

The Representation of the Women Presidents of the American Society of Criminology

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to highlight the women presidents of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) within the past decade, and as such, builds upon an earlier peer-reviewed article in 2006 that profiled the first five female presidents of the ASC. Since 2014, six of the last seven ASC presidents have been women: Joanne Belknap, Candace Kruttschnitt, Ruth D. Peterson, Karen Heimer, Meda Chesney-Lind and Sally S. Simpson. Specifically, this article examines how being a woman president has helped represent and shape the discipline of criminology and the ASC. Through a qualitative analysis, it provides further insight into factors contributing to their leadership success and challenges faced within academia and criminology from a female perspective, particularly noting the role of mentoring/networking, being female in a criminology discipline, work-life balance issues, and perspectives of being a female president in a historically male-dominated discipline. This article addresses how the representation of these women presidents has continued to raise the glass ceiling in a historically male-dominated academic discipline and the message it sends to those within the criminology discipline that is, women criminologists have and can continue to achieve success and overcome gender barriers.

KEYWORDS: American Society of Criminology, Female Criminologists, Qualitative Analysis, Women Criminologists.

The purpose of this article is to provide a qualitative analysis of women who have served in highly regarded executive leadership positions within the discipline of criminal justice and criminology to illustrate that women criminologists have and can continue to achieve success and overcome gender barriers. Specifically, this research examines women elected to serve as presidents of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) within the past decade, in an era wherein more women are continuing to be represented in higher education and within the criminal justice/criminology discipline. This article builds upon an earlier published peer-reviewed article (Petersen, 2006) profiling the first five presidents of the ASC. At that particular time, five women had been elected as presidents of the ASC all of whom served from 1989 to 2005. The first woman president of ASC was Joan McCord (since deceased) who served in 1989. She was followed by Joan Petersilia (since deceased), Freda Adler, Margaret Zahn and then Julie Horney (since deceased). The 2006 article not only profiled the first five presidents of the ASC but also included the extent to which each broke gender barriers within criminal justice and the ASC.

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From 2006-2013 there were no ASC women presidents at all. However, since 2014, six of the last seven presidents have been women: Joanne Belknap, Candace Kruttschnitt, Ruth D. Peterson, Karen Heimer, Meda Chesney-Lind and Sally S. Simpson. The representation, continued progression and inclusion of women as ASC presidents has changed from when Joan McCord first served in 1989 and even when Julie Horney served in 2005; that is, the most recent six presidents all received their Ph.Ds. from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, while their earlier predecessors earned their Ph.Ds. mostly in the 1960s and 1970s. This current trend within an era of increased representation, presence and acceptance of women in academia and within executive leadership positions in the discipline of criminal justice/criminology is truly significant.

Through the responses of these six women via structured interviews with a thematic qualitative analysis, this article provides insight into factors contributing to their leadership success as well as challenges faced of advancing to leadership positions within academia and criminology from a female perspective, particularly noting the extent to which “being female” has both helped and hindered their career progression, the role of mentoring and networking, work/life balance issues, and the message women’s executive leadership within the ASC sends to the wider criminology discipline. As the ASC is the largest criminal justice/criminology association in the world, with about 3000 members and about 5000 conference participants at the annual conference, this inclusion is both fitting and timely, especially at a period wherein more women are being represented in academia as administrators, faculty and students, even within the historically “male dominated” field of criminal justice/criminology. Nonetheless, these six women have continued to raise the glass ceiling as ASC presidents in a historically male-dominated discipline.

This article first begins with some brief but valuable information relating to the increased presence of women in higher education and criminal justice/criminology within the past decade or so while noting areas that still need improvement. This is followed by the methods used for interviewing each of the women presidents of the ASC elected since 2014. The thematic qualitative analysis includes factors contributing to their leadership as well as challenges faced in their progression as presidents. It concludes with a discussion on recommendations to further advance and represent women in this field to continue to raise the glass ceiling.

Literature Review: Women in Higher Education and in Criminal Justice/Criminology

It is well-known that more women than men attend college. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019)², women have outnumbered men in U.S. colleges and universities since the early 1980s, and as of 2018, females comprised about 57 percent of students on campuses nationwide with this trend expected to continually increase. Specifically relating to criminal justice and criminology, according to the 2019 report from the Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice (ADPCCJ, 2019)³, females comprised 58 percent of active Master’s students and 64 percent of active Doctoral students. Clearly, women constitute the majority of students overall and within Criminology and Criminal Justice graduate programs.

What is less known, however, is gender representation of faculty in U.S. colleges and universities. According to the American Association of University Women (2019), women now outpace men in the academy which is further evidenced by the NCES. To illustrate, by

² https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_303.10.asp?current=yes National Center for Education Statistics. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions.

³ <http://www.adpccj.com/>. The Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice conducts an annual survey of graduate programs. In 2019 thirty-eight programs participated in the survey.

2017 approximately 50% (49.6%) of faculty, 765,748 out of 1,543,569 in total, were female compared to 45% in 2005. (See Figure 1). This accounts for about a 1% increase every 2 years. This increasing trend among women faculty representation is also expected to continue. Relating to criminal justice and criminology professors, the most recent 2019 report from the ADPCCJ found that among the 38 programs offering graduate degrees, females accounted for 43% of all Criminology and Criminal Justice (CCJ) faculty with males at 57%, compared to 37% female and 63% male in 2011⁴. This trend in female representation among CCJ faculty is also expected to increase.

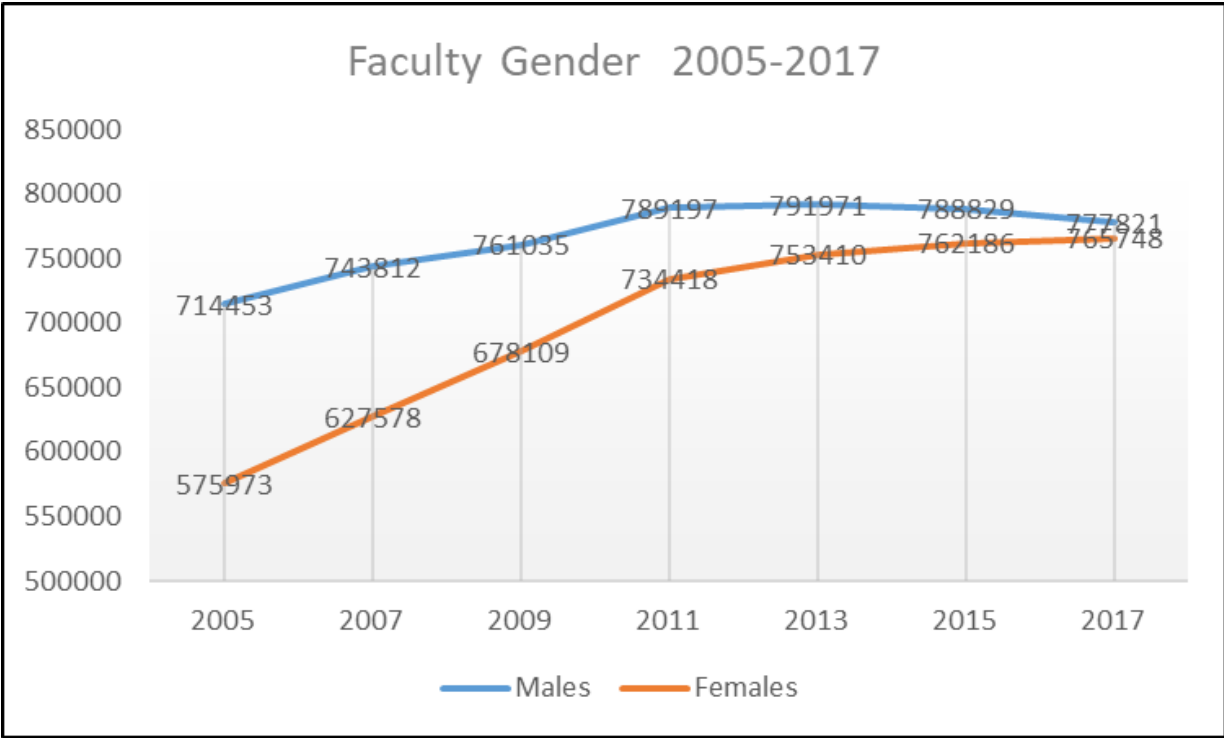


Figure 1. Faculty Gender Numbers by Year 2005-2017

Note. Faculty Gender Number, Year 2005-2017: National Center of Education Statistics. Employees in degree-granting post secondary institutions. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_314.30.asp?current=yes

But what about women in higher education institutions serving in administrative roles? This, too, has seen an increase. According to recent research by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, more than half of higher education administrators in the U.S. are women (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017; Lipscomb, 2020). More specifically, in 2005 women in higher education executive/administrative/managerial positions constituted 52% and by 2017, this increased to 56%⁵. The figure below shows the progression and representation of females within higher education administrative positions (See Figure 2).

⁴ The Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice conducts an annual survey of graduate programs. In 2019 thirty-eight programs participated in the survey and in 2011 thirty-one graduate programs participated. <http://www.adpccj.com/surveys.html>

⁵ National Center of Education Statistics. Employees in degree-granting post secondary institutions. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_314.30.asp?current=yes

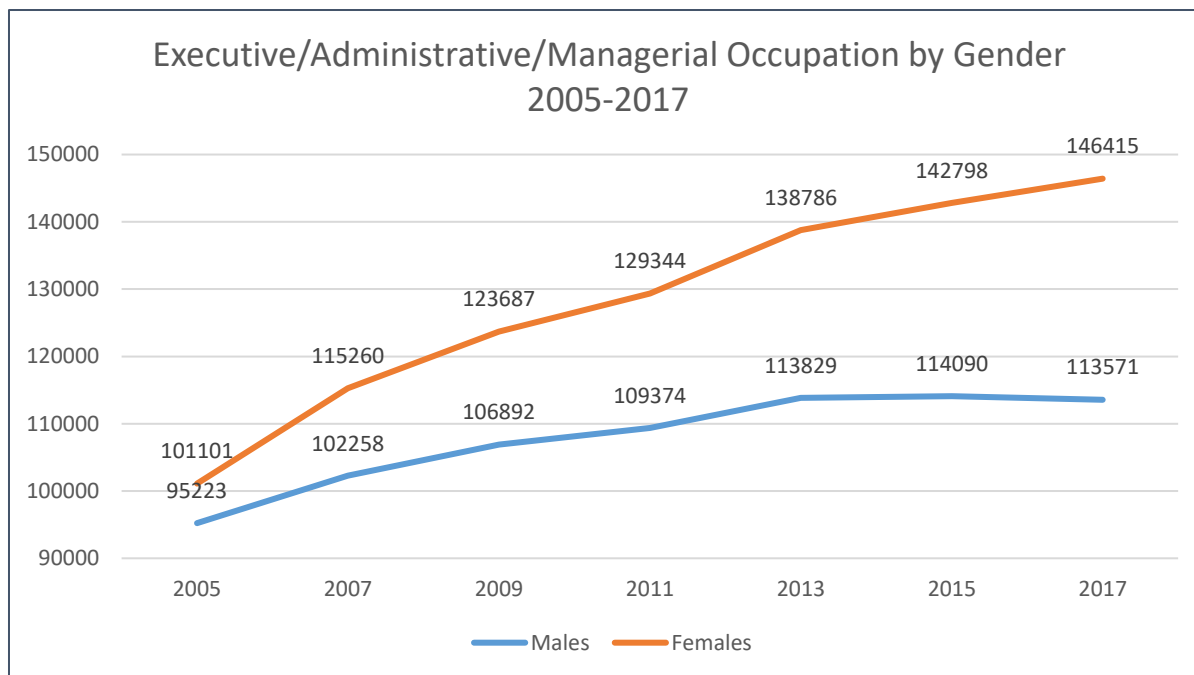


Figure 2. Faculty: Administrative/Executive/Managerial Numbers by Year 2005-2017

Note. Executive/Administrative/Managerial Primary Occupation by Gender, 2005-2017: National Center of Education Statistics. Employees in degree-granting post secondary institutions. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_314.30.asp?current=yes

The continued inclusion and progression of women in executive/administrative/managerial positions in higher education is undeniable as women have made significant gains within these positions. The trend in the representation of the number of women within higher education administration positions is to be celebrated. However, there are still significant gender obstacles faced in this progression that the presidents interviewed duly acknowledged. To illustrate, progress still has to be made insofar as the salary gap between the genders, even among the same rank (Bernat, 2015), women earning tenure, women obtaining full-professor status, minority representation, *and type* of administrative position, with women lagging in top executive positions, such as, Dean, Provost, Vice-President and President. Moreover, women continue to lag in higher-paying top executive positions with higher education. For example, according to the American Council on Education’s American College (ACE) President Study (2017), approximately 30% of college presidencies currently are held by women but with gender parity in college presidencies expected by 2030. Some of these concerns relating specifically to criminology have been similarly expressed by Chesney-Lind and Chagnon (2016) who concluded that, “Although women might be present in equal numbers, White men generally hold firm control over the most prestigious spaces within the field, and non-Whites are largely excluded” (p. 328).

The professional discipline of criminal justice and criminology has experienced a strong presence in female representation. For example, among those members of the ASC electing to report gender, over half (52%), 1,216 out of 2,418 were females in 2018, with this percentage about the same in 2010 with 51% (849 females out of 1,674)⁶. With women being the majority of students, faculty, and higher education administrators as well as members of the ASC, it is truly fitting that the last six out of seven presidents of the ASC have been women. In their book Gunnison and Helfgott (2019) profiled thirty-six women criminal justice leaders, six in higher education, through extensive interviews. Some of their interview findings and comments from

⁶ As per correspondence and spreadsheet provided by Susan Case, Deputy Director of the ASC.

criminal justice and criminology faculty administrators were quite similar to the ones expressed by the ASC presidents discussed later in the analysis.

What has contributed to the growing representation of women students, faculty and administrators, especially within the field of criminal justice? While there exists a myriad of reasons for this, Gunnison and Helfgott (2019) provide a solid foundation and historical context as to the rise of the growing number of women in the criminal justice field including in higher education. The women's movement of the 1970s and feminism helped bring women into the career spotlight. As all change takes time, the effect of the women's movement helped to facilitate the legitimacy of women as workers within the criminal justice system, especially in the field of policing, and as students and faculty in the discipline. As women have become more represented as students, especially among graduate students in criminal justice/criminology who have constituted the majority the past decade, their presence as faculty in higher education has resulted. Thus, the culture of being a woman professor studying crime and criminal justice has changed as more women have entered and succeeded in the field.

As noted in Petersen's (2006) research on the first five female presidents of the ASC (serving between 1989 to 2005), these women were more "traditional" criminologists who conducted research incorporating women and girls within the historically male-developed criminological and sociological theories (Hughes, 2005; Woofter, 2019) to examine the extent to which these established theories could help to explain the extent and nature of female crime and delinquency (Chesney-Lind & Chagnon, 2016; Ortiz, 2018); and as such, their research was "more accepted" within mainstream criminological research. Similarly, as expressed by Chesney-Lind and Chagnon (2016, p. 311), "Feminist criminologists have long criticized the masculinist bias in criminology, arguing for the inclusion of women, women's insight, and the study of women within the field." These last six presidents are much more activists with all either identifying as feminists and or conducting feminist scholarship. Furthermore, peer-reviewed research by women in the discipline also has ensued. As women represent over half of higher education administrators, these leadership roles have coincided within ASC leadership. This next section includes specific methods used in interviewing each of these presidents.

Methods

Since 2014, six of the last seven presidents have been women. All six of these presidents was contacted via email to see if she would be interested in answering a set of structured questions, similar to the Petersen (2006) article, of which each was provided the link to that specific publication. The interview questions can be found in the Appendix. The questions were similar to the earlier article on which this study was built but two new ones were added/modified. These were: (1) "As you have been one of the few female ASC presidents (but within a great majority the past several years), what are both challenges and benefits of your presidential position, especially from a female perspective"? and (2) "In the previous article one aspect of the president's lives that became abundantly clear almost immediately from all of them was the 'work-life balance' especially from a motherhood and female perspective. How have you been able to balance work-life and how do you perceive this to be different for males and females?" Other questions centered around the following: their main interest in the criminal justice field; being a female in a historically male-dominated discipline; active involvement within the ASC; challenges and benefits of the presidency from a female perspective; type of research done relating to women and feminism; and the role of mentoring.

The interviews also became semi-structured in that topics were explored that emerged during the interview relevant to the dialogue which allowed for ideas related to their experience not specifically asked in the questions. One such example was from Simpson whose presidency coincided with the cancellation of the 2020 ASC conference amid the Covid-19

pandemic and significant decisions she and the ASC executive board had to make. After obtaining IRB approval in 2018, each president was contacted. All were interested in participating in the study and agreed to be interviewed. The interviews mostly occurred during 2019 with one taking place in 2020. Each was provided the set of questions in advance of the interview. Each phone interview was scheduled at a mutually agreeable time, lasted between 40 to 90 minutes, with an average of a little over one hour, and included the same questions for each scholar. After the interviews, the transcripts were produced within 48 hours and then sent to each professor for review. Each made minor edits of her transcript with all giving final approval of the interview responses⁷.

Going in ascending order from the earliest to the most recent, the following (Table 1) includes some brief information of each president. The six women presidents of the ASC from 2014-2020 include her name, date of presidency, current title with discipline and affiliation, and name of the university including date of their Ph.D:

Table 1

The Women Presidents of the American Society of Criminology, 2014-2020

Name	Date of ASC Presidency	Current Title with Discipline and Affiliation	University and Date of Ph.D.
Joanne Belknap	2014	Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of Colorado	Michigan State University, 1986
Candace Kruttschnitt	2015	Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto	Yale University, 1979
Ruth D. Peterson	2016	Professor Emerita of Sociology, Ohio State University	University of Wisconsin, 1983
Karen Heimer	2018	Professor of Sociology, University of Iowa	University of Wisconsin, 1989
Meda Chesney-Lind	2019	Professor of Women's Studies, University of Hawaii-Manoa	University of Hawaii-Manoa, 1977
Sally S. Simpson	2020	Distinguished Professor of Criminology, University of Maryland	University of Massachusetts, 1985

Analysis and Findings

The qualitative analysis of the interview responses is classified into several themes. These categorical themes were generated both inductively, that is, they emerged from the presidents' interviewed, as well as deductively, meaning that the categorized themes were part of the original questions (Brooke & Semlyen, 2019). These major categories centered around themes that contributed to their representation in continuing to raise the glass ceiling as well as challenges faced by being one of the few woman presidents in a historically male-dominated discipline. These themes include: being female in the criminology discipline (especially early in their career), the importance of mentoring and networking, balancing work/life and being

⁷ Transcripts are available upon request to the author.

one of the few, but among the majority the last seven years, women ASC presidents from a female perspective.

Being Female in the Criminology Discipline

Each president was asked how “being female” has been both helped and hindered them. As most of these presidents earned their Ph.Ds. in the late 1970s to late 1980s, being a woman criminologist was not terribly common at the time and research by women, especially then, was not taken as seriously as it is now. For an example, Chesney-Lind stated that, “Initially, in the 1970s, it [being a female and a feminist] was a great hindrance. As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I had to piece things together. At the time, it was obvious on who was granted and denied tenure based on feminist work. Being a female and a feminist in this field was a challenge.” She further added that, “it [being a female and a feminist] forced me to make connections and gain support from both male and female colleagues. Being a female and a feminist in this field is no longer a liability.” These sentiments were likewise echoed by Kruttschnitt who stated that, “Now, it is not like earlier times when men dominated this field. At the very start of my career, I began presenting papers on panels on sentencing at the ASC. It was very intimidating as most on the panels and in the audience were males,” and by Simpson who noted that, “As a young scholar, it was unusual to have a lot of women in the discipline. But more attention was given to you as a female scholar. So, it helped being a woman because we were more noticed and unique.” As shown, they indicated the difficulties of navigating “being female” particularly at the beginning of their career but also noted how gender was a positive attribute in the study of criminology.

Similarly, Heimer added that, “When I first began going to the ASC meetings, I realized that I was often the only woman in the room. But that has changed quite a bit; we have come a long way since then.” This was further concluded by Chesney-Lind who stated that, “Criminology has evolved over the decades [40 years] since I have been in this field. I have been a part of new research looking at intersectionality and systems of oppression regarding gender, race and class, and its profound inequalities.”

Regarding these gender and race perspectives, Peterson, the only minority, African-American woman president, had a different take on being female in criminology but which substantiated Chesney-Lind’s last quote on the evolving state of research into the intersectionalities of criminology. Peterson stated that, “I am not sure how much my academic accomplishments or challenges have depended on being female versus being African American. I assume that these two statuses have combined to play a role in each.” She further argued that, “I also suspect that many of the opportunities that I have had to engage within national criminology circles have come in part because I am perceived as able to ‘represent’ both gender and race perspectives.” From both a minority and female perspective Peterson’s experience was uniquely different from the others as she discussed being both African American and being a woman within criminology with both shaping her career.

As the aforementioned comments showed, the presidents had many barriers of “being female” at the beginning of their careers when there were few women professors, but it has evolved to where women criminologists have become more accepted and represented. Moreover, all the presidents discussed the invaluable role of being mentored, how this shaped their careers and played a major role in their leadership representation.

Mentoring and Networking

The importance of mentoring in academia, and within the discipline of criminal justice, is a cornerstone for academic success (Breci & Martin, 2000; Kim et al, 2015; Kunselman et al., 2003; Livingstone & Naismith, 2018; McElrath, 1990; Moak & Walker, 2014; Mutchnick

& Mutchnick, 1991; Peterson, 1999; Zellers et al., 2008) which was quoted specifically by Peterson who stated that “Mentoring is essential to academic success.” Similarly, Heimer echoed that, “Mentorship is incredibly important, especially for women and scholars of color.”

All of us have had mentors and know the importance of being mentored and being a mentor. Being in the criminal justice/criminology field in the 1970s and 1980s, there were few women faculty members able to provide mentorship to the presidents and as such, most were mentored by male scholars. For example, Kruttschnitt stated that, “Donald Black (Yale University) and David Ward and Bob Holt (University of Minnesota) were instrumental in shaping my career, albeit in different ways. All were male and supported my goals and aspirations.” Similarly, Peterson wrote, “I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my dissertation chair, John Hagan, and countless senior and peer mentors for the success I’ve had.” Simpson further added that, “All of my mentors were male. I had terrific male mentors in grad school and when I became a junior faculty member.”

As more women have become more represented as both faculty and students, the opportunity of having a woman mentor with a woman mentee has also seemingly corresponded of which some of the presidents addressed. Heimer stated that, “I have been lucky enough to be mentored by many women leaders in our field, including Ruth Peterson, Candace Kruttschnitt, Sally Simpson, Julie Horney and many others.” Likewise, Belknap noted, “It is difficult for me to imagine how I would have gotten my Ph.D. if not for Merry Morash. She was invaluable to me.” Moreover, Kruttschnitt stated that, “I had great role models while I was at the University of Minnesota. There were two tenured women in my department who were amazing scholars, and I knew I had to jump-through-hoops to get through the tenure process just like everyone else.” Belknap, Heimer and Kruttschnitt all stressed the importance of mentorship and networking by other women scholars, although limited at the time but increasing through the decades.

However, the extent to which the gender of mentorship “matters” insofar as academic success and career progression is unclear. For example, Chesney-Lind said that, “Lee Bowker was my first mentor. He and Jim Short were instrumental in shaping my career. Joy Pollock was another and she and I published a book on women and crime together.” Simpson added that, “I have had tremendous sources of support from both males and females.” Similarly, Kruttschnitt wrote, “Being mentored and being a mentor are both important to academic success, but it truly does not matter whether a mentor is male or female as long as they support you and are significant in your achieving your academic goals.” Peterson’s research (1999) found that the quality or kind of mentoring was not influenced by race or gender. Contextually, at the time of Peterson’s research and at the time that Kruttschnitt and others were in the early stages of their career, there were far less women faculty, especially in criminology, compared to sociology. Regardless, the quality of the mentoring relationship and the extent to which they support one’s goals are unequivocally important. It, therefore, is helpful to be mentored and to be a mentor for professional success from and by both males and females which brings a diversity of gender perspectives both professionally and personally.

Related to mentoring, networking is likewise significant to one’s professional career. Baltodano et al. (2012, p. 74) wrote that “mentors are instrumental in helping them [women] recognize opportunities for career advancement through the utilization of networks to obtain desired positions.” The above section clearly addressed how being mentored was significantly influential in their career progression.

Likewise, to help “find a place” within criminology and to aid in their representation as presidents, each scholar similarly attributed the importance of networking and support, especially from other women scholars and within the Division of Women and Crime (DWC). Each discussed presenting and/or attending the ASC conference as pivotal in her career, especially in the early stages. To illustrate, Chesney-Lind stated that, “I became more actively involved in the ASC, particularly within the Division on Women and Crime, in the early 1980s.

I felt I finally found my place.” Belknap similarly said that, “I got together with a handful of members of the DWC. I felt lucky to have one-on-one contacts with feminist scholars studying criminology.” Peterson added that, “One early [ASC] meeting stands out to me because I met Joan McCord, ASC’s first woman president. She complimented me on the first paper I presented at a meeting. Her presence and her words at the session were encouraging and helped to sustain me during discouraging moments.” This type of encouragement was also mentioned by Simpson: “It was the Women’s Division of the ASC wherein I found female mentorship. As a Ph.D. student at Amhurst, I participated in a round table at the ASC. My session involved a critique of Freda Adler’s *Sisters in Crime* book that had just been published. Freda actually showed up to the session and was generous in her praise of the criticisms of her book.”

Peterson similarly noted that, “As a young faculty member, I joined ASC’s Division on Women and Crime (DWC) and became involved with the founding of the Division on People of Color and Crime (DPCC). These divisions remain second (and welcoming) homes for me within ASC and the profession.” Similarly, Chesney-Lind stated that the ASC, particularly the DWC, “helped broaden my network from both a research perspective as well as being a small percentage of females working within the field and/or doing research on women and crime.” Additionally, Simpson wrote “It was the Women’s Division of the ASC wherein I found female mentorship.”

There are many ways to network in higher education and for the discipline; it could be via the ASC conference, the annual Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) conference or one of the many regional conferences relating to criminal justice and criminology. Networking can be achieved through attending/presenting at sessions/panels, to meeting with participants/audience members after the presentation, to showcasing a research poster, to meeting people through the various social events and receptions and for many of these women, being a part of the DWC. The DWC is just one of the many 14 divisions within the ASC. Becoming actively involved in one of the divisions can provide an avenue for shared interests, belonging, friendship and acceptance into an academic community.

Networking plays a critical role in professional development (Raj et al., 2017) and is a main reason for attending a professional conference. For higher education, belonging to a professional association and attending conferences can promote career development (Mata et al., 2010) of which each president discussed as being instrumental in her career. Conferences provide opportunities to socialize and to talk with other scholars, especially those whose interests correspond and overlap with one another. Attending or presenting at a conference can also help renew interest or reinvigorate scholars, especially those at mid or latter stages of their career wherein burn-out is more likely. Thus, the importance of networking through professional association membership and attending professional conferences cannot be stressed enough. Having a network of other women scholars within the ASC, and often through the DWC, has been essential in shaping the leadership careers of each president. To conclude, Heimer said, “I would say that from the beginning and continuing to present, networking and collaborating with other women scholars has had a very positive impact on my career.”

Work-Life Balance

Women’s family roles affect their professional career and advancing within their career to a much larger extent than men. Male faculty are more likely than female faculty to have nonworking spouses or those in non-professional careers. Padilla (2007) expresses that higher education administrative positions often require relocation which can be more challenging for women if they have a professional, working spouse and children.

Each of the six professors was asked about work-life balance and this question was further elaborated on in this study in relation to the earlier article (Petersen, 2006) as it became apparent it was a truly significant theme. All duly acknowledged the challenges and difficulty

of this balance and added, that it is truly gendered, that is, it differs, negatively, being a working professional woman in the world of academia where women have faced, and continue to face, significant, unique barriers compared to men. Much scholarly research has been written about this subject and is truly beyond the scope of this paper to go into significant detail, but some of the comments the presidents mentioned are crucial to consider and reflect upon relating to their representation as women presidents and for our current and future generation of women scholars in the field.

To begin Heimer stated that, “The work-family balance has been the hardest part of my career for me” while Peterson admitted, “It’s important to have, but difficult to achieve, a good work-life balance.” This sentiment was echoed by Belknap who stated, “It is very difficult to balance parenting and work in academia—there’s always more you can be doing in both of them.” Heimer further indicated that, “Finding time to write while juggling teaching and a heavy service load was not easy and meant that I pulled lot of second shifts, beginning my writing late in the evening, finishing up in the wee hours of the morning, and therefore not getting very much sleep at some points.” Simpson added that, “There are many challenges earlier in a career for those with families. Scholarship is held back.” Even with tenure and have established one’s career, Belknap noted that, “The hardest part is trying to have to continually prove yourself [as a woman], even after tenure.” These work-life balance issues are gendered and matter within in academia.

As such, women in higher education often tend to progress slower in promotion from associate to full professor (Terosky et al., 2014). To illustrate, Kruttschnitt said, “I raised two daughters. It wasn’t always easy, and it probably took me longer than normal to get promoted to a full professor.” Moreover, Chesney-Lind commented that “Having children and raising them takes a hit, both personally and professionally. There have been enormous penalties for women in this regard and working at home is so gendered.” Being a working mom comes with having a “baby penalty,” (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Mason et al., 2013; Young et al., 2020) even if it is implicit bias. Women with children, especially single moms, have a lower likelihood of being granted tenure and/or promotion to full professor, especially compared to single men without children who often set the research bar so high that it is seen as “unattainable” or “unachievable” for advancement for many women in the professoriate, particularly single moms.

Moreover, Terosky et al. further noted that “women academics find themselves in vulnerable positions in regard to career advancement because they carry disproportionately higher workloads in the areas of teaching, service and lower level administration” (2014, p. 60) while also expecting to maintain a vigorous and active research agenda that is, peer-reviewed research publications, and in many cases, have continued to increase research expectations while having the same teaching and service responsibilities. The presidents further elaborated on this gendered service expectation. For example, Peterson said that “Being a relatively successful Black woman criminologist has also meant having far too many opportunities to contribute administrative or service work, compared to some of my [non-Black] counterparts.” Simpson added that, “There are more service obligations as women” while Heimer noted, “I ‘declined’ some service requests from my university after a certain point to allow me to prioritize my research and become a full professor.” Belknap also relayed declining requests but noted the benefits of being a mom in academia: “One thing that surprised me [after becoming a mother] was that I actually became a more productive scholar and it was because I learned how to use my time more efficiently, which was largely aided by being better at saying no to things. I became a better scholar and teacher after having my son.”

Relating to gendered roles and expectations, Belknap further stated that, “My experience as a mom while in academia is that most of us feel like *we’re not doing enough at work or parenting, and I just don’t see fathers of young children struggling so much with this.*” (original emphasis). Simpson added that, “My duties as a department chair did interfere with

family events, especially working on the weekends. There is a balancing act no matter how you cut it.” The work-family balancing act is further troubling among faculty who are single moms who make comparably less than men, tend to have more service expectations than men, must take on career responsibilities beyond “8 hours” and have infinite familial responsibilities. The progression is both gendered and related to single parenting. This is truly one of the greatest issues relating to earning tenure and promotion and progression to full professorship.

Many gender-specific difficulties exist for women in academia, especially those with children. However, little research has examined the role, productivity and progression of single women with children within higher education, especially among those children without fathers and those without familial support, as most academicians go where the job is, not where the family is, let alone ways to reduce barriers among this growing and increasing population of woman scholars.

While all admitted that the work-life issue was the most challenging in relation to balancing with their career, each also had a significant partner/husband and/or significant familial support. For example, Chesney-Lind stated that, “I have been fortunate to have had enormous support from my husband.” Further, Kruttschnitt stated that, “It [work-life balance] is very different for males and females. I raised two daughters. I had an extremely supportive husband, who respected my career and ambitions. He had a professional career as well, so we had to help each other out with our family responsibilities and careers.” For Simpson “I did not get married until I was 40 and had a son at age 43. I was already well-established in my career and was far along.” A supportive family was instrumental in career advancement and in helping to achieve a healthy work-family balance. These contributing factors to success were also mentioned by the professors interviewed by Gunnison and Helfgott (2019) and in the responses by over one-hundred full and associate male and female professors in the Bernat (2015) study. Furthermore, Gunnison and Helfgott (2019) noted that, “Despite breaking through barriers in the field, women in our sample have made personal sacrifices, including travel as part of their job that often took them away from their families, living apart from their spouse or children, balancing motherhood, and perhaps making the decision not to have any children” (p. 206).

To reduce gender barriers in academia relating to work-life balance, Chesney-Lind stated that, “The academic career needs to be better structured, more flexible and more accommodating for women. We need to seek out leadership positions so we can help others succeed.” The importance of supporting women into higher education and bringing women into higher levels of institutional leadership is critical and further reiterates the importance of mentoring and networking. Peterson stressed that, “My practice work has mainly involved efforts to facilitate the success of women and other underrepresented scholars in their academic pursuits. In collaboration with several other women members of ASC, for several years I helped to organize and facilitate an annual tenure workshop during the ASC meeting that was sponsored jointly by the DWC and DPCC.” She further alluded that, “More recently, I co-founded the Racial Democracy, Crime and Justice Network (RDCJN), which among other activities, sponsors an annual Crime and Justice Summer Research Institute (SRI) designed to facilitate the success of young faculty from underrepresented groups in their pursuit of academic success.” It is these types of efforts that can further help the progression of women in higher education and to help support leadership positions within criminal justice and criminology for women to continue to be further represented.

Perspectives of Being a Female President in a Male-Dominated Profession

This final section elaborates further on some of the perspectives of the first theme of being a female in criminology but as the focus of this article is on the representation of women as ASC presidents, the analysis concludes with their insight as being one of the few, but the majority the last seven years, women presidents leading the largest criminology association in

the world. Specifically relating to gender, Kruttschnitt noted that, “I took the presidency very seriously, and I do not think it matters if one is a male or a female. I do not think that there are unique aspects to this job for women. It is challenging and rewarding for both genders.” Simpson similarly noted that “I had a sense of this job from both genders.” This is similar to the earlier section on mentoring in which the scholars mentioned that their success and continuance in breaking the glass ceiling was positively influenced by both men and women.

Simpson further discussed an interesting, but not unusual, take that women will bring “personal politics” into decisions, especially from a leadership perspective: “As a woman, there is an assumption that you will bring politics into your decision-making and that discussions will be about politics. These are challenging to navigate. The positions we take should reflect the scholarship of the field not politics regardless of gender.” She noted that it was difficult to navigate the politics and scholarship conundrum and that ASC needs to take positions on policy issues informed by scholarship and not politics. Relating to such policy positions, Belknap noted that:

When I was first on the Executive Committee (as a board member), many of the women on the executive board discussed sexual harassment and exploitation against women. There was an attempt to develop an ASC Ethics statement. It was frustrating, especially as a feminist and activist, when the policy did not pass. When I was ASC President, we kick-started the ethics policy work again, and it did eventually pass under Ruth Peterson’s presidency, but started under mine.

Many duly noted the honor of being an ASC president and the tremendous amount of support received before, during and after their presidency. Peterson stated that, “I am very proud to be in the company of the other ten women who have been elected as President of ASC.” Simpson stated that, “They[my colleagues at the University of Maryland] have provided me much guidance and understanding for my commitment as the president. I have also leaned on support by some older women colleagues who have been past presidents including Candace Kruttschnitt, Meda Chesney-Lind, Margaret Zahn and Karen Heimer. I have been able to get a sense of this job from both genders.” This reifies the importance of mentorship and networking from both male and female scholars. Additionally, Heimer stated, “At this point, ASC has had quite a few female presidents, and I am very honored to be in their company. They are all wonderfully talented scholars and leaders, and I am thankful that several of the female past-presidents shared their wisdom and advice with me during my presidential year.”

What type of message does being a female president send? Simpson stated that being a female president of the ASC, “sends a signal to the members as to aspirational goals of the field. Seeing women leading the organization is a positive thing. Seeing women serving on the executive board is positive.” Relating to this, Heimer stated that, “I think that being a woman has been helpful in my leadership roles, both in the ASC and in my university” and continued with, “There are more women on the board now than ever before, and the ethos on the board is very collaborative and mutually supportive.” Moreover, Chesney-Lind stated that, “The demographics of research in this field as well as within the ASC have shifted significantly for the better.” Peterson added to the demographic perspective from a minority perspective in that:

I was persuaded to run for this office because no person from an underrepresented race or ethnic group had held the position. Trusted colleagues thought that I might have a reasonable chance of filling this void. As president, one of my main goals was to bring attention to the contributions of underrepresented race and ethnic scholars to criminology and to the Association. The changes that I sought to help

bring about (more recognition of the contributions of scholars from underrepresented race and ethnic groups, and more attention to scholarship with race at the center) during my tenure as president are the types that take place incrementally.

Finally, each of these six presidents further contributed invaluable to her role as president within the culture of ASC. Belknap helped to bring sessions/panels on intersectionality, gender, race and class, and also helped to facilitate an ASC ethics statement; Kruttschnitt helped bring in sessions/panels with practitioners in the criminal justice field to help bridge academia-practice; in her role as president, Peterson brought attention to contributions of underrepresented groups relating to race, ethnicity and gender by concentrating sessions/panels with these such themes; Heimer helped to further embrace the ideas of the ASC and worked in collaboration with the executive board and ASC members; Chesney-Lind encouraged scholars from the Pacific Islands, Australia/New Zealand and Asia to participate in the 2019 San Francisco conference as well as to offer more panels/sessions on gender and patriarchy; and finally, Simpson focused on panels on white collar crime, science and technology relating to criminology and abolition in relating to “shrinking” the criminal justice system (unfortunately, the 2020 meeting under her presidency was cancelled due to Covid 19).

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to examine women elected to serve as presidents of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) within the past decade, in an era wherein more women are continuing to be represented in higher education and within the criminal justice/criminology discipline and builds upon an earlier published peer-reviewed article (Petersen, 2006) that profiled the first five female presidents of the ASC. Since 2014, six of the last seven ASC presidents have been women: Joanne Belknap, Candace Kruttschnitt, Ruth D. Peterson, Karen Heimer, Meda Chesney-Lind and Sally S. Simpson. Through a thematic qualitative analysis, this article addressed how the representation of these women presidents has continued to raise the glass ceiling in a historically male-dominated academic discipline and that women criminologists have and can continue to achieve success and overcome gender barriers, albeit differently than men.

Each of these six scholars has made significant strides in continuing to break the glass ceiling set, in part, by their five predecessors in being represented as presidents of the ASC in a traditionally male-oriented discipline. So, what were the contributive factors of being representative as women presidents and raising the glass ceiling in a historically male-dominated discipline? There are many but from the perspectives of these six presidents they included: the examples set by the first five women presidents; a strong work ethic by breaking gender barriers, especially at the beginning of their careers; solid mentorship and support from both female and male colleagues; strong support and friendship from a network of women professors and former woman presidents; active involvement both within the ASC and DWC; maintaining a healthy work-life balance, especially with a supportive family structure; and helping to bring attention and recognition of female leadership by being a president of the ASC.

As indicated in the beginning of this article, the “culture” of criminal justice has changed within the past several decades. Women represent the majority of college students, about half of all faculty members, over half of those serving within administrative capacities in higher education, the majority of graduate students in criminal justice/criminology, an increasing number of criminal justice/criminology faculty members, over half of all ASC members reporting gender and six out of the last seven ASC presidents. As stated by Chesney-Lind and Chagnon, (2016, p. 311), “Women criminologists are a very substantial presence within the field, surely wielding influence that cannot be ignored, “especially being that the last six of

seven presidents of the ASC duly notes this. One can only hope the progression of females continues to rise in proportion to their representation but also duly acknowledge much more progress has yet to be made in relation to salary gaps (Bernat, 2015), minority representation, being granted tenure, being awarded full professor, have high service loads, developing realistic “work life” initiatives, and serving in various administrative ranks within higher education all which is well beyond the main scope of this article but some was addressed by the women presidents.

Regardless, these presidents have made significant strides and have overcome many gender-based barriers to not only represent women, but women in a historically male-dominated discipline and presidency of the largest professional criminology association in the world. As shown, the majority, or close to the majority, of those in M.S. or Ph.D. programs in criminal justice/criminology are now women and there has been an increasing number of minority students, especially African-American, in the surveyed graduate programs⁸. Thus, it can be projected that there will continue to be more women and more minorities as students, both undergraduate and graduate, which also has been steadily increasing in the composition of gender and race of CCJ professors.

Relating to the criminal justice system and those studying it, especially relating to the social unrest in America since the beginning of June 2020, the future “face” of criminology and criminal justice likely will look different than in the past. It likely will be more represented by women and minorities which may be attractive to a more diverse set of students. Experiences by women and minorities working as practitioners in the criminal justice system, researchers and/or faculty/students will change the face of criminal justice programs in America.

Moreover, it is interesting to ponder the extent to which the next generation of women leaders of the ASC will be similar or different to the ones profiled in this study and the earlier (Petersen, 2006). As women have now become the majority in the study of criminology and criminal justice, might feminist work and the direction of scholarship by and about women change? Many women, and some men, are feminists but do not conduct research on women and crime. Moreover, both women and men conduct research on women and crime but are not necessarily feminists. Future research could detail how the representation of females has shaped the direction of scholarship now in and the future. Likewise, workload and pay differentials between women and men need a closer look, especially in an era of Covid as many women, especially single moms, have had to juggle increased demands at work while also being a K12 teacher.

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Notes on Contributors

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What was the main impetus for beginning your work in the criminology field?
2. How has being a female in the field of criminology both helped and hindered you?
3. When did you become actively involved in the ASC?
4. Discuss some of your experiences as being one of the few female presidents of the ASC.
5. What type of work (teaching, research, field experience, practice experience, service, etc.) have you done with regard to women as offenders, victims, and/or workers in the cj system?
6. Describe the importance of mentorship, that is, both from a mentor and mentee perspective.
7. To what extent do you define yourself as a feminist scholar?
8. As you have been one of the few female ASC presidents (but within a great majority the past six years), what are both challenges and benefits of your presidential position, esp from a female perspective?
9. How have you been able to balance work-life and how do you perceive this to be different for males and females?