for its employees' well-being. Additionally, to make sure that the efforts practiced show progress, an effort must also be placed in seeking feedback on policy changes that encourages the development of formal company statements to reinforce the belief and importance of gender equality. Developing a set of surveys and employee polls will also allow for a visual progress and statistical charts of success can track the positive effects that women have contributed to the team (Cunningham & Green, 2007). Encouraging diversity through the implementation of changes to the

hiring practices can be a benefit to hiring more women with skills sets that can assist in promoting diversity and avoiding groupthink (Tavakoli, 2015). Providing a support structure and mentorship programs that assist women in succeeding can empower women to use these tools (Kurt, 2016). Promoting awareness would also open more opportunities for women to feel comfortable exploring other cost-saving opportunities for the companies that they work for. Furthermore, more men need to partake in the movement to help more women into leadership roles. They can assist in sponsoring future women leaders and both genders can benefit from mentorship programs for women. More men must be involved in the efforts towards gender equality and education reinforcing the need for women in leadership roles should be available. These actions can help both men and women to further recognize stereotypes and together to come up with solutions for change.

Secondly, other forms of internal and external strategies can take place in small increments that can mean big changes in the long run. The integration of women in small businesses would empower more women to branch out and make decisions that would develop them into advocates of change and policy changers for the future generations. Women should also consider doing their part and empowering themselves to moving forward. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) encourages women to become leaders by seeking training, negotiating salaries, taking the time to being a mentor, and exploring and defining biases that prevent them from moving forward ("Barriers and Bias," 2016). Additionally, they can learn to understand that stereotypes exist, but they should not let those stereotypes

define who they are as a person. Women should plan for setbacks and failures, and be willing to seek out opportunities to learn and grow ("Barriers and Bias," 2016). As women become leaders, they should also consider the goal of sustaining the momentum of growth by encouraging more women to become leaders. Other efforts by small businesses with women leaders can focus on work life balance efforts that can further attract both men and women to work for their business and also continue their growth through innovative thoughts and ideas.

Thirdly, focusing on the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act should be advocated and supported by small businesses. Both men and women could be able to spend more time with family which can also benefit society. Studies show that 1 in 5 women are holding back from managerial positions because of family responsibilities (Pew Research Center, 2015). More men than women worry about household and family responsibilities (Pew Research Center, 2015). A change of this mindset would encourage both men and women to equally partake in child raising responsibilities and children would reap the benefits from both parents' presence. Change can be done by encouraging benefits that can assist both men and women at work are beneficial to the employer and employee. Working towards this goal would allow for more productive and happier employees and more close-knit relationships at home ("Barriers and Bias," 2016).

Fourthly, women should earn fairer pay wages. Working towards equal pay can sound like a daunting challenge, but programs may exist in the future that would provide businesses with incentives for providing women with equal pay ("Barriers

and Bias," 2016). Equal and fair wages for women leaders and women employers means a more ethical practice of business. Women leading small business could also encourage the small businesses they work for to provide a more ethical and honest work environment that believes in sustainability, and the respect of human beings. Paving a way for women to succeed can prove to be a successful way to increase profits. With the majority of women in the workforce and more than half making up the customer base, more small businesses need to come together and consider the benefits of women leaders. The opportunity to make money the right way has also proven that women place value on profit within reason. Some studies even have noted that the number of women board directors has shown a greater increase in return on sales, return on equity, and a return on invested capital compared to companies who had none or low numbers of board women directors (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017). Additionally, according to the Women in Leadership and the *Bewildering Glass Ceiling Journal,* states that inclusion of women in business leadership roles has significantly improved factors such as "…firm value, financial performance, economic growth, innovation, insolvency risk, and social responsiveness, and philanthropy" (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017, p. 313).

Lastly, another issue that commonly takes place is sexual harassment in the workplace. The enforcement and protection of women from sexual harassment is critical to the success and retention of female talent in small businesses. Men and women carry different perceptions of what sexual harassment means to them. What

men may perceive as flattering and praising, a woman may perceive as sexual harassment. Women are needed to represent and be including in defining sexual harassment through their lenses and experiences. With more women in leadership roles, they will be able to assist in combating sexual harassment by creating stronger harassment policies that are gender inclusive. It would do more than just provide education on sexual harassment but it would also assist in defining justice and work policy measures that would also hold harassers accountable for their actions. These measures would help both men and women in creating a safer work environment that is free from hostility, discrimination, and sexual harassment in the workplace.

In conclusion, multiple studies have shown a steady trend of the need of more women leaders in the future. When women succeed, society succeeds with them. The structure of small business can allow for greater change and outcomes that can be crucial for potential growth for prospective women leaders. Small businesses can set groundbreaking changes through the encouragement and advertisement of more women joining their top management teams to innovate, to profit, and to look to the future for positive changes. Additionally, small businesses' roles in promoting women in leadership can assist in creating a foundation for other larger businesses to follow and to allow for young women to see themselves as equal leaders in this world and in their near future.

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