

MADWOMAN, QUEEN, AND ALIEN-BEING: THE EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-TIME
WOMEN PRESIDENTS AT SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

Dr. C. Carney Strange, Advisor

This study examined the experiences, challenges, and transitions of eight college and university presidents who were the first women senior executives at their respective institutions. A qualitative research method, following the principles of the constructivist paradigm, was used as the underlying framework. Two in-depth sequential interviews were conducted with each president. Case studies were created for each participant and were aggregated to form the basis for these results.

Most of the participants in this study did not plan to become presidents. Usually the role emerged as a possibility later in their careers, while priorities—such as being with their families, remaining professionally challenged, and serving others—shaped their career directions. Although cognizant of gender, most did not believe that it significantly impacted their presidencies; yet because in each case, a woman, instead of a man, was appointed for the first time, several changes and adjustments occurred. In their view, the influence of gender was essentially peripheral, meaning that it affected major operations and concerns less than smaller matters located on the edge of their agendas. The professional demands of the presidency inevitably affected their personal lives, and finding a balance between professional and personal responsibilities often proved challenging. Several factors, such as individual management strategies or the kinds of external services employed, impacted the personal demands placed on them. The greatest challenges frequently related to the state of the institution when they assumed the office, addressing various leadership issues, and resolving intrapersonal issues. The participants

recommended that presidential candidates be articulate and adept regarding financial and philanthropic issues, acquire a broad understanding of higher education, prepare for the magnitude of the position, and gain various leadership skills.

More attention needs to be paid to the mentoring and leadership opportunities women receive, while governing boards require education regarding non-traditional career paths. Before assuming a presidency, women need to examine their support systems, while assumptions about the position need to be analyzed. Further research should consider how the presidency affects personal relationships and explore the impact of institutional context, race, and generational influences on the experiences of first-time women college presidents.

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CHAPTER ONE

An Evolving System

American higher education emerged during the Colonial era for purposes of educating new leaders of a rising nation. Drawing upon the distinctive English models of Oxford and Cambridge (Duke, 1996), faculty scholars were responsible for the social, moral, and academic development of their pupils and taught the traditional classical curriculum (Thelin, 2003). Religion was also a central influence, as most colleges were founded by a specific denomination, and all but a few presidents and faculty were clergymen (Marsden, 1992). Access to higher education during this period was limited, both by geography and resources; institutions were small with limited enrollments and meager funds; and only a handful of students could afford to attend or received adequate preparation to pass entrance exams (Brubacher & Rudy, 2002). Although broad in its mission and intent, higher education evolved into a unique system, with localized institutions and a limited curriculum that admitted mostly elite male students.

Having served its purposes in this manner for over a hundred years, albeit selectively, by the middle of the nineteenth century the Colonial model of higher education in the U.S. soon gave way to a new and very different system that eventually took root in response to the shifting social, political, and cultural trends of a maturing nation. America's quest to define its national identity questioned the impact and effectiveness of higher education, as institutions were torn between improving their scholarship on the one hand and being practical on the other. Critics doubted if "gentlemen-scholars could create cities of the wilderness, explore unknown regions of the West, and cope with the raw necessities which the exploitation of a vast and immensely rich continent demanded" (Rudolph, 1990, p. 112). More conservative educational leaders countered with the Yale Report of 1828, prescribing a uniform liberal curriculum for students across the

disciplines (Brubacher & Rudy, 2002). Responding to the familiar call of Manifest Destiny, American higher education continued to evolve as the Civil War approached, a turning point that ultimately altered the very fabric of the nation that supported it:

The Civil War cemented the East and the great Middle West into a formidable alliance of resources—natural, human, industrial, financial. The shape of things to come was etched in the war-built factory towns of New England, in an ever expanding network of railroads, in the new fortunes and the gingerbread houses built on the hills overlooking the towns. The Civil War conquered space. It freed thousands of Americans from a village orientation. It suggested remarkable opportunities in markets created by railroads, in needs created by an expanding population. (Rudolph, 1990, p. 242)

To avoid becoming relics of the past, institutions of higher education began to adjust as organizations that could meet these needs and challenge this rapidly expanding polity. Higher education underwent massive reform in the decades following the Civil War. In 1865, Matthew Vassar founded Vassar College, the first women's college that was not a high school or finishing academy (Solomon, 1985). The Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1893 provided federal support for the mechanical arts and sciences and endorsed a more practical curriculum (Rudolph, 1990). Finally, a new cadre of education reformers, such as Andrew White at Cornell, Daniel Coit Gillman at Johns Hopkins, Charles Eliot at Harvard, and James Angell at Michigan, introduced innovative programs and policies that modernized curricula, decreased clerical and religious influences, and renewed the relationship between society and the institution.

In different ways they responded to the needs and the demands of a society that was experiencing an increase in material wealth, in the standard of living, in industrialization and urbanization. They responded to the unleashing of new impulses to social and

economic mobility, to the emergence of a more democratic psychology which stressed individual differences and needs, and to a more democratic philosophy which recognized the right to learning and character-training of women, farmers, mechanics, and the great, aspiring middle class. They recognized that a new society needed agencies of instruction, cohesion, and control. (Rudolph, 1990, p. 244)

With a distinct purpose and growing prestige, higher education had transformed into a new system that no longer catered exclusively to the wealthy and elite (Thelin, 2003). An increasingly industrialized and diversified economic system blended with a growing political regionalism to create new types of institutions, such as the first land grant universities, altering the curriculum, professionalizing the faculty, and mitigating religion's traditional hold on academe. At the same time, the number of colleges expanded greatly on a growing base of increasingly diverse students, including the first significant influx of women.

Higher Education and Women

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, women emerged as a substantial new constituency in American higher education, bringing new questions about their place in academe, their traditional social roles, and their success in out-performing men in the classroom. In 1870, only 11,000 women attended a college or university but, by 1900, the number of women had increased almost eight-fold to 85,000 (Woloch, 2002). By the turn of the twentieth century, one out of three college students was female (Woloch, 2002), yet society was slow to welcome women as collegiates (Clifford, 1993). Advocates for women's collegiate education faced the difficult task of trying to convince society that higher education for women was necessary, as doubts persisted about women's intellectual abilities and their physical fitness for the challenge. Aspiring women collegians and graduates faced considerable barriers. Edward Clarke's (1873)

popular book, *Sex in Education*, argued that female college graduates had less energy compared to men, increased their risk of contracting diseases, and inhibited their ability to bear children in pursuing advanced education (Solomon, 1985). Additional factors also hindered women's desires for achieving advanced learning. Confined to the private domestic sphere that limited their public life, they were excluded from the powerful realm of traditional politics that influenced social policies affecting women and children (Woloch, 2002). Furthermore, higher education held a marginal role in society; being a scholar was not a lucrative position, and many people were critical of the usefulness of the classical curriculum, especially as the United States became a more industrialized society (Woloch, 2002). Once enrolled, moreover, women encountered isolation, discrimination, and ridicule from male peers and faculty and, after graduating, they could only pursue careers in teaching, social work, nursing, and libraries, for which they received less pay than men (Ware, 1997). Despite such formidable challenges and often dismal prospects, young women continued to pursue higher education with zeal.

The early female leaders in higher education were women professors, who served as role models for young women students and helped to modernize the academy by introducing innovative approaches to teaching the social sciences, humanities, and the sciences (Solomon, 1985). As women's enrollment increased, male presidents sought assistance in addressing their needs, and a new position with campus-wide power appeared on many campuses for the first time: the dean of women. These early women administrators handled housing shortages, attended to health concerns, monitored socializing, and were instructed to ensure that women did not crowd men out of courses (Nidiffer, 2000). These new administrators and supporters created separate environments for women on coeducational campuses that were more welcoming and supportive, demonstrated that their health could survive the rigors of higher education, formed

professional support organizations, became general activists for women's needs, and even founded women's colleges (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Although women continued to dominate enrollment patterns for the next century, this was a time when their role, purpose, and impact were seriously questioned, especially in higher education. By the early decades of the twentieth century, women clearly had established a permanent place in the academy, shaping new expectations and establishing different standards through social reform legislation, new employment opportunities, and increased economic independence.

Women and Leadership

Women continued to play a vital role in American higher education from this point forward, assuming new positions of significance and taking on greater responsibilities. However, despite such gains, a key voice remained missing from the leadership of most institutions during this era of higher learning in America—women college presidents. Although an increasing number of women have served in leadership roles in recent decades, the notion of a female college president or university senior executive officer (SEO) remains somewhat novel in this system even today. As recently as 1986, women held only 9.5% of all college or university presidencies, although by 2001 that number doubled to 21% (Corrigan, 2002). Nonetheless, the office of president remains dominated by White men, as women account for only one-fifth of all such leaders in the United States (Corrigan, 2002). While racial and ethnic minority presidents by recent profiles comprise 13% of college and university presidencies, only one-third of Hispanic presidents and one-quarter of African-American presidents are women (Corrigan, 2002). More women leaders are advancing into presidential roles, but their progress is not comparable to their male counterparts. Even though nearly 40% of all faculty and senior

administrative positions in higher education are held by women, these women are not moving into presidencies as quickly as men (Corrigan, 2002).

Just as women faculty often are clustered in junior, adjunct, or part-time positions, women presidents seem to be more common at select institutional types. For example, the greatest proportion of women presidents is found in two-year community colleges and four-year baccalaureate institutions (Brown, Van Ummersen, & Sturnick, 2001). In 2001, one-third of new community college presidents were women. This corresponds with the fact that the largest increase of women presidents is in public two-year and public master's institutions, while few are found at doctorate-granting institutions (Corrigan, 2002). In short, women college and university presidents remain a minority in American higher education (Brown et al., 2001). Relatively little is known about their experiences, the hopes they have for such positions, and the challenges they encounter once in office. Even less is understood about the unique context that shapes the experiences of women who have assumed presidencies at post-secondary institutions where they are the first woman to hold these positions.

Research Questions

It is within this context of the history and role of women among American higher education leaders that this study posed the following research questions: What are the expectations and experiences of women who have assumed the presidency at a post-secondary institution where they are the first female to do so? What are their constructions about the processes and practices that frame their achievements? More specifically, this study sought to bring an understanding to the career paths of these women, their initiating experiences on campus, the challenges they encountered, and the insights they offered on what might be required of women who aspire to similar positions. Inquiry into this elite group of educational

leaders was pursued to educate the next generation of senior women administrators about the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for a successful presidency. Further, such a focus expanded insights available on college presidents beyond the current experiences of men and gave breadth and more detail to the existing literature on women and the college presidency.

Significance of the Study

The benefits of examining this phenomenon are several. First, exploring the current and formative experiences of women presidents illuminates the mentoring processes that might encourage future women candidates who would otherwise hesitate to pursue a college presidency. After all, such a position yields much power and influence, and while women dominate enrollment patterns on American college and university campuses, they maintain a very limited presence in senior administrative positions. Nidiffer and Bashaw (2001) observed that women earned more than one-half of all undergraduate degrees, one-third of doctoral degrees, and comprised one-third of the faculty, but held few of the senior positions in higher education. Rønning (2000) summarized the dilemma of academic women and administrators worldwide:

It is 130 years since women gained access to higher education, but still they are few and far between at decision-making levels. Why should one half of the population still be under-represented at the decision-making level of this important aspect of contemporary society? (p. 100)

Women have been a growing constituency on college and university campus for decades, yet their voices have been restricted in significant decisions. Programs, policies, and values are framed by those in power, and the people sitting at these “bargaining tables” are most often men.

Even though many policies and decisions affect women as a group, they enjoy little influence regarding critical public issues.

The sphere in which women are to make their contribution is not merely separate but also less powerful than the public world inhabited by men insofar as their private domain affords women no role in the formulation of public policy, in the shaping of the institutions that in turn largely shape and govern our culture. The two spheres—public and private—do not carry equal responsibility for the creative molding of society.

(LeBlanc, 1993, p. 43)

Morely and Walsh (1996) argued that “higher education is a pivotal institution in society, and the consequences of women’s underrepresentation in positions of authority have wider and more serious resonances for issues of equity, social justice, and participation in public life” (p. 4). Higher education is a powerful societal tool. College and university leaders affect institutional agendas and help to shape the attraction and education of emerging leaders. Based on their experiences in reaching this pinnacle position in academe, much can be learned from these pioneer women.

Second, a considerable literature already exists on the college presidency, but most of it has been written by men about their experiences in the position. Only a limited amount of literature exists on women presidents of post-secondary institutions, especially those who are the first women to hold such positions. Absence of the voices of women presidents limits a potentially vital resource. Collectively, women college and university presidents represent the largest group of women senior executives in the United States (American Council on Education, 1994). When they address a subject, people notice. While representing the minority of presidential leaders in higher education, women presidents create a potentially powerful platform

for change. By ignoring women in senior leadership positions, like the presidency, higher education is losing vital role models for students, faculty, and administrators, while stifling human resources that carry promise for addressing a number of problems and concerns.

Limiting who is perceived, and therefore subsequently chosen, as a leader stifles the individuals whose aspirations are dashed. It also deprives higher education of their talent and insight and the hope that new leaders might find new solutions to persistent problems. In fact, outsider status might abet women's capacity to seek innovative approaches. (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 104)

Beyond providing role models and establishing equity in leadership opportunities, women presidents are valuable resources that need to be tapped. Studies have demonstrated that men and women often possess divergent leadership styles, value different priorities, and take different career paths as they advance in the academy (Benokratis, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Tidball, Tidball, Smith, & Wolf-Wendell, 1999/2000). Learning about the experiences of these women may offer innovative solutions to challenges that potentially affect all in higher education.

Third, although the limited research pertaining to women college presidents focuses on different leadership styles (Astin & Leland, 1991; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Jablonski, 1996/2000; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001), barriers encountered in obtaining presidencies, challenges faced while president (Flynn, 1993; Holmgren, 2000; Nidiffer, 2001; Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2003), and strategies engaged in to become more effective and successful (American Council on Education, 1994; Brown et al., 2001; Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2003;), it does so mostly from a survey measurement approach. The literature benefits from greater depth and intensity that is achieved through alternative methodologies. Extant quantitative research generalizes experiences and notes disparities, but generalizations cannot be applied to all contexts, and an *a priori* frame

of reference that often informs this method does not adequately account for all experiences. Prior qualitative data have also been limited, with their focus on the singular experience of individual women presidents or only one particular aspect of women and the presidency, such as leadership style or career path. Context-sensitive by nature, the qualitative inquiry employed here contributes to current literature by bringing illustrations and “real-time” examples to the myths, trends, and challenges that first-time women college presidents encounter. Such rich and detailed information about the specific experiences and expectations of first-time women presidents of colleges informs the practices of current women presidents, educates campus leadership bodies (e.g., boards of trustees) about their interactions with first-time women college presidents, and serves as a practical primer for potential presidential candidates of any gender. Ultimately, such an approach serves well in preparing new paths open to future women leaders.

Women will continue to advance to senior levels of leadership in our institutions and, as they ascend, it becomes imperative that we explore and chronicle their challenges, experiences, and insights. First-time women college presidents often serve as mentors for aspiring faculty and administrators, work as leaders in and beyond the walls of the academy, and play key roles in shaping the knowledge, practices, and politics of our institutions of learning. They represent a growing constituency that has and will continue to make significant contributions to higher education. We must learn as much as we can from their accounts and listen to their stories using methods that honor their unique contributions.

Organization of the Study

This study contains five chapters. Following this introduction to the problem, chapter two, a review of the literature, provides a broad overview of the history of women and the college presidency, addresses the differences between male and female presidents, and

highlights the challenges women presidents encounter regarding leadership and power, working with governing boards, and achieving balance. Chapter three, or the methodology section, discusses the selected research paradigm and its assumptions, explains the processes used to select participants and to collect and analyze data, and reviews the measures used to ensure quality of data and the confidentiality of participants. The results of this study are presented in chapter four and are organized by the five research questions. Although data were analyzed initially through creating individual case profiles of each president, the results are presented in aggregate form (i.e., examples and descriptions were drawn from a variety of presidents to illustrate relevant points). Finally, chapter five considers the meaning of key findings in the data and discusses their implications in the context of presidential leadership development and the need for further research in this domain.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Once composed of a handful of courageous and pioneering women, the notion of a female college or university president is not unheard of today, as women increasingly are appointed to the position. Women's comparatively rapid recent ascent into the presidency makes one appreciate their enormous educational strides in just the last century, but great challenges still exist. First, men and women have dissimilar experiences and expectations as presidents. Second, while the idea of a separate women's sphere in higher education has dissolved, women presidents encounter many stereotypes based on traditional gender norms—especially from governing boards that might doubt their abilities to serve and to lead effectively. Third, one of the greatest challenges they face is the struggle to find balance between personal and professional responsibilities. This review of exemplar literature will introduce the major constructs and phenomena that are likely to inform the focus of this study.

History of Women and the College Presidency

Women have been involved in higher education for well over a century, but they still hold a relatively small percentage of senior level positions within the academy (Holmgren, 2000). With the exception of women's colleges, where many women have served in this senior-most position for over a century, relatively few serve as college or university presidents today. From 1865 to 1910, twenty-eight women served as college presidents, with Frances E. Willard being the first to hold the title as president of Evanston College for Ladies, yet as recently as the 1970s, several American institutions believed that they had appointed the first woman president (McGill, 1989). The contributions of these early leaders were often overlooked (Tisinger, 2002). Their exclusion from the histories of higher education made learning about women college and

university presidents a complicated task, because there was no one source on the subject. Inconsistent nomenclature further complicated historical research. For example, several women held the title of dean, but their duties were identical to those of a president (McGill, 1989); while in other situations, such as Catholic women's colleges, a priest acted as a figurehead president, while a head religious sister held the presidential responsibilities (Intrusco, 2001). These women were passionate about their beliefs in the importance of higher education for women, opened incredible opportunities for women students, and "quietly inspired the next generation of administrators to continue their battles and the next generation of students to aspire to their full potential" (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001, p. 3). Learning about their leadership, their vision for women collegians, and the motivations of these early women presidents lays a foundation for the study of their contemporaries.

Leadership Patterns

While several of the early leaders shared commonalities regarding their leadership skills, a key similarity was their ability to lead and manage—skills that had been relegated to the men's sphere (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Similar to their male counterparts, these women worked to increase enrollment, expand curricula, improve facilities, hire more faculty, and fundraise (McGill, 1989). However, unlike their male contemporaries, the early women presidents had few if any role models and pursued their efforts without support from a society that believed women did not need or could not handle advanced higher learning (McGill, 1989).

Most of the successful early presidents had male mentors, such as a priest at a Catholic women's college or a family connection with a board member; these early women leaders needed male support to legitimize and solidify their presidency (Brown, 2001). For example, Ada Howard had the backing of founder Henry Durant at Wellesley College (Brown, 2001),

while M. Carey Thomas, the president of Bryn Mawr, had the support of her father, who served on the board of trustees, and the financial backing of her companion, Mary Garrett, who promised a substantial monetary contribution to Bryn Mawr for as long as M. Carey Thomas remained president (Faderman, 1999). These pioneers did not reach the presidency without the support of mentors, who most often were men.

Differing Visions for Women

While these early advocates helped to shape the purpose of women's higher education, they also possessed differing opinions regarding its goals and outcomes. For example, Emma Willard, founder of the Troy Female Seminary; Catharine Beecher, founder of the Hartford Seminary; and Mary Lyon, founder of the Mount Holyoke Seminary, all advocates of women's education, promoted it to help students become better wives and mothers (Ihle, 1991). M. Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr, Elizabeth Carey Agassiz of Radcliffe, and Alice Freeman Palmer of Wellesley pushed for curricula that were equal to the traditional liberal arts found at men's colleges (McGill, 1989). McGill (1989) speculated that many of these early women presidents were advocates for equal educational opportunities for both men and women, because "for them, education was the key to escaping the confinement of the 'women's sphere' and entering the heady realm of autonomy, independence, and recognition" (p. 170). For the latter group of presidents, whose institutions were truly schools of higher education and not finishing schools for women, education was a means towards financial independence, professional employment, and personal satisfaction. These women had benefited from receiving advanced education and wanted to share their satisfaction with other women and help eliminate the barriers they had encountered. Their persistent efforts worked, as 61% of Bryn Mawr graduates and 36% of Wellesley graduates from 1889 to 1908 pursued graduate study, while 90% of Bryn Mawr

alumna and 36% of Wellesley alumna reported having a career (Faderman, 1999). College education for women provided social mobility for many, encouraged women to think for themselves, taught women to value themselves and their own thinking, and introduced many women to feminism (Solomon, 1985). Education provided a new foundation that would change women's lives.

No Aspirations to become President

Despite their capable administrative abilities and pioneering vision for women's higher education, few of the early women leaders aspired to be presidents, with the exception of M. Carey Thomas, who pursued the Bryn Mawr position. From her study of four early college presidents, Brown (2001) observed that "duty, persuasion, and obligation guided them, not personal ambition or compelling vision" (p. 56). Many of these pioneering women leaders were the first women to have access to higher education and likely never imagined serving an institution in that particular capacity, as equitable higher education for women was still a radical concept in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These early women presidents made a tremendous impact upon hundreds of young women who chose to pursue higher education. The leadership they demonstrated, the precedents they established, and the women they helped to educate laid a foundation that would permanently establish a woman's place on college and university campuses.

Contemporary Women College and University Presidents

Times have changed since M. Carey Thomas and Alice Freeman Palmer used their leadership and political talents to convince thousands of young women, their parents, and other social leaders that higher education could positively affect women's lives and improve society. Today women "compose slightly more than one-half of all undergraduates, earn one-third of the

doctoral degrees, and constitute one-third of the faculty” (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001, p. 5), yet few women reach the senior-most level of academia, the presidency. The number of women college and university leaders has doubled in the past decade, but they still remain a minority in administration and encounter discrimination and challenges because of gender. Many differences exist between men and women presidents. Subsequently, women college and university presidents face additional layers of challenges compared to their male colleagues and may require additional preparation in key areas.

Differences between Men and Women Presidents

Looking beyond the noticeable disparity of the number of men and women college presidents, it is also helpful to note basic demographic differences between them and differences in career path and concerns directly related to their gender. Compared to their male peers, women college presidents serve shorter tenures in office, have fewer children, and frequently serve without the support of a spouse or partner. Women presidents often take different career paths to the presidency, possess different motivations for pursuing the position, and encounter additional concerns, such as the roles of their spouses, if married, in their presidencies.

Length of Tenure and Experiences

The average tenure for a male American college president is 6.9 years, while most women presidents hold their offices for 5.5 years (Corrigan, 2002). Researchers have not speculated as to why women serve shorter terms in office, but Corrigan noted that women were more likely than men to serve as a senior academic officer, a provost, or another senior executive position within higher education prior to accepting a presidency. Some critics reason that taking time out for childrearing might delay women’s career paths, but women and men presidents are

similar in age, with the average male president being 57 years old and female being 58 years old (Corrigan, 2002).

Family and Marital Status

The most striking difference between men and women presidents is their marital and family status. More women presidents serve in their roles without the support of a spouse or partner, as nearly 15% of women presidents have never married and 17% were divorced, while only 5% of men have never married and only 4% are divorced (Corrigan, 2002). Only 59% of women presidents are married compared to 90% of their male counterparts. By 2001, the number of women presidents with religious training dramatically decreased, with only 2% being members of a religious order, a considerable drop from 30% in 1986 (Corrigan, 2002).

In addition to serving without the support of a partner or spouse, women presidents are less likely to have children; only 67% had children in comparison to 90% of men presidents (Corrigan, 2002). Nearly 26% of women presidents have altered their job circumstances to adjust for child-rearing, while only 2% of men have made such accommodations (Corrigan, 2002). Only half of the spouses or partners of male presidents hold paid employment, while almost 74% of the spouses or partners of women presidents do so.

Career Path and Motivation for the Presidency

Compared to their male presidential counterparts, women presidents take more non-traditional paths to the presidency, spending more time in administration (Bornstein, 2003). Switzer (2003) observed that many women presidents describe their career paths as a “crooked road” (p. 2), while Brown’s (2000) study noted that only 20% of 91 female presidents of private institutions of higher education followed the traditional career path of faculty member, department head or division chair, and senior academic officer. However, Corrigan (2002) noted

that 69% of current women presidents served as senior academic officers (SAOs), provosts, or other senior executive positions prior to the presidency. Overall, most current women presidents did not plan on becoming a president. Brown (2001) noted the cases of several women presidents who did not pursue the position, but took it out of obligation or duty to women, while Touchton, Shavlik, and Davis (1993) observed that few current women presidents aspired to the position—most became interested in pursuing a presidency later in their careers. Similarly, only one woman president in Switzer's (2003) study methodically sought a presidency and planned her career path accordingly.

Women also were appointed to different types of presidencies with most at community colleges and private institutions (Corrigan, 2002). Bornstein (2003) noted that because they followed non-traditional routes to the presidency, women and minorities were often viewed as less qualified:

[T]heir candidacies appear less legitimate than those coming from the mainstream. Presidents from underrepresented groups, often “the first” president from a particular category, are subject to continuing scrutiny arising from white male normed expectations. Such biases act as impediments to achieving legitimacy. (p. 29)

One search firm consultant conjectured that women were often matched with more volatile presidencies, such as institutions that were facing various crises or severe financial problems, and accordingly had shorter tenures because the work environment was more stressful and demanding (Brown, Van Ummersen, & Sturnick, 2001). Another search firm consultant explained that women presidents viewed presidencies differently than men, regarding it as a career finale instead of another step in career advancement, and subsequently did not pursue second presidencies (Brown et al., 2001). Yet Dean (2004) offered a different reason for the

lower number of women college presidents: women simply were not interested in them. Her study found that 63% of women SAOs did not desire to pursue a presidency. Moreover, 73% of the SAOs in her study believed they had the ability to become a president, but feared that the position would take them away from the academic center of the institution. Furthermore, they had no desire to be involved with the fundraising and social obligations of the position and wanted more balanced lives. The staying power of women presidents is shorter compared to male presidents, and more research needs to be done to help explain their shorter tenures and their motivations to pursue a presidency.

Expectations of Spouses

Another area that affects married women presidents more than their male colleagues is the role of their spouses. In traditional presidencies (i.e., the man as the president with a woman spouse), as Basinger (2000) observed, wives were often expected to supervise the social obligations of the position and be present at several events:

Spouses of college presidents in the past have been expected to plan and oversee parties, stand cheerfully for hours in receiving lines, schmooze with alumni in presidential boxes at football games, give speeches to community groups, listen patiently to students and faculty members, charm trustees, and maintain or oversee the maintenance of the presidential house. What's more, spouses have traditionally done all that free of charge.

(Basinger, 2000, p. 1)

Interesting questions, however, are raised when a president does not have a wife to do the "presidential spouse" activities (Jacobson, 2004). In one study, for example, a newly appointed woman president was asked who would be doing the flowers for an event or who would host the women's council on campus. But what if the president does not have a spouse, or what if the

president has a same-sex partner? Peg Brand, a professor of gender studies and wife of a former university president, shared: “When a male partner comes in, it’s pretty much assumed that he has a job and a career” (Basinger, 2000, p. 3). Basinger’s (2000) research revealed that different expectations exist for male and female spouses of presidents; male presidential spouses were not expected to oversee the social obligations of the office. Brown et al. (2001) noted that spouses of male presidents often are expected to attend social events, but the spouses of female presidents usually are not. Differing expectations exist between male and female presidential spouses.

However, Switzer (2003) observed that women presidents are grateful for how their husbands willingly alter the traditional divisions of labor in their roles as presidential spouses. In her study, some women presidents only expected their spouses to attend events of particular importance. Other male presidential spouses helped their partners by serving as unpaid drivers, while one male presidential spouse enjoyed entertaining obligations more than his presidential wife. Little has been written about the roles and expectations of spouses of women college and university presidents. Clearly being a woman brings an additional set of challenges to the presidency that does not affect heterosexual or single male presidents. Although men and women presidents share many common demographics, some aspects of a woman’s life, such as marital status and children, seem to be affected unduly by their career choices. Women leaders need to be able to work through and address these concerns in addition to the regular responsibilities of the office.

Challenges

While the increasing presence of women presidents will likely strengthen their influence within academe, they still encounter many challenges specific to gender. Societal norms about power, leadership, and family obligations significantly impact their work. These additional

roadblocks that their male peers may not encounter can mitigate their effectiveness as presidents. In addition, women presidents may also need to work harder to gain credibility with their governing boards and may have a more difficult time balancing professional and personal obligations.

Leadership and Power

Much literature has been devoted to the differing leadership development patterns, philosophies, and practices of men and women in general (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bensimon, 1988; Birnbaum, 1992; Chliwniak, 1997; Freeman, 2001; Gillet-Karam, Roueche, & Roueche, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Helegsen, 1990), and those serving as presidents in specific. Women presidents often encounter traditional expectations of power that may not always fit their particular leadership style. Accordingly, they need to find ways to combine traditional leadership expectations with their own particular styles and be cognizant of the standards critics used to judge their effectiveness.

Traditional Notions of Power

Women leaders often receive mixed messages about power, their abilities, and traditional social norms. Switzer (2003) noted the “double bind” that senior women leaders frequently encounter:

Effective leadership has long been traditionally associated with the masculine approach because of the perception that this kind of leadership got results. These stereotypes created the double bind for women because women who acted in stereotypical feminine ways (emotional, relational) are perceived as weak leaders. If they act in accordance with the stereotypical men’s approach to leadership, they are perceived as pushy, rude, and aggressive. (p. 1)

Mixed messages about leadership strengths and assets appear to be a common occurrence.

Bornstein (in press) asserted that in addition to receiving unclear signals regarding how to lead and act, female presidents face a higher standard of legitimacy to achieve among their constituents. She explained:

Female presidents face the same legitimacy hurdles as their male counterparts, but for women, the legitimacy bar is higher. Women must overcome structural and gender-based cultural biases and discrimination; many carefully monitor their own attitudes and behaviors to avoid reinforcing sex stereotypes. Expectations for the role of college president are based on traditional male models and the position is located within taken-for-granted gendered structures.

The notion of being judged by different standards is not uncommon, as many participants in the Women's Presidents' Summit expressed similar sentiments. They explained that they had been "shaped by society's expectations that a female must work harder and longer, be smarter and tougher, and earn more credentials and credibility compared to male colleagues—just to get to the same place" (Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2003, p. 6). Jablonski (1996/2000) also observed that women presidents believe that they are viewed differently compared to their male counterparts. Traditional social norms have made it difficult for women to recast themselves as leaders. Flynn (1993) explained: "The notion of a leader is someone tough or macho, with an aura of charisma. A role which women don't fit. According to society, women are nurturers and best suited for motherhood and the supportive role of wife" (p. 117). Nidiffer (2001) surmised that American society has canonized and associated attributes, such as aggression, vision, strength, and determination, with strong leadership abilities. Crowley (1994) compiled a list of metaphors frequently used to describe college presidents and cited superman, titan, statesman,

pilot, broker, papal figure, quarterback, helmsman, minion, foreman, villain, and viceroy. These descriptors further confirm society's rather masculine notions of presidential leadership and power—traits that women do not always portray or even value (Nidiffer, 2001). Subsequently, women presidents appear to be caught in a difficult position—critics are concerned if they appear too feminine or too masculine, yet they consistently evaluate these women leaders with a different set of expectations compared to their male presidents. In addition to receiving mixed messages about the “right kind of leadership,” women presidential candidates encounter disagreement as to how a “typical” college or university president should act or look (Nidiffer, 2001). Dowdall (2003) observed that style and presentation issues seem to be more prevalent for women presidential candidates than men candidates:

Women may have more problems of appearance because the dress code for them is more complex and thus more easily violated. Women have to consider issues like whether it is acceptable to wear a pantsuit, how much makeup and jewelry to wear, bright colors versus dark or neutral colors, scarves that slide out of place and become a distraction, hairstyles, and so on—most of which are not issues for men. Issues of demeanor seem to plague women more than men, including many traits that are so often considered pluses for men and minuses for women, like aggressiveness, competitiveness, and ambition. (p.

1)

In simply applying for presidencies, women presidential candidates seem to encounter additional concerns that would likely not concern their male presidential counterparts. Clearly societal expectations and stereotypes might be one of the most formidable barriers for women seeking presidencies.

How Women Perceive and Lead

The presidency is a powerful position, and current women presidents define and use their power differently when compared to male counterparts. Nidiffer (2001) explained: “Men often perceive power within a scarcity model, or zero-sum game. Women, in contrast, are more likely to believe that leaders actually increase their power by empowering others” (p. 110). The idea of leading by motivating others is supported by Jablonski’s (1996/2000) study on women college presidents; the presidents in her study described themselves as “generative leaders” (p. 245) who value people. Consequently, these leaders believed that they empowered individuals, emphasized collaboration by decentralizing decision making, and worked on keeping communication lines open—especially when listening to faculty concerns. However, it is interesting that the faculty on the campuses of Jablonski’s participants did not describe their particular president’s leadership style any differently when compared to the leadership style of male presidents (Jablonski, 1996/2000). Many of the participants explained that their women presidents were very hierarchical, needed power, and spent too much time on financial issues. Bornstein (in press) noted a similar dissonance between faculty expectations and how they actually evaluated their presidents. She explained:

Faculties say they prefer collaborative leadership, but their underlying assumptions about good leadership are based on a more authoritarian, “Father knows best,” style. Women presidents are expected to have a different leadership style from men, but are criticized as soft if they show themselves to be consultative consensus builders rather than authoritarian change agents.

Bensimon (1988) examined how men and women presidents defined leadership and found significant variation. Male presidents focused on the final outcome or “accomplishing the

leader's desired ends—either collegially or forcefully” (p. 151), while women focused on moving the institution through its people and used the mission as a guide. Men viewed themselves as the source of power, vision, and change, while women saw themselves as agents helping to facilitate change.

Switzer's (2003) study of 15 women college presidents found that they did not differentiate between male and female leadership styles and philosophies and believed that women might have the advantage of socialized gender characteristics that helps them in “building good morale, enlisting support for initiatives, collaborating effectively with colleagues and board members, and fund-raising” (p. 6). Furthermore, Switzer (2003) ascertained that women's more relational and motivational ways of connecting with people might prove to be an asset for fundraising. Although scholars have taken different perspectives regarding the intersection of gender and presidential leadership, some women presidents appear to believe that they lead differently compared to their male colleagues, but their constituents may not be able to comprehend or appreciate their different approaches.

But Does Gender Matter?

Scholars and practitioners disagree if gender influences presidential leadership. Fisher and Koch (1996) surmised that gender is not a determining factor in presidential leadership and described the gender question as “one of the most overblown issues in discussions of presidential leadership in American colleges and universities” (p. 81). Birnbaum (1992) found no relationship between gender and leadership and stated that “women are no less effective than men as presidents” (p.46), while Bornstein (2003) argued that more differences occur within gender rather than between gender.

I have been comfortable with the idea that there are more differences within than between the sexes, while I recognize the influence of special circumstances of women's lives.

Both men and women have a continuum of "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors available, as appropriate to the situations they encounter. (p. 96)

Today's men and women presidents draw from a wide continuum of leadership philosophies and practices. Reflecting on her own experience as the first woman president of Smith College, Jill Ker Conway (2001) remarked: "To me, the argument for including women was one of equity and utility, not some biologically based transformative capacity. I thought the executive role very little modified by the sex of the person who played it" (p. 125). Bornstein (in press) summarized the issue well: "Enough women have now completed successful, long-term presidencies to provide evidence that gender does not, by itself, undermine the influence and accomplishment of college and university presidents," so in many regards, it appears that gender should not be a factor.

Yet others disagree. Bensimon (1988) concluded that men and women presidents lead differently. Thomas (1993) learned that differences exist in the expectations of male and female presidents when they are first appointed because of gender stereotypes, but that over time, the biases are replaced by a more practical assessment of the person's skills and abilities.

Participants in Wolverton, Bower, and Maldonado's (2005) study expressed caution regarding the impact of gender on their presidencies; they believed that "there is no door that can't be opened" (p. 8), yet "women need to be very careful about making the correct choices for themselves" (p. 8). Another participant in their study warned of the backlash against "powerful, assertive women" (p. 8) and reminded prospective presidential candidates of the multiple barriers that still exist for women. One of Switzer's (2003) participants perhaps summarized the "gender

conundrum” well. When asked if gender was a factor in her presidency, she responded: “I try to be self-reflective about this, but I have no distance. I don’t know how not to be a woman leader” (p. 2) Yet, Bornstein (in press) reasoned that gender must matter because it causes constituents to judge presidents differently:

There are many pitfalls, especially for women, and most especially for the “first” woman president. The first woman in a presidency is viewed from a male-normed perspective, and constituents may perceive differences in personal and leadership style negatively... The first woman president is an oddity, a novelty, even a cultural misfit. Constituents may feel that she does not look or act like a president. They scrutinize her critically — her clothes, language, family arrangements, and management style.

Clearly disagreement exists about the impact of gender and presidential leadership, and more research is necessary to understand this phenomenon.

Little Structural Change to Higher Education

Another challenge for women presidents is higher education’s slow pace of adapting to change. Although the number of women students, faculty, and administrators in higher education has increased, the basic structure of higher education essentially has not changed. Jablonski (1996/2000) surmised that the disparity between the presidents’ perceptions of themselves and the faculty’s perceptions of the presidents could be attributed to the governance and organizational structure of higher education. “The presidents espoused generative leadership, but their colleges’ governance structures, committees, and boards of trustees could not support such a model. Organizations needed to be structured differently to accommodate alternative leadership styles” (p. 245). Women might be leading growing numbers of institutions, but they are still leading organizations bound by the same traditions, which makes it difficult for them to succeed.

Glazer-Raymo (1999) observed that individuals who join academe must “adapt to existing institutional norms” (p. 196-197), while Bornstein (in press) noted that “people in positions of power tend to reproduce themselves when making decisions about mentoring, hiring, and promoting.” Rosenblum and Rosenblum (1990) remarked on the segmented tendencies of professionals within academe:

The university takes its favored few and processes them through the stages of the academic hierarchy. Exceptions are made, but those exceptions rarely reflect the special conditions of women’s lives. The system can allow for any number of variations, such as military service, research leave, “community service,” alcoholism, divorce, sexual promiscuity, serious physical or mental illness, but never marriage or motherhood; not maternity leave, no schedules adjusted to childbearing needs, and so on. The “solution” for such “female trouble” is part-time, temporary status. (p. 155)

Higher education appears to be slow to adopt change, alter traditions, or change time-honored processes. Janet Holmgren (2000), former chair of the American Council on Education’s Board of Directors, observed that “the academy has absorbed the growing number of women without fundamentally changing the basic male-centeredness of our institutions” (p. 24). Perhaps because of different socialization processes and value systems, the leadership processes for men and women are seemingly different; although the final end product or outcome may be the same, their approach might differ (Bennett & Shayner, 1988). Women might bring a new leadership style into the presidency, but their approach to leadership is judged by the same standards, requiring women leaders to overcome such obstacles.

Governing Boards

While traditional gender norms may create gender-specific challenges for women, boards of trustees prove to be complicated constituencies for women presidents. Typically, governing boards have to overcome common stereotypes to accept women presidents; and afterwards, these women leaders need to work harder to develop and to cultivate positive working relationships with their respective boards. The process appears to be a continual uphill challenge, and getting the job in the first place proves to be a significant obstacle for female presidential candidates.

Dedication to Diversity

The paucity of female presidential candidates is often attributed to common prejudices about abilities, societal norms, and pipeline theories illustrating that the candidate pool of women is too small or not enough qualified candidates exist. However, several presidential search experts offer different reasons to explain women's lagging progress in the presidential arena and many of them relate to who is hiring the presidents—the boards of trustees. Fisher and Koch (1996) explained that governing boards still are reluctant to hire a woman president. Similarly, Bornstein (in press) observed that once hired, women presidents frequently encounter difficulties with board members:

Male trustees are often unaccustomed to interacting with women in positions of leadership, and they are less likely to develop the social, travel, and sports relationships with women presidents that characterize their relationships with male colleagues. Thus, the relations of many women presidents [with their boards] remain formal.

When beginning a presidential search, boards need to have serious discussions about their commitment to change. For example, how committed to diversity are the board and institution? Are boards willing to hire a candidate of a race or gender that differs from a traditional White

male? Often, in an attempt to diversify the semi-finalist pool, tokenism is practiced on presidential search committees; the short list of candidates might include one or two minority candidates, but search committees have little intention of selecting them (*Association of Governing Board of Universities and Colleges* [AGB], 2002). Some boards are concerned about the effectiveness of female leadership. Flynn (1993) observed that some leaders fear that the institution would become feminized if a woman took the helm, because she would not be taken seriously. Other critics have cited concerns regarding a woman's ability to fundraise effectively, administrate a large institution, and oversee large football and basketball programs. Finally, Bornstein (in press) discerned that even after a woman president is hired, she may not receive the necessary support from her board members:

Boards tend to be oblivious to a new president's need for support in the transition into the institution, as well as during change, in crisis, and at exit. Presidents, on the other hand, do not ask for support and direction, not wishing to appear inadequate to the task.

Women may feel especially vulnerable when requesting advice, worried about exhibiting stereotypical inadequacies.

Presidents, regardless of their gender, need to cultivate relationships and work on articulating their needs with their boards of trustees. Clearly, women presidents face additional barriers in convincing boards that they are capable, effective, and strong leaders.

Looking for Superstars

A similar problem is seen in refusing to consider applicants with non-traditional career paths. Many boards believe that senior women administrators are not "well-seasoned" for the political and financial aspects of the presidency, and this stereotype causes them to hesitate hiring a woman candidate (Brown et al., 2001, p. 7). Reflecting on her own presidential tenure,

Bornstein (2003), a non-traditional president, considered her own legitimacy, suggesting that she was “lacking the traditional lineage and academic background” (p. 65) of many college presidents and that she would need to “find acceptance as a different kind of president” (p. 65). Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) also noted that the “royal road” to the presidency” (p. 210), the traditional academic route, seems to be an important credential for presidential hopefuls. Similarly, governing boards usually want individuals who have trod the “time honored” academic progression of faculty member, department chair, dean, and then senior academic officer (AGB, 2002). However, many promising female candidates do not follow the traditional academic routes, and boards need to be more willing to consider alternate pathways to one of academe’s senior-most positions.

Similarly, the “star syndrome” causes barriers for women and minority candidates in presidential searches. In a recent interview with the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Richard Chait, professor of higher education at Harvard University, observed:

The search for a president is a search for iconic prestige. All too often institutions of higher education think they have to “marry up the ladder” by recruiting a leader from a higher-ranked institution to be considered successful. (Blumenstyk, 2005, p. A28)

Search committees naturally want the best and most qualified candidates for their institutions, but what is best for the institution and what the institution needs for prestige may not coincide, and boards and campus communities often have difficulty reconciling the dissonance (AGB, 2002).

Maria M. Perez of Perez-Arton Consultants explained:

Boards will have to become more willing to appoint minority or female candidates who are not “stars” but who have proved to be competent, knowledgeable, seasoned

administrators, even if their qualities were honed at a comparatively small or atypical institution. (AGB, 2002, p.17)

Few presidential candidates are nationally renowned but still are competent and successful leaders. Women and minority candidates face an additional challenge, because they often are categorized among the best only when their knowledge, skills, and abilities surpass others, so reaching the “superstar status” takes more effort (AGB, 2002). Furthermore, a woman who possesses a collaborative or alternative leadership style might not appear to be a strong enough leader and may be eliminated from a pool of presidential candidates. While men and women college presidents may hold the same job description, women presidents appear to encounter gender-related barriers and hidden expectations that they have had to work through to be successful presidents.

Achieving Balance

In a recent survey of American college and university presidents, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* observed that regardless of gender, the most frequently neglected areas of presidents’ lives are family, physical fitness, and leisure activities (Strout, 2005). Similarly, the struggle to balance their personal and professional lives is one of the most frequently cited challenges of women college presidents.

At the heart of the balance issue is how to manage personal priorities with professional obligations. Historically, the personal sphere, or the domain of the wife, family, and mother, has been relegated to women:

Between the woman and the position hovers the specter of the personal. The private domain of the family and social engagement that traditionally has served as the realm of

the female does not conveniently become self-sufficient or disappear as she crosses the threshold into the public sphere. (Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2002, p. 3)

While it is no longer uncommon for a working woman to also have a family, the woman's domain—domestic chores and child-raising—still primarily falls to them, despite increased external demands, such as careers outside of the home. Society further perpetuates the superwoman mentality when it expects professional women to balance it all—career, family, and home.

Participants in Wolverton, Bower, and Maldonado's (2005) study echoed similar concerns regarding additional challenges women in leadership positions face if they have families. One president shared:

Now women, I think, are sometimes conflicted, particularly if they want to be married and raise a family. And I think they have to decide where their balance is going to be and what's most important, which may mean that they have to wait until their children are older before they go into administrative positions. When they have the time and aren't conflicted with demands at home. (pp. 8-9)

A trade-off appears to be necessary if a woman desires to be a senior administrator and raise a family. Switzer's (2003) research revealed that many presidents delay senior leadership roles until their children are older, while another president could not imagine serving in her position and raising younger children, and another woman remarked that it is impossible to balance it all. She shared: "The presidency is all consuming. You must make a conscious decision to pursue it in lieu of something else—something has to give. Because women stop out to have families, it slows the move of women into the presidency" (Wolverton, Bower, & Maldonado, 2005, p. 9), so the superwoman image of "having it all" is an unrealistic goal for women presidents.

Adding to the balancing issue is the public nature of the office. The prominence and duties of the position often brings intense scrutiny to their personal lives. Families of married women presidents complain about living in the “proverbial fishbowl,” while single, divorced, or widowed presidents find it difficult to date without becoming fuel for campus gossip (Brown et al., 2001, p. 5). Clearly, women presidents encounter numerous competing demands that contend for her personal and professional attention.

The Presidential Roundtables: How to Achieve Balance?

The American Council on Education’s (ACE) Office of Women in Higher Education hosted a series of roundtables and summits around the country for women college and university presidents. These meetings addressed gender and leadership challenges. Reviewing the publications generated from these proceedings, one notices that the issue of finding balance was a primary concern for women college and university presidents and subsequently was discussed at each meeting. The concerns, their ideas for achieving balance, and the directives created at these meetings provide valuable insight into issues faced by these senior women leaders.

The first summit: An agenda for balance. During the first summit, the presidents outlined agendas for individuals and for clusters of presidents. As a result of the roundtable discussions, several suggestions for improvement were recommended by the participants. Individually, each president needed to role model a balanced life in her own presidency. Women presidents should attempt to integrate visibly their public and private lives, support campus policies that accommodate the whole person, and reward and recognize departments and individuals on campus who recognize and implement policies that support the whole individual (ACE, 1994). Small groups of presidents were encouraged to unite and use their critical mass to make changes. These leaders of academe need to reach out and connect with other women’s organizations—

especially those outside of higher education—for support and to be more intentional about placing women’s issues relating to the conflict of balancing the personal and professional on their presidential agendas. National and international research about women and women’s leadership need to be conducted, and their male counterparts, legislators, and corporate supporters need to be educated about their concerns. Finally, women presidents were encouraged to create presidential support groups among one another by institutions with similar missions or with schools in close proximity (ACE, 1994, p. 12). The presidents attempted to make their recommendations practical by organizing them into categories of what individual and clusters of presidents could do to help create a more hospitable and equitable work environment for them and for other women. However, their recommendations lacked specificity and prescription.

The second summit: Focus on the personal. The results of the second summit focused primarily on suggestions that would support and help women presidents to achieve balance. “Women presidents need to feel comfortable giving themselves time off...and recognizing a president’s three agendas: announced, personal, and anxiety-driven—and knowing which agenda is appropriate in a given situation” (Brown et al., 2001, p. 13). Women presidents should seek mentors for the different stages of their careers and establish a network of explainers and listeners to help them. The second summit had a more personal intent and did not mention national or international implications, but focused on what individual presidents need to do for themselves on their respective campuses.

The third summit: Do not separate the professional and the personal. One of the most noticeable changes to emerge in the third summit was the acceptance of the professional versus the personal conflict. Professional norms typically have kept the personal and professional

spheres separate, but the roundtable participants articulated that they should accept the merger of the two areas, because it forms the essence of their unique leadership styles.

Women are encouraged to accept family and other individual obligations as having equal import with their professional obligations, not hidden or isolated, but integral to who they are and what they stand for. The very values that reside in the woman's spirit offer the basis for her leadership, for the infusion of those values into the roots of the institution. That very rootedness becomes the foundation, holding even as the spiral moves up and out. (Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2003, p. 3)

These women leaders articulated that they should not try to assimilate leadership styles to mirror their male counterparts, but merge their public and personal spheres to create foundations for their leadership styles. Their efforts should not focus on convincing their governing boards that they could complete their jobs in the same manner as men, but rather that they could achieve positive results using their own approaches. In addition, participants emphasized modeling the merging of their separate spheres of responsibility on campus. One of the most effective ways to begin changes is to lead by example. Presidents need to

[g]ive themselves permission to involve themselves in family life, whether that means caring for an elderly parent or leaving the office early for a child's soccer game. By doing so, they also give that same permission to other women and men on campus. (p. 6)

To provide additional support, trusted confidantes are needed—people to whom they could turn without worrying about seeing their comments appear in newspapers. If presidents live on campus, they need a second residence to serve as a place of retreat, a physically separate space from the campus community.

The message that resonated from the final summit was for women leaders to “forge enduring links with other women who are leaders in civic, corporate, and political arenas” because their power will be achieved in numbers (Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2003, p. 4). Making connections with women in other professions could help to provide additional support and increase networking opportunities. By this point in their careers, these women were realistic about the demands their positions would bring to their personal and professional lives, but they did not want to separate them to become president. Women college and university presidents have begun to voice their concerns about the challenges they encounter while in office, but more individuals need to learn about their experiences.

Domestic Expectations

While many women discuss the lack of personal time, little has been written about domestic responsibilities, an area that is frequently relegated to the realm of women. Switzer (2003) asked very practical questions about housekeeping, planning social events, and other demands outside of the office that require a president’s attention. Most of the women presidents in her study lived in a campus-owned residence and had basic housekeeping provided by the institution. A few were provided with a house manager, who managed housecleaning, entertainment, and other standard housekeeping activities (maintenance, seasonal duties, etc.). Although Switzer recommended that women presidents would benefit from a driver to take them to off-campus meetings and a full-time house manager who could “plan menus, tend to decorating issues, notice when it is time to put in the screens, and work proactively to manage the property and the entertaining” (Switzer, 2003, p. 7), the acquisition of such services was difficult. Many are hesitant to ask for such support because they do not want to be perceived as being “uppity” (p. 7) or being too extravagant. While little had been written about this area,

domestic duties represent an example of a personal responsibility that does not disappear when a woman assumes a presidency.

Summary of Literature

Contemporary women presidents owe a great deal to the early women leaders of higher education, who defied social norms and broke new ground without the support of society. While women presidents of colleges and universities have become more common, they continue to encounter barriers—both structural and social—that their male counterparts do not encounter. Such additional obstacles might further mitigate their effectiveness in these positions. As more women accept presidencies, leaders in higher education and in other sectors need to address these barriers, propose innovative solutions, and be willing to implement such changes—even if they alter traditional social structures and gender schemas. Women represent a majority of participants in the higher education system, and more comprehensive and in-depth information about experiences of these pioneers is needed if women are to advance into leadership roles in the academy. Thus this study advanced an understanding of this domain through privileging the stories of eight individuals who assumed the role of pioneer on their respective campuses in rising to the tasks of leadership as the institution's first woman president.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Methodology details the processes and steps involved in conducting a research project. Accordingly, this chapter addresses the method of inquiry and related assumptions employed in this study. In addition, the participant selection, data selection and analysis, indices of quality, and participant safeguards are discussed. The chapter concludes with the exemplar research questions that guided the focus of inquiry and the presentation of data generated.

The Constructivist Paradigm

The constructivist paradigm, also known as the naturalistic, hermeneutic, or interpretive paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), served as the underlying framework for this study, because it provides a more comprehensive look at a problem or phenomenon in its natural setting. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested that the science of inquiry be viewed as a continuum “with discovery on one end and verification on the other” (p. 113). Although some insights have been generated about women college presidents in previous literature, the conventional paradigm that guided them for the most part has limited extant findings to one end of the spectrum—statistics collected, trends observed, and figures verified. While isolating a particular phenomenon has been the preferred methodology of conventional researchers, paying attention to the contexts and details surrounding the phenomenon yields a richer store of valuable information that is too often ignored. Lincoln and Guba (1985) compared the constructivist paradigm of observing phenomena in context to the properties of a holograph:

Holographs have the property that, even if large portions of the recorded interference patterns are lost, the remaining pieces, no matter how tiny, will all have complete information and will be able to reproduce the original image in its entirety (and in three

dimensions!). Every piece of a system has complete information about the whole, in this view. (p. 53)

One portion of the hologram contains information that relates to and affects other portions of the hologram. In their attempt to remain neutral and objective, conventional researchers exclude such connections—they sanitize the context. In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer (1998) also referred to this same metaphor, celebrating the fact that “every part of the hologram contains information possessed by the whole” (p. 122), and each part contains an image of the whole. This image emphasizes the dynamic process of a constructivist approach to research. One is not trying to isolate a variable or a set of variables but rather is attempting to read, observe, and learn from a particular section. One does not isolate that section from its context but looks at its connection to the world around it, because the patterns and networks tell a story—they are the threads that bind the tapestry together. To justify the use of a constructivist paradigm, the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of the constructivist paradigm are addressed here next.

Relativist Ontology

Ontology addresses the nature of reality, and the constructivist paradigm asserts that multiple realities exist in the form of varied mental constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) argued that instead of providing “a neat, sterile picture of congruent geometric figures, these separate observations provide a mosaic with general, unclear boundaries, but with rich central meanings about the interrelationships in the institution” (p. 15). One reality or “truth” cannot account for all possibilities or explanations. This assumption entails an appreciation for the complexity researchers encounter in coming to understand a particular phenomenon, a dynamic that is a function of both the knower and the

known. Thus, the methodology employed here emphasized the pursuit of multiple and varying constructions of these participants' experiences.

Subjectivist Epistemology

Epistemology examines the nature of the relationship between the knower (i.e., researcher) and the known (i.e., phenomenon being examined). While conventional researchers strive for objectivity by exteriorizing the studied phenomenon and remaining “detached and distant” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 84), constructivist researchers understand that meaning is gained through interaction, dialogue, and proximity. The outcomes or results of the study emerge from a mutual process of discussing, enlightening, and informing that produces new constructions of meaning. This entails a sensitivity to subjectivist methods and techniques. Therefore this study engaged these participants over time in relational encounters that capitalized on the researcher's opportunity to develop personal connections to each one of them.

Methodology

Finally, methodology looks at the ways one generates knowledge. Constructivists strive to examine the subjective relationships and interactions between the participant and the environment. The interaction between the researcher and the participant produces a “mutual influence” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 15) that shapes the outcome of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). They attempt to focus on the phenomena occurring in their context (Erlandson et al., 1993), because broad generalizations decay and lose their usefulness. This subjective way of collecting data is advantageous, because the human instrument has the ability to collect data about the nuances and details that surround, interact, and influence the participant. “Humans collect information best, and most easily, through the direct employment of their senses: talking to people, observing their activities, reading their documents, assessing the unobtrusive signs

they leave behind, responding to their non-verbal cues, and the like” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 176). These details represent essential components that are needed to reconstruct realities. Because generalizations change, constructivist researchers try to explain the broader picture by scrutinizing the details, or how the stitches in the tapestry connect each piece together.

The constructivist or naturalistic paradigm was utilized as the conceptual framework for this study because it provides the best means to learn about the experiences of first-time women college presidents in their own unique contexts. Summarizing the assumptions of the naturalistic inquirer, Erlandson et al. (1993) explained:

The aim of naturalistic inquiry is not to develop a body of knowledge in the form of generalizations that are statements free from time or context. The aim is to develop shared constructions that illuminate a particular context and provide a working hypothesis for the investigation of others. The purpose, then, for a naturalistic researcher conducting a study similar to a previous one is not to yield the same results, disclose errors in the former methodology, or to strengthen the generalizability to the universe. Rather, it is primarily to expand on the processes and constructed realities of one study to seek initial illumination of the context of another study. (p. 45)

My goal was to share the voices of these pioneer women by constructing meaning around their experiences and knowledge through shared dialogue.

Participant Selection

Constructivist researchers work with smaller, selectively chosen samples that will yield the most diverse data on the issues being studied. Erlandson et al. (1993) explained that “purposive and directed sampling through human instrumentation increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researchers’ ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate

account of contextual conditions and cultural norms” (p. 82). Purposive sampling helps to provide data rich in detail and maximizes the range of information obtained from a context.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) explained that purposive sampling occurs in stages. The first stage is to select the sample serially and contingently; in this case, presidents were selected because they met the initial criteria and their experiences appeared to differ from each other. Curriculum vitae (CVs) were analyzed for information regarding their experiences, their tenure as president, their career path to the presidency, race and ethnicity, relationship status, and institutional mission. Second, the sample was selected contingently; accordingly, each succeeding participant (up to a total of seven to nine informants) was chosen because her perspective might be the most different from the other informants. Respondents were selected according to their ability to offer the most insight on emerging themes. This process helped to provide maximum variation in the sample studied.

Participant selection occurred in several steps. First, a list of potential participants was generated through a variety of means. Initially, I conducted research on-line about presidents in the Midwest who met my qualifications (i.e., woman, first woman president at her respective campus, serving at a private institution). My gatekeeper or contact person, who is a current first-time woman college president, agreed to contact a staff member at the Council of Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU), who had experience in working with women presidents and those seeking to become presidents. Working with my gatekeeper and the CICU staff member, additional names were generated. I merged my research with the list from the CICU consultant into one comprehensive database that contained 14 names. After reviewing the database, my gatekeeper graciously sent a brief written letter to the eight women presidents known to her that explained my project and encouraged them to consider participating. Once the gatekeeper sent

her letters, I mailed a brief, persuasive letter that outlined the purpose of my study (Appendix A), a prospectus of the literature and study (Appendix B) , and a participant profile that asked for demographic data and information about their career paths to the presidency (Appendix D). The remaining potential participants, whom my gatekeeper did not know, were mailed identical packets of materials. Additional leads were generated through networking at conferences and talking to different professionals in higher education. If someone mentioned that he or she had worked with President X or President Y, I asked each of these individuals to send a quick email to introduce me and my study to the presidents. Once I heard back from a particular president, I would mail her the same packet of materials. Finally, a few letters were mailed without any introduction; these were women presidents whom I had researched but found no one who was familiar with them. All interested participants were asked to return CV and the completed personal profile to obtain initial data about them and to confirm that they met the study requirements.

A total of sixteen letters was distributed and eight women responded to my letter of inquiry. Although a variety of methods was used to obtain the sample, the process of having someone to introduce me and my study to the presidents yielded a better response. Four of the participants in this study received letters from my gatekeeper, three connections with presidents were made through networking, and one president was the result of a “cold letter” being mailed to her.

Contingencies always exist when selecting participants. Because of their demanding schedules and limited availability, presidents are a difficult group to study. The public nature of the office, combined with constant scrutiny from constituents, makes it difficult to convince a president to partake in a study with a complete stranger. Seven women initially expressed

interest and a commitment to the project. Another president was recruited approximately one month later. These presidents became my sample, because they met the criteria: each was the first woman president at her respective institution, and the backgrounds and experiences of each participant appeared unique. All the participants in this study were White, and while more racial and ethnic diversity was desired, it simply was not possible within the parameters of the study's focus. Although a few of the participants in the present study were acquainted with racial or ethnic minority female presidents, they were often not the first woman at their respective colleges or else served at public institutions. Nonetheless, redundancy occurred in some themes after three interviews, while other issues reached a point of redundancy after eight interviews.

Data Collection

To be able to construct meaning and effectively illustrate the rich contexts of participants, qualitative researchers need to gather data from numerous sources and employ multiple collection techniques. Erlandson et al. (1993) explained:

Respondents are asked questions, but they are also encouraged to engage with the researcher in less structured conversations so that their hidden assumptions and constructions begin to surface. They are observed in their daily activity so that the researcher can begin to see the operational meaning of what they have said. Further insight into their constructed realities can be gained from documents that provide historical context for interpreting their words and activity. Cluttered office arrangements, athletic award plaques on the wall, and spotless restrooms reflect values that helped shape the respondents' constructed realities. Data from these sources are brought together and systematically analyzed in a process that proceeds parallel to data collection. (p. 81)

Engaging in semi-structured interviews with my respondents, collecting documents, such as curriculum vitae, and reading articles written about them as well as those published by them, helped to provide details and information contributing to the themes that emerged from my research. Consequently, interviewing, observation, and document analysis served as the three primary means for collecting data. The purpose and value behind each method are now discussed.

Interviews

One of the methods that works well with the human instrument is interviewing. Described by Dexter (1970 as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as a “conversation with a purpose” (p. 268), interviews allow the researcher “to move back and forth in time—to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future” (p. 273). Interviewing helps the researcher understand the interpersonal, social, and cultural influences of the environment (Erlandson et al., 1993) and offers the flexibility to tailor questions to better fit the situation. Two interviews, lasting approximately one hour each, were completed with each president at her particular campus. The first interview (Appendix E) explored the five research questions, while the purpose of the second interview was to ask follow-up questions, confirm the essence and the accuracy of each respective case profile, and engage in discussion about the composite findings as presented in a draft of chapter four.

Observations

Observation represents a second technique that aids the constructivist qualitative researcher. While interviews are an integral tool in this type of inquiry, observations yield findings that the spoken word may miss. Erlandson et al. (1993) noted that “much is to be gained

by looking, listening, feeling, and smelling rather than by merely talking” (p. 98), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the insider’s perspective that observations can provide:

Observation...maximizes the inquirer’s ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like; observation...allows the inquirer to see the world as the subject sees it, to live in their time frame, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural, ongoing environment; observation...provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reactions of the group. (p. 273)

The experiences described by the respondents, coupled with the insiders’ viewpoint gained through observation, aids the researcher in constructing meanings that are rich in detail and that accurately convey the emic, or insider point of view. Accordingly, each interview was conducted in person, which allowed me to observe each president in her own environment and gauge participants’ responses to questions. In addition, conducting interviews in person made it easier to establish rapport and gain their confidence, because they could observe my actions and responses and meet the person behind the “human instrument.”

Documents and Artifacts

A third source of data is found in various documents and artifacts, written and symbolic records (e.g., resumes, articles) and other materials (e.g., works of art, recordings, awards) that further help to provide insight into the participant’s experience (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Collecting and analyzing documents and artifacts are advantageous: many are readily available; they represent a stable source of information, as they can be analyzed and re-analyzed without change; and they are a rich store of data, because they are “contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 277). I reviewed each institution’s

website and president's homepage (if applicable), where many of their speeches were available in full-text. If the president had been on campus for several years, I also spent one day in the campus archives reviewing materials (e.g., newspaper articles, alumni magazines) relating to her presidency. For newer presidents, I requested press packets (that contained the institution's press release and the articles in local papers) related to the inauguration as well as other pertinent materials. This multi-faceted approach supplied relevant background information about each president's experience, shed light on some aspects of institutional culture, and provided information that enhanced data obtained from interviews.

The Human Instrument

At the center of the techniques of the naturalistic inquiry is the tremendous capacity of the human inquirer. Lincoln and Guba (1985) aptly described the versatility of the human instrument: "The human being, who, like the 'smart bomb' can identify and wind its way to (purposefully sample) the target without having been precisely programmed to strike it" (p. 43). The versatility, adeptness, and adaptability of a human interviewer is one of the crowning hallmarks of the naturalistic approach.

Qualifications of This Human Instrument

Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) detailed the advantages of the human instrument, it is important to explain the qualifications of the researcher, or the human instrument, who engaged in this study. My personal interests, educational background, training in qualitative research, and professional experience prior to pursuing a doctorate provided a strong foundation of knowledge and skills that qualified me to pursue this research.

Personal Interest

Why are the experiences and challenges of first-time women college presidents important to me? As a junior at Monmouth College in Illinois, I was asked to serve on a student advisory board for the president, Dr. Sue Huseman, the first woman president at Monmouth. My involvement with the advisory board led to an invitation to be a student representative on a search committee for a new academic dean during my senior year. While four women (Dr. Huseman, the dean of students, a faculty member, and I) were involved in the search process, very few women applied to be candidates or were invited to interview. Observing Dr. Huseman work with the selection committee and interacting with the faculty members and potential candidates sparked my interest to look more into the role of women leaders.

During the second semester of my Master's work in college student personnel at Bowling Green State University, in 1997, I was fortunate to have completed a practicum opportunity with Dr. Lee Snyder, the first woman president of Bluffton University in Ohio. Although my practicum consisted of working on projects for her office, Dr. Snyder also discussed with me issues confronting higher education, shared her professional journey, and encouraged me to continue my studies once I had completed my master's degree. Both Dr. Huseman and Dr. Snyder were first-time women college presidents. My experiences and conversations with them cultivated an interest in women leaders in higher education.

Educational Background

A personal interest in a subject does not solely qualify one to study a topic. However, my educational preparation also prepared me to study this issue. I have completed successfully my coursework for a doctorate in higher education administration. This preparation included a course on qualitative research methods. As part of the course requirements, I conducted a

qualitative study of a first-time woman college president. This opportunity initiated me into the techniques, rigors, joys, and frustrations of qualitative constructivist research.

In addition to a qualitative research course, my doctoral cognate focused on women in higher education. This concentration of courses provided a framework for the issues facing women in the academy. Four carefully selected courses comprised my cognate: (a) Women in Higher Education; (b) Comparative Perspectives in Higher Education; (c) Women in the Modern United States; and (d) Social Justice Education and Training. These classes addressed the relationship of gender to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and religion of women faculty, staff, and students in higher education. The history of modern American women provided a strong contextual foundation to ground education-specific issues in the historical events and social forces that shaped the experiences of women over the past 150 years. The comparative perspectives course provided an international viewpoint of the issues women leaders in academe encounter around the world, while social justice training instruction provided a very pragmatic guide on how to educate others on the challenges and injustices women encounter. Combined with my formal coursework in higher education administration, I felt well prepared in undertaking this study.

Professional Experiences

While coursework has addressed my academic preparation, my professional experience at small private colleges, a context similar to the presidents who were studied, further enhanced my qualifications. I am a graduate of a small, private liberal arts institution and worked at a private, church-related liberal arts college for seven years. As a Residence Hall Director and later as the Director of Residence Life, I gained significant responsibilities and experiences that familiarized me with the unique culture and traditions, intimate nature, and internal networking that occurs at

smaller campuses. On a typical day, I might have had a phone conversation with a concerned parent, met with staff on residential concerns, attended a student program over the lunch hour, consulted with the vice president of student affairs about a discipline issue, and attended a campus event in the evening. While less “red tape” may exist at smaller institutions and change can be more readily implemented, the actions of one department can significantly and quickly affect another area. Faculty and staff usually maintain very collegial relations and, while everyone seems to be acquainted with “everyone else” on campus—an equally problematic and advantageous condition—a strong sense of community usually prevails. I enjoyed working at a small private institution and accordingly looked forward to a study on women presidents in this same environment. My personal, academic, and professional experiences qualified me academically to conduct this study.

Caveats Regarding the Human Instrument

While the responsiveness and adaptability of the human instrument increases the researcher’s sensitivity to the concerns of participants, it also potentially threatens the credibility of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) conceded that humans are sometimes careless, make mistakes, or become fatigued. Furthermore, it is a distinct possibility that context familiarity might render the researcher insensitive to some nuances and experiences presumed to be understood. Consequently, the constructivist researcher must employ compensatory measures of trustworthiness and authenticity to address the quality of the research and resulting constructions.

Trustworthiness

Quality research must be consistent and legitimate. Regardless of what paradigm is employed, valid inquiry must “must demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the

neutrality of its findings or decisions” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 29). Trustworthiness is how naturalistic researchers demonstrate that they have accurately portrayed the original constructions and that any reconstructions proffered are based in the data obtained from the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The naturalistic paradigm uses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, all elements of trustworthiness, to ensure that findings are sound and legitimate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

In response to expectations for internal validity, naturalistic researchers use credibility. Credibility is measured by checking to see if any descriptions developed through the inquiry process “ring true” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 30) for the research participants. The researcher attempts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the informant’s realities in the context where they have occurred and have the participants affirm the reconstructed realities (Erlandson et al., 1993). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested several strategies to achieve credibility: persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

Persistent observation was achieved by conducting, in person, two in-depth sequential interviews, lasting approximately 60-75 minutes each, with the participants. These interviews helped to confirm themes and provide depth to the data collected. Triangulation is a method of verifying emerging themes by validating pieces of information against each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Between-method triangulation was achieved through the collection of supporting materials, such as the presidents’ lists of activities, their curriculum vitae, and relevant publications they had written. These items were analyzed to see if they supported any emerging themes. All of the transcripts were reviewed with peer debriefers who had experience with qualitative research methods. Independently, each debriefer received copies of the transcripts to

discuss emerging themes. We then met to discuss and compare our findings. Finally, member checking was utilized, because it allowed the data collected and interpretations created by the researcher to be verified by each participant (Erlandson et al., 1993). Participants in this study were sent the transcripts of their interviews, a draft of their individual case study, and an overview of the composite categories, themes, and frameworks developed over the course of the study. In their cover letter, they were instructed to review the transcripts and profile for accuracy; to make any changes, such as adding or deleting phrases; and to propose any additional suggestions that may advance the material.

Transferability

A second criterion for quality data collection is transferability. The naturalistic researcher works to achieve transferability by describing “in great detail the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied” (Erlandson et al, 1993, p. 32). In this study, two strategies were used to attain transferability: thick description and purposive sampling. Because transferability depends upon the similarities between two contexts, the researcher must provide ample, rich, and detailed descriptions of the contexts so judgments about their applicability might be rendered. Thick descriptions can provide detailed accounts of the contexts and illustrate the emerging themes and patterns observed by the researcher.

The second strategy, purposive sampling, works with a smaller number of participants and seeks to maximize the amount of variation with each participant to provide the most varied and detailed information about the phenomenon being studied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that “the object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavor” (p.

201). Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to interview participants who brought the most diversity to the sample in regard to the focus of the study.

Dependability

A third quality criterion of the naturalistic paradigm is dependability, a measure of the consistency of results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shifts and changes in the data are the “hallmarks of maturing and successful inquiry” in this type of research and should be tracked so that “outside reviewers...can explore the process, judge the decisions that were made, and understand what salient factors in the context led the evaluator to the decisions and interpretations made” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). To check for dependability, a researcher might solicit the input of an external person. To allow for a dependability check, I maintained an audit trail that accounts for documents, transcripts, tapes, and other sources that helped me interpret the various themes. In addition, my field log provided a record of activity on the project and illustrated my logic and motivation in constructing realities.

Confirmability

The final criterion essential to the naturalistic paradigm is confirmability, or the degree that “data, interpretations, and outcomes are inquiries rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and not simply figments of the evaluator’s imagination” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). Guba and Lincoln have recommended that the dependability and confirmability audit be conducted together. Consequently, the audit trail established to demonstrate dependability facilitated confirmability as well.

Authenticity

While trustworthiness addresses methodological adequacy, authenticity examines the connection between the researcher and participant and how they mutually explore constructions

and interpretations. Guba and Lincoln (1989) have outlined several criteria for supporting authenticity: (a) fairness, (b) ontological authenticity, (c) educative authenticity, (d) catalytic authenticity, and (e) tactical authenticity. Since catalytic and tactical authenticity attempt to evaluate how participants' actions and decisions are influenced by the enhanced constructions and to what extent they were empowered to act (Erlandson et al., 1993), this study focused on fairness, ontological authenticity, and educative authenticity to improve the researcher and the participants' constructions of reality.

Fairness

The criterion of fairness works to establish that all stakeholders have equal access to the construction and evaluation processes and provides a mechanism of appeal for the participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Two strategies were used to achieve fairness: The first strategy was informed consent (Appendix C), which granted the researcher permission to conduct the interviews. The second strategy applied continual reevaluation of constructions and reconstructions. At each interview, I reviewed the emerging themes and asked each participant to comment on and to clarify the accuracy of the constructions represented. In addition, the member check enabled respondents to edit and polish the constructions.

Ontological Authenticity

Ontological authenticity refers to the degree to which an individual's understanding of her/his experience has expanded and improved (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Guba and Lincoln suggested that researchers can demonstrate ontological authenticity by providing testimony of participants that illustrates how their perceptions have changed or been clarified throughout the course of the study and by leaving an audit trail, which documents the constructions of the

researcher and the participant. Accordingly, I engaged and recorded each participant's response to the proffered constructions.

Educative Authenticity

Educative authenticity refers to the scope of the respondent's understanding and appreciation of other stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This criterion can be demonstrated by providing testimonies or case studies of other participants with very different experiences and by maintaining an audit trail that documents the shifts and changes in the respondent's comprehension of the issues. Thus, this criterion was satisfied in the display and discussion with each participant of an aggregate construction of the problem focus featuring the experiences and meanings attributed to all eight presidents.

Data Analysis

Once data are collected, they must be analyzed, and in qualitative research, this process is continuous and occurs before, during, and after data collection. Erlandson et al. (1993) aptly described the complex procedure that transpires:

Subsequent interviews are shaped by what has been learned by previous ones; a single interview may change course midstream because of what has been learned during the interview. New opportunities for data collection are seized as the researcher's learning clarifies the data's significance. Multiple working hypotheses are tested continuously. (p. 130)

Following data collection, several steps must occur: data must be unitized, organized into themes and categories, and reconstructed into a working theory or hypothesis. When an interview is completed, it is transcribed verbatim. Next the data are unitized, or disaggregated into the "smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thoughts in the absence of

additional information other than the broad understanding of the context” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 117). Once sorted into small pieces, the data are examined and re-sorted into different themes and categories that emerge. Titles are developed for the multiple themes, and then the researcher and peer reviewer consider alternative interpretations of the data, or negative and divergent case analysis. Finally, a case report is generated for each participant that summarizes the observations and emergent themes gleaned from each institutional context. In addition, a general report that aggregates the data from all of the presidents is given to each participant. In turn, they are asked to comment on the reconstructions and identified themes. By sharing and discussing the constructions and reconstructions of data, the researcher and the participants are engaging in the hermeneutic dialectic process, which aims to create a higher level of synthesis through dialogue and comparison (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The purpose of this process is

[n]ot to justify one’s own construction or to attack the weaknesses of the constructions offered by others, but to form a *connection* between them that allows for their mutual exploration by all parties. The aim of the process is to reach a consensus when that is possible; when it is not possible, the process at the very least exposes and clarifies several different views and allows the building of an agenda for negotiation. (p. 149)

Through intense observation, discussion, and data collection, the researcher and the participants engage in a mutual process of data construction that hopefully provides rich detail and illuminates the individual experiences of the participants. Thus, I proceeded stepwise from transcripts, to thematic details, case reports, and aggregate constructions to offer a coherent display of the experiences and meanings these women attributed to their presidencies.

Participant Safeguards

Researchers employ a variety of safeguards to protect their participants from harm. Guba and Lincoln (1989) addressed four areas of concern: physical or psychological harm, guarding against any form of deception, protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants, and obtaining informed consent. I took great care to meet these guidelines.

Harm

A majority of the data collected in this study was obtained from personal interviews. Because the interview were approximately an hour in length, I did not view process as a serious threat, as participants could suspend their involvement in the study at any time. Furthermore, an appeal mechanism was built into the data collection process. Through member checking, respondents had the opportunity to review transcripts and case studies, and to make additions, deletions, and suggestions that best represented their constructions of reality.

Deception

Deception does not aid the researcher in illustrating the realities of the context being examined and goes against the very essence of constructivist research.

Deception is not only unwarranted, but is in direct conflict with its own aims. For if the aims of a constructivist science are to collect and debate the various multiple constructions of stakeholders, how can one collect them if the research or evaluation participants are confused or misled regarding what the evaluators wish to know...it destroys dignity, respect, and agency, but it is also counterproductive. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 122)

To avoid any such barriers, I made every attempt to be forthcoming as to the purposes and processes of this study. The intent of this study was stated in the initial contact letter (Appendix A), in early correspondence, and before all interviews.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Because production of thick description was the intended goal of this study, it was difficult to guarantee complete anonymity. However, I maintained confidentiality and provided as much anonymity as possible through the use of pseudonyms for all places, organizations, and names. The contexts and experiences of each participant remained true, but identities were disguised so that a reader was not able to recognize ordinarily the identity of any given individual or place. Nonetheless, each president maintained full vigilance over what was represented on her behalf. Some chose to modify the material to maximize this safeguard.

Informed Consent

Before the interviewing process began, each participant was asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix C) that allowed the researcher to collect data and conduct interviews. Concerns of the participant were addressed promptly, and if she expressed discomfort with answering any questions, she informed the researcher. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were advised of their right to terminate their involvement at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Research Questions

This study pursued a more comprehensive understanding of the expectations and experiences of women who had assumed the presidency of a post secondary institution where they were the first female to do so. More specifically, this study sought to bring a deeper understanding of the career paths of these women, their initiating experiences on campus, the

challenges they have encountered, and the insights they offered on what might be required of future women who aspire to ascend to this position. Accordingly, the following exemplary questions framed the data collection and analysis:

- What are the critical professional experiences and personal incidents that have led these women to pursue or seek a presidency?
- How has being the first woman president at their institutions affected their roles and responsibilities?
- How do these women balance their personal and professional responsibilities and obligations?
- In regard to their presidency, what are the greatest challenges with which these women grapple?
- What kinds of knowledge, skills, and experiences should women aspiring to a presidency seek to prepare themselves for the position?

The investigation of the above questions expanded and deepened knowledge about these women presidents and, more specifically, illuminated the experiences and challenges they faced while serving in a presidency for the first time at an institution where a woman had not previously been considered.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Results

The results of my research are presented in this chapter, beginning with a brief profile of each participant president. These profiles provide an overview regarding the institution where each one is serving, or has served, as the first woman president; the president's educational preparation; and demographic data, including race, age, and marital and family status.

The composite results of the study are organized in response to each of the five research questions. I wanted to learn more about the significant personal and professional experiences that led these women to the presidency; how being the first woman to hold the office has affected her experience; what their greatest challenges have been while in office; how they managed the multiple professional and personal obligations placed upon them; and what kinds of knowledge, skills, and experiences they believed that women presidential candidates needed to be successful.

Numerous themes and categories became apparent through unitization and analysis of the data. Accordingly, each section begins with an overview of the major themes that emerged for that particular research question. Themes are further divided into categories or variations that illustrate the theme, while appropriate thick description and quotes from various presidents are used to support the phenomenon being described. Each section concludes with a brief summary of the overarching themes for the research question addressed.

Individual Profiles of the Presidents

Eight women college or university presidents were interviewed for my research. All of the women were the first female presidents at their respective institutions. Additionally, seven of these women were serving in their first presidency. All of the presidents were White and had earned terminal degrees. The number of years served in office ranged from 1 to 14 years; two

presidents were retired, and one recently had announced her retirement. Most were married and had grown children. Finally, they all were serving or had served their presidencies at small, private liberal arts institutions.

President Montgomery

Dr. Anne Montgomery is the first woman president of Redwood College, a small private liberal arts institution located in a small Midwestern community. Established in the late 1800s, the school has a long tradition of academic excellence and cultivating social responsibility and action. The institution maintains fairly strong ties with its founding religious denomination. The student body of slightly over 1,100 is largely undergraduate, with one small graduate program. Anne is 57 years old, White, married, and has three grown children. She earned a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in a field within the humanities and has served as Redwood's president for a little over a year.

President Barry

Dr. Dianna Barry is the first woman president of Maple College, a small, private liberal arts and sciences institution located in a rural Midwest community. Founded in the mid-1800s by a religious denomination that has some influence today, the institution has an enrollment of approximately 1,300 undergraduate students and offers nearly 30 majors and several pre-professional degree programs. Beginning the fifth year of her presidency, Dr. Barry is 58 years old, White, married, and has two adult children. She earned a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in humanities-related fields, and a Ph.D. in an area of education.

President Miller

Dr. Rachel Miller served as the first woman president of Walnut College for nearly eight years. Located in a Midwestern rural community, Walnut is a small private liberal arts institution

that offers bachelor's of arts and science degrees in over 30 areas of study and has an average enrollment of approximately 1,000 students each year. Established in the late 1800s by a religious denomination, the institution maintains strong ties with its affiliated church. Rachel is 56 years old, White, married, and has two grown children. She earned a B.A., M.A., and a Ph.D. in humanity-related disciplines. She is retired from the presidency and currently serves as a senior executive for a private organization outside higher education.

President Davis

Dr. Patricia Davis is the first woman president of Ash College, a small private liberal arts institution located in the Midwest. Founded in the late 1700s, the institution is located in a rural community but is only a few hours away from three large metropolitan areas. The school's 1,300 students can choose from nearly 40 majors and several graduate programs. The college is not affiliated with a particular religious denomination or church. Patricia is White, single, 58 years old, and earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral degrees in a humanities field. She is serving her fifth year as the senior executive of Ash College, which is her second college presidency.

President Adams

Dr. Emily Adams is the first woman president of Birch College, a highly-selective liberal arts institution located in the Midwest. The institution was founded in the early 1800s by a particular religious denomination but maintains no ties with its founding church. The school is located in a small rural community and is 75 minutes away from a large metropolitan area. Birch's 1,600 undergraduate students can choose from over 30 majors. Admission is highly selective with an average entering class having several National Merit Scholars, and one-third of its students are in the top five percent of their high school graduating class. Emily is 54 years old,

White, and married and holds a Bachelor's degree and a doctorate in a humanities field. She is serving her third year as the president of Birch College.

President Wilson

Dr. Susan Wilson was the first woman president of Cypress College, a nationally recognized, comprehensive liberal arts institution in the South. Located in a community of 25,000, the college is minutes away from a large metropolitan area of 1.8 million people. Today Cypress enrolls 3,500 undergraduate and graduate students, who can choose to study nearly 30 majors and nine graduate programs. A business school offers an MBA program, while extensive undergraduate and graduate evening programs offer several degree options. Founded in the late 1800s by a religious denomination that wanted to bring liberal arts education to the state's frontier land, the school has no religious affiliation today. Susan is 69 years old, White, widowed, and has two grown children. She earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in a humanities-related field, and a Ph.D. in a field of education. She served as Cypress' president for 14 years and is retired.

President Kennedy

Dr. Nan Kennedy is the first woman president of Elm College, a private national liberal arts institution located in the South. Situated in a metropolitan area, this urban institution enrolls almost 1,100 undergraduate and 60 graduate students. Nearly 42% of its students are from outside the state. Students can choose to study from 28 majors and 30 minors, and 90% of the campus population is residential. The school was founded in 1890 by a religious denomination that wanted to offer Christian higher education in the state. Its denominational church maintains some influence today. Nan is White, 48 years old, divorced, and has two young children. She

holds a Bachelor's degree in a humanities-related field, and Master's and doctoral degrees in a field of education. She is serving her fifth year as the president of Elm College.

President Amstutz

Dr. Ruth Amstutz is the first woman president of Pine University, a small liberal arts institution located in a Midwestern rural community. The institution has an enrollment of 1200 students and offers degrees in nearly 40 majors and more than 20 minors, an adult degree completion program, and three Master's degree programs. Founded in the late 1800s by a religious denomination, the school maintains strong ties with its founding denomination. Ruth is White, 64 years old, married, and has two grown children. She earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral degrees in a humanities-related field. In the tenth year of her presidency, she announced her intended resignation for the end of the current academic year.

Journey to the Presidency

The journeys of these presidents were unique, yet they shared a number of common qualities. Their career paths to the presidency ranged from a product of surprise to the unfolding of a calculated plan. The presidents' personal characteristics provided the motivation to advance them in their careers, while mentors usually played significant roles along the way, serving as guides who recognized talents and encouraged these women to pursue opportunities.

Shape of Career Paths

While a variety of factors influenced their unique career paths, most of these women had never planned on becoming a college or university president. Dr. Montgomery explained that "being a president was never part of any kind of career path. In fact, I don't think I had a career plan" (A1, 9-10) [Dr. Anne Montgomery, first interview, lines 9-10], while Dr. Wilson remarked that she had never "thought of myself as the president of anywhere" (S1, 104). The varied nature

of their career paths suggested that a particular presidential passage may not exist. President Adams shared that one of her goals as a president was to show women that one did not have to travel a particular career passage to achieve a presidency.

I tend to work with women in higher education administration about the next step, and it is always so interesting to me, because they all, typically, seem to have a picture that everything is programmed, and I see one of my major roles as kind of breaking that stereotype and saying there be will twists and turns that you can't predict. You don't have to have punched X before you get to Y. (E1, 15-19)

For most of these women, being a president was not a planned goal early in their careers; rather, their career paths were shaped by their priorities and motives, which seemed equally diverse.

For some, families came first. "I composed my life around the needs of my family and the timing when it was convenient for them—that I would go to school and locate at places that worked for the family" (A1, 12-14). Throughout her career, Dr. Montgomery placed high priority on her family and accordingly declined to participate in searches for deanships and other senior administrative positions because it would draw her away from them. Serving others was another key factor for some presidents. They felt called to their positions:

My reason for taking this job was a sense of call. I did talk about the nudge, listening to others, seeking counsel, and being asked, but I was called to this work and that has been the one sustaining theme in my presidency. You do it, because your work grows out of a sense of calling. (RU2, 37-41)

Others viewed their presidency as a way to serve others. Dr. Amstutz shared one of her reasons for accepting a presidency:

I've always seen myself as serving. If I can serve, if I can empower and enable and help an institution and its faculty and staff be who they can be in the service of the mission, then that would be my highest aspiration as president. (RU1, 200-202)

Dr. Amstutz readily acknowledged the challenges of the office, but the impact she has made on others through her presidency has been one of her primary motivations over the years. For others, there was the need to be challenged.

Although the presidency was a goal, it wasn't one that I would say that I would have done anything to get. It was not that compelling. What was more compelling was to find a way to use my talents in a challenging way where I really felt stretched. (D1, 114-117)

To remain challenged, some women sought diverse experiences. Dr. Davis remarked that she still wanted to "grab all the experience that I can and to do everything I can" (P1, 495), while Dr. Wilson felt compelled by a sense of urgency to pursue interesting opportunities:

Because I started and stopped my education and then therefore got into the professional world late, I seized every opportunity that came my way, even when I thought I wasn't prepared for it, and I did have a lot of opportunities. (S1, 10-12)

So most of these women were not actively seeking out powerful positions but were attracted to the presidency for different reasons. While several presidents expressed surprise by the opportunities that came their way, one president strategically planned and sought out professional experiences that would prepare her for a presidency. By the age of 22, Dr. Kennedy knew that she wanted to be a college president, and her presidential aspirations began to guide her professional career. For example, her choice of graduate degree was influenced by which degree would give her the most credibility among faculty. She explained: "I think it started when I was choosing between an Ed.D. or a Ph.D., and everybody says, "You want to be a president?"

Get a Ph.D.” I got a Ph.D., so I was always posturing that way” (N1, 433-435). Early in her career, she assessed the areas that she knew little about and figured out ways to gain experience in those domains, often volunteering to work for or to learn more about an area. So different from her peers in the sample, Dr. Kennedy’s ascent to the presidency was calculated and planned.

While the presidential pathways varied for these women, many of them took advantage of opportunities that came their way and placed emphasis upon their personal priorities. Their career paths may have taken interesting professional twists and turns, but they still managed to prepare themselves effectively and find their ways to presidencies.

Importance of Mentors

Although their career paths leading to the presidency varied, a common feature of their trajectories was the prominent role of mentors. Several of the presidents discussed the significance of having someone who recognized their talents and affirmed their gifts. Dr. Montgomery explained that she had “a lot of strong leadership gifts and those were affirmed in me along the way by different people” (A1, 15-16), while Dr. Kennedy discussed the critical importance of mentors hiring her for positions and then nurturing her leadership skills along the way.

I was certainly fortunate to have a mentor in my immediate family, but there were many, many other mentors along the way—people who took chances on me. Take, for example, my selection as Vice President for Student Affairs at Norwalk College in [State]. [Man’s name], the president of Norwalk, hired a 29-year old woman from [state] whom no one in the state of [state] knew. He took an enormous risk. And not only did he take that risk and hire me, but he then spent six years carefully mentoring me each and every day, telling

me all along the way that I would be a president one day and would need certain skills. So I paid close attention to everything from how to shape invitation lists for important events, to the way he spoke with and called each custodian by name. (*Elm College Magazine*, Inauguration issue, p. 4)

By recognizing talents and encouraging the cultivation of these gifts, mentors provided invaluable opportunities for these presidents, particularly in their undergraduate and graduate school years and during the early portions of their careers. Mentors also nudged or encouraged these women to pursue opportunities that would become essential building blocks in their careers. Dr. Wilson never considered a presidency until someone nominated her for one, while Dr. Amstutz shared an example of the encouragement she received:

It was always at the encouragement of someone else, and so that also underscores for me the critical place of mentors encouraging me. I would never have dared to consider some of the things, but I said, "Sure, OK, I'm willing to try that." I wouldn't have done that just because I was ambitious or highly motivated to have more responsibility. It was because someone else urged me. (RU1, 39-43)

Mentors helped Dr. Amstutz and others to recognize strengths and to consider possibilities they might never have considered. They also served as role models who provided important examples of leadership. Dr. Miller explained how two women professors significantly influenced her leadership style:

Marilla and Muriel were very important to me, because I saw that even though they were single women, they were modeling the balancing act that I was trying to juggle. They were modeling excellence and to this day they are two of my most revered role models. Each of them had a passion for teaching and a deep spiritual base...thorough knowledge

of the subject matter...wisdom. They had experienced a lot, had entered into their subjects in a deep way—loved the subjects. In Parker Palmer’s terms—there was a “great thing” in their lives and people who entered their classrooms knew it. Marilla even talked about the threshold to the classroom being a sacred gateway and that when you passed over it you did so consciously. You brought blessing into the room, you invoked God’s presence, you invoked blessings upon your students when you did it—both of them had a kind of mystic approach to teaching and to the spiritual life and therefore, to leadership. They wouldn’t call themselves leaders, but other people would, and so they were very important to me. (R1, 101-117)

Marilla and Muriel’s “modeling excellence,” their “symbolic approach” to teaching and sharing their knowledge and passion for their fields, and how they balanced their lives left a permanent impact upon Dr. Miller that would serve as a guide for her later in her career.

The success of these women presidents was achieved through the help and support of others. Serving as guides, supporters, and advice-givers, mentors provided the occasional nudge when they thought that opportunities should be pursued, proffered advice when needed, and believed in these women’s abilities when they perhaps did not have as much confidence in themselves.

Importance of Education

A final element that played a significant role in their career trajectories was their post-secondary education. While earning a terminal degree seems to be an obvious prerequisite for a college or university president, several women mentioned their education as the key element that either began their careers in academe or opened doorways to critical experiences that eventually

directed them towards a presidency. For Dr. Adams, her undergraduate degree generated countless professional opportunities that led to an advanced degree and a professional career.

I was extremely fortunate in being admitted into the first class of women at Nassau University and that was kind of amazing. I mean no one in my family had gone to college. I didn't even know where Nassau University was. I figured it was in [State]. No idea, so that was a *complete* change in my life. I was a complete scholarship student. It was by no means anything I could have anticipated and that, obviously, has set the stage for a lot of the rest of what I've done. (E1, 24-31)

Dr. Adams' undergraduate education did more than provide extraordinary professional and personal opportunities; it also acclimated her to working in environments dominated by men. Being a member of the first co-educational class at her alma mater prepared her to handle being a minority and taught her the norms of how the majority operated.

I think the experience of having been—there were about 100 women and there were about 3,000 men at Nassau University at that time. I've always felt subsequently that essentially for those very important young adult years of my life, that I was kind of socialized as a man and that has been tremendously valuable for the rest of my life. So when I am in those organizations and it happens *all* the time—still even today, you know as a woman president—you're in a group that's all male—that's totally comfortable to me and that I owe, I think, to that early experience. (E1, 221-227)

During her four years of undergraduate education, she always stood out as a woman. Being a part of Nassau's first co-educational class acclimated her to being different—to be in the minority—which would prove to be useful later as one of the early women faculty members in her

discipline and later as one of the few women administrators on campus. Education also played a significant role in Dr. Amstutz's pathway to the presidency.

It was absolutely essential that I went on for my doctorate. At a certain point after I finished my master's in literature, I sort of assumed that I would not continue with the doctorate. I had a job I loved. I was in administration. I didn't need to go on, but I had this inner nudge. I had been out of school for about eight or nine years, and had I not pursued that, I would have never had these opportunities. So the degree is *really* important. (RU1, 16-21)

Without her doctorate, Dr. Amstutz never would have been considered for an academic deanship and later the presidency, so the Ph.D. was a key factor in her career path.

In summary, a common pathway to the presidency may not exist, but the career tracks of these women shared common features. A presidency is often unplanned—it is realized later in one's career. Personal motivations provided the drive for many of these women—whether it was family, the need to be challenged, or the desire to serve others—their internal drive to push forward helped to propel them along their different professional avenues, while the assistance of mentors provided the necessary challenge and support for their personal and professional well-being. En route to the presidency, one did not see how these factors related to each other, but in retrospect their connections seemed clear.

Being the First Woman President

Being the first woman to hold a particular leadership position was not a new phenomenon for these women because they had been crossing gender boundaries throughout their careers. While cognizant of their gender, most did not believe that it significantly impacted their presidencies. For most, being the first woman president involved redefining the role and

expectations of the position and acclimating the campus community to a new leadership philosophy that dramatically differed from their predecessors.

Many Firsts

The newness or the excitement of being the first woman to hold a position had worn-off long ago for most of these women, because each had been “the first woman” to hold numerous positions along the way. For example, Dr. Adams was a graduate of her alma mater’s first co-educational class, the first female graduate of her alma mater to return and hold a full-time faculty appointment, and the first woman president of Birch College. Prior to serving as Elm College’s first woman president, Dr. Kennedy was the first female senior vice president at one institution and vice president at two different institutions. Dr. Barry shared similar experiences and explained: “I’ve been the first woman in every position that I’ve been in except [subject] teacher in high school, so I haven’t, quite frankly, paid much attention to that” (D1, 204-205). Being the first woman was familiar territory for these leaders, which may help to explain their overall indifference to gender.

Significance of Gender

Like their unique career paths to the presidency, the presidents’ perspectives on the significance of gender ranged from consciously advocating and role modeling for women, to passive acknowledgement of gender, or to no recognition of it at all. For some, gender seemed to play a paradoxical role in their presidencies, because even those who strongly felt that it had little impact on their roles mentioned problems or adjustments that appeared to occur because a woman and not a man was serving in the presidency.

Gender is Significant

Dr. Wilson was very cognizant of being the first woman to serve as president of Cypress College. “They talked a lot about my being a woman. It was, you know, a big deal. You saw the paper, ‘Hail to the chief’” (S1, 157-158). In her inaugural address, she observed women’s prominent roles throughout Cypress’ history: a woman was the driving force behind the founding of the institution; its first two graduates were women; two of the first five professors were women; and already, in 1919, the trustees elected the first woman board member. So, in many regards, a woman assuming the helm was a natural progression. Similarly, Dr. Montgomery’s appointment to the presidency represented important news for many constituents. She commented: “I’m definitely not in denial about gender being an issue with my presidency...it’s big news and it’s a big change” (A1, 533-534). Presidents Wilson and Montgomery both recognized the historical significance of being the first woman president.

Recognized yet Minimized Gender

Other presidents, such as Dr. Kennedy and Dr. Miller, recognized yet minimized the significance of gender. Aware that she is a pioneer for women’s leadership, Dr. Kennedy did not dwell on or emphasize her gender in her daily operations. She explained: “Well, I think it is a big deal. Obviously, you get up every morning, and it’s just us. We don’t surely don’t focus on it, but I’m well aware that I’m female” (N1, 443-444). Dr. Miller echoed similar sentiments. When reflecting on the early years of her presidency at Walnut College, she explained:

Well, even if you weren’t conscious yourself, everybody asked you about it [being the first woman president], so yes, I would have to say I was conscious...I would say that I probably deliberately downplayed it, because, I think, that the earlier we get to a time when this is not remarkable, the better. (R1, 292-206)

Dr. Miller held a paradoxical approach to being the first woman president. She readily acknowledged being the first, was honored by the position, and felt an obligation towards other women; yet she also wanted to minimize her status. The paradoxical perspective on gender was also demonstrated by Dr. Adams who, when asked about her experiences of being the first woman president at Birch College, replied, “Being a woman? Oh, it’s probably different, and I just probably don’t recognize it” (E1, 523-524), yet during her inaugural address, she acknowledged the “boundary breaking” accomplished during her career: “On a personal note, the theme has several particular resonances. One is the crossing of boundaries—it has been a persistent theme in my life, to cross boundaries not only of geography, but of class, of gender” (Dr. Adams’s inaugural address). Dr. Adams, like several of her presidential colleagues, recognized the significance of being the first woman, but did not dwell upon it in her daily operations.

Indifferent to Gender

On the opposite end of the spectrum, gender was not an important issue for some of the presidents. Drs. Barry and Davis were indifferent to gender and made few references to it, while Dr. Amstutz felt that being a woman was not a disadvantage to her. Cognizant that she was the first woman president of Pine University and the first woman to serve as a university president for any of the institutions in Pine’s religious denomination, Dr. Amstutz added:

I have felt that I have had advantages as a woman—more advantages than disadvantages and it’s partly because I don’t have an approach that there is this gender limit that I’m never going to get real consideration because I’m a woman. I just haven’t operated out of that world view but it’s out there. (RU1, 519-522)

Although Dr. Amstutz may not have been disadvantaged because of her gender, being a woman has affected some areas of her presidency. It did influence some of her constituents' opinions regarding expectations for a woman's success, as several trustees in reflection admitted. Dr. Amstutz laughingly recalled several gender-related comments that were made when her appointment was announced. For example, one trustee told her husband that he needed to be strong for her, while another trustee's wife asked, "Why would you want this job?" (RU1, 311). Although she has filed these incidents away as trivial, she has received interesting confessions regarding people's doubts about her abilities since announcing her retirement.

Since I announced my retirement, I'm getting the most interesting comments. I mean people have generally been wonderfully affirming, but two trustees—one is a current trustee and the other is a trustee emeritus who was on the board when I was hired—both said to me in essence the same thing: "I just didn't think a woman could do it." I am just astounded that they would tell me that, but they were complimenting me on a job well done. Remember when I told you about my first meeting with the trustees? One of these is the same trustee that told Jacob [her husband] that he had to be strong for me—the same trustee said, "I didn't think a woman could do it," and the other one was an old school business man, who basically said, "When you were hired, I really didn't think you could do it." Basically these perceptions both had to do with the fact that I was a woman. They could not conceive of a woman succeeding at this job, and they meant it as an affirmation to me. The one trustee was affirming me saying, "You have done a great job. I didn't really think that a woman could do it." The other one was saying, "You have really done a great job." It's this kind of backhanded compliment that says, "We really didn't think you could do it, but you surprised us!" (RU1, 493-506)

While Dr. Amstutz paid little attention to her gender as president, other constituents were keenly aware of it and the significance of being the first woman president. Dr. Barry demonstrated a similar dissonance. While she placed little importance on being the first woman president, the headline of the local newspaper read “First Woman President at Maple” (D1, 206-207).

Responding to the newspaper’s declaration, she explained:

Once you got past the headline, the rest of the story could have been about anyone that was a new president. You know, it’s the typical profile of you. I do think they probably do a little bit more about the spouse and kids and this kind of thing with a woman president than they probably do with a male. (D1, 213-215)

For Dr. Barry, being the first woman did not make a difference, yet she did concede that the newspapers paid more attention to certain aspects of her life, such as her family and husband. Dr. Amstutz’s response to the trustees’ confession regarding their early doubts about her leadership also demonstrated a dissonance between her perception of her position and the reality of how some individuals might perceive her in the presidency.

I know these people well and I have a good rapport with them, so it doesn’t bother me. It doesn’t make me angry. I wanted to make sure I knew why they didn’t think I could do it. I mean I can handle that. It’s just their old boys stereotyping. They are both businessmen. They are from an era that doesn’t see women taking on this kind of responsibility. (RU1, 508-512)

Dr. Amstutz believed that gender should not be a factor in her presidency, yet two of her trustees held reservations about her because she was a woman. Gender has been more like a looming cast—invisible yet still influencing the silhouette of her presidency. It affected people’s

expectations about her success and perhaps other areas as well, but Dr. Amstutz and others did not believe that it should make a difference.

The Gender Conundrum

The magnitude and influence of gender is a conundrum. When reflecting on the aggregate responses regarding the significance of gender and the presidency, the reactions and explanations of these eight presidents also varied. Dr. Montgomery reasoned that many of her presidential colleagues were perhaps unaware of research regarding gender studies. She explained:

If you study anything about gender differences, you know that there are important differences in how we're socialized and how we act on those messages. So it may be a lack of awareness of some pretty consistent research findings about gender... Gender does make a difference in how people are perceived. Again, it's not always a good difference or a bad difference, but it is a difference. (A2, 48-53)

Again, Dr. Montgomery did not conclude if gender was a positive or negative factor in the presidency, but it was a factor that resonated implications. Changes or transitions occurred because of gender. Dr. Amstutz indirectly admitted that gender was significant, but not to women currently serving in the position:

I suspect the reason that we all responded the way we did [in reference to the aggregate comments] has more to do with us in terms of how we've come to terms and whether it is still a big deal for us or not. For most of us, by the time we get to the presidency, those factors have been negotiated all the way through so they're not that big of a deal, unless you have an experience where you get head-to-head with a trustee or something on campus that is directly gender-related. A lot of women presidents want to get on with it, but if you ask members of the campus who have been here a long time, "Does it make a

difference that Ruth Amstutz was a woman?” My guess is that they would have somewhat a different answer than I did. (R2, 67-75)

Gender makes a difference to others, but to these presidents who have been dissolving gender barriers throughout their entire professional careers, the uniqueness of it had long disappeared. Other presidents speculated on different explanations regarding their responses to this topic. One president conjectured that ignoring the impact of gender was a coping strategy:

Maybe people don't want to take the victim role, because you can use gender as an excuse for everything that goes wrong—just like you can use skin color as an excuse. It could be that they're saying, “I'm not going to assume that all the resistance I get is because of gender.” If you do that, you can build yourself a pretty unhappy life quickly, because you will get resistance in this kind of leadership role. (A2, 55-59)

Being the first woman to hold the highest leadership position on a campus will inevitably trigger changes and transitions, but to get through this early period, first-time women presidents may “put blinders on.” Calling attention to inequities may not help them with their primary mission—to run the institution successfully. Another president's response echoed a similar meaning. Acknowledging and embracing the underlying role of gender and her presidency, she downplayed it because it would not be well-received:

I played down that question [i.e., gender]. I didn't make it front and center because I was quite aware of a backlash against feminism that existed on our campus, and I saw myself as a bridge builder. Without feminism, I wouldn't have been in the position, but if I had come in and said, “I'm a woman and I'm going to lead the women of this institution,” it couldn't happen. It's not in my heart to do that either, and that's why I had problems with some other feminists, because I always had a more inclusive view of what the world

should be—at least I felt like you had to be able to lead all the women and the men of the campus and lead them to be more understanding of each other. (R2, 57-64)

Gender was important, and it caused transitions, changes, and reactions, but for the most part, it was relegated to a behind-the-scenes position. Similar to a shadow, gender was present but often unnoticed. The topic of gender was a sensitive, almost taboo-like issue, that was acknowledged, but these women seemed reluctant to attribute problems to it. Most presidents mentioned gender, although the admitted impact on their presidencies varied.

Redefined Roles and Expectations of the Presidency

With new leadership comes transitions, and one of the most common changes experienced by these women was having the campus and local communities adjust their expectations of the president as each woman redefined her role. While some viewed this adjustment phase as a growth opportunity, others found the transition difficult and frustrating.

Liberating Opportunity

Being the first woman president at Cypress was a liberating opportunity for Dr. Wilson, because it allowed her to create her “own sense of the presidency” (S1, 195). In some regards, being first granted her more freedom.

It was liberating in some ways, because I didn’t have to fit into somebody else’s mold. I write [referring to a book she had written] about coming into an institution where people have certain male-normed expectations for you—a role—so I did have to deal with what people expected of a president—how they thought a president should look and act, but that was both a virtue and a problem. A problem because I had to work hard over time to overcome those expectations of leadership—what a leader does—but at the same time, I

was freed from having to be my predecessor. I mean I didn't have to look like him or act like him. (S1, 186-192)

With no previous woman role models, she could create her own leadership style; yet creating a new style brought additional challenges—especially being a new woman leader.

Proving Preparedness

Some presidents needed to prove that they were “tough enough” to handle a leadership position. Dr. Montgomery made several remarks that implied that women leaders needed to prove their hardiness and durability in their positions:

I think that people want to be assured that I'm not too soft—that I'm tough enough to do the job...make tough decisions and have fiscal discipline. And in actuality, I'm fine in all of those things, but I need to figure out how to convey that. (A1. 263-266)

To gain the confidence of supporters and critics, these women leaders in particular needed to convey that they were tough enough—not harsh—but able to make difficult decisions without breaking down. They had to demonstrate their ability to be strong, to lead, and to handle the stress. Although quite insistent that being a woman had not affected her presidency, Dr. Amstutz remarked that women need to be better prepared than male presidential candidates and to have a terminal degree:

The degree is *really* important, and I try to tell women it's more important for women than men. The reason I say that is because many of my male colleague presidents don't have doctorates. They come from business or from some other field. They are kind of brought in—some of them are lawyers, some of them went for JDs, but they do not have an academic doctoral degree. I think there would be very few women. I haven't checked

this, but women—they've always had to prove something, and I think to be the head of an academic institution you have got to have that degree. (RU1, 21-27)

While Dr. Amstutz never indicated that she ever felt the need to prove herself, she considered that women in general need to be more polished and prepared, compared to their male colleagues. They need to demonstrate their strength in handling critical situations and adroitness regarding issues, in particular athletics, finances, and construction.

Adjusting Expectations of the President and her Spouse

Most of these presidents had anticipated a transition period while they became acclimated to their institutions and the institutions to their leadership style. However, several experienced transitions related to being a woman in the office—instead of a man. Despite her community involvement, Dr. Barry discovered that certain expectations the local community had of her required modification:

Some of the women in the community have said that they just didn't feel like I was active because Jennifer [former president's wife] used to be in the women's club. Well, Jennifer was the president's wife—not the president—and so the vision is that you will be part of all these things and do these things that the president's wife does, but I don't have a wife. I have a marvelous husband, but he's not a president's wife. (D1, 237-242)

Dr. Barry did not have time to attend the more “traditional” community events that past presidents' wives had attended, because she was working with the organizations that previous presidents had been involved with, as well as creating new initiatives. It took the local community time to adjust to this change.

A similar transition occurred with several of the presidential spouses who had their own careers. Being married to the first woman president in office helped to alter traditional

expectations of them as spouses as well. For example, Dr. Barry's husband, Dave, held a full-time position outside of Maple College and commuted to a metropolitan area located two hours away. The Maple community needed to adjust to a president's spouse who did not organize the social responsibilities of the president. Dr. Barry explained:

It's the dumb little stuff quite frankly. It's not the major stuff. It's knowing what to do with a male spouse when they've always had—always at this institution as far as I can tell—a president's wife. We do a lot of entertaining. My husband is a wonderfully supportive spouse, but he's not going to figure out the menus. He's not going to do the things. He's not going to be the hostess. He will *be* there for the events, but the campus was used to having someone who coordinated, made sure there were flowers on the table, that the menu was picked, that everything was set-up before somebody walked in the door. (D1, 223-230)

Someone else needed to oversee and organize the social events because Dr. Barry did not have the time and her husband was not going to serve the college in that role. Other presidential spouses have made similar transitions. Dr. Montgomery and her husband, John, have used their “firstness”—that is, being Redwood's first presidential family without a wife playing the supporting role and having a spouse who is employed full-time outside of the institution—to their advantage. Instead of expecting her husband to take on the traditional roles of the president's wife, Redwood College found alternate ways to meet those needs.

He [her husband] is coming in now as the first time ever that there was not a wife as the spouse of the president, and it's the first time they've had a spouse who had a full-time job, so there are a lot of expectations that I think would have been a lot harder on him if

he had been the female and I had been the male. There are some ways we can break new ground and people give us more slack for it. (A1, 328-333)

Because her spouse is male, people did not expect him to fulfill the traditional duties of presidential spouses. For example, Redwood College hosted a large alumni golf-outing and dinner. In the past, the president and his wife would have been expected to attend, but her husband had to work, so she went without him. Her husband's full-time work legitimized his position compared to a woman spouse not employed full-time. Together they made new traditions and established different standards.

For others, their institutions did not place entertainment expectations upon the president's male spouse, and he had the opportunity to create an entirely different role. Dr. Wilson's husband, Walt, retired from the professoriate a year after she became president and devoted himself to his research and supporting his wife in her new role. Describing her husband's role, Dr. Wilson explained:

He, too, was a non-traditional spouse, because he was a male and just as people didn't know quite what to make of me, they didn't know what to expect of him. A woman spouse is expected to have tea parties, to entertain, to organize who sits at what table, which I actually did. I helped with the tables, because I knew who liked whom and where people should sit and all that. He never did any of that and nobody expected him to, so he got away with stuff. He just showed up. (S1, 481-486)

No one expected Walt to assume the social responsibilities of a traditional female spouse, so Dr. Wilson, with the help of her staff, continued to organize the social events hosted by the president.

Finally, one president never experienced “growing pains” with having a male spouse. In fact, she and her husband, Jim, have never lived together in their 20 year marriage. Dr. Adams reflected on her unique experience:

When I host events, 75 or 80% of the time, Jim is not here. I’m sort of the sole proprietor, whereas normally, there would be your spouse going around doing whatever. The search committee, when I came on campus for the interviews, asked me about that, if it was going to be a problem? Commuting? I just said that we’ve commuted all of our lives. We have been together more than 20 years. We’ve commuted between here and [Country], between here and [another country], and so this is not a big problem and we’ve never lived together actually, even when I was at Nassau. I lived at Nassau University and Jim lived in [State], so that reassured them. (E1, 524-532)

Dr. Adams seemed to easily overcome and eradicate traditional social expectations that the campus community might expect of the president and her spouse. She maintains her social obligations but hosts most events alone. The board and the community’s acceptance of this change demonstrated their willingness for a new leadership and style.

Some of the presidents anticipated transitions when they assumed their offices, but a few of the transitions—especially those related to their spouses—caused more adjustments than many of them had expected. Once the modifications had occurred, most viewed the transition as an excellent opportunity to reexamine traditions and protocol for their offices.

Different Styles Compared to Predecessors

When these new presidents assumed their positions, changes naturally occurred in institutional leadership and organization. Nearly every president discussed how her leadership style differed from her male predecessor. Some described their leadership as more feminine and

relationship-oriented, while others reported being more business-like and task-oriented because they needed to turn their institutions around. While no president indicated that being a woman caused these changes, many talked about how their style differed dramatically from their predecessors' approach.

More Feminine Style

The self-described leadership styles of these women varied greatly. Some referred to their styles as more “womanly” or “feminine.” Dr. Montgomery, for example, described her style as “stereotypically female” (A1, 188):

I think because my style is different than any of my male predecessors...much more participatory, much more listening oriented, much more relational. All those things are associated with sort of stereotypical female ways of acting and interacting. People notice that difference. I don't think most of them say, “Ah, we had a woman, therefore we have these changes.” I think they're saying we're seeing these changes, but I don't know if they connect it to gender. (A1, 185-191)

When describing how she works with people, Dr. Montgomery used words such as discussion-oriented, trust, and confidence, which might be aligned with a more feminine leadership style. However, it was clear from our conversation that she empowers people—she wants her vice presidents to make decisions and has encouraged the board of trustees to move forward on several projects that they were hesitant to pursue under the former administration. Change definitely has occurred, and while she admits that gender is an issue, she is cautious to connect change and gender together:

I do think that anybody who thinks gender isn't an issue is kind of kidding themselves. I mean, it's got to be, but if someone would ask me how does being a woman affect your

leadership...there's a sense in which I have to say I don't really know, because I've never been a leader apart from being a woman. Certainly for me a lot of the gender role stereotypes fit about participation, people skills, and all that stuff, so it does mean a change in my style from what they experienced in the past, but I think that's the primary way in which it affects how we work here. (A1, 536-542)

It is difficult, if not impossible, for Dr. Montgomery to separate being a woman from being a leader, but various constituents have noticed a change in the leadership at Redwood College.

Dr. Miller's leadership also reflected feminine undertones. As the first woman president, Dr. Miller led in a manner different from her predecessor's. She explained: "I had an authenticity as a woman. I could speak as woman and that had never happened before" (R1, 365-367). Her leadership represented an eloquently delicate combination of symbolism, power, inclusiveness, and love. Using a symbolic approach to teach and lead, Dr. Miller created an ethereal image of the woman as leader:

I think women have a lot of opportunities in the ritual symbolic realm...the kind of queenly role that has been there throughout history and perhaps has been repressed in dominated societies. It's there to be revived, and I somewhat deliberately did that. I had ceremonial robes I wore. I initiated rituals and encouraged rituals and used metaphor and symbol as my number one leadership strategy. (R1, 381-386)

Marked by delicacy and refinement, metaphors and symbols were Dr. Miller's medium for communicating the intent of her leadership. Throughout her presidency, she initiated traditions and gave addresses filled with images that painted her message. For example, during the welcome services at the start of the school year and at the baccalaureate ceremonies at the conclusion of the year, she wore long, flowing African robes that were only worn during these

events. In her inaugural address, she compared a tuning fork and a guitar to how a community learns, while her signature scarves represented her commitment to relationships and cross-cultural learning. On her final day as president, she gave her successor her *oringa*, a beaded wooden piece that Maasai leaders in Kenya used to show their position and to work on resolving conflicts peacefully. These examples demonstrated how Dr. Miller incorporated her symbolical and spiritual leadership into her presidency.

The inclusion of beauty and love into the role of power, I think, is such a wonderful thing to do...Many of us who have been called to lead have also felt a natural inclination to bring into the role in which you might call femininity and not to expect that to clash with the tough calls that you have to make or the financial decisions or the other roles of power. It's all part of one. I enjoyed that very much. (R1, 398-404)

President Miller valued an inclusive leadership style that incorporated beauty and love into power. For her, being the first woman president was an opportunity to represent other women and to lead in her own very womanly way.

Inclusive and Community-Oriented

Although Dr. Kennedy did not describe her leadership as more feminine per se, she was more hands-on, inclusive, and affirming compared to her predecessor, and her particular leadership style has affected the campus community:

I don't know if it's so much my gender as it is my approach. I followed a fella who was a corporate style, who had a degree from Harvard, a Ph.D. in business, had been a dean of business school, used a business approach and had a corporate sort of identity—very much hierarchical—didn't get a lot of input—a classic male style. If you were to take the text book male leader-female leadership, he's about as classic in the corporate male

model as I am in the classic student affairs, touchy, feely, love'em up, get everybody's opinion, make everybody feel great about what we're doing, group hugs and move on, and so I think there has been an extraordinary cultural shift on campus to the, "You're important. You mop my floor but I know your name and you're important," and "I care about you and I include you in the staff town hall meetings," and that's very different.

(N1, 262-271)

Dr. Kennedy referred to her style of communication as "circular," because she pulled people into circles and tried to "obtain the best of everybody's mind" (*Elm College Magazine*, Inauguration issue, p. 4). All faculty, staff, and students were important to her.

Inclusiveness was an important theme for many of the presidents. While the Birch community eagerly embraced a female president, Dr. Adams remarked that being a woman had affected the campus and local communities in two dimensions. She explained that "one may not be inflected by being a woman but I think it may be slightly. The other I'm almost certain is inflected by being a woman" (E1, 325-327). The first influence related to the planning of her inaugural weekend.

I'll give you an example from the inauguration or from the welcoming reception... I remember as all that was being planned, I said, "Well, one, we'll invite the local dignitaries—the publisher of the paper, the president of the bank"—and whoever it was who was doing the planning said, "Ah, no, we don't do that," and I said, "We do now," and it just seemed to be obvious from the beginning that it's important to be a good neighbor in this community, and it's important to see our presence in this community as something that is positive for us, a college, and should be positive for the community and that was an area that had really not been developed very well before... The former

presidents were apparently almost never seen, you know, and they were focused on the Birch constituency and Birch is only 20% [State] students. We are a national college, and I feel, perhaps, feel more strongly about that than anybody, but at the same time, I just felt we should be very rooted in this area. (E1, 325-343)

Participating in the local community, recognizing the impact that the College had in the community and vice versa, and including the local community in the inaugural festivities were important factors to Dr. Adams, but her inclusiveness did not end with her inauguration. She made tremendous gestures to incorporate the local community into the campus. For example, when Birch was interviewing for a particular administrative position that worked closely with the village, she wanted a community representative on the search committee.

I've done *all kinds* of things with that regard, that are extraordinary and have never been done before. I had the local bank president on a recent search committee for an administrative position—this has never happened, but that particular administrator is going to interact with the village, and I thought, “Well, let's have a voice from the village.” So that's one area, and I'm not sure to what extent that's really inflected by being a woman. I think it's slightly. (E1, 343-348)

Community involvement was an essential element in Dr. Adam's leadership. She valued having a positive town-gown relationship that benefits both the College and the community.

Business-Oriented

Although all the presidents were cognizant of the many facets of the institutional community, a few entered office with daunting tasks, such as extreme financial crises, that required strong, direct leadership. Acutely aware of what needed to be done, Dr. Wilson began to

recalibrate Cypress College, and the faculty, staff, and administrators needed to adjust to her operating style:

I was business-like and efficient. My predecessor was very sweet, nice, Mr. Chips kind of guy, so I organized. I straightened things out. I made things run better. The faculty appreciated that, and I was close to them, but for other people, it looked heartless. I mean some people lost their jobs. We made people work harder, and there were a few years of budget deficits, and I had to make some hard decisions. (S1, 264-268)

Her predecessor was more student-oriented, and while Dr. Wilson cared about students, she also had an institution to recalibrate and run, and it took time for people to adjust to her mode of operation.

Dr. Davis experienced a similar situation at Ash College. When she assumed office, Ash was described as a “difficult presidency.” The institution had been operating for years in the red, the faculty was deeply divided, and the fundraising campaign was dragging, so she acted with a great deal of direction and urgency and turned the institution in a more positive direction. Her actions earned her the nickname of “steel magnolia.” She explained:

Some people on campus called me the steel magnolia—which I take as a high compliment, because they think I’m very nice, and very cordial, and you know I don’t get into many arguments, but I’m going to get things done and I’m going to move the place forward. (P1, 416-419)

Dr. Davis appreciated her nickname because it represented a softer, gentler side while capturing her straight-forward, business-oriented philosophy—Dr. Davis was proud of returning Ash College to a stable, more prosperous status in just five years.

When each president assumed office, significant changes occurred regarding campus leadership. Although some of the presidents were cautious to connect gender to these changes, many of the resulting transitions occurred because a woman was leading the institution for the first time.

Role Models for Others

The presidents who readily acknowledged the significance and importance of gender in their positions also felt a special responsibility towards women that caused them to be even more cognizant of gender. For Dr. Miller, being the first woman to serve in the presidency brought the realization of a dream for many who were not allowed to serve, as well as an obligation to others. In an interview after she announced her resignation, she shared the significance of being first: “When you are the first, you bear a special responsibility. You are accountable to those who follow after you as well as those who went before you who did not have the same opportunities” (Walnut College alumni magazine). Service seemed to be an underlying theme for Dr. Miller. By serving as president, she realized a level of leadership that many women have not achieved and laid a foundation for future leaders:

I have always felt honored to be called as a woman into leadership. It has always been my goal that my example would not foreclose the possibility of other women being called in this way, but would stimulate other women to develop their leadership gifts and encourage the college and the Church to look at 100% of the possibilities. I expect women to appear on the list of possible presidents from this time forward! (Interview with public relations director)

While Dr. Miller hoped that some day being the first woman to hold any position would be an insignificant feat, she acknowledged and gave priority to the importance of her achievement.

Dr. Kennedy shared a similar awareness of how she would become a role model to many women and men. From the beginning of her presidency, she was aware of the significance and impact of being the first woman president at Elm College. In an interview for Elm's alumni magazine, she stressed the importance of role modeling:

As to being Elm's first female president, I can never underestimate what it will do to provide a role model for young women, many of whom are going on to medical school, law school, professional school. My presidency tells them that you can have a very satisfying, wonderful career and also have a family. You have to be smart about time-management, but you can do it. My presidency also models well for young fathers because we are looking at the world of careers differently today. The old idea of the woman doing everything at home, and the man bringing home the bacon is still a viable model, but it's not as economically viable for young families. So I think it is important for young fathers to see how their wives can share in the career-track journey as well.

(Elm College Magazine, Inauguration issue, p. 4)

Dr. Kennedy knew that people would be looking to her for leadership for both women and men, and at the same time, scrutinizing her because she was a prominent woman leader in a conservative region.

Curious as to whether "young women on campus were at all influenced by having a woman president, because a lot of them seemed sort of oblivious" (S1, 418-420), Dr. Wilson created two leadership groups on campus towards the end of her presidency—one for rising faculty and administrators and one for students. The leadership groups turned out to be a tremendous success, and Dr. Wilson also learned that she had made a difference to alumni—especially to women.

I have run into a number of graduates—many of them women who now say, “You know, it meant a lot to me that there was a woman president,” or “You inspired me,” or something. I have a feeling that they may not realize it until later when they are forming their own career paths that it showed them something and so that feels good. (S1, 432-436)

Being the first woman president made an impact. Dr. Wilson crafted a different image for the presidency as a woman and she also made a longer term impact upon women students after they graduated.

In summary, being the first woman president was significant—even if the presidents were hesitant to acknowledge the importance of a woman serving in their roles for the first time. Having a woman president made institutions re-examine traditional norms and expectations of the office. It provided opportunities for presidents and their spouses, if they had one, to create new standards and social traditions. Furthermore, these women ushered in new forms of leadership. While some of their leadership philosophies might be described as more feminine or community-oriented, they differed from previous models and promoted changes on their campuses. Their leadership helped to mend rifts, refocused institutional missions, cleaned up financial hazards, and provided change. The experience of being the first woman president was significant because it caused so many changes on all of the campuses.

Balancing the Professional and the Personal

When asked about how they managed the numerous demands upon their schedules, presidents offered a variety of views. One president explained: “It’s by the seat of my pants” (E1, 470), while another described herself as a “mad woman scrambling around” (A1, 478). Clearly, the professional demands of the presidency inevitably affected their personal lives, and finding a

balance between the professional and the personal aspects of their lives often proved challenging. Several factors, such as having a supportive confidante or the ages of one's children, impacted the number of personal demands placed on these women. Their individual management strategies and the kinds of external support services employed also helped them to find private time for personal needs.

Exhaustion and Little Personal Time

The demanding schedule of the presidency certainly affected these presidents' health and personal time. As the leader for her institution, Dr. Amstutz remarked that it was important for her to attend a variety of events on campus, but her commitment to show support also took a physical toll upon her. She explained:

I get tired, but I feel that it's important that the president shows up—student recitals, artist series, musicals, public events, faculty colloquia, Tuesday lunches, forums and chapels—I think it's important that the president be there, and I remember on some nights at [event]—I was just physically exhausted. I might stay at the office, not go home for dinner, maybe eat a bite, and then head over for the reception and greet all these people that were there—all the dignitaries and you know that energized me—the personal thing energized me, but then to sit down too in that concert hall. It was restorative, but I remember just being absolutely dead tired. (RU1, 442-450)

While Dr. Amstutz believed that she led a fairly balanced life, she still felt exhausted at times.

Dr. Montgomery expressed similar concerns. As an academic dean, a mother, a professor, department chair, scholar, and wife, Dr. Montgomery knew how to manage and prioritize her life—she would not have made it this far professionally and as successfully without having time management instincts and skills. Yet when discussing how she managed everything, she

explained: “I’m just scrambling like a mad woman” (A1, 478). While nowhere near being “mad”, she regretted having little if any “down time” since assuming office seven months earlier:

I’ve had two days off since I began. I’ve had maybe four weekends when I actually had a weekend—maybe not that—maybe three—so I’ve had almost no time off since then and that isn’t good for the long haul. (A1, 469-471)

Cognizant of the immediate and future effects of not taking care of one’s self, she readily acknowledged the lack of personal time and has begun to find coping mechanisms and resources to help achieve her desired professional and personal balance.

In addition to a lack of rest, Dr. Barry commented on her limited privacy. At her institution, the president’s house is located on campus, which she compared to living in a fishbowl: “Security tells me they know when I’m home, and they know what room I’m in, and they do and so do the students, because our house is that visible” (D1, 299). Having the president’s residence in such a prominent location made it difficult for Dr. Barry to ever feel away from the office. Between the physical rigors of the position to the lack of privacy, being president clearly affects one’s personal life.

Supportive Spouse

Aware of how the position can affect their lives, these presidents employed a variety of strategies to better manage their personal and professional obligations, and for those presidents who were married, their spouses represented a paramount part of their management systems. In doing so, the spouses encouraged their work, occasionally assisted them in their professional responsibilities, and supported them in other ways.

Encouraged their Work

Having a partner who supported and encouraged their work was commonly mentioned by several presidents who were married or had been married while in office. For example, Dr. Adams' husband, Jim, was a major source of strength and support for her. During her inaugural address, she expressed her deep appreciation for his support and how important he was for her presidency.

I cannot speak to you at this inauguration without expressing my deep thanks to my husband, Jim. I know that many of you have not yet had a chance to meet Jim. But when you do, you will understand how incredibly blessed I am in my spouse. From our first discussion of Birch, Jim has been extraordinarily excited about this opportunity, supportive of me, and engaged with the Birch community. Perhaps fittingly, given his legal career, he is in every sense my "counsellor," and there is no way that I could carry out this role without Jim at my side. It is really impossible for me to express the depth of my gratitude to him, but I believe it is important to try. (Dr. Adams' Inaugural Address).

Dr. Wilson expressed similar sentiments about her husband, Walt. She sacrificed spending a portion of her evening hours attending student events because she knew how important Walt was to her personal and professional well-being—they balanced each other:

I think every president needs a significant other or a spouse or somebody to let their hair down with because you're always on stage and always careful about what you say when you're in the presidency and always feeling kind of like under-appreciated—not always, but often, and so for me it was wonderfully nourishing to have someone there who loved me unconditionally. I was really fortunate. It was the perfect marriage, because he loved—he was really interested in what I was doing. Loved hearing about it. Loved

talking about it. Had good advice, you know, because he knew the academy and certainly knew faculty, but he was more theorist than a practitioner. (S1, 442-450)

Walt was someone Dr. Wilson could be “off-stage” with—someone whom she did not have to worry about being “presidential around”—someone she could confide in. Fascinated by her presidential post, he genuinely wanted to hear about her experiences in the presidency and also kept her intellectually engaged with his own research. In some regards, she received a two-for-one deal in Walt, because in addition to being her spouse, he was also a scholar in higher education, so she had a resident expert by her side. Walt served as an integral support system for her.

Presidential spouses also demonstrated support by being understanding of their partner’s demanding schedules. Dr. Barry shared one of the many ways her husband, Dave, was supportive:

I have a marvelous spouse of 37 years that is terribly understanding of the kind of demands that this role has. I don’t think either one of us quite fully knew the demands.

You don’t until you’re in it—even as close as I was to it, so we’ve made the compromises and work things out. (D1, 267-270)

Having a close, trusted confidante tremendously helped these women presidents with the balancing act. Dr. Kennedy began her presidency married but later divorced; she commented that her husband was young and was not prepared for life in the spotlight—or at least being her shadow in the public spotlight. In her opinion, for a husband-wife team to be successful with the woman serving as president, the man must be willing to play a secondary role—to be in the spotlight with the president but in a supportive capacity.

If you have someone, beware that the odds are not real good that you'll keep him! The presidencies where I see it working beautifully well is when you've got like a Susan Wilson, whose got a retired professor for a husband. Jill, my good friend, whose got a minister for a husband, but he's retired. The man who has had his moment—who's had his glory—had his day, knows who he is, older, secure—isn't going to be toppled by a female president—that works well. My good friend, Jane, up at Sequoia University—her husband is retired. He literally drives her to all of her events. The guy has been there and done that. My friend at Cottonwood, Jamie—her husband, Steve is retired. He plays golf. He supports her and he was a VP for development. He's the *dream* husband! Those are the dreams. (N1, 507-517)

Maintaining a marriage was difficult for Dr. Kennedy, and while she is not sure what she could have done differently to achieve another outcome, she remarked that women presidents who had someone—often a husband who was willing to be second and serve as a source of support—was the ideal situation. Dr. Amstutz reiterated similar sentiments regarding her husband's support in her presidency:

There isn't any way I could have achieved the level of success that I have had without Jacob. He is the person I can talk to. I think the office is lonely in some ways, but I never really felt that keenly, because Jacob is a wonderful listener, and he very seldom directs or gives me direction even if I asked him. (RU2, 6-9)

For the presidents in this study, having a key support person who encouraged their work was important, especially for the married women presidents.

Worked Together

In addition to supporting their work, several of the married women presidents remarked that their husbands also assisted them in their duties. Dr. Montgomery described the conversations she and her husband had about how the presidency would affect their lives: Were they willing to have their space and time be less private? What would living in the presidential home located on campus be like? How would the position impact their children? Even though he works at another institution, he knew that his wife's presidency would be a team effort, in that she would need his support. Dr. Barry's husband, Dave, showed his support in a different manner—he enjoyed the social aspects of the presidency. They operated as a team when they attended social events, and he helped her with the meeting, greeting, and networking:

We work the room and between the two of us, we'll hit everybody in the room in the evening. He's very good. We rarely are together when we do those, because he'll go one way around the room and I'll go the other. (D1, 284-286)

Having a partner who not only enjoys the social obligations of the presidency but excels in networking is helpful for Dr. Barry. Dr. Wilson's husband, Walt, also seemed keenly aware of the unofficial role he played as the president's spouse. In an interview with the *Cypress College Alumni Magazine* he remarked:

One of my important roles—maybe my most important role—was my relationship with the spouses of the donors and even of other presidents. At banquets, I would be seated next to the wife, usually of the person who was seated next to Susan, and I would begin a conversation...and I got good feedback from it. (*Cypress Alumni Magazine*, 2004, p. 29)

Walt knew the importance of being a social host and even enjoyed his wife's busy social calendar. In fact, Dr. Wilson remarked that “women *loved* to sit next to him at these dinner

parties. He was a marvelous conversationalist” (S1, 469-470). In addition to being a social host, Walt also kept an eye on her image. She explained:

He was very interested in my being presidential, so if I put on a pair of jeans to go the market, he would say, “Mmmmm-mmmmmm” [Shakes her head indicating disapproval] and he had no real clothes taste! But he knew when I looked what he thought I should look like—presidential or not. He used a thumbs up or thumbs down. (S1, 451-456)

Walt played an extraordinary behind-the-scenes role in Dr. Wilson’s presidency. While he sometimes counseled and advised her on a particular situation, he enjoyed being in the shadow of the president as well as accompanying her in the limelight.

Dr. Miller emphasized a different role that her husband played in her presidency—hosting and socializing with donors. Her husband attended numerous private dinners and trips to meet with potential donors and spend hours engaged in conversation. She shared:

Fundraising is something two people do together, because a lot of it is done couple to couple. Now you could do it with another kind of partner—it wouldn’t have to be your marriage partner, but when there is an “ask,” it’s frequently not two people sitting in the room but four. There were definitely times when he was part of the process, because it’s a relationship-based process, in which you’re working together towards the same aims. The “big asks” were usually done with the vice president for development, but the activities that you did to lead up to “the ask” were very related to not just the CEO of the company, who was controlling the purse strings of the company and the household finances, but sometimes the woman in the relationship—the wife. There is as much building of a relationship with her as there is with him. It’s a very, very important part of fundraising. (R2, 24-34)

Dr. Miller's husband played an integral part in fundraising. In fact, she asserted that having a spouse who was well-liked and enjoyed the process helped her raise money:

I suppose a single college president, male or female, would have to do this differently, but in the circles of our donors, having a spouse that they admired and respected and enjoyed was a big piece of my ability to raise money for Walnut College. (R2, 36-38)

Serving at a church-related institution with traditional family, moral, and spiritual values, the presence of a traditional husband (albeit in a more nontraditional role) was, in her opinion, a critical element to her fundraising success as president. Many presidential spouses encouraged their wives' careers and also tried to find ways that they could assist their partners in their professional duties.

Coping Strategies

Some presidents elaborated on the coping or managing strategies that they and their husbands employed to help them work through the demands of the office while remaining connected and balanced to each other. For example, Dr. Montgomery frequently attends campus and off campus social events. She refers to the occasions where the president's spouse should attend as "command appearances" (A1, 339-340), and their agreement is that she will indicate to him if the event is a command appearance, and then he will generally attend if he can. The coping mechanisms also work both ways, as they use them for each other:

We're trying really hard to be respectful of each other and the pressures on each other, and he's willing to participate as long as I let him know which of the ones that are really important. I likewise want to be supportive of him still. We both have jobs. We both need affirmation and support, and so we're just trying to figure out how we do that both ways. (A1, 350-355)

Meeting the needs of the other person is important for the success of both of them and their positions. The presidency can take its toll on both the president and her loved ones, so Dr. Montgomery and her husband have made it a priority to help each other, which has been an essential part of her mechanism to achieve balance.

Dr. Adams and her husband, Jim, have also created different coping mechanisms. While they have been together for over 20 years, they have never lived together. Over time they implemented strategies to help cope with distance, yet their mutual support and coping mechanisms were not created overnight—it took time and effort to learn what each person needed.

Jim was—before we married—he was in the army. He had gone through Nassau University with a Rotzy [ROTC] scholarship, and I think we learned a lot from when he was in [Country] and I was here, even though we weren't yet married. I feel in retrospect that we learned a lot about what you need to be—the kinds of conversations that you need to have face to face, the kinds of things you can do on the phone and in those days, and the kinds of things you can write. We actually still don't use email very much at all except for just very simple transactional stuff, but I do think we learned some processes—like we have an every day rule: no matter what—if we're in different time zones—no matter what it is, we talk every day. (E1, 546-554)

Strategies such as the “every day rule” helped Dr. Adams find the balance and support that she needed. Calendars and advanced planning were also essential for their relationship, and while she described their system as “very screwy” (E1, 542) it has worked for them and helped her to balance the professional and personal aspects of the presidency.

But coping strategies did not always work. Dr. Kennedy emphasized the effect of the presidency upon one's personal life. Although the president is "in charge" of the institution, it is institutional needs that determine much of the president's schedule. She warned women presidential candidates about how the presidency could affect their personal relationships:

I would have to just say to young women—as you think about doing this, you better make sure that you have a partner that is fully into it, and mine *was*, I thought. He was completely behind me, but as it turned out, it was very difficult for him to follow along while I was in the spotlight all the time. (N1, 498-501)

Presidential couples—especially partnerships where the woman will be the senior executive—need to consider the impact of the presidency on their relationship and personal lives and examine the partner's supporting role in the presidency, as living in the shadow of the spotlight can be a difficult role to sustain. Clearly presidents need to be cognizant of their personal priorities and needs.

Legitimized the President

Spouses provided support in different ways. One presidential spouse—Dr. Wilson's husband, Walt—helped to legitimize his wife, academically in the eyes of the faculty and socially with the board of trustees, alumni, and other constituents. Among the faculty, Walt legitimated her because he was a faculty member and provided Dr. Wilson with a familiarity-by-association approval—she was married to a faculty member and therefore, in their eyes, might have a better understanding of their culture. Walt's presence also made her appear "more normal." She explained: "He legitimated me, partly with the faculty as I said, but also coming in as a woman president having a husband and children kind of made me normal" (S1, 485-487).

Initially the Cypress College community was suspicious of him and thought he was acting as the “president’s spy”:

At first they were very suspicious. The whole business of me coming in like this alien being. He went to a couple of faculty fora, and he always took notes wherever he went, which were completely illegible, so they thought he was taking notes for me. (S1, 462-464)

Gradually the Cypress faculty figured out that Walt was a true scholar at heart and was studying his discipline by being with them. “People came to really respect him and he made a couple of faculty presentations and he was really well-liked by the faculty, so he legitimated me with the faculty” (S1, 466-468). Dr. Wilson was the first woman president and the first Jewish president at an institution that had been founded by Christian missionaries. In this conservative community, having a husband and children provided reassurance, that although Cypress’ new leader was clearly different, she was not too different from past presidents. As a husband, Walt provided support in social situations, he was a trusted advisor and confidante, and his presence helped the Cypress community ease into having a woman president.

The notion of assurance was a common theme for a few presidents, as husbands and families provided a sense of normalcy and familiarity. Dr. Barry commented that having a husband and children “softens you a bit in image—you’re not purely the career-driven executive, and for some people, that is comforting, and for others, it just reinforces some of the stereotypes” (D2, 77-79). Serving at a church-related institution, Dr. Amstutz explained that her husband’s presence added a greater sense of stability to her presidency:

We don’t act like husband and wife on campus necessarily. We don’t seek each other out at lunch. We keep our professional lives separate, but he very much symbolizes the

supportive spouse in that he goes with me. He makes appearances with me, and I think that is reassuring to people. They like a stable sense in that these two people are in this together. That would be some of the values of our own tradition—our Church and a religious college. I know there are many successful single women presidents, so I don't want to say that you have to have this supporting spouse, but for me, it has been very important. (RU2, 89-95)

Dr. Amstutz's husband, Jacob, served two essential roles: he supported her work by listening and encouraging her, while his presence provided normalcy that helped others become acclimated to the notion of having a woman president. Husbands and families provided reassurance by linking these female presidents with a seemingly "traditional American family" that helped these extraordinary women appear more ordinary.

Grown Children

Another factor that helped many of the married women presidents maintain a balanced life was having grown children. Some remarked that they could not envision being in their current positions with younger children at home. Dr. Barry reflected in relief: "Well, my children are grown. Frankly, I could not have done this job. I wouldn't have done this job when I had kids at home, because I simply have very little personal time" (D1, 291-293). Having children was important to Dr. Barry and her husband, and although she credited her children with providing some of her best preparation for the presidency, she could not imagine being a president and trying to raise a young family. Dr. Amstutz also felt fortunate to have grown children while she was president and remarked that being a university president and also trying to raise young children would be a difficult task: "I don't have small children. My daughters are grown...I'm very lucky, because I think it would be much harder if I had children at home that needed

attention. I think some presidents have that and that's very different" (RU1, 431-436). Dr. Miller expressed similar sentiments and added that, throughout her career, she turned down positions because of the ages of her children. Both Dr. Miller and her husband were faculty members and made a conscious effort to share childcare. As she gained more teaching and administrative experiences, people began to notice her and asked her to pursue more advanced opportunities. Although she has served as a professor, department chair, and chairperson of several key task forces and committees, she chose not to pursue a deanship:

The dean position is the hardest position in higher education, in my opinion, and for me, I think it would be quite taxing...I'm *glad* I didn't take that position when my daughter was a baby—that's when I went up to the bar and then pulled back. (R1, 210-215)

Dr. Miller "pulled back" because she was not particularly interested in a deanship and caring for her daughter was more important to her. The one president who had young children while in office shared that she felt challenged at times, because of trying to run an institution and then going home and running her family. Protective of her time at home, Dr. Kennedy told her staff: "Don't call me after nine o'clock unless somebody is bleeding or dead...I'm a mom. I have a whole other job" (N1, 301-303). Because the presidency easily permeates one's personal life, Dr. Kennedy articulated to her staff members when it was acceptable to interrupt her private time with family. For these women presidents who had children, the ages of the children significantly affected their personal time.

External Resources

To meet the increased demands, several presidents used outside resources to help them better manage their personal responsibilities and make more time available for them to attend to professional obligations. Some institutions provided domestic help at personal residences, and

another purchased a place of retreat away from campus. One president turned to technology for assistance.

Domestic Assistance

Several women were accustomed to hosting social events from prior administrative experiences, but the position of president increased their obligations. Traditionally, the female spouses of male presidents often helped with the planning and preparation of social events, but with no “wife” to coordinate events, these women presidents had to do the planning themselves or find someone to assist them. In response to the social obligations of the presidency, Dr. Barry decreased the number of small dinner events at the president’s home and made more events less formal. Her expectations of the campus food service also were modified:

Food service had to get keyed into the idea that they’ve got to be the ones that organize the flowers. They’ve got to have everything set up. They have to clean up the kitchen afterwards, because I can’t scrub the floor at eleven at night and be up at six to be at three breakfasts at homecoming. (D1, 247-250)

While issues of entertaining, housekeeping, and cooking may seem like trivial matters that should not concern a president, Dr. Barry worried about those very basic, practical matters because she did not have the time to attend to them and run the institution. She was the president—not the traditional president’s wife.

Dr. Montgomery also tried to achieve more balance by making changes to her external environment. For example, she had a 20-minute commute to the office, but moving into the presidential house eliminated her commute and made it easier to go home before returning for evening events. She also utilized support services, such as the campus food service, to help

manage her entertainment obligations. Dr. Montgomery and her husband had always done a great deal of entertaining in their home, but now food service assumed a portion of these duties:

One of the nice things is that when we move to campus the college food service will prepare meals that we do for college entertaining. We do a lot of college entertaining now on weekends, but we buy all the food, get the house cleaned, cook it, they all leave, and then we clean it up, and both of us look forward to having someone else do some of that.

I mean it's fun, but it's a lot of work. (A1, 344-348)

In addition to meal preparation, other services will help with the time crunch. Dr. Montgomery explained: "I look forward to being over here when we have house cleaning provided [and] exterior care to the home, because I'm physically tired...I mean I go home and do the laundry" (A1, 418-420). The "little things" like housecleaning, meal preparation, exterior home care, and laundry consume a lot of evening time, time which Dr. Montgomery does not have to devote to domestic activities; so having help—whether it is food service preparing for a dinner event or having the grounds crew mow the lawn—is essential for helping presidents find more time in their days and to use their time more productively.

A Place of Retreat

Another coping mechanism for balancing personal and professional responsibilities was to find a place away from campus to relax and to escape. Dr. Barry and her husband, Dave, bought a place away from their campus presidential home where they could get away from the public nature of the presidency.

The best thing we've done is we've bought a lake cottage. I never ever wanted a lake cottage, but it's fifty miles from here and that's our place to go and have our private time because we're not in the fishbowl...We're just Dave and Dianna up there and we can

have private time, so that has been our way to step outside the role a bit. (D1, 297-299; 301-302)

Having a place away from the center of activity helped them to find private time and to balance the pressures of the presidency. Dr. Montgomery and her husband also kept the home they had lived in prior to moving into the presidential residence so they could have a place of retreat.

Technology

In addition to hiring external support services or finding a place of retreat, one president used technology as a key tool to help her stay connected with the campus community and exert a presence on campus even when she physically was not there. Dr. Adams explained her utilization of email:

I am a total email junkie, and I'm very comfortable with that, and that has served me in good stead actually. I sort of felt guilty for a while that I wasn't holding office hours for the students because many presidents do that, and I have many accounts from them that it works very well. Well it didn't seem to work very well with my schedule, because I don't believe in office hours that are this week on Tuesday at 10:30 and next week on Wednesday at 8:45 and, I didn't think that would work and yet my travel schedule is such that we really couldn't get just a chunk where we said every week this is what it's going to be. So I'm saying, "Oh, geeze! I'm not open to the students." So I kind of went with my natural path and I am *totally* accessible to students on email and that works for me. I mean now at 7 o'clock in the morning and at midnight, I'm accessible. I actually had one of the seniors at graduation who was introducing me to her parents and he said something like, "Well, we really knew when President Adams was OK, when I emailed her one night at midnight and she emailed me right back and then she did it again!" So for me,

that is the way that has worked. It has kind of permeated the student body that, if they need me for something, I'm accessible, or I'll certainly go to anything when they ask me to come to an event. With the faculty, I think kind of the same thing. (E1, 471-487)

Using email has helped Dr. Adams keep in touch with her various constituents at Birch—whether she is at home at night, on campus in her office, or traveling. Technology is yet another support mechanism that some of these presidents used to balance the various personal and professional obligations in their lives.

Whether it was hiring someone to take care of the yard, appointing someone to manage events, finding a place of respite, or simply using email to stay connected with the campus, these presidents made adaptations to help them balance the personal and professional aspects of their lives. While several of them mentioned that they never felt that they had figured it out, they had consciously made several changes to help with the balancing act.

Personal Strategies

In addition to employing external services, altering personal habits seemed to be another strategy evident among several presidents. They examined the social outlets needed, scrutinized personal or leisure practices, or created routines to help them better manage their professional and personal time.

Friends Outside of the Institution

Having friends outside of the university is one way Dr. Kennedy tried to maintain balance in her professional and personal life.

I learned my third year of the presidency that I have to have lots of friends off campus that have nothing to do with Elm and I started a network—I'm in a *fun, fun* book club of just *rabid* liberal Democrat women, and I found friends at church, and I found people to

be with socially who have nothing to do with the college, and I spent a lot of time with those people socially. (N1, 223-227)

It was important for her to find an outlet beyond the walls of the college, but it was also essential that she found a group of “sharp women” (N1, 246) to socialize with and to find support from.

I’m in a group of executive women—women CEOs that do what I do—and that has been one of the best groups that I’ve been a part of, because they all have their own companies and they all have their own issues. They’re my peers...the number one piece of advice that I would give that I didn’t know—is that you’ve got to find peers fast to hold you up that have nothing to do with your college. (N1, 238-243)

These groups, whether it is the book club or the women CEOs, provide a respite for Dr.

Kennedy—a place where she relaxes from the presidency. In addition, they also provide a social outlet and source of empathetic support.

Establishing Boundaries

Although Dr. Kennedy found support from external groups outside of the College, she still received support and socialized with friends from within:

I still very much enjoy some of my friends at the College. Two of my vice presidents I’ve hired three times and I know them like the back of my hand, and we have it worked out when we work, we work, and when we play, we play, and we do one or the other. That’s not saying that we don’t have a lot of fun at work—we do, but they know that if they see me socially, they best not bring up anything that’s going on at work. That way I get some space and I get to have some “me time.” (N1, 227-232)

With great clarity, Dr. Kennedy shared with professional colleagues who were also personal friends the social boundaries she established if she was going to maintain the delicate balance between her professional and personal obligations.

In addition to establishing boundaries with others, some presidents needed to establish boundaries with themselves. Especially in their early years in office, these presidents reported the need to understand how their personal priorities fit with their professional obligations. Dr. Montgomery discussed how she was considering giving up some personal traditions in order to accommodate her increased responsibilities as president:

I need to make decisions to stop doing things that I have enjoyed doing all of my life.

When somebody is sick, if somebody dies—I like to take some food to their house. If somebody has a baby, I like finding a special gift and taking a meal over, and some of those I just need to stop because I just don't have the time to do it anymore. We had a staff picnic last week and everybody was supposed to bring a dish to carry-in...but rather than just go to the deli at the grocery and buy a gallon of potato salad, I made a whole bunch of stuff. I just need to cool my jets on that stuff, but that's not anybody else forcing me to do that. I just need to do that. (A1, 428-437)

Again, the “little things” take up a great deal of time and eliminating those items might provide the time Dr. Montgomery and others need to fulfill their presidential obligations. One can sense her remorse at the idea of sacrificing small gestures, such as finding a personal baby gift or making a homemade dish instead of picking up a store-prepared item for a potluck, but she felt that these sacrifices were necessary to find the time she needed.

Highly Organized

Several presidents discussed the importance of organization as another element in how they manage their professional and personal obligations. Many also shared their particular organizational strategies. Dr. Amstutz explained her personal management philosophy:

I'm also a very good time manager. I have always been on top of that. You know I get my speeches ready well ahead. I'm not doing things all night the night before. I learned years ago that that was how I function best. I prepare ahead. (RU1, 436-439)

Dr. Amstutz understood her limits and knew what she needed to function at her best.

Accordingly, even before her presidency, she adopted two mechanisms to help carve out the time she needed. First, she arrives at work at least an hour before eight o'clock in the morning:

I come in well in advance of 8 o'clock and have an hour and that's an hour not doing work primarily—once in a while it's answering a few emails, but it's really time for restoration and preparation for the day, you know spiritual preparation, and that has been *the* essential thing. (RU1, 453-455)

Having an hour for herself before the work day officially begins has been an essential coping and time management strategy. A second practice is dedicating two Saturday mornings a month, when possible, to her speech preparation and personal work outside of the presidency.

When I'm in town—I'm not here every weekend—but the weekends I'm in town, I'm very jealous about Saturday mornings, and I come in and again that's not so much doing work—that's when I prepare my addresses. If I have an assignment with a professional women's group—that's when I do that work mostly, but it's also a time to journal and I'm usually reading two or three things. It's paying attention to the spirit so you can survive, so if I can have my early mornings and my Saturdays twice a month, I'm fine,

because Sundays are often full of responsibility. Sunday's not relaxing for me, because I'm frequently speaking at churches or you go to church or you have this and that. It's not just totally down time when nobody has a claim on you. (RU1, 456-465)

Paying attention to her spirit—what she needed to stay balanced, refreshed, and content—has been another way she manages the great demands of the presidency.

Dr. Kennedy also shared her time management strategy. Unlike most women presidents, she has younger children still living at home to care for in addition to her institution. Accordingly, she developed a system to keep her responsibilities and everyone in her family organized.

I'm super highly organized. I have a family calendar, and I do it on Sundays and I have a nanny and a housekeeper and an ex-husband and two kids and tutors, and I just do the master calendar on Sunday and everybody gets a copy, and it stays on the counter in the kitchen, and if you got to change something, you change that and let me know. It's very detailed. (N1, 338-342)

While Dr. Kennedy joked that she juggles her various responsibilities “really badly sometimes” (N1, 338), her organizational system represented another way that she tries to maintain balance. Clearly balancing multiple obligations and responsibilities is a significant issue for these presidents, and several of them have made a conscious effort to find successful approaches to managing their time.

The presidency is a demanding professional position, and each president experienced her own adjustments as she transitioned into office. A commonality among these women leaders was the chaotic, often-demanding nature of their positions and the exhaustion it could exert on them both physically and mentally. However, what helped them manage their multiple personal and

professional obligations varied, from supportive spouses, to the maturity of their children, the kinds of external support they received at home, or their own personal strategies of organizing their time. Most of the women were cognizant of a support person or an organizational schema that helped them achieve or become closer to finding balance for the personal and professional aspects of their lives.

Greatest Challenges

New leadership brings transitions and adjustments. The greatest challenges for these women presidents frequently related to the state of their institutions when they assumed the office, addressing various leadership issues that ranged from predecessors reluctant to leave, implementing new campus-wide leadership strategies, assessing their own leadership styles, and confronting intrapersonal issues, such as time management and their level of self-confidence early in their presidencies.

State of Campus Inherited

These presidents assumed their offices under a variety of conditions. Some campuses were in a state of crisis, with bleak financial futures, serious admissions problems, and faculty not getting along, while other institutions required new leadership to reinvigorate the place. For example, Dr. Davis began her presidency with a broken campus—money was extremely tight, deep divisions existed among the faculty, and morale was low.

Ash had problems. They had had several years of budgets being in the red; of going into the endowment to cover deficits; they were in a campaign that was not going very well.

The money was coming in very slowly. A lot of that campaign was for bricks and mortar, and it was not clear that any buildings were actually going to get built. Morale was low.

The board had appointed a strategic planning committee about eight months before I

came and charged it to develop the strategic plan to turn the place around, to get the finances under control, and to get the house in order. The threat that I think was fairly explicit was if things don't get better, we're not sure this place is going to make it. (P1, 172-179)

Ash's status quo had reached a perilous point. Having recently supervised the permanent closing of a different college, Dr. Davis recognized the signs of a troubled institution. She explained: "I had an enormous sense of urgency. I mean that is one thing you get from having gone through the experience, so I knew that I didn't have the luxury of a lot of time" (P1, 198-200), and she immediately began to make changes.

Dr. Barry shared a similar experience. The repairing, healing, and redirecting that she faced was part of a recalibration process that needed to occur at Maple College. When President Barry assumed office, she explained that "there was no plan in place and no clear direction for the institution" (D1, 352-353), so she needed to create a plan and take actions that would bring the institution to a state that she envisioned for Maple.

Those first four years were a great deal of focus on getting the institution re-sized for the realities of the resources we had; getting the enrollment back on track; putting the plan together; and getting people a common sense of direction; and building the relationships and trust—not necessarily in that order—but building them so that we had enough support for the direction we were going that we could begin to move together in the same direction and not have everybody fighting everything that was going on. (D1, 361-366)

Faced with significant budget issues, declining enrollments, a lack of unity and trust on campus, and no clear strategic plan, President Barry needed to be a healer, leader, planner, and visionary to turn the campus around and to establish a firm foundation so progress could be made.

But not all presidents inherited campuses that were in crisis mode; a few institutions were thriving and the presidents had to figure out ways to keep the momentum moving in a positive direction. Dr. Adams explained that nothing was wrong at her institution, Birch College:

There's nothing broke at Birch, so a part of my issue in articulating that vision is that much of what we do here is really right the way it should be. I don't see radical change as something that Birch needs, and so that makes it an interesting challenge to articulate something when I feel that really Birch doesn't need and should not make dramatic change. We know that we need to raise funding to improve our financial aid picture, so that's a simple one, but what are the appropriate ways to sustain and enhance the things that are the best about the College? (E1, 594-601)

Dr. Adams referred to this challenge as a “blessing that has its own interesting side” (E1, 593-594), because Birch has a healthy endowment, attracts top students from around the country, and employs top-notch faculty. The institution is positioned in a very enviable place, and that was one of her greatest challenges—maintaining and even improving excellence.

The recalibrating, or the redirecting of the institution to a state that each president envisioned, was a significant challenge for some of these women presidents. They understood that effective new leaders did not introduce sweeping reforms, but changes for the most part were necessary and needed to be made. Each leader needed to figure out how to instigate those changes and transitions without alienating her institution.

Leadership Issues

Presidents bring their own leadership styles to their positions. Part of the recalibration process at each institution was having the campus become accustomed to the leadership philosophy of the new president and the president becoming acclimated to her new institution

and to the presidency itself. Several discussed the difficulties they experienced with their immediate predecessor and the “growing pains” their institutions experienced as their faculty and administrators became used to their leadership.

Succeeding One's Predecessor

Some presidents shared the challenges they encountered with their presidential predecessors—a few retired presidents were reluctant to let go, while others had left the campus in a dismal state. For example, Dr. Montgomery succeeded the president whom she had served under for several years, and shortly after she was appointed, the board of trustees asked her to accelerate the transition time by a half year while her predecessor and former supervisor remained on as president-in-leave. The transition was difficult. The board sponsored a reception to mark the day that Dr. Montgomery officially began her term as president.

They wanted to do something that sent a very clear signal that I was the president—that's why they had that reception—otherwise all that stuff would have happened later, but there needed to be some clear message: Anne is the president. (A1, 139-141)

Laying the foundation for new leadership and transitioning a campus to a familiar but new leader is challenging—all while one's predecessor is still present. Dr. Montgomery needed to find a way to fulfill her new role without jeopardizing her relationship with the former president.

Dr. Barry's experience differed, in that her predecessor had caused many divisions on campus:

The transition from my predecessor to me was a very, very difficult one...The board split, the campus split, the community split, the alumni split. They were pro- and anti- my predecessor. He had a 12 and a half year presidency—10 of which were probably really

good years and he did some wonderful things, but the end was horrible, absolutely horrible, so I came in with a campus that had to be healed. (D1, 332-337)

Dr. Barry was left with the task of cleaning up the aftermath of a presidency that had turned sour in the last years. She needed to repair rifts, heal wounds, and redirect the institution onto a new course. The previous leadership and its aftermath proved to be a challenge to some of these women presidents.

Acclimating Institution to Leadership Style

While not all presidents encountered challenges from their predecessors, nearly all of them endured a period where their institutions and their respective administrative teams adjusted to their particular leadership philosophy and style. Some presidents emphasized the need to include and empower others, while others made strong statements to set the tone and initiate change. Either way, several presidents shared specific examples of how their leadership differed or caused change in the status quo.

Building trust and empowering others. Dr. Montgomery's transition focused on improving relationships and communication. Describing her predecessor as "top down in how he made decisions" (A1, 194-195), she worked to build trust with her administrative cabinet:

I just told cabinet that they knew me, and that we would have a different approach. I've said the words: "I trust your judgment" a thousand times to say that, "As we work on these things, I trust your judgment," or "I trust you. I have confidence that you'll bring these things to the table," or "I have confidence that you can make a good decision about that." So that hasn't been by accident that I repeat that a lot. (A1, 210-217)

Showing her cabinet that she had confidence in their abilities, that she trusted them, and that she wanted them to contribute were crucial elements to Dr. Montgomery's transition. She needed to recalibrate her primary leaders to work in a way that complemented her leadership style.

Leading for women...her way. Part of Dr. Miller's transition also included issues of trust—people not trusting her leadership philosophy regarding how she supported women in higher education. Throughout the presidential selection process at Walnut College, Dr. Miller's most ardent critics were two women faculty members who possessed different ideas on how to advance women in higher education:

The people least likely to support my presidency either as a potential president or in reality were two of the women faculty who had pushed the hardest and whose views of how to advance women were different from my own. (R1, 305-307)

Serving at Walnut for 20 years prior to her presidency, Dr. Miller was not surprised by their opposition. The two women faculty members possessed a different philosophy regarding the advancement of women and strongly disputed her approach:

When you hold power, you are a lightning rod for people, and so I'm sure that they would describe my presidency as having sold out or not furthered women—set women back at Walnut...I had a kind of authenticity as woman. I could speak as a woman and that had never happened before, but when I spoke as woman, I didn't say the script that I was supposed to say from their perspective. (R1, 358-367)

Dr. Miller did not follow their script, because she did not support the radical feminist view on the advancement of women. Her role models and her experiences in her career leading to the presidency helped Dr. Miller to form a more spiritual and inclusive approach to women's leadership.

Yes ma'am phenomenon. Building trust and confidence were not issues for Dr. Adams; her leadership team had a great deal of confidence in her abilities and ideas—maybe too much in her opinion—because they seemed to agree with her most of the time. Being wary of group think, or what she referred to as the “Yes Ma’am Phenomenon”—that is, when people thought that her ideas were always wonderful—was Dr. Adams’ concern as she transitioned into office. Elaborating on her concern, she explained:

It’s just the “Yes Ma’am” phenomenon. I’m getting accustomed to the phenomenon when people say, “Oh, that’s a great idea.” Well, I’m sure it’s not always a great idea, so there is a little bit of that I think. This is a very friendly community and people like to get along and I like that, but it’s a thing to be wary of. (E1, 432-436)

While Dr. Adams believes that she has done an effective job during the first two years of her presidency, she wants to keep an accurate perspective on her work and the state of the institution, which can be difficult to ascertain if one’s leadership team is caught in “group think” mode.

It’s very hard to detect your own shadow. I worry a little bit about remaining vigilant about group think, because that is something that confronts any leader and as people get accustomed to your views or something it can be too easy for all of us to seem like we’re on the same page and to not encourage or hear so clearly those dissenting voices, so that’s one thing I think about. Sometimes I think, “Wow. We’re really coming together as a team,” and I want to be wary about that because I think that can happen even when people aren’t intending it out of goodwill. (E1, 389-395)

Her leadership team needs to share the same goals and visions for Birch College, but not at the expense of losing dissenting voice and opinions. Her staff needs to be comfortable with disagreement and the questioning of ideas so that they can help each other detect their own

shadows. Dr. Adams and her leadership team are striving to keep a realistic assessment of their performances and decisions in order to keep Birch College moving in a positive direction.

Dynamic and aggressive leadership. Adjusting to the leadership philosophy of a new president takes time, and some presidents believe it was important to take an aggressive stance on key social and moral issues as part of their presidency. Dr. Kennedy addressed particular societal issues that affected Elm College. As the president and chief representative of the institution, her decision to make statements about issues, such as sexual orientation, sent a strong message regarding her beliefs and what she hoped for the institution. For example, a symbol of the State bore an icon that she and many others found offensive. Dr. Kennedy decreed that the icon would not be used at Elm College, because “it has a symbol on it that I find abhorrent and offensive” (N1, 179-180). Dr. Kennedy also has been a vocal supporter of the gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual populations. In her inaugural address, she expressed her dismay and shame regarding the ignorance and bigotry that the gay community faces and called for an end to discrimination on the basis of race, nation of origin, religion, or sexual orientation. She shared the trustees’ responses and her motivation for including the subject in her inaugural address:

Our trustees did not rise up and call me “Blessed” on that one, and I made some enemies there and those enemies really worked to take me out—particularly when I hired the first out gay vice president of student affairs. Yeah, I darn near lost my job over that...I thought it was important for the State of [name]. I thought it was important for the campus, and I do think it is a civil rights issue for the next decade. Elm was very powerful in being the first integrated college in the South and it’s a civil right. We pride ourselves in social justice. It’s sort of one of the centerpieces of the student experiences here to be very socially aware and into social justice. It’s part of our ethos, and so I

thought that was very important to say, and I also thought it was very important to say that to let everybody know, you know, we are going to move forward at Elm College. We may be in [city and State], but we're moving forward. (N1, 481-492)

Dr. Kennedy is not afraid to take a stand. In her position as the president of Elm College and a leader in the local community and state, her actions and statements are advancing her causes. Dr. Kennedy faces challenges head on and her aggressive yet dynamic approach to her presidency has impacted the Elm College community.

Rebuilding the trust and self-confidence of a leadership team, leading for women in one's own way, or taking a personal and political stance on a controversial social issue demonstrated specific leadership transitions that these presidents experienced. Presidents and colleges alike experience growing pains, and as these women learned the lay of the land, they began to assert their own leadership approach for directing their institutions.

Other Leadership Adjustments

In addition to leadership concerns, presidents also grappled with intrapersonal issues as they adjusted to their new positions. Time management and self-confidence about their abilities in office were the two most prominent issues they discussed, and their doubts about these two areas rose early in their terms.

Time Management

A president's schedule does not operate on an eight to five timeframe. Presidents frequently have evening and weekend commitments both on and off campus, and adjusting to the demands of the position is challenging for many. Serving in the presidency for nearly a year, Dr. Montgomery shared that she was still trying to figure out her schedule—how to use her time most effectively and still meet her numerous personal and professional obligations.

I need to use my time with more intentionality, because I think I can get greater use out of my time if I prioritize a little differently—it's not even prioritize—if I figure out the mechanics of my weekly schedule. Should I reserve two days a week and just tell fundraising to put me where I should go? I just don't know exactly the mechanics of it.

(A1, 456-561)

Figuring out the mechanics of her schedule—how she can use her time the most effectively and choosing where she should allot her time—has been a challenge for Dr. Montgomery.

Managing time was also a concern for Dr. Wilson. Her husband was a key source of support throughout her presidency, and early in her term, she realized that she needed to intentionally schedule time out of her daily schedule to spend with him.

One of my problems was that I had to give my husband time that I might have otherwise spent with students. He retired because of me—that commute became too much for him, but he was a great scholar, so he didn't mind being alone working and he worked every day, and he was more productive in the time we were here than probably in his whole career, but I realized very quickly that I had to make time for him. We had to go out for dinner unless we had an affair to attend. I didn't cook and he didn't cook, so we could connect, so it was very important for him, for me, to tell him about my day and what was happening and issues...I didn't do some things that I might have done and one of them would have been having more time with students in the evening. (S1, 408-416)

Dr. Wilson regretted turning down many evening events, especially those involving students, but Walt was an integral part of her life and they needed time together, so she sacrificed some student time in favor of time with him.

A final example of time management issues related to managing the president's multiple constituents. Dr. Adams shared her anxiety of figuring out ways to become familiar with the faculty, staff, students, and the trustees of Birch College.

There was a bit of just anxiety about can I establish a good relationship with the faculty? Can I establish a good relationship with the students? How do you keep all those balls in the air? I mean I literally had a process—I think I felt sort of tangibly last year that I came in and it was the staff. OK, OK I got the staff! I forgot the faculty! OK, let's make friends with the faculty! The students! I forgot the students! And then I sort of got to the end of the year and I thought, "What am I supposed to be doing with the trustees? Who are they?" So a real challenge in the role is how do you maintain some kind of equal focus on all of those along with just the day to day operations. (E1, 460-467)

Finding that balance of managing the daily operations of an institution while also paying attention to her numerous constituents was a challenging obstacle during her first few years as Dr. Adams became acclimated to Birch and as the Birch community became familiar with her. Clearly, adjusting to the demanding schedule of the presidency, coupled with learning how to finesse and best utilize one's limited time, was a significant challenge to these new women presidents.

Self-Confidence

Another intrapersonal challenge during the early years of the presidency related to one's self confidence. Dr. Adams remarked: "There is a huge transition from not being president to being president" (E1, 513-514), while others talked about the magnitude of the position and the weight of the role.

The see-saw of self-confidence. When describing her presidency, Dr. Wilson explained that she “was both hailed as a savior and vilified as an alien” (S1, 652), and she made numerous references throughout her narrative about feeling like an imposter, recognizing her deficiencies, and doubting her abilities. Then she would remind herself of her many tremendous successes. This “teetering” or “see-sawing” between self-doubt and confidence was a pattern throughout her presidency. Beginning with the search committee, Dr. Wilson wondered how her resume made its way into the finalist pile, because in her opinion, she was not qualified to be a traditional college president.

I was nominated by someone on the search committee, who knew me from Palmetto University, who was on the board there. I believe that’s the only reason that my resume, which would not look like a standard president’s bone fide, could have surfaced, and he likes to say that all he did was put my name in and then I did it myself, and I had to win the job, but I know *perfectly well* that that made a huge difference, because somebody with a vita like mine would never float to the top, and I think the consultant they had was not ever thinking that I would possibly surface as a candidate. (S1, 111-117)

Dr. Wilson was appointed to the Cypress presidency because of her networking and fundraising skills. The college desperately needed financial help, and she possessed the knowledge, skills, and personal savvy to accomplish the task; so while being a fundraiser was her greatest asset in the eyes of the search committee, she believed it was also her greatest deficit because she did not travel down academe’s “royal road” as a faculty member.

Of all the deficits—legitimacy-deficits I had—the biggest one in my mind was the fundraiser, but that’s why I got the job, because they wanted a fundraiser. They desperately needed a fundraiser...I felt insufficient, inadequate, because I wasn’t a

traditional academic...but the fact is they *needed* a fundraiser...The endowment when I came was \$36 million or so, and they were raising very little money...I left with a \$260 million endowment having run a campaign that raised \$160 million dollars, so I did what they wanted me to do, but I also was able to gain respect as an academic and to have, you know, this kind of recognition in the booklet the faculty did for me [referring to a book of essays the faculty dedicated to her in honor of her retirement] and so on...that was to me very, very important, but they needed and wanted a fundraiser. So while it was a deficit in legitimacy, it was the only reason I got the job. (S1, 210-224)

Even after a few years in office, Dr. Wilson continued to worry about her position and if she was serving the college effectively. The summers particularly were the worst time of year for her:

During the two semesters of the year, I was so busy and in motion and creating. It was in the summers, primarily, when things were quieter that I would begin to anguish about what I was doing. It was really quite interesting, so my summers were pretty terrible for a while. I would just be in pain about whether I was leading the college the right way, in the right direction, and so on. (S1, 232-237)

Throughout her presidency, her anguish and see-sawing would persist, even though her husband, a scholar in higher education, pointed out to her that she always seemed to know what to do.

There were two things that characterized me in the first few years. My husband used to say, "You always know what to do. How do you know what to do?" and he was of course a student of higher education and the presidency and so on. He said, "It's amazing," and that was true. I felt very confident as president. At the same time, I was absolutely loaded with self doubt. I didn't think I would last. I mean I wrote, "Oh, I'll probably be here a few years and what are we going to do next?" We used to walk around and talk about

what we would do if we were fired, and I agonized over my vision, strategic planning—and was I doing it right? How should it be done? What did the college need? I really was anguished about all of those things, but at the same time, I always acted appropriately. When I looked back on it, I didn't make any terrible mistakes, and I think I did a very good job, but it was partly because I came the non-traditional track, and I felt insufficient. I had to keep working and proving myself an academic. I wanted to be taken seriously as an academic and not just a fundraiser. (S1, 133-145)

Again, Dr. Wilson oscillated between confidence and anxiety: at times she was assured about her vision and her success, yet she also agonized about the same issues. As perceptions changed—both her constituents' and her own—her confidence and assurance became more persistent in the latter years of her presidency:

I think the perceptions about me changed a lot. The way probably I changed the most was in my sense of confidence. Although even until the end, it could be shaken in a way that people didn't realize, but I mean I came in with a lot of fanfare and support and people thought I was going to be a savior...even though they thought I brought what they needed, once on the ground, there was so much animus from the alumni. You know, when I left, they made me an honorary alumna. It was just beautiful, so the perception of me and the way I was viewed had changed. I think they thought that they had this great fundraiser, but they came to respect me as an academic and an intellectual equal. (S1, 384-393)

By the end of her tenure, Dr. Wilson was cognizant of her success and confident of her abilities. She had reached a level of acceptance with herself and her various constituents, yet the “see-sawing” between self-doubt and confidence was one the greatest challenges in her presidency.

Filling the space. Just as Dr. Wilson questioned her legitimacy and efficacy as president, Dr. Amstutz wondered if she wanted to pursue a presidency and if she could successfully handle the responsibilities. Throughout the presidential search interviews, Dr. Amstutz explained that she was “brutally honest with myself” (RU1, 193) and described the process as “walking through the questions with the search committee” (RU1, 220). As the trustees and search committee members interviewed her, she further questioned herself regarding her desire to assume the position. When talking about her uncertainties, she explained:

They are still questions that represent for me those aspects of this unfolding of this path that suggests one has to be both confident and humble at the same time. Is it Rosabeth Moss Kanter that says, “Confidence is that sweet point between arrogance and despair?” And that’s exactly how I feel. That’s why those questions are for me symbolic. “Can I do it?” is an expression of self knowledge about not one’s abilities, not arrogant, but being realistic. “Can you do it?” Obviously, I can do it, but it’s still not saying, “Oh, yes, I can do it!” because some days you can’t do it. Some days you cannot be what you have to be, because you are human. And then, “Do I want to do it?” is related to that aspect. The job is large and most days one can do it, but some days you don’t have what it takes. (RU1, 122-132)

Dr. Amstutz’s extensive internal questioning about her motivations, skills, and abilities helped her to realistically appraise the presidency and its impact upon her, and instead of keeping this self-reflection process internal, she shared it with the committee as they walked through their questions and reservations together. Accordingly, in the process, one trustee asked her if she could fill the space—could she handle the presidency and everything that the position encompassed:

I think he asked me that because I was very honest all the way through with this search process about my own uncertainties. I wasn't going to sell myself that I could be this great president, because I didn't know! I had never been a president before, so I was very open and honest about the questions I had. Could I do it? So I think he was maybe a little worried. His questions, "Can you fill the space?" meant, I think, "Can you rise to be what this position has to be, to be the president?" I said yes, because I was there as a woman who had lots of experience with trying new things and finding out that I could be successful and surprising myself many times about what I could do. I knew if I said yes—I knew if I were invited to take the position and I took it, that I could do it. Could I rise to whatever is necessary to be a president? That question had to do with personal style, the way you meet people, are you open and welcoming? Do you have a good communication manner and style, because a lot of that is public relations. Can you rise to that role? Can you do that for the campus—can you fill that space whatever that silhouette is of the president that the president has to step into? Can you be that for the campus? (RU1, 155-172)

Filling the silhouette or the space of the presidency represented a critical concept. Dr. Amstutz realized early that the presidency was more than providing leadership and shaping the direction of the institution. The president needed to possess the agility to address the most critical issues while also scanning the horizon for future concerns. Presidents need endurance to rise to the occasion on behalf of the institution—whether one was handling a crisis, congratulating a victory, or simply attending an event. All these skills and abilities represented essential components of the presidency—the proverbial "other duties as assigned." While communication and style may largely be public image components, they were part of the weight of responsibility

that a president must be prepared to bear willingly, because she is the leader or the face of the institution during her tenure as the senior executive. Although challenging, Dr. Amstutz's ruminations were two-fold for good reason; she determined first if she wanted to be a president, and secondly, whether she could perform the job well. Her deliberations helped her to be very frank and realistic about herself, and in the process, helped the search committee understand and learn about her as a candidate.

Adjusting to the rigorous and demanding schedule of the presidency and having confidence in one's abilities were some of the intrapersonal challenges these women presidents encountered when they assumed office. Externally, these leaders reported being patiently proactive as they became acclimated to their institutions and their institutions became accustomed to their particular leadership philosophies and initiatives as the presidents worked on recalibrating their campuses. While the specifics of the challenges varied among them, most of these presidents' concerns related to improving the state of well-being of their institutions, working through leadership issues, and adjusting a few intrapersonal concerns.

What Women Presidential Candidates Need to Know

When reflecting on what women presidents need to know, Dr. Wilson perhaps stated it the best: "The presidency calls upon everything you ever learned in your life" (S1, 590), and the diverse career paths, backgrounds, and personal experiences of these women prepared them for the presidencies in different ways. However, from their perspectives, aspiring women presidential candidates need to gain preparation in multiple areas. First, women candidates must be articulate and adept regarding financial and philanthropic issues, and they should develop a broad understanding of higher education and how the different divisions within their own institutions function. Second, on a personal level, they must prepare themselves for the

magnitude of the presidency while gaining leadership skills that will help them to empower others, promote change, handle crises, and plan for the future.

Financial Issues and Fundraising

Developing a solid understanding of financial matters and understanding fundraising were the two most frequently cited areas that women presidential candidates were thought to need to understand before pursuing a presidency. Dr. Barry remarked that “women are perceived as not as sharp on the finance side. It’s unfair, and this isn’t rocket science” (D1, 521-522). Several others made similar remarks. Dr. Montgomery, for example, explained what, in her opinion, aspiring women need to know about money:

You certainly need to know how to budget and how to read balance sheets and kind of know the picture on institutional or organizational budgets for a non-profit. Again, that’s not rocket science, but you have to know how to do that, how to read it, how to talk it, and know what some of those jargon words are because they can be so intimidating. They’re not that complicated, but you need to learn them to hold your own with people. And I think women particularly need to be strong and to appear strong early on. (A1, 486-492).

En route to a presidential post, many women candidates would likely gain financial experience in vice presidencies or deanships, but proving one’s financial sharpness seemed to be a key factor. Talking about her experiences regarding the construction of a new academic building, Dr. Montgomery explained how people tested her knowledge about finances: “I think that’s the area where some of the board members wondered what kind of business acumen I had. They would ask me questions and find out that I know what I’m talking about” (A1, 285-287). Reading a

budget sheet might not be “rocket science” (A1, 284), but clearly women need to gain experience in finance, according to these presidents.

In addition to being able to understand how money is handled, women presidents need to understand how to ask for and raise money. Fundraising has always been central to the survival of many institutions in private higher education, so it was not surprising to learn that presidential hopefuls should educate themselves about the world of fundraising. Dr. Montgomery shared concerns regarding her own knowledge and abilities in that regard when she took office:

I didn't have any fundraising experiences, and that was one of the big liabilities that I brought to my job application, so I think either some experience with it or training.

Fundraising isn't rocket science either...there are some rudimentary principles, and if you can get some formal education in it—go to a conference or a training... You want to know how to talk that world of talk and be sure that you want to do it. (A1, 495-501)

Dr. Montgomery's predecessor did not want his vice presidents, (among whom she served) involved in fundraising, so she informed herself by reading books and attending a week-long introduction workshop.

Unlike many current presidents, Dr. Wilson spent much of her professional career as a fundraiser, and while the advancement or fundraising route may not represent the typical presidential career path, presidents today need to understand the undergirding philosophies of fundraising and be comfortable working with legislators. Dr. Wilson explained: “I've spent a lot of time working with people trying to convince them that fundraising is not begging. It's a very honorable American tradition and they need to get some experience” (S1, 551-553). Especially for individuals who work at public institutions, gaining additional experience with legislators is also important. Knowledge, skills, and practice in these two areas are often the deciding point,

these presidents warned, between two candidates in a search, and Dr. Wilson emphasized the networking and fundraising skills:

Legislator relations is very important and fundraising is very important and that could make a difference between getting a presidency and not getting it today, so if people are coming up through *the royal road*, as Birnbaum calls it—the academic faculty position, deanship, provostship, and want to go to a presidency—many people who are in the provost role have never done much fundraising, and if there are two candidates, and one has more fundraising experience and they look more or less equal, they are going to pick that person because every institution today is after the philanthropic dollar, and has to be. States are withdrawing support and tuition—there is always pressure and people don't realize that they can get that kind of experience by participating in local organizations. I mean you can affiliate with the local day nursery and help them raise money for their capital campaign and that gives you the experience of sitting across the table and asking somebody for money. So that's really important. (S1, 559-569)

To be a competitive candidate and to prepare oneself for the presidency, candidates must understand financial issues, become familiar with financial jargon, gain fundraising experience, and learn how to network and relate to external constituents and supporters.

Understanding the Big Picture of Higher Education

No matter what route individuals travel to the presidency, according to these women, they need to develop a broad comprehension of their institutions. Dr. Wilson's recalled a remark that one of her assistant deans made. He said: "No faculty member really understands what a president does at all or the kind of larger picture of higher education" (S1, 575-576). Many presidential candidates move through traditional academic pathways to the top. Working their

ways through the various professorial ranks, they become department chairs, deans or assistant vice presidents, and frequently academic vice presidents. Consequently, they often do not fully understand how the different components of a college or university work.

Another thing is a lot of people who aspire to presidencies don't know very much about higher education generally and they are insulated. They may have been at their own institution for a very long time or they may have been focused on departmental or disciplinary issues or association issues, and so what they know about is the MLA and its politics, but not about the national associations, the re-authorization processes, and Congress, and so I think that that's another issue. (S1, 569-574)

Presidential hopefuls need to gain a comprehensive awareness and understanding of the different segments that comprise colleges and universities, since they ultimately would be responsible for the overall outcomes of their institutions.

Dr. Barry agreed with Dr. Wilson's assessment of an average presidential candidate's preparation for the presidency. As a faculty member and then later an administrator, she had immersed herself in her discipline and became a leading expert in her field. For her, however, a critical component of her own presidential preparation was participating in an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship, which granted her a valuable opportunity to take a broader view of higher education and gain familiarity in areas where she was lacking experience. She explained:

Get to know all aspects of an institution. I had very little acquaintance with athletics, for example, so I spent time with ADs [athletic directors]. Know every part of an institution, because you're going to have your areas of comfort that you come in from. I came out of the academic side, so that part was very comfortable. (D1, 514-518)

Explaining further that she had little experience with enrollment management, admissions, and financial aid, she did a quick study to “become acquainted enough with all of the areas so that you can ask good questions” (D1, 525-526). While presidents are responsible for everything, they directly supervise very little; yet they must be able to understand the issues, such as the physical plant and technology, and ask the right questions to be effective leaders.

Gaining a comprehensive view of the many components of higher education and how those components interrelate was key for these women. While an ACE Fellowship was thought an excellent way to broaden one’s understanding of higher education, another way to diversify and expand one’s knowledge and skills about unfamiliar areas was to volunteer. Particularly for those presidents who traveled non-academic routes to the presidency, Dr. Kennedy advised:

Volunteer to get on faculty committees. Try to get on as many academic committees. Ask if you can go to faculty meetings and go to them. Ask if you’re allowed to go sit in and observe. Volunteer for assignments that aren’t in your area to go figure them out. Get involved in athletics, for example. See if you can get on a search committee to hire a coach for something, but just get yourself all over campus so you can see how the campus works in its entirety. So volunteer to work for free. (N1, 404-409)

For non-faculty presidential hopefuls, obtaining academic committee assignments might provide a window to faculty culture and concerns while also helping one to become more familiar with the faculty. Dr. Kennedy encouraged young professionals to assess their knowledge and skills and make a plan of how to broaden their resumes:

Sit down and figure out what you don’t know and figure out who you’re gonna get to know it and volunteer for free to learn it—that’s a good deal. Goes on your resume and then you fly through the next paper process when you’re looking for whatever your next

level is. You want to go from director to dean, dean to VP, but get that portfolio built up.

(N1, 416-420)

Assessing one's experiences and actively seeking out opportunities that will provide significant exposure to other areas of the university is an excellent approach, according to these presidents, towards developing a comprehensive understanding of an institution.

Comprehending the Magnitude of the Presidency

Several presidents remarked on the process of adjusting to the magnitude of the presidency. In addition to the anticipated leadership, cultural, and environmental changes, individuals had to become acclimated to the idea of being president—the senior person in charge of their institutions. Accordingly, several women discussed the reality of the position: being responsible for a wide array of areas, bearing the weight and responsibility of the position, and becoming comfortable with being recognized as the “face” of the institution.

The Ultimate Generalist

As the senior executive officer, the president is the ultimate generalist. These presidents recommended that aspiring candidates should be comfortable with being responsible for a multitude of diverse tasks and responsibilities. Dr. Adams explained:

I think the first thing is it does help if you enjoy—we could call it many things—being a generalist, being a sort of Renaissance person...so I think that one of the best things is to have lots of kinds of varied experiences, because everything crosses your desk. (E1, 562-573)

Being the “ultimate generalist” also has its limitations, however, as Dr. Barry remarked: “You have to realize that you’re going to be an expert in nothing...I’ve gone from being nationally [recognized] in a role in my field as an academic, to an expert in absolutely nothing” (D1, 526-

528). This transition represented another adjustment for new presidents—they need to become accustomed to being a generalist from being a specialist in a specific discipline or being an administrator responsible for a particular institutional division.

Weight of the Position

In addition to the Renaissance background recommended for the position, the ponderous nature of the office itself placed a great deal of pressure on some of these presidents. Dr. Barry pertinently described the weight and magnitude of her responsibilities: “[The] pressure is on the president when it’s institutional, because whatever anybody else does, I’m responsible for” (D1, 437-438). To the public and for her many constituents, Maple College’s success lies with her, and the obligations of the office took their toll:

I had spent a year in a president’s office shadowing, watching a presidency, but that still doesn’t give you what it feels like personally, and I don’t know how you would ever know that. I think the biggest thing that I realized from it, from a personal standpoint, is the continual weight of responsibility. You never let it down. Presidents will laugh when they get together and talk about the 4 a.m. Invariably most of us wake up at some time in the night and think about the place, and some will say that mine’s three or mine’s five, but it’s that weight of the responsibility of the institution and all it means. You never lay that down—you don’t, as long as you’re president. You’ve got it twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That’s the part that I don’t think I could have known until you live it.

(D1, 500-508)

New presidents need to reconcile being a generalist who is responsible for everything, find ways to accomplish goals while not being directly responsible for most of them, and shoulder the ever-present weight of the office.

Being the Living Logo

Along with the weight and wide-ranging responsibilities of the position, candidates should be aware of the sometimes larger-than-life reality of the presidency and the importance of understanding the symbolic significance of the office. Dr. Adams remarked in that regard:

There is a huge transition from not being president to being president... You are a “living logo” and you just have to recognize that...it’s symbolic capital. As a president, I think it was very clear to me on a kind of theoretical level, and I learned it from seeing [name of president she had worked for] in action, too. It is a role of symbolic capital. In a sense, you’re not even a person...many of your duties are not really about a person, they are about a construct or a role, and that’s a big difference from anything else you do. (E1, 513-524)

The president is the ultimate champion of the institution—the advocate, the protector, and the principal motivator. The magnitude and weight of the position can be overwhelming, but candidates need to prepare themselves for this transition. While these women thoroughly enjoyed their roles as presidents, learning how to cope with the overwhelming responsibilities and magnitude of the office was, at times, daunting.

Leadership Skills

A variety of leadership competencies is also required for the presidency in these women’s views. Aspiring executives need to understand how to empower others, promote change, construct dynamic and effective administrative teams, be visionaries while managing daily issues, and be prepared to handle crises.

Empowering Others

A critical leadership skill is knowing how to empower others to lead. While the president is accountable for everything, others ultimately are responsible for a majority of the changes that need to occur. Dr. Barry surmised: “There’s very little a president accomplishes for the institution that isn’t done through somebody else, and yet you’re responsible for what all those somebody else are doing, and so you rely on all of these other people” (D1, 532-534). So presidents quickly learn that while the buck might stop with them, they need to rely on their senior leadership and countless numbers of faculty and staff members to make the institution run smoothly and successfully. Dr. Kennedy emphasized why empowering others is so important to effective leadership:

I think the most common error that new people make is that they are so eager to do something wonderful fast, and it’s the worst thing you can do. You have to try to resist the urge to do something wonderful fast and really listen and listen and listen and listen and listen, and then when things start to happen make dead sure it’s not your idea. You have to empower people. People support what they help to create so when things start to happen, the team has to think they’re doing it. (N1, 140-146)

Convincing other members of the institutional community of the president’s vision and encouraging them to make changes and run their respective areas smoothly are essential for a strong presidency. Accordingly, successful presidents understand how to successfully promote change on their campuses. Dr. Montgomery stressed: “Read enough about change so you understand that, because if you go into any new leadership job that is going to be an issue” (A1, 513-515). Transition and change are inevitable when a new president assumes office, so they need to understand how to introduce and finesse change.

I read a lot about change...I actually read before I knew I was going to be president...we're kind of a change adverse culture here and I wanted to figure out ways to help faculty deal with the changes that would inevitably come with the new president, not realizing that I was going to be that person. (A1, 501-507)

According to these women, being knowledgeable about how change processes occur and how to introduce and sustain those transitions are crucial steps when a new president takes the helm. Sudden, sweeping change is very rarely necessary and would likely not go over well with faculty, staff, and students, so presidents need to become familiar with the art of change. The successful presidency is only as strong as the many people underneath her in the institutional governance structure.

Choosing and Cultivating Leadership

While presidents need to be conscientious about their own leadership philosophies, selecting the best leadership team was another essential element to a successful presidency. In addition, some felt that leadership also entailed cultivating the next generation of leaders for higher education.

Riding on the same bus. Having “the right” administrative team is essential for presidents. Early in her presidency, Dr. Miller encountered difficulties with her administrative cabinet. The board had agreed that she would be able to personally select her senior staff, and while she kept most of the team that she had inherited, she felt two staff members needed to leave. One staff member’s eventual departure generated much controversy. Sharing her frustration with the situation, she explained:

When I used my option of asking two people not to stay on my team, who had been on the previous president's team, I could not get one of them to the win-win. The other was a wonderful case study of grace. (R1, 439-444)

Dr. Miller asked the administrator to leave, but the individual protested and drew other people into the process, which meant she had to use her "honeymoon capital" immediately. This was difficult for her, because she counted on her powers of persuasion and hated to use coercion, but when forced to do so, she did. She explained: "Building a strong team was my highest priority. The previous cabinet had not worked well together. I had to make changes" (R1, 447-448). Furthermore, because her administrative cabinet was not entirely of her own selection, it was difficult for them to work effectively together. Accordingly she stressed the importance of having a solid core leadership team:

Find that team of leaders, because you're not leading alone—or you shouldn't be. You should be leading with a group of others who are the "right people on the right places on the bus." They have the skills sets you need to complement yours. They have the same vision of what the institution's strengths are. You need to love them. They know their own strengths, and they're prepared to work very hard with you and to love you, the team, the institution, and the work. A lot of the challenges were getting to that point where that love and trust existed. (R1, 428-434)

Dr. Miller reflected that the combination of key women faculty protesting her leadership, coupled with the lack of trust and confidence from her senior administrators, made her early months in office very challenging. She eventually found a solid team of vice presidents, the leadership among women faculty changed, and she was able to bring about institutional the changes she envisioned with the help of others. Solidarity was an important element for her, and

while it eventually was achieved, it took time to create a team that shared her vision, passion, and standards. Clearly, presidential candidates need to be straightforward with the board of trustees and the existing administrative cabinet regarding how the new leadership team is created.

Cultivating future leaders. In addition to choosing one's leadership team wisely, some of these presidents believed that they had an obligation to cultivate the next generation of leaders. Dr. Wilson created two leadership programs at her institution—one for students and another for rising faculty and administrators. Dr. Amstutz dedicated time to mentoring faculty and staff members—particularly women—by actively encouraging them to pursue doctorates and participating in programs that promoted women in higher education, such as serving as a keynote speaker for a collegiate women's student leadership conference at a nearby liberal arts college. Reflecting on her past ten years in the presidency, she took pride in encouraging and cultivating the next generation of leaders at Pine University.

I've grown in my understanding of how critical it is to nurture a team of leaders. I knew to some extent, but not nearly to the extent I now know the importance of cultivating and calling out and enabling a team of leaders for the institution. That is because the kind of president I am. I mean, I'm not a single figurehead type of president. I don't see myself in that role, so it's the administrative team, in my judgment, that really ensures the success of the institution. I'm convinced of that. I think if I've made any contribution at Pine, one of those is paying attention to that emerging group of leaders on campus, so that there's no sitting around wondering what's going to happen when Ruth leaves—not at all. There is a strong team in place. (RU1, 329-337)

Service to others is vitally important to her, and Dr. Amstutz explained that mentoring and encouraging others to pursue careers in the academy is one way that she could serve others by

helping them see their talents and gifts. Women presidents need to be keenly aware of their own leadership. Through their support, they could also encourage others to pursue careers in higher education and help to develop the next generation of leaders.

Leadership Agility

A final subset of necessary leadership skills and abilities these women recommended is to balance the different types of leadership required. For example, when a crisis occurs, presidents need to be able to respond quickly. However, amid the daily operations and duties of these women, they also had to consider long-term goals and needs for the institutions that might stretch well beyond their tenures in office. Accordingly, several women remarked on the agility and flexibility of their leadership.

Finessing and balancing one's leadership. The longer they served in office, the more comfortable and adept these presidents became at articulating and managing long-term and short-term goals. While dealing with the daily operations and developments that required immediate attention, they also planned for the future. Dr. Davis explained the delicate equilibrium that she strived for:

I think one of the things that changes or that always makes it interesting is you're balancing the immediate and what needs to be done next year or this year or right now with what needs to be done for five or ten years out, and I think that's interesting. (P1, 467-470)

Figuring out how to balance the short and long-term needs seemed to be key, and now in her sixth year at Ash College, Dr. Davis has found her pace and was able to reflect on the future:

I think that I am a little bit more relaxed than I was when I came, although relaxed may be the wrong word. It may have to do with taking the longer view and knowing that there

are going to be some bumps in the road. Certainly my career ought to illustrate that. We're going to make some mistakes, and although that's not a good thing, you get on with it. You just keep your eye on what you're trying to do, so I think that in a way, I have a longer view. (P1, 480-485)

While keeping an eye on their daily duties, presidents also need the foresight to plan ahead strategically and figure out what their institutions' long-term needs and goals might be. Dr. Wilson elaborated about a similar finessing process that occurred in her leadership. She believes it is important for presidents to manage and to lead—and to keep the two in balance.

I have always thought about good leaders as being able to do two things: keep their eye on the big picture—keep everyone focused on the big issues—and also clean out the underbrush. A lot of people can do one and not the other, and I can do both, and I look for that in people I hire. Do you know what I mean? If you're too busy cleaning out the underbrush, it means you're just micromanaging everything and you're sitting at your desk and you're doing your in-basket all the time. I can do that and get through it and then move on and go out and talk about what are we going to do about this admissions issue—the big issues—changing the composition of the student body, and I think that's really important. I could get the place running. I suppose it's what people call the difference between leadership and management or something in there. (S1, 328-337)

An effective president understands when she needs to supervise, when to give directives and let others handle situations, and when to look to the horizon to see where the institution might need to be directed. Being able to “switch gears” between management and leadership is an essential skill.

Ambiguity and the unexpected. Finessing the kind of leadership required for a situation is also essential. In addition to overseeing and understanding the general daily components that comprise an institution, presidents need to possess the flexibility to work through the unexpected. Dr. Amstutz shared the numerous obligations and issues that she worked through during her ten years as president:

Ensuring financial stability; knowing how to deal with crisis; knowing how to create an agile institution, because there's going to be ups and downs and external factors that impinge; being able to articulate the mission in ways that are alluring and make it worthwhile for people to be a part of that. I think I had a pretty good grasp of all of that. (RU1, 202-208)

Through serving as an assistant to the dean of academics and then being an academic dean for 12 years, Dr. Amstutz gained broad experience and had opportunities to observe and work with successful and unsuccessful academic leaders. She also stressed the importance of being prepared for the ambiguity of the position: "I was very aware that there are contingencies and factors over which we have no control that affect whether you're successful or not, and I'm even more convinced of that after ten years" (RU1, 214-216). Presidential candidates need to acquire a broad yet thorough understanding of how an institution functions, have the ability to switch between long and short-term planning, and possess agility to work through unknown contingencies and much ambiguity.

Understanding Faculty Culture

Working effectively with faculty members represents another competency for aspiring presidents. While students are the life blood of an institution, the faculty and administrative staff symbolize the major organs through which the blood flows. Presidents need to know how to

work successfully with their faculty. Dr. Amstutz elaborated on why the competency is so important:

I had a pretty good sense that I could work well with faculty. I had been able to achieve a lot of initiatives over my deanship, so I had experience that I could rely on. I had experience with basic prioritization when it became necessary to downsize—that went fine—painful, but I was successful, so that in a lot of areas I was very confident that I had the skills and experience. (RU1, 208-212)

Dr. Amstutz valued her faculty, staff, and administration, and part of her vision was to have everyone working together for the good of the institution. Understanding faculty culture was even more important for presidential candidates who traveled through non-academic routes to their position. Dr. Kennedy explained:

When you go to become a president, you will be interviewed by faculty. There are always going to be a faculty dominated or a trustee dominated committee, so you've got to figure out early on how to talk to the faculty and talk to them in a way that they can hear you and know their issues and understand. In other words, if they're going to ask you, "Well, what would your criteria for tenure be?" You need to have an answer and be ready with that so that you can wow them over. (N1, 421-426)

Dr. Kennedy advised non-faculty candidates to do their homework—teaching and publishing would provide experiences similar to a faculty member's career path, but understanding faculty concerns about promotion and tenure practices, funding policies, and related issues would help to prepare presidents for working with faculty members.

Reflecting back on her presidency, Dr. Miller remarked: "It's interesting how life has a shape in hindsight that you couldn't see when you were on the path itself" (R1, 12-13). Nearly

all of the presidents credited their diverse professional and personal experiences en route to the presidency as their best preparation for the position. Presidents need to be prepared for everything. They need the terminal degree to gain credibility with the faculty and to learn about the culture of higher education, but much of the leadership skills, financial acumen, fundraising abilities, and comprehension of the vast nature of the position truly require what Dr. Adams referred to as a Renaissance background. Being aware of the knowledge, skills, and experiences required of a president, coupled with an honest assessment of one's own professional skills and experiences, would help to prepare aspiring women presidential candidates.

Summary of Findings

The experiences of these women presidents were rich, multi-faceted, and many-layered, which made them both fascinating and complicated to examine. In many regards, they shared numerous commonalities; yet their backgrounds, professional positions, and other various elements differed. The journeys of these presidents were less conventional in that not everyone followed the traditional academic road to the top. However, nearly all of these women spent their entire careers in the academy as faculty members or senior administrators. What differed were the interesting detours and developments they often stumbled upon along the way that provided valuable preparation for the presidency.

Even though all of them were experienced in breaking through gender borders during their careers, the construct of gender held little relevance to most of these presidents—at least on the surface. While few discussed the historical importance of their appointments, most mentioned examples of awkward or frustrating incidents that occurred because a woman instead of a man was in the presidency. Transitions related to gender did transpire, yet most of these

women continued to push forward and were reluctant to relegate the significance of what they accomplished to gender.

Regardless, the presidency was a demanding position that affected the personal and professional aspects of these women's lives. Various aids were used to ease the stress and pressure of the position. The support of confidantes, who were usually spouses, was a key element in their management strategies, while having external services such as event planners to organize social functions and ground staff to care for home maintenance also freed scarce personal time. Having a grown family was another crucial element in their balancing puzzle, because most believed that having young children would have made their jobs even more difficult. Clearly, an intentional approach was needed to achieve some semblance of a balanced life. Without one, the demands of the job would have consumed the personal sphere.

In addition to balancing the personal and professional aspects of their lives, these women worked through a variety of institutional challenges. Some had to refocus their institution's priorities and steer the campus in a more productive direction. Most also worked through numerous leadership transitions, such as predecessor issues, introducing and sustaining new leadership strategies, and accurately assessing their perceptions of the progress being made.

Through all of these transitions and changes, most felt prepared for their roles. Drawing from their vast experiences, they believed strongly that women in particular need to be financially shrewd, as well as competent and comfortable with fundraising. Breadth of knowledge is also essential—candidates need to possess a broad understanding of higher education and develop an understanding of the practical and theoretical enormity of the presidency. While presidents are responsible for their institutions as a whole, they are directly “in charge” of few areas. Supervising the numerous facets of the institution, presidents need to

understand the vastness of the position because being the living logo or the face and voice of the institution is a daunting realization. Finally, presidents need to be adept leaders—people who are able to see the horizon, yet pay attention to daily concerns. They are called to promote change, nurture others, and possess agility to move seamlessly through all of these essential skills.

Despite such a challenging order, these presidents seemed to thrive in their positions. Dr. Kennedy summarized it well: “I think the presidency is wonderful...It is a wonderful job. I wouldn’t take anything for it. It’s been a blessing. A real privilege” (N1, 523-526). Challenged, humbled, and energized by their presidencies, these women, often unconsciously, forged a pathway for current and future women leaders in higher education. Serving as the first women presidents at their institutions, they proved that women were inquisitive, talented, and qualified to lead higher education in this senior-most position.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Implications

This study examined the experiences of eight college and university presidents who were the first women senior executives at their respective institutions. Previous research efforts provide some statistics on this group but shed limited light on the actual experiences of these women leaders. Prior qualitative data have also been limited, with their focus primarily on the singular experience of individual women presidents or on only one particular aspect of women and the presidency, such as leadership style or career path. The present study took a decidedly different approach, exploring the whole of these women's experiences as they entered a leadership position at an institution for which this was a novel role. In addition to examining significant formative experiences leading to the presidency, this research focused on "firstness," or the experiences, challenges, and transitions associated with being the first woman to serve at an institution in this senior-most position. This final chapter considers key findings in the data, their meaning in the context of extant literature on the topic, and their implications for presidential leadership development and future research.

Discussion

The dialogue with these eight women presidents was exhilarating and fascinating. This process produced a tremendous amount of data that has implications for current and future women presidents, boards of trustees, senior administrators who work with presidents, and other scholars. Included are considerations for how these presidents' priorities shaped and indirectly prepared them for a presidency; their responses to the significance of gender and its side effects; the roles of their spouses, if appropriate; and finally, their specific strategies of transitioning to the position and coping with the challenges it presented.

Priorities

For the most part, the presidents in this study did not plan to become presidents and rarely made the presidency a goal on their career paths. Usually the presidency emerged as a possibility later in their careers, almost a side effect or afterthought of their particular pathways. What guided and shaped the career decisions and directions of the presidents in this study were their priorities—family, remaining professionally challenged and stimulated, and wanting to serve others. Such priorities led them down diverse and interesting routes that provided numerous diverse opportunities, experiences, and skills that unintentionally, but rather thoroughly, prepared them for a presidency.

Their Motivations

The seeming lack of intentionality in these women's career paths is consistent with what Touchton, Shavlik, and Davis (1993), Brown (2000), and Switzer (2003) found previously in their studies, concluding that few women presidents set out or plan to become presidents. Bornstein (2003) and Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) have also noted that women presidents frequently take non-traditional routes to the presidency (i.e., they do not follow the traditional steps of faculty, department chair, dean, or chief academic officer). Their findings both support and differ from the present results. In one sense, these eight presidents reported traditional experiences in the academy: they all advanced throughout numerous levels within their specific disciplines or in different administrative positions in higher education. The handful who began their professional careers as teachers or administrators in public education quickly returned to school for advanced degrees and then began their professional careers in higher education. Furthermore, all eight women had some teaching experience in the academy, as five were full-time faculty at some point in their careers and three taught courses, often as adjunct faculty

members. However, several of their career paths took interesting twists. While three of them followed Birnbaum and Umbach's (2001) "royal road" (p. 210) to the academy, one jumped directly from faculty member to president, two advanced through student affairs and enrollment management career paths, one progressed through administrative ranks as an advancement/development officer, and another moved from an administrative assistant, to the senior academic officer (SAO), and then to the presidency. From this perspective, several of these women took non-traditional paths in that they often did not follow the traditional faculty progression to the senior-most position within the academy.

Several of these presidents emphasized that no uniform presidential pathway exists and their own diverse routes to the senior-most position supports this notion; yet many also articulated a variety of knowledge, skills, and experiences that would be helpful for obtaining a presidency and effectively serving in the position. These findings both contradict and support other research on the career paths of women presidents. Wolverton, Bower, and Maldonado (2005) postulated that as higher education becomes more business-focused, women leaders need to calculate their career paths to gain progressive responsibilities, and that the incidental woman president—that is women "falling into positions" (p. 10) or "advancing without conscious preparation or direction" (p. 10)—is a pattern of the past. As higher education becomes more business-focused, they argued, women with presidential aspirations need to be more intentional in their career paths and calculate career moves that will provide the necessary experiences for a presidency. Intentional and systematic career planning, it has been argued, could aid prospective presidential candidates in obtaining this knowledge and these skills.

Another perspective might consider the entry points and social climate these women encountered when they entered higher education—both as students and as professionals.

Throughout their narratives, several of these presidents shared that they often were the only woman in a meeting, on staff in an administrative office, or as a faculty member in an academic department. Subsequently, their unplanned routes to the presidency might have been more of a product of the Title IX era, when federal legislation proscribed gender-based discrimination in any educational program receiving federal funds (Kaplin & Lee, 1995). In the early 1970s, several of the presidents in this study were in graduate school and were teaching in a very male-dominated environment, so when legislation demanded more equity, they were well-positioned for advancement. Although the presidents in this study emphasized that they progressed through the academy because of their skills and experiences and not their gender, the limited presence of women in leadership positions in higher education and the need for increased representation of women in faculty and administrative positions within academe perhaps contributed to their atypical career directions. So it was an era of opportunity that each of these women took advantage of, although it remains to be seen if this pattern will persist as the tides of change ebb and flow.

Background Leading to the Presidency

The educational attainment and professional positions prior to the presidency reflected common interests of the presidents in this study. While generalizability is not a goal of naturalistic qualitative research, it was interesting to note that all of these presidents had earned Ph.D.s. Six of them earned their final degree in a humanities-related field, while the remaining earned degrees in education. These findings are consistent with Corrigan's (2002) survey of American college presidents, where she observed that women college presidents were more likely to hold Ph.D.s and earn their terminal degrees in the humanities. Corrigan also noted that 69% of current women presidents had served as SAOs, provosts, or in other senior executive

positions prior to the presidency, while only 16% had served in another presidency. Again, seven of the presidents in this study had served as SAOs or other senior vice president positions before accepting their current presidency, and one of them had served as a president before her current position.

Context and Type of Institutions

The fact that these women had pursued a first presidency at a small college or university raises some interesting questions about the selective influence of institutional context in this study. Is there something about the small college environment that is more receptive to appointing a woman leader? Perhaps the educational background of the presidents in the study contributed to their journey to the presidency, as several of them possessed doctorates in the humanities, a hallmark credential for a liberal arts institution. The smaller and flatter governance and organizational structures typical of such colleges may be another element contributing to the larger number of women presidents at these types of institutions. Far less bureaucratic than larger institutions, the quintessential liberal arts college thrives on community, collegiality, and tradition (Birnbaum, 1988). This type of community very well might be more receptive and empathetic to the unique career paths and differing leadership styles of women presidents. If they “fit,” understand, and appreciate the culture and mission of the institution, a traditional academic career route may not be as important to the community. Additionally, the ladder to the top of the organizational chart is relatively short, so the intimate nature of small private institutions (i.e., where everyone knows everyone) may lend itself in particular to the more relational and collaborative leadership styles of women leaders (Rogers, 1992). However, the close-knit culture of smaller, private institutions may also exacerbate institutional problems, causing faculty and staff to take issues more personally, and create a deeply torn and divided institution. In *Alma*

Mater: A College Homecoming, author P. F. Kluge (1993) pertinently observed: “Colleges are touchy places, dedicated to the exchange of ideas, to critical comment and sometimes painful self-examination, yes, but also inclined to preen and pout, to remember and not forgive” (p. 253). The personal, cohesive, and interdependent nature of small institutions sometimes can make them rather difficult places in which to work, because one cannot get lost in a department or bury an issue in multiple layers of committees and bureaucracy. Brown, Van Ummersen, and Sturnick (2001) observed that women presidents often were appointed to more volatile presidencies with added stressors and demands. It is difficult to ascertain, though, the applicability of their results to the present findings. While half of the presidents in this study discussed the challenging situations on their campuses (i.e., extreme financial duress and deep divisions among faculty), these challenges—particularly the lack of funding—are common to many institutions.

In summary, insights generated from these data suggest that although these women presidents spent nearly all of their careers in higher education, they did not necessarily follow traditional pathways to the presidency. In fact, most did not aim for a presidency. In some regards, their success is reassuring to current and future women leaders in higher education, because these women leaders followed their interests and the opportunities that became available and still made it to the presidency.

The Shadow-Like Influence of Gender

The responses of these participants to being the first woman president on their respective campuses were both varied and surprising: some acknowledged the historical significance of having a female hold this senior-most position for the first time, but most were rather ambivalent about their “firstness” despite attention given by the media and other constituencies regarding their appointments and subsequent inaugurations. Gender appears to have had a domino effect on

many aspects of their presidencies. Because a woman was appointed for the first time to the presidency, several changes and adjustments needed to occur: presidential roles and expectations were redefined and the social expectations of their spouses were reexamined.

Redefining the Presidential Role

Many changes and transitions occur when new leaders assume their roles and begin to make decisions, but several of these presidents discussed transitions that occurred not so much because a new person was in office, but because a woman took the helm.

General expectations. A few of these presidents—often the ones who noted the significance of being the first woman president—shared different transitions and expectations related to being a woman in the presidency. Some viewed being the first woman as an opportunity to redefine the position, while others discussed how the traditional expectations of both a male president and his female spouse were often placed upon her. Others explained that they needed to prove that they were strong and tough enough to handle duties related to the position. In any of these examples, the expectations of various constituents (e.g., the campus community, alumni, local community) required alteration.

These experiences, transitions, and expectations were not surprising, as several male-normed expectations were applied automatically to these leaders. Bornstein (in press) observed that the “first presidents from a particular category are subject to continuing scrutiny arising from White male-normed expectations.” Phillips and Van Ummersen (2003) observed from the American Council on Education’s (ACE) women’s presidential roundtable discussions that women presidents are judged by different standards and need to work harder and be better qualified compared to their male presidential colleagues, while Brown et al. (2001) and Dowdall (2003) noted that women presidents have an additional realm of expectations to worry about—

their physical appearance (e.g., clothing, make-up, hairstyle) and presence. Clearly, for a few of the presidents in this study, several adjustments of expectation were necessary because of their gender.

Social expectations of presidents and their spouses. The most significant transition that occurred for many of these participants related to the social obligations of the office. Traditionally, “presidential spouse” referred to the woman who followed her husband to the presidency. It was frequently treated as an unofficial “two-for-one” deal, in that the president’s wife naturally would assist in the social obligations of the position. However, the spouses of these women presidents who were married had no such expectations placed upon them. In some cases, the women presidents were expected to oversee such issues, while others and their institutions were rather unsure of what was supposed to happen and who would plan events. Accordingly, how each president negotiated—not formally in their contracts, but how they worked and sorted out these issues with their campuses—was a fascinating process that was met with varying success.

Very little formal research has been conducted on the roles of presidential spouses, but the results from the present study concur with the meager amount that exists. Basinger (2000) noted that presidential spouses (assuming that they are women) are expected to oversee numerous social obligations of the president, co-host events with their partners, and network with alumni and donors. Fisher and Koch (2004) suggested that “active, participating spouses are a plus for a president and that presidents without such spouses operate at a perceptual disadvantage” (p. 87). Basinger (2000), Brown et al. (2001), and Jacobson (2004) also observed that different expectations exist for male spouses of female presidents, and the experiences of these eight women presidents overwhelmingly confirm this notion. Nearly all the male spouses

of these presidents held professional positions outside of their spouse's institution and were not expected to attend all social obligations. None of them assisted with the planning of social events. Subsequently, several presidents and their institutions needed to figure out who would be responsible for the social obligations associated with the office. Having a woman president made institutions re-examine traditional norms and expectations of the office. It provided opportunities for presidents and their spouses, if they had one, to create new standards and social traditions.

Presidential Leadership

While the leadership styles of these presidents were not unusual or extraordinary, nearly every woman discussed the transition process that occurred as her senior staff and the institution became acclimated to her particular style of leadership. Some were criticized for their approaches, while others were praised for transforming the campus community; yet in both extremes, adjustments needed to occur. It is difficult to ascertain if these leadership transitions related to gender. The leadership literature is equally diverse in opinions regarding the interplay of gender and presidential leadership. Nidiffer (2001) and Switzer (2003) noted that women presidents are criticized for being weak if they act in feminine ways, and too brusque if they adopt approaches more typical of men's leadership. Jablonski's (1996/2000) study demonstrated that women presidents thought they were leading in a particular manner, although their constituents judged their leadership quite differently. Bensimon (1989) and Wilson (2004) have argued that gender significantly impacts leadership styles and expectations placed upon women, while others (Birnbaum, 1992; Conway, 2001; Fisher & Koch, 1996) have argued that gender makes no difference whatsoever. Adjustments and transitions—for both the president and the institution—seemed natural and a necessary element in these first presidencies of women. However, without talking to the various faculty, staff, and students on the respective campuses, it

is difficult, if not impossible, to determine from the present study the influence, if any, of gender on each president's leadership. From their emic perspective, these women considered it to be a negligible factor.

From the researcher's perspective, however, gender seemed to function like a shadow; it was nearly always present but often undetected by the one it obscured. A person does not often think about his or her shadow, but notices it when the sun comes out or when the spotlight is turned on, such as during a special event, like an inauguration, or when a grievous mistake is made. Subsequently, most of these women presidents did not acknowledge the influence of gender, but occasionally, it did appear and was recognized at times by them.

Managing Professional and Personal Obligations

To achieve this level of success in the academy, these women presidents needed to be able to manage effectively their professional and personal responsibilities. However, the farther one advances in the academy or in any organization, the amount of professional obligations increases, and finding private time for personal needs becomes increasingly difficult. Strout (2005) observed that regardless of gender, presidents feel that they do not have enough time for their family, physical fitness, and leisure activities. It was not surprising, then, to learn that the women presidents in this study also struggled with achieving a semblance of a balanced life. While the presidents in this study discussed several issues that influenced how they managed their lives, two key elements were significant: the supportive roles of their husbands (when appropriate) and their specific strategies for coping with the professional and personal demands.

Supportive Spouses

Among the presidents in this study who were married, spouses represented a paramount partner in their management systems, encouraging their work, occasionally assisting them in

their duties, and supporting them in multiple ways. This finding was somewhat surprising because, in an age of Blackberries, global networking, and wireless email, a person—or, more precisely, their relationships and coping mechanisms with their spouses—were frequently mentioned as integral support elements to their presidencies. Some presidents shared very specific strategies regarding how they and their partners handled the pressures of the position, the social obligations, and the lack of privacy. The literature on college and university presidents does not explore deeply the role of female presidents' husbands, except by noting the starkly different expectations between male and female spouses of presidents (Basinger, 2000; Brown et al., 2001; Jacobson, 2004). Switzer (2003) observed that women presidents appreciate their spouses' willingness to alter traditional divisions of labor, but little else is written on the matter. Corrigan (2002) noted that although more women presidents are reporting being divorced, separated, or widowed, the number of married women presidents has increased as the number of women presidents has grown overall. However, a higher percentage of male presidents is married compared to their female presidential colleagues. Clearly, for many of these presidents, their relationships with their partners help to keep them professionally and personally balanced.

Coping Mechanisms

Besides their spouses, nearly every president shared different coping strategies employed to manage their lives. A variety of approaches was used that ranged from external support services, such as house care services for managing their personal residences; purchasing a vacation home away from campus; or implementing personal strategies, such as arriving to work early, creating a weekly, color-coded family event calendar, or finding a network of friends outside of the institution. These particular presidents were very intentional and reflective about how they attempted to manage their personal and professional time.

Not much literature discusses how women presidents can lead healthier, better balanced, more productive professional and personal lives. However, the recommendations from these eight women presidents are consistent with a portion of what has been suggested. Switzer's (2003) research asked current women presidents very practical questions about housework, planning social events, and supervising home maintenance; she observed a variety of support services, from women presidents having a house manager, an event planner, or nothing at all. The experiences of the women presidents in the present study are consistent with Switzer's findings. The presidents who mentioned struggling to find time to manage entertaining obligations and domestic responsibilities did not have adequate support in those areas but were working on acquiring more help, while other presidents failed to mention such issues at all and had assistants to attend to those needs.

The women presidents' roundtable discussion sponsored by ACE published three documents that discussed many of the balancing concerns that women presidents face. For example, the first publication recommended that women presidents should connect with other women beyond higher education, participate in national forums on women's leadership to educate others (i.e., male presidential colleagues, corporate supporters, and legislators) about the challenges unique to women presidents, and create support groups among one another. Only one of these presidents mentioned a women's group that she created in her community to bring senior level women together from other professions. Others were involved in the community, but they were representing their institutions—not participating in support groups for leaders. Several of these presidents had attended professional seminars, such as Harvard's institute for new presidents, an ACE workshop, or the ACE Fellowship Program. Most of these opportunities offered support and guidance for new and current presidents but did not focus solely on the

challenges of being the first woman president. However, since most of these women presidents did not believe that gender is an issue for their presidency, it is not likely that they are seeking such opportunities.

Finally, nothing has been done to educate the public about the unique challenges of being a woman and a college president. Again, since gender is not perceived as a key issue by these women presidents, they are not likely to draw attention to their gender and their positions. It is unclear if other women presidents feel the same way. From the number of women presidents who participated in ACE's women presidents' roundtable discussion and the resulting recommendations, it would appear that women presidents are concerned about gender and the presidency; however, gender and the presidency is not an *a priori* issue for the women leaders in this study.

The second and third women presidents' roundtable discussion offered further recommendations about better managing one's personal life. They encouraged women presidents to take time off for vacations, find mentors, and set the example of leading a balanced life. Again, the presidents in this sample concurred with many of these same recommendations. A few shared examples of how they manage their schedules and find time for family—one president bought a lake house an hour away from campus; several scheduled vacations far in advance and took them; another had her workouts listed in her work schedule three days a week; and the one president who had young children at home attended many of her children's athletic events. These examples demonstrate a consistency between the practices of these women presidents and what has been reported in the literature.

Where the practices of these women presidents differed from the literature is in the specificity of their experiences. For example, the one president with young children—who

shared that unless someone was dying, she did not want to be disturbed at home—explained how she planned her family’s weekly schedule, even printing out a copy for me. Three of the married presidents discussed the negotiating processes used with their husbands to manage the personal events in their lives and college events. Some presidents shared their struggles with time management and talked about why they were trying a certain approach or what they were cutting out of their personal lives in order to make time for their professional obligations. Whether it was one president’s “every-day rule” of talking with her husband at least once a day, no matter where they were, or another president branding certain social events as “command performances” that her husband needed to attend, these realistic examples provide insightful and helpful lessons for current and future women leaders in the academy. It is clear that the presidency demands a great deal of professional time that inevitably detracts from personal and private time.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills for Women and the Presidency

The knowledge and skills necessary for presidencies varied by individual experiences; institutional context; and social, cultural, and political factors of the time. Although these eight women presidents recommended a variety of professional and personal competencies and experiences that would better prepare women for presidencies, the areas most frequently mentioned related to financial concerns—budget issues and fundraising—and the adjustment associated with understanding and living with the magnitude of the position.

Financial Matters

Bornstein (2003) and Kelly (2004) noted the importance for women presidents to possess a solid understanding of fundraising principles. Bornstein (in press) further surmised that a president’s success is frequently judged by her or his fundraising records despite other academic improvements, such as increased student selectivity, improved rankings, or program

development. In fact, she frankly observed that “people generally do not make major gifts to an institution unless they believe in the president” (Bornstein, in press) so, in today’s world, fundraising is an essential skill and area of knowledge for aspiring presidents. While the presidents in the present study offered numerous suggestions regarding knowledge and experiences that would make aspiring presidential candidates more effective leaders, it was not surprising that nearly every one stressed the importance of understanding and being comfortable with discussing and raising money. Their emphasis on finance perhaps suggests that for women presidents to be successful, they must become adept in areas that have traditionally been reserved for men (i.e., working with budgets, lobbying with legislators, courting donors). The importance they place on financial and philanthropic astuteness may also reflect the fiscal environment of many private institutions today—rising tuition, decreasing campus resources, increasing parent and student expectations, and reduced federal and state support have caused private and public higher education institutions to turn increasingly to private donors for additional support. Clearly, all presidents, regardless of gender, need to be incisive and competent regarding financial issues for their institutions.

Magnitude of the Presidency

Although the diverse career paths, backgrounds, and experiences of these participants prepared them well for the multi-faceted nature of the presidency, several shared their surprise at the magnitude of the position. The presidency is the most powerful position on campus: the person who fills it is responsible for everything, yet directly supervises very little. However, the literature is sparse on how women presidents adjust to the vastness and complexity of the position. Nonetheless, the remarks of these women seem consistent with the experiences of many male presidents regarding the nature of the office (Birnbaum, 1988 & 1992; Muller, 2000).

To be considered for a presidency, candidates regardless of gender, need to accumulate a wide-ranging spectrum of academic, administrative, and political (i.e., being familiar with the politics of higher education and institutions) experiences. However, gaining a solid understanding regarding financial matters, coupled with competency in fundraising seem to be issues for the presidents in this study. In addition, these participants also encouraged future candidates to prepare themselves for the ambiguous yet comprehensive responsibility that is demanded by such a position.

Implications for Practice

Research is evaluated by how it can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), but qualitative researchers do not aim for generalizability, or the broad application across many contexts; rather, qualitative research is limited by context, time, and numerous factors that inevitably change. Subsequently, the transferability of data, or how results are applicable to others, occurs only when contexts are judged by others to share similar characteristics (Erlandson et al., 1993). The data of this study reflect women leaders and presidents serving at comparable institutions with similar circumstances. Accordingly, the results might have implications for current and aspiring women college and university presidents, senior administrators, governing boards working closely with them, and key support people (i.e., spouses, families, personal friends). New insights and further questions were raised in this study regarding the mentoring and formative career experiences of women leaders; the assumptions and perceptions frequently embraced by boards of trustees and the campus community; and the kinds of support that would benefit presidents and their families, especially women who are the first to hold such a position on their campuses.

Mentoring and Leadership Opportunities

Nearly all of the presidents in this study discussed the significance of mentors in their professional lives. In addition to providing encouragement and guidance, mentors frequently connected these participants to important leadership development opportunities, such as the ACE Fellowship Program, or encouraged them to consider applying for professional positions that proved to be pivotal career moves. This finding suggested that women leaders could benefit greatly from mentors for the various career stages leading to the presidency. While internal motivation propelled these women to pursue the presidency, mentors often planted the seeds or helped them find jobs that positioned them well for a presidency.

Although these participants did not plan their professional ascents to the presidency, the varied and vast amount of essential knowledge, skills, and experiences required for the position may require more intentionality for future presidential hopefuls. In this regard, deliberate career planning, as Wolverton, Bower, and Maldonado's (2005) study suggested, might aid women candidates in acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences that may expedite their ascents to the presidency and better prepare them for the position. The presidents in this study did not reach this pinnacle by accident. Although their career paths were often indirect and unintentional, their varied tracks provided effective training. Furthermore, the increasingly external demands on the office—especially as presidents defend the purpose and escalating cost of higher education to parents and legislators—will require future candidates to be prepared even more for the position. Coupled with the tacit, often unrecognized, gender-related prejudices that governing boards and others possess about women leaders, future women presidents perhaps need to be more reflective and intentional about their desire to pursue this senior position.

Educating Others About Non-Traditional Pathways

Most of the women in this study did not take traditional paths to the presidency, yet they seemed very qualified and have been successful thus far in their positions. However, boards of trustees and others involved in hiring processes frequently are reluctant to consider candidates who have not traveled Birnbaum and Umbach's (2001, p. 210) "royal road" through the academy. Accordingly, the success stories of non-traditional candidates need to be highlighted and shared throughout higher education and with key associates outside of the academy. Consistently returning to the same source (i.e., usually White, male candidates who have taken more traditional career paths) may limit higher education's ability to respond to new and recurring challenges in innovative ways. Bateson (1990) noted that women historically have found innovative and creative ways to balance competing life choices, such as pursuing a career, having and raising children, or following a partner to a new job; subsequently, women leaders, if given the chance to serve in these senior positions, may offer fresh insights to such issues and concerns. These life skills, according to Bornstein (in press), make women leaders well-suited for addressing the needs of higher education; but the people who hire presidents must grant them access to this senior executive position, and their constituents must trust them, be willing to work with them, and at least consider alternative proposals to problems. However, higher education is notoriously slow to change (Birnbaum, 1988), and this kind of transition will not happen quickly. Nevertheless, as more women are granted access to the presidencies and other senior positions, changes are more likely to occur.

Support

When a woman is appointed to a position that, for the entire history of an institution, has been held by a man, changes are inevitable. To help the presidents and their constituents through

this transition, support is needed and can be manifested through a variety of means. The campus and local communities need to examine assumptions regarding expectations and traditions of the office, the new woman president must learn how to negotiate and balance personal and professional obligations, and the male spouses of married women presidents need to be aware of their informal, yet very essential, role as spouse and how spousal obligations will fit within their own career.

Assumptions about the Position

Regardless of gender, the presidency is a very public position; but, when a woman assumes the office for the first time at an institution, the president herself, the campus community, and the local community need to examine their assumptions about the role of the president and the office. For example, presidents host numerous social affairs, such as receptions for special events, holiday parties, and fundraising campaigns. The hospitality aspect of these occasions is extremely important, and frequently, the president's spouse, who is usually a woman, assists both in the planning and co-hosting of these events. When a woman is the president for the first time, however, the campus community often becomes confused as to who is responsible for the events. Will the president organize the event, or does her husband, if she is married, assume that responsibility? What if her husband has a full-time position or is not interested? When a man is serving as president, whether he is married or single, the entertaining obligations of the office never seem to be an issue, but several of the presidents in this study mentioned numerous incidents regarding planning and organization of the social obligations of the office. While many of these issues were deemed trivial, the frequency of their occurrence caused them to become a problem because they distracted several of the presidents from more pressing matters. For example: Who will decorate the Christmas tree at the president's residence

before the holiday open house for the community? Will a scotch and cigar gathering still occur at the president's house before the big Homecoming game? Who will travel with the president on fundraising trips? Several of the presidents in this study mentioned these examples, and these "trivial incidents" often developed into major frustrations until the president and her staff figured out a solution or a compromise.

Another constituent group that needs to examine its relationship with the president under these circumstances is the community where the institution is located. Nearly all of the presidents in this study served at institutions in smaller communities where the town-gown relationship was more pronounced. The concerns of the local community did not involve the president's office or responsibilities directly, but instead with the president and her spouse's involvement in the community. Again, traditionally, the president's spouse becomes involved in various social organizations and community events; however many of these presidents remarked that they did not have a wife, they had a husband who was busy with his own interests and professional career. So while these women presidents were active in the local community, they were not engaged in the organizations of past male presidents' wives, and some communities felt neglected. Accordingly, the campus and local communities might reconsider past traditions and assumptions about the office. Events may not have to change, but perhaps an event coordinator needs to be appointed to assist women presidents in managing the entertainment details of the office. Similarly, someone from the campus community should study what organizations past presidents and their spouses have been involved with and begin conversations with the first woman president about those associations. Then the woman president can decide if it is important for her to be involved, or if someone else could represent her or the campus

community. Clearly the underlying social assumptions of the office can cause significant problems during a woman's early years in office.

Support for Herself

In addition to examining traditional assumptions about the office, women college presidents might benefit from examining their own support resources and networks. The women in this study were not surprised by most of the demands required of the position, as most of them had served in senior-level administrative positions prior to the presidency. Although many turned to their spouses to find personal support and a confidante, they did not consider the domestic obligations of their personal lives (e.g., maintaining family relationships, cooking, cleaning, home maintenance). It was surprising, in some regards, to realize that a president needed to worry about those domestic issues, but several did; so, in addition to the entertainment obligations discussed earlier, these women also had to think about who was going to take care of the domestic responsibilities. Women college and university presidents and their respective institutions might consider hiring someone or contracting with a service to take care of several domestic tasks, because it would help presidents to focus more on their professional obligations by decreasing personal demands. Switzer (2003) noted that some women presidents were hesitant to inquire about such domestic assistance for fear of being viewed as extravagant, but as Phillips and Van Ummersen (2002) observed, the realm and associated obligations of the personal do not disappear when a woman becomes a president, and taking care of the home—at least the internal elements (i.e., children, cooking, cleaning, laundry)—has traditionally fallen to the woman. While most of the women in this study had worked to change traditional labor divisions with their male partners, several of them still discussed the domestic responsibilities that they regularly performed.

Another means of support can be provided by encouraging presidents to reflect on their experiences in office. Bornstein (2003) noted that the presidency calls upon “every experience and every ounce of intelligence and sensitivity that one has accumulated” (p. 73), which leaves little time to think about one’s own well-being—either professionally or personally. Even though a formal assessment is often performed annually by the board of trustees, the evaluation scrutinizes the formal obligations of the position. Since a prominent feature in the literature focusing on women presidents is the challenge of balancing the professional and the personal, current presidents could benefit from taking time to examine their personal lives. Are they healthy? Do they feel that they are spending enough time with family? Is the position eroding any personal aspect of their lives? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then how can they make changes? The ACE’s roundtable encouraged women presidents not to dichotomize their professional and personal obligations (Phillips & Van Ummersen, 2002) and to set an example for others on their campuses. Accordingly, time needs to be set aside for these women presidents to reflect on their experiences: the professional, the personal, and the gray areas where the two domains overlap.

Spousal Support

A major source of support for the married presidents in this study was their spouses. Although very few of the institutions expected the male spouses of the women presidents in this study to take on many of the traditional responsibilities frequently assumed by a female spouse, much ambiguity, and even some confusion, existed regarding the role of the male spouse. However, such uncertainty was not always viewed negatively by the presidents and their spouses. In fact, several women and their partners used this ambiguity to their advantage in redefining the roles and obligations of the president’s spouse. In some cases, though, it was

presumed that the woman president would assume the female spouses' traditional roles in addition to the obligations of the presidency—and that did not work well. The presidents in this study did not have the time, energy, or interest to be the president and the president's wife. Perhaps it would be helpful for the role and expectations of a male spouse to be discussed more explicitly when the woman president is negotiating her contract. None of the spouses in this study received compensation for the roles they played, and perhaps all presidents' spouses, regardless of gender, should be entitled to some compensation for time devoted to assisting with duties and traveling with them.

The transition to the presidency is complex, and the support system for women presidents seems to be particularly imperative. They and the people who comprise their support networks might examine their personal and professional routines and coping mechanisms before assuming office, and then reevaluate their systems during their first year. Doing so will likely help them to better manage the ambiguity, crises, and magnitude of the position in a more effective manner.

Implications for Further Research

This exploration into the experiences of women who were the first females appointed to the presidency at their respective institutions produced many new perspectives and opinions on issues that presidents and their constituents face in and beyond the walls of the academy. Yet the quest for new knowledge inevitably yields new inquiries, and this research endeavor is no different. The discussion points raised further questions regarding institutional context, race, spousal roles and other personal relationships, the impact of gender, the influence of a generation, and the effect of retirement.

Context of Institutions

This study intentionally focused on private higher education, both secular and religiously affiliated institutions; but one wonders if the experiences of women presidents would differ at community colleges, where the largest number of female senior executives are appointed, or at public institutions, particularly research extensive schools, where relatively few women presidents preside. Are their experiences leading to the presidency similar to the women in this study, and what kinds of transitions do they encounter as their respective institutions became acclimated for the first time to a woman leader? Conducting a similar qualitative study with women college and university presidents serving in other institutional settings might generate interesting comparative data.

In addition to changing institutional classification, it would be helpful to complete a more comprehensive study of each woman president in the present study by interviewing key members on their respective campuses, such as senior administrative team members, student leaders, select faculty members, and board chairs. Jablonski (1996/2000) noted that the faculty often perceive their women presidents' leadership styles differently from the president's perception of herself. Similarly, one president in the current study reasoned that she and her peer participants were immune to the impact of gender and speculated that members of her own cabinet, who had been there before she began her term as president, would possess different perspectives on the significance and impact of being the first woman president. Accordingly, it would be insightful to conduct a series of interviews with the presidents and their multiple constituents over time and to be able to compare their perspectives against each other.

Race

The women presidents in this study all identified their race/ethnicity as White. Racial minority presidents comprise only 13% of all college presidents, while 16% of women presidents identify themselves as a racial or ethnic minority (Corrigan, 2001). The lack of racial or ethnic minority representation in this study is not surprising, as it was difficult to find a racial or ethnic minority president who was a woman. However, the complexity of race and how it affects the opportunities, career paths, and transition issues—especially at a predominantly White institution—needs to be examined if this line of inquiry is to advance. Women minority presidents, in particular, may encounter additional challenges and barriers due to the interaction of their race and gender.

Personal Relationships and the Presidency

More research on the impact of a woman's presidency on her personal relationships also would prove beneficial, especially since it appears that a married female president's spouse represents an important element in her support system. Very little research exists on presidential spouses, regardless of gender; yet spouses play very significant roles—they support, assure a sense of normalcy, and often enhance the president through various projects and actions. The presidential spouses almost appear to be a hidden facet of the presidency that frequently is taken for granted until it is not present, in the case of single presidents, or altered, such as having a male spouse or a same-sex partner. To help prepare future presidents for the office and to help their families and loved ones to prepare and cope with the challenges of being concurrently in the president's shadow and in the limelight, more research needs to be conducted with this special population who, by marriage or familial association, is deeply immersed in higher education and the success of the institution his or her partner is serving.

Management Strategies

Closely related to personal relationships are the management and coping strategies of these women presidents. Although women have made tremendous strides in equity compared to just decades ago, professional women around the world still struggle with the double-day dilemma (Fave-Bonnet, 1996; Luke, 2001; Mabokela, 2001; Suspitsina, 2000)—that is, finding time to balance professional demands and personal obligations such as children, aging parents, and domestic responsibilities. Women presidents are not immune to these concerns, and their professional obligations often negatively affect the personal realm—especially relationships. Continued research on successful management strategies for these leaders could benefit all. These results need to be shared with women college and university presidents and other women leaders in higher education who will likely encounter similar management dilemmas and frustrations.

The Significance of Gender

The focus of this research was on women presidents. Subsequently, nearly all of the literature reviewed centered exclusively on the experiences of women college and university presidents. Yet the bulk of presidential literature has been written about the experiences of male presidents. Through data analysis and discussions with participants and other researchers, one wonders how the experiences of these women presidents might differ from their male counterparts. In some regards, it would be difficult to compare the two experiences, since men have served as presidents since the beginning of higher education in the United States. Consequently, many of the transitions and initiating experiences unique to these women presidents, appointed to this highest leadership position on their campuses, will never be experienced by a male president. Transitions and changes, regardless of gender, inevitably occur

when a new president assumes office, but male presidents will not be able to comment in the same way on changes and transitions related to gender. Nonetheless, comparing the experiences of women and men presidents might yield additional insights as to how their experiences might differ and what measures might be taken to better prepare them for successful presidencies.

Generational Influences

Another factor to consider is the impact of generational forces that might have influenced the graduate work and early professional experiences of several presidents in this study who were launching careers in the academy as the feminist movement reawakened. Several key events, such as the proposal for a national Equal Rights Amendment, the passage of Title IX, and the Supreme Court's ruling on *Roe v. Wade*, energized the feminist movement in the 1970s (Ferguson, Katrak, & Miner, 1996/2000) in significant ways. These events had a ripple effect across many sectors of society, and although these presidents generally were reluctant to embrace the term "feminist," several benefited from the impacts of the feminist movement—namely, women slowly gaining access to areas that had been traditionally reserved for men. Yet these presidents, for the most part, did not acknowledge the significance of gender in their own experiences. Perhaps their entry into the academy, at a time when few women were pursuing graduate studies or teaching, acclimated them early to being one of the few women in their respective disciplines. This kind of socialization might have prepared them for being a minority, and subsequently, made them comfortable working and succeeding in a male-dominated environment. The presidents in this study possibly benefited and became accustomed to the challenges of the second feminist era, and consequently, they adapted and continued to progress along their unique career paths. One wonders how successive generations of women leaders will respond to the challenges yet to be faced by women in the academy. How will they regard gender

at a different point in the future? Will they be passive about it, or will they quietly acknowledge the work of their predecessors and continue on? How will current cultural, historical, and social movements influence the career paths of future women presidents? There is a need for longitudinal research to examine and map the potential generational effects of such a movement on the attitudes, experiences, and career paths of women in these senior-most positions.

Retirement and Frankness

The participants in this study have served as presidents for varying lengths of tenure, ranging from 1 to 14 years, with most serving at least five years as president. However, two of the women had retired from the presidency and moved on to other professional opportunities. One has to question the impact of being retired and thus having more freedom to speak frankly about their experiences when no longer amid the politics and scrutiny of the position. The presidency is a very public office, and both of the retired presidents in this study remarked how they were freer to speak now that they were retired compared to their “sister colleagues” currently serving in active presidencies. By the candor displayed during interviews and by the editing requested during the member checking process, I believe that the participants in this study were honest and frank with their responses; however being completely free of an institution, coupled with having the time to reflect on their experiences, elicited interesting questions. At a later time, would these presidents proffer different responses regarding their challenges in the office? Would they provide different insights regarding the gender-transitions that occurred on nearly every campus because a woman was president? What other incidents would they share if they were no longer connected to the institution? It is difficult to speculate the outcome, but it would be interesting to interview only retired women presidents who might

be able to share more freely without the constraints of duty to an institution and loyalty to a campus.

This research has revealed fascinating insights into the formative experiences of these women leaders, challenging issues faced at various points of their presidencies, possible suggestions as to how some of them overcame or coped with the challenges, and advice for aspiring candidates. Although this research provided interesting results, it also produced more questions. Clearly, more research needs to be conducted on the experiences of these women so that others can benefit, learn, and make changes to the higher education system.

Conclusion

The experiences of the presidents in this study, the first women to be appointed to the position at their respective institutions, were unique, common, poignant, and sometimes frustrating. Breaking the traditional mold for a college or university president, some were viewed as “alien-beings”: they were a different gender, followed divergent career paths, possessed alternative leadership philosophies, and sometimes established unconventional divisions of labor and roles with their spouses. Some embraced their femininity and womanhood in a “queen-like” manner, placing their mark on their institutions through customs, leadership approaches, and personal beliefs. Still others shared that the challenges, the constant pull between professional and personal responsibilities, and the exhaustive and public nature of the position made them feel like “mad women” running around, trying to find the time and means to accomplish their goals for the institution and for themselves. These results can be applied to many contexts. Yet, Bornstein (2003) aptly observed that “each president brings to the position a unique set of experiences and characteristics, and each institutional context is unique” (p. 61). Although no

magic recipe for success has been discovered here, several lessons can be learned from these pioneering women leaders.

While the traditional royal pedigree (i.e., faculty, department chair, dean, senior vice presidency) will aid women presidential hopefuls in attaining a presidency, it is not always required. Women in higher education can make it to the presidency with alternative career opportunities and different career progressions, and this result should be encouraging for women who want to have careers in the academy. However, non-traditional presidential candidates will likely not make it to an Ivy League institution or other university that favors a more traditional academic lineage. Nonetheless, women can and have attained presidencies at a number of fine, reputable institutions.

Gender does make a difference in the college or university presidency, particularly when a woman assumes the position for the first time. Although several participants in this study were reluctant to acknowledge the shadow-like influences of gender, the side effects of gender were present, from this researcher's perspective, in nearly every narrative. When a woman assumes a position for the first time, people (i.e., media, campus community, local community, board members, alumni) notice and look for differences—both in the spirit of celebration and with the sword of scrutiny. From a positive perspective, the women in this study forged new paths, expanded opportunities for others to follow, and served as important role models. Their service and triumphs were done often unknowingly as the women presidents in this study simply moved forward, looking for new challenges and trying to stay motivated as they had done throughout their careers leading to the presidency. However, a darker side existed to their firstness: being the first person in any category often brings more scrutiny from constituents, raises questions about a woman's ability to perform well in a role that has always been done by men, and subsequently,

points to the need for higher standards in order to hold any doubts at bay. Gender has a shadow-like effect on the presidency that is often unnoticed until an anomaly, or a difference for either good or ill, occurs.

Yet gender's influence was also peripheral, meaning that it did not impact the major operations and concerns (i.e., fundraising, budget, personnel, faculty) of the women in this study, but affected smaller matters located on the periphery, or "the edges" of their agendas, such as entertaining or being involved in particular community organizations. Nonetheless, the "stupid little things," as one president stated, were significant because of their frequency, and the cumulative effect of these minor issues was tiresome and often time-consuming. The presidents in the current study, however, took these minor challenges in stride and continued onward despite turbulence. Their "eyes" became adjusted to gender's cast so they could see and focus under a variety of lighting conditions, yet the shadow was still present.

Regardless of gender, the presidency is a community affair in that it requires the professional and personal support of many, and for the women in this study, their personal support systems were significant elements in their various successes. Women tend to possess and practice more relational and generative leadership styles (Astin & Leland, 1991; Helgeson, 1990; Jablonski, 1996/2000; Rogers, 1992), which perhaps explains the consistent acknowledgement of the presidents in this study for the people and personal connections important to their personal and professional well-being. Clearly, spouses, family, friends, and leadership teams are important to these women presidents.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, women can successfully serve as college and university presidents. Bornstein (in press) aptly observed: "Enough women have now completed successful, long-term presidencies to provide evidence that gender does not, by itself, undermine

the influence and accomplishment of college and university presidents.” However, no magic formula exists as numerous variables influence and confound the presidency, but the gate has been opened for women. While the “newness” of having a female in the presidency may be waning for the higher education community, the appointment of a woman to a presidency, for the first time, is and will remain a significant event for each institution.

As more women enter into college and university presidencies, additional questions will be asked and realizations discovered about societal assumptions regarding roles and obligations for men and women in the position, the kind of support systems required, and the transitions and changes made as higher education and its presidency evolves. However, from this study, it is clear that being the first woman appointed to such a position is a significant and different experience. New pathways must be forged. American higher education has over 3,500 colleges and universities, but women hold only a little over 220 of their presidential positions, a mere handful in the grand scheme of things. Issues of access continue to challenge all women in higher education who want to have families, while governing boards, administrators, and faculty cling to the idea that only one authentic road to the presidency exists. If the system is to approach a point of equity, the focus of this line of inquiry must remain on the leadership agenda of the higher education community.

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APPENDIX A



 BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Higher Education and Student Affairs

 330 Education Building
 Bowling Green, OH 43403
 (419) 372-6016
 FAX (419) 372-9382
 korine@bgsu.edu

Invitation Letter

Dear President _____:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration Program at Bowling Green State University (Ohio). For the completion of my doctorate, I am conducting a study to learn about the expectations and experiences of women who have assumed the presidency of a post secondary institution where they are the first female to do so. I am hoping that you will consider participating in my research study.

Purpose

I plan to interview seven to nine women presidents with varying professional experiences, tenure in office, institutional mission, and relationship status. The study will focus on answering the following questions:

- What are the critical professional experiences and personal incidents that have led these women to pursue or seek a presidency?
- How has being the first woman president at their institutions affected their roles and responsibilities?
- How do these women balance their personal and professional responsibilities and obligations?
- In regard to their presidency, what are the greatest challenges these women grapple with?
- What kinds of knowledge, skills, and experiences should women aspiring to a presidency seek to prepare themselves for the position?

Procedure

Once participants are selected and confirmed, involvement in this study will include two separate interviews, at least one month apart, that will be approximately 60 to 75 minutes in length, which will take place at your institution or another convenient location. The purpose of the second interview is to confirm and clarify the content of the first interview and to obtain additional information. You will be provided with opportunities to read and revise your responses; transcriptions of your interview and my interpretation will be sent to you prior to the second interview.

All recordings, transcriptions, forms, and other documents will be coded and altered to safeguard the participants and institutions' identities to the greatest extent possible. Participation in this study is voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw any time without penalty or prejudice.

Benefits of participating

Inquiry into this elite group of educational leaders could help to educate the next generation of senior women administrators about the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for a successful presidency. Further, such a focus expands insights available on college presidents, beyond the current experiences of men, and gives breadth and more detail to extant literature on women and the college presidency.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed Participant Profile and include a copy of your vita. You may also wish to review the enclosed Participant Consent Form sent for information purposes only.

Should you have any questions about the study or need clarification, please contact me at (419)-352-2950 (home), (419) 372-6016 (office), or korine@bgsu.edu, or contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Carney Strange at (419) 372-7388 or strange@bgsu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Korine Steinke
 Doctoral Candidate
 Bowling Green State University

APPENDIX B
Participant Profile

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete this form and return it in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope by May 13, 2005. If you have questions about this form or study, please feel free to contact Korine Steinke at korine@bgsu.edu, 419-352-2950 (home), or 419-372-0381 (office).

Keep in mind that returning this form neither obligates you to participate nor the investigator to include you in the study. Your return simply indicates your initial willingness and offer to participate. The information provided through this form and your vita will allow the researcher to make further decisions about whom to contact and to further discuss their participation.

I am requesting that you provide a current vita and complete the enclosed one-page demographic survey. These materials will help me to select participants who meet the initial criteria and have experiences that appear to be different from each other. Each succeeding participant will be chosen because her perspective might be different from the other informants. In addition, respondents might be selected, because they might be able to offer the most insight on emerging themes. This process will help to provide maximum variation in the sample studied.

Be assured that no one other than the investigator will be allowed access to the first page of the form. The information on the following page will be shared only in coded form with only the chair of the dissertation committee.

Contact Information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Institution: _____

Administrative Assistant whom I should contact for scheduling: _____

Please complete the following items and return them in the enclosed envelope to Korine Steinke by May 13, 2006:

1. The contact information requested above.
2. The attached one page demographical survey.
3. A current vita.

Materials should be mailed to:

Korine Steinke
1722G Killarney Circle
Bowling Green, OH 43402

Characteristics of President:

1. Are you serving (or did you serve) in a college or university presidency for the first time?
 Yes No
2. How many years have/did you serve(d) as president?

3. Are/Were you the first woman president at your institution? Yes No
4. What was your position prior to becoming president?

5. For how many years did you serve in the position you held prior to the presidency?

6. Did you have tenure in your position prior to the presidency? Yes No
7. Have you earned a doctorate or terminal degree?
 Yes No
8. What field is your doctorate or terminal degree in?

9. Have you ever served as a faculty member?
 Yes No
10. What is your age? _____
11. How would you describe your racial/ethnic identification?
 White Hispanic
 African American Asian American
 Native American
 Other _____
12. What is your current relationship status? (check only one)
 Single, never married Married
 Divorced or separated Widow
 Domestic partner
 Never married, because member of a religious order
13. Do you have children? Yes No
14. If yes, how many? _____
15. What are their ages? _____

Institution's Background

1. Which of the following best describes the location of your current institution?
 Urban Suburban Rural
2. What is the highest degree offered by your institution?
 Bachelor Masters Doctorate
 Other _____
3. Approximately how many students attend your institution?

4. What percentage (approximately) of your students are full-time?

5. What percentage (approximately) of your students live on campus?

6. Is your institution affiliated with a particular denomination or religion?
 Yes No
7. If yes, what particular denomination or religion?

8. If denominational, which of the following phrases best describes the influence of that affiliation at your institution:
 No influence Little influence
 Some influence Significant influence

*Thank you for completing this survey and sending the requested materials to me.
Please return your vita, this form, and the contact information page to
Korine Steinke by May 13, 2005.*

APPENDIX C



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Higher Education and Student Affairs

330 Education Building
Bowling Green, OH 43403
(419) 372-6016
FAX (419) 372-9382
korine@bgsu.edu

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study on women college presidents. For the completion of my doctorate in the Higher Education Administration program at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), I am conducting a research study on the experiences of first-time women college presidents.

Purpose

The study will focus on answering the following questions:

- What are the critical professional experiences and personal incidents that have led these women to pursue or seek a presidency?
- How has being the first woman president at their institutions affected their roles and responsibilities?
- How do these women balance their personal and professional responsibilities and obligations?
- In regard to their presidency, what are the greatest challenges these women grapple with?
- What kinds of knowledge, skills, and experiences should women aspiring to a presidency seek to prepare themselves for the position?

Procedure

Approximately 7 to 9 women presidents will be interviewed. Involvement in this study will include two separate, tape-recorded interviews that will be approximately 60 to 75 minutes in length, which will take place at your institution or another convenient location. The purpose of the second interview is to confirm and clarify the content of the first interview and to obtain additional information. You will be provided with opportunities to read and revise your responses. Transcriptions of your interview and my interpretation will be sent to you prior to the second interview for your review. If necessary, the above conditions may be with the investigator.

Risks

The anticipated risks to you are not greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

Confidentiality

All tapes, transcriptions, forms, and other documents will be coded and altered (i.e., through the use of pseudonyms) to safeguard the participants' names, identities, and institutions to the greatest extent possible. Participation in this study is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Benefits

Inquiry into this elite group of educational leaders could help to educate the next generation of senior women administrators about the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for a successful presidency. Further, such a focus expands insights available on college presidents beyond the current experiences of men, and gives breadth and more detail to extant literature on women and the college presidency.

Contact Information

Should you have any questions about the study or need clarification, please contact me at (419) 372-0381 (office) or korine@bgsu.edu, or contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Carney Strange at (419) 372-7388 or strange@bgsu.edu. If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of BGSU's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this study having read, understood, and agreed to the above terms.

Participant's Signature

Date

I agree to conduct and report this research according to the above terms.

Investigator's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF STUDY

A Study of the Experiences of First-Time Women College Presidents

Korine Steinke

Doctoral Candidate

Bowling Green State University

As an undergraduate and graduate student, I had the opportunity to work closely with two first-time women college presidents. Working with them on projects, observing how they addressed issues and concerns, and learning about their own career paths confirmed my interest in pursuing a career in higher education. After becoming a college administrator and throughout my doctoral studies, I continued to ask questions about women's leadership roles within the academy. Now as a doctoral candidate, I am proposing to examine the experiences and expectations of women who, for the first time, have assumed the presidency at a post secondary institution where they are the first female to be appointed to such a position.

First Time Women College Presidents

Throughout the past 150 years, women have played a vital role in American higher education, assuming new positions of significance and taking on greater responsibilities. However, despite such gains, a key voice remains missing from the leadership of most institutions—women college presidents. Although an increasing number of women have served in leadership roles in recent decades, the notion of a female college president remains somewhat novel in this system, even today. As recently as 1986, women held only 9.5% of all college or university presidencies, although by 2001 their prevalence had doubled to 21% (Corrigan, 2002). Nonetheless, the office of institutional president remains dominated by White men, as women account for only one-fifth of all such leaders in the United States (Corrigan, 2002).

While more women leaders are advancing into presidential roles, their progress is not comparable to their male counterparts. Nearly 40% of all faculty and senior administrative positions in higher education are held by women, but these women are not moving into presidencies as quickly as men (Corrigan, 2002). Just as women faculty often are clustered in junior, adjunct, or part-time positions, women presidents seem to be more common at select institutional types. For example, the greatest proportions of women presidents are found in two-year community colleges and four-year baccalaureate institutions (Brown, Van Ummersen, & Sturnick, 2001). In short, women college and university presidents remain a minority in American higher education (Brown, et al., 2001). Consequently, relatively little is known about their experiences, the hopes they have for such positions, and the challenges they encounter once in office. Furthermore, even less is understood about the unique context that shapes the experiences of many in these first-time college presidencies.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the expectations and experiences of women who, for the first time, have assumed the presidency of a post secondary institution where they are the first female to do so. More specifically, this study seeks to bring a deeper understanding to the career paths of these women, their initiating experiences on campus, the challenges they have encountered, and the insights they would offer on what might be required of future women who aspire to ascend to this position. Accordingly, the following exemplary questions are posed:

- What are the critical professional experiences and personal incidents that have led these women to pursue or seek a presidency?
- How has being the first woman president at their institutions affected their roles and responsibilities?
- How do these women balance their personal and professional responsibilities and obligations?
- In regard to their presidency, what are the greatest challenges these women grapple with?
- What kinds of knowledge, skills, and experiences should women aspiring to a presidency seek to prepare themselves for the position?

The investigation of the above questions will expand and deepen the knowledge of women presidents and more specifically, illuminate the experiences and challenges of women in a presidency for the first time at an institution where such a candidate had not previously been considered.

Methodology

This study proposes to use a qualitative research method. Two, in-depth sequential interviews that are at least a month apart will be conducted with each president. Each interview will be approximately 60-75 minutes in length. Participants will be sent the transcripts of their interviews, a draft of their individual case studies, and a general overview of the categories, themes, and frameworks developed over the course of the study. They will be instructed to review the transcripts for accuracy, to make any changes, and to propose any additional suggestions that may advance the material.

Significance

The benefits of examining this phenomenon are several. First, exploring the current and formative experiences of women presidents promises to help illuminate the mentoring processes that might encourage future women candidates who would otherwise hesitate to pursue a college presidency. The presidency yields much power and influence, and while women dominate enrollment patterns on college and university campuses worldwide, they maintain a very limited presence in the senior-most administrative positions. Higher education represents a powerful societal tool, and college and university leaders affect institutional agendas and help to shape the attraction and education of emerging leaders. Based on their experiences in reaching this pinnacle position in academe, much can be learned from these pioneer women.

Second, while a considerable literature already exists on the college presidency, most of it has been written about men and their experiences in the position. Absence of the voices of women presidents limits a potentially vital resource and restricts role models for faculty, staff, and students. Learning about the experiences of these women may offer innovative solutions to challenges that potentially affect all in higher education.

Third, the limited literature pertaining to women college presidents is quantitative in nature—numbers are collected and statistics are compared. This qualitative approach would provide rich and detailed information about the specific experiences and expectations of first-time women college presidents that could help to inform the practices of current women presidents, educate campus leadership bodies (i.e., boards of trustees) about their interactions with first-time women college presidents, and serve as a practical primer for potential presidential candidates of any gender. Ultimately, such an approach could serve well in preparing new paths open to future women leaders.

Confidentiality

All tapes, transcriptions, forms, and other documents will be coded and altered (i.e., through the use of pseudonyms) to safeguard the participants' names, identities, and institutions to the greatest extent possible. Participation in this study is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Conclusion

Women will continue to advance to senior levels of leadership in our institutions, and as they ascend, it becomes imperative that we chronicle and explore their challenges, experiences, and insights. It is imperative that we learn as much as we can from their accounts, and that we privilege their stories through methods that honor their unique contributions.

References

- Brown, G., Van Ummersen, C., & Sturnick, J. (2001). *From where we sit: Women's perspectives on the presidency*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Corrigan, M.E. (2002). *The American college president: 2002 edition*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

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APPENDIX E

Initial Interview Guide

I. Greeting

- A. Thank you for being willing to participate in my study about the experiences of first-time women college presidents.
- B. Purpose: I am interested in learning about the expectations and experiences of women who have assumed the presidency of a post secondary institution where they are the first female to do so.
- C. Procedures: I'll be asking a number of open-ended questions. As I indicated in the initial invitation letter, I would like to tape these interviews so that I am able to recreate accurately what you say. If you would like to say something and prefer for it not to be recorded, please indicate this desire to me, and I will turn off the tape recorder. All tapes, transcriptions, forms, and other documents will be coded and altered to safeguard the participants and institutions' identities to the greatest extent possible.
- D. Do you have any questions before we begin?
- E. Review and sign two consent forms; give one form to the participant.
- F. Make sure that digital recorder is ready. Start interviewing!

II. Interview Themes and Questions

- A. **Critical professional experiences and incidences that have led these women to pursue or seek a presidency:**
 - Describe your career path to your current position.
 - What attracted you to the position?
 - Did you aspire to be a president when you began in academe?
- B. **The affect or impact of being the first woman president at their institutions on their roles and responsibilities:**
 - Has being the first woman to hold this office at your institution affected or impacted your role? If yes, how so? Can you provide a few examples?
 - Do you think the women faculty at your institution hold you to a higher standard or have different expectations for you?
 - As a female administrator, do you feel an obligation or responsibility to encourage and promote professional development of women faculty and staff?
- C. **The balancing of personal and professional responsibilities and obligations:**
 - Think about your personal and professional responsibilities...what falls into each category?
 - How do you balance your personal and professional agendas?

- What kind of role does your partner/spouse have in your presidency? Does it affect him/her?
- How about children? Does being president have an impact upon them?

D. Their greatest challenges as presidents:

- What are your greatest challenges as president?
- Listen to responses; discuss each of them accordingly if necessary.

E. The knowledge, skills, and experiences aspiring women need to prepare for a presidency:

- Are there any skills or experiences that women need before becoming a president? What are they and how should they go about gaining those skills/experiences?
- Have you had role models? If yes, how have they influenced you?
- Would mentoring experiences help to cultivate more senior level women administrators? If yes, what kind of mentoring experiences do these aspiring women need?

III. Summary Question

- Is there anything that I have not asked you that I should have?

IV. Recommendations of Others...

- Is there another president, who is serving in her first presidency at an institution where she is the first female president that I should talk to?
- What brought her to mind?
- Would you be willing to contact her to see if she would be interested in talking with me?

V. Closing Statement

Thank you for spending time with me and sharing your insights. I will be sending you a transcript of the interview and my initial impressions of this interview as soon as possible. You will have an opportunity to read and revise your responses.

APPENDIX G



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Second Interview Letter

Dear Dr. XXX:

I hope this letter finds you doing well. I am making great progress on my research and am preparing to conclude it in January and early February. Our next interview has been scheduled for **9 a.m. on Wednesday, January 19** at your office. To prepare for our interview, I have enclosed several documents for you to review:

1. **Participant profile**—your profile is titled: “Dr. Emily Adams-Birch College.” This case study was constructed from our interview. Please read through it and make any changes that you see fit.
2. **Draft of Chapter 4**—this chapter represents the composite findings of all eight presidential participants.
3. **Transcript of interview**—I have also enclosed a transcript of our interview for your reference. You do not need to review it.

I know that your time is valuable and limited. Please read your participant profile and the composite findings as carefully as possible. As you review the materials, consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the case profile that I have written about you?
- Are there any changes, oversights, and/or points of clarification regarding your profile?
- Are there points of agreement or challenge regarding the composite results of all eight presidents? If yes, what are they? Were you surprised by any of the findings?

An essential element of qualitative research is checking the results with the participants and gauging their responses to the data. My goal for our final interview is to confirm the essence and the accuracy of the case profile and engage in some discussion about the composite findings as presented in the draft of chapter four. In addition, I have a few questions that were generated through data analysis, and time permitting, I would like to ask you a few of those questions. However, we only have an hour, so reviewing the items before our interview would be of great help.

Again, I cannot express enough gratitude to you for agreeing to be a participant in my study. My research has been engaging and fascinating, and I hope you enjoy reading it. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Warmest regards,

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