

THE ROLE OF ETHNIC CULTURE IN WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AMONG ARMENIAN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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In contemporary society women leaders in education have struggled to balance work and family. During the last three decades, shifting demographics, globalization, affirmative action, and the increase in two-income families and single-parent families have resulted in greater participation of women in the economic sphere.¹ Women in 2008 comprised 46.8% of the total labor force; 74% of employed women worked in full-time jobs, while 26% worked on a part-time basis in the United States.² Integrating work and family life and maintaining a sense of balance challenge many women professionals in senior level leadership positions.³

In the 1960s, watershed events in the United States came to have a significant bearing on women's rights in the workplace, their status in society at large, and their opportunities to assume leadership roles. One of the main events was the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Title II, which banned sex discrimination in the workplace, leading to the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which was charged with the enforcing of the Civil Rights Act, Title II. Another significant event was the start of the women's movement and the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966.⁴

A half-century after the women's movement began, and despite the growing trend of women's achievements in higher education, the progression of women into executive positions continues to be slow. Among Fortune 500 companies only 16% of corporate officers, 14% of board members, 5% of top earners, and 1% of CEOs are women.⁵ In education specifically, women have attained leadership positions but still remain underrepresented.⁶ Most women are in the middle management ranks, ready for advancement to top-level positions.

A number of challenges that women encounter on their path to leadership have been identified. Traditionally researchers have explored the barriers that women in educational administration had to overcome to achieve professional success. They have addressed obstacles such as societal expectations,⁷ gender stereotyping and discrimination,⁸ work-family balance,⁹ and lack of a support-network.¹⁰ Despite these challenges many women have managed to maintain their family life while advancing in their careers.¹¹

Similarly, studies on women in leadership suggest that women find themselves in conflict due to the demands of their careers as leaders in education and societal expectations of them as homemakers.¹² Societal attitudes toward appropriate gender roles discourage women from seeking leadership positions. Traditional gender roles, such as taking care of children and family, pose a major barrier to women's advancement.¹³ The role of women in the family and familial demands often preclude them from devoting essential time and energy to achieve milestones that are central to promotion.¹⁴ In addition, different socialization patterns for women and men indicate that women are less likely to be encouraged to move up the career ladder to assume leadership positions because femininity and leadership are not viewed as compatible.¹⁵

Furthermore, women's access to leadership positions has been hindered by gender stereotyping. While the role of leadership applies to both sexes, gendered differentiation of leadership has focused on qualities and styles of leadership that vary between men and women. Stereotypes of how women lead have made it difficult for women to access or even stay in leadership positions.¹⁶ Sex-role stereotyping implies that women cannot assume senior-level leadership positions because of their ineffective feminine leadership style -- democratic, participative, and collaborative -- whereas men have a more commanding and authoritarian style that is more compatible with the masculine image of leadership.¹⁷ This gender stereotyping leads to prejudice against female leaders,¹⁸ which can significantly alter the perception and evaluation of female leaders as well as affect the women themselves.¹⁹ These conditions increase women's stress level and dissatisfaction, and make balancing work-family more difficult.

For women leaders, the constant struggle to balance their work and family responsibilities can be overwhelming, causing dissatisfaction when there is no support system in the professional, personal, and family domains. Minority ethnicity adds another layer of complexity to the gendered understandings of leadership that women must negotiate to access positions of power.²⁰ Further, socio-cultural effects on leadership suggest that men and women in educational leadership positions will be influenced by both organizational and socio-cultural understandings that differ by ethnicity and gender.²¹ Ethnic group culture within society at large provides the context in which socialization of the individual occurs, where norms of acceptable behavior, gender roles, and the values for shared belief systems are developed.²²

The above explanation applies to the Armenian ethnic community from which the participants of this study are derived. Armenia is a patriarchal society in which males are recognized as the heads of families. In traditional Armenian society patriarchal stereotypes divide social life into two parts. Society assigns public life to men and the private sphere of family to women. In the women's

scale of values, family and children should take priority. Hence, society expects women to choose the family over their career when confronted with a choice.²³ When Armenian immigrants settled in the United States the role of each member was structured by the Old Country models.²⁴ Despite this fact, some Armenian women have succeeded in attaining senior-level leadership positions in higher education and achieving a work-family balance. This study focuses on three such successful Armenian women.

During the 19th-century Armenian Renaissance, a number of women journalists and feminist writers, such as Marie Beylerian and Serpuhi Vahanian Dussap advanced the notions of women's education, participation in social-public life, and engagement in gainful occupations. At the same time, they reminded their readership that motherhood was a sacred calling and that responsibilities at home should not be neglected. In other words, a balance had to be maintained between family and outside undertakings. These ideas gained acceptance among Armenians in the 20th century, as families gradually became supportive of their women seeking careers and aspiring to leadership positions in various spheres including higher education.²⁵

In the United States, the family was the central unit of social organization and the most useful adaptive institution for immigrant Armenians. When the Armenian family resettled in the United States, the role of each member was structured by the Old Country patriarchal model. While the role of women in this model was confined to the private sphere of the family and the culture did not approve of women working outside the home, economic necessity in the United States compelled women to work in factories and stores. Moreover, women assumed vital community duties, primarily in the church, charities and education. They even formed associations of their own. Thus, women's communal responsibilities grew significantly in the New World.²⁶

This study identifies the experiences of three Armenian women in top-level leadership positions in higher education in the United States, and how their ethnic culture has played a pivotal supportive role in finding a work-family balance.

