

Full Length Research Paper

Nine Decades Later: Idaho Women Reflect on the Meaning of the Nineteenth Amendment

Kathy Canfield-Davis, Penny Tenuto, Russell Joki, and Erik Hadley

Kathy Canfield-Davis is an assistant professor, Department of Leadership and Counseling
University of Idaho, Coeur d'Alene
canfield@uidaho.edu

Penny Tenuto is an assistant professor, Department of Leadership and Counseling
University of Idaho, Boise
ptenuto@uidaho.edu

Russell Joki is the Chair, Department of Leadership and Counseling
University of Idaho, Boise
rjoki@uidaho.edu

Erik Hadley is the Budget Specialist, Department of Leadership and Counseling
University of Idaho, Boise
erikh@uidaho.edu

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Reflecting on the 90th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment (ratified August, 1920), this narrative inquiry explored its significance to women in leadership positions residing in Idaho. Idaho's status as a forerunner approving suffrage underscored the foundation for the study. The researchers also wanted to investigate whether women have reached equal citizenship in aspects other than the right to vote. Findings indicate that the Nineteenth Amendment was pivotal in not only giving women a voice in governmental decisions, but also paved the way for other political and social breakthroughs. However, few participants linked passage of the Amendment with their rise to leadership. In some instances, full equality has not been achieved and gender discrimination still occurs, primarily when seeking leadership positions.

Key words: top women in leadership, gender equity, nineteenth amendment

Introduction

This calendar year, 2010, marks the 90th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women in the United States the right to vote. Twenty-four years prior to its passage, in 1896, Idaho became the fourth state to grant women suffrage following Wyoming Territory, Colorado, and Utah. Considered by historians to be one of the most important events after statehood (Arrington, 1994), affirmation of this right opened doors for many of Idaho's female pioneers to assume leadership positions. Ten years after the law passed, women were elected state legislators, state superintendent of public instruction, county treasurers, county superintendents of schools, and deputy sheriffs.

Idaho's status as a forerunner approving suffrage underscores the foundation for this study. The purpose was to explore what significance the Nineteenth Amendment may have had for 17 female civic and educational leaders who presently work and reside in Idaho. Although a transformation of gender roles has occurred during the past three decades, women remain significantly underrepresented in formal leadership positions (Rhode, 2003). Moreover, a wage gap still exists and women continue to experience forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment (Ireland, 2003).

Two primary questions guided this study. The first was: What significance, if any, does the Nineteenth Amendment have on women who have aspired to leadership prominence in Idaho, 90 years after its passage? O'Conner (1996) posed a second question for further examination: Have women reached full and

equal citizenship in aspects other than the right to vote? Using phenomenological research methodology, in this narrative inquiry, we sought answers to these questions.

Underpinnings of Suffrage in the West and Idaho

The initial advancement of women's suffrage took place in the Rocky Mountain West when Wyoming territory was the first government in the world to grant women the right to vote on equal terms with men (Mintz, 2007). Subsequently, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho followed. Using data collected by historians who studied the early enfranchisement of women in the western section of the United States, Morin (1997) identified three recurrent themes that influenced the passage of women's right to vote: (a) regional demographics; (b) the political structure and economic opportunity; and (c) campaigns by advocates for women's rights.

In 1870 there were nine men for every woman residing in Idaho (Arrington, 1994). Morin (1997) contended the passage of suffrage was used as a recruiting tool to draw women to western territories and states where they were proportionally few in number. Men wanted to attract women to the West and granting them the right to vote was one means to encourage migration. Edwards (2002) added an economic motive for enfranchising women in Idaho. During the 1890s Idaho's economy was based primarily on silver mines. A strong political movement was initiated to increase the money supply by minting silver coinage at the same value as gold. Proponents believed if women were enfranchised, they could help advocate for silver currency.

