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Identifications of Challenges and Success Factors of Females Entering and Advancing in the Profession of Emergency Management

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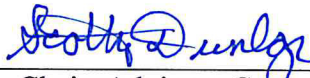
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Identification of Challenges and Success Factors of Females Entering and Advancing in the
Profession of Emergency Management

By

Audra Cronen

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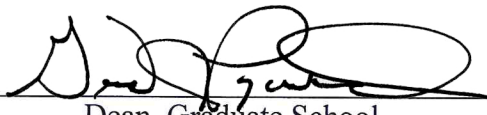
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IDENTIFICATION OF CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS FACTORS OF FEMALES
ENTERING AND ADVANCING IN THE PROFESSION OF EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

By

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Bachelors of Science
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Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Tim and Karen Cronen,
thank you for your unending love and support.

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I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Scotty Dunlap, for all of the guidance and the incredible support he has given me throughout this process. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Chad Foster and Dr. Ryan Baggett, for their assistance and encouragement throughout writing this thesis. I would like to express my thanks to my wonderful parents, Tim and Karen Cronen, for always being there for me and for all of their love. I truly appreciate the late night encouraging texts from everyone who knew that I was trying my best to finish my thesis on time. Many thanks to Starbucks and Folgers for the supreme coffee for all the late nights and early mornings. Also, thank you Kelly Sowders, for coming up with this topic and always being reassuring. I am ultimately thankful to God for without Him, I am nothing.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on how women in the emergency management field have identified and overcome challenges when entering and advancing in the profession. The two research questions were:

- What barriers have females experienced when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management?
- In what ways have females overcome barriers when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management?

These questions were answered by five women who work in the field of emergency management and responded to a series of interview questions. These women made it clear that while this is a predominately male-dominated field of work, stress will always be evident within this field, but the ways in which challenges are managed may vary.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Women in emergency management have had many challenges working in their career fields. These women have gone through so many challenges and have overcome many of them over the years. These challenges focus on how this field is predominately comprised of males and it is not always easy for a woman to work in the field or even begin in the field. Focusing on the barriers that women have faced and how they have overcome them is the focus of this research.

Some of the challenges that women face in emergency management are not specific to emergency management careers, but some of the challenges are quite different due to it being a relatively young field where men have usually had these positions and many emergency managers were originally from male-dominated professions, such as being a fire chief, a police chief, or mayor.

It has not been until recent decades that women have even been able to be a part of any of these fields. In 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt helped to pen the document ‘American Social Defense Organization’ to develop the use of women as volunteers in war missions. This was the first document of its kind within war efforts to involve women to protect their homes and their neighborhoods during times of invasion. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was named “the first woman in Homeland Security/Emergency Management” (McBride, 2011). It has been 75 years since women began to involve themselves within the field of emergency management.

More women have become emergency managers in the last 10 years and they range from 25-34 years of age. Many of these women became engaged in the field after

September 11, 2001, according to Kirby Felts, the Chair of the Board of Directors of EMPOWER (Pittman, 2011). After September 11, 2001, many women felt as if they should lend their help in any way to give back after the attacks. Several women joined the efforts to help with disaster relief.

There are challenges that women still face today entering the field of emergency management, according to the Department of Homeland Security Annual Employee Survey (2016), it showed that there were only 36% women that worked in the Department of Homeland Security. For example, one state's emergency management agency has 46% of women working in their emergency management office. The survey then utilized a Likert scale of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Of the 78 questions given, question 38 discussed "Prohibited Personnel Practices" which showed, for example, "illegal discriminating for or against any employee/applicant, obstructing a person's right to compete for employment, knowingly violating veterans' preference requirements, etc." Of those that answered the question, there were 57.43% positive responses that strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, while only 19.51% negative responses were provided. The positive response indicates that women may have been discriminated against within the field.

Evidence that shows that there are an increasing number of women in the field is that creation of organizations dedicated to women, such as The International Network of Women in Emergency Management (InWEM). These organizations focus on empowering women in the field. These organizations are also a lifeline for some women who face the challenges and feel as if they cannot discuss them with their superiors.

The challenges that many of these women face may be different, but a great deal may be derived from the fact that the field is predominately comprised of males and women face issues that men may have not dealt with in the career. According to Pittman (2011, para 16), “Emergency Management has been called the ‘good old boys club.’” The Director of the Seattle Office of Emergency Management stated, “When I first got into the field it was very male-dominated, and of the men in the field, it was very military-dominated.”

The research presented here will focus on women in the field of emergency management and their personal experiences and challenges that they may face in their careers. Interview questions were sent to the participants and the data was collected qualitatively from their narrative responses. The women participating were asked to be completely honest and answer as truthfully as they could so that the data could potentially help other women in the field to gain empowerment by knowing they are not alone and there are ways to manage challenges with which they are faced.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This thesis focuses on women in the field of emergency management and how they manage challenges they have faced when entering and advancing in the profession and how they have overcome challenges. There were two research questions that were utilized:

- What barriers have females experienced when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management?
- What ways have females overcome barriers when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management?

These research questions not only look more in depth into the lives of the women in the field, but help to show that women truly do have issues within the field, whether it be harassment, inability to get the job they would like, and also the inability to receive the pay they should receive. Working within this male-dominated field, which has just recently experienced an increase of women entering the field, has sometimes created challenges for these women. These challenges are noted by personal experiences as indicated in the participants' responses to the interview questions.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is not only to answer the research questions, whether it matches the ideal outcome or it does not, but its sole purpose is to bring light the challenges and the types of problems women in emergency management face. The purpose is to focus on these women's experiences and how they have dealt with issues in their workplaces. Not only does this research present their experiences, but also their advice and recommendations to women entering the field of emergency management. Hopefully, the outcome of this research will not only allow women entering the field of emergency management the option of seeing others' challenges and their advice, but also that they are not alone in their thoughts or are by themselves with respect to unique challenges. The purpose of the research was to also focus on a target audience, which includes women who work in government, state and federal, or for a specific emergency management department, agency, or office.

The definition of emergency management used for this thesis comes from the State Emergency Management Director Handbook (NEMA, 2011, p.22):

“Emergency management is an activity, a profession, a discipline and a critical government agency. Its purpose is to apply resources and efforts to mitigate, prevent when possible, protect where feasible, and to respond and to recover from all threats and hazards that impact the safety and security of the nation.

Government has the responsibility to ensure an effective response to any disaster or emergency that threatens the residents and communities of a state.”

This definition focuses on the purpose of emergency management and how those that work in the field work to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond, and recover from disasters in our country. The women that are asked to participate in this research are involved in state and federal organizations that truly fulfill the definition stated in the above.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consisted of interviewing five women within the emergency management field. These women were contacted and asked to participate based on their meeting the criteria of professional engagement in the field and being in early, mid, or late career. Completed and returned narratives were investigated to determine themes across all participant responses to the interview questions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research was conducted utilizing Critical Theory as the theoretical frameworks. Creswell (2007, p. 27) stated, “Critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (Fay, 1987). Women were viewed within the context of this research as a potentially marginalized population based on gender who have experienced challenges when entering and advancing in the male-dominated profession of emergency

management. Critical Theory is one that “seeks to change the situation” (Crotty, 2007, p. 130), which supports the goal of this research as not only to identify challenges, but also to identify ways in which women have productively responded to these challenges, thus informing higher education academic program administrators, employers, and women seeking to enter and advance in the field of emergency management of best practices that can be utilized.

Another piece of the theoretical framework would be Institutionalism Theory (Rollag, 2015), which “asserts that the institutional environment can strongly influence the development of formal structures in an organization.” This theory shows how a workplace environment influences the ways in which the organization will behave. These Behaviors are much like the manifestations of organizational culture, which is where an organization has its own environment and the culture shows the habits and the concepts in which the workplace takes on as its own. These cultures and theories make the workplace environment to be as it is and sometimes since these cultures have been in place for a while, and women have not been involved, it can be difficult for women to immediately become part of the culture.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through the use of structured interviews. “In structured interviews, the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories.” (Fontana & Frey in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) A series of interview questions were provided to participants to collect data related to challenges and ways in which women have responded to challenges when entering and advancing in the predominately male field of emergency management. The

survey questions are available in Appendix A: Survey Questions. All participants were asked the same interview questions in order to ensure continuity of data collection among participants so that themes can be properly identified. Interview questions were sent to participants via a hyperlink to an online survey.

The survey was delivered through Qualtrics. Using the Qualtrics survey system allowed all of the participants to click on the same anonymous link and the participants were able to answer all questions through an online hyperlink and anonymously submit their answers.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed through identifying codes and themes (Creswell, 2007) that surface from the interview response narratives. Codes are unique issues that were identified within the text of participant narratives. Codes were organized into naturally occurring themes, which are the final goal of the research with regard to the existence of barriers and how women responded to and managed identified barriers.

ASSUMPTIONS

The only assumption of this research is that participants responded to the interview questions truthfully. Anonymity was integrated into the research design to foster truthful responses.

LIMITATIONS

Though this research involved a limited number of participants, it is hoped that transferable elements can be identified and can be used to express feelings of other women in the workplace. The limited number of participants resulted from the resources available to the researcher. Another limitation is that not all answers were gender-based.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

The new knowledge that can be learned can inform our understanding of the thoughts and experiences of these women in these fields which has never been noted in a thesis project before this time. With this information being new knowledge, it gives women coming into this field honest and truthful opinions of the women working in this field. This information is also worth knowing because it can help organizations to understand the challenges of women within the profession.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's challenges to women participating in emergency management is changing, mainly throughout equal opportunity laws which make it illegal to discriminate against women in the workplace. Since more women have recently entered the field, change has been slow due to emergency management being a somewhat newer field. The attitudes have continued to change toward women in the field, but their presence is still an issue. According to Wilson (1999, p. 117),

“.... A lot of younger people have been coming into the field of emergency management although traditionally this office has been primarily made up of retired military personnel especially under the realm of the fire department which has been traditionally male-dominated. It is obvious that there is still some leftovers of this heritage and at state, regional, etc. conferences and meetings because I am either the only woman or one of two or three women in attendance to these functions with 50 or so men...I don't think there are actually many female directors. Probably some of the other women in emergency management come from a fire department background.”

Other challenges that women could face in the career of emergency management is that within local departments, members are usually put “on call” 24 hours per day certain days of the month. Such a schedule could be difficult for women with young children at home. With the difficulty of not only being a mother, there are also constraints of ageism (Wilson, 1999). Usually if there are older women in any field that have been their position for a long period of time, there will be a sense of respect and acknowledgement

of expertise in the field. Younger women have a difficult time gaining this respect because they first have to prove themselves.

The presence of women in the workplace has grown a great deal in the past 100 years and especially in leadership positions in the field of emergency management. Joanna West, a thesis student from the Naval Postgraduate School interviewed 14 women who held a position or had held a leadership position in federal, state, or local agencies with homeland security responsibilities. She found that asking these women to discuss the barriers that they have experienced and a majority of them stated they did not notice a barrier, or if they did, they said they tried to not acknowledge it and just stepped past it. According to West (2013, p. 15),

“A woman currently leads the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and women have achieved high levels of leadership within the federal homeland security apparatus. While great strides are being made, women are still clearly the minority and hold an average of 20% of leadership positions in homeland security related professions...”

This data suggests that women in these fields have the ability to receive leadership positions, but it is few that achieve them in light of only 20% of women holding such leadership positions.

FEMA has always done a phenomenal job working with and supporting local and state emergency management agencies. When working in these local and state agencies, many personnel look to FEMA for guidance during disasters. In many of these agencies, there are women and men who accept jobs in FEMA because they want to help not only other people, but also other communities that may be in need. The head of the FEMA

Office of Response and Recovery, Elizabeth Zimmerman, discussed this dynamic in an interview with Jason Lindesmith (2014). She stated that when she was offered a career with FEMA, she was very ready to take the opportunity. Not only because she wanted to help people, but that she did not see many women in the field and wanted to have diversification within the field of emergency management.

Zimmerman is one of the only women to be the head of an office in FEMA. She stated, “As a woman within emergency management, there will be times when you will be ‘outnumbered’: expect to have meetings or projects where women are in the minority” (Lindesmith, 2014, p. 4). Many times, women in these predominately male fields are outnumbered, but according to Zimmerman, “You can’t give up...be respectful and a positive team player...I provided feedback and ideas constantly on disaster recovery. I used my position to voice my concerns and I stuck with it.” She went on to discuss how women in this field continue to bring great ideas and perspectives to the table and even some ideas that had never been noted before in certain situations.

This information points to the idea that although many women are outnumbered in the emergency management field, there are plenty of opportunities to work in the field as a woman. This interview informs readers of Zimmerman’s point of view in the field and how much she truly enjoys working in FEMA. Zimmerman shows that being a professional in the field may be difficult as a woman, but it is completely rewarding in the end when you see others follow your footsteps into making the field a better place for women.

In other countries there is an issue with the number of women that are in the field of emergency management. There can be a stigma that comes with emergency

management work that it is very physically demanding and that it is not portrayed to women as a job that they can do as easily as it would be for them to engage in nursing or education. This idea is more of an earlier ideal but it was also thought that women would be a part of recovery, feeding, clothing, and comforting those affected since they were all thought to be “nurturing”. According to Robertson (1998, p.201),

“Despite substantial progress since 1974, a significant level of knowledge and skill is lost to the Australian emergency management-community: the loss of the input of women to emergency management decision-making, planning, and operations. Unless and until we address, indeed redress, that loss, the disaster management system will be diminished accordingly.”

He discussed women being a part of the Australian Red Cross as a way to show the positive impact of women in the field. The Australian Red Cross is a very important volunteer assistance program, similar to the American Red Cross. He noted that it was difficult for women to take leadership positions since it was such a male-dominated field. In 1993, after a flood, it had been noticed that there were not many women assisting in recovery efforts and a man stated that he was able to “get things done because he had a strong personality and had already established networks” (Robertson, 1998, p. 202). In no way is does this quote speak disparagingly of all men, but it does rise the concern of how women might be typically viewed in the field compared to their male counterparts.

Women have been engaged in disaster risk reduction for a period of time. In the past when men had the primary responsibility to oversee a disaster, it was the women who came together in homes and protected their families. These women made sure that

the home of the community were taken care of and that normalcy was brought back into their daily lives:

“Women, as individuals and organized groups, are agents and leaders of collaborative change, innovation, resilience, solidarity and survival strategies in their communities. Their perspective and local knowledge provide important contributions to building resilience... This means removing barriers for women to voice their needs and priorities, to access and use of information... (UN World Conference, 2015, pg. 4)

There is always a need for diversity in the local, state, and federal levels of government. Since emergency management tends to be an agency that assists the community, there is a need for these emergency managers to “look like” the communities in which they serve. There have been many efforts across the states through emergency management agencies that “remain a fairly homogeneous cohort that is overwhelmingly represented by white middle-aged males” (Cwiak & Kiltz, 2012). This idea that it is essential to have those in the field mirroring the gender and race of those in the community is called the “whole community approach”. The whole community approach is where those at all levels of government should resemble those in the community with respect to categories such as gender, race, and age. The whole community approach benefits communities by building trust and relationships during times that could be detrimental to the community, such as when a disaster strikes.

It has only been recently that women have been introduced into the leadership roles of emergency management. According to Wilson (1999), emergency management agencies have been traditionally formed by male-oriented occupations of the military and

civil defense, resulting in a male workforce and work culture. These male workforces and work cultures have not been easy for women to infiltrate.

Though it might appear emergency management is evolving into a more gender equal field, that is not necessarily the case. According to an interview conducted with Vilma Milmoe, an inductee into the International Women in Homeland Security and Emergency Management Hall of Fame (Trotter, 2016, para 11):

“Emergency management will never meet the mission without diversity. True Diversity – in all forms, is not just a snapshot of individuals from various backgrounds co-existing and contributing in any organization, but rather the opportunity for active engagement with varying ideas, approaches, and solutions to problems...I’m joining the ranks of outstanding FEMA women who have received the award in the past – which makes it evident that the work women at FEMA do is visible. Milmoe and the other five women inducted into the Hall of Fame have truly been examples of leadership and a willingness to fight the odds.”

Representation of women in the emergency management field helps to show other women that it is a possibility to work in the field and also to succeed. Recognizing these women is encouraging to the women that are already in the fields and show them what challenges and possibilities that they can overcome while in their careers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH

The intent of this research was to examine the challenges women might face when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management. This research will be a helpful tool for women entering and advancing in their careers within emergency management in realizing there are others who might face the same struggles and challenges.

This research evolves from the literature review by presenting the statements and views from women who work in emergency management. Fifteen women were asked to participate in this research with five participants submitting responses to interview questions. The interview document is included in Appendix A. These participants were all Caucasian females and their ages ranged from 22-65 years old. The interview asked for the number of years of professional experience. Four of the participants indicated they had entry to 10 years of experience and one indicated 21 or more years of experience.

A question asked for their primary work experience sector. The options for the sector were “public” and “private” sectors, to which four stated they had worked primarily in the public sector and one primarily worked in the private sector.

The rest of the data collected was specific to questions that were asked regarding challenges participants have faced and how the challenges were managed. Codes were formed from the answers provided based on key words or concepts presented in participant responses. The themes were then identified based on naturally occurring clusters within the codes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The results of the research not only focused on how these women viewed their time in their respectful careers in emergency management, but also provided insight into their daily lives and what could contribute to a more conducive workplace. The pseudonyms for the participants were Annie, Carrie, Tara, Lee, and Jane.

The first interview question addressed barriers experienced when entering the career of emergency management. The theme related to this question was lack of preparedness. Three of the participants (Annie, Carrie, and Jane) noted they did not understand “what entry level meant”, such as what they needed to know before they started the job. One said that they had a “lack of incident management training before starting” and another stated that “the learning curve” was an issue when entering their position. Lee said that “the only barrier I experienced...was my mind. I had the experience, but being worried that I would not be able to handle the duties and demands of the position.” Tara simply noted there were no barriers entering her position.

The second question addressed strategies utilized to overcome barriers when entering the career. The theme was that these women overcame barriers entering their career by working hard and learning as much as they could. They all stated that they would network, show how great their work ethic is, volunteered for every opportunity, and studied the Codes of Federal Regulations (CFR) to gain a better understanding of the requirements of their position.

The third question addressed barriers experienced when advancing in the career. The theme of this question was that these women felt that there was a need for more

training, feeling as if they were truly a woman in a man's world, and age discrimination. Jane said that there were no barriers advancing as a female. Carrie stated that "others had military training, while I had none." Tara concluded that she advanced in her career by taking a middle management position so it was easier for her to move to a supervisory position. Lee and Annie had differing comments about their advancements in their careers than the others. Lee stated that age discrimination was a barrier and you need to gain respect, because individuals may not respect you because of your position. Annie said that there were more comments about her looks than the work she had done. "By some it is expected that I am merely another secretary that cannot pull the weight." Annie's comments showed that there can still be a gender divide and that older thought processes are not completely diminished regarding women being qualified as secretaries.

The fourth question addressed strategies utilized to overcome barriers experienced in advancing in the career. The theme of question responses was to always go above and beyond. Annie said that she physically changed herself, started wearing more conservative clothing and no make-up. She focused on being the hardest working person in her department and remembering why her job was so important. Carrie said that she always took on the difficult assignments to not only gain experience, but also to show others what she was capable of doing. Tara said she researched all aspects of her branch of operations and then met with her staff and asked them what their expectations were so she could get an idea of what she could do to be better. Jane said there were no ways that she needed to overcome barriers advancing in her field. Lee said that there is a need to prove yourself.

The fifth question addressed challenges in integrating into the profession through ongoing activities, such as attending conferences or trade associations. The theme of this questions was to always prove your worth against challenges. Annie and Carrie stated that challenges were that new staff must prove themselves and that being a younger woman in the field was usually unusual so it was difficult finding other employees to connect with and share experiences. Tara stated that she had not experienced any challenges. Lee said that the support of her employer and employees had not led to any challenges.

The sixth question addressed responses to challenges in integrating into professional activities. The theme was that the challenges were usually provided for in the end for these women, that training and opportunities to grow were available. Carrie said her job was very good at providing a variety of training and many opportunities to integrate with other employees. Some stated that there were no challenges.

The seventh question addressed ways in which participants were treated differently in the career compared to males in the work environment. The theme of this question was the need to keep doing your best in your profession. Annie stated that, “many think that as a woman they can hand their work off to me while they receive the credit.” Carrie stated, “As a woman, your competence level must be proved. With most males in this profession, it is assumed that they are already competent. Through working together, it is easy to identify who is actually competent.” Tara stated that she did not feel as if she had been treated differently and Lee said that “it seemed that females in the office are typically asked to do more secretarial duties, such as taking notes rather than the males.”

The eighth question addressed methods used to respond to different treatment. The theme of this question was that women need to act professional all of the time. Tara and Jane both said there were no methods used. Annie stated she needed to act professional and to not seem flirty to the men she was working with on the site. Carrie said that being willing to step up to tough jobs and getting to know everyone is key to responding to different treatment. Lee said she needed to continue to prove herself.

The ninth question addressed ways in which stress has been experienced. The theme was that there was stress related to being a female. Some participants stated they have never experienced stress. Annie said she had extra work pushed her way, knowing they thought she would not say anything about doing their work. Tara said that she had never experienced stress, but she believes it is possible for women who have children at home to experience stress because the job is demanding. Lee stated “males are more likely to make sexual innuendos in front of younger females” and that females would more likely not say anything because they were not in a position of power. Carrie and Jane stated there was no stress related to being a female, but there was stress related to the difficulty of their jobs.

The tenth question addressed ways participants worked to manage stress that has been experienced. The theme of the question is that stress within this field is inevitable, but how you deal with the stress is important. Annie said that she sometimes has to explain her position clearly so as to make sure that others do not push their work upon her. Carrie said that you must discuss your concerns, but to manage the stress you can exercise to keep your mind off of it and to always stay positive. Lee stated that you should take everything with a grain of salt and do not let it stress you. Tara had a

somewhat humorous take on her stress. She said that during an activated Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that she would take breaks and walks to get away and then after the EOC is deactivated, there is a need for a massage.

The eleventh question addressed participation in a mentoring relationship and if so, in what role(s) (mentor or mentee) did participation occur and ways in which that/those relationship(s) impacted participant career entrance and/or progression. The theme of responses was that most of the participants had been a mentor at some time, but Tara said she had not. Annie stated that she was part of a “buddy” program, that as an intern she had a buddy within the facility that guided her and then when she became a full time employee she became a buddy. She noted that because she did the buddy program, it helped her to grow as an employee because she was sharing her work experiences with her buddy and it helped her to grasp it more because the intern would ask questions she had not thought of yet. Carrie stated she had been a mentor and that it truly helped to develop new people into leaders. Lee stated that she was a mentee and it truly solidified her interest in emergency management and that an internship helped her to get her new position. Jane stated that she mentors constantly in her position and it helps her to distribute the workload during disasters so that more work was being done efficiently.

The twelfth question was addressed recommendations to women who are seeking to enter and advance in the profession. Recommendations from participants included:

Annie: “I would recommend to other women seeking this job field to be aware of the challenges that they may face. You have to love what you are doing to get through some of the challenges that you may face as young women in a "man's

world". Do not change yourself for others and have confidence from within that will help you face the challenges that you come across."

Carrie: "I would highly recommend a woman choose this profession. Women are now being seen as equals who can work in all facets of the field."

Tara: "Be very flexible-there is never a boring day. You may have to make quick decisions. There is nothing wrong with asking for a second opinion."

Jane: "Check your gender at the door. Be professional."

Lee: "My first suggestion is to do as much as you can to expand your education and experience. Even if you are still in college, you can do things to gain practical experience in the field, such as internships or volunteer work. Anything to gain exposure to the true working world of emergency management and network with professionals in the field. I also think it would be valuable to find another female who could serve as your mentor as soon as you enter into the profession. It is great to have someone to bounce ideas off of and consult with who has likely experienced the same things you have."

There is no doubt that there are women that might be wanting to enter this field and reading these recommendations could help to prepare them for what is to come and give them hope that they can do anything within this field and continue to improve themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The results showed that throughout the different ages of the participants, it was clear that there were varying opinions throughout the answers of the survey. These women were truthful and honest and sometimes told of personal experiences which helped to give women who might be considering the field of emergency management a clear understanding of the potential challenges they might experience.

The barriers that the participants have faced were that they did not understand “what entry level meant”, such as what they needed to know before they started the job. One said they had a “lack of incident management training before starting” and another stated there is a “learning curve”. Others felt as if they needed more training, they were truly a woman in a man’s world, and they noticed problems brought about by age discrimination. Further, these women noted that you should always prove your worth against all challenges and if you are treated differently, you must overcome and keep doing your best in your profession.

In relation to overcoming the barriers listed above, all participants stated they would network, show how great their work ethic is, volunteered for every opportunity, and go above and beyond what was required. They also noted you must “act professional 100% of the time.” It was also noted by all of them that stress within this field is inevitable, but how you deal with the stress is important.

In analyzing the data, it can be noted that these women were not all unanimous in their thoughts. These women have all experienced different situations and challenges in their lives. It would not be correct that to say that they all agreed on all the barriers

presented, but they all stated that there were challenges that they experienced. Some of the participant's responses indicated there are times when it is very clear participants shared the manner in which men talked to them. Sometimes it was not words, but the actions of men, such as pushing their workload onto these women.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to explore women's experiences and how they have dealt with challenges entering and advancing in the field of emergency management. The two questions that were to be answered were:

- What barriers have females experienced when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management?
- What ways have females overcome barriers when entering and advancing in the field of emergency management?

These questions were answered well through participant responses to the interview questions with appropriate themes identified. This research helps to shed light onto the issues, whether positive or negative, for women seeking a career within emergency management. The recommendations these women shared leave a positive imprint for women who wish to enter the field to always stay positive and work their hardest because it will be worth it in the end.

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APPENDIX A.
Interview Questions

Thesis – Interview Questions

Consent

The purpose of this interview is to understand ways in which females entering the field of emergency management have identified and overcome challenges when entering and advancing in the field. It is hoped that through analyzing data from the interviews, themes will be identified that can be used to communicate recommendations to females who wish to enter the field as well as provide recommendations for employers and academic programs who wish to recruit females into the profession. There will be no risks or foreseeable discomfort related to the interview. Records related to this research will be submitted by you via this online survey to the researchers and will be maintained confidentially via electronic files. Representation of information in written research documents, such as the thesis and potential published research material, will be completely anonymous through the use of pseudonyms in written narratives with no personally identifiable information included. Participation in this interview is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not result in a consequence. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without consequence. Questions regarding this interview can be directed to any of the following:

- Audra Cronen
 - Researcher – Master of Science Degree Candidate
 - audra_cronen@mymail.eku.edu
- Scotty Dunlap, EdD, CSP
 - Thesis Committee Chair
 - Scotty.Dunlap@eku.edu

Demographic Information

Years of Professional Experience

<input type="checkbox"/>	Entry to 10
<input type="checkbox"/>	11-20
<input type="checkbox"/>	21 or More

Primary Work Experience Sector

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public

Age: _____ **Ethnicity:** _____

Interview Questions

Please respond to the following questions from a female perspective entering and advancing in a male-dominated profession.

1. What barriers did you experience when entering into your career?

2. What strategies did you utilize to overcome barriers when entering your career?

3. What barriers have you experienced as you have advanced in your career?

4. What strategies have you utilized to overcome barriers as you have advanced in your career?

5. In what ways have you experienced challenges in integrating into your profession through ongoing activities, such as attending conferences or trade associations?

6. How have you responded to challenges in integrating into professional activities?

7. In what ways do you believe you have been treated differently in your career compared to males in your work environment?

8. What methods have you used to respond to different treatment?

9. In what ways, if any, have you experienced stress related to being a female in a male-dominated profession?

10. In what ways have you worked to manage stress you may have experienced?

11. Have you ever participated in a mentoring relationship? If so, in what role(s) (mentor or mentee) did you participate and how did that/those relationship(s) impact you in your career entrance and/or progression?

12. What recommendations would you make to women who are seeking to enter and advance in your profession?