

Paths to Power

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Women still lag behind men in holding senior management and executive positions.

Research explains why women struggle to achieve power due to stereotypes, obstacles, and lack of opportunities. However, there is little research examining how people arrive to power.

Power is influence and decision-making ability.

Male and female students describe achieving power similarly in general, but use gender stereotypes when describing power for the opposite sex.

Analysis of expectations vs. realities of power highlighted minor similarities and differences and provided new insights.

FINDINGS

RESEARCH PROJECT

We focused on how people arrive to power within the current constraints and the characteristics and actions required to achieve power.

We examined differences by gender and expectations vs. realities.

The methodology included an online survey of MBA students and interviews with people in power

Next steps focused on two areas: application and research.

Training and mentorship programs increasing awareness of gender stereotypes and perception management are necessary.

New research is needed to analyze if men and women exhibit the characteristics and actions identified in this study and the impact on their careers.

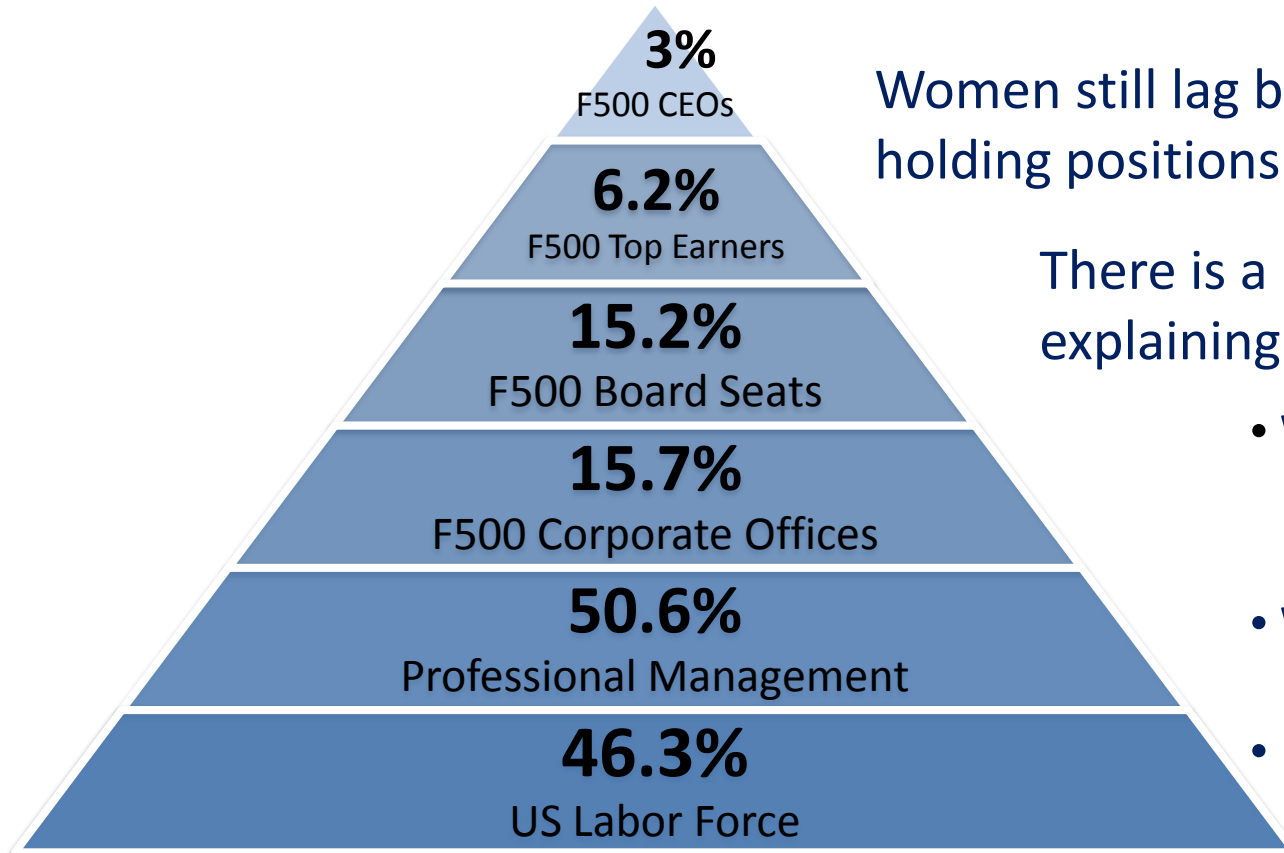
NEXT STEPS

PATHS TO POWER

Question: How do men and women arrive to positions of power?