Idaho's unique political structure was significant to the suffrage movement as well. Groups such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints assumed women would vote like their husbands thereby doubling the Mormon vote (Morin, 1997). Morin explained, "It would thereby secure the legal status of polygamy while at the same time prove that Mormon treatment of women was progressive, not abusive" (p. 23). Given the moral virtue associated with women, particularly in the domestic realm, proponents asserted that providing women political power would advance public morality, or in a sense, "civilize western communities" (Morin, 1997, p. 24). Thus suffrage came to be associated with other principled crusades deemed appropriate for women including temperance, protection of children, and educational reform.

The West was a dynamic place and lacked either the paternalistic, evangelical character of the South, or the moralizing culture of Puritan New England. Morin (1997) maintained the West was characterized by an individualistic culture emphasizing personal freedom, which was conducive for accepting women's suffrage. Evoking noted historians Frederic Jackson Turner and Daniel Elazar, Morin postulated that a discernable American character persists, and it manifests differently based upon three geographical locations: (a) southern, (b) eastern, and (c) western. Morin explained:

The early enfranchisement of women in the western states represented a unique coming together of diverse forces set upon the political culture stage of moralism and individualism; few women, nascent political structures, economic opportunism, and women's rights activism all were specific forces that came together to operate on this stage. (p. 32)

Larson (1974) agreed saying a combination of "frontier spirit" and chance afforded western women the vote at an earlier date than eastern women (p. 19). Enfranchising women in Idaho was initially addressed by the territorial legislature in 1871 before black suffrage was considered (Colson, 1991). The first bill was introduced by Representative Joseph William Morgan who believed women were equally affected by the laws and therefore should have a voice in making them. According to Colson, opposition to the measure was expressed by W. H. VanSlyke. Citing a report from the *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* Colson presented VanSlyke's argument, "Woman rules us through her love, and her chiefest power over us is through her graceful impulsiveness of heart and fancy, well enough around the fireside, but dangerous guides in the halls of legislation" (p. 142). The initiative was defeated after the third reading in a roll-call tie vote at 11 to 11.

Successive years produced little suffrage legislation (Arrington, 1994). However, several key landmark decisions paved the way for granting women voting privileges. In 1879 a bill was passed permitting unmarried female taxpayers to vote at school tax elections. In 1885 married women were extended suffrage in school elections, and authorized to hold school offices.

Shortly thereafter in 1889 women were sanctioned to be elected county superintendents. Colson (1991) reported the following reason quoted in the *Boise City Republican* justifying why women progressed in education affairs, "Women being naturally gifted teachers, we see no reason why they should not be competent to judge the qualifications necessary for teaching, which is the only matter which the law entrusts [sic] to the sole judgement [sic] of the Superintendent" (p. 142). The same year, Idaho held its Constitutional Convention resulting in admission to the Union on July 3, 1890. Several nationally renowned suffragists including Henrietta Skelton and Abigail Scott Duniway addressed the assembly, pushing for full suffrage. Although the bill had some support, the motion to include it in the Constitution failed, in part, because of the perceived close relationship between women's right to vote and prohibition, which many of the delegates opposed. Mead (2004) confirmed, "True to form Duniway alienated many local activists when she opposed the linkage of suffrage and prohibition amendments" (p. 93).

Four years later two additional milestones moved suffrage closer to becoming a reality: (a) the formation of the first women suffrage organization to advocate for enfranchisement, and (b) public endorsement for a suffrage amendment from Idaho's three political parties. After the 1895 convention of the

National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) national and state activists launched a strategic campaign. Local clubs were established throughout the state along with the Idaho Equal Suffrage Association, an affiliate of the national organization. When the 1886 suffrage convention was held, “committees of women were stationed near polling places with yellow suffrage banners and circulars beseeching men to “Remember the Amendment” (Arrington, 1994, p. 436-437). The Amendment passed by 12,126 in favor, and 6,282 against. Immediately afterward the state board of canvassers ruled the amendment invalid arguing it did not receive the majority of all votes cast in the election. Instead it only garnered a majority of those voting on the amendment. The edict was appealed to the Idaho Supreme Court and on December 11, 1896 a unanimous decision was rendered in favor of the Amendment, making Idaho the fourth state to extend voting privileges to women (Arrington, 1994). Larson (1974) pointed out all three judges were spouses of suffragists at the time, which may have influenced their decision. Idaho’s victory was celebrated the following year at the Convention of National Woman’s Suffrage Association. Reasons given for its successful passage were:

First, the fact that within the state a large colony of people reside who were formally residents of Utah at the time the women were voting there and who were then converted to the measure; second, the educational and organizational work of the national committee; third, the labors of the various branches of the Idaho Association; fourth, the political endorsement by all political parties. (Arrington, 1994, p. 437)

Arrington’s (1994) analysis supported Morin’s (1997) discussion about factors that influenced the passage of women’s right to vote: (a) regional demographics; (b) the political structure and economic opportunity; and (c) campaigns by advocates for women’s rights.

Women’s Equality Post Suffrage

The right to vote was sanctioned for every American woman in 1920 with successful passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Nevertheless, the struggle to gain equality over property rights, marriage and childcare, reproductive rights, sexual harassment, equal pay protection, and maternity leave proved to be a slow, evolutionary process (Brown, 1992-1993; O’Conner, 1996). Chapman and Mills (2006) commented, “Even in the immediate wake of the 1920 ratification, there were questions about the meaningfulness of women’s entrance into the electoral process, and scholars today remain divided about the Nineteenth Amendment’s benefit for women” (p. 4). Eleanor Roosevelt (1940) also voiced this observation about women: “In government, in business, and in the professions there may be a day when women will be looked upon as persons. We are, however, far from that day as yet” (p. 67). In a compelling article depicting the post World War II status of women’s rights in America, Anthony II (1948) observed:

There are more than 16,000,000 women working today, but they form only one fourth of all American workers. Only a third of all women over fourteen years of age have jobs. More important, women are the last to be hired and the first to be fired, just as they were in Aunt Susan’s lifetime. Their wages are still low. Women work at half the pay men get according to the United States Department of Labor. Even in 1945, when war wages were swollen with overtime, the average annual earnings of women workers were only \$1240. Men averaged \$2570 during this period. (p. 23)

The commentary further describes how eighteen states barred women from jury duty and in nineteen additional states, women were eligible to serve but could be excused because of their gender. Sixteen states required women to acquire their husband’s consent to sign legal documents and five states required women to obtain a court order to start a business. Anthony II (1948) concludes, “Our economic, political and social position is only slightly better now than it was in 1920” (p. 119).

Based upon an analysis of the Southern poll tax, requiring women to pay voter registration fees, Podolefsky (1997-1998) maintained that even after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women were subjected to discriminatory voting privileges. Those who did not have sufficient economic resources were excluded from obtaining a ballot. These conditions prevailed into the 1960s, along with a widely accepted dogma of male superiority in work and public service. Women were considered unfit to be airline pilots, firefighters, television news anchors, carpenters, movie directors, or CEOs (Collins, 2009).

Women and Leadership Today

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2009) website, 66 million women were employed in the United States in 2009. Although 26% of these women held part-time jobs, the remaining 74% were employed full time in 2009. This online report stated:

The largest percentage of employed women (40 percent) worked in management professional, and related occupations; 32 percent worked in sales and office occupations; 21 percent in service occupations; 5 percent in production, transportation, and material moving occupations; and 1 percent in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations. (p.1)

Twenty years ago in 1989-1990 there was one female superintendent serving in Idaho across 108 school districts. The following school year, 1990-1991, two females held this rank. In the present school year, 2009-2010, the number has increased to 47 female superintendents and charter school administrators.

