Chapter 3
Women Higher Education Administrators:
Approaches to Leadership in Times of Crisis

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ABSTRACT

In the multiple crises of 2020, a common narrative emerged about the effectiveness of women leaders in responding at the local, national, and international levels. Their behaviors suggested a reliance on adaptation. As microcosms of the social structures in which they exist, postsecondary institutions are not exempt from the task of leadership through crises; however, little is known about women leaders in higher education administration in times of crisis. Though having the ability to adapt has shown to be paramount for organizational success and thriving, it is virtually unknown whether women higher education leaders take an adaptive approach during crises. Thus, the authors went beyond recent headlines to understand women higher education leaders in contexts riddled with crises. Findings provide illustrative evidence of the six tenets of adaptive leadership to inform practice and future research.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 brought crises in health, economy, government, education, and social justice with effects scaling from the local citizen to the global community. One emerging narrative centers on the role of women leaders in responding to crises at the local, national, and international levels. Political leaders such as Nancy Pelosi, Jacinda Ardern, and Angela Merkel have been highlighted not just for their work, but for their work as women (Friedman, 2020; Taub, 2020; Tumulty, 2020; Wittenberg-Cox, 2020). Media headlines such as "Why are women-led nations doing better with COVID-19?" (Taub, 2020), "Are women leaders better at fighting coronavirus? It's complicated" (North, 2020), and "Research: Women are better leaders during a crisis" (Zenger & Folkman, 2020) show the prominence of gender and leadership considerations in coverage of crisis responses.

As this chapter examines the experiences and behaviors of women leaders in higher education administration, there is a salience and timeliness to the examples provided by women global leaders. Their behaviors suggested a reliance on adaptation—a willingness to anticipate and respond to short- and long-term needs in times of crisis. These approaches can be seen in response to both the more technical leadership challenges (e.g., establishing public health mandates to minimize risk) and the adaptive challenges for which there are no known or immediate solutions, but which require the engagement of followers to find a solution (e.g., minimizing fear and discord in times of risk, frustration, and inequity). A review of the literature identified adaptive leadership as a theory that would direct the research efforts of this chapter.

The emerging narrative about women leaders in times of crisis emphasizes a merging of skills and competencies, a reliance on differing viewpoints working toward a collective goal, and an ability and willingness to adapt quickly as new knowledge surfaces. Adaption is paramount to organizational success and thriving (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). There is no research as of yet that has explored whether women take an adaptive approach in their leadership, particularly in times of crisis. Recent comparisons between men's and women's leadership undergird the elevation of women as effective leaders in crises due to the perceived utility of leadership traits typically ascribed to women in challenging circumstances. Specifically, researchers have suggested that women leaders are more task-oriented and transformational in relation to counterparts who are men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Stott, 2013; Winters, 2012). The need to shift, if not change, amidst uncertainty and distress, warrants a more in-depth inquiry into women's leadership in times of crisis. Particularly, research about whether adaptive leadership in challenging times contributes to women's effectiveness would be of value.

Significance of This Chapter

Research about the intersection of gender and leadership during crisis is common in the business and political sectors (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Gipson et al., 2017; Rosener, 2011). A greater understanding of these dynamics within higher education administration would be helpful, as colleges and universities must also enact complex yet timely responses to global crises. This extends to the organizational offices and subunits within institutions, and the leaders tasked with the sometimes unanticipated responsibility of leading their stakeholders through crises. Research focused on leadership within the academy has pointed to the need for knowledge, skills, and abilities (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Seemiller, 2016; Spendlove, 2007); a developmental network of trusted supporters in individual success (Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; Fowler, 2019; Johnson, 2020); and consideration of contexts and crisis has

been made (Tarker, 2019). Less is known about women leaders in higher education administration in times of crisis.

While focused on the intersection of gender and leadership, findings from the authors' research enable all leaders to identify strategies for weathering challenging times in advance of their own work lives and the organizations and populations they serve. This chapter educates the reader about adaptive leadership as a theory and practice, and provides examples of adaptive leadership in higher education for consideration and potential application to one's own leadership practice. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold: To review the tenets of adaptive leadership theory and to present descriptive evidence of the ways in which women leaders in higher education organizations demonstrate those tenets in their approaches to leading during global crises. To support that purpose, this chapter first summarizes the concept of adaptive leadership. Research and practice about women in leadership is discussed, with a particular focus on gender and leadership effectiveness. Then, an overview of women's advancement in the workplace across industries globally and within higher education is provided. Illustrative evidence of the six tenets of adaptive leadership is offered, drawing from the authors' recent study of women administrators in higher education during global crises.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Times of crisis highlight the role of leadership. Understanding the contexts in which crisis management occurs is essential to fostering the development of an evolving organization that is strategically positioned to survive and thrive in times of crises and beyond. Communities and campuses are experiencing a global pandemic and racial injustice that reinforce the importance of leadership. However, the current crises also suggest that higher education administrators may be ill-equipped if there is a tendency to manage, rather than lead, out of crises. While challenging, the current pandemic is highlighting leadership gaps in higher education (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020). To capitalize on these opportunities, college and university leaders may be best served by frameworks that account for broader contexts and challenges.

As cultural and societal norms change, so too must the ways in which individuals and organizations respond. Adaptive leadership, "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive," facilitates such an approach (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 14). Adaptive leadership focuses on leading when there is no right answer or known solution. According to Heifetz and colleagues (2009), adaptive leadership can be achieved through six tenets: (a) enabling the capacity for organizational thriving, (b) building on the past, (c) committing to experimentation, (d) depending on diversity, (e) expecting loss, and (f) investing time. On its own, adaptive leadership is an approach for creating new environments and new ways of meeting an organization's goals. Its utility during global crises is compelling, when new environments appear suddenly in an undesirable and unplanned way, leaders must develop new ways of operating as a result. Additionally, new organizational members may be brought in or given additional responsibilities that require them to quickly engage in needed change.

Under the adaptive leadership lens, women leaders in higher education administration and their leadership approaches were explored as they supported their institutions, departments, teams, and colleagues through global and national crises. Conversations with these leaders exposed how they made sense of their organizations' needs during crises, and how they responded to those needs. The result of these conversations is that women leaders in higher education administration demonstrated adaptive leadership in their responses to crises.

BACKGROUND: STUDYING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The rise of women in positions of power is notable; yet, women still lag behind men peers in advancing along the leadership pipeline across industries and professional fields (Hill et al., 2016; Lyness & Grotto, 2018). While a variety of factors contribute to this reality globally, there is much to learn about the relationship between gender, leadership behaviors, and effectiveness, including the contextual and societal factors that support or inhibit women leaders. In the following section, the authors review literature in three key areas: gender and leadership effectiveness, women in the workplace, and women in higher education leadership.

Gender and Leadership Effectiveness

Since women entered the workforce and assumed formal and informal leadership roles, there has been a fascination with the connection between gender and leadership as social scientists and management practitioners sought to understand the differences between men and women leaders (Eagly et al., 2003). In the 1980s, leadership coaches and social scientists sought insight into this question. Their findings revealed little to no difference between men and women in terms of leadership aptitude or style (Bartol & Martin, 1986; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). However, those findings were called into question based on a variety of factors including sample size, quality and type of data, and methodological approaches (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Questions still abound about gender and leadership. The current global pandemic and increased attention to racial injustice has once again raised the question about the connections among gender, leadership effectiveness, and the contexts in which women and men are most effective.

Three decades ago, Eagly and Johnson (1990) sought to provide a more systematic evaluation of gender differences in leadership. They conducted a meta-analysis of research in which leadership styles of men and women were statistically analyzed. Their analysis revealed that the "view, widely accepted by social scientists and experts on leadership, that women and men lead in the same way should be very substantially revised" (p. 248). They further elaborated, "Similarly, the view, proclaimed in some popular books on management, that female and male leaders have distinctive, gender-stereotypic styles also requires revision" (pp. 248–249), namely the need to account for internal and external contributing factors such as organizational context and field. Their findings revealed the need to rethink concepts of leadership while also recognizing that differences in leadership may be best attributable to personality differences and varied skills.

More recently, Paustian-Underdahl and colleagues (2014) conducted a meta-analytic review of studies that examined the connection between leadership effectiveness and gender as an update to and extension of the work by Eagly and Johnson (1990). In essence, their goal was to test the perceived "female leadership advantage" (p. 1). What they found, again, was an oversimplification of the differences between gender and leadership effectiveness. Specifically, Paustian-Underdahl and colleagues' findings revealed a number of indicators that contributed to leadership effectiveness, particularly contextual factors including academic field, industry nuances, and organizational characteristics (e.g., male-dominated work environments). Of particular importance to the focus of this chapter was the finding that women were regarded as more effective compared to their male counterparts in business and education fields. The authors elaborated, "Such findings highlight the shifting stereotypes surrounding gender and leadership, which may be increasing perceptions of men's incongruity (and ineffectiveness) in leadership positions"

(p. 11). In sum, their research highlighted how context and environmental factors necessitate various leadership styles and approaches.

Contextual factors present during the preparation of this chapter included the COVID-19 global pandemic, racial injustice and social unrest, and the presidential and other political elections in the United States. These contextual and societal realities have once again elevated the use of gender as one lens through which to examine leadership effectiveness. The notion of a "female leadership advantage" has resurfaced in conversations and research, suggesting that women do, in fact, have a leadership advantage during times of crisis (Post et al., 2019). Post and colleagues (2019) found that women's leadership advantage in times of crisis is centered on the notion of trust, due to a relational leadership approach. In the context of higher education, Wayne (2019) noted, "institutions in crisis which are looking for their next leader should consider candidates' style of leadership and how they would interact with their constituents and key stakeholders based on past evidence of relational behaviors" (Para 5). Capacity building and a relational approach to leadership are more effective during times of crisis, both of which are stereotypical traits associated with women leaders (Zenger & Folkman, 2020). A review of women's educational attainment and advancement across a variety of fields helps paint a more holistic picture of women's global presence in leadership positions across industries and the educational credentials earned to attain them.

Women in the Workplace

Despite the number of women in the workforce, which is growing globally, women still face obstacles and barriers that hinder their advancement (Baker, 2020; Hill et al., 2016). Recent indicators include the #MeToo movement (https://metoomvmt.org/) and notable pay disparity cases that span industries such as film and television, and corporations including Disney (Crowley, 2020; Yasharoff, 2019). Harassment, inequality in pay and treatment, and pressure to behave or look a certain way affect women's experiences in all areas of their lives, notably including the workplace. Efforts to make contributions and earn wages due to qualifications and demonstrated success are clouded by an emphasis on external assessments, and unfounded comparisons, of worth based on unrelated characteristics.

Though faced with entrance and ascension challenges within socioeconomic spaces, women are represented and representing in higher education. For example, women are more likely than men to earn a bachelor's degree by the time they are 29 years of age, and women's educational attainment at the baccalaureate level has quadrupled since 1970 (NCES, 2017). Further, nearly 47% of U.S. workers identify as women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), and they own nearly 10 million businesses, "accounting for $1.4 trillion in receipts" (DeWolf, 2017).

The advances made by women in education and in the workplace are clear; however, gender inequality is still rampant, and pay disparity is but one such example. According to a report titled, "The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap" (AAUW, 2018), women are paid 80 cents for every one dollar a man is paid on average, with conservative estimates suggesting pay equity will not be achieved until 2059. The well-documented challenges faced by working women in the COVID-19 and racial injustice crises threaten to extend this timeframe (Scheiber, 2020). Where one lives matters, as do demographic factors such as race and age. For example, the pay gap is the smallest in New York (89%) and the largest in Louisiana (70%) (The United States Census Bureau, 2018). Compared to White men, Asian American women show the smallest gender pay gap at 85%, whereas the largest pay gap is experienced by Hispanic women at 54% (AAUW, 2018). In terms of age, full-time women workers ages 20 to 24 are paid 96% of

what men were paid on a weekly basis. Yet, women between the ages of 55 and 64 years of age are paid only 74% of what men are paid (AAUW, 2018). These findings about women's contextualized leadership effectiveness lend themselves to consideration of women in the academic workforce, including the points in the pipeline through which women advance.

Women in Higher Education Leadership

Women are advancing in higher education both across faculty ranks and leadership positions, yet positional and pay inequities are persistent in the academy despite efforts to draw attention to these issues (Johnson, 2017). Baker (2020) highlighted the pipeline issues for women along the path to the professoriate. Despite occupying more assistant professor posts than their men counterparts, women lag behind at the associate and full professor ranks, a trend that is consistent globally (Baker, 2020). In addition, research published by the American Council on Education revealed that women faculty members were paid, on average, $15,408 less than men faculty members annually, with consistent pay disparities across the ranks of assistant, associate, and full professorship (Johnson, 2017). First coined by Curtis (2011) and later reinforced by Johnson (2017), there remains evidence for the phrase, "the higher, the fewer." Baker (2020) concluded, "despite the fact women have achieved higher education attainment levels compared to men, this success is not reflected in the number of women in positions of high faculty rank, salary, or accompanying prestige" (p. 68). Scholars have argued that many well-qualified, capable women academics are leaning out or away from such opportunities due to antiquated workplace structures and expectations being deeply rooted in ideal worker norms (Ward & Eddy, 2013). Notwithstanding academic rank, this issue has consequences that extend beyond the individual faculty member and holds implications at the departmental and institutional levels because the faculty pipeline is the source of most academic leadership roles. These findings raise critical questions about academic women's experiences attaining and holding leadership roles.

Moreover, for those women who do assume leadership roles, research indicates that women may be more effective leaders during times of crisis, that women may experience unique contextual challenges in their leadership roles, and that leadership in colleges and universities requires a strong skill set including crisis response (Radu et al., 2017; Zenger & Folkman, 2020). This presents a complex narrative about the support for, perspectives of, and leadership by women in higher education administration. To learn more, leadership ideologies and approaches of women leaders in higher education administration were studied, specifically those who occupy a variety of positions spanning institutional, departmental, and organizational types and levels.

Higher education was, and continues to be, greatly impacted by both COVID-19 and extreme racial unrest, with certain populations being doubly affected. These events led to unexpected outcomes for colleges and universities such as financial constraints, job loss, demands to improve practice and transparency (Flaherty, 2020; McKenzie, 2020), and an overall instability of an employment sector that still has lingering effects from the 2008 great recession (Selingo, 2018). Thus, in light of recent headlines that champion the success of women leaders during uncertain times and a lack of research about women leaders in higher education administration, their leadership in contexts riddled with crises must be examined.

DATA SOURCES AND EVIDENCE

A phenomenological approach was employed in order to understand the lived experience of women leaders in higher education administration (Christiana et al., 2014; Freeman, 2020; Saldana, 2011). Freeman (2020) articulated this method, in essence, as a way of mining experiences to bring visibility. What was the meaning made by women leaders during times of crisis? Answers to this question were synthesized by the common and shared accounts (Christiana et a;l., 2014; Saldana, 2011) of women leaders across regional and institutional contexts and personal identity characteristics to reflect their experiences. The collective lived experiences of these leaders emphasize the presence and utility of adaptive leadership during global crises.

The authors conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with women in various leadership positions across institutional contexts. Of the 15 women invited to participate in the study, 13 accepted. Selection criteria included those who self-identify as women, were appointed to leadership roles within colleges and universities in the last 18 months, and hold doctorates and faculty appointments in higher education administration or related fields. Participants' roles ranged from full-time faculty with administrative responsibilities in their academic units to senior leadership roles such as provost. A purposeful sampling strategy was employed to engage in dialogue with information-rich participants (Palinkas et al., 2015), relying on the authors' professional networks and organizations to recruit study participants. The sample includes racial and ethnic diversity, as well as diversity across other identity categories where possible. According to self-reported descriptors, the sample included three Latina women, three multiracial women, two Black women, and seven White women. Human Subjects approval for this research was granted by the lead author's home institution.

Data were collected through interviews and field notes, as well as a brief informational survey that collected demographic information and professional experiences. Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes, yielding more than 250 pages of transcribed data. The semi-structured interview protocol was mapped and aligned with prior research and adaptive leadership as the theoretical lens to ensure trustworthiness of findings. The interview protocol included three broad categories: (a) career histories and transitions into leadership roles; (b) leadership experiences and behaviors in times of crisis; and (c) the role of gender and other identity characteristics in leadership during crises. This chapter focuses on participants' leadership experiences and behaviors through the theoretical perspective of adaptive leadership.

Interviews were transcribed and coded to identify emerging themes and patterns, guided by the concept of adaptive leadership. Upon completing initial coding, the authors collaborated multiple times to compare and contrast individual emerging codes, refine the codebook, and derive final themes. Doing so led to evidence of adaptive leadership in participants' perceptions and subsequent behaviors when leading through crises. Data from this study demonstrates how adaptive leadership theory may manifest among women leaders during times of global crisis.

FINDINGS AND APPLICATION: ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

In this section, each of the six tenets of adaptive leadership is summarized, including consideration of the form it may take during crisis, followed by an example of practical application as told through the words of the women leaders who participated in the authors' study.

Enabling the Capacity for Organizational Thriving

Adaptive leadership in steady times is driven by the urge to create new environments. It requires leaders to be strong in their ability to mobilize and make change happen so the organization and its members may thrive. The primary leadership questions embedded within this tenet relate to questions of value, purpose, and process. The ability for the adaptive leader to answer these questions has the potential to generate high morale, positive social and environmental impact, and stakeholder satisfaction (Heifetz et al., 2019). During crises, these high expectations may seem suddenly insurmountable, yet coming from a position of strength is essential for leaders to guide organizational members through challenges. Leadership is not initiated by a desire to create disruption and evolution; it is a mandate to respond to them as they are unfolding. The central questions remain as leaders must provide others with a sense of confidence in value, purpose, and process.

One study participant, Alice, described some of her personal reactions to the global health pandemic, as well as how those reflections empowered her to use her leadership role as a way of supporting others through processes and policies:

I think as COVID was really breaking out and just rocking all of us to our core, immediately as a woman, as a mother, as the person who sort of really organizes our household. …I was thinking, "Oh my gosh, all of this is happening and I am tenured and healthy. We have good paying jobs. We're going to be okay." What about all of the women in the college who do not have a safety net? I thought a lot about the single moms in the college. I thought a lot about what it was like to be pre-tenure and how hard I grinded, just so hard. I thought a lot about what would it be like to be a trans woman and to have such a small community and now, to have any network or ability to physically connect maybe with colleagues around campus, gone. So, it made me immediately sensitive to the fact that our leadership, whoever they are and in every setting possible, need to be willing to think about the context of this year going forward. If we're really serious about retaining and elevating a diverse range of voices and faculty in the academy, then you've got to be ready to think about evaluation differently. You've got to be ready to take some steps. You've got to be ready to hold yourself to account.

Alice's words, like many of the study participants, bring to the forefront that in order to respond to or endure a crisis, institutional leaders should have a presence of mind to think broadly, particularly about the members of the organization and how these members are being affected in real time. This level of thinking enabled Alice and some of the other women leaders in the study to respond in ways that shore up, in this instance, institutional capacity for growth and change.

Building on the Past

Heifetz and colleagues (2009) referred to the evolution that results from adaptive leadership as changing an organization's DNA. Under this tenet, they emphasize change's significance but also that change builds on existing structures that have demonstrated success. Adaptive leaders are not necessarily revolutionaries who abandon all precedent in the name of creating something new. Successful adaptive leaders must identify what to preserve and what to add, subtract, or alter when surveying the historical and current state of their organizations. This tenet is rooted in questions of competencies, strategic orientations, and informed decisions about future directions. During crises, adaptive leaders may have

strong indicators of ways that past approaches either caused crises or failed to prevent crises from occurring. Or, crises whose causes do not stem from the organization may point out structural weaknesses, outdated approaches, and inefficiencies that are clear to stakeholders in new ways. As adaptive leaders guide stakeholders through crises to a stronger future, they will be responsible for complex decisions about what to keep and what to leave behind.

Sally offered how her training and some of the traditional ways of doing things in higher education and student affairs had provided her and others with a foundation for crisis response:

I think I have always been very level-headed and thoughtful. I didn't realize that – I think honestly, part of it is that I was trained in student affairs. This is what we prep for, right? If you work in residence life or if you supervise people, or you do trainings, you learn how to navigate some of this, and you learn how to facilitate thoughtful conversations, so that you're not just jumping and moving without, I don't know, intention. And I think the other part is that my student affairs background has always been in multicultural affairs and social justice and international organizations. Like there's all these connections that kind of led up to prepping for this.

With this example there was not an effective organizational foundation or past for Sally to draw from. However, she did explicitly rely on her past training and work experience, as did study participants, namely Grace and Susan, in order to build the infrastructural foundation necessary for developing leadership strategies for difficult events and conversations now and going forward.

Committing to Experimentation

Committing to experimentation highlights the need to be willing to engage in risk-taking in the name of increasing the odds of success. With limited resources such as time, information, or capital, adaptive leaders must determine how to act quickly and learn as they go. Crises lend themselves to this type of behavior quite easily. They require reallocation of resources and almost certainly involve a sense of urgency in which time and information are in short supply, but solutions must be identified nonetheless. The leadership questions under this tenet are "what if?" The spirit of innovation and a willingness to learn in real time are, of course, less playful in crises; however, they are essential in equipping adaptive leaders to react to the ways in which crises affect organizations and their members, often quickly and without all the desired information or resources.

For example, Lucy shared her enthusiasm for change based on what she had observed in her leadership role:

There's all this negative rhetoric around what's possible for change in higher education. This spring, we totally busted that apart, right? We busted that apart. I mean, we saw that higher education in fact can—perhaps painfully, but can—change on a dime. And if we can change on a dime with the pandemic it would be unethical for us not to question why we're not changing on a dime for anti-racism and anti-Blackness in higher education. So the fact that we had urgency for the COVID pandemic and made it happen, that does show me that that….we now know that it's possible, so let's just bottle that up and serve it up to our faculty, staff and students around anti-racism. I just think there's more opportunity to evolve as an industry in ways that are needed, not ways that are problematic. [The phrase] "new normal" is not a thing. It shouldn't be "new normal." It's something totally different. Let's not call it

new normal. We're going to return to an equitable higher education, right? That's what we're going to return to. Just say it, put it out there. I just feel like there's more that could be done.

With Lucy's example, not only can an openness to and a willingness for change be observed, but there is a letting go of what was and an embrace of evolution, though the outcome remains unclear. This level of adapting will be key for leaders and organizations to grow and transform for whatever is to come.

Depending on Diversity

In the fourth tenet of adaptive leadership, depending on diversity is essential for survival. The collective intelligence of an organization is only as rich as its collective diversity in ways of knowing. Adaptive leaders ensure that their organizations value diverse views, participatory engagement from members, and respect for difference. During times of crisis, it is unlikely that any one person will be able to identify all the problems or all the solutions. A dependence on diversity will allow adaptive leaders to remain mindful of who holds the power within organizations, who is affected by crises and in what ways, and whether there is a disconnect between the two. A commitment to diversity will embed questions of inclusion and voice, outcomes and effects, and authority and decision-making power. Such a commitment helps leaders to pursue all possible perspectives and participants in the work to create the best possible outcomes for as many people as possible in response to crises.

Grace demonstrated her dependence on diversity as an adaptive leader when she reflected on the range of views she must represent and account for in her role, particularly her observations of the personal experiences of some members of her organization that were not well understood by others during the racial justice crises:

For me, I'm able to hear a lot of the concerns of faculty, staff and students being in student affairs. I can't say what I don't know, so if I was in the administration building and not close to student affairs, I couldn't give a different perspective or a different account. …So for me, I definitely try not to lean into my own understanding because my own understanding is rooted in its own set of biases. …Having to share my experience of being pulled up by police right after Sandra Bland died. And, everyone's like, "That happened to you?!" I said, "Yes." "And," I said, "on top of that, this persistent racial trauma that people of color, particularly African-Americans, are experiencing, you don't understand, post-traumatic slave syndrome is a book and yes, it is real. Racial injustice and trauma, this is how it psychologically impacts you, physiologically impacts you, mentally impacts you. We are exhausted. We are tired." And so when I said it, I think it became more tangible and more real because now it's like, "Oh, Grace has experienced this. Oh, Janelle down the street has experienced it. Oh, Byron upstairs experienced it." So, now it's real. Before it was kind of, "Oh, this is happening over in Oregon, this is happening in California.

Calls for diversity can be interpreted as hollow, particularly in seasons of compounded racial unrest. Yet here, Grace, similar to many of the other participants, demonstrated not only the need for but also the utility of diversity. By highlighting how we come to learn through a broad spectrum of experiences and voices, diversity adds immense value, especially during times of crisis when select communities are negatively impacted.

Expecting Loss

The fifth tenet of adaptive leadership acknowledges there will be loss in transformational change. This tenet cautions against defensive reactions to change. It centers not around avoiding loss, but around questions of how to anticipate loss, reactions to it, and strategies for mitigating negative outcomes. In steady times, this can be understood as changes to relationships, titles and responsibilities, individual perceptions and beliefs, or even membership within the organization. During crises, the concept of loss takes on a potentially much more dire meaning. Yet as it relates to adaptive leadership, it remains similar to its meaning during calmer times. Adaptive leaders should anticipate that their approaches to crisis response and leadership will cause losses in relationships, teams, and others' perceptions of them. Further, they must be able to weather the losses as an added stressor as they navigate toward tranquil waters.

Hillary exemplified a commitment to comfort with loss as a result of decisive action in her leadership:

Another way that I've been deliberate is to be unafraid of disruption. In both of these efforts that I help lead, there's a very linear approach to what it means to do business and a very box-checking approach to doing business. But I think that's a function of visions of Whiteness and masculinity and that the desire for disruption, for resistance, is part of what it means to honor Black members and Brown members of my projects right now. And so I'm trying to be supportive of the moments where they resist, where there are needs in the project for disruption. And the only way that that becomes a problem is if other people in leadership roles think differently. And there definitely have been a couple of those moments and we're still actually kind of figuring out the fallout from those. But yeah, just comfort with disruption, comfort with resistance, in practice as opposed to in principle, is something that I'm trying to be deliberate about.

This is valuable insight because it demonstrates the potential for loss, which often remains unspoken. It is conceivable that other project leaders in this example would have stepped away, publicly disagreed with her, removed or punished those who were disruptive, or that the team would have lost some stability. Yet Hillary was comfortable with the risk of loss because, in this instance, she valued the members' voices more than consistency or the status quo.

Investing Time

The sixth and final tenet serves as a reminder that incremental efforts lead to big change over time, and that changing organizational cultures and processes is slow and requires persistence. The obvious question embedded within this tenet is "when?" but perhaps the more central question is "why?". Adaptive leaders must demonstrate tenacity and commitment in the process of building a stronger future for their organization. Thus, they must be clear on the driving force that will keep them engaged in the work when it becomes particularly difficult. For adaptive leaders during times of crisis, the investment of time may be more concentrated and the resource of time may take on a different meaning. Significant bursts of time on the job may be required within periods of hours, days, and weeks as well as months and years as the work of moving through and beyond crisis takes place.

Reina explained she was considering time, specifically how she wanted to change student experiences through her leadership by moving away from established practices:

So, just realizing – and even with this whole crisis, it's a challenge. It's like a daily challenge sometimes. To kind of let things be. There's a lot of things you can't control and if you get too caught up in it, it can be very destructive to yourself. And so, it's helped me to focus on what I can control and not being tied to the outcome, but really trying to do what I can do and let others play their role. And so, it's just – yeah, honestly those are the strategies that have helped me. …I sort of operate with [the understanding that] a lot of these students don't need me to tell them certain things. So, then I really try to be intentional about what I think they do need me to tell them. Not to be like the know-it-all but they were saying all these things that are just wasting people's time. I realize people's time is a lot more precious time now. A lot of people are trying to do school or trying to do work. Kids are at home, doing homeschooling. There's just no network of support that they used to have. And so I really want to be aware of people's time. So, I'm doing things in a different way.

Reina not only makes clear that time is precious in a crisis, but there is a cognizance around time as a resource that one must strategize for both self and others, in order to endure change. While having to lead differently during these uncertain times is obvious, the complexity of time also became apparent. With so many moving pieces, one has to prioritize and protect time. This then strikes a balance between *when* and *why,* mindful that the former is not always in one's control in a crisis.

DISCUSSION

The global pandemic and social injustice crises have shined a light on effective leadership as fundamental to weathering short- and long-term impacts. Given the high visibility and immediacy of these crises, questions and comparisons arise as scholars, leaders, and stakeholders consider if and how gender influences leader behaviors and outcomes in times of crisis. Based on media accounts, women are solidifying their position as leaders capable of advancing their countries and organizations through the current crises and associated challenges, and gaining the respect and trust of their community members in the process.

Higher education is not immune to the effects of these crises, yet limited research has explored the role of women leaders in times of crises. This study contributes to research and practice about women leaders in higher education in two meaningful ways. First, the authors sought to understand the approaches employed by women leaders during challenging times across a variety of roles that span programmatic, departmental, and organizational levels. Second, the authors applied adaptive leadership as a conceptual framework to shed light on women leaders' views of and approaches to leadership during times of crisis. Next, the authors expand on these contributions and offer lessons learned from these women leaders in higher education.

Leadership Approaches

The women leader study participants' accounts offer implications for future research and practice. First, the women leaders were cognizant of who was affected by the combination of the global crises and their institution's policies, practices, and expectations. Specifically, participants focused on who was most impacted by the crises (e.g., colleagues and students of color), and how they were impacted (e.g., productivity, personal finances). Women leaders highlighted the need to evaluate individuals' experiences, taking the necessary action to revise existing policies and structures that were in disservice to

all members of their academic community, especially those most at risk (e.g., pre-tenure and clinical faculty, underrepresented faculty and students). This level of cognizance is underexplored in research that explores gender and leadership broadly and within the academy.

Second, these leaders demonstrated that diversity and equity are foundational to their approaches to enacting meaningful leader behaviors during times of crisis in ways that move beyond rhetoric or temporary attention. In short, they capitalized on crises to enact necessary and overdue changes. They communicated an awareness that diversity that goes beyond visible differences to account for non-visible traits, personality, values (Harrison et al., 2002), and experiences was paramount to their success as leaders, as well as to institutional success. An essential component of these leaders' behaviors was their commitment to unabashedly asking justice-oriented questions while maintaining a critical lens when working to understand who is disproportionately affected by crises. This led these women leaders to re-evaluate institutional priorities and engage in a re-articulation of values while bringing others along in their efforts to engage in this work, in line with calls to think more broadly about disproportionately impacted populations across the academy (Fain, 2020).

Third, the attention to the effects of crises on organizational members highlighted the potential for misalignment between individual and organizational values, thus prompting the need for leaders to take action in the face of resistance. Participants were inquisitive about the possibility that a lack of change related to social justice may be an unwillingness rather than an inability. A few participants recognized that change can happen, and fairly quickly, when the community is impacted, as evidenced by shifts to online learning prompted by COVID-19. Yet, some observed hesitation and a need to be convinced from colleagues when the request for change related to race, ethnicity, or other disenfranchised or dispropor-tionately affected groups. Adaptations to approaches accounted for not only who is affected, but also who is likely to push back. This research builds on prior accounts of resistance to evolving beyond ideal worker norms, acknowledging gendered work environments, and employment policies and practices that account for non-majority individuals (Croom & Patton, 2011; Hart, 2016; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). It offers approaches to pushing past observed resistance and enacting change.

Lastly, the authors found that study participants focused on the power of relationships and the need for capacity-building. These women found utility in working cross-sectionally across campuses, roles, divisions, departments, and programs to maximize efforts. Declarative in their leadership roles, they engaged others to take action around what needed to change, which diversified and fortified partnerships and positioned them to initiate change at the required levels. These relationships afforded participants a recognition that the health of organizational members is acutely important, an always desired outcome. These women leaders recognized and appreciated that without the health of organizational members, which is challenged given the current moment, needed change would not happen.

Adaptive Leadership as a Framework

The six tenets of adaptive leadership were demonstrated in the approaches to leadership exhibited by women leaders in higher education during times of crisis. While myriad types of leadership could serve in times of crisis management and uncertainty, such as transformational, transactional, and servant leadership, findings highlight the utility of adaptive leadership. The six tenets provide a framework that informs the types of questions leaders can ask to ensure stakeholders' voices are heard and views are represented in crisis response and organizational change processes.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

These women leaders' efforts corroborate prior research highlighting the importance of skills and competencies, including knowledge (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Holzweiss et al., 2019; Seemiller, 2016; Spendlove, 2007), consideration of the contexts (Tarker, 2019), and a network of supporters (Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; Fowler, 2019; Johnson, 2020). Participants demonstrated a reliance on differing viewpoints working toward a collective goal, and an ability and willingness to adapt quickly as new knowledge surfaces. With these things in mind, as gender and leadership considerations remain a focus in the academy, future research should continue this line of inquiry, further exploring the ways in which adaptive leadership facilitates change and effective crisis response, perhaps in comparison to other leadership styles or nested within disciplinary and institution types. Here, adaptive behavior highlights what needs to be changed, but perhaps comparatively exploring how this particular style fairs in promoting organizational change versus more commonly referenced styles (e.g., transformational or transactional) could yield an understanding of women's success in leading through times of crisis by generating lasting and effective outcomes.

The use of adaptive leadership during times of crisis highlights what should be of value, who should be of value, and how value is illustrated. Thus, questions of value, purpose, and process should be at the forefront of leading unexpectedly new environments. There is also room to examine the values of higher education that influence decision-making. While not all participants used all six tenets all of the time, their accounts provide examples of how the tenets might inform effective strategies for leading during crises, with uncertainty in new challenges and contexts, and toward a new vision of the academy that promotes success and thriving for all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Recent headlines have highlighted the success of women leaders in times of crisis, often attributed to their ability to adapt. Higher education has also been plagued by crises, exacerbating demands for change; however, it is unclear how women leaders in higher education administration have fared in times of crisis, whether these leaders take an adaptive approach, and if so, how it shaped their leader behaviors. The purpose of this chapter was to review the tenets of adaptive leadership theory and present evidence of how women in higher education leadership roles demonstrate the tenets of that framework in their approaches to leading during global crises. The findings of this phenomenological study elevate women as effective leaders in times of crisis and yield a deeper understanding of how to lead during crises, which may be particularly useful for leaders who are navigating new roles or who have little prior experience with leading through crisis. Although a chapter on the subject would not have voided the challenges experienced by the women leaders featured in this study, it is the authors' aim that these leaders' generosity in sharing their growth and wisdom may serve as a resource for those who take on the mantle of leadership during difficult times.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Adaptive Leadership: A leadership style that takes into consideration the ever-evolving landscape and adopts flexible strategies to mitigate negative outcomes.

Colleges and Universities: Postsecondary institutions representing a range of types, sizes, and missions.

Crisis: A negative event that has the potential to jeopardize the stability of an organization.

Higher Education Administration: A field of research and professional practice; an organizing concept to acknowledge employees responsible for the day-to-day functioning of a college, university, or system.

Leadership: The ability to influence people and organizations.

Women Leaders: Those individuals who identify as a woman and are in a position to lead an organization.