The study focuses on the following four research questions in an attempt to provide answers to the stated purpose of the study:

1. What challenges do Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education face in balancing work-family life?
2. What support systems do Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education perceive to be helpful in achieving a work-family balance?
3. What strategies do Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education employ to balance their work-family life?

4. What role does ethnic culture, as a support system, play in achieving a work-family balance for Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education?

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were three Armenian women in leadership positions in higher education in the United States. Participant A is an immigrant from Beirut, Lebanon. Her parents were survivors of the Armenian Genocide who had found safe haven in Beirut. Participant A was Director of the School of Nursing and Full Professor at one of the comprehensive universities in the western United States with an enrollment of around 33,500 students. She was the curriculum consultant for the World Health Organization (WHO) and for the Ministry of Health of the countries of Oman and Armenia.

Participant A received her Nursing Diploma from an American University in the Middle East, where she was one of the first graduates of the program. She then obtained a B.S. and M.S. in Nursing and a Ph.D. in Education from the California State University system. Her experience in the field of education spanned four decades. She is married and has two daughters.

Participant B is the daughter of an Armenian immigrant father and a second-generation, US-born Armenian-American mother. At the time of this study, she was Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at one of the four-year colleges on the East Coast with an enrollment of 12,000 students. Participant B had been Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at various universities on the East Coast. She pursued her undergraduate and graduate education in the University of California system, earning a Ph.D. in English literature. She is married and has two daughters.

Participant C is the daughter of first-generation, US-born immigrants whose parents were survivors of the Armenian Genocide. She was Chair of the Academic Senate, Professor and Vice-Chair of Industrial Relations at one of the comprehensive universities in the western United States with an enrollment of about 40,000 students. She earned a B.S. in Engineering from the University of California system and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from the California Institute of Technology. She is married and has a son and a daughter.

This research was conducted through three in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and a second interview of a person referred to by each participant. In addition, it was based on a weekly activity log, as well as written documents, such as the institutions' job descriptions, workplace policies from their Human Resource Handbook, and the participants' resumes.

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION

Research Question One: Challenges

The first research question asked was, "What challenges do Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education face in balancing work and family life?" To answer this question, the themes discussed and analyzed were: the demands of dual roles, gender stereotypes, making choices about professional compromises and personal sacrifices.

Demands of dual roles

All three participants indicated that they were fully aware of the demands of their roles and responsibilities both in their leadership positions and as wives and mothers. One of their challenges was long work hours as required by their dual roles. Their work hours on the average ranged between nine and eleven hours per day. Additional hours were spent at home after work on household chores and taking care of the family. The participants considered a typical day at work to be very busy with many meetings and dealing with problems that required immediate attention. After regular working hours they spent an additional two hours on responding to emails and other paper work. Participant B noted, "Work doesn't end. I am responsible for the whole enterprise as Senior Vice-President of Academic Affairs. There are always issues and strategies or politics to think about." Even though the participants attempted to prevent overload, sometimes they did not succeed as explained in Participant C's description of a typical day:

I usually get to work around 8:00, and I do a lot. With the [Academic] Senate [Chair] position during the academic year, I'd have two to three hours of meetings during the day. I try not to have so many hours of meetings, but my staff has the calendar. I tell them not to schedule so many meetings. At least give me breaks between the meetings, but sometimes, it is unavoidable.

As for family responsibilities, all three participants indicated that they were involved in household activities in addition to taking care of their children and helping them with their homework, particularly when the children were young. This was evident in Participant B's activity log: "This was a fairly easy week with regard to work-life balance. The primary challenge focused on ensuring the necessary household chores were completed, from preparing meals to grocery shopping to doing the laundry." For all three participants the demands of child-rearing responsibility were more significant when their children were young. Participant C reflected in her activity log:

The fact that my children are mostly grown makes my work-life balancing much easier. When my children were small, I was constantly breaking up my work day to accommodate their needs (transportation to and from school, helping them with homework, dealing with health issues, etc.). The children needed assistance in their daily routine and homework.

Even though the participants' spouses helped them with the household work, the main responsibility of taking care of the children fell on the women as Participant A noted: "It is a very good partnership with my husband, but our roles are very clear. Major decisions on the house we make it together. Decorating is my thing, anything in the garage and the repairs are his. Anything related to food and child rearing is mine."

The participants thus also conformed to the societal norms ascribed to women and their child-rearing responsibility as evidenced in participant B's response:

My story is not any different from women who have full-time positions of responsibility. As our kids were growing up, of course my husband and I shared the responsibility, but I think the responsibility falls a little bit more on the woman. But I felt that as the kids were growing up, my responsibility was to spend time with them. They were in school most of the time during the day, so the difficulty was only in the afternoons. So, I really invested my evenings and the weekends with them.

The participants, therefore, fully recognized their roles as professionals and homemakers, and accordingly maintained the borders between the two domains.

Gender stereotypes

Another major challenge stemmed from gender stereotypes. The participants indicated cultural challenges to some degree and how they overcame those challenges. Participant A told a story that exemplified societal expectations in gender roles and how it would have impacted her future career negatively had it not been for her mother. Her mother's interference as a mediator in convincing the father to transcend the restrictions imposed by societal norms and gender stereotypes was evident in her response. She explained how her father wanted her to stay home, cook, sew, and be a good housewife. Her mother, however, drawing from their ethnic cultural values, convinced the father to allow their children to continue their education, equating education with wealth. The mother told her husband, "You don't have any wealth to pass on to your children, let them get their education." Participant A affirmed the value of education metaphorically with the following commonly-cited simile, "We have a saying, 'A profession is like a gold bracelet that you can always rely on.'"