Goal: Use this knowledge to help more women achieve power in the workplace

The problem is, it's still lonely at the top for women



Women still lag behind men in terms of holding positions of power.

There is a large body of research explaining why:

- Workplace gender stereotypes
- Work-life balance obstacles
- Lack of structured networks and sufficient mentors


Our research looked at the problem of women and power in the workplace. Women still do not hold as many positions of power as men, and there is already much research explaining why women struggle to achieve power.

We explored *how* people arrive to positions of power



CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

How do people, both men and women, achieve positions of power within the current paradigm of obstacles and constraints?



Objective 1

Identify characteristics, actions, and tools for achieving power

Objective 2

Examine differences along the path to power by gender

Objective 3

Determine differences between expectations and realities of power

Hypothesis 1

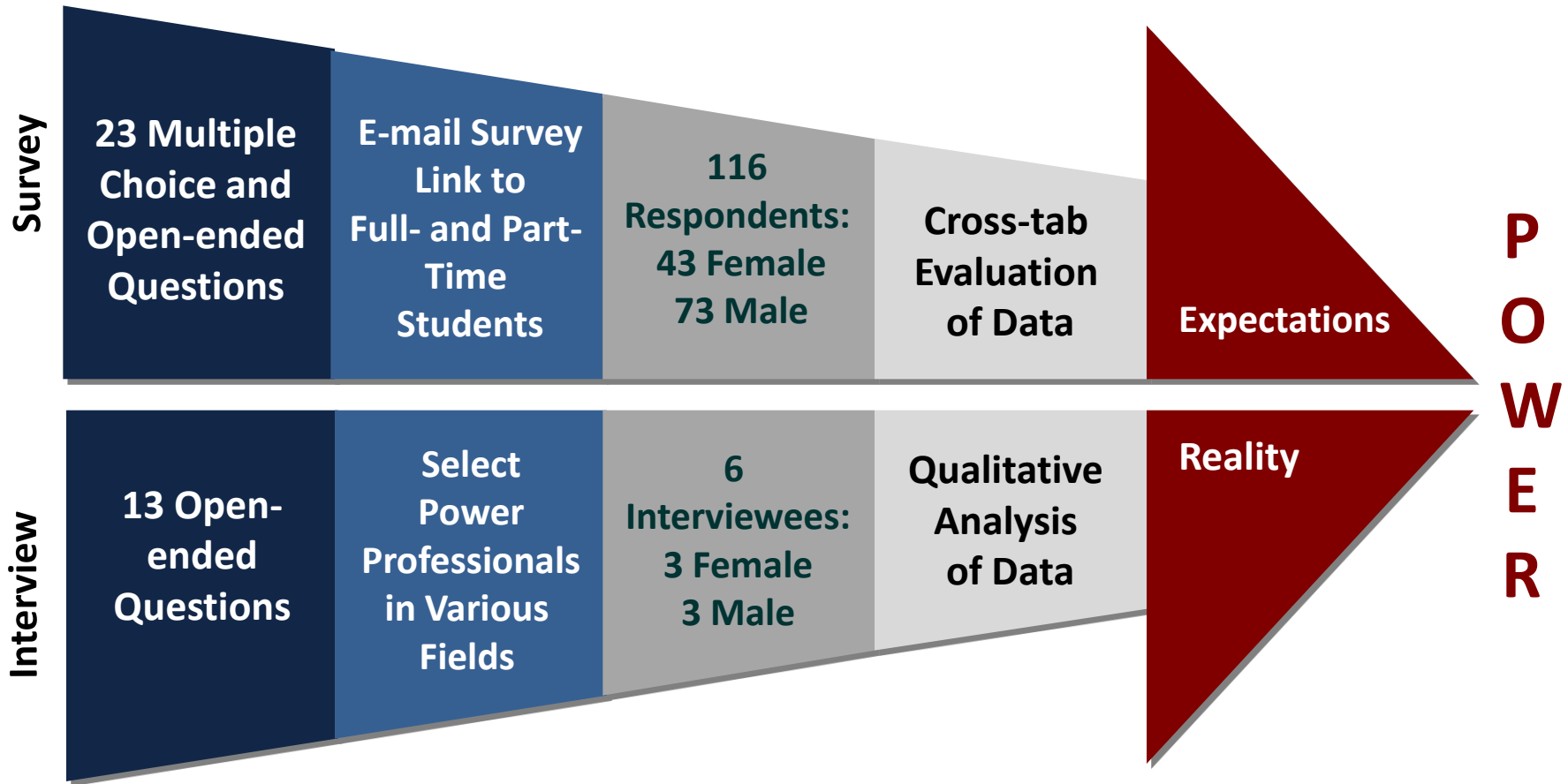
Men and women arrive to power differently, using dissimilar characteristics and actions