Historically, women have been largely excluded from leadership ranks (Rhode, 2003), and conventional leadership has been primarily constructed in masculine terms (Billing & Alvesson, 2000). One theory for women's absence from leadership status is frequently termed the glass ceiling (Hoyt, 2007). The glass ceiling refers to "artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions" (Begun, 2000, p. 30). Hoyt offered three explanations for this phenomenon. First, women lack human capital investment in education, training, and work experience. Campbell (1982) added:

In addition—men because of their security, self-confidence, and the backing of sponsors—have been able to learn the job while doing the job. Unfortunately, women need more education to be hired for the same jobs and make the same salaries as men. (p. 338)

Second, although women are equally effective in leadership roles, they are less apt to promote themselves. Finally, gender stereotyping portrays women as communal which is characterized by concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness and nurturance (Deaux & Kite, 1993; Heilman, 2001). Conversely, men are depicted as being agentic; displaying confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness. Nelson-Kuna and Rigor (1995) explained:

The highly valued attributes that our society defines as agentic are those associated with power and status because autonomy and mastery require the freedom to make choices. Frequently what is considered feminine is the product of powerlessness and low status; those not in a position of autonomy and choice must focus on connection and communal goals to survive. (p. 173)

In other words, men are more apt to retain positions of autonomy while women lack the institutional power, status, and economic independence to act agentially (Nelson-Rigor & Kuna, 1995).

New York Times reporter, Lisa Belkin (2003), offered another reason for the dearth of women leaders. Belkin's term "opt-out revolution" (p. 1) suggested many women made conscious decisions to avoid seeking leadership roles. According to Fine (2009), multiple reasons coalesced to rationalize this trend including, women's desire to balance work and family life, fear of success, lack of desire for power, and lack of confidence in their preparedness to seek a higher position. Additional rationale included health and religious demands, personal burn-out, and a desire to support other women who aspired to leadership roles (Bond, Holmes, Byrne, Babchuck, & Kirton-Robbins, 2008). The Nineteenth Amendment has been recorded as a crossroad that changed the course American

history (McPherson, Brinkley, & Rubel, 2001). Toward this end, the goal of this study was to understand how this landmark legislation defined and shaped the professional lives of 17 women who hold civic and educational leadership appointments in Idaho.

Method

A phenomenological research design (Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994, & Sokolowski, 2007) was used to understand how women in contemporary civic leadership positions construed the meaning of the Nineteenth Amendment, and its impact on their leadership experiences. According to Manen (1990), "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (p. 9). Furthermore, Patton (2002) described this method as one in which people perceive, describe, feel about, judge, remember, and make sense of a phenomenon. In addition to offering descriptions of events and experiences, narratives express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations. This study also incorporated several principles drawn from feminist research; specifically: (a) inequality exists in our culture and (b) highlighting the experiences of women and allowing their voices to be heard, may reverse these inequalities, and encourage action to redress oppressive practices (Gribich, 2007). Another purpose of this inquiry was to examine whether women believe they have reached full parity in aspects other than voting privileges

Participants

Data were collected from 17 women who hold civic leadership positions, including seven public school superintendents, two school board members, four legislators, two mayors, and two former judges. Women were selected as participants based upon their experience retaining positions of leadership in Idaho. The significance for selecting Idaho was determined by the State's distinction as a vanguard in women's suffrage. The research team anticipated comments from long-time civic leaders in the state would generate information-rich data (Patton, 2002), offering insight on the significance suffrage had on their respective paths to leadership (Maxwell, 2005). Civic leaders were chosen over corporate executives because members of the research team were more familiar with leadership in the public sector. Additionally, women in civic or public leadership roles are more visible, and therefore tend to be more readily accessible. All of the women were white and their ages ranged from 45-60 years.

Data Collection

Following approval from the university's human assurance committee, the first and second authors conducted 17 interviews. Qualitative interviews were selected as a means to collect data, because this study was concerned with establishing common patterns between the respondents versus focusing on a particular setting (Warren, 2002). Silverman and Marvasti (2008) suggested, "Perhaps we all live in what might be called an interview society in which interviews seem central to

making sense of our lives” (p. 146). Using interviews allowed the authors of this article to gain the perspectives of others by assuming their viewpoints were meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002).

Applying the principles recommended by Merriam (2009) several basic procedures were employed to schedule the interviews. The first author contacted the female leaders via phone to explain the study, and determine their level of interest in participating. All 17 women responded favorably. Next, face-to-face interviews were scheduled at a location of the participants’ choosing. Prior to the interview, each woman received an electronic copy of the interview protocol which helped guide and focus the dialogue. Open-ended questions were used to establish some parameters and allow the participant to elaborate, and the interviewer to seek clarification when needed (Seidman, 2006). With permission of the participants, the semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and careful notes were taken by the interviewers. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Researchers were mindful of the complexities associated with feminist methodological issues. For example, during the course of an interview, some women may discover personal thoughts they have not yet considered, and learn more about who they are. Others who may have never had the opportunity to express themselves may not know how to respond (Reinharz & Chase, 2002). To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned.

Analysis

The data analysis process followed steps outlined by (Gribich, 2009). Interviews were transcribed, verbatim, and then read in their entirety by the research team to obtain a sense of what the data set contained as a whole (Yin, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Possible categories and interpretations were chronicled by making written notations in the margins, and highlighting the emerging themes with different colored markers (Merriam, 1998). According to Patton (2002), when multiple reviewers analyze data, it is helpful to have each person develop the coding format independently, then compare and contrast similarities and differences. Patton suggests this procedure serves as one means to help triangulate data. This process of triangulation was used in this research. Overall impressions of what the data meant, was exchanged electronically among the researchers. Next, the data were condensed, removing all extemporaneous, irrelevant comments, phrases, and utterances, then arranged by question. This permitted the first author to group the whole into smaller parts. Schwandt (2007) maintained, “Through reassembly of the parts, one comes to understand the integrity of the whole” (p. 6).

Next, a more detailed pattern-coding analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was employed by the first author to sort the text into themes. Miles and Huberman explained, “It helps the researcher elaborate a cognitive map, an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions” (p. 69). Further, theme codes show where patterns

re-occur in the text (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). When analyzing data collected from women, Reinhartz and Chase (2002) theorized:

Feminist researchers face a particular challenge when we interpret the words of women who reject feminism or other aggressive movements. In such cases, it is tempting to attribute an interviewee’s ideas to ‘false consciousness’ and to discount what she says. The idea of false consciousness suggests that a person misunderstands his or her own situation, particularly with regard to self-interest (Bartky 1998). (p. 233)

Consequently, the first author remained attentive on how the words and phrases of the women were interpreted. Recurrent themes were then highlighted electronically. According to Stake (1995), “Sometimes, we find significance in a single instance, but usually the meanings will come from reappearance over and over” (p. 78).

Data were then compiled into a checklist matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994), permitting the information to be presented systematically. Once it was reviewed and a consensus on the accuracy was reached by the research team, generalizations were made about the inquiry, and contrasted with the literature. Finally, the narrative was written and revised according to researchers’ discussions and feedback from the participants. One concern with interview research is that participants may change their responses during an interview, or they may offer different replies to different interviewers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviewers followed the advice of Kvale and Brinkmann, and were cautious to avoid asking leading questions because of their propensity to inadvertently influence a response. To strengthen validity member checks (Merriam, 2009) were used. Member checks revealed the participants concurred with the findings and appreciated participating in the research.

Limitations

Participants in this study were selected based upon their experience holding positions of leadership in Idaho. Their perceptions and reactions about the impact of the 19th Amendment on their lives may not be the same as other female leaders in states that also afforded women the right to vote at an early stage. Moreover, the participants held civic and educational leadership positions. Women more closely aligned with the private sector may have alternative viewpoints. The first and second authors, both females, conducted all of the interviews. Responses may have been changed had the interviews been completed by the third and fourth authors, both males. All of the women interviewed for this study experienced success in a leadership role. Had women who aspired to leadership, but failed, been interviewed the results may have been the different. The women interviewed were between the ages of 45-60 and Caucasian. Women representing a different age and ethnic group could have different responses. For

example, when these findings were present during a college campus forum on the Nineteenth Amendment, different role models were mentioned.

Results

Three primary themes emerged from the data. First, women in this study agreed the Nineteenth Amendment had a significant impact on their lives. Second, full and equal citizenship has not yet been attained, particularly in employment opportunities, advancement, and equal pay. Third, women in this study expressed an acceptance of the agentic theory of male dominance. The data also revealed two other themes. First, participants shared the advice they would give to younger women on how to fulfill their goals and aspirations, and second, women in this study identified their role models, and why they were chosen.

Significance of the Nineteenth Amendment

In her essay, *The History of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (1996), Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote:

It is difficult to imagine that only seventy-five years ago, a woman's right to vote was not protected by our Constitution. It is hard to remember that a right I have taken for granted, all my life is one that some of our grandmothers never enjoyed. But it is important to remember such things, to celebrate the amendment that extended to women one of the fundamental rights of citizen participation, and to reflect on how far we have come. (p. 657)

Fourteen years after her essay was written, 90 years subsequent to the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment, and 114 years following the passage of Idaho's Constitutional Amendment granting women suffrage, participants in the present study echoed O'Connor's sentiment suggesting this right has been taken for granted. For example, Susan Jones remarked, "I think it's really amazing that women haven't always had the right to vote," while Jenica Jones found it "almost unfathomable" to imagine such a time. The participants acknowledged how significant the Nineteenth Amendment was, not only in terms of the right to vote, but also the way in which it opened other opportunities for women. Lucile Applebee noted how this historical legislation built women's "confidence to be able to become not only homemakers and child bearers but also intellectual participants in our culture." Likewise, Carmen Riley-Morgan said it helped "women to participate in those higher levels in citizenship, such as running for office, voting for candidates of their choice and that opened doors in terms of civic participation, educational participation, and labor force advancement." Other participants shared how the Nineteenth Amendment also contributed toward moving women forward in self determination, building confidence to become more than child bearers and homemakers, and giving women a voice in how they were governed. In the words of Deborah Jensen:

Well, I guess my thinking is how much it has enabled women to expand their horizons and to know they are part of a larger community and that their contributions are needed and accepted. It just seems to me that when women understood they had a voice; that they too could make decisions about themselves and about their families and people in their community. That is of tremendous significance. They were no longer, well, a chattel. Although some courts still treated them that way, but they were no longer just a belonging and just an entity. They had their own voice.

When asked whether a more historical event had occurred to advance equality for women five of the respondents were unable to identify one. The following comment made by Wendy Cartwright was typical. She remarked, "I thought about that question quite a bit and honestly, I don't think any other single event had more ramifications than suffrage had". Five interviewees placed an emphasis on reproductive freedom and two identified women's health care issues.

Discrimination Related to Employment Opportunities, Advancement, and Equal Pay

Despite an overall consensus that the Nineteenth Amendment launched greater freedoms for women, several participants in this investigation experienced present day discrimination, most commonly occurring in employment related opportunities. One example given by Deborah Jensen occurred when she applied to become a judge. During her interview, she was asked by a male commissioner whether she would be able to drive during inclement weather. She reflected, "I'm fairly confident that he didn't ask any of the men whether they would have any difficulty driving over snowy roads." In another instance, Elizabeth Trewen recalled her 1979 interview with a male superintendent and a male special education director who asked whether she was planning to get pregnant in the near future. She remembered thinking if she came across too strident, she would ruin her chances of obtaining employment. She added, "So I just kind of made a joke about it. But in the end, I answered the question and I told them what they wanted to hear; oh no, I'm not going to get pregnant." Other participants reported situations where they were denied employment based on gender. Jenica Jones described a circumstance when she applied for a position where she was more qualified and had more experience. She recalled, "As it turned out, they selected a male candidate who wasn't even endorsed for the position." Davis Lee recounted a similar situation:

I remember walking in and I knew the principal fairly well, and I shook his hand and I sat down, and he leaned across the table and he said, "I appreciate you coming in, and I won't waste your time, and you won't waste mine. I really need a man." And that was surprising to me. That was the extent of the interview.

Despite these discriminatory experiences, data analyzed from a related question revealed that several women in this study did not appear interested in advancing legislation to correct existing inequalities. For example, Susan Jones offered, “I don’t see really that there is anything legislatively that hasn’t been done to give women equal rights. I don’t think that you can just make more laws and that’s going to change people’s attitudes.” Others agreed and made similar comments to Camille Richardson who remarked, “I don’t know that there is any legislation that could be written that can dictate behavior and people’s value systems.” Several participants believed the opposite, and felt legal recourse was necessary, primarily in the area of equal pay. For example, Hazel Zaffke suggested, “I would direct it specifically to compensation. As soon as you fall outside of an identified leadership role, I think women are undervalued in their compensation. So I would write a simple line; you pay him that, you pay us that.” All of the interviews were conducted prior to President Obama’s 2010 State of the Union Address. It is therefore worth mentioning the President made note of his administration’s commitment to correcting this form of discrimination stating, “We’re going to crack down on violations of equal pay laws—so women get equal pay for an equal day’s work” (para. 97).

Acceptance of Male Dominance

One of the more complex themes that emerged from data obtained in this investigation is drawn from the agentic theory of male dominance (Nelson-Rigor & Kuna, 1995). On the onehand, when asked if gender prohibited them from attaining their professional goals nearly every participant replied it was not a factor. However, some comments suggested the participants had acquiesced to a system of male dominance in leadership positions, and found ways to work within it. For example, Leigh Snider offered the following:

I even interviewed in a neighboring district, and they said, “well what does your husband think about you working in this field?” And I thought well, this is not right, but I also knew that if I made a big stink about it that it would get around to other districts. I jumped through the hoops and proved myself again. I realized that if I was going to be successful, I would not only have to know my stuff, I have to watch what I say, and how I say it; skills that you would normally learn for your career, but beyond that. It had to be even better than that. I couldn’t afford to slip. I remember being told by other women that were in leadership roles that you just have to be better than the average man. So you have to be always aware of what you’re saying and doing and how they might perceive you and pay your dues before you can get there. And I know most leaders have to do that, but it was more so, way intensely more so for women.

When working with male colleagues, Elizabeth Trewen observed, “If I’m in a heated dialogue with a group of people,

mixed genders, women and men, my sense is that society gives permission for the men to raise their voices and to dominate the conversation and to be a physical presence, but if a woman tries to do that, or if I have done that, then I’m labeled with the “B” word and I’ve even seen it, the exact same behavior, demeanor. Camille Richardson added:

You know, I tend to address my approach to gender discrimination is to try and figure out what the system is, what the expectations are – you know, are you supposed to wear pants, wear a skirt? I try to understand the boundaries and the framework and the expectations and then work within them, to build integrity and trust and a rapport with individuals on a one to one basis. I try not to be in your face, because what I have found is when you say, well, you’re just treating me like that because I’m a woman, the door closes, whether it is intentional or not, you can just sort of see the door come down.

Advice and Role Models

Two additional themes pertaining to the advice participants in this study gave younger females and the identification of role models warrant notation. First, in advising young women today on how to achieve their dreams, the interviewees recommended many of the same patterns and behaviors they utilized: Obtain an education, develop a clear picture of future endeavors, define personal goals and follow personal dreams, work hard, be persistent, follow the rules, and work within the system. Hazel Zaffke pointed out “I would probably tell that to a young man too, if he asked, because those are just really what makes a person successful.” Second, the women leaders in this inquiry identified primarily political figures as role models, in both contemporary and historical eras. Eleanor Roosevelt, Abigail Adams, Rosa Parks, Hilary Clinton, Jackie Kennedy, and Margaret Thatcher were mentioned most often. When further questioned about what type of national event would further advance women in leadership the most common responses were the election of a woman president, and equitable representation in government.

Discussion

It is fitting, after 90 years of its ratification as part of the United States Constitution, an analysis of the Nineteenth Amendment and its impact on women in present day leadership roles should take place. After its passage in 1920 the right to vote became a reality for women who now exercise the franchise on an equal footing with men (Brown, 1992-1993). Participants in this study unanimously agreed the Nineteenth Amendment was significant, in not only giving women a voice in governmental decisions, but also paving the way for other political and social breakthroughs including greater involvement in the culture and community. Few linked passage of the Nineteenth Amendment with their rise to leadership, and instead attributed this phenomenon, in part, to mentorship and encouragement from others, including male role models. Additionally, they

associated their success to hard work, professionalism, and in some cases, being in the right place at the right time.

Whether the Nineteenth Amendment eliminated other discriminatory practices against women appears to be in question today. Some women in this study could not think of a situation where they were either discriminated against or marginalized. However, others recalled instances when they were overlooked in the process of applying for leadership positions, and men were awarded the job even if they were less qualified. Those participants who felt they were bypassed for employment because of their gender, supports Campbell's (1982) and Rhode's (2003) assertions that men are better able to secure positions of a higher status, than women are able to do. None of the participants identified gender as being the most virulent form of discrimination. Rather, the majority pointed to racism. However, Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to serve in the United States Congress was quoted as saying "Of my two 'handicaps' being female put more obstacles in my path than being black" (Lewis, 2010, p. 1).

Despite encountering discriminatory practices, several participants did not view the legal process to be an effective tool to correct them. This could imply an acceptance of the status quo. Or, it could be rationalized that if women are perceived as gaining a position based upon legally required preferences for females, then they may feel less competent and hesitant to make tough decisions (Heilman & Alcott, 2001).

All of the women in this study served in leadership positions, and therefore had achieved a degree of success in historically male-dominated professions. Even though they encountered certain road blocks along the way, they deemed their education, determination, and patience eventually propelled them into breaking the glass ceiling (Hoyt, 2007). Several participants admitted that in order to succeed, they learned how to work within patriarchal systems, and used these principles to their advantage.

One could presume the women in this study consider the battle for equal rights has largely been won, which could account for why none of them offered gender-specific advice for up-and-coming women. Many of the participants found it hard to believe it had been 90 years since woman attained this right, and admitted they took it for granted. Results from this study show no eminent passion on behalf of the participants to correct any existing imbalance between women and men, whether the inequity is grounded in legal, political, or social norms.

This study sheds light on what significance the Nineteenth Amendment may have on contemporary women in civic leadership positions. It shows that, in some instances, full equality has not yet been achieved, and causes one to wonder whether, as a group, women have used this right to their advantage. Or, are women today content with the status quo because the struggles and barriers encountered by their

predecessors have been diminished? It is also worth considering whether these women were empowered through their own agentic systems resulting in a self-determination to succeed and disregard the potential of male domination.

Conclusion

The Nineteenth Amendment revolutionized the equal status of women and men in the United States. As O'Conner (1996) pointed out, "Suffragists were jailed, attacked, harassed, and divorced in their quest for the American dream of full citizenship and civil rights" (p. 668). Accordingly, the results obtained from this study caused the research team to reflect upon how the suffragists' principles of equality are still relevant today. Statistics tell part of the story. In the 2008 presidential election women comprised 53% of the voters compared with men who cast 47% of the votes. Idaho's records show in the same election women encompassed 52% of the vote, and men 48%. These statistics demonstrate females have made gains over time. Nevertheless, participants in this study reported incidences of gender discrimination. Blind spots are prevalent in attitudes about working relationships between male and females in leadership positions, both from a supervisory perspective, and a subordinates' outlook. If this investigation encourages further discussion allowing women to keep moving forward, then its purpose will be fulfilled.

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