Another example of gender stereotyping was evident in participant C's description of her experience in the male-dominated engineering department: "I would say that there aren't many women in our faculty in engineering, probably ten out of 150 faculty, so it is not a large percentage...there are two of us [women] for twenty-seven years... So, I would say there are cultural challenges for sure..." She explained them as follows: "The majority of the colleagues came from different cultures, and they brought with them their own

perspective about women where women were in lower life form." Even so, the participant's longevity in the department and the respect that she had earned based on her capabilities and achievements allowed her to disregard the gender stereotyping that existed in her department.

Leadership style was another form of gender stereotyping. The stereotype that women's leadership style is incompatible with effective leadership was found to be a challenge, particularly in higher leadership positions as experienced by the participants. For example, the paradox of choosing a leadership style was expressed by participant B: "When you move to higher positions there is really a challenge. If we are firm in our thinking and we are tough-minded, we are considered as being tough in a negative way. If we are gentle and have manners, we are considered of being weak." This finding is consistent with a study that indicated that the styles that successful leaders set tend to be masculine.²⁷ If women emulate a masculine leadership style, their male subordinates will resent them. If women adopt a stereotypically warm and nurturing style, they will be embraced for their warmth, but not respected. Because participant B was well-versed in this topic and she herself had given talks about it, she understood these misperceptions and applied a transformational leadership style through building relationships and consensus to succeed.

Making choices: Professional compromise/personal sacrifice

Professional compromises and personal sacrifices were found to be necessary in balancing work and family. The participants made decisions at different stages of their career path, considering the impact of those choices on the whole family rather than focusing only on themselves. They made professional compromises that included accepting positions that met their families' needs and declining better positions that required relocation.

Participant C gave an example of her trade-off even after her children were grown up by declining a position because of her filial responsibility:

I've been offered leadership positions, dean's position in other universities, and I've said I am not interested. So right now, we have a good balance to our family. Even though our kids are much older now, but my parents are elderly, and I really need to be not too far from them. My mother-in-law lives with us and so moving outside of Los Angeles would be impossible.

The same participant's activity log described how she had helped her parents with their computer problems, which took extra time: "I chose to make extra time available to my parents to help them at their home...this took me away from some work projects, but it wasn't a big deal." She perceived this as a positive experience related to work-life balance and commented in her log: "I do feel blessed to still have both parents in my life, and my mother-in-law, so it's always encouraging to me to be able to help." Traditional Armenian

society is quite similar to collectivist society. It is normal to live under one roof as an extended family and support each other.²⁸ Participant C's trade-off mentioned above exemplifies traditional Armenian society.

Participant B, while raising her children, chose to moderate her goals when she took an administrative role:

I wanted very much to have my scholarly work, but I can't really have much time to spend on it. That was a choice I really had to make when I went to an administrative role and also when I was raising my children. There may be a time when my kids are both grown up, and there will be some time to pick that [academics] up again.

The participants' activity logs indicated that the items that were rated high on the priority list were those dilemmas that had the largest impact, either on the participants' career or on their children. The participants also spoke about their limited personal time such as for relaxation, exercise, gardening, reading, and going to the movies. When they prioritized their daily schedules, their personal needs were last, as evidenced in Participant B's comment in the activity log: "I would note that what is lost is my personal time to relax and recharge my batteries." The participants gave up their scholarship and free time to maintain their work-family balance. Even though they talked and wrote about the sacrifices they made, all participants had passionate commitments to work and family and to making things work.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Question One

The demands of the participants' dual roles and responsibilities, gender stereotypes, professional compromises, and personal sacrifices were found to be the main challenges for their work-family balance. The participants identified with their roles as mothers and wives. They held the major share in domestic responsibilities in addition to taking care of their children. Even though there were some modifications in the social roles, where men also shared some responsibilities at home, the participants conformed to the societal norms ascribed to women and their child-rearing responsibility.

The participants faced challenges that emanated from societal expectations of gender roles at various stages of their life. Each of the participants experienced the impact of gender stereotypes in a different way, be it in their education paths, or in their roles as educational leaders. The participants chose to make sacrifices and compromises by giving up their free time and other opportunities of leadership. They worked hard to compensate for the high demands of their leadership positions to balance their work and family. As participant A indicated: "Probably I would have been the president of a university by now or a provost some place, and you say 'You know what? Family is more important, and I don't regret it.'"

The Armenian women made conscious choices that aligned with their goals, ambitions, values and socialization. They did not express any regrets for the

choices that they had made in balancing work and family as evident in Participant A's response: "There is always a price for everything. Nothing comes free. Everything comes with a cost. That is a choice I made, and I am not sorry for it."

The participants considered the impact of the decisions that they had made, not only on themselves but also on the entire family, because at the end of the day they thought the health and the happiness of the family would have an impact on their own job and personal satisfaction.

Research Question Two: Support

The second research question asked was, "What support systems do Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education perceive to be helpful in achieving a work-family balance?"

Family support

The participants' family background and upbringing were investigated to explore the parental and family influence on the participants' ability to balance work and family. It was evident from the participants' descriptions that their parents had a positive influence on their education and career choices, and played a significant role in their success in the work-family balance. Furthermore, all three participants indicated that their parents, especially mothers and/or grandmothers, were their role models who became a source of inspiration for them. Participant A recounted her story:

Being an Armenian, and I am a descendent of parents who were escapees of a genocide, they had never owned a house. We were five kids. The message we all got from childhood is that all wealth can be taken away from you, but what you have in your head as far as education [is concerned], they have to kill you to get that away from you. So, Mom and Dad put all their efforts to ensure that all of their five kids finished high school, and they paid the first semester of college, and then they said, "Henceforth you find it [tuition]". At that point we took the ball and ran with it. That has been the foundation for my education.

Family support continued unabated throughout the participants' career path. All three participants indicated that they had family/husband support that helped them to achieve a balance between work and family. The person to whom Participant A referred me concurred with the support of A's family and said, "She has a closely-knit family around her. Her extended family is very supportive of her role as a director. That's where I think she finds comfort." Similarly, Participant B indicated: "We had family who helped out. There was my sister-in-law and my cousin who helped us out." Participant B's energy was likewise attributed to her family support as Participant B's referral asserted: "She has an extraordinary amount of energy...whatever it takes to have that energy is derived from the support that she gets from her family and from her personal feelings of satisfaction, and that gives the fortitude to go on." In turn,

Participant C stated: "My mother-in-law lives with us since three years. So, she wants to feel useful and helpful and will cook Armenian dishes. So, when I come home everything is made."

The participants' primary personal support was the husband, referred to by Participant B as "built-in support." She explained: "If I come home with a problem or issues, he is really interested about it. These are problems that he understands, and he really has insights into them. He becomes a part of the analytic process." Participant C also elaborated: "My husband has been extremely supportive. I don't think I could have been doing this without his love, support, and encouragement." She then specified: "He [my husband] has always picked up the slack and made dinner, that sort of things that traditionally a woman does." These findings about family/husband backing are consistent with the literature review which indicated that those who belong to family-oriented cultures are most likely to receive support from their extended family.²⁹

Professional support

In their careers, the participants first held entry-level faculty positions while their children were still young, which gave the participants more flexibility to do work from home and be with their children at the same time. When they assumed senior-level leadership positions in later years, they had more control over their work schedule and fewer people above them to deal with, making it possible for them to handle demands more easily. As Participant B indicated in her activity log, "I had some flexibility over my schedule so I could accommodate the doctor's office hours and the post office hours. If my schedule had been fixed, this would have been a more serious challenge."

Professors played a crucial supportive role as well. Participant C shared her experience in receiving support and encouragement from her professors from the outset: "There were professors who were very encouraging when I was a young girl," specifying, "Years ago, when I was a student, my advisor was very influential. He encouraged me and gave me a lot of opportunities for teaching and research and getting my position here." And as she ascended the leadership ladder later on, her colleagues in the highest echelons continued to support and guide her: "There are people who have previously been [faculty] senate chair...who have given me advice [after my assuming that position], and that has been helpful."

In fact, all three participants have had mentors and advisors who played influential roles in their careers. The Schmidt and Wolfe study defined mentors as colleagues and supervisors who actively provide guidance, support, and opportunities for their protégés.³⁰ In this context, Participant B indicated that she had been fortunate to have had mentors and patient advisors along the way who were very supportive when she assumed administrative roles. She stated,

"We have a friend who was provost when I was dean, and we became good friends. He used to support me and ask me mentoring questions. What would you do in this situation? Here is a problem, how would you solve it?"

Institutional policies and resources

Besides husbands, extended family and professional support, university policies and resources benefited the participants. The participants benefited from the university's leaves of absence such as the Childbearing-Leave, Parental-Leave, and Family and Medical Leave policies. For example, Participant C managed to get a year off when she had her first child. She explained: "When our son was born, I basically took the whole academic year off. In the spring before he was born, I took double load so that I didn't have to teach when he was born." Such policies, therefore, provided flexibility that enabled the participants to spend adequate time for marital-familial-personal needs, thereby eliminating any strains that might upset the balance between work and family.

The participants similarly benefited from the resources available to them. For example, Participant C sent her children to a university-run preschool. When her children got older, she also hired a university student to be their after-school sitter, to pick them up from school, give them a snack, and get them started with their homework until she or her husband came home. Participant C believed that this situation was beneficial for her children in yet another way: the university student turned out to be a great role model in the academic milieu besides their parents for the children to emulate. Participant B, in turn, spoke of her positive view regarding child care: "I believe that child care is good for the kids if you find the right place. We were fortunate to have lab schools attached to our doorway in the university, so our kids went there." Thus, this resource further enhanced the children's social and cognitive development while the parents were engaged in their own work.

Community involvement

Community involvement returned dividends in terms of building an additional support system. Rendering voluntary service to various organizations such as churches, sports teams, and health facilities enabled the participants to establish networks that proved beneficial. For example, Participant A assisted a local hospital with its research plan. By doing so, she earned the local community's admiration, trust and respect so that when she needed help later on, the community responded positively: she was able to raise \$ 2.2 million towards a new building for her university's nursing program. Similarly, Participant B coached her daughters' basketball team. This hands-on engagement opened doors to new acquaintances, who in turn volunteered to carpool Participant B's children to and from various functions whenever

needed. In short, establishing networks in the community through active participation supported the participants in their work and family needs.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Question Two

The participants had personal and professional support that helped them to balance work and family. The participants' upbringing and the parental influence on their aspiration for high achievement were evident among them. Their parents had a positive influence on their educational career choices. The primary source of the participants' personal support was their family, predominantly the husband, without whose support balancing work and family would have been impossible as confirmed by all three participants. Similarly, they alluded to their mothers/and or grandmothers as their role models. The participants also received professional support along their career path of leadership that helped them achieve a work-family balance. They received support and encouragement from their professors, advisors, mentors and colleagues. They benefited from the policies and resources of the institutions that they worked at, in regard to child-care facilities and leaves of absence. They established partnerships with the community, which supported them in their fund-raising endeavors and dealing with politics, both of which are important aspects in higher education leadership.

Research Question Three: Strategies

The third research question asked was: "What strategies do Armenian women in higher education leadership positions employ to balance work and family?" To answer this question, it is important to understand the participants' definitions of work-family balance. The participants interpreted work-family balance as being able to define work and family from their own perspective, ensuring progress of work to the best of one's ability, and having family satisfaction. The participants indicated that they lived their own definition of work-family balance. In this context, the major themes identified as strategies employed by the participants are: applying democratic and participatory leadership; communicating effectively with family members; managing time; putting things into perspective; planning and sharing plans; making a conscious effort to learn from others' experiences; integrating roles to balance work and family.

Applying democratic and participatory leadership

Practicing democratic and participatory leadership was a strategy that facilitated teamwork and built mutual trust and respect between the participants and their colleagues. This was evident in the participants' as well as their colleagues' responses. Participant C, for instance, noted, "I reach out to the staff and chat with them; it always makes it a friendly environment." Similarly, participant B's referral noted: "Participant B is a fabulous leader because

primarily she can help everyone see where we're going together in this mission and everyone really appreciates that." Another colleague, referring to participant A, stated: "She is open to suggestions, so she is not contained in a box. If we suggest something, she provides the rationale for the decision as to why she has made the decision. So, she takes our input into thought." A good rapport was thus established between the participants and their colleagues, which was attributed to a participatory leadership approach. In other words, making colleagues feel valued through sharing information, building consensus, taking personal sensitivities into account, and demonstrating a nurturing attitude, all helped the participants to accomplish their goals. This finding is supported by literature that indicates that women portray a more participatory leadership approach, share power and information, and are more democratic, more sensitive, and more nurturing than men.³¹

Communicating openly with family members

Communicating effectively with family members was another strategy that helped the latter to understand the demands of the participants' dual roles at work and at home. For example, discussing work-home related dilemmas with husbands and children made them grasp the situation more readily, which diffused possible tensions. Participant B's activity log reflected on this: "I explained the conflict to my daughter. Fortunately, she understood, found the solution perfectly workable, and all was well." Participant C concurred: "The kids have been flexible, and they understood, and that has been helpful." Participant B's cumulative reflections further elucidated: "It takes constant communication with those around you...both at home and at work and an ability to adjust on the spot."

Another related factor that eased the process of work-family balance was that the participants followed an open-telephone policy with members of their families. In other words, the participants made it amply clear to their children, for example, that they could call their mothers at any time during the day to share information, concerns, or matters of mutual interest. Referral B stated in regards to Participant B:

She always has her cell phone on, and her husband and her children have access to her. She never misses a beep when it comes to that. If she has to pause another conversation, she would let them know that that is important to her.

By the same token, the husbands, who may not have had high professional positions compared with those of their wives, were reassured by the participants that spouse and family came first in their lives. In sum, maintaining open channels of communication and discussing any matters pertaining to family proved effective strategies.

Managing time

The participants also spoke of the importance of time management as a critical element in balancing work and family. They were aware of the limited time that they had to fulfill the demands of their dual roles, so prioritizing was one strategy they used as evidenced in Participant B's response:

There is so much we can do. We have to prioritize what really has to be done now. But it will all get done at some point, but know how to organize it. I think that is the key, not to be hit by all the things at once.

Making things right from the outset by taking things more slowly to prepare the grounds for the decision, or even changing course if deemed necessary, were additional strategies for time management, as explained by Participant B:

One of the things you learn is that you have limited hours during the day. The last thing I want to do is cleaning up after a mistake, and that is easy to happen. So I work very hard in thinking about strategies to make things right. Sometimes that means making it slower, because I want to make sure that the ground is prepared and people to be engaged. Sometimes it means to go on into the directions that are slightly different than when you start. I think I am pretty successful with that part of it because of my politics.

Paying attention to details, being organized, looking critically and logically at problems were contributors to time management as evidenced by Participant C's husband's statement: "Preparation is probably the key to her success. She spends a lot of time thinking about things and writes down her thoughts and makes lists of things she needs to do, very intensely organized. She does have the memory to deal with details."

Putting things into perspective

Putting things into perspective constituted another strategy. For example, Participant C was able to handle crises because she put things in perspective as evident in her statement: "I think putting things in perspective and realizing that if negative things happen at work and if political things that occur, they may be stressful but may not be catastrophic." Similarly, Participant B put things in perspective and dealt with difficult and stressful situations that occurred as a result of overloads at home and at work simultaneously: "Everybody was crazy. It was a stressful time. We just had to step back for a moment and remember that what we were doing, it is good and just get perspective. I think that is the key."

Planning and sharing plans

Planning and sharing that plan with those who would be impacted by it were a useful strategy employed. Participant A explained, "Planning is a major thing. I put things not only on my calendar, but I put the same thing on my family calendar, where I'm going to be when, so he [husband] knows. He does not like to be surprised." The same participant also planned ahead to make sure that

home-made food was available for the family during her travels. She gave a detailed description of her cooking. She called herself the “queen of the kitchen” and explained how she cooked for the number of days that she was gone. She said, “I make ten lunches and freeze them and ten dinners to go with the menu. That’s how it has been. Other than that, he [husband] knows how to microwave them.”

Making a conscious effort to learn from others’ experiences

Endeavoring to observe and learn from others’ experiences in terms of domestic, child-rearing issues, and making professional choices was an additional beneficial strategy. For example, realizing that things would not be perfect and that she would not be able to figure it all out by herself in regards to child care, Participant C asked other women’s advice and stated: “I didn’t know a lot of mothers who were working at jobs like mine. The ones that I did know, I’d sometimes ask how they juggled things...they would give tips, babysitters, that sort of things.” As for making choices in career advancement and having families and children, the participants observed women who chose to stay home, others who postponed having children, or still others who chose not to have families at all. Participant B described how she had benefited from other women who had the same professional training and experiences and adopted what worked for herself. She stated:

I think you develop them over time. One of the things I’ve done throughout my life is to watch how other people have done, and what might I have done differently, if I had to do it. I watch people all along the way and I have been doing that. I watched women who have made a choice to stay at home. They may have had professional training and experiences, but they made a choice to give that up at least for some time. I’ve watched women who have not been fortunate to have a choice or have made a choice not to have a family to be successful and everything in between. So, I think you evolve your skills based on seeing what other people do, see what works for you.

In the final analysis, the pros and cons of staying home altogether or sacrificing personal life in terms of not having children or married life were all taken into consideration by the participants. And as they forged ahead to assume senior leadership positions, they decided to have children, be good wives and mothers, and pursue their professional ambitions, all along maintaining a work-family balance.

Integrating roles to balance work and family

Making the dual roles, that is, at work and at home, mutually beneficial was yet another strategy adopted. All interview responses gathered from the participants and the secondary interviews pointed to the positive impact their leadership roles had on their family roles. The participants took charge at home the way they did at work. They became role models for their children. They

exemplified hard work and commitment to their responsibilities, and gave serious consideration to their family. Participant B verified, "I have two daughters, and I'd like to think that it has been good modeling for them. I always think about what I do, and how does that impact them. I think I am not around as much as I would like to be around, but I am around and that does make an impact." Referral B concurred: "Actually it [leadership role] impacts positively, in that, she has two daughters. She is a great role model. Here is a woman in leadership position balancing it all." Similarly, Referral A thought that Participant A's leadership role provided her with the ability to understand and listen to the people at work, which led into being able to do the same as a mother, wife, aunt, and sister.

At the same time, all participants indicated that their family role positively impacted their role as a leader. They indicated that their role as a mother gave them empathy. Being a mother made them better professionals and helped them to become more sensitive to the individual needs of their colleagues. Referral B explained the importance of Participant B's family role in understanding people in the workplace: "I think her role in the family basically just broadened her understanding of lives of other people... I mean she relates with other people from different level, and that is important, I think. The depth and breadth in your own life impacts you. And that is how that impacts her on the job." In this way, the participants considered their roles as enriching rather than conflicting. They believed their experiences in one role enhanced their performances in the other. All participants thus valued both their family and work, and strategized accordingly to integrate the two roles.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Question Three

The participants lived their own definition of a work-family balance. They defined work and family from their own perspective, fulfilled their responsibilities to the best of their ability, and ensured that their family was satisfied. The participants' democratic and participatory leadership approach, acquiring of skills, and integration of the two roles contributed to their success in balancing work and family. Their leadership style facilitated teamwork and built mutual trust. Their interpersonal skills helped them build good relationships with their co-workers, which created a positive work environment. Similarly, those skills helped their families understand the demands of their dual roles as did sharing plans with everybody involved. When confronted with stressful situations resulting from work overload or budgetary crises, they looked at the whole picture and put things into the right perspective. The participants' awareness of time, as a crucial element in balancing work and family, made them manage their time effectively. Through strategic planning and analytic problem solving they attempted to get things right from the outset to save the extra time and effort required for correcting a mistake. They made

a conscious effort to learn from others' experiences. They observed other women in similar situations and adopted from them the strategies that would work for their individual needs and situations.

The participants had positive dispositional affect. They perceived their two roles to be compatible and mutually beneficial. Their role as a mother positively impacted their role as a leader. It made them better administrators by helping them to become more approachable, better organized, and more compassionate. Similarly, the participants as leaders became role models for their families. Their perception of work and family as allies enriched each of the two domains and contributed to their success in balancing work and family.

Research Question Four: Ethnic Culture as Support

The fourth research question asked was, "What role does ethnic culture, as a support system, play in finding a work-family balance for Armenian women in educational leadership positions in higher education?" This research question investigated the ethno-cultural component in balancing work-family life. The major themes that will be discussed are the influence of ethnic culture in developing core values, creating a sense of belonging, and facilitating networking, and of artifacts as reminders of ethnic identity.

Core values

The role of ethnic culture as a support system was clearly evident from the success stories of the participants. The influence of ethnic culture on developing the participants' core values and shaping their ethnic identity and career choices was plain. The motivation to develop ethnic pride at a very young age, achieve, and excel was clear as Participant C recounted her grandmother's story:

When I was little, she [her grandmother] used to say a lot of things about education. "Education is like a gold bracelet on your wrist that no one can take away from you. Value them." She used to say, "Do your best in all you can do because you will judge other Armenians the way they judge you, and you are going to be an example." So, these things I remember, taking walks with her and hear these things. These had really big impact on me, so I think about them.

Sense of belonging

The ethnic culture component made the participants a part of a whole community that gave them a sense of belonging, strengthened their ties with the community, and provided them with different experiences. Participant B likened her Armenian-American background to living between two interconnected worlds that gave her a unique experience which contributed to her success. She stated:

Throughout my life, I think, though I appreciate this [Armenian issue] very much, we kind of live in two worlds and the question is do they bridge? Is there any moment that they bridge? I think ultimately, they do, but they are very different. Having the

community, that Armenian dimension, gives me the molding, the strength and the contacts of all kinds and experiences of all kinds.

Networking

Participant B elaborated further her ethnic experience that facilitated networking with people. This exposure had a positive impact on her role as a leader in higher education where involvement in politics, business, and fund-raising were expected of her. For example, she explained how her involvement in the annual Armenian Genocide commemorative events gave her access to politicians, businessmen, and others who were present and facilitated networking. She stated:

When you are in senior leadership positions in higher education, you need to know how to be comfortable in all these [politics, business, other] worlds. You need to be comfortable in the fund-raising world, because as you know, Armenians know a lot about philanthropy. I think that experience enriched my ability to be successful in my career and vice versa. I think that support is not separate. I really think they cross-fertilize. And I think that has helped me grow and even be more successful along the way. I think it has given me a dimension that other people with purely an academic experience might not have this.

The subconscious influence of ethnic culture and values was also clear in the participants' decision-making process. Participant A felt personal reward and satisfaction by bringing honor to her collective ethnic identity: "I bring to decision-making my values. I always want to bring honor because there aren't very many Armenians [in her position]. That [bringing honor] is always in the back of my mind."

Although not through direct inquiry, the role of religion and church, both integral to Armenian history and culture, emerged as a part of women's support system in balancing work and family. All three participants referred to their involvement in church life as evident in Participant C's statement, "I've been pretty active in our church since we joined long time ago... For a long time, I was singing in the choir and taught at Sunday school." The participants' involvement in church enabled them to establish relationships with the church community, which expanded their support base such as in child care and later as a social circle for their kids in their adolescent years. Participant B maintained, "When our daughter was an infant, we were living two blocks away from the Armenian Church, and we were involved in the Armenian Church, and there was an Armenian woman who watched her [daughter] couple of days a week." Participant B further stated:

Many of my kids' friends turn out to be the kids of friends of mine from church. Their friends' parents are our friends too. This turns out to be a nice situation. My daughter plays basketball from the church team. They didn't have a coach this year. I agreed to coach them along with another father.

In sum, the ethnic culture component influenced the development of the participants' core values. It gave them a sense of belonging and facilitated networking that expanded the participants' support base.

Artifacts as reminders of ethnic identity

The participants were asked to discuss their work environment and how it connected to their work-family balance. Symbols as constant reminders of ethnic identity were evident in the participants' work environment. All three respondents had artifacts in their offices which reminded them of who they were, why they had excelled, what was important to them. When Participant C was asked as to how she connected those to work-life balance, she replied:

You know, some people, or a lot of people, put up honors and certificates like that and I wonder if I should do like that because I don't like to be bragging, but it kind of reminds me of my past and where I come from and then pictures of my family and others, you know, it reminds me what's important.

When the researcher inquired about a poster on the wall with the portrait of a man, the participant replied:

That is [Armenian- American writer] William Saroyan's famous quote. When I moved into my senate office, I decided to put it. It sparks some interesting conversations with faculty when they come to see me. It reminds me how much my grandparents suffered or my great grandparents suffered, and how blessed I am to be in this country, and yet to remember who I am and where I came from.

While discussing Participant B's office environment filled with books, paintings, and family pictures, I noticed that one picture stood out: it represented the illuminated letters of the Armenian Alphabet. In the participant's words, "I have the Armenian Alphabet which is quite beautiful." Besides its aesthetic value, the alphabet was an identifying marker for her Armenianness. Thus, artifacts occupying a prime location in the offices reminded the participants of who they were.

Analysis and Discussion for Research Question Four

The participants identified themselves with their ethnic culture as manifested in their verbal responses and/or collected artifacts. Ethnic values remained consistent despite the intra-ethnic diversity and differences in the parental educational background of the three participants. Similarly, ethnic culture was reflected in the upbringing of the participants, which had influenced the participants' growing confidence in their own identities, persistence and motivation to excel. Whether the parents were highly educated or not, whether the participants were from the immigrant Armenian group, a mix, or third generation Armenian-Americans, they still were close to their families and placed high value and priority on the family and education. When the participants were obligated to make a choice between work and family, the primacy of the family was obvious. The role of parents, grandparents, and the

extended family in contributing to character building, inculcating core values, and providing a support system were clearly evident as the participants recounted their success stories.

The participants' ethnic culture added another dimension to their support system. It was manifested in the participants' close ties with their families, their association with the church, and their pride in their ethnic identity as represented through the artifacts found in their work environment. Their attachment to family, church, and culture acted as a solid support system that alleviated the strain that may have resulted from trying to fulfill the demands of their work and family domains. Moreover, the Armenian experience enriched the three Armenian women's ability to reach the stage of self-actualization as senior-level leaders in higher education who achieved a balance in their work and family life.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The three case studies of Armenian women in leadership positions in higher education may inspire other women to persevere in their aspiration to attain similar ranks. They also serve as role models to be emulated by others new to the field. Moreover, they demonstrate ways to succeed in finding a work-family balance to those who are still struggling to find that balance.

