

Salary Negotiation Strategies of Female Administrators in Higher Education

A salary gap continues to exist between male and female administrators in higher education due, in part, to the unwillingness of many females to negotiate for salary (Thompson-Stacy & Pogue, 1996). One reason given for not negotiating was that it simply did not occur to them to ask for more money. They were sometimes not prepared to negotiate, not knowing how much to ask for or feeling uncomfortable about negotiating. Other studies revealed that women set less aggressive goals than men when negotiating for salary (Babcock & Laschever, 2003) and women were more cooperative and likely to accept an offer given (Eckel & Grossman, 2001). However, these studies have not focused on the specific negotiation strategies women use to negotiate for compensation, conditions that must exist for a female to feel confident in negotiating or when women stop negotiating for compensation.

Purpose and Benefits of Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the salary negotiation strategies of executive- and mid-level female administrators in higher education. Data collected from this study will be used to evaluate how female administrators negotiate for salaries, what environment is necessary for successful negotiations, what gendered communication traits they exhibit when they negotiate, their perceptions of women's salary negotiation strategies, and what strategies they perceive to be effective.

Understanding how female administrators negotiate for compensation and what strategies may be employed to enhance their negotiation skills is an important step in moving toward gender salary equity. While there is no direct benefit to the participants, the benefits of this research may be to add to the knowledge base on gender equity issues,

focusing on the salary gender gap and what role inadequate negotiation strategies might play. The study will explore whether or not women negotiate, why they may not negotiate, women's perceptions of how their negotiation strategies differ, and what gendered communication traits they exhibit if and when they negotiate.

Research Questions

The main question in this research will focus on what strategies, if any, female administrators at institutions of higher education use to negotiate for compensation at the time of initial hire and/or for additional job duties and what gendered communication traits they exhibit if and when they negotiate for compensation. This study will also explore similarities and differences to previous findings on women's negotiation strategies. Female administrators are defined as director level or above, excluding the positions of president and chancellor. For purposes of this study, institutions of higher education are restricted to four-year public universities in Western Michigan.

Specific research questions include:

1. What, if any, negotiation strategies do female administrators use to negotiate for compensation:
 - a. at the time they are hired; and
 - b. when additional job duties assigned to them?
2. What gendered communication traits do female administrators exhibit if and when they negotiate for compensation:
 - a. at the time they are hired; and
 - b. when additional job duties are assigned to them?

3. If female administrators do not negotiate for compensation, what issues are defined as barriers to negotiating:
 - a. at the time they are hired; and
 - b. when additional job duties are assigned to them?
4. When female administrators do negotiate for compensation:
 - a. what conditions must exist for female administrators to feel confident in negotiating; and
 - b. at what point do female administrators cease to negotiate for compensation, and why?
5. How, if at all, do women perceive that their negotiation strategies are different than men's in reference to:
 - a. types of strategies used; and
 - b. any gender stereotypes implied?
6. What negotiation strategies do women perceive as most and least effective and what recommendations do they offer for other aspiring female administrators?

Research Design

This study will be conducted using a qualitative method. Qualitative research will allow for a deeper understanding of the negotiation strategies used by female administrators. The audience will benefit from the use of a qualitative method for this study due to the richness of data that will be generated. This allows for a more thorough presentation of the negotiation strategies used by various female administrators. Because of an intense interest in this topic, the researcher will be an active learner and will share

the views of the participants in the study findings by presenting rich descriptions of their responses. The researcher will take great care in maintaining confidentiality of the participants by changing names and generically referring to their positions and universities.

Phenomenology is the qualitative research method that will be used to conduct this study. A phenomenological study seeks not only to understand perceptions, but also people's perspectives and understanding of a particular situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This requires that the researcher bring forward previous understandings connected to the phenomenon being studied.

Subject Selection

Methods of data collection for a phenomenological study suggest a purposeful sampling of 5-25 individuals (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Creswell (1998) indicates that a criterion sample is well suited for research where the subjects have all experienced the phenomenon being studied. For this study, a total of 16-20 female administrators will be selected and a purposeful sample will be used based on criterion sampling. All participants in the study will have experienced the opportunity to negotiate for compensation.

A purposeful sample will yield the most information and best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2003; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The researcher will purposefully select the participants for this study by viewing websites of the various universities to determine potential subjects. A sample of 16-20 female administrators will enable collection of data from at least eight participants from the executive-level category and eight from the mid-level category. This sample size will

also allow for diversity in age, ethnicity, and work experience of the participants. An attempt will be made to include an average of two women of color from each university and a total of four to six participants from each of the four universities. Because specific departments will not be identified and the universities will be referred to as four-year institutions in Western Michigan, the identity of the 16 to 20 participants will be protected. The participant list will be verified by contacting the human resource departments at each institution to verify position titles prior to contacting potential participants. A snowballing technique will also be utilized. Upon securing the agreement of one or two individuals from each institution to take part in the study, the researcher will solicit suggestions from these subjects for other potential participants.

Initial contacts will be made via email to determine interest of potential participants for the study. A sample of the email communication is attached. A follow-up telephone contact will take place within a week after the initial email contact to confirm receipt of the communication and interest or lack of interest in learning more about the study. A sample telephone script is attached to this proposal. If an affirmative answer is received, a meeting will be scheduled.

Instrumentation

Phenomenology involves the use of in-depth interviews as the primary method of collecting information (Creswell, 1998). To ensure a comfortable atmosphere and convenience for the participants, interviews for this study will take place in the town or city where the institution is located. A private room will be secured, which may be a conference room or office, depending on the arrangements that can be made at each

university. The researcher will work with each of the interviewees to determine the best location to ensure privacy, including an off-campus location if desired by the participant.

Scheduling of the interviews will be based on the availability of the participants. The researcher will attempt to schedule as many interviews on the same day as are reasonable in each location, realizing that more than one visit may be necessary. Since all of the institutions are in the West Michigan area, this will not be an issue for the researcher.

A consent form will be used to obtain agreement from subjects to participate in the study. A sample of this form is attached to this proposal. The consent document will be forwarded to the participants who agree to take part in the study. This document will be reviewed and explained at the scheduled meeting prior to beginning an interview, with the option to continue and sign the document or discontinue the interview. No one will be participating in the interview until the consent document has been thoroughly reviewed, questions answered, and the consent document signed.

At the meeting, the researcher will make it clear that potential participants do not have to participate in any follow-up conversations or meetings if they do not wish to do so and that they may quit at any time. If a follow-up is necessary, they will be reminded of the consent form, that they have agreed to participate and that they may withdraw at any time. All information relating to a participant who withdraws will be destroyed. If the potential participant decides to sign the consent document and participate, the interview will follow immediately. If not, the participant will be thanked and dismissed.

Open-ended interviews of the subjects will be conducted for this study using a general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002). This approach involves developing an

outline prior to the interviews, which includes a set of issues to be explored with each participant. The guide will allow for free conversation within a topic area while ensuring all questions are adequately covered in the interview process. The interview outline for this study is based on the research questions and is attached to this proposal.

Each interview will be audiotaped and the researcher will take notes at every session. Permission to tape the interviews will be obtained from participants as part of the consent process. Interviews will be from one to two hours in length, depending on responses from each participant. If follow-up interviews are required, they will be conducted through telephone conversations and/or personal email accounts. These contacts will be made only if there is a need to clarify information that has been collected or if responses to specific research questions were not addressed sufficiently in the interview. A sample script of these follow-up conversations is attached. Participants will be made aware of the potential for additional contact prior to agreeing to participate in the study. If it is determined that an additional face-to-face interview is required in specific cases to thoroughly capture the lived experience, the researcher will make arrangements with the participant at their convenience. Again, it will be made clear that participants do not have to participate in a follow-up.

It is anticipated that interviews will begin in April 2005 and continue through June 2005. The results of the study will be disseminated as a doctoral dissertation.

Method of Analysis

In phenomenological data analysis, the researcher follows a methodology of reduction, including an analysis of statements and themes and a search for meanings (Creswell, 1998). The researcher must bracket personal experiences by participating in

epoche, setting aside all prejudgments. Personal biases will be set aside in order to listen to and understand the lived experiences of the female administrators participating in this study.

Patton (2002) lays out the reduction phase of data analysis, which the researcher will follow for this study. This phase includes locating key phrases, interpreting the meanings of these phrases, obtaining the subjects' interpretations of the meanings, inspecting the meanings for what they reveal, and offering a tentative statement about the phenomenon. From this phase, the data are spread out for examination and irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping data are eliminated. The researcher then looks for the textural portrayal of each theme, which provides content and illustration. A structural description containing the experience of the entire group is evaluated, looking beyond the experience for deeper meanings for the individuals who make up the group. Moustakas (1994) suggests the final step is "an integration of the composite textual and composite structural descriptions, providing a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience" (p. 144).

The audiotapes of the interviews will be transcribed verbatim. An attempt will be made to transcribe them within two days of each interview. The researcher intends to transcribe the tapes. This will allow for a total immersion in the data. However, additional assistance may be necessary if time becomes an issue. A professional will be hired to complete any transcription that cannot be completed by the researcher. Numbers will be used to identify the audiotapes in order to protect the participants' identity. If it is necessary to have a third-party transcribe the tapes, the researcher will allow additional time to more thoroughly analyze the transcripts.

Transcripts from the interviews will be analyzed using the methodology described previously. The researcher will read each transcript closely and make notes. Data will be coded based on themes, identifying key words and phrases. This will be accomplished by conducting a search for both words and phrases using a computer program in addition to manually reading through the transcripts and highlighting themes. A coding sheet will be developed inductively from the data presented. Therefore, no code sheet has been developed at this time.

After deciding on the major themes, a delimitation process will be followed to eliminate irrelevant, repetitive or overlapping data. This will lead to a process of developing an expanded view of the themes and a textual portrayal of each theme. From there, a structural description will be created and then an integration of composite textual and structural descriptions, which will be accomplished by refining words and applying interpretations to each theme. The final analysis will be a distillation of the essence of the salary negotiation strategies of female administrators in higher education.

Member checks will be an important part of this study. This involves the participant's review of the material to verify its accuracy (Creswell, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that member checks are important comprehensive checks to not only test for fact and accuracy of interpretation but also to provide credibility to the results. A draft summary of each participant's response will be shared with each interviewee individually to ensure accurate interpretation of the data prior to completing the findings. In addition, verification of the data will also involve the review of findings by an individual well versed in gender communication theory. Input from this individual serving as a professional consultant will be used to ensure that interpretations are

appropriate according to research through their review of the transcripts and comparison to the findings. Identifiable information will be removed prior to the review of the data by this consultant.

Risks, Protection and Confidentiality

Risk associated with this study could include the possibility of being identified. Subjects may not want to be identified due to continuing relationships with the institutions where they are employed, as some of the issues discussed in the interviewing process may be sensitive in nature. Rubin and Rubin (1995) indicate that in some cases this could mean leaving out exciting material or slightly distorting the results to protect participants from being harmed. Participants could also feel embarrassed about their possible lack of negotiating skills. The researcher will engage in casual conversation to begin each interview and attempt to make each subject feel as comfortable as possible.

An effort will be made to protect the identity of study participants. Fictitious names will be assigned to subjects and the university names, positions and specific departments where subjects are or have been employed will be presented generically. Every attempt will be made to maintain confidentiality, including holding interviews in private locations. Confidentiality will be maintained by carefully storing the audiotapes in a secure, locked location. The audiotapes will be destroyed once the data analysis is completed. Transcripts will also be stored in a confidential manner as will electronic material, which will be saved on an external media storage device and stored with the transcripts for at least three years in the primary researcher's office at WMU. The electronic material will be password protected.

Initial Email to Potential Participants

Dear _____:

My name is Suzette Compton and I am inviting you to participate in a study on the salary negotiation strategies of female administrators in higher education. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership through Western Michigan University. I am the investigator in this study (231-591-3901, *comptons@ferris.edu*). The supervising professor is Dr. Louann Bierlein-Palmer (231-387-3596, *l.bierleinpalmer@wmich.edu*).

You are being invited to volunteer as a participant because you are in an executive- or mid-level administrative position at your institution. If you choose to participate in this study, you will attend a one- to two-hour interview session at your institution or an off-campus site where you will be asked questions regarding your work history, age, ethnicity and experience in negotiating for salary and additional compensation. You may also be asked to attend an additional session or to participate in follow-up telephone conversations, if clarification of your interview response is necessary. Email correspondence may be used to contact you throughout the study, however clarification of information will be done by phone, unless you have a private email account that you are willing to use for this purpose.

This study will be restricted to universities in the Western Michigan area. However, your interview responses are strictly confidential. This means that your name will not appear on any papers on which information is recorded. Fictitious names will be used and your position and place of employment will be described generically.

I will be contacting you via phone within the next week to discuss your possible voluntary participation in this study. If you decide you are interested in learning more about the study, please feel free to respond to this email. I will follow up with a phone call and will send you a consent form for your review. An appointment will be scheduled, where I will review the form with you. After obtaining your signature, the interview will begin. You will also receive an interview guide in advance, so you can be fully prepared to respond to the interview questions, should you decide to participate.

If you have any questions, you may contact either me or Dr. Bierlein-Palmer, as indicated above. Thank you for considering possible participation in this study. The results of this study may be of interest to female administrators in higher education and may be beneficial in assisting others in negotiating for compensation and ultimately reducing the salary gender gap.

Sincerely,

Suzette Compton

Script for Follow-up Phone Call to Potential Participants

Hello, my name is Suzette Compton. I contacted you via email over the past week regarding possible participation in a study on the salary negotiation strategies of female administrators in higher education. As I indicated in the email, this study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership through Western Michigan University.

Your participation in this study would be voluntary, although very much appreciated. The results of this study may be of interest to you as a female administrator in higher education and may be beneficial in assisting others in negotiating for compensation and working toward reducing the salary gender gap.

The purpose of this call is to see if you have had an opportunity to read the email and if you have considered your participation in this study. You may also have some questions regarding the study, which I am happy to answer for you at this time.

Should you decide to participate, I would like to schedule a meeting at your convenience at your location. The exact place of the meeting is flexible. We could meet at your office or at a neutral location, if you prefer, such as a conference room at your institution's library or an off-campus location.

Upon your acceptance, I will forward a consent form for you to review as well as an interview guide. You may review these documents and contact me with any questions prior to the meeting. I will review the information contained in the consent form on the day of the meeting to ensure any questions you may have are answered and will ask you for a signed copy of the consent form. Once the consent form is signed, the interview will begin.

Once again, your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated. May I schedule a meeting at this time to discuss the consent form and your possible participation?

Thank you and I look forward to meeting with you soon. Please feel free to contact me via phone at 231-591-3901 or email at comptons@ferris.edu if you have any questions prior to the meeting.

OR

Thank you for considering participating in this study. I understand you are not able to participate and appreciate the time you took to speak with me and to read the information regarding the study.

Consent Document

Western Michigan University
Department of: Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Principal Investigator: Louann Bierlein-Palmer
Student Investigator: Suzette Compton

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled *Salary Negotiation Strategies of Female Administrators in Higher Education*. This research is intended to study how female administrators in institutions of higher education negotiate for compensation. This study is being completed as *Suzette Compton's* dissertation project.

You will be asked to attend a one- to two-hour private session with *Suzette Compton*. You will be asked to meet *Suzette* for this session at your private office or in the university library or an off-campus location, if desired. The session will involve an interview regarding your work history and experiences in negotiating for salary and additional compensation. You will also be asked to provide general information about yourself, such as age, level of education, and ethnicity. These sessions will be audio taped. By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow the audio taping of your interview. If clarification regarding interview responses is deemed necessary, you may be asked to attend a second interview session or to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Email communications may also be used to contact you; however, clarification of responses and verification of accuracy in reporting responses will be addressed by phone, unless you have a private email address you are willing to use for this purpose. Once I have completed my summary of your interview, I will be sending it to you for your review, to insure its accuracy.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. For example, one potential risk of participation in this project is that you may be uncomfortable responding to information about your salary or in sharing experiences that could be sensitive in nature. However, *Suzette* will take great care in keeping your identity confidential in the reporting of data collected in this study. Fictitious names will be used and positions and places of employment will be reported in a generic manner.

All of the information collected from you is confidential. That means that your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. The forms will all be coded, and *Suzette* will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the principal investigator's office.

Interview Outline

- I. Background information
 - a. Explanation of research and assurance of protection of identification as described in the proposal
 - b. Demographics (age & ethnicity) (age will be reported generically, i.e. middle aged or age range)
 - c. Educational background
 - d. Work experience
- II. Salary negotiation strategies used and gendered communication traits exhibited
 - a. Explore experience with negotiating for salary
 - b. Explore experience with negotiating for additional compensation
 - c. Identify strategies used to negotiate for salary
 - d. Identify strategies used to negotiate for additional compensation
- III. Reasons for not negotiating
 - a. Identify reasons for not negotiating for salary
 - b. Identify reasons for not negotiating for additional compensation
- IV. Characteristics of confidence in ability to negotiate
 - a. Identify characteristics that must be present in order to negotiate for salary
 - b. Identify characteristics that must be present in order to negotiate for additional compensation
 - c. Identify conditions present when negotiations cease
- V. Perceptions of negotiation strategies

- a. Identify participants' perceptions of differences in the types of negotiation strategies used by men and women
- b. Identify participants' perceptions of stereotypes of men's and women's negotiation strategies
- c. Identify participants' perceptions of most effective negotiation strategies
- d. Identify participants' perceptions of least effective negotiation strategies

Script for Potential Interview Follow-up Phone Call to Participants

Hello, _____

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in the study of the Salary Negotiation Strategies of Female Administrators in Higher Education. Your participation in this study is very much appreciated.

In attempting to summarize the information collected during your interview, I have a few follow-up questions for clarification purposes. As a reminder, please refer to the copy of the consent document you signed when you agreed to participate. At that time, I indicated that you do not have to participate in any follow-up if you chose not to do so and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Are you willing to participate in this follow-up? If so, is this a good time for you? If this is not a good time, I would like to schedule a time that would be most convenient for you. (Note: I may contact them by email to ask when a good time would be to call them.)

Once the time has been established, I would indicate the following:

As a follow-up to the question on _____, you indicated _____. Could you clarify (fill in whatever the question/clarification may relate to for this participant).

Thank you so much for your time. Once I have completed my summary of your interview, I will be sending it to you for your review, to insure its accuracy. Please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss the study, ask questions or for any other reason related to the study. You may contact me at 231-591-3901, *comptons@ferris.edu* or Dr. Louann Bierlein-Palmer at 269-387-3596, *l.bierleinpalmer@wmich.edu*.