Laura Hills

Lasting Female Educational Leadership

Leadership Legacies of Women Leaders

Springer

Lasting Female Educational Leadership

STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

VOLUME 18

SCOPE OF THE SERIES

Leadership we know makes all the difference in success or failures of organizations. This series will bring together in a highly readable way the most recent insights in successful leadership. Emphasis will be placed on research focused on pre-collegiate educational organizations. Volumes should address issues related to leadership at all levels of the educational system and be written in a style accessible to scholars, educational practitioners and policy makers throughout the world.

The volumes – monographs and edited volumes – should represent work from different parts in the world.

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*In memory of my father, David
Kirschenbaum, who instilled in me a love of
achievement, learning, and higher education*

*In memory of my mother, Janice
Kirschenbaum, who wanted me to marry a
nice Jewish doctor, but who would have been
very proud to see that I have become one*

*For my daughters, Meredith Sachs, Alicia
Hills, and Victoria Sachs, for whom I have
modeled lifelong learning
and of whom I am so proud*

*And for my husband, Cornell Hills,
my* beshert, *who has given me everything.*

"What we do repeatedly will determine the legacy we leave."

James Kouzes (2005, p. 66)
In The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching

Preface

Right now and all around the world, our colleges and universities are being led in large part by individuals who are, like me, in later midlife. Huge numbers of those middle-aged leaders will retire within the next 10 years. While we know that being in midlife and impending retirement must influence a person in a leadership position at an institution of higher learning, we do not really understand how.

This monograph is based upon an empirical study that linked higher education leadership to one aspect of midlife known as *generativity*. This psychosocial phenomenon was described by Erik Erikson as a desire that peaks in midlife to leave something for future generations before one dies. Generativity typically manifests itself in the legacy one intends to leave. I completed a multiple case study of women who are in later midlife and who hold high-level leadership positions at an institution of higher learning. From this work, I learned more than has ever been known about the nature, antecedents, and support of generativity in the leadership of female higher education leaders in midlife. I am thrilled to share my findings in the pages that follow.

Chapter 1 describes the psychosocial challenges typically faced by higher education leaders in midlife. It explains why higher education leaders in midlife may feel that their time in leadership is running out and why they may feel compelled right now to leave something behind for future generations. It locates these normal and common feelings within the context of Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development and particularly, Stage 7: Generativity vs. Stagnation. Chapter 1 also describes the context in which my study was situated, the particular research problem I addressed, and the three research questions that drove my work: What is the nature of leadership generativity? What are the antecedents to leadership generativity motivation? And what environmental factors within higher education institutions facilitate or inhibit leadership generativity? Chapter 1 also describes the purpose, audience, and significance of the study and provides a glossary of terms.

Chapter 2 situates my research study within the context of practical considerations and applications. It explains why legacy strivings escalate in midlife and why generativity usually matters more to leaders who are in midlife than those who are younger. This chapter also describes the many practical questions addressed by

my research study. For example, it describes how I defined *midlife* and *higher education leader*, how women particularly experience midlife, generativity as a particular midlife phenomenon, and how generativity manifests itself particularly among women.

Chapter 3 describes the practical aspects of my qualitative descriptive multiple case study. It describes my rationale for choosing the naturalistic paradigm, a qualitative methodology, and case study in particular, and it locates my study within relevant qualitative research literature. This chapter, coupled with Appendix E, describes in detail my research design including the specific criteria for study participation, study delimitations, sampling strategies, techniques used to enhance my study's trustworthiness, data coding strategies, and my criteria and strategies for analyzing and interpreting my study's findings. My research design is further summarized in Appendix A, an executive summary of my research study and its key findings.

Chapter 4 explores the early influences on a higher education leader's generativity, particularly those that stem from their childhood and early adulthoods. These influences include a higher education leader's parents, grandparents, siblings, other family members, peers, media, faith, clergy, educators, supervisors, colleagues, members of the community, motherhood, public figures, and growing up at a particular moment in history. This chapter also considers higher education environments that are supportive of leadership generativity, the personal characteristics of highly generative leaders, and more broadly, the landscape for leadership generativity at institutions of higher learning, including potential pitfalls and obstacles to avoid.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications of my study's nine key findings and secondary findings and places them within the context of current literature. It offers eight working hypotheses about higher education leadership generativity and their implications. It also presents my theoretical framework for developing higher education leadership generativity that emerged from the study. Higher education institutions can use this framework to develop leadership generativity development programs. In particular, this chapter includes an extensive chart of 24 topics for program content, links those topics to specific research data and literature, and provides practical focus questions for leadership generativity development program participants.

Chapter 6 provides tools that will enable the reader to harness the study's findings and put them to practical use. It includes leadership legacy scenarios and will lead you through a series of hands-on leadership legacy development exercises. These exercises, coupled with the exercises included at the end of each of the first five chapters, will enable you to identify the leadership legacies, relationships, and formative experiences that have influenced your own generativity. This chapter also provides you with the Leadership Legacy Statement Template and sample leadership legacy statement that have grown out of my popular legacy workshop. These will enable you to craft your own higher education leadership legacy statement. This chapter further explores ways that higher education leaders can work collaboratively to realize their leadership legacies, and also, to preserve and celebrate the higher education leadership legacies of others. Broad implications and topics for further research are also included in this chapter.

This work grew directly from my experiences, questions, observations, and inklings as a female higher education leader in midlife. I have combined my scholarly work with my more practical concerns as an educator and developed exercises and other tools higher education leaders can use to shape and work toward achieving their intended legacies. I have also developed a theoretical blueprint a college or university can use to develop and foster leadership legacies. I hope this work motivates you to act now, while there's still time, to develop and foster your leadership legacy and the legacies of your colleagues. I also hope that it motivates you to preserve and cherish the higher education leadership legacies of those who came before you.

Read on to learn more about my study and how you can become a legacy thinker. Here's to making your higher education leadership last beyond your lifetime.

Fairfax, Virginia, USA   Dr. Laura Hills

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1
Leadership Legacies: Immortal Higher Education Leadership

My favorite research topics are those that occur to me when I'm not looking for them. A few years ago, I had just such a research epiphany that ultimately led me to the topic of this monograph. This is my story.

It was busy Tuesday just like every other Tuesday at our small university. At 10:05, I realized that I was late for our regular 10:00 a.m. senior staff meeting. I let out a gasp, grabbed my pad folio and a pen from my desk, and dashed down the corridor to the conference room to join my colleagues, who were already seated at the conference table and engaged in discussion. All eyes turned toward me and there was that awful disapproving silence that occurred whenever one of us arrived late to a meeting. I sheepishly mimed an apology, slipped into my seat, and silently picked up the handout that was waiting at my place. When everyone's attention went back to the matter at hand and discussion resumed, I could see from the large, bold heading that the page before me reported figures about our retention rates, the topic of our meeting that day. But that was all I could see. I'd have needed my reading glasses to make sense of the rest of the blurred page of figures in front of me. Unfortunately, in my haste to rush to the meeting, I'd forgotten to bring them with me.

I felt stuck. I didn't dare disrupt the meeting any further by going back to my office for my reading glasses or asking my assistant to bring them to me. And, I had to know what was on the page. I squinted to see if I could read the figures better, but that didn't help much. Then, I tried holding the page as far from my face as possible, sliding my arm out and in, hoping that I could find a distance that would bring everything into focus. Unfortunately, that didn't work either. Then, without saying a word, the colleague sitting beside me came to my rescue. He had noticed my "trombone" playing and handed me his reading glasses. I slipped them on and found that I could read the page perfectly. And that is the precise moment when the topic for my research was born.

As I peered over my colleagues' reading glasses at the senior staff gathered around that conference table on that Tuesday morning, I saw that to a person, every one of us was of the age when one needs to use reading glasses. I'd never given notice before to the fact that we were the senior administrative team at our small

university *and* that we were all of roughly the same age, somewhere I guessed to be between 50 and 60. Our faces were lined with the same wrinkles, our hair gray, graying, dyed, or thinning, and our life points similar. We were all of that age when our children were becoming older and more independent of us, when our bodies did not do what they used to do, when our doctors advised us to have colonoscopies and to watch our cholesterol, and when we would talk about the junior staff members and students around us as though they could be our children.

My colleague's reading glasses enabled me to see with perfect vision that we were all in midlife. That set me to wondering about all kinds of things. I wondered, for instance, if and how, precisely, being in midlife was affecting us in our roles as the leaders of our institution. Was our life point affecting our choices, our priorities, and our concerns, or even, the way we worked with and communicated with one another? I wondered, too, why we were all probably dealing with similar issues of being in midlife but that we never talked about that openly with one another. I wondered if the men at the table were experiencing midlife differently from the way I was. Surely their physical changes had to be different from mine. But how? And then, I wondered, was our situation typical? Were the conference rooms at colleges and universities around the world filled with midlife leaders like us who needed to use reading glasses to see the small print?

Within the next few days, I asked my colleagues who worked at other institutions of higher learning whether they thought that their leadership positions were held mostly by people who were in midlife. Their responses caught me off guard– not because of *what* they told me, but because of *how* they told me. Every colleague I asked thought my question was absurd. I might as well have asked them if the sky was blue. Of *course* a huge number of the leaders at their schools were in midlife, they told me, as though that was a foregone conclusion -- obvious and not interesting. But that observation confirmed my hunch and became *hugely* interesting to me.

I considered my own experiences and perceptions as a higher education leader in midlife and I knew that I had changed and that my leadership had changed, too. As a midlifer, I believed that a key function of higher education leadership is to mentor others, to provide them with leadership opportunities, and to develop future leaders; I didn't remember feeling that way when I was younger. I started to read up on midlife and found a huge body of scholarship. I learned that my colleagues were indeed correct; there is a fantastic number of midlife leaders at our institutions of higher learning, and in fact, in pretty much all of our organizations, corporations, and institutions. And yet, we know extremely little about whether and how being in midlife influences their leadership.

These observations, experiences and wonderings are what ultimately led me to embark on a multiple case study of six female higher education leaders who were in later midlife (between the ages of 50 and 64) and to explore the nature of their intended higher education leadership legacies, the sources and antecedents of their legacy thinking, and the environment that is needed for higher education leadership legacies to be realized.

Need and Background

There is a 10 ton white elephant stomping around our global living room that relatively few researchers and employers notice or speak of; the number of individuals who are in midlife (between the ages of 40 and 64) is huge, accounting for about one-third of the U.S. population (Hunter, Sundel, & Sundel, 2002) and the majority of individuals who are in executive and leadership positions in the U.S. workforce today are, in fact, in midlife (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2002; Freedman, 2007). The middle years are ones in which individuals act as leaders of families, organizations, and communities (Schaie & Willis, 1986). Yet, we understand so little about the impact of midlife on leadership, particularly for those of us who are serving as leaders in our institutions of higher learning. According to Mills (2006),

> This is a troubling void given the fact that so many administrators and would-be administrators [in higher education] are in the second half of life…and as a result are undergoing great physical and psychological changes appropriate to this stage which can and will affect their work. (p. 294)

As I read more and more about midlife leadership and began to get the first inklings of my research questions, I realized that it would help me tremendously to work from a theoretical framework, a lens through which to look at the concept of midlife. I hit upon numerous theories having to do with midlife, and in fact, was attracted at first to the work of Carl Jung. However, I kept coming back time and again to Erikson's theory of generativity, not only because so many scholars referenced Erikson, but because Erikson's generativity theory resonated with me personally.

Erik Erikson (1950) identified generativity as *the* defining psychosocial feature of midlife (versus stagnation). During the middle adult years, Erikson maintained, men and women are most likely to be concerned about the well-being of future generations; they are most likely to become involved in projects aimed at generating a positive and enduring personal legacy that will ultimately outlive them. Generativity can explain why midlife is the time most of us make our most significant contributions to future generations and to society more broadly, Erikson argued. Erikson's generativity theory certainly gave me a way to begin to understand my professional interest in developing and fostering future leaders at our small university.

But for far more personal reasons, I was also particularly attracted to Erikson's generativity theory as the theoretical framework for my research study because it put forth the proposition that individuals in midlife are likely to concern themselves with leaving a legacy. That resonated with me loud and clear because I was reading Erikson during the time of my father's battle with thyroid cancer and his eventual passing. I was consumed at that time with thoughts of my father's legacy, my own legacy someday, and the legacy others ultimately leave behind them when they die. Erikson shed some light on these issues for me. Moreover, from the standpoint of society and culture, I came to see generativity as a critical resource. McAdams (2001) suggested that generativity may "undergird social institutions, encourage citizens' contributions and commitments to the public good, motivate efforts to

sustain continuity from one generation to the next, and initiate social change" (p. 396). As I continued to read about Erikson's generativity theory, it seemed to me that higher education institutions and college leaders, as well as leadership coaches and leadership development programs, would all benefit from knowing more about the nature of generativity in leadership, the antecedents for generativity in midlife leadership, and especially, the higher education environment that fosters and sustains generativity in leadership. Effective higher education leaders and institutions, I believed, would be those that are highly generative or forward-thinking; they'd be the ones that would want to develop, nurture, and foster their own generativity and the generativity of others. My research study attempted to figure out how both higher education leaders and the institutions that employ them could be more generative.

As I continued to read and study, I learned that generativity is not the exclusive domain of individuals. Social contexts and institutions themselves may be more or less generative. There are generative people but also generative groups, generative situations, generative institutions, and even generative societies. A prime motivation undergirding the commitments that many adults show toward social causes, political parties, religious traditions, and a wide range of other social and cultural institutions is their concern for the well-being of the next generation (McAdams, 2001). Likewise, there are people, groups, situations, and even societies that are more or less lacking or deficient in generativity (Kotre, 1984, 1999). For example, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1991) argued that the most pressing problems facing large-scale institutions – including educational institutions, churches, and governing bodies – reflect failures in generative care. They called upon leaders to embrace a "politics of generativity" through which adults may be able to "anchor our economic and political institutions firmly in the moral discourse of citizens concerned about the common good and the long run" (Bellah et al., 1991, p. 279).

I began to see leadership generativity more and more as a global issue. By 2030, one out of five Americans will be 65 or older. But there are countries – Japan, Sweden, and Canada for example – where populations are even older than they are in the United States (Kotre, 1996). In 1994, one of them – Italy – became the first in the world to have more people over 65 than under 15. What takes place in our aging societies will depend in great measure on what takes place in those doing the aging, and specifically on the condition of their generativity. Outside of the United States, Japanese social scientists and policy makers have turned their attention to the concept of generativity and its implications for developing a public philosophy to promote the survival and well-being of future generations (Kim & Tough, 1994). In Hong Kong, a study of generativity suggests that older persons in that culture transmit moral and behavioral codes through role modeling and story to create a lasting influence (Chang, Chan, & Chan, 2008). Cross-cultural research by Hofer, Busch, Chasiotis, Kartner, and Campos (2008) conducted in Germany, Cameroon, and Costa Rica suggests that generativity models can be applied to all these three disparate cultural samples, despite cultural differences. My research enabled me to infer that there may be higher education institutions all over the world that are highly generative or more or less lacking or deficient in generativity. I hoped that my study