Hypothesis 2

Expectations and realities differ regardless of gender

Our research focused on identifying how people arrive to power, the characteristics and actions required, and any differences by gender and between expectations and realities.

Two paths to understanding expectations and realities of power



We used 2 different research methodology components: an online survey taken by MBA students on expectations of achieving power and qualitative interviews with people in senior level positions about experiences.

Breaking down the sample demographics

SURVEY

- Sample size: 116 current MBA students
- 62.8% Male, 37.2% Female
- 77.9% Full-time, 22.1% Part-time
- 45.1% 1st-years, 51.3% 2nd- years, 3.6% 3rd-years (part-time only)
- 92.9% are less than 35 years old and 60.3% are between 26-30 years old
- 94.7% with less than 10 years of full-time work experience and 54.3% with 2-5 years of experience

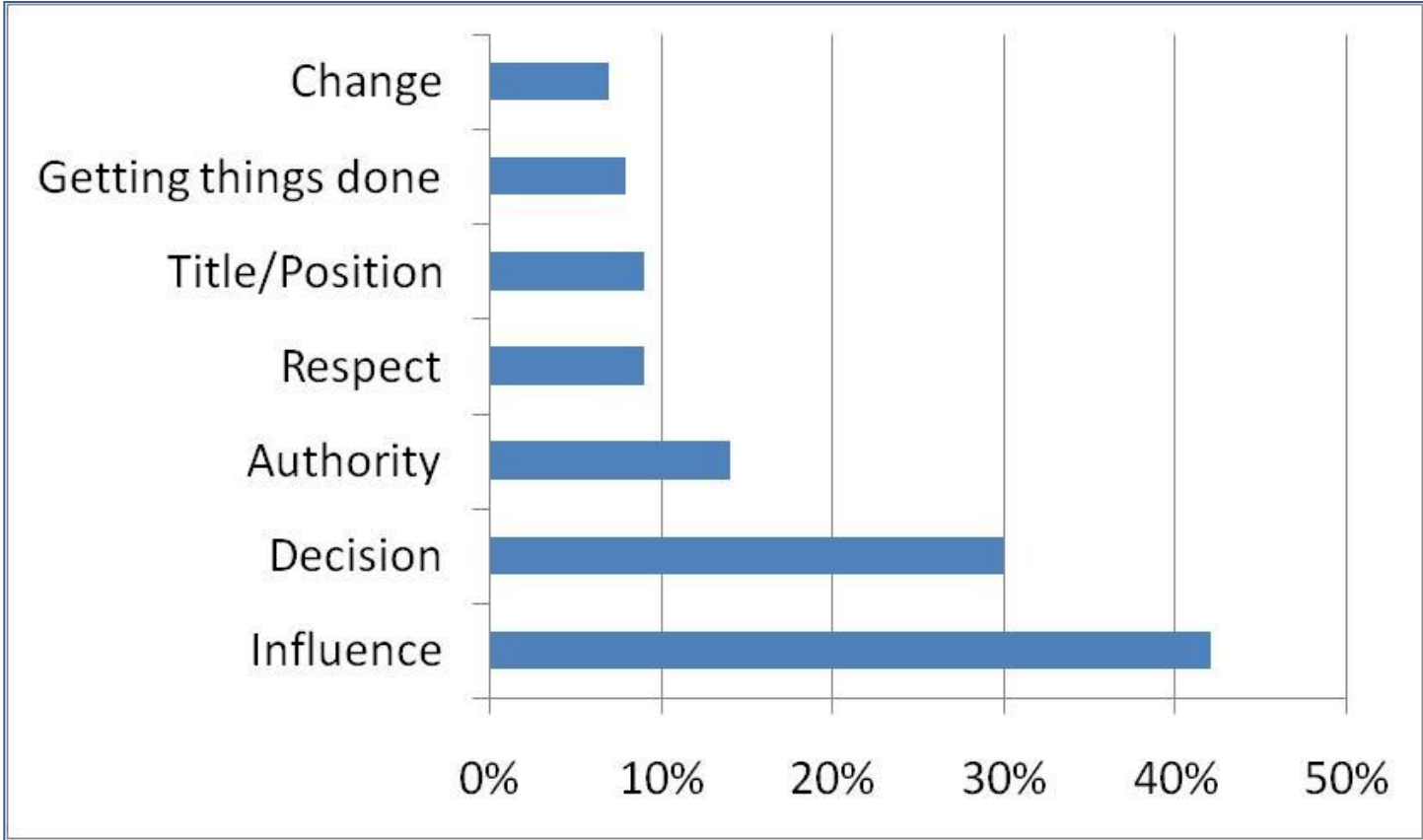
INTERVIEWS

- Sample size: 6 current professionals
- 53-year-old African American female in consulting
- 45 year-old Caucasian male in consulting
- 36 year-old Caucasian female in finance
- 62 year-old Caucasian female in non-profit
- 52 year-old Caucasian male in marketing
- 60 year-old Caucasian male in sports management

These demographics illustrate that our survey sample was representative of the MBA student population, allowing us to explore our research objectives. The interview sample provided varying perspectives of the reality of power.

MBA Students define power as influence and decision-making

Percentage of responses per definition of power



Influence and decision-making ability stand out as the most often cited definitions of power in the workplace, coupled with authority, respect, title/position, ability to get things done and change.

MBA Students agree on the general characteristics and actions for power

CHARACTERISTICS

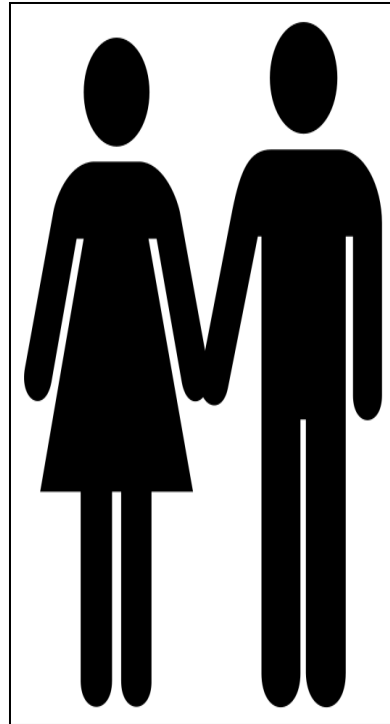
Good Communicator



Influential/Persuasive



Self-confident



ACTIONS

Demonstrate the ability to make important decisions



**Seek allies/
build a network**

All respondents, regardless of gender or other segmentation, consistently identified these three characteristics and two actions as the most important for a person in a position of power.

Gender stereotypes emerge when describing power for the opposite sex

Men's Perceptions

Characteristic/ Action	General Ranking	Ranking for Women
Intelligence	5	1
Hardworking	9	5
Seek allies/build network	2	6
Outperform co-workers	3	1

Women's Perceptions

Characteristic/ Action	General Ranking	Ranking for men
Good Communicator	1	4
Assertive	8	3
Charismatic	12	6
Aggressive	15	5
Advocate for self	4	1

Men and women tended to characterize themselves more like the general “person in power” while the opposite gender was often given characteristics or attributes that highlighted typical gender stereotypes.

Women believe men and women arrive to power differently

We stated, “*Men and women arrive to a position of power in the exact same way*”

Percentage of MBA students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement

TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN
53.1%	42.5%	72.1%

Students who disagreed mostly believed that differences were due to gender stereotypes, while the rest listed personality differences.

Although more women than men believe there is a difference, they are still no less likely than men to use gender stereotypes when describing power for the opposite sex.

72.1% of women disagree that men and women arrive to power in the same way, but women still persist in using gender stereotypes about men.

Realities and expectations converge, diverge, and bring new insights

SIMILARITIES

- Achieving a position of power in 5 years
- Definition of power
- Most believed there is a difference in path for men and women, but obstacles are decreasing

DIFFERENCES

- Importance of luck beyond characteristics and actions
- Interview participants used gender-biased characteristics and actions to describe self.
- Reality emphasized actively seeking out opportunities and others to learn from.

NEW PERSPECTIVES

- Viewpoints of Generation Y varied greatly among interview participants
- Role of personality in different paths to power beyond gender

Interview subjects provided insight into the realities of power in the workplace. There were equal amounts of similarities and differences between expectations and reality and new perspectives on the issue of power.

Next steps for paving the path to power

Gender-based stereotypes of power are declining in the workplace, but still persist

Applications

Increase awareness of gender stereotypes and path to power differences through training and mentorship programs

Emphasize importance and provide training on perception management for MBA students and employees

Research

Expand research by increasing sample size, exploring other power components (personality), and focusing on a broader definition of power

Conduct new research on how women and men exhibit these characteristics and actions in the workplace and how that impacts their power

Next steps focus on immediate application and continued research. The most critical next step is to analyze how men and women exhibit these 5 key characteristics/actions in the workplace and determine if that is the reason why there are fewer women in positions of power.

Appendix I - Sample Breakdown

Program	Graduation Year	Gender	Population	Sample Size (Survey Respondents)
Full Time	2010	Female	76	14
		Male	182	28
	2009	Female	85	17
		Male	182	31
Part Time	2011	Female	37	6
		Male	80	5
	2010	Female	31	4
		Male	70	7
	2009	Female	27	2
		Male	35	2
Total Female			256	43
Total Male			549	73
GRAND TOTAL			805	116

Appendix II - Survey Questions

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY

We are interested in how people define and view power in various work contexts. We would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Please note, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions; we are just interested in your opinions and beliefs. All completed survey respondents will have the opportunity to participate in a drawing for several \$25 iTunes gift cards.

1. How would you define power in the workplace?

[Blank]

2. Based upon your definition of power, do you plan to achieve a position of power within the span of your career?

Yes

No

3. How long do you anticipate it will take after business school to achieve a position of power as you have defined it?

Less than 2

2-5 years

5-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

More than 20 years

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

4. Please choose 5 of the characteristics below that you think are the 5 most important characteristics of a person in a position of power in the workplace.
Next, rank these 5 characteristics in order from 1 to 5 by choosing a button below, where 1 is "most important" and 5 is "least important," characteristic of a person in a position of power in the workplace.

If you do not believe a characteristic is one of the top five characteristics, please leave the buttons next to it blank.

Adapt to changing situations

Aggressive

Assertive

Charismatic

Cool/calm under pressure

Fair

Forward-thinking

Good communicator, conveyor of information

Hardworking

Influential/persuasive

Intelligent

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

Likeable

Passionate

Risk-taker

Self confidence

Team player

5. Please choose 5 of the actions below that you think are the 5 most important actions a person needs to take to achieve a position of power in the workplace.

Next, rank these 5 actions in order from 1 to 5 by choosing a button below, where 1 is "most important" and 5 is "least important," action a person needs to take to achieve a position of power in the workplace.

If you do not believe an action is one of the top five actions, please leave the buttons next to it blank.

Ability to guide/advise/mentor

Actively seek out new career and development opportunities and be willing to take many approaches/try new things

Advocate for themselves, making sure successes & ideas are recognized

Consider/solicit different perspectives

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

Demonstrate ability to make important decisions

Find mentors, particularly people in positions of power

Outperform co-workers

Participate in firm activities with co-workers, both external (drinks/dinner, outside entertainment) and internal (community service projects, committees)

Seek allies/build a network

6. If you had 100 points that represented the characteristics, actions and other things that help someone to achieve a position of power, how would you allocate these points among each of these factors?

Characteristics (ex: self confident, risk-taker, etc) = _____

Actions (ex: seek allies, find a mentor, etc) = _____

Other (if you believe there is no other factor, enter 0) = _____

If you allocated points to "Other" factor(s) above that help someone to achieve a position of power, please describe what those other factors are. If you did not allocate any points to "Other" please enter N/A. _____

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

7. Which kind of professional network do you think is more effective?

Small and deep, composed of a few people you know very well

Wide and shallow, composed of many people that you know as acquaintances

Other (please specify) _____

8. When you look for a mentor, would you prefer (select only one):

Someone who can support and guide you

Someone who is in a position of power

Other (please specify) _____

9. To what extent do you agree/ disagree with the following statement: “Men and women arrive at the same position of power in the exact same way.”

[choose from “strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree”]

10. If you selected “strongly disagree” or “disagree” in the previous question, please specify why. Otherwise, please enter N/A.

[Blank]

11. Of the characteristics below, which three (3) characteristics, in no particular order, would you most identify with a man in a position of power?

[See response options to Question 4]

12. Of the characteristics below, which three (3) characteristics, in no particular order, would you most identify with a woman in a position of power?

[See response options to Question 4]

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

13. Of these actions below, which three (3) actions, in no particular order, would you most identify with a man in a position of power?

[See response options to Question 5]

14. Of these actions below, which three (3) actions, in no particular order, would you most identify with a woman in a position of power?

[See response options to Question 5]

15. What kind of MBA program are you in?

Full-time

Part-time

16. What year are you in your MBA program?

First year

Second year

Third year (part-time students only)

17. How many years of full-time work experience do you have?

Less than 2

2-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

More than 20 years

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

18. What business area were you in prior to business school?

Finance

Marketing

Consulting

Non-profit

Other (please specify) _____

19. What business area are you pursuing after business school?

Finance

Marketing

Consulting

Non-profit

Other (please specify) _____

20. Please indicate your age:

20-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

46-50

Appendix II - Survey Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER SURVEY, continued

21. Please indicate your gender:

Male

Female

22. Please indicate your race:

White, non-Hispanic

African American

Hispanic

Asian

Native American

23. Thank you for taking this survey. If you would like a chance to win a \$25 iTunes gift card, please fill in your email information below. Note that your email address will be kept confidential and will not be distributed to outside parties in any way, nor will it be associated with your survey answers.

Appendix III - Interview Questions

PATHS TO POWER INTERVIEW

Description:

We are conducting a research study about how people arrive to positions of power, called paths to power. Our study explores many aspects of this topic including the characteristics and actions that help someone get to a position of power, differences between realities and expectations of paths to power, and variances in paths to power by gender.

Procedure:

- This interview will take approximately 45 minutes.
- Before beginning the interview, I will ask you to sign a simple waiver form that indicates you agreed to this interview.
- You have the option of viewing the questions ahead of time if you so prefer.
- At the end of the interview, I will ask about your preferences for anonymity. This decision is entirely up to your discretion.

Questions:

1. How do you define power in the workplace?
2. Please describe your path to power.
3. Please describe your education-undergraduate degree and graduate level.
4. How long after completing your latest education did you achieve a position of power as you define it?

Appendix III - Interview Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER INTERVIEW, continued

5. Thinking back on your experience, were your expectations of how you would arrive to a position of power different than the reality? What were the main differences? Can you think of a story or example from your professional experience that exemplifies this?

6. What are the major challenges you encountered along your path to power?

7. What are the characteristics that you think helped you arrive to a position of power? Please describe at least 5. *(Encourage the respondent to come up with their own characteristics. If they are confused or need examples, mention characteristics such as self-confidence, fair, risk-taker, passionate, intelligent, charismatic, hard-working, etc... There is no maximum number, but please encourage the respondent to mention at least 5 characteristics.)*

8. What are the different actions that you think helped you arrive to a position of power? Please describe at least 5. *(Encourage the respondent to come up with their own characteristics. If they are confused or need examples, action such as building a network, finding mentors, advocating for yourself, outperforming co-workers, mentoring others, being open to opportunities, etc.. There is no maximum number, but please encourage the respondent to mention at least 5 characteristics.)*

9. If you had a pie that represented how you arrived to power, would it be composed of actions and characteristics or any other factors? What other factors, specifically? If you had to allocate a percentage of this pie to all of these factors, what percentage would you allocate to characteristics, actions, and the other factors you mentioned?

Appendix III - Interview Questions (con't.)

PATHS TO POWER INTERVIEW, continued

10. Based on your experience, do you think there is a difference in the paths to power for men and women? What has led you to believe this? Please include an example or story.

11. Do you think that the path to power for members of Generation Y will be significantly different from your path to power? How so?

12. Can you describe the impact of networking on your path to power? What kind of networking you have used and what do you think is the most effective use of networking?

13. Can you describe the impact of mentorship on your path to power? What kind of mentorship do you think is most effective?

Demographic Info:

- Graduate Degree: *take from question 3*
- Age: *Do you mind sharing your age?*
- Gender:
- The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder.
- Race
- Current business area:

Years of experience in this area:

Position title:

Company:

Appendix IV-Power, in their own words (Interview Quotes)

Generation Y

“What they’ve (Generation Y) come to understand is as a result of technology, social marketing, and social media, is they can have power at very early ages. They know that they ultimately have the power; the question is how they choose to channel it. Power (to us) was something that came later and was assumed after years of experience. That’s a real shift in the power balance.”

“The fundamentals of the path to power don’t change – I interview a lot of people about hiring people and they tell me ‘younger people don’t have the work ethic ‘we’ grew up with’ and that they are ‘looking for the quick and easy way to the top,’ they want to get there fast and are not concerned with spending time in an apprenticeship. But at the end of the day the people without work ethic, smarts, creativity and knowledge will still not advance.”

Obstacles for Women

“The women I grew up with who were successful were not the cliché where they basically acted like men, but they had a tougher time. Women did not support each other in the workplace, and there weren’t as many of them, so the math was against them. They had fewer mentors, and it was higher beta. There was no critical mass.”

Luck

“A good part of it (achieving power) is luck, which is why the networking is so important. If you figure that luck is nothing but a numbers game, than you got to keep throwing the dice. And throwing the dice is interacting with people, because every person either brings to you a different competency or skill that you need.”

Appendix V – Research Team Bios

Lauren Rose Carrasco (ler36@georgetown.edu)

Lauren worked in the nonprofit and education fields before business school. Upon graduation, she will join Deloitte as a Sr. Consultant in the human capital practice, also where she interned last summer working on training improvement with a large discount retailer. Lauren has her BA in International Affairs from George Washington University

Amanda Nyberg Sisley (ans39@georgetown.edu)

Amanda has worked for the past five years in a marketing capacity, on both the client and agency sides, with various packaged goods companies. After interning at Nike this past summer, she is excited to be starting as an Associate Brand Manager at MillerCoors on the Miller Lite brand. Amanda holds a BA in American Studies from Yale University.

Monica Zwick Zeitlin (mlz3@georgetown.edu)

Monica worked in marketing capacities at E! Entertainment Television and The Associated Press prior to business school. Upon graduation she will be an Associate Product Director for the McNeil Consumer Healthcare Division of Johnson & Johnson, where she interned this past summer. Monica graduated with a BA in French and Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis.