

What We Say Without Saying It:
A Study of Perceptions of Organizational Culture and Women in Leadership

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About the Author

Kallie O'Hara grew up in St. Paul, MN. She received a BA in Political Science, with a minor in French Studies, from the University of Minnesota in December 2007. Prior to becoming an employee of the Bush Foundation, she worked in both nonprofits and higher education. As someone who has experienced many different work environments, she became interested in what leads to healthy organizational culture in some places and toxic culture in others. In addition, she has always been disturbed by the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and influence across sectors. This project is a culmination of these interests and an examination of how organizational communication can address these problems.

Executive Summary

This paper examines the relationship between organizational culture and women in leadership. The research question examined is if workplace culture negatively influences how, and if, women advance to leadership roles. The results of this study show further research is necessary, specifically around the following questions: 1. What is the current state of organizational culture in organizations? and 2. How can we influence organizational culture to increase women in leadership roles?

A review of current and historical research uncovers the deeply rooted explanations for the perceptions of women as leaders, and the determination of leadership characteristics. The literature also explores organizational culture and how it contributes to the structural obstacles women face in the workplace. Although the research on this topic is extensive, additional exploration is needed to uncover the gaps between stated values and demonstrated values.

In addition, experts on the topic were interviewed to uncover the stories of women in leadership and the organizations for which they work. These interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the culture and support women experience in the workplace. From this research, a wide range of responses showed common themes around manager support, leadership structure and organizational culture. The interviews uncovered the need for more awareness between what organizations claim to support and how these claims are perceived. They also revealed how powerful culture is in dictating perceptions.

Taken together, the literature review and expert interviews resulted in recommendations for organizations to implement in order to improve the culture of their organizations and support women's advancement in the workplace.

Introduction

In 2013, women accounted for 51 percent of all workers employed in management, professional and related occupations. This is somewhat more than their share of total employment, which is 47 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Yet, women currently hold only 29 of CEO positions at S&P 500 companies, or about 5.8 percent (Catalyst, 2017). American business leaders are still overwhelmingly male, with slightly over one third (39 percent) of all management positions occupied by women (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Only 23 percent of senior managers are women (Catalyst, 2017). What accounts for this underrepresentation the further up the ladder we go? This paper will attempt to show how the culture within organizations, prejudices and policies, and differences among industries impact women's leadership prospects.

There is an abundance of literature published on the topic of prized leadership traits and women in leadership. Scholars agree that the way we perceive leaders is influenced by gender schemas. Many argue that gender bias and the accumulation of advantages make it more difficult for women to advance into leadership roles than their male counterparts (Valian, 2004; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Prime, Carter, Jonsen and Maznevski, 2008). We tend to see men as having the natural leadership qualities that are required in top management positions, which has the twofold consequence of both restricting women from rising to leadership positions and also disabling them once they reach this level (Abele, 2003; Cuadrado, Garcia-Ael and Molero, 2015).

Organizational culture is another well-researched subject, with a multitude of implications for women in leadership. However, it is often difficult to measure workplace culture and its impact. Culture can be difficult to articulate and inequity is perpetuated

through subtle forms of discrimination (Rowe, 1990; Offerman, Basford, Graebner, Basu DeGraaf and Jaffer, 2013; Basord, Offerman and Behrend, 2013). As Offerman et al. stated, “As blatant discrimination grows more and more unacceptable, examining the subtle and sometimes unintended aspects of workplace discrimination is increasingly important” (p.374). Organizational culture is often enforced and maintained by the dominant coalition, which allows the perpetuation of structures that do not support or include women (Badjo and Dickinson, 2002; Jandeska and Kramer, 2005). Authors agree that these cultures are often represented through artifacts, or symbols, and metaphors that set the tone for where value is placed within organizations (Schein, 1992; Wilson, 2000; Nagy and Vicsek, 2014; van Wijk and Finchilescu, 2008).

This topic is critical to communications because there is a general lack of understanding about how we communicate culture. Rather than taking an active role in communicating organizational culture, communicators are often passive and let others determine how it will show up in internal communications. Organizational culture affects all employees and is a critical component of employee retention and satisfaction. When companies allow others to define their narrative, they are missing an opportunity to tell their story. Communicating culture and supporting women in leadership should be an essential piece of internal communication within organizations.

Research Question

This research study seeks to answer the question, **what is the relationship between organizational culture and the barriers for women to advance in leadership?** Organizational culture is defined as a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which governs how people behave in organizations. Leadership is categorized as executive and senior level officials and managers.

This research question is explored using Role Congruity Theory and Schein's Levels of Culture. Role Congruity Theory was proposed by Alice Eagly and Steven Karau as a way to explain how prejudice affects female leaders in two different ways: one, by perceiving women less favorably than men as potential leaders, and two, by evaluating behaviors that fulfill the requirements of the role of leader less favorably when performed by a woman. In other words, "prejudice toward female leaders follows from the incongruity that many people perceive between the characteristics of women and the requirements of leader roles" (Eagly and Karau, 2002). This helps to explain why it is more difficult for women to both attain and occupy leadership roles.

This paper will also explore the role of culture through Edward Schein's Levels of Culture. Schein asserts that culture can be analyzed on three levels: underlying assumptions, espoused beliefs and values, and artifacts. Underlying assumptions are the everyday, and often unstated, principles by which an organization operates. We are often unaware of the underlying assumptions because we take them for granted. Things like "we stay late here if the work isn't finished" could be considered an underlying assumption. Espoused values and beliefs are how an organization publicly expresses what it hopes to accomplish. Examples of these can include mission statements and

organizational values. It's important to note that just because they are stated, does not mean they are true. The last of Schein's levels is artifacts. Artifacts are the visible levels of culture. These include the space of the organization, the dress code, the logo and website, and the way meetings are run, among other things. By examining how these levels of culture manifest, we can begin to understand both the implicit and explicit messages communicated within organizations.

Literature Review

Women in Leadership

Leadership has been depicted in mostly masculine terms for the majority of history; men are seen as the "norm for managerial behavior" (Kusterer, 2008). When we look deeper into how this is defined, most scholars agree that leadership characteristics can be broken into two categories that are associated with men and women respectively: agentic traits and communal traits (Kusterer, 2008; Evers and Sievering, 2014; Abele, 2003; Alvesson and Billing, 1992). Agentic traits are associated with men and communal traits associated with women. These authors argue that:

Agency refers to such characteristics as independence, self-reliance, autonomy, aggression, leadership, initiative, competitiveness, ambition, analytical thinking, dominance, forcefulness, competence, and instrumentalism. Communion refers to such qualities as nurturance, compassion, sensitivity, cooperativeness, affection, gentleness, empathy, interpersonal sensitivity and interdependence. (Alvesson and Billing, p.76)

Eagly and Karau highlighted the problems in associating certain gender roles with leadership roles in their *Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders* (2002). They explain that this leads to two forms of prejudice: “a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman” (p.573). This theory is widely cited by other researchers in the field, including Kusterer (2008), who explains that, “A male manager displaying agentic characteristics is seen as acting in congruence with both the leadership role and his gender role. A female manager displaying agentic characteristics, however, would act in incongruence with her gender role” (p. 549). This creates what is often called a “double-bind” for women, in which they are not viewed as leaders unless they display agentic traits. However, when they do display agentic qualities, they are evaluated unfavorably since they are operating outside of gender role expectations. In other words, women cannot lead in the same way as men or they will be perceived negatively.

Some scholars have shown that employees are beginning to favor communal leadership styles over agentic (Eagly, 2007), which has important implications for how we assess the effectiveness of leadership. Eagly argues that, “In contemporary culture of the United States, women...are lauded as having the right combination of skills for leadership, yielding superior leadership styles and outstanding effectiveness” (p. 1).

Powell (2012) asserts that:

Women [score] higher than men in dimensions of behaviour that contribute to leaders effectiveness (charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward) and lower than men in

dimensions of behaviour that detracts from leader effectiveness (passive management by exception, laissez-faire leadership). (p. 133)

These studies provide important evidence that men are not more effective leaders than women, even though masculine traits have been favored historically.

Despite the fact that traditionally female characteristics make for good leaders, there is still a preference among staff for male leaders. Many studies have shown that there is a “think manager-think male” stereotype in which employees perceive male characteristics as more important to be a successful manager (Schein, 1973; Cuadrado et al, 2015; Prime et al, 2008; Powell, 2012). Powell’s study (2012) found that even though more employees than ever have had a female boss, they still prefer a male boss by a 2:1 margin. He shows that, “among men who stated a preference, 34 percent favored a male boss and 10 percent a female boss. Among women who stated a preference, 40 percent favored a male boss and 26 percent a female boss” (p.123). Based on these results, a greater proportion of women indicated that they would prefer a male boss. Although a small number argue that there is a building preference for characteristics neither ascribed to men nor women (Kusterer, 2008, p. 550) most all agree that in terms of career success, agency is more important than communion.

An important piece to understanding the problem with the association of male traits with good leadership, is that rather than changing the system, we’re asking that women comply in ways they are not socialized to behave. Alvesson and Billing (1992) assert that:

More women adapting to the male norms and becoming managers is hardly in itself contribution to equality between genders, unless it is complemented by

more men obtaining positions requiring 'female' socialization. Equality is hardly achieved by a one-sided adaptation of the one sex to the standards of the other.

(p. 80)

This is a critical point that should be emphasized since organizations are not being held responsible, but rather the women in these positions. Nagy and Vicsek (2014) found that they "constantly encountered criticism of the individual (e.g. careerist women) and basically never of the organization itself" (p. 330). This speaks to the need to create change within our organizations instead of expecting employees to comply with the current structure.

The stereotypes associated with women's competence in leadership roles doesn't just hurt women, but also organizations. Organizations operating in this way, "run the risk that their talent management processes will be influenced by these stereotypes and thereby become less effective at core functions such as evaluating talent" (Prime et al, 2008, p. 205). In addition, it can affect retention when women are not able to see other women in positions of leadership. As Alvesson and Billing (1992) relate, "The executive from a bank emphasized that with a large proportion of female employees, they just could not afford not to utilize the qualified female managerial candidates, and that top management followed this issue carefully" (p.83). This can be presented as evidence against those who argue that a solely meritocratic approach is the solution.

Organizational Culture

Organizations and organizational culture are barriers to women in leadership because they perpetuate inequity in our society. As Acker (1992) posits, “Much of the social and economic inequality in the United States and other industrial countries is created in organizations, in the daily activities of working and organizing work” (p.441). Culture is an integral part of the solution for equity in the workplace. As Schein (1992) states, “a deeper understanding of cultural issues in groups is necessary to decipher what goes on in them but, even more important, to identify what may be the priority issues for leaders and leadership” (p. 5). This shows the elemental nature of culture within organizations and the necessity in exploring culture to understand prejudice and the potential for change.

Although there are some nuances within the definition of organizational culture, scholars generally agree that it can be defined as the values, norms, and beliefs internalized by organizational members that shape the behaviors and attitudes that are rewarded (Schein, 1992; Jandeska and Kraimer, 2005; Plakhotnik and Rocco, 2010; Alvesson and Billing, 2009). Culture is important because it is the glue that holds an organization together. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2010) argue that, “Organizational culture serves as a common frame of reference that enables employees to better interpret organizational activities, understand their supervisors’ and peers’ expectations, respond appropriately in new situations, deal with disagreements, or resolve conflicts” (p. 76). In other words, it affects much of our behavior within organizations.

So, why is it important to understand how culture uniquely affects women within organizations? Because many of the problems within organizational culture stem from

the fact that organizations were built by and for men, so that the rules and the advantages are skewed from the start. Jandeska and Kraimer (2005) argue that, “an ‘old-boy’ network excludes women from centers of influence and valuable sources of information, often trivializing or ignoring their contributions” (p.465). Alvesson and Billing (1992) further this argument by saying, “the interesting question is to look at the game itself, and whose interests and preoccupations it expresses and preserves. In addition to that, it is of interest to study if the game could look otherwise, and to investigate the pros and cons of other designs” (p.79). Further, the lack of women in positions of leadership becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. As Badjo and Dickson (2001) argue, “If women are placed in positions with limited power, they will have limited opportunities to influence the organizational culture. Further, if they are promoted based on mandates to ‘increase the numbers of women,’ backlash is likely to result” (p.410). Wilson (2000) agrees and argues that, “similar observations could be made in relation to race, disability, age, and any number of differences, where the owners of preferred attributes are privileged in terms of organizational access and acceptance” (p.277). This speaks to the importance of changing the culture from within in order to foster equitable and inclusive opportunities for women and others outside of the dominant group.

By using Schein’s Levels of Culture we’re better able to understand how culture manifests in organizations. More specifically, this paper will examine the difference between espoused values and basic underlying assumptions (see Figure 1). In order to understand the perceptions of employees, it’s important to compare what a company claims to support through espoused values, and then look deeper to see if this is what

employee perception supports. Schein is widely cited among scholars and provides a basis for analysis that many have used to further their research.

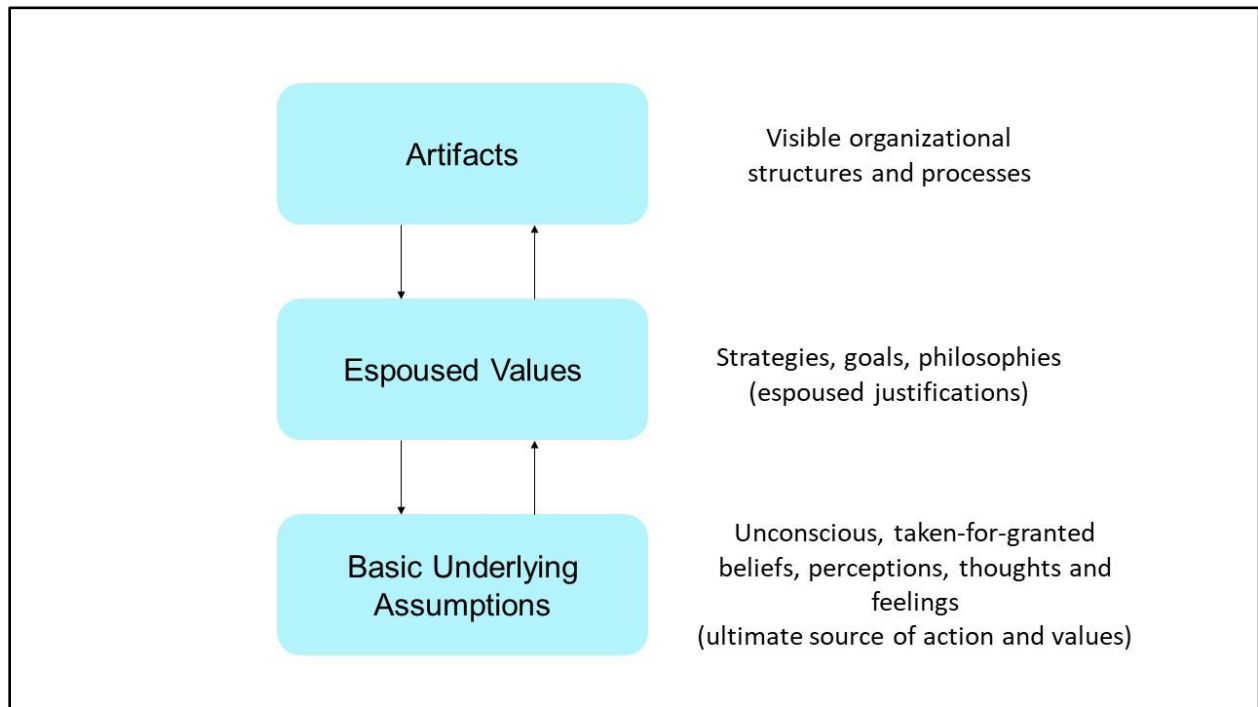


Figure 1: Schein's Levels of Culture

Method

The goal of this paper is to delve deeper into the role of organizational culture and explore how the explicit values of companies do not always align with the implicit messages they are sending. This paper proposes that workplace culture negatively influences how, and if, women advance to leadership roles. Although there is a bounty of research on organizational culture and women in leadership, this study provides an opportunity to dig deeper into the chasm between stated values and perceived values. It also allows for an exploration of the difference between what organizations claim to support and how employees perceive support in the workplace.

In order to explore this question, in-depth interviews were conducted with women leaders and experts in communications and organizational culture in the Twin Cities area. The interview participants represented many different industries including nonprofit, government, higher education and business. Both in-person and phone interviews were conducted between May 19th and July 5th, 2017. Conducting the interviews in real time allowed for follow-up questions and tailoring of the questionnaire based on responses given by subjects. The goal of the interviews was to obtain expert analysis and a richer explanation for how women leaders interpret, experience and are affected by culture. The participants provided a multidimensional perspective of what it means to be a leader and the kinds of things that organizations can do to help increase equity and inclusion. By looking for patterns in their responses, we are able to see the themes that arise and also the differences among women in leadership. In addition, in-depth, qualitative interviews allowed for a nuanced look inside not just what organizations claim they support, but the actual perceptions of support, in a way that examining policies could not uncover.

Twelve interviews were conducted in total, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. Interview participants represented different sectors including nonprofit, government, large corporate organizations, and higher education, among others. All participants were women and most were at the Director-level or higher within their organizations. Those who were not, were experts in women in leadership and/or organizational culture. Interview respondents are listed by their title and organization below:

- Assistant Professor, St. Catherine's University
- President, Bush Foundation
- President - North America, Weber Shandwick
- Director - Talent Development, Bush Foundation
- Chief Human Resources Officer, Best Buy
- Vice President - Government Affairs, Best Buy
- Author of *All On One Plate: Cultural Expectations on American Mothers*
- Chief Operations Officer, Habitat for Humanity
- Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Senior Vice President - Strategic Development (Retired), Thrivent Financial
- Senior Public Relations Consultant, Large Medical Device Maker
- Biomechanical Engineer, Orthopedic Medical Device Company

All participants were asked the same set of questions (see Appendix I), but some modifications were made for follow-up questions depending on their responses. The questions focused on the following themes:

- Their experience with women in leadership within their organizations.
- The culture of their organizations.
- Ways in which their organizations support or discourage women - including verbal, physical and ceremonial symbols.

Research Findings

There was general agreement among the participants that although women have come a long way in representation in leadership, there is still more that needs to be done in order to achieve parity. Eight out of the twelve participants indicated that there was female representation within the leadership ranks of their organizations. Themes from the interviews are discussed below.

When women are in leadership, organizational culture is assessed more favorably.

All eight of the participants who indicated women were well-represented in the leadership of their organizations assessed their organization and its culture in positive terms. There was a general sense of pride when the participants could claim female representation in leadership:

“We are unusually dominated by women in leadership. There are more women than men. The top three positions are women. The next tier

down, three are men and five are women. That has been lovely. I have really enjoyed working in this environment. It's the first time I've ever had a female boss" (Chief Operations Officer, Habitat for Humanity).

Several participants noted the nurturing climate and difference in the structures of female-led organizations. One said, "It's a place where people care about each other and take issues that people have seriously" (President, Bush Foundation). Another mentioned, "We have a culture that prides itself on not being bureaucratic and it tends to be relational. There is a fair amount of ambiguity within roles and responsibility" (Chief Operations Officer, Habitat for Humanity).

Conversely, the participants who came from organizations without women in leadership ranks reported more repressed cultures within their organizations. They used words and phrases like "traditional", "buttoned-up" and "hierarchical" when describing their culture. This uncovers an additional question of not only how culture influences leadership, but also how leadership influences culture.

The importance of Work/Life Balance

All the participants talked about the importance of work-life balance, although there seemed to be disagreement between what an acceptable balance was. One participant said:

"If we say that we're going to reward hard work and define those that are promotable as those that show commitment to their work and devotion to the organization, then we are saying there are cultural elements that go along with this – nights, weekends, travel, new business, last minute travel schedule. If you define work as the central focus, it makes it difficult for parents to advance, unless the parent has

full immunity from domestic work. As long as organizations have the culture that defines the ability to advance as devotion and commitment to the organization, any parent who has commitment to domestic work will not advance” (Assistant Professor, St. Catherine’s University).

Since women are disproportionately managing domestic responsibilities, this tends to impact them in a different way. Another participant talked about the challenges of promoting work-life balance:

“We try to encourage work-life balance. This one is harder – but we’re aware. We want all people to have lives outside of work. Many have families. We want all employees to know – we know your family matters to you, that means it matters to us. We do our best to help you create the balance. We’re not there yet, but we want it to be out there. We’re working towards that” (Chief HR Officer, Best Buy).

There are important implications around who will take advantage of these policies. As one woman in leadership said,

“It’s not uncommon that leaders know about my family and that I have kids. I need to set boundaries –I would say, I need to leave this meeting for my kid’s conference- and I didn’t apologize for that. Acceptance has been created. Being able to assert your authority to say – this is what I can and cannot do” (VP, Best Buy).

This raises questions around whether women in the lower ranks of the organization can do the same thing. Would a female employee in a coordinator or manager position be granted the same flexibility given that she may not have the authority to advocate for herself? Additionally, would she be able to afford the kind of child-care that allows her focus mainly on her role at work? These are interesting questions to consider and

warrant further study. Regardless, seeing women in positions of power create boundaries sets a positive example for the employees of the organization and shows that it is acceptable to make room for life outside of the office.

It should be noted that this should not only apply to women and men with children. Several respondents pointed out the importance of making these accommodations for everyone on staff. As one respondent said,

“I’m a single woman, so it doesn’t affect me, sometimes I’m resentful if I have to shoulder more, but I would prefer to work for a flexible company. It would be nice to figure out how to make this fair for everyone” (Biomechanical Engineer, Orthopedic Medical Device Company).

This is an important point to acknowledge: flexibility can feel exclusive if not applied fairly to everyone. Even though this respondent can sometimes feel excluded, she would still prefer to work for a company with flexible work policies. This sentiment was echoed by other participants. The Talent Development Director at the Bush Foundation said,

“It’s hard to stay inclusive around people who don’t have kids. Women as leaders get put in boxes. How do we think inclusively about people who have other things – faith life, art, community context. How do we do this? We can keep getting better at this”.

Respondents acknowledged the challenges around keeping culture inclusive and making sure that it’s not just accommodating one type of employee. In doing this, companies can also avoid placing stereotypes on working mothers and make sure that

work-life balance isn't just code for parenting issues, but can be applied to allow all workers to have a full life outside of work.

Industry Matters

The interviews highlighted important differences between industries. Women who worked in nonprofit, government and higher education had a different perspective on the demands of their industry as opposed to the women working in financial services, retail and the medical device industry. The respondents who worked in nonprofits described their fields as being more heavily dominated by women in general. They also reported more cooperative environments and a greater emphasis on flexibility. A forty-hour work week was also more typical in the responses of women working in nonprofit industries. The Chief Operations Officer at Habitat for Humanity acknowledged that,

“People tend to stick to a 9-5, and there are not a ton of evening responsibilities, but there are some. The CFO during the budget process was working a lot of late nights, for example. Other than special events, though, there is not an expectation that you work nights and weekends”.

In contrast, for-profit and financial services we reported to be more competitive and also require more hours from their employees. Both respondents from Best Buy noted the difference in their retail stores versus their corporate headquarters. They reported that these jobs required lots of nights and weekends and “may not appeal to women. They are well-paid jobs, but they don't have the flexibility you might otherwise have in corporate” (VP, Best Buy). The former VP of Thrivent Financial stated that financial

services are more male dominated in general. In this world, performance is critical and may require longer hours. Said one respondent, “The ideal employee [at our company] is super smart, super goal oriented, very hard driving, can’t stop won’t stop, get after it kind of person” (Senior Public Relations Consultant, Large Medical Device Maker). This may translate to long nights and weekends.

Industry has direct implications for the kinds of recommendations that can be implemented within an organization. In competitive industries, there is additional pressure to work longer hours because that’s what the climate dictates. In industries that depend more on professional services, organizations may be able to offer employees more flexibility.

Cooperative over competitive

Interview participants echoed research findings that women prefer collaborative environments as opposed to competitive environments (Eagly, 2007, Powell, 2012). Half of the interview participants indicated that they worked in collaborative environments rather than competitive. In addition to being in the nonprofit and human services sector, all six of these organizations had a woman at the helm as CEO or President of the organization.

These participants specifically stated that collaboration was part of the culture of their organizations and noted the benefits that this provided. As one said, “we are not competitive, we are collaborative. This leans into teams and working together more” (President, Weber Shandwick). The Talent Development Director at the Bush Foundation said, “we are much more collaborative in our way of working now – which

has made room for different kinds of leadership.” These responses resonate with research showing that women often prefer collaborative environments versus competitive environments.

Alternatively, three participants acknowledged the difficulty of working in competitive environments. As one respondent said,

“women are not heard, and I don’t think people know this. We should encourage a more collaborative environment. I will run from adversarial and competitive climates, I don’t feel like I can thrive there”
(Biomechanical Engineer, Orthopedic Medical Device Company).

Another noted, “It’s a tough environment. It’s competitive and fast moving. Not everyone connects because of this reason” (Chief Human Resources Officer, Best Buy). This illustrates the challenges of women who are asked to adapt to climates that are may be suited to more traditional male leadership styles and shows that climates can depend on industry. This is not to say that competitive climates should be viewed as male-only realms. As noted above, some industries are inherently more competitive than others. But it does bear noting that respondents remarked on the challenges of working in more competitive climates.

It is important for leaders to model the behavior they say they value

Seven participants mentioned the importance of seeing women in leadership as an example of the organization’s support and commitment. Two participants said that the lack of women in leadership made it more difficult to believe their organization’s commitment to women in the organization. They were also skeptical of their own ability

to succeed within the company. Said a Senior Public Relations Consultant at a large medical device company,

“They do a lot of talking. The CEO [says he] wants 40% [women in leadership] but they have been talking about this for almost as long as I have been there with little progress. They bleed mid-level women. It is a tough environment”.

This statement exposes a gap between what an organization claims to support and what employees within the organization perceive. As one participant noted,

“Modeling is huge. We see other capable women leaders and men leaders, it’s endemic – you see the studies on learning through working with and alongside people outside of a mentor and sponsor...they model well what it looks like to be a leader. We are overtly inclusive of finding great talent and providing opportunity” (President, Weber Shandwick).

Several respondents talked about the importance of not only seeing women in leadership roles, but also the importance of those leaders modeling the behaviors that they expect from their employees. The Talent Development Director at the Bush Foundation discussed the importance of valuing life outside of work, not just through words, but by demonstrating this behavior, “Jen [the president of Bush] hates to put herself out there as a model. To the extent that she says- I am going to be off the grid when I’m on vacation. The extent she is up front of that – it is great for other people to see.” This is an important component of closing the gap between espoused values and underlying assumptions. If employees do not believe they can take advantage of a

policy, then the policy may as well not exist. As one respondent said, “You need to see people getting to do stuff and not being penalized for it” (President, Bush Foundation).

This sentiment was echoed by several other participants.

“Add Women and Stir” Is Not Effective

Many respondents reported that just because there were women in leadership, did not mean that this percolated through the ranks of the organization. The former VP of Thrivent provided a telling example of why it didn’t work to just “add women and stir”.

As she relayed,

“American Express was cultivating women at every rung of the ladder. Thrivent went out and hired people like me to come in and help create that culture towards the top. They did make progress. There are women now, but instead of grooming women, they brought in a bunch at a higher level and tried to have changes go out into the org structure. I suppose that’s faster, but it’s a somewhat unusual model. It takes a long time to change the culture. I feel the American Express approach of aggressive development programming for all the rungs was ultimately more successful”.

Culture can be difficult to change, so hiring women for the c-suite without consideration for the cultural implications may be a tenuous solution.

Another respondent noted the challenges inherent in the structure of an organization, another reason why simply placing women within leadership ranks is not effective. She stated, “As long as you have to leap from one level or tier from the next to the next, that’s where I see these cultural norms taking over” (Assistant Professor, St.

Catherine's University). In other words, this leader may be able to start somewhere, but upward movement can still prove difficult for other women.

Additionally, women can experience backlash if they are not seen as "earning" their place in the ranks. As one woman said, "They did hire a woman director of HR, she was the highest woman in HR. She was not well-respected either. People felt she was not qualified and didn't have the background to qualify for the job" (Biomechanical Engineer, Orthopedic Medical Device Company). This kind of situation does not help to improve the culture or environment for women, but can have the adverse effect. It shows the importance of building inclusive culture from the ground up to include not just the current women in leadership, but also the ones who aspire to these roles.

Women's Resource Groups are Common – with varying degrees of success

Half of the respondents mentioned there was a group for women in leadership or women in general that their organization either tacitly or actively supported. This did not seem to have a connection between the health or supportiveness of women within the culture of the organizations. In some cases, it seemed to act as a band aid solution or a hollow symbol of support within the organization. However, most respondents indicated that it helped to gather with people to share experiences and build comradery. Although one respondent expressed some cynicism in the women's resource group at her organization, she also stated,

"There was grass roots support. It was a message saying that someone in management cares. None of those messages were explicitly stated,

*but this is in my mind why I felt like I could move forward.”
(Biomechanical Engineer, Orthopedic Medical Device Company).*

As this respondent noted, the group sent an important message that women are valued within the organization. Even if the results are mixed, the message is important, and works to build cohesion between espoused values and underlying assumptions.

These groups can also provide women with connections that can be important in obtaining visibility and support, especially in larger organizations. This can be particularly vital in more competitive and male-dominated fields. As one respondent noted,

“The women’s group – it was less formal but well known – it was primarily VPs and above and men were not a part of it... It created opportunities – we got jobs that maybe we weren’t qualified for but they knew we had the aptitude” (former VP, Thrivent).

Most respondents had positive reactions to these groups. Another mentioned the team building as well as support from the C-Suite for their group, “If I want to go to the women’s group, I know I can connect and relate in a different way. In those groups, there is lots of involvement and team building. We have an executive sponsor of each group. Our CFO is a sponsor of this group. A few hundred employees are a part of each ERG, depending” (VP, Government Affairs, Best Buy). The reactions to these groups from respondents were different, some cynical and some enthusiastic, but regardless, all respondents who noted that there was a group indicated that it had an overall positive effect on the culture for women in their organization.

Flexibility and Engagement is Manager-Dependent

A major barrier that almost every respondent identified is that policy is enforced at the manager level rather than organization-wide. Many talked about the differences within organizations depending on your manager. As long as different treatment persists based on reporting structure or department, parity will not exist within the organization. This puts the onus on organizations to enforce culture rather than individual managers. The Chief HR Officer at Best Buy discussed the challenges of this:

“Some of it is about the dynamics of the people you report to or who works for you. If you work for someone who demands 60 hour weeks, then it will be harder. That’s what we’re trying to address. We want everyone to have that option of work life balance.”

One interview participant reported that in her organization, “it depended on the managers to encourage or discourage (participation in the women’s group). Some seemed ambivalent, some were disparaging” (Biomechanical Engineer, Medical Device Maker). This shows that it’s not just about the support of managers to allow flexibility, but also to encourage engagement and buy-in for organization-wide initiatives. This was echoed by the COO of Habitat for Humanity: “I think most of it happens through direct interaction – where we have engaged managers it works well, there is a gap where we don’t”.

Women Trade Prestige for Flexibility

Another important theme that emerged from the interviews was that women will sacrifice advancement and recognition if they are given a flexible and supportive work environment. One respondent said,

“A lot of women trade flexibility for prestige, especially after they have kids” (Adjunct Professor and Author, University of Minnesota).

Several participants highlighted the disparities of part-time work and the sacrifices that come along with it. One stated,

“organizations benefit greatly from the women who work part-time and they don’t pay them. People are so grateful that they will do anything to keep it – including working more hours offline” (Talent Management Director, Bush Foundation).

One woman from a medical device company said that she went down to part time after she had children. She paid the price of what she called a “flexibility tax”; although her pay decreased, her responsibilities did not. As she said, “I just have to figure out how to do more with less time”. This indicates a possible connection and a potential barrier in women’s advancement to the c-suite. If a woman is being asked to choose between a promotion, and a more demanding position, or flexibility, she may choose flexibility. It’s worth noting that these two aspects are often treated as a dichotomy. It may be worth organizations exploring possible scenarios where an employee would not have to make this choice.

The former VP of Thrivent argued that women should be cautious when seeking flexible work arrangements. She argues that,

“my attitude was against making allowances for women that could come back to haunt them or hurt their career. I think there are times when well-intentioned policies can hurt as much as they help”.

She also said that, although it’s good to have policies that allow for active child-rearing,

“You have to be careful of this so it doesn’t backfire and go the opposite way. I know it disadvantages women too – they made allowances and then they hadn’t had the experience when they came up for promotion since they had taken time away for two years”.

These are important considerations to make and they highlight the differences between the choices women are presented with that men may never have to confront. It again highlights the differences among industries.

Several women interviewed pointed out that their bosses acted paternalistic and protective towards them. This was not out of malice, but it has had the unintended consequence of holding women back and not allowing them to make decisions for themselves. As one respondent noted, “I had a boss who was fussing over me when I was pregnant. He was concerned and I wanted him to get over it. I worked on a big project during that pregnancy, if I hadn’t done it, I don’t know where I would have been” (VP, Thrivent Financial). This speaks to the volume of incremental disadvantages that women experience that add up to have a big impact over the span of their careers. One

respondent posited, “By the time women reach leadership roles, the incremental favoritism shown to men and the incremental disadvantages shown to women means that it’s unlikely that women will be seen in equal numbers in leadership roles” (Associate Professor, St. Kate’s). Managers may think they are making decisions that benefit their employees, when they may be preventing them from a challenging, yet beneficial opportunity.

Discussion and Recommendations

The lack of representation of women in leadership is a complex and multifaceted problem with many root causes. However, with women representing fifty percent of the workforce, it is difficult to continue to justify the paltry representation of women in the leadership as a “pipeline problem”. Nor is it possible to ignore the issue and assume that it will improve on its own. Equity in leadership is important not just for the sake of fairness, but also because it serves to strengthen different perspectives in the c-suite and helps organizations remain relevant to the next generation of employees.

Increasing women in leadership is not just the right thing to do, it’s the sensible thing to do in order to maintain the health of organizations.

To tackle this problem, organizations need to change culture from within. As Alvesson and Billing (1992) argue:

The real problem, according to the broader, more basic orientation, is that it is the male players that made the game, the rules, and manufactured the arena, in accordance with their specialties, skills, and interests. Instead of studying foul play, the effects of some players having a longer period of training and more

helpful coaches, that referees un- or consciously are in favor of certain players, and so on, the interesting question is to look at the game itself, and whose interests and preoccupations it expresses and preserves. (p. 79)

In other words, we cannot continue telling women to “lean in” and change their behavior to fit a flawed system. Rather, we need to change the system to fit the realities of today’s modern workers and families.

The research in this paper supports the findings of the literature within the field and points to the everyday manifestations of discrimination that are enforced through our workplaces: diminished responsibility, unequal pay for the same amount of work, and an inability to advance to the highest rungs of an organization, especially in certain industries. Below are recommendations for organizations to create a more supportive culture to advance women in leadership roles.

Recommendations:

Based on the above themes, the following are recommendations for leaders within organizations to build more inclusive and supportive cultures for women in leadership. Some of these recommendations may be implausible for certain organizations to make based on industry and size. However, even small steps in awareness are helpful and can lead to changes in attitude and perception.

- *Make room for different styles of leadership and organizational structures.*

Women exhibit different leadership characteristics than men. They are more communal and less agentic, but research has shown that communal styles of leadership

are just as effective, and in some cases, can be more effective (Eagly, 2007; Powell, 2012). Organizations need to begin valuing these styles of leadership. This will require those in power to look beyond their own biases of what leadership looks like and begin to see the value in different characteristics.

In addition, cooperative culture is an appealing alternative to competitive culture and can benefit not only women, but men as well. Many women in the interviews shared their aversion to the competitive cultures of their organizations. In some cases, women choose to walk away rather than compete for roles and recognition in certain environments. Not only does competition not appeal to many women, but it can repel them from participating and leading within organizations. If possible within the confines of the organization, leadership should push for more cooperative ways of working. If the industry is competitive, organizations should encourage cooperation within team structures to create support for those who prefer more cooperative environments. It may be especially important in competitive climates to help create and sustain a group for women leaders and employees in order to provide additional support and solidarity.

Creating space for different kinds of leadership styles may also require organizations to restructure their hierarchies and reporting framework, or flatten their organizations. When interviewed for this paper, one respondent suggested that as long as there are hierarchies within organizational structures, we will continue to see the same cultural norms persist. She argues that we should create “self-regulated and goal-oriented teams. You may have a novice and a veteran in a group who must work together. If someone is not pulling their weight, it’s the work of the team to help solve this” (Associate Professor, St. Kate’s). This may seem like a radical idea, but several

companies are currently testing out these structures, called holacracies, including Zappos and Medium.

Holacracies replace the traditional organizational culture and are a way to remove many of the implicit biases that exist in traditional structures. They allow for a more individualized approach to leadership and decision-making. Although going full-fledged holacracy may be impractical for many organizations, they can borrow some of these practices to encourage different ways of thinking and participation to begin to change their organizational culture.

This recommendation clearly depends on the size and type of organization in question. Most organizations will not be able to restructure their hierarchy. However, it may be possible in smaller organizations to think about how work is assigned and to reassess reporting structures. The idea is to begin thinking about structures differently, and if possible, look for new ways that are inclusive of those outside of the dominant culture.

- *Consider who is defined as a successful employee and (when possible) limit additional hours.*

Organizations need to consider their rewards system and how they define a model employee. This gets to the heart of building an inclusive work culture. By defining success as an employee who works long hours, evenings and weekends, companies are eliminating many people from eligibility based on their lives outside of work. This disproportionately affects women since they continue to hold more of the domestic responsibilities at home. This may be the reality in some industries, but it does not have

to be the case for all. In industries that depend on human-centered delivery and client services, it is important to lift up successful work and employees who can contribute in ways outside of working excessive hours. Companies should celebrate contributions not just from the loudest person in the room, and look for opportunities to reward different styles of leadership.

When possible, organizations should encourage work to happen within the confines of the 40-hour per week schedule. Organizations should avoid hosting work events on evenings or weekends, and host team building events during the workday so as not to exclude employees with children, elderly parents, or other commitments. Admittedly, the ease of implementing this recommendation can depend on industry. In financial services and similar industries, it can be more difficult to adhere to a 40-hour work week. However, companies should be flexible where possible. Even if employees are working additional hours, policies should accommodate working remotely and allow flexible hours to fit the demands of life outside of work.

Organizations should be aware of the “flexibility tax” and try to accurately pay people for the work that they do. If an organization allows employees to work part-time schedules, it should adjust responsibilities to align with these hours. This is not to say that there should be no salaried employees, rather, if an employee is paid for a part-time schedule, but is working full-time, they should be compensated for full-time work.

- *Be consistent with flexible policies across the organization to include all employees regardless of their manager.*

Everyone interviewed for this paper said that flexibility mattered. They also said that their treatment and experience depended a great deal on their individual manager. In the current climate, providing employees support and flexibility is critical in retaining top talent; companies need to make sure they are managing this experience at the organizational level. Research has shown that bias creeps in when decisions are left up to individuals, so it should also be important for organizations to create consistency between and across departments and reporting structures.

Additionally, flexible policies should not only apply to those in leadership positions, but be available to everyone in the organization, when possible. Often, the people who need them the most are the ones within the lower ranks of the organization. Women are vulnerable to dropping out of the workforce if they are unable to find a schedule that accommodates major life events like pregnancy and childbirth. If nontraditional work arrangements can help retain employees, it is a benefit to the company as well as the individual. And as one interview participant noted, “This does wonders to engender loyalty” (Talent Management Director, Bush Foundation).

It is important to note here that policies amount to very little if they are disingenuous and unenforced. This is a common area where a gap between espoused values and underlying assumptions is exposed. It is easy to claim support of flexible work arrangements, when in reality, employees are discouraged from taking advantage of them. This is another reason why enforcement cannot be left to the individual

managers. It must be valued throughout the organization or equity will be difficult to attainable.

- *Communicate your policies boldly and clearly.*

Most of the interview participants did not have clear answers as to how their organizations communicated their support to their employees. This is a significant missed opportunity. It's unclear why organizations are waiting for their employees to define their narrative. Organizations must communicate intentionally and through different mediums. Employing internal communication tactics for storytelling can help employees understand more about connecting with their co-workers and their company. Organizations should not ignore rich forms of communication like face-to-face interactions through town hall meetings and all-staff events. Some organizations employed various internal communication strategies, but many did not. Others said it was mostly through individual managers that support was communicated.

Companies should not leave their messaging up to interpretation. It's important to take control of the message to let employees know what is important. Organizations can avoid sending unintended signals by watching for the disconnects in espoused values and observing the underlying messages. Employees are savvier than ever and look for candor and authenticity. They are wary of the tropes and clichés that companies have trotted out over the years and they are able to identify words that have no meaning. Instead of using corporate speak and legalese, organizations should rely on friendly and simple language to let employees know how they are valued. They should present policies in an approachable manner and make them widely accessible to everyone.

Internal communications present a great opportunity to highlight employees who are exhibiting the values and traits organizations want to celebrate. Storytelling is a great way to showcase employees' whole selves, not just their role at work.

Organizations can present examples of successful employees through videos, pictures and stories. Additionally, they can recognize employees for great ideas, not just for working extra hours on nights and weekends.

Communications has an important role in creating the symbols and narratives that influence employees' perceptions of the organization and its culture. This should not be overlooked or left to others to define. Culture is a communications issue that has direct implications on employee retention, satisfaction and company performance. In certain industries, companies may be reticent to define messages of flexibility and support since they may actually value long hours and competition. It's worth considering that organizations may be complicit with leaving messaging up to others to avoid direct confrontation between espoused values and underlying assumptions.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of communicators to present audiences with images and examples of women in leadership roles. Much of the implicit bias exists because of the images we are surrounded by from a young age. Communicators have an important role in changing the perception of what a leader looks like to expand beyond white men in suits. This is an opportunity for communicators to have an impact on changing the minds of their audiences.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper is not all encompassing. One important issue that it leaves out is the intersectionality of leadership and women of color. Women of color are even more marginalized in organizational culture and are often missing in senior ranks of leadership. However, in order to keep a broad focus, this paper does not address these implications explicitly. A recommendation for future research would be to explore the additional limitations and solutions for women of color in the workplace.

This paper focused on interviewing women in leadership roles. Thus, the responses presented a top-down view of the organization. Future research should focus on the responses of women from the lower and mid-level ranks of the organization. These women are more embedded in the culture and may have less of a stake in providing positive responses to questions about the culture and structure of their organization. Interviewing women lower in the organizational structure may have also provided a more authentic view of how employees experience culture and their ability to advance within the organization.

It's also important to note that interviews can only measure perception, not actual behavior. When considering these findings, it's necessary to keep in mind that these are only the perceptions of participants included, and cannot be generalized. In order to measure behavior, an observational study would have been necessary. Suggestions for future research could include a behavioral study to pair with this study.

While conducting the interviews, it became clear that some respondents were choosing their words carefully, parroting phrases and glossing over challenges. This was a negative aspect to conducting interviews. It may have been beneficial for all the

respondents to remain anonymous in order to uncover honest responses. In addition to getting women from different levels within the organization, keeping respondents anonymous may have helped to encourage more frank and revealing conversations.

It also became clear that many respondents struggled in identifying symbols within their organizations. This included verbal and physical symbols as well as rituals and ceremonies. This was in part because when experiencing the everyday culture of our organizations, we become blind to the symbols right in front of us. Although several of the interview questions focused on symbols, the responses did not yield the anticipated results. There may have been a benefit in providing better examples for interview participants and by asking specific follow-up questions for greater insight.

In addition, this research would benefit from a quantitative study. Since this paper examines the gap between espoused values and actual attributes, it was important to examine qualitative results which were best captured through in-depth interviews. However, surveys would be beneficial in capturing a wider range of responses and to measure the differences in what companies say they support and how their employees perceive support.

Conclusion

Women have struggled to pierce the glass ceiling of organizational structures and leadership. They are woefully underrepresented in boardrooms and executive suites. However, women make up half the population of the workforce. This study looked to explain this disconnect by exploring organizational culture and its effect on women in leadership.

The findings from this study show that there needs to be a shift in organizations to allow for different types of success and different styles of leadership. It's necessary to expand our ideas and perceptions of what leaders look like. This may not happen until we have more examples of different types of people in these roles. It is also important to strive for flexibility where possible. This goes a long way in engendering loyalty and dedication in employees.

Interviews uncovered the differences between culture and its effect on women in certain industries. In nonprofit and government realms it may be more feasible to provide flexibility and contained work schedules to accommodate different types of lifestyles and goals outside of the office. In more competitive environments, it may be important to create smaller groups that encourage women, despite the realities of the larger context.

When considering culture, organizations should remember that it is their responsibility to define. Through internal communications, organizations can have a hand in crafting the narrative and telling the stories that support who they want to be and the kinds of employees they want to celebrate.

By working to change the culture and expectations within organizations, we can work towards more equitable and inclusive environments for all employees. We often forget about the potential for change that these everyday systems can offer, but it's critical that we focus our efforts not only on the problems in larger society, but on the issues we confront daily when we walk into the office.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Guide

1. Can you describe the culture of your organization? Is it traditional, or more progressive? Other adjectives that come to mind? (*Culture can be defined as: a series of consistent, observable patterns; How you “do” things in your organization; “the sum of values and rituals which serve as ‘glue’ to integrate the members of an organization.”*)
2. Are there women represented in leadership roles within your organization (leadership includes: President or CEO and C-Suite, Vice presidents or Directors)?
 - a. How long have women been in leadership positions in your organization?
3. Is there a level where you observe female representation dropping off within your organization (ie: at the director or c-suite level)?
4. What are the ways that your organization supports women employees, and specifically, women in positions of leadership?
5. How do you communicate this support to your employees (both women and men)?
6. Can you think of verbal symbols in your organization that either support or discourage female employees (*Verbal symbols are the stories that tell the history of the organization*)?
7. What kind of employee is held up as an example of a successful employee? Who do you celebrate as the ideal employee?
8. Can you think of ceremonies or rituals in your organization that either support or discourage female employees - either overtly or subtly (*ceremonies and rituals might include celebrations or parties, awards, team building activities, annual meetings, etc.*)?
9. Can you think of physical symbols in your organization that either support or discourage female employees - either directly or indirectly (*Physical symbols might include: corporate logos, breast pumping rooms, childcare facilities*)?
10. Is there anything else that your organization does to communicate its support for women employees that I haven't asked about?

11. What are some ways that your organization, or organizations in general, could better support women?

Appendix II: List of Interview Participants

1. Diane Fittipaldi
Assistant Professor
St. Kate's University
Interview on 5/23/17 - 2:30pm

2. Jennifer Ford Reedy
President
Bush Foundation
Interview on 6/8/17 - 9:00am

3. Sara Gavin
President - North America
Weber Shandwick
Interview on 5/30/17 - 11:00am
Part II - Friday, 6/23/17 - 2:00pm

4. Stephanie Andrews
Director - Talent Development
Bush Foundation
Interview on 6/1/17 - 10:00am

5. Paula Baker
Chief Human Resources Officer
Best Buy
Interview on 5/19/17 - 1:30pm

6. Laura Bishop
Vice President - Government Affairs
Best Buy
Interview on 5/22/17 - 11:00am

7. Solveig Brown
Author of *All On One Plate: Cultural Expectations on American Mothers*
Interview on 6/20/17 - 2:00pm

8. Pam Wheelock
Chief Operations Officer
Habitat for Humanity
Interview on 6/29/17 - 1:00pm

9. Andrea Vaubel
Assistant Commissioner
Minnesota Dept of Agriculture
Interview on 6/30/17 - 9:00am

10. Pam Moret
Senior Vice President - Strategic Development (Retired)
Thrivent Financial
Interview on 7/5/17 - 10:00am

11. Senior Public Relations Consultant
(Preferred to remain anonymous)
Large Medical Device Maker
Interview on 6/28/17 - 5:00pm

12. Biomechanical Engineer
(Preferred to remain anonymous)
Orthopedic Medical Device Company
Interview on 7/5/17 - 1:00 pm

Appendix III: Interview Transcripts by Question

1. Can you describe the culture of your organization? Is it traditional, or more progressive? Other adjectives that come to mind? (*Culture can be defined as: a series of consistent, observable patterns; How you “do” things in your organization; “the sum of values and rituals which serve as ‘glue’ to integrate the members of an organization.”*)

Respondent 1:

Think about two different things when you think about culture: formal and informal. There is the culture that the organization talks about openly -on the wall how they might describe their culture, and there is what they actually do and what they actually reward. There are undercurrents. In the ad agency – there were a number of rituals and activities that at face value looked gender neutral, but as long as women are the ones that get pregnant, that means that that person has nine months of pregnancy and the medical experience of delivery and that is the only person who can breastfeed. There are a lot of cultural elements that make it difficult for women to advance. Example: if we say that we’re going to reward hard work and define those that are promotable as those that show commitment to their work and devotion to the organization, then we are saying there are cultural elements that go along with this – nights, weekends, travel, new business, last minute travel schedule. If you define work as the central focus, it makes it difficult for parents to advance, unless the parent has full immunity from domestic work. As long as organizations have the culture that defines the ability to advance as devotion and commitment to the organization, any parent who has commitment to domestic work will not advance. It’s the “work hard play hard” culture. Work hard= daily work, all day long. Then at 6pm – after hours work meetings that happen ‘til 6 or 7pm. Then, you go to the bar together. Who is invited and who isn’t invited? You must have immunity from domestic work in order to be a part of that culture. This did not get better towards the end of my career. The ability to succeed was geared towards the breadwinner or a single person.

Respondent 2:

I would describe it as a values-based culture. It’s dynamic – things change here quickly compared to other institutions in our field. It’s a place where people care about each other and take issues that people have seriously.

Respondent 3:

Our culture is composed of a whole set of offices around the world. Have to think of three levels – what happens in a team. Fluid, dynamic. Composition of team and team leader. Second level is office- leadership team is important for setting the tone. Hand print of leaders is huge. Macro-culture – there is a consistent thread. The real animation happens at different levels. Macro – is one that is ... we take joy and motivation and adrenaline out of invention and innovation. Problem solving for clients. Dynamic industry. Prize the client relationship. Secondly, idea of leading through innovation. Not a culture that is hyper aggressive – almost the opposite. Collaborative, invention, a lot of celebrating the work. We can be proud of for our client when a team makes something happen for the team and the client. Anchored in innovation and thinking differently. Very strong culture here of collaboration, we work hard to take that to a definition – very overused term. Collaborative spirit – have done quite a bit of research around this. A big driver is that we get to work with amazing people everywhere. Network structure. Our clients expect it since we're a global office. The collaboration thing is in the genetics and DNA. People crave and want this. Not competitive, we are collaborative. This leans into teams and working together more.

Respondent 4:

It's really interesting – I was just talking with someone from Work XO – about Culture DNA and workplace genome mapping of culture. Looking at engagement surveys into how we would define our culture. I would define it as pretty traditional in the way we do our work with an interesting mix in traditional ways of working with innovative output. We are earnest in wanting to do a good job. Intentional about doing well, being fair, we're not spontaneous. It's funny because we plan out how we will have fun – we take fun breaks. There is not a lot of whimsy in our culture. We are fairly cautious, pretty collaborative and friendly. Also, pretty reserved. Our narrative is sometimes different than the way we behave. Our risk for innovation is different than what we actually do.

Respondent 5:

The culture is rooted in 50-year history – built as the Sound of Music (that was the name of the store) in 1957. Evolved from there; there was a tornado in 1981 that wiped out some of the stores. The founder rebuilt and took everything destroyed in the tornado and sold it; advertised that these were the “best buys in town”. Over the history, we went public, went through many transformations to keep the company viable and healthy. That's how culture was built. A nature of resiliency and stamina. A competitive Nature. We can win and win together. We can win with our customer and win with our employers. Gives you a sense of the culture and foundation. This is what the culture is based in. Teams come together when you face adversity and come through to the other side. There is a sense of camaraderie and purpose when you come out on the other side. The team is 120,000 people.

Respondent 6:

I would describe it as somewhere in between traditional and progressive. It's innovative and competitive. Our CEO likes to say it's purposeful leadership and our values drive leadership. We focus on our core values, which are ingrained in everything we do: 1) Have fun while being the best. 2) Learn from challenge and change. 3) Show respect humility and integrity 4) unleash the power of our people.

It is something that is front of mind, hanging in the HUB. These values have been around a long time. 30 years. Business always changes, but our values do not.

Respondent 7:

Worked in banking, took time off to be home with kids, went back to academia
Now I do contract work with a company that does market research.

Way back when, in the banking industry, I was admin support, floater, worked at a temp agency. That was the 90s, it was so predominantly men, working at all higher up places, male dominated, One woman in an executive role. That was one of the things that made me interested in this.

Academia – I was in a different department. Chair that was a man that was men for the last 20 years. President is a man. Yeah -there was a trend and connection.

Anthropology dept. that was a shift to women, they have been very intentional about to creating more gender equity in who they hire. When you compare this to who is retired – it's all men, so you can see this changing.

In the Smart Revenue – consumer market research. Top three people are men. They are the only three who are full time, who have benefits, everyone else is part time, contract. Notice that in contract work, adjunct – predominantly female. It is 80% women in the adjunct circuit. The pay is horrible, you get paid less than a TA. Women are doing these positions. It is the new business model of lean business operations. Use your own paper and phone. 75-80 percent women, all hourly, contract, you may or may not have positions. Flexible but not steady. Higher positions generally are men, new contract work is for women.

Did this correspond to the number of women working within the organization? (i.e: if the company was 50% women, was leadership 50% women as well?)

Smart revenue – no – way more women in org than leadership.

In Anthro dept. it's almost even. They have worked hard to create gender equality and inclusivity.

Banking – the clerical/support staff were overwhelmingly female.

Also – interesting that volunteer orgs are predominantly women. PTA and PTO all women, all run by women. Interesting that volunteer leadership experience related to school, are mostly women and they get amazing stuff done. Unique cohesiveness of the groups, volunteering – unpaid leadership positions overwhelming fill them.

I wonder about the nonprofit sector? A lot of women trade flexibility for prestige, especially after they have kids.

Respondent 8:

The Habitat culture is one of a faith-based affordable housing nonprofit – the culture here tends to be driven by an employee group that is motivated by the mission. The culture is affected by units within the org that can work independently. Staff who work in the central office and staff who are offsite at restore, building sites, or at the warehouse may have different experiences.

We are evolving from a traditional – white employee base to intentionality grow around diversity and representing the communities that we work in. 90% of the families we serve are people of color and largely new immigrants. We are engaged in the beginning phases of improving our cultural competency. We have a culture that prides itself on not being bureaucratic and it tends to be relational. There is a fair amount of ambiguity within roles and responsibility. We are around 50/50 men and women, slightly more women, perhaps.

Respondent 9:

It's a little of both – traditional in that it is the state. Certain bureaucracies that are set in place that you have to follow, union contracts, in those ways it is a traditional culture. But in the last few years, there has been a desire to make the culture more progressive, part of this is to retain employees. Young, energetic employees. There has been a move to allow more telecommuting, and be more flexible on hours, more incentives on vacation, we do a lot of achievement awards. A lot for generational – we want them to work at the state, The state has a stigma – that it's boring and old. So, there is a desire to make it more progressive. It's also really different in the way of dealing with people. The regulatory side is more scientists, keep their head down and do the work. My division is more creative marketing people who want to do more, they're talking about strengths finders, much more interactive. So it's navigating different personalities for sure.

Respondent 10:

I've worked for 39 years, over that time, things have changed so much, it's hard to generalize. I was a lawyer earlier on, when it was not very common for women to be

business lawyers back in the day. The vast majority of senior lawyers were men and the women who preceded me had to engineer their lives to be exactly like men. There was a woman who negotiated a settlement when she was still lying in the hospital after delivering her baby. That probably didn't set a good example, but it showed, she was willing to do anything to be treated equally.

I was with American Express for 20 years. Financial services is more male dominated in general. Earlier in my career, there were definitely more men. Then, a new CEO came in after 5 years of me being there, and they became extremely committed to promoting diversity. They were ahead of many other firms at the time.

As I was getting promoted, they were going out of the way to get development opportunities for women, they were going out of their way to give women jobs that women had not been in before.

This was part of a larger diversity effort – it benefitted not just women, but women benefitted the most. I was part of that. There were a variety of ways in which the CEO worked to open up jobs and candidate pools for women. He wanted an open and transparent posting process. They weren't common things to do then and they made a big difference. You still had to perform – if it was a stretch and you couldn't get the work done– you would get fired. It's not like people were coddling you. But if you had the aptitude – it worked.

Over time, we developed a group of senior women who would meet once every month or two over happy hour and actively talk about jobs and situations – we would provide coaching and give feedback back and forth. It became an environment where women were coaching women. There were a few senior people with stripes who could open up opportunities for other women, I certainly benefitted from that. It doesn't seem radical now, but at the time it was unique. Particularly in brokerage and investment management. I was frequently the only woman in the room in meetings.

At Thrivent, I think that they aspired to do more, but American Express was cultivating women at every rung of the ladder. Thrivent went out and hired people like me to come in and help create that culture towards the top. They did make progress. There are women now, but instead of grooming women, they brought in a bunch at higher level and tried to have changes go out into the org structure. I suppose that's faster, but it's a somewhat unusual model, it's a not for profit – similar to healthcare. That means that when these listings come out of top firms that employ women, Thrivent usually isn't on list, even though 50% of their management team was women, which is unheard of in financial management. It wasn't as fast as they might have hoped to move women into

lower levels, they just jammed a bunch of women at the top. It takes a long time to change the culture. I feel the American Express approach of aggressive development programming for all the rungs was ultimately more successful. But interestingly, they got a new CEO who is a jackass who was able to unravel the successful women's environment within 3-4 years. American Express – now Ameriprise – is dramatically less than when I left (I left 14 years), so what was interesting to me about that is that it took 20 years to build up that culture, and less than 4 to unravel it. That broke my heart. I watched it happen from the outside. It became a lesson on how fragile culture is. Unless you seed and cultivate it all the time. If you do something out of the ordinary and innovative, it's easy to screw up.

The women's group – it was less formal but well known – it was primarily VPs and above and men were not a part of it. There were some prima donnas and queen bees, but I would say it was 75% successful. The woman head of HR was the instigator, with help of CEO. She deserves a lot of the credit. And the women in the group deserve credit too for keeping it going.

It created opportunities – we got jobs that maybe we weren't qualified for but they knew we had the aptitude. They were willing to take a risk on us – people are less inclined to do this with women. American Express changed this explicitly. Some women went off to other companies, like me, but some stayed. Then they were a part of the change in culture.

Did this correspond to the number of women working within the organization? (i.e. if the company was 50% women, was leadership 50% women as well?)

In general, financial services are more male dominated, Thrivent was an exception. They have made it a point to have women on the board and in senior management – explicit representation. This is unique to Thrivent. They were committed to 50% women in leadership.

Respondent 11:

When you think about [this company] it's really large. More traditional. Very business and achievement oriented. More buttoned up.

Respondent 12:

The culture of [company] is hierarchical, corporate [company] has been around since the early 1900s. There is a tradition there. It used to be a manufacturing company, how business gets done. About ten years ago, they were trying to push for innovation and creativity. Got mixed reviews – some were not on board, others embraced. Still have a core who are trying to foster this innovative culture. This didn't fully translate to our

division in MN. We go some funding for an innovation consultant. He was wonderful and spoke to me. I really value this creativity and want to be in culture that values this. This is where development is happening.

There were many changes when the mergers happened. So much change that we just got numb to it. That merger was bad for morale and Minneapolis, despite the fact that [company] purchased, they lost most of their Minneapolis employees, felt like they didn't care about us.

2. Are there women represented in leadership roles within your organization (leadership includes: President or CEO and C-Suite, Vice presidents or Directors)?

a. How long have women been in leadership positions in your organization?

Respondent 1:

"Add a few women and stir" does not work. The only time I've seen it work are within small orgs with flat org charts. The relationships are based on individual relationships and not a hierarchical org structure. My view is that the enemy is the pyramid of the org structure. One person at the top, five people reporting, and so on. And as long as you have to leap from one level or tier from the next to the next, that's where I see these cultural norms taking over. When I see a circular org trying to implement holacracy at Zappos – the jury still out. Medium is also operating this way. The idea is, we are going to let adults form self-regulating teams. And you must do the work – there is no place for watching others do it. If you're the kind of person who feels they've earned this, to sit back and supervise others, they will give them a package and have them leave. Self-regulated goal oriented teams, you may have a novice and a veteran, a group who must work together. If someone is not pulling their weight, it's the work of the team to help solve this. Medium was started under this structure and is operating fairly well.

Two schools – individual and structural – Sheryl Sandberg school – you lean in, change your behavior, get more aggressive and you can succeed – blaming the victim. It's like saying to people of color, there is no institutional racism.

Holacracy – how can we create a business that is performance oriented and satisfies stakeholder needs but does away with structural elements that remove implicit biases? Not just gender based. It privileges white male. Heterosexual, married, euro-centric, etc. And increasingly young matters. Communications organizations are increasingly taxed with having to assist clients with digital – seen as a young person's world. All pop culture based – young people are seen as the keepers of pop culture.

Respondent 2:

Yes, here, but philanthropy in general is a female dominated field. CEO positions are more male. Majority of staff are female and well-represented in leadership but the top of the organizations are male. Including board and chair.

The second president of the foundation was a woman. I think we had female board members as well. So, reasonably early on. By the time we got to be a professional foundation, we had female leaders on the board and in staff.

Respondent 3:

Quite common – global president is a woman. Would have to do the math – many of our offices and practices are led by women. Well-represented. President of N. America, most significant offices are run by women, practices are run by women as well. We're not built to have operational leaders only. If you're a practice leader, you're active in the practice. Agencies run thinner in that way.

Historic truth at Weber Shandwick – relatively young. Current configuration happened around 2000. Three companies came together – we were invented then. Has been true – again, some of our biggest offices are run by women. Long-standing leadership. Tasked with building out our approach and model for how we support clients.

Respondent 4:

Yes.

Our second president of the foundation was a woman. What I know from the history, other important program leads have been women. There has been a fairly consistent pattern of women in important roles. The chapter with Jen (current president) has been a new part of the foundation's history of having women with families. Previously, when I started, it was mostly women in the foundation. As a staff of about 30 women, only three had school age or younger children. Now we're in a place where people are actively raising families. Women and family life in leadership is newer.

Respondent 5:

There are – at the executive level – 40% of the c-suite are women

This has been the case since the current CEO in 2012 – so, for about 5 years.

Respondent 6:

Yes – half of our c-suite are women. Our CEO is a man. Among our officer ranks – 38% are women (AVP, SVP). From our board of directors – 40% are women. This has been

a focus of our CEO. This has been an amazing transformation – business – when I was promoted to VP in 2010, there was 12% representation of women. Now 38%. With this transformation, we ended up taking on more, de-layered. There were 220 officers, now we have 80 officers. Women are taking more on. They are thriving within the ranks. We saw a change with the new CEO. Hubert has been there for almost 5 years. When he arrived, one of his first hires was Sharon McCullum – our CFO who is a woman. To bring in a mighty CFO who was going to turn around the company was a major statement. She is 5 foot nothing powerhouse. This was a powerful symbol. Shari Ballard – AVP and Pres has been with the company for a long time – is also an incredible role model.

Respondent 7:

At the higher levels in place working now, there is no female representation. Academia – shifting now. Becoming more equitable. Within Anthropology Dept. – they hired an outside person to come in and advise them how to do this.

Before he came, two wonderful women were not granted tenure. Ideal employees are the people who are publishing – one had a book, one had a paper, they were well-loved by students, but it wasn't valued in making cohesive, and cooperative environments. It was important and instruments. The department was fractured and bitter and students were mad. They hired someone to fix this in the chair position. He has done an amazing job of promoting inclusivity. Has been intentional. You could witness the power of the changing environment. Could be men or women who promote this. Recruiting women and getting them to the track. Consulting work and – if you don't have the commitment from the top, it's impossible to make changes. Equal opportunity praise and reward.

Respondent 8:

We are unusually dominated by women in leadership. There are more women than men. The top three positions are women. The next tier down, 3 are men and 5 are women.

That has been lovely. I have really enjoyed working in this environment. It's the first time I've ever had a female boss. She is a classic CEO. Don't know how much the gender makes a difference.

She has been CEO for 12 years, so it's been a while. And in recent years, my predecessor was female, my colleague is female and her predecessor was female. So it's been true for at least a dozen years. I don't think that this has been intentional. I would guess for her, it was not intentional to hire women, rather people who she thought would execute on the goals and fit in with the culture.

Respondent 9:

The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners are both men, but the two Assistant Commissioners are women. The Director of Government Affairs and the Communications Director are both women. There was a Deputy Commissioner who was a woman in the prior administration. I think it has shifted in terms of the numbers. I think the governor's office has done a great job modeling. They have a lot of women in leadership roles. We are trying to recruit people of color but it's really difficult to do in ag. I would like to see more women supervisors. We are getting there, and I've noticed a change in the last two years. This is hard because you have lifers – people who have been there forever and who don't leave.

Has shifted in more recent years.

Respondent 10:

Answered above

Respondent 11:

Yes. There are a couple of women on the executive committee – The CFO and Chief Talent Development Officer. As you go down, women are more represented. Starting at the director level, it begins to winnow down.

I've been there about 15 years and there has always been at least one woman on the executive committee. One of out of ten. There has always been a woman or two on the board as well.

Respondent 12:

No. Not the CEO, and I don't think any at the VP level, corporate is far enough removed that it is several layers away. There was one woman in HR that was at a higher level. There was a woman in the C-Suite ten years ago – she was the Scientific Officer. She had mixed reviews. Some people didn't like her, others did seem to respect her. She was trying to change innovation – push this into the culture. It tends to remind you that diversity is key and important. You can bring in a diverse viewpoint and new ideas. That includes gender diversity.

The [company] is headquartered in a small town in Indiana. They are not a town known for diversity. They have a hard time recruiting people to live in a small town in Indiana, which doesn't help. In Minneapolis, recruiting should be easier. Ten years ago, we brought in a woman who had been a director of Engineering. She was promoted to VP of product development and research, hired a director of marketing who was a woman. Within a couple of years, profits were not great and they changed over a lot of Management, so when the rehired, they weren't as conscious and it became male

dominated again. The HR person they have now was not born in US, and he has different cultural norms, his wife would walk behind him, for example. He didn't seem to care about gender diversity, and he didn't have credibility. They did hire a woman director of HR, she was the highest woman in HR. She was not well-respected either. People felt she was not qualified and didn't have the background to qualify for the job.

3. Is there a level where you observe female representation dropping off within your organization (ie: at the director or c-suite level)?

Respondent 1:

There are just as many women entering communications as men. Sometimes more women than men, and yet at the top, it's male dominated. There is a leaky pipe in the beginning – when people discover this isn't the industry that they want. The second place is around motherhood

Third – is being invited into the inner circles. When ten people are in leadership and there is only one woman, it's less likely that women will be invited in.

There are issues around perception of performance and skill. There is a concept called – gender schemas. We are socialized – media, religious, education institutions that are top-down. We associate traits with leadership. Tell don't ask – decisive. Variety of different stylistic elements with leadership that we associate with men. We don't associate the same “female” characteristics with women. When women are considered for promotion – all of these biases come up. From the time women begin to when they end, there is an incremental accumulation of advantages for men and equal disadvantage for women. So, that by the time women reach leadership roles, the incremental favoritism shown to men and the incremental disadvantages shown to women means that it's unlikely that women will be seen in equal numbers in leadership roles. I'm not interested in the numbers. Unless some of the cultural and sociological structures change – you just have a lot of women behaving like men.

We are socialized like this. The dad wears the pants. Religious orgs don't allow women in leadership. Doctors and educators and military are all men. We associate maleness with leadership.

Respondent 2:

No.

Respondent 3:

No.

Respondent 4:

There are not a lot of men in general. Interesting for this field, in philanthropy, I wonder if we had men in key roles despite, being more female dominated in general. I think leadership in philanthropy can be heavily reflective of men despite the fact that most of the staff are women. The kind of men that are here are pretty red in what they bring – strong and assertive. Looking at the different teams, it's hard to imagine those characteristics being successful on teams. There are broad types of leadership represented at Bush – different kinds of people showing up here. We are collaborative versus directive. This has been a change – not as top down leadership as it was under our last president. We are much more collaborative in our way of working now – which has made room for different kinds of leadership. Management Team has been a way to consult, and has made more room for different styles. These will be good questions to ask Jen.

Respondent 5:

Yes – if you think about the.... The first reason is we are in retail. We have 120,000 employees- most are retail. Retail is 7 days a week – from 10am to 9pm. There are a lot that goes into running these stores. Because it's retail – and technology – trying to figure out why – but as we move into the customer, the number of women in once you get to the masses – where there are 100,000 employees, female representation drops to 25%. The type of business we're in seems to be. Similar on the corporate level, but not the same. I think the reason is because the jobs are very different. It's more regular hours, demands of the retail might not be what women are looking for. We are conscious of this.

Respondent 6:

The interesting part is that we don't have it in our field ranks. 120,000 employees, although corporate has changed. It's hard to recruit women for retail jobs. In retail leadership – store general managers – these are big jobs. They are running 30 – 40 million dollar businesses. These don't correlate to corporate. A lot of late nights and weekends that may not appeal to women. They are well-paid jobs, but do not have the flexibility that you might otherwise have in corporate.

Respondent 7:

N/A

Respondent 8:

No.

Respondent 9:

We have our division directors, they are the level right under assistant commissioners. We only have one woman division director. There are only 6 divisions though, so not a lot.

Respondent 10:

N/A

Respondent 11:

At the Director level. The employee base is close to 50/50 men and women.

Respondent 12:

It probably is more male-dominated in general. The Engineering dept. was male dominated for sure. There weren't many women to begin with. It's been 12 or 15 years since I've seen a woman in the director level in Engineering. There is one female manager in engineering. And I was not considered a manager, but I did manage the test lab.

4. What are the ways that your organization supports women employees, and specifically, women in positions of leadership?

Respondent 1:

What if we said that the office closes at 5pm and if you're not out by 6 there was a sanction? What if there was a sanction for emails on weekends and meetings on Fridays? Take an annual survey and each time we'll benchmark our progress towards equity. Annual training on unconscious biases. Got rid of mentoring – that's just me molding you into me – mentoring teaches you how to play the game with the rules that are there. Instead, what if we replaced it with sponsorship agreements – you break down walls for me? Mentoring is a microaggression –saying that there is something wrong with the way that you're navigating this system. Implicit male biased. What if we had a 32-hour work-week? Then the mandatory OT goes away. Get work done in 32 hours instead of taking 55 hours. Why can't you get as much done in a day as someone else? If there is a cultural value placed on completing work without having to work around the clock. What if they never ask you to travel unless you are given 18 days' notice. Who can travel on 24 hours' notice? Breadwinners and single people. These are bigger than some of the symbols and rituals that are within organizations.

Respondent 2:

I think the biggest thing is flexibility, on an ongoing basis – you have a say in where and when you work, and having part time schedules. And also, how people are doing maternity leave. Mandy and Molly job sharing is an extreme example of supporting women, and women in leadership. Reshaping things to work for two talented women who wanted work-life balance. Radically supportive although it's not necessarily what's best for the organization.

Stephanie, is a great example of family leave – a recognition that life creeps in and respect for how people want to integrate this on an ongoing basis and also episodically.

Respondent 3:

There are two or three factors at work here – modeling is huge. We see other capable women leaders and men leaders, endemic – you see the studies on learning through working with and alongside people outside of mentor and sponsor. We have some extraordinary leadership – men and women – who are supportive of leaders in general. Not specific to women. This is for everyone. They model well what it looks like to be a leader. Overtly inclusive of finding great talent and providing opportunity.

Virtuous circle. You see and get to work alongside extraordinary people. Chairmen and CEO are unalterable support for talent and finding great leaders. Some of these people will be women. We are proud of the composition of our team – when we talk about it, it helps to reinforce the culture and promote more women. They appreciate that they work for an office led by a woman. Respect for the whole being – lives outside of work. We try to respect this to the best of our ability. Regardless if this is families, whole person is important.

Respondent 4:

It's really important for Jen and me to think about what it means to be someone managing a lot of parts of your life. We want to make this a place where people can succeed given that. I think we don't get the best people when we want workaholics. We want to support women who have families. We are really open to flexible work arrangements. This is the biggest thing. Being able to have these policies and to demonstrate that we value them.

Jen was willing to be frank about it – that we're moving away from a culture where an email is expected to be answered immediately. She made a clear statement. Now, she won't even send an email over the weekend since it has weight and expectations. We have overachievers so we need to keep this in mind.

We also demonstrate in our behavior – we ask about people's home lives and we actually care. And this is part of who you are – it will and should show up at work. For me, to be able to take off the time and say I needed to take off 8 weeks at the busiest time in my work calendar, I hope it lets people know that it's ok to do this. It's hard to

stay inclusive around people who don't have kids. Women as leaders get put in boxes. How do we think inclusively about people who have other things – faith life, art, community context. How do we do this? We can keep getting better at this. We are less good at other things. Women and men with kids won't use policies if it's seen as something just for people with kids. Have to have it be about more – can cause reasonable resentment if you're just catering to the people with kids.

Respondent 5:

There are both things that we are doing and attempting to do. One of the things we're conscious of is "women in technology", we're retail, but the word technology can deter women from coming to Best Buy. Women that we have in leadership roles and men too. We do this for everyone, not just women. We work hard to create opportunities for development. Whether for the self or the team. We are activating around this and encouraging. We also send many leaders to outside development course to take 12 or 18 months to support them to get experience and exposure and be more well-rounded. We try to encourage work-life balance. This one is harder – but we're aware. We want all people to have lives outside of work. Many have families. We want all employees to know – we know your family matters to you, that means it matters to us. We do our best to help you create the balance. We're not there yet, but we want it to be out there. Working towards that. Don't want the employee to feel pressure. This shows up in the field differently. We're retail and sales and most of our business happens on the weekends. We are working hard to create this and make this predictable and accommodate those who want to have weekends off. We talk about this and want to demonstrate these values.

Was this more recent?

No, this has been there for a long time. Some of it is about the dynamics of the people you report to or who works for you. If you work for someone who demands 60 hour weeks, then it will be harder. That's what we're trying to address. We want everyone to have that option of work life balance.

The other thing – we are working on this – our benefits and rewards package. We spend a lot of time reviewing it to determine if we're competitive in the workplace. We are going to do a survey of our benefits package to see what resonates with them and what they want to see more of. We're doing an overhaul of this now. One of the things we're recognizing is that we have a millennial generation that works for us, as they get more vocal, we're learning they have different needs. We want it to work for everyone, not just the baby boomers. It all plays into what is important to the individual. Part of the approach is for everyone. Maternity and Paternity is part of the package. We've never

looked at it differently for women. Is there something else we can be doing to make it better for them, and also remain competitive for other people?

What's good for the employee turns out to be good for the company.

Respondent 6:

We have a women's employee network which is a great ERG – it does everything from mentorship to leadership workshops that help. Seeing women in leadership – Cori Barry – how she balances being a mom and having kids. When you see those examples – it's important. Everyone is the same boat. Helps people to forgive themselves more and ask for help. Asking for things – when you see women in these positions of authorities you know you can do it too. I had a 4 and 6-year-old at the time of being promoted to VP – most did not have kids or another working spouse. I was able to talk and share with other women about the challenges around this. It's not uncommon that leaders know about my family and that I have kids. I need to set boundaries – I would say, I need to leave this meeting for my kid's conference- and I didn't apologize for that. Acceptance has been created. Being able to assert your authority to say – this is what I can and cannot do.

Asking things of my bosses – setting expectations – this is what's going on in my life. I asked for an executive coach to focus on leadership. I don't know that my boss would have suggested that. Asking for these things and not waiting for them to come to you. It's important – taking the initiative to get the support you need. I've done govt affairs for 14 years- I am interested in focusing more on this, need to promote someone else – I'm burning out and need to focus on something else – I needed to ask for this. The company supported me, but I had to ask. Learned this lesson – make your case.

Respondent 7:

U of M – Anthropology – pretty inclusive and some flexibility.

Consulting – notice there are a lot of third party orgs that support women. Women in design and construction – group that is formed because women are underrepresented. This external community helps women to navigate these male dominated organizations. Women execs all come together for lunch and speaker – as a way to network -women's executive council – Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce hosts female CEOs and executives. One of the women was a partner at Gray Plant Mooty (law firm) – initiatives to create a path to better work life balance. She was able to scale part-time – 35 – 40 hours/week but she was still able to make partners. Conscious effort to separate out the time you spent over the quality of work you do.

Hennepin county – their culture is static and hard to change. Promotion is based on time in job. Doesn't promote the best productivity. She is trying to change this. Switch this to make it more performance-based.

Boston Scientific is the best I've seen. They work hard to mentor women, especially being in science; major gaps in representation. Have women together in different areas - not with boss or co-workers and get coaching. Last year's topic was confidence. There is a confidence gap between women and men. How do you speak to show confidence? Teaching women specific skills. Flexibility that women and men can leave at different times of the day. Parental leave not just maternity leave, Have a whole team, as subset of HR to create a more equitable environment.

Seeing shift in ECFE – family work environments were historically more important for women. Good jobs were not 40 hours a week. Now, seeing all the young dads at ECFE – women and men were showing up at these classes. Men were saying I want to be an equal parent.

Don't see a lot of initiatives that support women, there is an isolated business model – unique quick turnover of data.

Respondent 8:

Probably – for me, I think there is intentionality to do coaching and mentoring for young female managers. Broadly, the values of the org are mindful of work life balance and fam responsibility. There is a generous benefits structure. We look at market data to understand compensation levels and we are looking at it by gender and race to see if we have issues there as well. On the organizational level, we are used to giving women visibility and leadership opportunities. We have women in non-traditional roles – specifically site supervisors on building sites. There is a strong history of promoting from within.

Respondent 9:

I would say... recently, we had a situation where we had a supervisor position open, there was one man who thought it was his to have, we gave it to a younger women. There was some animosity about this. Comments were made about how “I hope this wasn't political” – that wasn't the reason, he was angry, but he thought we just hired her because she was a woman. I would say part of this is that we have a lot of women and I thought it was a benefit of her getting this job, it was so cool to see that women can move up and be supervisors. Sending these types of messages that we value hard work and women can do just as well as men and they can go somewhere is important.

This isn't just conducive to women – but, paid parental leave. We just passed paid parental leave and the state and this put a lot of people at ease. We have phenomenal nursing rooms they are well kept- we have a group for women – new moms who get together and talk and provide support for each other.

Some of these things are better for both men and women – better in supporting family life

Are work hours limited to 9-5? Or does it depend?

It kind of depends on the position – during session, it's expected that we're on 24/7, if there is an event, someone needs to go on the weekend. Generally, people have set schedules. Another way we try to be more flex – four 10-hour days for example instead of five days a week.

Working in DC, you're working until 7 or 8, so it was such a shift to be able to leave at 5 or 6pm.

Respondent 10:

The women's group – most of the things that I saw weren't usual. They were trying to allow maternity leave without penalty. And making sure women had opportunities and were a part of the candidate pools for hiring.

I will make a perverse comment – but I think it's important:

There were well-intentioned men who would mentor talented women, and when she would get married and have a kid, they would try to protect her by not having her work too many hours to try to not drag her away from her family. And I would call them out – these women should decide for themselves. What would happen, is that, some big new job that might come up that required them travel, but they wouldn't even get offered the chance. They should decide for themselves, you shouldn't take opportunities away.

Some of my female colleagues disagreed with me– my attitude was that plenty of men have new babies and we don't make these decisions for them. They are adult people, they can decide. I insisted they should have the choice. You may or may not have another opportunity to do this. Some, like me, saw this as continuing to provide women with opportunities, and others saw this is harsh to women – making them travel when they had little kids.

My attitude was against making allowances for women that could come back to haunt them or hurt their career. I think there are times when well-intentioned policies can hurt as much as they help. That's why women don't end up in senior management – the kind of qualities that are valued that make you a good project manager – diligence, responsibility, checking all the boxes, do not translate to senior management roles. When you're senior, they want to see – creativity, risk taking, diving in. Those qualities that you were rewarded for earlier in your career, can get in the way of risk. So, women get trapped at the fulcrum point – usually at the director level. They all do the “good girl”

things, but men, who are better at taking risks, women didn't learn how to do that. They keep doing the same things, but the skill sets are different at the senior level and it creates a ceiling for women.

There is a Harvard Business Review article – it's another example of the unintended consequence of overemphasizing some of the wrong skills. We train women to do so well, they can't move on.

Respondent 11:

Specifically in positions of leadership – I don't have a great example. Overtly, there are employee resource groups. One of them is the Women's network. There's also a new affinity group – women in science and engineering. They are symbols. They get up and talk about wanting to achieve 40% of leadership by women by 2020. I think they would define it at the director level, maybe VP. No, there is not really a lot of support. They do a lot of talking. The CEO wants 40% but they have been talking about this for almost as long as I have been there with little progress. They bleed mid-level women. It is a tough environment. From a support for employees in general – they have employee assistance, they have dialed back their leadership development because of [a recent] acquisition. The acquisition doubled the size of the company; it was a massive acquisition/merger. So a lot has been shut down in the face of the merger. They have been doing so much "leaning out" that it's hard to see it coming back in. The question of parental leave comes up once a year – they are very stingy. Adoption leave is two weeks. There is a couple weeks paternity leave. There is no maternity leave – just short term disability And FMLA. The other thing that is manager support only- is a less than full time work schedule. Pre-[merger] – 4% of the positions in the company were part time.

I have an 80% position – but there is a flexibility tax – because I didn't have anything taken away, there isn't less on my plate, I just have to figure out how to do more with less time. Flexible work environments are manager-dependent. So there are a couple of things.

Respondent 12:

I was trying to think if there were deliberate attempts, the HR director started a women's group that met once a month. It was an interesting concept, but she didn't have the follow through or the respect, so it depended on the managers to encourage or discourage. Some seemed ambivalent, some were disparaging; they wanted to know why there wasn't an equivalent men's group. I think he was told to pipe down. He was part of the good ole boys club. He had one woman who reported to him. When she was pregnant, I think he was trying to tell her to not work so hard, he was trying to be nice, but it did not feel like it to her. He didn't have the support or people telling him to not

have that conversation. I think the HR woman started the women's group, she was copying corporate, which was a good thing. This could have the potential to be good. She had us read books and discuss. She wasn't there very often and wasn't good about communicating in the group or outside of the group. She wasn't good about communicating what they point was. There was some grass roots support. It was a message saying that something in management cares. None of those messages were explicitly stated, but this is in my mind why I felt like I could move forward.

I had a close female co-worker and also a female engineer who supported one another. We would try to back each other up in meetings. There is a tendency for women to not get credit in meetings. And a man will say something that was your idea and get credit for it. When someone else is in the room who can back you up, that's helpful.

5. How do you communicate this support to your employees (both women and men)?

Respondent 1:

Storytelling. If orgs had a star of the week. If they held up the stories of a truly diverse set of people and show that they value all styles of management and types of people, and that there is not one way or another to get things done. These enter your celebrations and parties and awards. So often the celebrations are after work. Can these be during work?

Respondent 2:

I don't know. By example – live it. You need to see people getting to do stuff and not being penalized for it. When someone goes on maternity leave, others are willing to pitch in and help out; I don't think that people grumble about it either. It's quiet enough that we help enable stuff for people.

Respondent 3:

Also part of a parent company. They have built a women's leadership group – IPG – parent company. There are ways to meet women leaders even beyond Weber Shandwick. This creates opportunities to connect and also sends a message.

This is where the Micro and Macro converge – if you need a team inside of Weber Shandwick you convey commitment to the work, celebrate the work. Look after your

teams. Are we giving people opportunities to stretch? Happens at the office level, this is where they walk in every day. There is a Sr Leadership group – a lot of these leaders create our oxygen in making this a place that people want to come. Getting good talent in this world is a job and something you need to focus on. It's about bringing the alchemy together. Client and talent. You need to be a place that people want to come. And these leaders are tasked with building extraordinary workplaces. Team structure and size of office are important. People can excel and realize aspirations in the job of the office to create.

On higher level, we have a program called No Boundaries – it is executed locally, a certain number are selected to participate. They are given time off and money to do this. Visual has become powerful in advertising. One person went to cartoon school for a week. It is tied to work, but separate. Occasionally, we have done an exchange from different offices globally. One woman spent a week with a creative group in Sweden. These are meant to honor the idea that we learn from each other. We also have standard communications – intranet, learning webinars, CEO communications, we have an internal Facebook at work – Facebook worked on this; we were one of the beta sites. Internal communications are important – but most companies are doing this. Nothing too innovative on this front.

Respondent 4:

I think through behavior. Jen and I have a difference of opinion. I would love her to be more open about being an example – Jen hates to put herself out as a model. To the extent that she says- I am going to be off the grid when I'm on vacation. The extent she is up front of that – it is great for other people to see. There was a particular interaction not too long ago; she was going to be out since her sister having surgery for breast cancer. She said she was going to be available by email. I encouraged her to reconsider; that it should be sick time. What message does it send to people if you're still working while this major event is happening in your family? The Messaging thing is important – when is it ok for them to do it? She ended up taking sick time – I really appreciated that she listened. How do you model that we really do believe carving out time for personal life? What is our behavior around work?

We also communicate through our policies. We have done a lot of work on our handbook. One of the things that I spend a fair amount of time on is being a watchdog with my supervisor colleagues – what message are they sending with their employees? How do you support them while also getting the work done? We care about you as a person first. We have done role playing and work on this.

Respondent 5:

Through surveys, newsletters, we have lots of ways to connect with us. Newsletters, we have an intranet where everything is housed and communicated – benefits, pay, etc. and where people can learn about possibilities. Our website is the biggest resource. We also mail things to get things to people that way too. We have town halls for all employees on a quarterly basis, we have company calls to provide updates and information and quarterly meetings with officer population to provide updates.

Respondent 6:

We have both internal comms – HUB, and external – BLOG. We have a section on our values and employees that we dedicate space to. We have quarterly town halls where leadership is represented. We have a fireside chat after earnings calls, these are streamed to the field as well. Fireside chats are with the CFO and CEO talking about earnings and results. Trish Walker talking about services. We have women on this stage. Employees being leaders. We have lots of recognition events for employees.

Respondent 7:

No response

Respondent 8:

We are actually pretty bad at doing this. One of the challenges is we're big, but small and segregated. There are 120 of us, but at different sites. One of the vulnerabilities is that if a key employee leaves, it can be devastating. We have a lot of institutional knowledge that is lost. We had a lot of turnover in HR recently and are rebuilding. We have some great things for employees; We have a great tuition reimbursement, which is not accessed consistently. There is spotty commitment to development opportunities, it seems to happen unevenly across the organization. We have not had a lot of central HR support to supplement what happens independently in each siloed sector. We have online resources –a shared network.

If it's not actually visible, people won't take advantage of it. We have weekly emails to all staff,

But that tends to be a bucket that carries all things. I think most of it happens through direct interaction – where we have engaged managers it works well, there is a gap where we don't.

Respondent 9:

It depends on division – each one has a different feel and culture to it. I try to be an example. Or I have one on one check ins with staff. If I'm meeting with young women, I'll see how things are going and make sure they feel valued. I talk a lot about my daughter – try to live it and normalize it so they can see that it's ok. If I have a meeting

towards the end of the day, I check with staff to make sure it doesn't conflict with day care pick up.

So, it not really about sending an email, it's more one on one. One woman was temp and she heard from her supervisor they might not be able to keep her. She emailed me for advice, and asked, "should I talk to them?" I recommended to her: First thing – advocate for yourself. She hadn't experienced advocating for herself. It was important for her to hear this coming from someone else.

Respondent 10:

N/A

Respondent 11:

There is communication and how they adapt to structures to support different types of workers, A lot of men would like 80% or paternity leave, but they started a program where you can't roll over vacation. So for maternity leave, the first 6-8 weeks, you'll have short term disability. But at most, you'd only be able to use 3 weeks of vacation after that since you can't save up anymore for when you're pregnant. This is so much harder for people in lower wage jobs because they can't afford to take unpaid time off.

They have a holiday shutdown between Christmas and New year's, but you have to use vacation during that time. Some of the days are company holidays, but some are not. Even if you're Muslim and don't celebrate Christmas. Typically, it's super expensive to travel then, some workers are from china and India. Some people like this because since no one is working at the office, you won't get behind during your time away.

So I would say it's aspirational. Anything that they actually do is driven through the women's network. They will have speakers and workshops. But it is not driven by the company. People running this – it's in addition to their full-time jobs. They aren't getting paid extra for the work on the women's network.

Respondent 12:

Nothing explicit.

6. Can you think of verbal symbols in your organization that either support or discourage female employees (*Verbal symbols are the stories that tell the history of the organization*)?

Respondent 1:

No response

Respondent 2:

We have mixed ways of how we talk about Edyth Bush – because we have an Edyth foundation. I feel torn about that. Are we diminishing her traditional female roles in the time that he was having his career? Hard to say because if we were an overly male organization we might try to be more intentional. We celebrate kids – B onesies – celebrate them as part of a person's whole self.

Respondent 3:

Much of our success stories are dispersed throughout the organization. We have 20+ offices. The leader of the office has a very particular stamp on that particular office. I did run an office for a long time and regional level of communication. We celebrated the work the most in our firm. Share great work that hits the metrics of creativity. Sharing the team that's behind the work, being associated with the work that is celebrated makes you successful. There is an intentional effort to celebrate work that challenges a social, for example, we did work for honeymaid, they were doing spots that celebrated what modern families are; the unconventional beauty of today's families. Older couple, gay couple, children w disability, single mom, etc. At the most fundamental level, we celebrate our work. The intentionality is coming from work that shows our creativity and our values. Work that around body stereotypes, gender, social justice. On some level, we send signals about what is important to us by the work that we share. Some about client results, some about creative strategy, what's important in society today. We are also a five-generation company – have 5 generations in our company. There is a wide array of frames of reference about what's relevant in your life. You have a young mom, a millennial, someone at the end or beginning of career, this is an important blend. The intricacy of signals and symbols in a dispersed organization that is multi-general, multi discipline (photographers, writers, strategists, etc.) it is interesting and important to think about where are our colleagues in establishing and articulating the cultural norms we want to stand for. A signifier is that our leadership is visible- there are several women. We have five regions in North America – 3/5 are women-led. Our president is a woman. The preponderance of practice leaders are women. One of our most important symbols is that women are represented in leadership and the voice that they have. Without having good clarity on influence of women leaders within the company. The preponderance of population are women. Tends to be more female dominated in the cohort.

Our history is checkered – our firm is the product of a number of mergers, so it comes from everywhere. Our global president who is a woman – her voice is around the work, too.

Respondent 4:

No response

Respondent 5:

The best stories that show specifically our female population that there is a future at Best Buy for them are the stories where you can show the evidence. I started out at a store in Dallas, TX, worked my way up to President of Retail. What I know for sure is that everyone can relate to that story, because they can see themselves in this story. You can write yourself into that story regularly. Those are the most powerful stories because everyone can relate and connect to it.

Respondent 6:

This is where I started thinking about the video with Cory Barry. Recognized by the annual women in business – St. Kate's – women in business. MN honor role companies – Best Buy was recognized. Included men at the table too. Shout out this recognition to draw attention. Hubert is proud of this – 50% women direct reports. Things that he has direct control over. This is a part of his dialogue.

Respondent 7:

The only one – within Anthropology department – because we had women founding the field - Margaret Mead – was an example of Ruth Benedict – unusual in the 1920 and 30s who were prominent anthropologists - the prominent history of women created great examples.

Respondent 8:

Think it's impactful to see leaders as females – every staff meeting or event, there are a lot women leaders. We are pretty sensitive about gender – we're working on race. That's more complicated. There are so many instances where people working on a building site are white, they assume they are a volunteer. If a person of color is working on a site, people assume that they must be the owner. Often families are women led. We profiled a woman this year at our big event – a woman who was head of household and doing great things. We also have female site supervisors leading a crew of men. In home building, it may be our biggest challenge – the staff have been there 30 years, so they tend to be men and they don't leave. There are younger people who came through AmeriCorps and are female. Women tend to be collaborators. The work advances in collective style which is more accommodating for women to take part in. We still appreciate direct. We're not as reflective as I'd like to be.

Respondent 9:

I think particularly in Ag as an industry, it's not a secret that there aren't many women in leadership. We try to talk about this in an open way – it's just different that there are

women in leadership here. We indicate that there is change happening and that we're progressing. I try to be open and let people know we can talk about this. Acknowledging it is important.

In terms of symbols – I was at a women's ag conference. All the discussions around women was about – mothers or assumed that people wanted to be mothers. I am a mother, but I know some of my employees don't want that. It was frustrating they weren't speaking to the broader audience. I acknowledged it to my staff. I was like, "hey I'm sorry that all they did was talk about motherhood". If you're a woman, people assume that you want to be a mom. Recognizing that not all women in ag are farm wives is important. This is another thing: I want to support all female employees whether they are moms or aren't.

Respondent 10:

When I became a Senior Vice President, you get invited to retreats and meetings. One common afternoon activity was the senior management golf outing – I was the first female P&L manager and I didn't like this. I explicitly gave the women the choice to go to the spa or go golfing. Just to say - you don't have to be a golfer to make this work. This was controversial when I did it. The next year, I did the same thing. There was something weird about the thought that it might not be legitimate that women would go to spa for 3 hours, but men can golf for 5 hours. There are other ways to do it that are more inclusive.

When a field representative would do well, they would get some kind of gift. At Thrivent – they would get a gift. Most of the gifts were very masculine: Snippers to snip a cigar or an alcohol holder – very male dominated gifts. I asked that we create female alternatives, so one year we had a Tiffany necklace, for example, that people could opt for. This was small, but it made a difference. Let's come up with more generic gifts or things that might appeal to women.

I don't think they tried to make it hard, but they were indifferent or oblivious that these things were useless and inappropriate for women.

We started having a reception for top management – there were two or three levels of trips if you produced. Gradually, there were women who started to qualify at this level, so we started holding women's cocktail receptions to celebrate, since it's not easy to get there. The first year, the reaction to the reception was, "that's fine, you girls go off and do that". The following year, the CEO came to the reception, this was a big strong signal that this is important and more of us should pay attention to it. They are remarkably strong markers for when people have been given permission to do this.

Respondent 11:

In our history stories, I would just say that women do not show up. They do not show up in the origin stories – it's just about the founder and other men.

Respondent 12:

There is the story about the founder – he had been an employee at a different organization and the family founder disagreed and he said he would go across the street to start his own company and he did. [This small town], IN, is known as the orthopedic capital of the world. Interesting small town culture. It's a 10,000 population, most everyone works for the companies.

Minneapolis was an acquisition. One in CA, FL, CO and have closed down multiple divisions in TX. Interesting working for a Swiss company, I was there in 1997/98, the intern who had my position, she was actively discriminated against, she was told, what's the point – you're just gonna go home and have babies.

It is a super conservative society. Women only got the right to vote in 1972 – and some women got the right to vote as late as 1991 or 92. I was in Canton - Women did not have the right to vote since they couldn't carry swords. Their swords are their votes, raising swords.

Their representative to the federal government was female, she was president of Switzerland for the year (they rotate), they vote by consensus. Any change takes a while. She still had a traditional lifestyle. She would still hold hands with her husband Connection in the fact that Spine Tech – company was initially bought by Swiss They have a good reputation internationally because they're good at fine precision manufacturing and high quality -so they have some good expertise in medical devices. From watches and military history. Their mercenaries were the best around. There still is a Swiss guard who guards the pope. Means you've arrived if you can afford a Swiss guard.

7. What kind of employee is held up as an example of a successful employee? Who do you celebrate as the ideal employee?

Respondent 1:

No response

Respondent 2:

I think we lift up a lot of people, who gets promoted –

I don't think it's a sense that you get lifted up if you work a thousand hours a week

Shout outs at all staff – the people who get celebrated the most are actually the people in support roles. The nature of how we do that is that we celebrate more the people who

are producing the work. Doesn't just mean women, but it could if there was more distinction in the kind of roles women had.

Respondent 3:

No response

Respondent 4:

Success stories, well, Mandy is part time – she was just given an award, but she has made room for the stuff in her life. Success would also be having this be a place that someone in lower ranks would be able to go down to 80% too. The extent to which we keep moving this around to positions and not just in management team.

Success stories: We raise up people who work super hard. I don't think we do as good of a job raising up the success of people who come up with new ideas.

Mostly we give nods of approval to people who are diligent. Not that creativity isn't needed, but volume is what's getting the praise. There is a lot of volume, I'd love to celebrate the places when someone had a brilliant idea. A different way to think about compensation. We take this person's creativity and just squash it. How do we get there to where it's celebrated? This is interesting for an org that talks about innovation.

Respondent 5:

No response

Respondent 6:

No response

Respondent 7:

Dependent on getting published, getting recognition. As a teacher, looking at students – you see the differences in female and male students. In teaching males, they are more likely to speak up and take over a classroom and ask more questions, being funny, commenting. I have noticed a trend in looking at people – trends in who has highest GPA – less than half are the boys. The women are the ones who are actually doing better, but that doesn't show up in the classroom. Girls are more likely to feel like they have to follow the rules. They will do all the homework, etc. Thinking about stories, men are people like Steve Jobs and Bill Gates – rebels and entrepreneurs. Women don't have the same success stories – high achievers. Just in our culture in general – there isn't as much room for women to say they went against the flow, went against the flow. Men have more leeway for grades and rules.

Observing in high school graduates – incredible high achieving women – how does this translate into leadership positions? Being in a lean in group at work – how are you going

to figure out how to become leaders? Again, there is a confidence gap. See it in students and
See it in parent groups – men saying their wives can make more money than they can. More family friendly work environments.
But the barrier -macro forces create inequality that lasts long a time – paternity leave. You're making women the primary caregivers from the beginning since men don't even get paternity leave. Women have a lot of leadership in unpaid positions – and the work of kinship – is predominantly female. Women are way more likely to do this. This is totally undervalued in the private sector.

Respondent 8:

No response

Respondent 9:

Well one of them I thought of was the woman we promoted to supervisor. She has two kids and manages that like a boss. She is kind and respectful but not passive. She is also hungry for new challenges. The governor's office wants us to sit on all these committees and I can't do it all, so she took one and ran with it in addition to all of her other duties. She is respected and valued by people she works with. She also did this Emerging Leaders Institute and loved it and wanted to organize a training around it for her whole division. She is kind and respectful, willing to take on new challenges and willing to adapt to changes of the agency.

Respondent 10:

In both companies, they would often have employee recognition below the officer level – at the officer level, you are getting paid well enough that you don't get held up as an example too.

Most of these recognitions were for managers and below, sometimes director and below. But people in senior management are already getting recognition, so they didn't need anything else.

It was pretty well represented in male and female. Usually a function of whatever the corporate values were - Integrity, excellent work, work ethic - along with performance.

Usually you have people who meet the criteria – and are also strong performers. You don't want people who are crappy performers, but just upheld the values. But the problem with that, the unwritten rule about performance, would benefit employees who were visible and working on major projects. Women end up in staff and men end up in P & L, there is a subtle bias against women. I remember calling people out. Seeing if we could identify a woman who was instrumental in the project who we could also hold up so it wasn't just men. That did help.

Respondent 11:

Who is held up – when there is a technical patent or breakthrough. On the business side, there are some women who are held up as positive examples. The CFO is held up as a positive example and she is a woman. The ideal employee is super smart, super goal oriented, very hard driving, can't stop won't stop, get after it.

Respondent 12:

I'm not sure I know the answer. One of the employees I can think of – he had a lot of patents – innovation in terms of patents. One of my personal frustration – I don't know how to get a patent. I worry that I'm not a good enough engineer and I could never get that many patents. There is a Harvard Business Review article about women in engineering that hit me hard – there was so much truth in it. We're getting better at getting women to go into science and engineering. But we're not doing well at retaining female engineers. The reasons that I saw and think are true – women are still relegated to the care taking roles in groups. They are not allowed to dig in and focus the problem solving work, the guys just take over and do this. My design class in college was the only class I ever got a C in. I don't know why – the professor ranked highly what other teammates said about you. The other women in the group also got a low grade. There weren't quizzes or exams – wish I had just asked him why. It hurts your confidence. Do I even want to stay in this field. Women are penalized for displaying this confidence. You need to have confidence to get people to buy into your ideas, but also people don't think you're a team player. But if you're collaborative, your contributions are attributed to someone else on the team.

8. Can you think of ceremonies or rituals in your organization that either support or discourage female employees - either overtly or subtly (*ceremonies and rituals might include celebrations or parties, awards, team building activities, annual meetings, etc.*)?

Respondent 1:

Monday morning meeting – started with a joke. Anyone that wants to come up and tell a joke. If you never told a joke – you were invisible. Mostly the jokes were off-color. It felt like locker room banter. Mostly men who told these. Felt like locker room banter.

Respondent 2:

Most of the things we do as rituals don't have a gender lens. We have a lot of baby showers, but that could be men too. Men and women win good minton tournament.

Everyone gets an award at the end of the year, we want to show that all roles and positions matter.

At Mckinsey all the assistants were women and the consultants were mixed – I took over party planning – started making awards for everyone. It was an explicit equity thing.

Who gets made fun of matters – having a friendly but nice joke that shows that everyone was seen mattered. Small cultural warfare. But now, I still do that because it matters.

Respondent 3:

This would not be a ceremony, but one thing I think about - our hours are unpredictable. Before a big giant thing – a client event or something - the hours can get long., Parents can have a difficult time with this. You have to work hard not to send a signal that family doesn't matter. There is a persona around agencies as hard driving, long nights. A lot of this is lore. We are, on balance, pretty good. But now what is fantastic, I have four children, and I remember being somewhat uncomfortable with people saying I had to go pick up the baby, but you did navigate it and it was understated. Now, I will have as many dads that say they have to go pick up the kids. It's fantastic to see this being spread around. So, it's less through a female lens and more through a life lens. Children have historically been the realm of women, I think sending signals about families and flexibility is important. But part of the commitment has to be recognizing that some issues are as important to men as to women. Similarly, around development – important for women and men – goals and moving. These discussions have been more for women. Honestly, it's a challenge for everyone. So, it important to send some of these signals uniformly.

Respondent 4:

Don't see that much – which might mean I'm blind to it. I know it's there. I don't know. I will have to think about. What would I do to make it a great place to work for not only a mom with young kids, and also someone nearing end of career, and also a beard-wearing millennial with no kids who is interested in career growth. What does it mean for all of those people that they can grow within this organization?

In an annual professional development cycle, we are year by year, so we're planning it out. Let's look ahead- what does life look like for you in five years? When might you have three months to do something. We are often linear in a way that people's lives are not linear. Especially women's careers – when they have to go on and off. We are not as good at helping women promote themselves. When we get into our racial work, I think we sometimes leave gender behind. When people can't self-promote how do we give them the attention in the field that they deserve since impact is so big? How do we raise up the qualities that we prize for someone who is part time? How much work is

happening outside of the office? We need to be paying you for this time! Organizations benefit greatly from the women who work part-time and they don't pay them. How do we figure this out? When we go to part time – this needs to be an organization-wide conversation – still up to the individual to make this work for them. People are so grateful that that they will do anything to keep it – including working more hours offline. Would do anything for them. This does wonders to engender loyalty. The guilt that women carry around – I have three permission slips to fill out vs professional development reading – you're going to do the permission slips. We can't help but feel guilty about that. What other choice do you have?

Respondent 5:

A couple things come to mind: We have what's called employee resource groups (ERGs). One of the largest ERGs – like a frat or sorority where like-minded people come together. Ranges everywhere from Women's or Black employees resource group. If I want to go to the women's group, I know I can connect and relate in a different way. In those groups, there is lots of involvement and team building. We have an executive sponsor of each group. Our CFO is sponsor of this group. A few hundred employees are a part of each ERG, depending.

The company values are clear– we all wear these on our sleeve. We work hard to live by the company values and demonstrate. Learning from challenge and change, unleashing the power of people. We say these words out loud and it comes to life when we talk about females. It's a tough environment. It's competitive and fast moving. Not everyone connects because of this reason. Values come into play a lot. Helps people becoming emotionally connected.

Respondent 6:

Women employee resource group. Conference – we have a women's leadership summit. Recognition events – celebrate promotions and other things at town halls. Last week we had a sales event – celebrating meeting certain targets.

Respondent 7:

Within Anthropology – it's pretty gender neutral – all inclusive. I have friends who work at places where they have golf weekends – good ole boy's networks. My friend learned how to golf so she could be a part of their club. But I haven't had personal experiences with this.

Travel requirements – so many women talked about not having nursing facilities and how they were expected to travel after they come back from maternity leave- too soon.

Respondent 8:

We have a big fundraiser where we profiled woman-led family. It was a great stories and examples and where she paid off her home. We're not great at celebrating successes. We have been talking about that. There is lots more work we can do to get better at celebrating our success. A lot of this is defined by your manager. Managers who are attentive and make their employees feel known. We are trying to figure out how can people be themselves in the workplace and how do we support these different priorities?

The other thing I would say is that, while we're women-led, one of the things I like is that there is a gender mix. It isn't just that entry-level employees are female, it feels like there is a real balance throughout the organization.

Respondent 9:

I would say, for women in particular – we do a lot of baby showers, we did a baby shower for men too – not just women. When folks come back from maternity leave, we'll do something to welcome them back. We also do a years of service celebrations that is gender neutral.

You get to choose a gift and there is a ceremony. We have a lot of women who work in the agency. I work a lot with these two divisions and there are a lot more women than I thought. We try to celebrate employees that way. Also, there is a lot of team love in ag marketing – they will do a lot of organizing events outside of work, go to Twins games or bring brownies. Most are not specific to women but rather helping to promote all employees- both women and men.

Respondent 10:

Another one, I worked for two major Fortune 300 companies – there was a huge sales force. The men and women who were doing this – we provided gifts as rewards and incentive.

Another example is – when women and men were winning these awards– more men than women – there were always speeches about how women were so supportive and helped them achieve what they accomplished – when the men were up there – not so much. Men got the award, and their wives got flowers. They didn't know what to give her husband when a woman won. They never quite fixed the difference in how the couples were treated. Struggled to come up with a recipe that worked. Why didn't they just ask people what they would like? People were so happy to be up there, they didn't make a big deal of it. But they could have been done better.

Gifts for employees – 5 or 20 years, they created a catalogue to choose. Ended up removing a way that people were indicating which gender.

Respondent 11:

There is required training every year, and there is a low tolerance for any kind of harassment. I have gone into the field a few times and conferences, I've had drunk and not drunk doctors hit on me, or ask me to come with them to a strip club. One time was a doctor following me, had to tell the doorman to stop him. In the field, it might be more negative. It's definitely a more male dominated function. But it's not the case within the company.

We have a mission and medallion ceremony– you get a talk about the mission and everyone is given a medallion. This is very gender-neutral. It talks about the origin story, but it is about valuing employees.

They do a holiday program every year, where patients come and talk about their experiences. This is positive. I have been mostly on female dominated teams – and that has been supportive. But there is nothing in what the company does – it is fairly silent or unacknowledged.

Respondent 12:

Engineering meetings – people who received patents would get awards. Service awards , annual company picnic. None of these encourage or discourage any groups that I'm aware of.

9. Can you think of physical symbols in your organization that either support or discourage female employees - either directly or indirectly (*Physical symbols might include: corporate logos, breast pumping rooms, childcare facilities*)?

Respondent 1:

These are gestures disguised as solutions. It's about changing the reward systems so we define dedicated committed capable worker. Having a daycare center just reinforces that someone is not reliable – that they have distractions. If we change what we consider what we think is someone committed to their job, that's what's interesting.

A mix of these things at once. No org is going to tear down the org and start over. More than cultural symbols, the most important pieces are rewards systems, hiring practices, etc. When you decided you're up for a promotion, but it was reviewed by an outside committee of your choosing, or reviewed by different people. Human nature to say – if you look like me, talk like me, you'll make the same decisions and I trust you more.

Sheryl has the confidence of the men because she operates like them. This reinforces the decisions on who is a good worker. Someone who is willing to stay here at all hours of the night. Is often tied up with the definition of masculinity. Warrior, balls, no sleep. I'm a man. I don't have to come home to tee ball.

Example that someone talked with me about last week – to make them more equitable. Gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. Decided to make their bereavement policy more lenient, 5 days off for immediate family and sounds great. Jews sit Shiva – sit for 7 days. They also define their family based on people who are not blood relatives. So, by defining who you can show grief for, you're already excluding people. There are all kinds of stuff like this still embedded. Companies still give Good Friday off and have Christmas parties.

What happens in orgs – what is in the handbook and what's actually practiced. If your boss never takes vacation – will you? What about maternity leave? If the floating holidays are not taken, if your boss is emailing you on a Sunday, all of these things reinforce what does it mean to be committed to your work. Women are seen as distracted by family matters.

Respondent 2:

We have Archie and Edyth portraits (founders) on the wall. Who we put on BMag – three covers have been women. We also have photos of women displayed everywhere

Respondent 3:

Having flexible hours, leave policies, privacy rooms, proximity to childcare facilities is all important. We were encouraging, even when we moved, that we needed to be near to a childcare facility. We were able to negotiate a discount for employees if there was a certain volume of kids. Making this known, and encouraging it. Also, again, having physical space that if people need to bring little people in, kids at work – this helps. Broadly, talking through the lens of families. What has been historically women, is becoming more families – men equally. Similarly, you hear about the intensity of agencies. How do you balance family within this category? We do have privacy rooms, but I don't know that there are others. Again, we are about celebrating the work. We have quite a bit of work in gender equity, we are very intentionally sharing that work as an indicator of what our values and beliefs are. The other things, we're talking about serving clients too – it is interesting to think about – you may go into a client setting where there are different signals. You may be the only women in the meeting. Interesting to also build colleagues confidence, knowing that all of our colleagues, especially women, may find themselves a minority outside of our office, how are we helping them to be successful? They need to have confidence in their

recommendations. Be mindful that they will be walking into cultures that are different than ours.

Not everything is perfect. I hope that we are supportive. Our field is generally more female – our profession and company. There are also a lot of millennials. Agencies are a good place to start a career, tend to work with large teams, there is variety, it's fast learning. Intrinsic that we need to be more aware and aligned with where the millennials are. Some of these barriers crumbled a little more quickly than they have in other industries. We may have an advantage by the size and nature of our workforce. We see a certain level of healthy movement – people moving on in 5 – 7 years. Several years ago, a senior partner was lamenting that all these women are having children! Now, people wouldn't bat an eye. We have a lot of people with young families, so the discussion has changed. The requirements of your workforce may influence culture from the bottom and middle as much as anything. Talent is everything. We need great talent – we need to draw and attract great talent. That means creating a workplace that works for people. We have a lot of work to do, we need to build more diverse workforce, this includes women and people of color.

Respondent 4:

I think the quality of office space is a huge decision that Jen made that every single day makes the statement – you can't overestimate the importance of that decision. She struggles with that in that her own space since it's a little bigger. Another physical thing – the fact that the values are on the wall, values are constantly coming out of our mouths. This gives us a place to anchor the policies and behavior check. I thought it was cool that someone asked about having feminine products in the bathroom – that was nice to have. We're also putting in a transgender bathroom. That matters. You didn't have to be a mom who was nursing who had to ask how long the wellness room would be out of commission for construction – the question came from men. That was important.

Respondent 5:

At our corporate campus- we have a child care center at the corporate headquarters open for long hours, we have family rooms for pumping or changing areas for babies.

Respondent 6:

At our corporate office – we have nursing and pumping rooms, daycare on site that houses 250 kids. I started at Best Buy when I was 8 months pregnant with my second kid. Both were there and I could visit my kids, they push is kids in strollers through hub – it's a joy to see them walk by. We have so much here on site. We have banks, dry cleaners, shoe repair, CSA, farmers market, Richfield comes to process drivers

licenses. We have a Gym. All the services you need are onsite for the 4,000 Best Buy employees at the corporate office.

Respondent 7:

None jumped out at me.

Respondent 8:

All of the photos we have are tangible evidence of the work that we do through our building projects. The families, staff, volunteers that make it happen are all in the photos. There are lots of women within these roles.

Maybe the building itself is a symbol? This is a much nicer and more nurturing and functional space than where we used to be. I wonder how much being women-led contributed to this? Maybe it would have looked different if a man had designed or chosen. We have wellness rooms and quiet rooms, we have patio space if people need to take breaks outside. There was attention paid to softer lighting and warm textiles. The furniture makes it feel like home. It is a human centered space rather than a corporate space. It shows that we value family and community.

Respondent 9:

We do have nursing or lactation rooms. Something that bothers me – they have all the pictures of all the former commissioners of ag – they are all white men. People walk by that every day and it's a reminder that we still have a ways to go. We have pictures of governor and we put one up of the lieutenant governor, who is a woman.

We don't have child care facilities on site – which would be great.

We try to be understanding with women who have kids -take a sick day when their kids are home sick or once in awhile – daycare is closed – I will bring my kid into work. This physically shows that for folks who are working moms or not, you make it work and that's ok.

Respondent 10:

Not really. Not beyond what I have already mentioned.

Respondent 11:

There are private rooms – lactation rooms are set up nicely. Hospital grade pump in every one. This varies in other locations. This is a priority. There is a daycare on one of the campuses – but it is super expensive. In between the offices and the parking lot. I have seen people get their kids and have lunch and then take them back to the daycare.

Respondent 12:

Pictures on the wall – there was a marketing campaign for spine devices, some of our devices that would be displayed in magazines. They didn't use employees, the doctors were all male, but not all white. The team of engineers – young white male, young white female, and one male person of color in the picture. The patient was an elderly woman, to represent our clientele. We had a couple of speakers come in, different years. One was a marathon runner. He had received our implant in his mid-thirties. We were treating low back pain, he was so grateful. Another patient was a famous baseball player, we had vastly improved his world too. Both were men. It was great that they came back and spoke.

We have a problem in engineering, one of our sets of customers are spine surgeons – they are overwhelmingly male. We interact with them a lot and I don't even know a female spine surgeon. They have to have confidence. They know they're smart. Some of them have a god complex. You roll with that, but you need to work with them. They are your customers, so you have to work with them.

We also hosted high school kids in our facilities. Brought in power tools because girls don't grow up using them. This hurts them in engineering as well. When you're in school, you need to be able to use these tools. Guys aren't intimidated by this. So, it provides a safe environment for girls to experiment. They were cutting plastic and Styrofoam, not hard. Got a chance to see how you could affect people's lives. If you can use these power tools, you can be helpful.

I break stuff in my lab – I have to test it to make sure that it's durable and safe. In my mind, it's cool – I get to use power tools and hydraulics. I change oil by the 50-gallon drum. You feel some power in this. My boss trusted me to do this, we had an interesting dynamic. He knew I was capable, but at the same time, he protected me and treated me like a daughter, which wasn't always helpful. I felt like I didn't know what was going on, but I couldn't understand what they were doing because no one was talking. I know his intentions were good. But he is also very conservative. He wouldn't have lunch alone with a woman because of his religious background. He's super smart and was conscious of hiring women – we had the most in our group. I suspect he was partly responsible for that. He gave me an opportunity.

I was featured prominently in any tour of the building – the fact that I was introduced as manager of the lab, it was a good symbol.

10. Is there anything else that your organization does to communicate its support for women employees that I haven't asked about?

Respondent 1:

I want to help you understand that you're entering a thorny field through the elements of symbol, ritual, and microelements. Almost always the founders are dead white guys. Guys names on the door and their portraits were everywhere. All dead. White savior story – I'd rather see stories of the people who are getting the grants. Put those hero stories on the wall. Thank you, Archie, – here is what you did. Put those stories on the wall. Founders stories are hard especially for legacy.

There are sociologists who believe that culture is reinforced through these symbols and rituals. So, the founder stories for example. There are also stories that we tell in the hallways – who gets held up as exemplary employees. Demonstrated that they are married to the job. What are the informal stories that we tell around the water cooler? How do we define committed and dedicated? What did they do to achieve this? Employee is always someone that goes the extra mile? Above and beyond. How do you do that if you have a life to balance. Who gets their pictures in the annual report? Not the work-a-day employee. Focus on the smaller pieces.

The whole business of ritual and symbol – Ruth Lincoln – hard to slog through but there are pieces that she has written about that are exactly what you're talking about. Woman who talks about accumulation of advantage vs disadvantage – Virginia Valian Two women in the field of gender bias in orgs – Joan Acker and Joan Williams One of them was a lawyer and studied this in law firms. There is always a ritual around the pre-meeting chit chat, there is a ritual around - one of the places where culture is enforced. When we ask, how was your weekend? What happens when I say to you as a mother of three – washed diapers and went to urgent care. Or Joe who went to the Masters or went rock climbing. Felt obligated to come up with things that she didn't do. We had a nice meal, a good bath and then bedtime. You can't say that in the pre-meeting chit chat. Unwritten rules.

Respondent 2:

No response

Respondent 3:

What will be important in the future, is information, the whole idea of sponsors. I would not say that we have identified this as a requirement of leaders. You work with a high talent person, and this happens on an organic level. I do see for women, as well as colleagues of color, that having a more formal structure and making it clear that a leader requirement is to mentor and sponsor great talent. As we grow, something that has been on my mind, that I think would be valuable, is the idea of mentor/sponsor. It's hard

to sort through how did I do on that? It's equally hard to look at someone when the career path isn't always clear, the real power of identifying big potential talent, is being more systematic and intentional. Women's leadership network (symbols) at the parent company level – when I see colleagues become involved in this and get the advantages of networking and learning, I can see that it's important. We must encourage more of our women to be active in these worlds. We need to overtly encourage more participation. More than anything. It's the responsibility of leaders to help women, people of color, and high potential talent. How do we think about helping these colleagues to keep moving to develop?

As a general statement, we need inclusive culture. Accountability of personal behaviors. How do you think about how inclusion works? This has enormous implications for women, people of color, young people. Our work is better when people can offer their perspective. To know that their voices will not only be welcomed, but heard. How do we create a culture that ensures hierarchy doesn't get in the way of people expressing their opinions? We have examples of women who have succeeded. We see the influence of capable women leaders. I actually think that where the next big step is going to be is getting to the definition of inclusion, What does diversity look like? And also, what it feels like when it's working. We're doing unconscious bias training – but it doesn't always work. Communicators need to be in touch with the world. Genuinely, creating inclusive environments, this applies to a lot of things – not just gender. Our strategic and creative product and how it's implemented, all of those things, if they are not relevant and resonant, then we're not doing our clients any favors. Which allows meaningful ways for them to connect with clients. We need to be looking at things like – we have a lot of women – are we keeping them? Why or why not?

Respondent 4:

There is a tendency to get stuck on traditional gender definitions around context. Emoting. We are not comfortable with that here. Traditional expressions of culture around structure and caring are there, but the emotional hasn't always had a place. There are different ways of expressing conflict not so much there. So many of these roots go back to our intercultural work – trying to be more inclusive around ways of thinking and being. On good days, it's awesome when it works, on bad days – I feel like a fool and other people are so cool and collected. Still working through this. Gender is a proxy for different ways of being.

Respondent 5:

There is something about the community connection here. Not specifically geared towards women, but inevitably we talk about it. We have teen tech centers which are funded by best buy foundation and we go to communities around the county where

underserved children come after school to stay out of trouble. Computers, workstations, someone from geek squad volunteering to work. We see a lot of girls come into these teen tech centers. This might be their first or only connection to tech, gives them a way to see what 's possible and get them interested in STEM. If they want a retail job, we see girls who are interested in this. Geek squad academy – girls get excited about this and it becomes a great story to tell. Inevitably we see a disproportionate number of girls and women excited about this.

Respondent 6:

No response

Respondent 7:

Such different cultures – some of which are supportive and some are not. A lot of individual variability – depends on who your manager is. Gender bias – show that mothers implicit bias against mothers. Reduction in hours alone isn't enough to compensate. Women with kids are less likely to be perceived as competent. Mothers are less likely to be hired and promoted. Real parenting lack of leadership – doesn't take away from men to be leaders. Unless they take too much time off – in certain companies.

Rules that looks like they will support women, but you're stigmatized if you follow them. In theory, it's great. But in reality, no one can use it. She lies if she has to go to a kid thing. Boston Scientific is trying to de-stigmatize the parent things.

Respondent 8:

I think it's tricky when HR reports to you, it is a workplace where it is ok to demonstrate compassion in various forms. We had an employee who lost a child, we make it ok to be approachable and say we can talk about it. We are family-focused and people care about others here. This is modeled by the CEO. So much of child rearing tends to be female. Female led organizations can better understand the challenges. It's different than in other more male dominated environments.

People don't tend to stick to a 9-5, and there are not a ton of evening responsibilities, but there are some. The CFO during the budget process was working a lot of late nights. Other than special events, there is not an expectation that you work nights and weekends. Some of this is manager dependent to allow more flexible schedules too. There is a female employee who works three days a week in the office and works from home the other two days.

Respondent 9:

No

Respondent 10:

No.

Respondent 11:

No. Not as an organization.

Respondent 12:

When we were talking about space, our company was too small to have day care on site. Some departments were flexible to allow for people to pick up kids from daycare. Other departments were all about the time you put in – come early and stay late and that’s how you proved yourself. So it depended a lot on your manager.

We had locker rooms so when surgeons came, where they could change into scrubs. There was a women’s locker room and that was where women pumped. Not particularly comfortable.

11. What are some ways that your organization, or organizations in general, could better support women?

Respondent 1:

No response

Respondent 2:

If I had the idea, I would do it. I don’t think there’s anything we do to support women that doesn’t support everyone here. Both short term and long-term arrangements. I’m having to analyze things that we do with a gender overlay.

Flexibility is the most important things – not easy to get your head around because it seems like it’s at the expense of the company. A lot of complexity – seems like it’s not great stewardship. I can understand what makes it hard for people to do. You’re so shaped by the environment you work in. The only asset you had was people, how do you make it the best for people.

At McKinsey, part of the giving feedback – it was a kind thing to give feedback – to be trusting enough to know that it’s going to help you in the long-run. I think this is the next thing we should work on...

Respondent 3:

No response

Respondent 4:

No response

Respondent 5:

As we review benefits, I think we'll find ways to better accommodate work-life balance. Through maternity leave or other benefits. We're also an anomaly – we have more female executives than most. It's few that have as many as we do, but we don't scream this from the rooftops, we're humble. But it could be beneficial for all females to know this – telling our story more broadly. There is internal work we can do both for female and male leaders. Men and women don't think and talk the same. Sometimes communication barriers get in the way. There is training needed around this.

Respondent 6:

Maternity leave could be stronger and better. Make paternity policy acceptable as well. – division of household labor. This is important. Flex work environment is organized by leader and division – this could be more widely supported by the company as policy.

Respondent 7:

Subtle language – managers have to work to create more equitable work scenarios.

Having better paternity and parental leaves. One woman did maternity leave, found out that her male counterparts were using their paternity leave to work on their stuff instead on parenting. She was home taking care of the baby. Having leave was not equal.

People with equal parenting relationships:

1. ability to take paternity leave/responsible for taking care of kids on their own
2. both partners committed to gender neutral parenting style.
3. every woman let go of control of how partner did things

Double bind of doing everything perfect.

Offering more flex time for all employees without punishment

More of what Boston Scientific is doing – coaching, compensations, confidence gap - women are more likely to discount themselves.

Awareness of what you're saying you support and what you actually support.

What are symbols? What does our language say?

Also – women lose so much ground in leadership if they stay home. Tremendous project management skills that women show in private sector. Internships and training programs for women who are reentering the workforce and can't go back – end up

taking things that they are overqualified for. Women's skills as leaders in volunteer sector aren't as valued.

Mostly being aware and doing.

Upper management must be part of the solutions

Leadership changed at Best Buy and it slipped back. – new CEO – they were cutting edge 5-7 years ago.

Respondent 8:

I am old enough to remember the early years when I was the only woman in the room. And people mistook me for the notetaker instead of the Deputy Mayor. I had a high school guidance counselor – I did well on the ACT - he asked me what I wanted to do after high school and I got up the gumption to say that I wanted to go to Law school. He asked, "Have you ever thought about being a paralegal?"

I have counseled women that there are more opportunities in the public sector; it seems much more challenging in a corporate environment.

When you're thinking about culture, you have to ask yourself, who has to do the most adapting?

In thinking about diversity and gender, who has to spend the most time and energy adapting and who determines the culture? This says a lot about what kind of culture you have.

This environment is the most conducive for women and families that I've ever worked. In part because of the number of women in leadership.

Respondent 9:

No response

Respondent 10:

Well, obviously, the whole child bearing thing – having active policies around this. Whether it's breast pumping rooms or being flexible on time away. But you have to be careful that this so it doesn't backfire and go the opposite way. I know it disadvantages women too – made allowances and then they hadn't had the experience when they came up for promotion since they had taken a time out for two years.

Having development programs- open to both genders – and women have to step up and do this, provide mentorship. I had a boss who was fussing over me when I was pregnant. He was concerned and I wanted him to get over it. I worked on a big project during that pregnancy, if I hadn't done it, I don't know where I would have been. I went

to New York to negotiate something when I was eight months pregnant. Frankly, the head of the securities commission was so flustered by my pregnancy, he was more willing to negotiate. Once I got it done, the CEO was so pleased, and he would pick me out of the lineup for the next few years after that to work on tricky projects.

If I had listened to my boss, I wouldn't have gone and the CEO wouldn't have known who I was.

Respondent 11:

Ok – So, what I was thinking about – structures. One thing would be better parental leave and caregiving leave. And a better program for on-ramping and off-ramping – more defined option for women. Those are the two big things.

With the women in science and engineering – they have piloted a program, where women who have taken a step back from the workforce are given the option to come back as an intern. It helps them refresh their skills and it can be a stepping stone back into the company.

People are talking about it, so it means they're embracing it.

Respondent 12:

I think giving women flex time for families is important – but also giving men this. So both can be responsible for childcare. Supporting both in that respect. Allowing men to have paternity leave is helpful. I'm a single woman, so it doesn't affect me, sometimes I'm resentful if I have to shoulder more, but I would prefer to work for a flex company. It would be nice to figure out how to make this fair for everyone.

Women are not heard, and I don't think people know this. We should encourage a more collaborative environment. I will run from adversarial and competitive climates, I don't feel like I can thrive there.

In terms of communication – I think one of the reasons I love collaboration - there is a time and a place for suspending judgements. In innovation, you need to have wide open brainstorm and converge them and figure out priorities to get back on the same page. You have to suspend judgment in order to get there. This helps in stereotypes too. How can you be mindful and use communication to reflect back what you're hearing from other people? How do you encourage this dialogue as a company? You can't just blindly treat everyone as equal – everyone isn't equal. Being conscious and intentional about this is important. It's an ongoing process, and what I'm seeing in engineering, you need to have a certain number of female engineers, and we're not even there yet. You need a work buddy who you can bounce ideas off of and not feel totally alone. It's an idea worth thinking about.