Institutions of higher learning, in turn, can draw other benefits from the findings of this study. The new insights can be conducive to adopting family-friendly policies that help meet the needs of women in higher education leadership positions to achieve a work-family balance. In order for such policies to be implemented, institutions should conduct professional development sessions in a bid to understand the socioeconomic, religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of the women leaders in order to provide them with the necessary professional and human support. The women, on their part, will more fully grasp institutional rules and expectations through similar seminars. Once a culture of mutual understanding and appreciation is thus established, it will contribute to a positive perception among all stakeholders that the professional environment and the home are indeed integrated spheres. Such a perception will ease the process of balancing work and family.

It is true that there is certainly no one way to achieve personal and professional success and no one way to sustain it. And while "what works" in the present study is based on the experiences of three women from a specific ethnicity—Armenian—and their own unique situations as professionals and homemakers, the findings will ease the process of balancing work and family for women of different backgrounds and not just in higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following recommendations for future research are the result of the present study process and findings:

- The present study was conducted on three women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education. This small sample limits the possibility of generalizing the findings. Although there is a limited number of women in similar positions, replicating the study with a wider sample of Armenian women in leadership positions in the United States would enable the researcher to draw general conclusions.
- The present study focused on Armenian women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education in the United States. Because the Armenian Diaspora consists of numerous communities scattered around the world, it would be in order to examine the cases of women in similar situations in other Armenian communities for comparative purposes and to confirm or dispute the findings.
- The present study did not address the situation of women in senior leadership positions in higher education in Armenia, whether under Soviet rule (1920-1991) or after it gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. While ethnic culture may no longer be a viable consideration in the native land, upbringing, societal expectations, and the geopolitical-ideological impact may reveal new dimensions regarding adaptations of women in senior-level educational positions in higher education in Armenia as they attempt to find a balance between work and family.
- The present study was limited to a specific ethnic group—the Armenians; therefore, there is a gap in cross-cultural studies within the general theme. Future research is needed to identify the similarities and differences between the experiences of women from different ethnic backgrounds. The difficulties and the successes revealed could be mutually beneficial.
- The present study addressed women in senior-level leadership positions in higher education who have families and children. Now that societal norms have been modified and more men are involved in greater levels of domestic responsibility, it would be worthwhile to also examine their challenges and strategies in finding a balance between work and family.

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Ուսումնասիրությունը լուսարձակի տակ կ'առնէ Մ. Նահանգներու քարձրագոյն կրթասպարեզի ղեկավար դիրքի երեք հայ կիներու՝ իրենց աշխատանքն ու ընտանիքը հաւասարակշռելու փորձը, որ ունի ընկերային այժմէականութիւն:

Ուսումնասիրությունը կ'առանձնացնէ դիմագրաւուած մարտահրաւերները եւ յաղթահարելու համար որդեգրուած ռազմավարութիւնները: Հաասարակշռումը իրագործելու համար առանձնացուած են նաեւ ասպարեզային եւ անհատական աջակցութեանց համակարգերը, ներառեալ՝ էթնիք մշակոյթը:

Մարտահրաւերները արդիւնքն էին արհեստավարժ եւ տանտիկին կրկնակի դերին եւ պատասխանատուութեան պահանջներուն, ի դիմաց՝ սեռոյթի կարծրատիպերու եւ՝ արհեստավարժութեան գիջումներ ու անհատական զոհողութիւններ յարաբերակցութեան:

Յառաջացած արհեստավարժ եւ անհատական աջակցութիւնը նպաստած է աշխատանք-ընտանիք հաասարակշռութեան գոյաոոմին: Անհատական աջակցութեան առաջին աղբիւրը եղած է ընտանիքը, ծնողը, ամուսինը՝ իրենց զաւակներու հոգատարութեան եւ կրթական ուղիի ընթացման առումով: Միւս կողմէ պաշտօնակիցներու, հաստատութեանկան կանոնագրական տրամադրութիւններն ու միջոցներու արհեստավարժ վարժանքները, ուղղորդումը եւ մենտորութիւնը եւս նպաստած են անոնց աշխատանք-ընտանիք հաասարակշռութեան յաջողացման:

Յառաջացնելու համար այս հաասարակշռութիւնը անոնց գործադրած են այլազան ռազմավարութիւն. աշխատանքն ու ընտանիքը դարձած են իրենց տեսադաշտը, իրենց կարողութեան լաւագոյնով կատարած են իրենց պատասխանատուութիւնները եւ ապահոված ընտանիքին քարօրութիւնը, յառաջացուցած աշխատանքի դրական միջավայր՝ մասնակցային եւ ժողովրդավար առաջնորդի մօտեցումներ որդեգրելով, ժամանակը վարած են արդիւնատրապէս, կանխաւ ծրագրելով եւ ծրագիրը բաժնեկցելով առնչակիցներուն: Զգօն ճիգով ստրկած են նման այլ կիներու փորձառութենէն, երկու դերերը դիտարկած իբրեւ յարիւր եւ փոխադարձաբար օգտակար եւ համարկած զանոնք:

Վերջապէս, հայ կնոջ էթնիք մշակոյթը՝ ընտանիքին մէջ արմատաւորուած կորիզային արժէքները, ինչպէս՝ կրօնը, կրթութիւնաւորում եւ պատմութիւն, յատկանշականօրէն ներշնչած են զանոնք եւ խթանած՝ գերազանցելու իրենց առաջնորդողի մղումը եւ յաջողելու հաասարակշռել աշխատանքն ու ընտանիքը: