

2008

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The University of San Francisco

WOMEN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS: LEADING WITH AUTHENTICITY

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Cathy Corcoran
San Francisco
December 2008

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Cathy F. Corcoran

12/05/08

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Kathleen, and my father Bernard, for their love and support that I carry with me always.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Patricia Mitchell, my advisor and Dissertation Chair, for all of her support and guidance throughout the years of my doctoral studies and especially during the dissertation process. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Ellen Herda and Dr. Betty Taylor for serving on my dissertation committee.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and input that I received from my peers and dissertation support group at USF, along the road we shared together. In particular, Lyn Motai, whose support and input was invaluable.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family and friends, in the United States and in Ireland, for their constant love and support. A special thank you to Noelle, my partner, for everything.

Abstract

The field of education continues to see an underrepresentation of women as presidents of colleges and universities. Four women presidents of the Ivy League universities in 2007, an unprecedented number, distracts from the fact that women still lag behind in achieving the position of president at institutions of higher learning. Women continue to hold, disproportionate to men, fewer leadership positions in the workplace of today.

It was the intent of this qualitative study to investigate the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; to identify the strengths and skills that allowed those women who serve as college presidents to attain those roles; to identify the challenges and barriers they overcame; and to determine how previous work/life experiences contribute to their authentic leadership roles.

The study utilized the conceptual framework of Authentic Leadership Theory. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed and findings grouped into themes. In relation to the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency, the participants perceived multiple factors, as well as persistence in discrimination and gender influences, gender inequity, and struggles for women to maintain work/life balance and suggested strategies to reverse the trend. Hard and practical skills, and people skills were revealed and strategies for aspiring college presidents to obtain them suggested. In relation to challenges and barriers, the perception and reality of the job as well as the personal and familial challenges that aspiring women leaders face were met with approaches and

strategies to overcome them. Finally, in relation to their authentic leadership development, themes of personal life experience, work and professional experience and personal leadership style and substance were shared.

The study found that intervention is required in order to address the lack of women (and minority) college presidents. Institutions must make a concerted effort to identify and recruit future leaders that better reflect the communities they serve. Routes to the college presidency must be examined and alternative backgrounds considered. The role of search committee needs to be investigated and reworked. The position of college president itself needs reconsideration as does the persistent stereotype of the (male) leader that fills it to be replaced by an authentic leader's emphasis on fit with the institution, valuing people, sharing credit, and honing the leader/follower relationship and integrating one's personal beliefs and values into the role of college president.

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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

The field of education, which attracts considerably more women than other careers, continues to see an underrepresentation of women as presidents of colleges and universities. Four women presidents of the Ivy League universities in 2007, an unprecedented number, distracts from the fact that women still lag behind in achieving the position of president at institutions of higher learning. Women continue to hold, disproportionate to men, fewer leadership positions in the workplace of today. Though their numbers are particularly significant in the business sector, few succeed in achieving the peak leadership role of Chief Executive Officer.

The 2007 study on college presidents conducted by the American Council on Education found that 23% of college presidencies in the United States in 2006 were held by women, up from 9.5% in 1986 (American Council on Education, 2007). Excluding two-year colleges, women held 20% of college presidencies. While the growth is reassuring, the pace at which women achieve college presidencies in the last twenty years is such that parity with men will not be achieved for decades, unless change occurs. The same study shows that minority group members have not fared as well as women: 13.5% of college presidencies in the United States in 2006 were held by minorities, up from 8.1% in 1986 (American Council on Education, 2007).

The canon in the field of women and leadership has been growing exponentially over the last several decades and many of the writers and researchers in this area have underlined the underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership as an ongoing issue, emphasizing the difficulties encountered by women approaching each rung on the

ladder of career advancement. (Heilman, 1997; Oakley 2000; Wilson, 2004). Insufficient numbers of women in roles of authority unfairly charges the few with the burdens of the many (Wilson, 2004). The importance of role models with whom women can identify cannot be underestimated and the dearth of women top executives and board members of companies is rooted in societal expectations: "...despite enormous gains we have made in the last twenty-five years, the 'cultural ideal' for a woman remains that of wife and mother" (Wilson, p. xi).

The fact that so few women have made inroads into high ranking leadership roles in occupations such as education, business, politics, and sport, or those traditionally labeled as male jobs, is still a reality and intricately linked to gender-bound decisions in relation to career advancement and compensation affected by distinctions between male and female and masculine and feminine (Acker, 1992; Vinkenburg, Jansen and Koopman 2000). Research has shown that progress has been made by women into the professional workplace over the last two decades (Davidson & Burke, 2000; Bolman & Deal, 2003). Some researchers have investigated how gender has influenced and redefined today's notions of leadership and power (Freeman, 2001). Others have sought to identify the reasons why women achieve so few positions in upper tier leadership by scrutinizing sex stereotypes and sex discrimination in the workplace (Heilman, 1997); have taken theoretical and practical approaches to gender difference (Oakley, 2000; Powell and Graves, 2003); and have sought to explore ways to remedy the situation (Rhode, 2003). Eagly and Carli replaced the notion of a glass ceiling barrier with a labyrinth of potential factors such as discrimination, home responsibilities, organizational policy or leadership style that can scupper or derail a women's leadership success (Eagly and Carli, 2007). A

series of essays on the quotidian state of women and leadership and strategies to improve it acknowledge the fact that considerable progress made to date has yet to narrow the “dispiriting distance” (Kellerman and Rhode, 2007) from solving women’s underrepresentation in leadership.

In relation to leadership in higher education, the continuing underrepresentation of women has also been highlighted (Berryman-Fink, et al 2003; Madsen, 2007; American Council on Education, 2007). In a profile of women college presidents in 2006 compared with 1986, the proportion of women presidents more than doubled (to 23% from 10%) but the rate of change has slowed since the 1990s (American Council on Education, 2007). The study found that marital status and child rearing responsibilities continue to be very striking differences between women and men presidents. Fewer women presidents were married compared to men (62.6% to 89.3%) and less likely to have children (68% to 91%). Those women who had children were more likely to have taken a career break to care for children or spouses (15% compared to 5% of men) (American Council on Education, 2007). Women presidents then, encounter similar difficulties in breaching the glass ceiling as those in other fields, and reasons for this impermeable layer’s continued resilience include stereotyping leadership with maleness, conflicting expectations of women, discrimination of women, and the personal and familial price that women must pay in order to achieve career success (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Wenniger & Conroy, 2001; Bolman & Deal, 2003).

A special report on women in business, investigating the conundrum of the glass ceiling, acknowledged the reality that time alone will not fill the gap between the number of men and women in leadership positions. Intervention by organizations is called for, in

the form of providing flexible working arrangements, mentoring opportunities, recruiting outside of traditional frames, and acknowledging the abilities of women as good investments in the potential of organizations (Economist, 2005).

The growing competitive climate in talent management and acquisition has been highlighted as an issue that all organizations face. The need to address the coming shortage (Economist, 2006) also includes institutions of higher learning, which will face a talent and leadership shortage in the upcoming decades (Leubsdorf, 2006b; Ashburn, 2007). There is strong potential for women and minorities to meet those needs in growing numbers. Bower acknowledged that over the last twenty years, organizations have lost focus on building future leaders (Bower, 2007) and a succession crisis must be addressed by developing leaders from within while maintaining an outside perspective. Bower proposes four skills that are required of an organization's new CEO: the ability to judge where markets are headed and form a vision; to identify and recruit talent to make the vision a reality; to understand those problems that the company faces and finally, to know how the company really works, and who the key players are. For aspiring leaders it is interesting to note that three of the four skills "require extensive inside knowledge" (Bower, p. 93).

A study conducted by the American Council on Education "*On the Pathway to the Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education's Senior Leadership*" found that many faculty and senior administrative staff serving in higher education in 2007 were women. In what are considered pipeline positions in higher education, women hold a sizeable number of second tier roles (CAO, Provost, Chief of Staff, etc.). In the study conducted in 2007, women represented 44.6% of senior college administrators

demonstrating that “higher education has ample opportunity to create greater gender diversity in the presidency” (American Council on Education, 2008, p.15). Minorities however, constituted only 16% of senior leaders holding positions that frequently lead to the presidency. The study was conducted in response to the American Council on Education’s 2007 report on College Presidents which revealed the slow pace at which diversity was being achieved in college leadership. Regardless of current percentages of women and minorities in line for presidential positions, a caution against the pipeline theory and the notion that time will eventually address their underrepresentation continues to sound (Heilman, 1997).

Search committees appear to recognize that change is needed with more women chosen to fill university presidencies in the last two decades, but more needs to be done. William Bowen advocated for improving the succession planning process by requiring boards to face “their failure to deal with this problem” (Bowen, 2008, p. 107) and acknowledge what he describes as “simple demographics” that make it clear that “a crisis is at hand” with demand for new leaders far exceeding supply of candidates. He puts the responsibility squarely with the boards, in both the non profit and for profit sectors that must face up to the fact that their inability to recognize the “potential leadership deficit” amounts to a “failure of vision” (Bowen, 2008). An emphasis on succession planning in the board structures would help and would be charged with “management development and succession”. Organizations also need to contribute by creating a pool of strong leadership candidates internally that would be targeted for advancement opportunities. The board could then do an annual review in order to assess the “depth of the bench” in each area to determine who displays the best in leadership potential that would be poised

to take on new responsibilities (Bowen, 2008). Bowen also recommends that search committees better manage the process of picking a new president.

Talent management charges organizations with anticipating human capital needs and subsequent planning to meet those needs (Cappelli, 2008, p. 74). The American Council on Education report on the American College President (2007 edition) suggests that institutions of higher learning will need to consider other avenues to recruit future leaders. The study found that almost half of college presidents surveyed in 2006 were 61 or older (American Council on Education, 2007, p. 12) which signals the arrival of a considerable number of retirements over the coming decade. This fact, coupled with the need to foster diversity in college presidencies, precipitated a special supplement in winter 2008 of *The Presidency*, the American Council on Education's magazine for higher education leaders. Entitled "the Spectrum Initiative: Advancing Diversity in the College Presidency", the supplement launched an initiative to assist institutions in diversifying their leadership. As many current college presidents look ahead to retirement, "a changing of the guard" is called for (Cowen, 2008, p. 15) and provides an opportunity for institutions of higher learning to redress the current demographic gap by filling leadership roles with presidents that mirror the "gender and racial makeup of our students and our communities" (Cowen, 2008, p. 15). Davis faults the academy for not preparing its leaders to assume upper tier positions, that people are "thrust into leadership positions who are often unable to work in teams, have short tempers and display rudimentary skills" and needs to learn from the private sector: "That is the challenge everywhere, including in higher education: to build leaders in a systematic manner" (Davis, 2008).

Still, talented women are dropping out of the equation in all fields. Overdue recognition of the phenomenon by organizations is resulting in work-life initiatives, as has the increasing demand by working mothers that the anti-motherhood culture at work be changed (Stone, 2007). Narratives shared by working women who have quit jobs because of the pull of family also reveal that nine out of ten of them would not have left except for “workplace pushes” (p. 81). The linear model of work continuity that, by default, proffers an advantage on men, causes talented women to opt off the career “ramp” for family reasons (Hewlett, 2007). At the same time, “push and pull factors” (p. 8) set against each other in a non-supportive or discriminatory work environment result in women being “more likely to respond to the pull of family when they feel hemmed in by a glass ceiling” (p. 8). The onus on organizations to place flexible work arrangements to the fore of talent retention efforts will be required to preempt growing child care and elder care responsibilities that are predominantly assumed by women.

Purpose of the Study

It was the intent of this study to investigate the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; to identify the strengths and skills that allowed those women who serve as college presidents to attain those roles; to identify the challenges and barriers they overcame; and to determine how previous work/life experiences contribute to their authentic leadership roles.

Background and Need for Study

The continuing underrepresentation of women presidents in colleges and universities needed to be investigated further. Women have a considerable presence in

higher education, as faculty and as administrators, and yet only 23% of college presidencies in 2006 were held by women. The number of women presidents almost doubled in the years since 1986, but a significant slowing in the 1990s has raised cause for concern, as has the fact that minorities do not hold sufficient pipeline positions to the presidency to improve the percentage of college presidencies currently held; 13.5%. Further, the characteristics of the college president as being white, male and married have not changed much over the past twenty years and as half of current leaders are over 61 years of age, it is predicted that a sizeable number will be retiring in the coming years (American Council on Education, 2007). Even though a far reaching global financial crisis at the time of writing influenced the timing of retirement decisions of leaders in every industry, issues around succession planning, talent management and diversity still confront many organizations in the United States; higher education is no exception.

The need to diversify the college presidency so that it better reflects the communities it serves has been acknowledged in recent years and studies on women and minority presidents have revealed insights and experiences from the perspective of current and past holders of college presidencies. An investigation into the personal contributions of five women in Mississippi who have achieved the college presidency was conducted by Smith (2004). The qualitative study obtained in depth lived detail regarding self, family and career paths of the participants. Themes around hard work, the role of mentors, the importance of communication skills and self belief and ego emerged. The study also revealed insights into the role and the strengths necessary for success in areas such as fiscal affairs, dealing with gender discrimination and being the face of the institution. Critchlow (2005) examined the lived experiences of 19 African American

women community college presidents in order to determine the career paths and tools that African American women aspiring to the college presidency could utilize. Skills such as interpersonal and technical skills, as well as a demonstrated track record of service in the community, along with the requisite educational background and professional connections provided the composition of a future leader in the study.

Roberts (2006) conducted a multi-case study of retired female African American college presidents. The qualitative study examined the lived stories of the six participants and revealed that they each had transformational leadership style in common and shared the belief that the position of college president could be used to empower students and staff alike. Often the first woman and African American to hold the position, the participants shared an acknowledgement that gender and race served as obstacles leading up to and during their roles as presidents and the researcher found that the participants encouraged aspiring women college presidents to seek out insights from sitting presidents in order to better handle such issues as contract negotiation (Roberts, 2006). Rodriguez (2006), sought to identify career pathways to the community college presidency by conducting a study of sitting female community college presidents in California. The study revealed the career paths, skills, characteristics and professional development activities of the female participants.

On an individual level, an autoethnographic study conducted by Ross (2006) shared the story of Theodora J. Kalikow, president of the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF). The study revealed the impact the president had on her institution, the leadership Kalikow brought to the role and through story, shared the lived experience, the successes on the job and the challenges encountered and provided aspiring women

college presidents with an intimate inside view of the presidency. A quantitative study of women community college presidents (Persyn, 2006) to investigate the work and family balance necessary for the presidency found that in addition to the influencers of children, career and self, an underlying system of integrity, ethics and spirituality steered the women presidents' interactions with and leadership of all constituents, from students to community members. Boyum-Breen (2006) conducted a study of three women college presidents who are mothers to reveal how their work and home experiences impact them as leaders. The study revealed the differences in comparison to other working mothers specifically in relation to whether or not the college presidents lived outside of their campuses.

A qualitative study of women college presidents conducted by Switzer (2006) aimed at determining the necessary leadership ability, and work/life balance challenges that the participants must navigate in order to succeed in the presidency. In addition to sharing insights into the realities of the job, the participants invoked the courage necessary for future women college presidents as an opportunity to be seized. Kampel (2006) sought to reveal the perceptions of twelve women college presidents in terms of how they obtained the requisite skills for the role. The participants shared that a process of learning to lead through work and life experiences provided them with the credentials to achieve the presidency and the skills to serve successfully. A study conducted by Logan (2007), sought to determine the behavioral leadership skills of African American women who serve as CEOs at the community college level. Utilizing a mixed method approach of surveys and interviews, the African American women participants were found to utilize collaborative and contributory leadership styles as opposed to a

competitive behavioral skill. A case study by Kuhnle-Biagas (2007) set out to determine the style and leadership traits utilized by women college presidents in order to overcome adversity. Six women college presidents of research institutions were studied and common characteristics of having a high self-esteem and confidence were revealed. Further, the participants utilized “flexible optimism” (Kuhnle-Biagas, 2007) in order to address adversity: an ability that emphasizes the positive more than the negative approaches to handling difficult situations. Similar resiliency and determination to overcome obstacles was noted in a recent study of three African American women college presidents (Williams, 2007). The qualitative study explored the lived experiences of the women and how their leadership styles were shaped by their backgrounds, education and career paths. The participants shared a strong sense of self and confidence, leadership ability and Black identity with which to overcome challenges en route to the presidency and shape their shared transformational leadership style.

A qualitative study into the lived experiences of women college presidents of Georgia’s two-year and technical colleges in relation to obstacles encountered and preparations completed on the path to the presidency was conducted by Terry (2008). The study revealed the importance for the participants of preparation and experience in career strategy as well as the role of factors such as educational credentials and life long learning. Two recent studies anticipated the looming shortage of leaders at the community college level in the coming years. Hoopes (2008), set out to develop a set of leadership skills from current presidents utilizing a quantitative research method. Data analysis sought to determine whether leadership differences existed based on such characteristics as gender, ethnicity and age. The results demonstrated that there was no

difference in scores based on age or ethnicity. However, the study revealed that transactional leadership traits and a caring leadership style were demonstrated more in the female participants than in the male participants. Stubbe (2008), sought to identify characteristics and competencies of sitting college presidents and ascertain whether or not gender differences existed in community college leadership, by conducting a quantitative study from a woman's perspective. In relation to mentor-protégé relationships, statistically significant differences were found between the genders. However, the researcher found that even though male and female leaders demonstrated differences in how they thought, acted and communicated, neither male nor female leadership proved to be the better style for leading successfully. The researcher suggested that fostering the differences and uniqueness as an approach for future college leaders warranted further investigation.

The studies presented here reveal the contributions that sitting women college presidents have made in the growing canon of empirical research. Many studies focused on women college presidents of community colleges. If associate or two-year institutions are excluded, the percentage of women presidents drops from 23% to 20% (American Council on Education, 2007). Further empirical focus on women college presidents that lead four-year or graduate or research institutions was needed. An analysis of the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women among their ranks, the strengths and skills used, the challenges and barriers overcome, and the work/life experiences that contribute to their roles makes a further contribution to the canon on women and leadership. This study focused on the “one in five” who achieved the peak leadership role in four-year or graduate or research colleges

and universities and provides further data for aspiring women leaders in search of models of influence and inspiration.

Conceptual Framework

This study considered broader themes relating to women and leadership with the theoretical lens of authentic leadership. Leadership theory and practice have linked effective leadership with authenticity. The development of the theory of authentic leadership was undertaken by Luthans and Avolio (2003) to address the perceived inadequacy of existing leadership theories in the definition and development of effective, authentic leaders. The concept of authenticity is not in itself new but authentic leadership theory suggests that leaders, having cultivated self awareness, self regulation and attunement to inner core values that shape the way they lead, are ultimately more effective personally and professionally (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). As a leadership multiplier, authenticity in leaders has a positive effect on personal and organizational processes and provides the foundation upon which follower and organizational effectiveness is built (Chan, Hannah and Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership is a logical extension of a person that is authentic: "...authenticity is an emergent property of key processes and components of the self-system" (Chan, Hannah and Gardner, 2005, p. 3).

Two significant publications on authentic leadership theory and development were the offshoot of the first Gallup Leadership Institute Summit, held in 2004. The first brought together writings in a special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* in 2005. The second, a monograph of essays on the origins, effects and development of authentic leadership theory and practice (Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, Eds.) was published in 2005. Both publications built upon the work of Luthans and Avolio and the papers

presented in each collectively expanded upon advancements in relation to authentic leadership development theory, research in leadership intervention, measuring authentic leadership, presenting exploratory studies in the perceptions of authentic leadership and strategies for authentic leader development. For example, one paper found that authentic leaders were seen to exhibit considerable levels of moral capital (Hannah, Lester and Vogelgesang, 2005), and the reciprocal relationship between followership and authentic leadership was noted in another (Douglas, Ferris and Perrewe, 2005).

As a theory, authentic leadership is still in the developmental stages. However, authentic leadership theory has been shaped to address the inadequacies of other theories in analyzing the leader of today and tomorrow.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study focused on revealing the perceptions of women college presidents in relation to the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; their experiences on the way to achieving their leadership role and whether work/life experiences contributed to their roles as college presidents.

1. What are the perceptions of women presidents in higher education regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in college presidencies?
2. What were the strengths and skills women utilized to achieve the position of president in higher education?
3. What were the challenges and barriers overcome by women in order to achieve the position of president in higher education?
4. What work/life experiences contributed to the authentic leadership of women presidents in higher education?

Limitations

The small number of participants in this study reduced the generalizability of findings and conclusions to all women presidents or women in positions of leadership in higher education. In addition, the qualitative study focused on the centrality of the participants and their experiences in the study and at the same time acknowledged the role of the researcher in analyzing and interpreting the data gathered from interviews and interactions with the participants. The study aimed to center on the individual experiences of the participants in a naturalistic setting. The unique aspect of the contributions of each participant was emphasized. As a result, findings and conclusions can potentially be open to the further interpretation by the reader.

Delimitations

In order to narrow the focus of this study on women presidents in higher education, eleven participants were purposively selected who were serving presidents of four year or research universities or graduate schools. In addition, the participants were selected from colleges or universities in the western United States. The study did not include women presidents of non associate or two year colleges. By narrowing the focus, the study facilitated the collection of rich description from each participant, fitting because the aim of qualitative researchers “is to better understand human behavior and experience. They seek to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are. They use empirical observation because it is with concrete incidents of human behavior that investigators can think more clearly and deeply about the human condition” (Bogden and Biklen, p. 43).

Significance

The field of education, which attracts considerably more women than other careers, continues to see an underrepresentation of women as presidents of colleges and universities. The existence of four women serving as presidents of the Ivy League universities in 2007, an unprecedented number, distracts from the fact that women still lag behind in achieving the role of president at institutions of higher learning.

In order to investigate the underrepresentation of women in college presidencies, this study honed in on those few who have broken the glass ceiling, reached the pinnacle, and served as presidents of colleges or universities in the western United States. Specifically, investigating the perceptions of a purposive sample of women that constitute 20%, or “one in five” of non associate college presidents revealed their perceptions of the limited representation of women in college presidencies. Further, the strengths and skills each utilized to reach the role of president and the challenges and barriers each encountered along their career path were illuminated. Finally, a link was made with the contributions of work and life experiences to the leadership role they achieved and to their perceptions regarding authentic leadership. The qualitative approach to the study afforded participants the opportunity of sharing perceptions, expressing lived experiences and contributing rich detail from their position as a small but significant group of women presidents.

The importance and implications of the study for women seeking to emulate the achievement of the participants are significant, and it contributes to literature in the field of women and leadership, management and higher education. Finally, framed by the growing need for gender and minority diversity in college presidencies, and the

impending retirement of a significant number of college presidents in the coming years, the study makes a contribution to the field of educational leadership policy and practice by highlighting the ability and availability of women to fill leadership positions and make a significant contribution to organizations of higher learning.

Definition of Terms

Other definitions for the following terms may apply, but the following terms are defined as they relate to this study:

Authenticity - In the *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, Kathleen Allen defined authenticity as “the condition or quality of being authentic, trustworthy, and genuine, free from hypocrisy” (Goethals and Sorenson, 2004, p. 5) and explained that to be an authentic leader, one must actually possess the qualities that can be perceived by others, that is, being authentic from the inside out.

Authentic Leadership Theory - The development of the theory of authentic leadership was undertaken by Luthans and Avolio (2003) to address the perceived inadequacy of existing leadership theories in the definition and development of effective, authentic leaders. Authentic leadership theory suggests that leaders, having cultivated self awareness, self regulation and attunement to inner core values that shape the way they lead, are ultimately more effective personally and professionally (Luthans and Avolio, 2003).

Minority/minorities - In relation to leadership, minority leaders or leadership minorities include women and men that are underrepresented in the college presidency. Their minority status can include race, class, age, sexual orientation, religious affiliation or a combination of the above.

Summary

“Ingenuity rests on the conviction that most problems have solutions and that imagination, perseverance, and openness to new ideas will uncover them” (Lowney, 2003. p. 167).

Women are underrepresented in leadership positions in many fields. With women holding 45% of senior positions considered to be in the pipeline to the presidency in higher education, in 2007, only 23% of college presidencies are held by women, up from 13% in 1986. Only 20% of four year or research or graduate colleges and universities have a woman as president. Women ascending to the presidency slowed in the 1990s and it is widely acknowledged that the continuing underrepresentation of women and minorities in leadership positions in higher education must be addressed in order to improve diversity that better reflects the students and communities that colleges serve, and to prepare for the anticipated retirements of a sizeable number of sitting college presidents in the coming decade (American Council on Education, 2007).

It was the intent of this study to investigate the perceptions of women college presidents of four year or research or graduate colleges and universities, the “one in five” who achieved the peak leadership role, regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; to identify the strengths and skills that allowed those women who serve as college presidents to attain those roles; to identify the challenges and barriers they overcame; and to determine how previous work/life experiences contribute to their authentic leadership roles.

This study considered broader themes relating to women and leadership with the theoretical lens of authentic leadership. Leadership theory and practice have linked

effective leadership with authenticity. It was the intent of this study to provide further data for aspiring women leaders in search of models of influence and inspiration.

The remaining chapters consist of: Chapter II, a review of literature covering four themes that inform this study; Chapter III, a presentation of the methodology employed in conducting this study; Chapter IV, a summary of the findings and results from this study, and Chapter V, a discussion of the findings and a presentation of the conclusions, implications and recommendations that emerged from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Women are underrepresented in leadership positions in many fields. With women holding 45% of senior positions considered to be in the pipeline to the presidency in higher education, in 2007, only 23% of college presidencies are held by women, up from 13% in 1986. However, women ascending to the presidency slowed in the 1990s and it is widely acknowledged that the continuing underrepresentation of women and minorities in leadership positions in higher education must be addressed in order to improve diversity that better reflects the students and communities that colleges serve, and to prepare for the anticipated retirements of a sizeable number of sitting college presidents in the coming decade (American Council on Education, 2007).

Overview

In this chapter, an overview of the literature related to the study topic will be presented. There is considerable literature in various topics and subtopics around the subjects of leadership, gender and higher education and four themes have been selected to present a summary of the literature in order to provide background and context to the topic of this study. The major themes that will be presented in this chapter are as follows: leadership theory and practice, authentic leadership theory, women leaders in higher education and finally, gender equity and professional development. Each theme will be introduced and followed by a review of the pertinent literature and research in that area, and will be concluded by an analysis of how the theme informs the study and the research questions.

Leadership Theory and Practice

Interest in leadership theory and practice has accelerated in recent years as organizations acknowledge the need for effective and ethical leaders to compete in a global economy and as institutions of higher learning look ahead to securing stewardship to take education into the next several decades. Leadership, one of the world's oldest preoccupations (Bass, 1990) continues to attract considerable research and writing and is amplified by the need for such leaders in every industry and organization as an ongoing concern. A compelling phenomenon with universal appeal, defining leadership has proven to be an elusive task and has been approached by research from the perspective of the person: the leader, and doer, and the angle of the task: the activity and process or style of leadership (Northouse, 2004). Looking as far back as the 18th century and rationalist thought and the subsequent enlightenment for the roots of leadership thinking, the advent of Freud and Weber initiated the questioning of reason and fueled the interest in the concept of leadership in the 20th century (Goffee and Jones, 2000). Trait theory, which found footing in the 1920's, sought out the defining characteristics of the leader, psychologically and physically, but would be supplanted in the 1940's by Style theory which was defined by the time in which leaders found themselves and they adapted accordingly. More recently, Contingency Theory has dominated, and calls for leaders to act in reaction to the situation, or context at hand. The "endless contingencies in life" however, provide for the "endless varieties of leadership" (Goffee and Jones, p. 47) that abound today.

Stephen Covey, in describing the leader of the future twelve years ago, identified an individual who will create a culture or a value system centered upon principles. Only

leaders who “have the vision, courage, and humility to constantly learn and grow” (1996, p. 149) will be able to meet this challenge. Covey explained that in order to do this, the leader will need to embrace three roles in order to achieve principle-centered leadership. The first, called pathfinding, or achieving “the strategic pathway” (p. 152) that aligns mission and values with the needs of stakeholders, must be embraced. The second role, aligning, involves ensuring that organizational structures and systems play a role in mission achievement and that people, the “human conditions” (p. 153) of the organization, are committed. The final role, empowering, requires a leader who “co-missions” (p. 153) with others, and manages to include individual purposes and goals of the individual with those of the organization. In addition to the predictable needs such as vision, energy, authority and strategic direction, inspirational leaders share four unexpected qualities: they selectively show weaknesses, rely on intuition to know when and how to act, manage with tough empathy, reveal their differences, and capitalize on what is unique about themselves (Goffee and Jones 2000, p. 49).

Research over several decades has revealed that the prevailing influence of sex related traits in relation to management ability holds stereotypically masculine traits higher than stereotypically feminine traits and that overall, “think manager-think masculine” and “think manager-think male” managerial stereotypes still hold sway (Powell and Graves, 2003, p. 138). In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins found that companies that he studied shared a leader in common – the “level 5 executive”, who builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will (Collins, 2001, p. 20). Without the existence of a gender monopoly on such ability and effectiveness, the promotion of motivated and willing women into positions of top

management has the potential to overcome gender stereotypes and affect positively the advancement of women (Vinkenburg, Jansen and Koopman, 2000, p. 130). Peter Drucker's, *The Effective Executive*, describes a leader as someone that gets the right things done (1966). Describing what was and continues to be a role largely held by men, Drucker's central thesis, that effectiveness can be learned, rings true today, regardless of the leader's gender: "All in all the effective executive tries to be himself; he does not pretend to be someone else" (p. 97). The effective executive looks upon people including himself as an opportunity. He knows that only strength produces results. He knows moreover, that the standard of any human group is set by the performance of the leaders. And he, therefore, never allows leadership performance to be based on anything but true strength. (p. 98).

The seminal work by Robert K. Greenleaf inverted the leadership lens to view the leader as being a servant first, which Greenleaf identified as the distinguishing characteristic of leadership (2002). Greenleaf emphasized the necessity for leaders of following an inward journey, and the need for "faith in the validity of one's own inward experience; faith in the wisdom of the great events of one's history, events in which one's potential for nobility has been tested and refined" (p. 340). The link between effectiveness and experience gained over time is shared with other thinkers. Greenleaf, however, underpins the growth and learning that comes from a leader's willingness to change. Leadership is, for Greenleaf, an awareness that comes with time, involves letting go, enduring loss and cultivating from it. Spears, in acknowledging that Servant Leadership requires an inside-out approach, defines this self-knowing and growth as "the power of the individual as the programmer" (1998 p. xvii).

Discussing the leader and the importance of story, Gardner (1995) explains that the creator must in some sense embody his story: “The story may grow out of the leader’s personal experiences and may well have been embodied in his or her daily life before being expressed overtly” (p. 293). Explaining how it is impossible to verify whether someone embodies the story they tell: “The issue of embodiment raises the question of authenticity...The individual who does not embody her messages will eventually be found out, even as the inarticulate individual who leads the exemplary life may eventually come to be appreciated” (p. 293). For Bennis and Thomas (2002) a leader is made by the power to draw strength from adversity, and create opportunity while others despair. The authors show how true leaders draw strength and wisdom from trying experiences. .”...one of the most reliable indicators and predictors of true leadership is an individual’s ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from even the most trying circumstances (p. 3). They go on to discuss crucibles of leadership, opportunities to learn from difference. They define a crucible as “...a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity” (p. 4).

The experience of prejudice can lead to gaining a clearer vision of the individual. They share the experience of estrangement and sexism of Liz Altman in rural Japan. She believed the experience helped her get a clearer sense of her personal strengths and capabilities preparing her for other difficult situations. In interviews with many other business leaders, crucible experiences can come from encounters with great mentors. The authors synthesize how these leaders were able to cope with and learn from difficult circumstances into four essential skills and they are: 1. The ability to engage others in shared meaning. 2. Having a distinctive and compelling voice. 3. Having a sense of

integrity and strong values and: 4. ““adaptive capacity” – or applied creativity – which takes two qualities: being able to grasp context and hardiness” (p. 9).

The question whether a woman can be both a leader and a woman has been described as the double-bind test (Kolb, Williams and Frohlinger, 2004, p. 6). Effective leadership continues to be seen through the lens of qualities that are attributed as masculine, such as charisma, strength, and aggression. Women who lead with such acknowledged traditional leadership qualities are frequently questioned and deemed uncaring and ultimately rated as less effective (Kolb, Williams and Frohlinger, 2004) or are seen to have chosen the “pathway of emulation rather than differentiation”, a folly that contributes to the continuing underrepresentation of women leaders in companies (Deemer and Fredericks, 2002, p. 1-3). Instead, women must tap into the powers of feminine leadership, and embrace the opportunity to differentiate themselves, recognize inner behaviors that help gain confidence, and lead with intuition and creativity (Deemer and Fredericks, 2002).

Adler proposed the notion that a feminization of management could be embraced as a complementary contribution to organizations and an acknowledgement of the essential difference between men and women (Adler, 1987). Other researchers argue that some aspects of female leadership are not only unique, but also better than traditional male-dominated models of human development (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Bales, 2000). In contrast to traditional leadership behaviors, some researchers assert that women leaders bring greater benefits to organizations than men in the leadership practices exhibited (Helgesen, 1990, Bales, 2000; Gatteau, 2000; Grzelakowski, 2005). Women also tend to focus on care and concern for others, building

relationships, and communicating and resolving conflicts (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, et al., 1986; Helgesen, 1995). Androgyny theory proposes the need for an androgynous manager who blends masculine and feminine characteristics of leadership to be effective. Schein (1995) cautions against celebrating the notion that women have feminine qualities that they can bring to leadership because it reinforces gender stereotypes and won't necessarily result in more women achieving leadership positions. Research has failed to find any real differences in how men and women lead but the glaring difference is that there are fewer women leaders than men. For Schein, the issues that need to be addressed are the continuing structural and attitudinal factors in relation to the glass ceiling.

With regard to women and leadership theory, the canon in the field of women and leadership has been growing exponentially over the last several decades and many of the writers and researchers in this area have underpinned the dearth of women in positions of leadership as an ongoing issue and emphasized the effect that pay inequity has on the lives of women at each rung on the ladder of career advancement, and in particular how women who achieve leadership positions need to leverage their power to ensure that they achieve gender pay equity as the benefits of both (power and pay) play a central role in influencing and inspiring other women to achieve similar success.

Sally Helgesen's body of work in the area of Organizational Theory is comprehensive. Her intimate investigative work in relation to organizational change and functioning is revealing. Her diary studies in *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* present, for our consideration, compelling theories in a very anecdotal fashion. In the introduction, Helgesen shares that the 'seed' for the book came about in the mid-seventies during a conversation with an editor at *Glamour*. Commenting on the

glut of 'power-and-how-to-get-it books' which "...just counseled women on how best to ape what men were doing' (Helgesen, 1990. p. xiii), they both recognized the lack of books investigating how women themselves really lead. Helgesen's study actually went to the source to research first-hand how women were actually leading organizations.

Helgesen's *Everyday Revolutionaries: Working Women and the Transformation of American Life* again employs the data gathering methods previously utilized as Helgesen gives voice to women in a suburb west of Chicago. Their stories of working, running homes, dealing with the changing roles of the men in their lives and their impact on American life as we know it, cannot be underestimated. "Men in America have long had the freedom to define the parameters of their lives....Now that women are no longer confined to the private sphere, they too are assuming this freedom" (Helgesen, 1998. p. 250). Helgesen reminds us that knowledge in today's labor force is the top commodity and "the emphasis on innovation, flexibility, and creativity, has made organizations more dependent than even on their people. In a neat reversal of Marxist ideology, we now find ourselves living in a capitalist economy in which we as workers own the primary means of production" (Helgesen, 2001. p. 16).

Research conducted by Zichy (2000) sought to assess a women's management style by conducting a survey of accomplished women. The study found several qualities in common among the women, such as optimism, belief in life-long learning, and intellectual strength. Zichy subsequently profiled 30 of the women she interviewed, and uncovered several leadership styles and found that women who aspire to achieve influence and power need to cultivate self-knowledge, self management, self confidence,

accomplishment and self-esteem as the building blocks along the path to leadership (Zichy, 2000, p. 13).

In a collection of essays entitled *Women on Power: Leadership Redefined* the not insignificant progress that women have made into the professional workplace over the last two decades are shared. The fact that so few women have made inroads into high ranking leadership roles in occupations such as business, politics, and sport, traditionally labeled as male jobs, is explored. The contributors pinpoint how gender has influenced and redefined today's notions of leadership and power (Freeman, 2001). Another collection of essays, entitled: *The Difference "Difference" Makes: Women and Leadership* (Rhode 2003), again looks to identify reasons why women achieve so few positions of upper tier leadership and takes a theoretical and practical approach to the differences that gender difference make, and seeks to explore ways to remedy the situation.

A series of essays entitled: *Enlightened Power: How Women are Transforming the Practice of Leadership*, (Coughlin, Wingard and Hollihan, 2005) brings together the thinking of contributors such as Helgesen, and business leaders such as Eileen Fisher, to discuss the challenges women face when they find themselves achieving positions of power. The essays compile knowledge from the annual Women in Leadership Summit, and have much to share with individuals and society in general on assuming power roles (Coughlin, Wingard and Hollihan, 2005) and are clearly focusing on how women are still managing to have a transformative effect on the practice of leadership. Moe Grzelakowski (2005) *Mother Leads Best: 50 Women Who are Changing the Way Organizations Define Leadership*. (Grzelakowski, 2005) shares stories from 50 women

executives to distill the common traits of leadership maturity these women experienced. Grzelakowski suggests that those corporations that succeed in embracing the “maternal leadership model” will ultimately gain a competitive edge.

Leadership theory and practice have evolved over time and include approaches that cover the spectrum of leadership: trait, skill, style, contingency, charisma, transaction and transformation, among others. Given the continuing underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, the embrace of finding women’s ways of leading, of difference, as a means by which women leaders can set themselves apart and bring unique tools to the task of leadership have found traction. However, the dangers of sustaining sex stereotypes inherent in setting women leaders and women’s leadership apart from traditional, male centered leadership theory and practice must also be considered.

Authentic Leadership

This study was informed by the depth and breadth of leadership theory and practice and utilized authentic leadership theory as its conceptual framework.

The very first step on the journey to credible leadership is clarifying your values - discovering those fundamental beliefs that will guide your decisions and actions along the path to success and significance. That journey involves an exploration of the inner territory where your true voice resides. It’s essential that you take yourself on this voyage because it’s the only route to authenticity and because your personal values drive your commitment to the organization and to the cause. You can’t do what you say if you don’t believe in what you’re saying (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 68).

In the *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, Kathleen Allen defined authenticity as “the condition or quality of being authentic, trustworthy, and genuine, free from hypocrisy” (Goethals and Sorenson, 2004, p. 5) and explained that to be an authentic person, one must actually possess the qualities that can be perceived by others, that is, being authentic

from the inside out. Authentic leadership is predicated upon the fact that leaders positively impact both the organization's culture and people. (Goethals and Sorenson, 2004). Others have noted that authentic leaders possess self awareness of their own values and beliefs and act accordingly (Bass et al. 1999); that effective leaders' inner conviction permeates an authentic life story (Denning, 2005) and that authentic leadership is a journey of discovery that leaders must embark upon (George, Gergen and Sims, 2007).

Authenticity is seen as a vital quality of leadership and its importance has been amplified in recent years by the corporate, organizational and political scandals that had a direct impact on the perceptions and outcomes of all constituents, not just the disgraced leaders involved. At the time of writing, a far reaching financial crisis gripped the world and examples of failed leadership permeated the political, financial, and corporate framework of society on a massive scale. Hemorrhaging financial markets, shrinking retirement plans and the bailout of major companies and banks were a regular occurrence. Juxtaposed by a presidential election in the United States that grappled with the meltdown on Wall Street and its impact on Main Street, the inadequacies of existing leadership and the search for stewardship that was actually effective and authentic, could not have been more palpable. In serving as the "root construct" (Harvey, Martinko and Gardner, 2006) of all existing forms of positive and effective leadership, authentic leadership "...transcends other theories and helps to inform them in terms of what is and is not "genuinely" good leadership" (Harvey, Martinko and Gardner, 2006, p. xxiii). Authentic leadership qualities and attributes have been linked to both ethical and transformational leadership (Coughlin, Wingard and Hollihan, 2005); and emergent and

androgyny leadership theories (Madsen, 2007). Covey presents an approach to leadership that is ‘inside out’, a principle-centered core demonstrating influence and power fueled by self control (1990). It is also depicted as an inner path in each leader’s personal journey where one’s authentic presence as a leader is “more about being than doing, it is about our orientation of character, our state of inner activity” (Jaworski, 1998, p. 185).

Authenticity has been defined as a state rather than a trait (Cameron, 2007) and the connection of authentic leadership with leading with emotional intelligence has been demonstrated by Goleman et al. (2002). Leadership effectiveness requires emotional intelligence and the four dimensions of emotional intelligence have been identified as self-awareness and self-management, both of which fall under the category of personal competence, and social awareness and relationship management, which fall under the category of social competence (Goleman et al. 2002, p. 39). Further, in terms of relationship management, Goleman states that the essential leadership skill, “the art of handling relationships well, then, begins with authenticity: acting from one’s genuine feelings. Once leaders have attuned to their own vision and values, steadied in their positive emotional range and tuned into the emotions of the group, then relationship management skills let them interact in ways that catalyze resonance” (p. 51).

A practitioner in the field, Bill George defined leadership not as style but as authenticity and viewed authentic leaders as those who lead with purpose, values and integrity, heeding the heart as well as the head. Authentic leaders focus on serving others, and empowering them. They are consistent and self-disciplined, and when their principles are tested, they refuse to compromise. They are dedicated to developing themselves because they know that “becoming a leader takes a lifetime of personal growth” (George,

2003, p. 12). George identified five essential dimensions of the authentic leader - understanding of purpose, practicing of solid values, leading with the heart, establishing connected relationships, and demonstrating self-discipline (p. 18).

Previous research on authentic leadership theory examined leadership behaviors that are characteristic of authentic leadership in three dimensions: transparency, altruistic actions and behavioral consistency (Wood, 2007). Recent studies on leadership in educational settings (Allan and Chen, 2007; Christopher, 2007; Newman, 2007) have posited authenticity at the core of leadership experience and practice and underpin how authentic educational leaders pursue a lifetime of self reflection and growth. In relation to authentic behavior in organizations, Harvey, Martinko and Gardner proposed an attributional framework with which to understand authenticity as a developmental process (Harvey, Martinko and Gardner, 2006).

The development of authentic leadership ability is an ongoing process for each individual leader. Obstacles and challenges need to be faced and overcome if outside influences and dictates are to be deflected. “Discovering our authentic leadership requires us to test ourselves, our values, and our beliefs through real-world experiences. This is not an easy process as we are constantly buffeted by the demands of the external world, the model of success that others hold out for us, and our search to discover our truth”(George, 2007, p. 65). Women in leadership positions must often grapple with the perceptions and expectations of peers and subordinates that are influenced by persistent stereotypes in relation to gender and leadership, and authenticity in leadership can be a struggle for women already in high pressured and stressful positions. Setting ethical boundaries, leading by values and gaining self-awareness involves taking time for

personal reflection or introspection. Reflecting on one's life story and experiences can assist in an understanding of them on a deeper level; so that one's life story is reframed in a coherent way (p.78). It also involves having at least one individual with whom a leader can be completely vulnerable and building a support team to enable leaders to "ground their values and help them stay on track, especially when outside forces pressure them to take another course" (p. 118).

In relation to gender and the achievement of leader/follower relational authenticity, Eagly (2005) noted that the persistent inability of women and members of "outsider groups" (Eagly, 2005) to access certain leadership roles ultimately hinders their ability to be identified by followers as legitimate representative of their values and those of their organization or community. Eagly recommended that aspiring women and outsider leaders focus on developing relational authenticity: "training should explore the legitimacy deficit that goes with the territory for people who gain leadership roles that are nontraditional for members of their group" (Eagly, p 470).

In one of a series of essays in *Enlightened Power: How Women are Transforming the Practice of Leadership*, Anderson and Shafer share that perceptions of power are embedded in our life stories. Power comes from our being, and our ability to embrace it. This is what they see as "authentic power" where there is "an alignment of personality with soul (Anderson and Shafer, 2005, p. 56). They view traditional perceptions of power as external, and the inability of the individual to make an impact due to the confines of organizational structures as stifling. The authors share personal stories in which they grapple with allowing their personal inner beliefs to demonstrate true intentions: "To be authentic, I needed to risk personal discomfort to bring a new view into being" (p. 58).

Their stories reveal how acting authentically facilitated change, but also how courage was required to reject the status quo, to risk failure, and to face the “anxiety raised by being genuine” (p. 61).

In approaching the notion of leading authentically, Nadaff defines the two components of the concept of authenticity as: “know thyself” and “express thyself” (Nadaff, 2005, p. 301). Her research on working with coaches and consultants around the globe on leadership has led to preliminary research that “provides evidence of a real link between authenticity and increased leadership effectiveness”. An analysis of findings revealed that “women are more powerfully drawn to both parts of authenticity” (p. 302). Her research has discovered two dynamics that appear to challenge women’s efforts to be fully authentic. One is that they are more concerned about taking care of others and the second is gender bias in their environments. Men seem to have less of a tendency towards introspection, yet seem to encounter fewer obstacles in the quest for authenticity. Authenticity in life and leadership is achieved through inner depth and experience: “The exploration of authenticity is a lifelong journey that manifests in ongoing evolving ways” (p. 313).

Roberts (2007) shares lessons on authentic engagement as a source of strength, gleaned from case studies of women leaders. Their ability to tap into all aspects of their identities allowed them to make unique contributions to their organizations. She describes authenticity as one of the highest virtues. Authenticity “refers to the degree of congruence between internal values and external expressions” (Roberts, 2007, p. 329). For women and minorities it is especially important as an act of “countering pressures to suppress one’s social identity” (p. 329). Authenticity has come to be valued in terms of personal

and professional life and leaders need to allow employees to utilize unique strengths, as well as embracing their own authentic selves and unique strengths in their leadership roles (p. 332). Leading authentically must be developed intentionally and is not just a matter of doing what comes naturally. Women leaders have much to offer the organization by “strategically applying the strengths they have cultivated through their professional, gendered, and cultural experiences” (p. 333). Instead of emphasizing the unique attributes of women leaders or deemphasizing gender as a factor in leadership ability, Roberts proposes that “all aspects of identity influence work goals, style and practices. It is difficult to disentangle the strengths or core competencies one has developed as a function of work experiences from those that have been formed through socialization as a member of social identity groups” (p. 333).

Authentic leadership theory and development has seen a resurgence of interest in the past several years, precipitated by the inability of existing leadership theories in accounting for or addressing the failures in leadership witnessed recently on a global scale. Further empirical and practical attention will be paid to authentic leadership theory in the coming years as effective leadership, practiced in tune with core values and self knowledge, will be much in demand and short in supply.

Women Leaders in Higher Education

The underrepresentation of women and minority leaders has received deserved attention and institutions of higher learning are acknowledging that a concerted effort to swell the ranks of leaders with representative numbers of women and minorities is needed to diversify campus leadership and prepare for impending retirements in the

coming decades. The second theme considers historical as well as recent literature and research on women leaders in higher education.

Language facilitates the development of new meaning, as well as facilitating shared and transmitted ideas, experiences and stories, and enables the participant and researcher to weave events into narrative, text with which to understand ourselves, those around us and give meaning to our world (Polkinghorne, 1988). Women leaders in education have participated in a growing number of studies and provided for interpretation and consideration their personal and experiential insights. A series of influential essays were brought together in *Cracking the Wall: Women in Higher Education Administration* (Mitchell, 1993) and recognized that while change had occurred to facilitate advancement of women in higher education administration, further change strategies were required in order to overcome barriers to success. More recently, studies have delved into topics such as the use of forgiveness in leadership (Grace-Odeye and Osula, 2007), transformational leadership, (Paternoster, 2006), the impact of children on career decisions (Persyn, 2006), higher education careers (Gerdez, 2006; Steinke, 2006), spirituality, (Harris, Ballenger and Jones, 2007), journeys to the presidency (McAtee, 2006; Rodriguez, 2006; Ross, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Newman, 2007; Williams, 2007), facing adversity (Kuhnle-Biagas, 2007) and retirement (Roberts, 2006). Such efforts “adopt research methodologies and forms of communication which express women’s voices and allow them to create and articulate their own meanings” (Marshall, 1995, p. 8).

Empirical research also utilizes participants’ lived experiences to inform and influence. Turner (2007) studied the first Mexican American, Native American and Asian

Pacific/Asian American women presidents of their colleges by conducting in-depth interviews and cross-case comparisons, in order to examine the paths each had taken on the way to the presidency and how their narratives contribute to the canon. Their stories as women of color “firsts” help pave the way for other women and underpin the power of storytelling in instilling hopefulness, self-worth and confidence between generations (Turner, p. 16). These new stories integrate narrative, and told as personal or collective narratives provide the opportunity for self analysis, change, and transformation in “the world of everyday life” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.19).

Astin and Leland’s (1999) *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*, a cross-generational study of great importance on women in leadership roles, investigated how seventy-seven women leaders considered social change, activism, historical events and issues that informed their growth over time and the change they instigated, barriers they overcame and accomplishments they contributed. The study was broadly significant in that it captured the perceptions through interviews across three generations of the participants and succeeded in informing the practice of leadership and nurtured consequent studies. Darden (2006) for example, built on Astin and Leland’s findings by honing in on those “changeable attributes” of women college presidents that bolster their success. The study aimed to provide guidance to aspiring women leaders in order to address the imbalance in leadership in terms of gender in higher education. The study focused on 18 women college presidents and succeeded in grouping changeable attributes into 15 categories including Leadership Traits and Characteristics Important to Success in the Presidency and Developing and Implementing an Effective Leadership Style (Darden, 2006). A key finding was the ongoing awareness of the influence of gender on leadership

for women presidents: “it is therefore important that women are aware of gender as a barrier and are able, as much as possible, to overcome this barrier. It is additionally important for women to assist in changing attitudes and behaviors so that, ideally, gender will someday become a non-issue” (p. 337).

Studies have been conducted on leadership in higher education to investigate demographic shifts in presidencies in community colleges in California, (Piland, and Giles, 1998) and the relationship between leadership style and burnout among college and university presidents (Gubanich, 1991). In 1996, Jablonski considered *The Leadership Challenge for Women College Presidents* in relation to gender issues, decision-making, leadership styles and the individual power and its use by the college president. The researcher investigated the leadership styles of seven women college presidents and juxtaposed the findings with the perceptions of faculty with whom the women college presidents worked. The description of the leadership style of the women college president depended upon the perception of the participant. A clear discrepancy between the self description of the president (collaborative, inclusive) and the description of the president provided by the faculty member (hierarchical, task- focused) emerged.

A survey conducted by the *Chronicle of Education* in 2005 sought to discover what college presidents were thinking in relation to their jobs, their lives and about higher education in general. The study reached 6 out of 10 college presidents at that time. One male respondent described the university presidency as “one of the true dream jobs left”. Given the fact that most college presidents came to the position via the post of provost, balancing the budget was the top indicator given by the respondents as a measure of their job performance. The survey revealed that the college presidency has become

increasingly similar to that of the corporate CEO in recent decades. The necessity for an intentional approach to leadership development was cited by a female president respondent: “As leadership talent is recognized, current presidents should take more initiative in mentoring senior and junior administrators” (Selingo, p. A26).

The importance of leading in a time of crisis came to the fore in 2007 and 2008 when several tragic campus shootings took place in the United States. Crisis management ability is now a skill that search committees look for in a potential president and disaster training is now high on the list of priorities for college presidents (Fain, 2007, p. A17). Scott S. Cowen, Tulane University’s President after Hurricane Katrina, 2006, proposed four tenets of presidential leadership – intellectual and moral leadership, political skills, and corporate-style managerial abilities. Mr. Ryan, former chancellor of SUNY stressed the importance of finding someone who is authentic. He and other college chiefs cite authenticity and candor as crucial in facing calamity on campus (Fain, p. A17). A growing need for college presidents to “successfully diagnose and confront areas of chronic conflict” (Bennis and Movius 2006, p. B20) was evident, in relation to the major trends emerging around the rise of science and technology, campus entrepreneurship and individual mobility. The failure of leadership was amplified in 2007 and the consequences of leadership inaction swift at Eastern Michigan University after the mishandling of a campus murder resulted in the resignation of three administrators, including the president. (Lipka, 2007).

Women college presidents were urged to work towards improving the climate on campus for all women by Janet L. Holmgren. In “Growing the Women-Friendly Campus: The President's Role”, Holmgren, herself a sitting college president, reviewed the state of

affairs for women in higher education and has reason for both guarded optimism and concern (Holmgren, 2000). Holmgren viewed the woman president as ideally situated to make changes and strive for true gender equity on their campuses as a way to contribute to efforts to counter the greater inequities in relation to women in leadership in higher education.

Phifer (2000) conducted a study of self-assessment leadership competencies of women administrators in higher education. The women leaders studied provided insights into self-perceived competencies in leadership such as problem analysis, written expression and cultural and philosophical values. They also shared self-perceived leadership competencies that needed further development in the areas of delegation, staff development, and resource allocation and information collection. The study found that self assessment abilities of women leaders in higher education in relation to their strengths and weaknesses as leader bode well for their continued development and participation as leaders. Panico (2003) conducted a qualitative study of women leaders in higher education to uncover their experiences in supervising other women. The study found that women leaders utilized a relationship oriented approach to the tasks of leadership and supervision and were at times conflicted or in a “double bind” in utilizing traditional feminist leadership skills or masculine leadership skills in order to be successful in supervising other women. Waring (2003) conducted a study in on the origins and conceptions of leadership of African American female college presidents. The researcher conducted interviews with 12 African American women presidents in a discussion of the role that educational background, class and the process of emerging as leaders had on their views of themselves as leaders. The study found that the role of race

was a key component in their identities and motivated them to take on positions of leadership. Wootton (2006) conducted in-depth interviews with six women administrators in higher education to explore successful female leadership and revealed the importance of dedication to the institution at which they serve as well as internal motivation factors.

A significant report was published in 2001 revealing the perspectives of women presidents on the peak position in higher education and how successful college presidencies are influenced by gender differences. The report was a culmination of data gathered by the Office of Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education at a series of roundtable events held in 1998 and 1999 with 110 women presidents participating in conversations and sharing their personal insights into challenges and gender issues in relation to the college presidency. The report revealed that women college presidents encountered gender specific difficulties including doubt about their ability to lead as a woman president as perceived by the board and the gender factor of juggling personal and professional duties was evident. Indeed, the gender factor was second on the list of five areas that the women presidents spent focusing on. Working with the board was first (Brown, Van Ummersen and Sturnick, 2001). The roundtables and subsequent report confirmed that women presidents acknowledge and experience a gender factor in relation to the presidency but also the importance of mentoring and being mentored as part of professional development for women. This report brought together the lived experiences and stories of women college presidents from across the United States. Common themes emerged as did differences in experience. Further qualitative studies that engage women presidents continue to expand the knowledge and learning in this area, which for each woman college president is ongoing:

“We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be” (Polkinghorne 1988:150).

Gender Equity and Professional Development

“Women have made significant inroads into the senior leadership of American higher education, but parity for women presidents has yet to be reached. If the proportion of women who serve as senior administrators and as full-time faculty provides a standard for equity, then women remain underrepresented as presidents. Forty-five percent of faculty and senior administrative staff in higher education are women. These data suggest that more leadership development, mentoring, and networking- as well as greater efforts by institutions to identify and attract women leaders- are needed to increase the representation of women among college presidents” (American Council on Education, 2007, p.18).

This section will consider issues around gender equity for women leaders, as well as the importance of professional development in the success of women who have achieved leadership roles. Topics included within gender equity, such as pay equity and comparable worth, sex discrimination and equal opportunity, will be reviewed. In relation to professional development, the role of mentorship and staff development and training will be presented with regard to women and leadership success.

The underrepresentation of women leaders in all fields is framed by many factors, and the continuing impact of sex stereotypes and discrimination has been researched widely. Heatley investigated the significance of attitudes and same gender biases encountered by women managers by looking at the relationship between sex-role orientation and barriers to career advancement (Heatley, 1992). Gerdez (2006) conducted

a qualitative study of women who began their careers in higher education in the 1970s in order to obtain a retrospective of their experiences. Analyzing individual responses to open ended questions from 98 participants, Gerdez utilized an inductive process to categorize answers and determine themes. The study found that while changes had been considerable, and improvements achieved over time, biases remain and the struggle for equal opportunity continues. A study conducted by the American Association of University Women in 2004 examined cases of sex discrimination in academia (AAUW Educational Foundation, 2004). The report considered eighteen cases of sex discrimination in tenure decisions since 1981. In describing the adoption of the litigation route, the report acknowledged that the personal and professional price tags for plaintiffs in these cases were considerable but “the process does have intangible rewards that come from doing what one believes is right” (AAUW Educational Foundation, p. 63).

In their research on gender differences, Goffee and Jones found that women are prone to being stereotyped according to differences (Goffee and Jones, 2000). Labels such as “helper, nurturer or seductress” prevent women from defining their own differences. Older women try to avoid being stereotyped by disappearing, making themselves invisible, wearing clothing that disguises their bodies, or talk tough to blend in with men. This reduces the chance for women to be seen as leadership potential and they are not promoting their real selves and their real differences. Collective resistance to stereotypes is a challenge when women are busy just trying to survive. Playing into stereotypes for advantage furthers harmful stereotypes and “continues to limit opportunities for other women to communicate their genuine personal differences” (p. 50).

A study, conducted by Catalyst in 2005, among male and female leaders in corporate settings, found that perceptions of leadership competencies continue to be influenced by such stereotypes as women being better at caring activities, and men being better at taking charge. Respondents, both male and female leaders in business, perceived women to be more competent in areas that are seen as traditionally feminine, such as supporting, mentoring, team-building, and inspiring, and perceived men to be more competent in areas traditionally seen as masculine, such as influencing, problem solving and delegating. The study also considered factors that put women at high risk of being stereotyped, regardless of individual competencies. For example, senior women managers who report to women tend to hold more stereotypical views of women leaders than those who report to men. As a result, hiring women into management positions will not eliminate stereotypes, nor will having exposure to women leaders. Steps must be taken by organizations to eradicate stereotypic bias (Catalyst, 2005, p. 21).

The *Economist* (2005) dedicated a special section entitled “Women in business: The conundrum of the glass ceiling” and investigated the issues pertaining to the static number of women in positions of upper management across all industries, and the very real facts in terms of pay inequity that women are faced with. Women constitute 46.5% of the American workforce, but women only account for 8% of top managers and on average women managers’ salary is 72% of that earned by their male colleagues (Economist, p. 63). The section noted that the conundrum that is the glass ceiling has seen little to crack it, never mind shatter it. Progress has been “glacially slow” (Economist, p. 63). Indeed, “The glass-ceiling phenomenon is proving peculiarly persistent. The top of the corporate ladder remains stubbornly male, and the few women

who reach it are paid significantly less than the men that they join there” (Economist, p. 63). The article considered such factors as the “myth of dropping out”, the challenges faced by women who seek re-entry after a career brake for family reasons and the reality that time accumulated is very much tied into career advancement (*The Economist*, 2005). Possible solutions were presented and included emphasizing that the onus should be on business to help retain women employees by giving allowances for carers of children and the elderly, by providing more flexible work hours, and offering the same to male care givers. The section concluded with the imperative for employers to begin to recognize that women have different needs (*The Economist*, July 23-29, 2005, p. 63-65). Other researchers concur with this finding. As researcher Aparna Mitra stated: “Since marital status is still an important and negative indicator of women’s position at the workplace, job flexibility and child care should be important issues to consider at the workplace” (Mitra, 2003, p. 1042).

The reality of pay inequity is well documented and frequently discussed. Recent data retrieved from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the area of Wages by Area and Occupation, specifically looking at National Wage Data, by occupation and gender, does not show much improvement in relation to equity. Data for men and for women in 200 occupations (from the Current Population Survey) for household data and annual averages, provides the median weekly earnings of management, professional and related occupations. For the total number of workers in this category of 39,147, the median weekly earning was \$996. Of this total, 19,222 were men, and the median weekly earning for men was \$1,187. Of this total, 19,924 were women, and the median weekly earning for women was \$858. Even though there are

more women in this category, they still earn just over 72% of what men earn. (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

There has been considerable analysis regarding comparable worth (Becker, 1957), labor economics (Bellanote, 1976) equal compensation for women (Berry, 1994) and ongoing pay inequity (Bonella, 2003). Joan Acker made a significant contribution to this area with an empirical study to tackle the notion of equal pay for work of equal value, identify gender-based pay issues and suggest solutions. Acker's work documented an expansive study undertaken by the State of Oregon and revealed the political intricacies, union clout and ingrained biases involved (Acker, 1989).

Impediments to equal access for women to positions of responsibility with equitable pay are many and have been identified by researchers and thinkers cited above. Certain industries achieve better rates of equality (e.g. Marketing) than others and those women, all be they the significant minority, who achieve substantial positions of leadership face a lesser gender wage gap than those in lower tier management positions. As Aparma Mitra's study in 2003 shows "... the nature and hierarchy of supervisory positions are important determinants in improving the status of women professionals and reducing the significant gender wage gap in the labor market" (Mitra, 2003, p. 1042).

Indeed, it is significant that Mitra's research reveals that:

...supply side variables such as education, cognitive skills, and work experience have little contribution in mitigating the significant gender wage gap. Instead, personal attributes such as shyness and marital status exert negative effects on the wages of professional women. Thus statistical discrimination on the part of employers may restrict the upward mobility of qualified female workers...gender segregation and the allocation of differential supervisory positions among professionals may contribute primarily to the lower earnings of female supervisors and the unequal pay between males and females (Mitra, 2003, p.1042-1043).

Corporate culture will need to undergo meaningful changes in order to achieve true equity for women in terms of achieving positions of authority and requisite remuneration.

Institutions of higher learning continue to have challenges in diversifying faculty and leadership. Chliwniak investigated the phenomenon of cultural norming that succeeds in keeping alternate ideas out of the higher education equation and constitutes what is essentially the essence of the gender gap problem in higher education institutional culture (Chliwniak, 1997). The study analyzed the gender gap that exists in leadership in higher education and proposed that addressing the disparity would succeed in a shift from task and goal orientation to an embrace of the individual and the process, which entails a fundamental shift from masculine modes of operation to the feminine. For Chliwniak, this shift is demonstrative of transformational leadership, and its success requires the dismantling of existing organizational strictures that exclude, suppress or otherwise adversely affect the potential of women faculty and administrators. This endeavor requires the unification of all female constituents in a collective acknowledgement of the inequity of their status in institutions of higher learning as well as a call to action, in such areas as comparable worth, sexual harassment and tenure acquisition (Chliwniak, 1997).

A qualitative study conducted by Sturnick in 1999, entitled “*Women who Lead: Persevering in the Face of Skepticism*”, gleaned insights from seven women college presidents and chancellors in which they described their most significant leadership challenges. The participants revealed the importance of risk-taking, communicating shared values and vision rather than individual power in their leadership actions and discussed the existence of double standards in higher education in relation to women’s leadership. Other challenges cited by the leaders included women's long-range

perspective, coping with large-scale change, discrepancies between the expectations of men and women leaders, and dealing with stereotyping (Sturnick, 1999).

Valian's work on women and leadership (1999) brings together research from disparate fields to glean insights into the slow pace at which women achieve career advancement, the disparity between men and women in career advancement and on the existing gender schemas that men and women hold that bias perceptions of women's performance in the workplace, and serve to advantage men and disadvantage women. Valian exposed how our gender schemas for women do not include professional competence by conducting an experiment in an all female college classroom. The experiment showed that the female students rated women lower than men on typical characteristics of successful managers (Valian, p. 125). In academia, gender schemas were found to have disadvantaged women in many ways, starting upon graduation from a prestigious institution through promotion, tenure, advancement, and earnings. Men fared better in all areas (Valian, p. 18). The sex gap in earnings exists across and within occupations, does not diminish with educational achievement, exists across ethnic and racial groups and is a presence across national cultures (Powell and Graves, 2003, p. 30). Recent research on the continued pay gap between men and women substantiates Valian's findings and highlights how little things have changed in a decade. In 2007, the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation published "*Behind the Pay Gap*". The report by Goldberg and Hill found that the pay gap between men and women was already established one year after graduation from college, earning approximately 80% of what their male counterparts earned (Goldberg and Hill, 2007, p.10). The report, having accounted for the possible explanations for the pay gap, such as

hours worked, and type of field chosen, found that a 5% percentage of the disparity remained. Acknowledging that discrimination cannot be measured directly, the authors conclude that “it is reasonable to assume that this pay gap is the product of gender discrimination” (Goldberg and Hill, 2007, p. 18).

The unique issues for women and minorities in management have been identified (Morrison and Von Glinow, 1995) and research has grown exponentially. Many studies acknowledge the importance of work/life experiences, mentoring, networking and professional development along the path to attaining a leadership role. Melendez (1996) provides the “Outsider’s View of Leadership” in which she shares her reality as a Puerto Rican woman in a society where she is and has always been in the minority. Everything she is and does is “colored or informed by” that fact (Melendez, 1996, p. 294). Melendez explains that “leadership which is observed primarily as a set of behaviors, is influenced, if not determined, by culture and one’s life experiences” (p. 294). Melendez shared examples of leadership opportunities that were presented to her at a young age in church, at school, and further, throughout her work experiences. She identifies the challenge of relaying a vision as presenting an obstacle for people of color, women, individuals with disabilities, and others who are not cast in the traditional mold (p. 297). “Women and people of color need to have the usual set of characteristics and skills that all leaders must have in some measure, and they must be able to cross barriers of culture and experience to exercise leadership and engage others in their vision.” (p. 297). Melendez emphasizes how self-knowledge for women and people of color must work in tandem with a broad knowledge of “male and majority culture and styles” (p. 302).

Mentoring has been seen as a catalyst for advancement (Hubbart and Robinson, 1996), and an essential in a hypercompetitive world (DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees, 2008). Competition felt by professional service firms has seen mentorship of junior professionals, a tool with which to control talent attrition, recently “fall by the wayside” (p. 116). Successful mentoring programs include top tier and second tier professionals in an effort to provide constant constructive feedback. Professionals should play a role in securing mentors and participate in co-mentoring opportunities internally. Mentors play a key role in the developmental experience of women by contributing to both career success and satisfaction (Powell, 2000, p. 244). *Women in Higher Education*, the newsletter, frequently offers articles on professional development and mentorship. A compendium of articles on this and other subjects related to women in higher education and leadership (Wenniger and Conroy, 2001) now serves as a resource and reference.

In a comprehensive study on mentorship and women college presidents, Brown considered its importance in administrative advancement for women (Brown, 2005) by examining mentoring relationships among female college presidents. The study surveyed a sample of 91 female presidents at selected independent colleges in order to obtain data on mentor and mentee relationships and demographics. Findings demonstrate that a majority of the respondents had had primary mentors (56%) and also served as mentors (64.4%) to aspiring leaders. Brown found that mentoring and multiple mentoring relationships were essential in advancing women through the ranks of higher education administration and for increasing the number of female college presidents (Brown, 2005).

In educational leadership programs, issues around gender and sexuality are often marginalized and need to be acknowledged as lived reality of administrators on the job in

educational institutions (Marshall, 2006). The American Council on Education provides training and support for prospective or aspiring college presidents. The Millennium Leadership Institute has focused on training college presidents from underrepresented minority groups since 1999. Described by Leubsdorf as a crash course for “the loneliest job on the campus” (Leubsdorf, 2006, p. A18), such training underpins the importance of preparation for a complex job such as the presidency of an institution of higher learning.

Research on women college presidents conducted by Susan Madsen (2008) utilized a phenomenological approach in order to explore the “lived experiences” of her participants; obtain an in-depth understanding of their lives, experiences and perceptions; move beyond actual things they do or did and pursue how these lived experiences reveal underlying meanings and influences (Madsen, 2008, p. 7). Madsen found that women presidents followed informal or nonlinear career paths and did not seek out leadership positions intentionally (Madsen, 2008, p. 143). Lived experiences, during childhood, college, and adult years, contributed to the personal leadership development of the women presidents who participated in the study and Madsen shared how, as researcher, it was interesting to “listen to how these women interpreted their college experiences so that they could learn leadership abilities and competencies” (Madsen, 2008, p. 127).

Theme four juxtaposed issues surrounding gender equity with the importance of professional development for women leaders. The ongoing underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership is influenced by many factors, but the impact of sex stereotyping and acts of discrimination encountered by women continues to be felt. In addition to underrepresentation in leadership positions in many fields, women earn less for comparable work and continue to face barriers to success and goal attainment.

Research has highlighted the importance of mentoring and professional development for women as being central to addressing gender inequity and barriers to success for aspiring women leaders.

Summary

Research cited above has shown that progress has been made by women into the professional workplace over the last two decades. However, there is a continuing underrepresentation of women in leadership in many fields. Some researchers have investigated how gender has influenced and redefined today's notions of leadership and power (Freeman, 2001). Others have sought to identify the reasons why women achieve so few positions of upper tier leadership (Heilman, 1997), have taken theoretical and practical approaches to gender difference (Oakley, 2000; Powell, 1993), and have sought to explore ways to remedy the situation (Rhode, 2003). A review of the literature for this study presented research and writing in relation to four themes and provided background and context to the problem, and informed the methodology and interview questions.

Women continue to be underrepresented in college presidencies. Only one in five college presidents of four year or graduate colleges or universities is a woman and there is a pronounced need to diversify the college presidency (American Council on Education, 2007). Further empirical focus on those women college presidents that succeeded in achieving the peak leadership role was needed. An analysis of their perceptions regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women among their ranks, the strengths and the skills used to obtain the presidency, the challenges and barriers overcome en route to the presidency, and the work/life experiences that contribute to their roles as college president makes a further contribution to the canon on women and

leadership. This study focused on the “one in five” who achieved the peak leadership role in four-year or graduate or research colleges and universities and provided further data from models of influence and inspiration for women leaders who aspire to ascend to the college presidency one day.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Restatement of the Problem

The field of education, which attracts considerably more women than other careers, continues to see an underrepresentation of women as presidents of colleges and universities. Four women presidents of the Ivy League universities in 2007, an unprecedented number, distracts from the fact that women still lag behind in achieving the position of president at institutions of higher learning. Women continue to hold, disproportionate to men, fewer leadership positions in the workplace of today. Though their numbers are particularly significant in the business sector, few succeed in achieving the peak leadership role of Chief Executive Officer.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted to conduct this study in order to explore the research questions and elicit descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants and identify emerging themes. As with most qualitative research, it was the intent of the study to reflect the individual and unique perspective of the participants in order “to develop patterns and relationships of meaning” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). A qualitative research design enabled the researcher to meet the study participants in their work settings, conduct an in-depth interview and comprehensive analysis of data gathered to reveal themes, challenges and solutions. This research design was chosen in order to provide rich answers and detail to the study’s research questions.

The qualitative research methodology employed in this study involved an open ended search for data, and an ongoing analysis of the data supplied by participants from

interviews, field notes taken by the researcher and memos written to document analysis insights and personal reflections. The provision of transcripts of interviews conducted by the researcher to the participants allowed the researcher to gather input and feedback to supplement data analysis and interpretation. Considerable interpretation, reflection and understanding of the data collected were involved in the data analysis of this study. Data generated from lived experiences shared by the participants are therefore constructions or interpretations.

The researcher entered the study firm in the knowledge that there is “no “pure,” “raw” data, uncontaminated by human thought and actions, and the significance of the data depends on how material fits into the architecture of corroborating data” (Freeman et al, 2007, p. 27). Qualitative data and information are by definition interpretations made by participants as they answer questions or by researchers as they write up their observations. It is acknowledged that neither participant nor researcher can achieve neutrality in a qualitative research design “because...they are always positioned culturally, historically and theoretically” (p. 27).

Population and Sample

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in higher education is punctuated by the exceptional women who have succeeded. As stated above, the most recent study of college presidents conducted by the American Council on Education found that 23% of all college presidencies in the United States in 2006 were held by women. Excluding two year or community colleges, 20% of four year or graduate or research colleges and universities were led by women. This study focused on the “one in five” women college and university presidents who achieved the pinnacle of leadership

positions in their institutions of higher education “...all notions of human agency are culturally constructed and are matters of empirical investigation in any society” (Marcus and Fischer 1999, p. 48).

Upon receipt of the letter of approval (Appendix A) to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), a purposive sample of this population was selected by the researcher for this study. The participants were selected from the population of women who currently serve as presidents of four year or graduate or research colleges or universities in the western United States. Invitation letters (Appendix B) were sent to eighteen women presidents in order to secure at least 8 participants. Follow up letters (Appendix C) were sent to those who did not respond to the initial invitation letter. Eleven presidents agreed to participate in the study, five declined the invitation citing busy schedules and two did not respond to the invitation letter or the follow up letter.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the participants as the primary source of data collection. Qualitative research studies “...focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning. This requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon – how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, and make sense of it, and talk about it with others. To gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have “lived experience” as opposed to second hand experience” (Patton, p. 104).

The interviews were conducted with participants in their natural work setting, which afforded the researcher the opportunity to assemble supplemental detail about the participants in their on-the-job environments (Creswell, 2003, p. 181). The approach of conducting interviews in each participant's natural work setting informed and shaped the study. The interview questions (Appendix D) were emailed to each participant one week in advance of the interview date. An audio taped in-depth interview with each participant was conducted. Interview questions were crafted with the purpose of exploring the perceptions of the participants and affording them the opportunity to share lived experiences in relation to the research questions. Open ended questions were employed to allow the participants to "best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (Creswell 2005, p. 214).

Validity

Descriptive validity involved the accurate collection and account of data obtained from the interview conducted in each participant's work setting, and extensive researcher field notes and memos written throughout the data collection and coding processes. In addition, the review and approval of interview transcripts engaged the participants in validating data. Approaching data analysis acknowledged that "interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes the interpretation" (Patton, p. 106). Interpretive validity was achieved by a process of data analysis that was methodical and logical and reflected in the data itself. A purposeful use of direct quotes and vignettes from the interviews in the participants' own words was employed to support this endeavor. Triangulation, involving the analysis of data within each interview initially, and cross-interview subsequently, to determine convergence and divergence was

supplemented with references to data and findings from parallel empirical research conducted on these or similar topics. Member checks conducted assisted in identifying disconfirming evidence and peer debriefing within a dissertation support group provided the opportunity to share interpretations and solicit feedback. A careful persistence was required of the researcher in striving towards validity achievement. Finally, an external auditor reviewed the study to provide an assessment of the data collection, coding, analysis and interpretation at the conclusion of the study.

Reliability

Interview protocol was employed; comprehensive field notes were taken while on site with the participants in their natural work setting. Memos were written throughout the study documenting the researcher's observations, interpretations and conclusions, and the review of the transcripts by the participants for accuracy and feedback also assisted in determining reliability: "In qualitative studies, researchers are concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data. Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study (Bogden and Biklen, p. 40).

Data Collection

In order to answer the research questions for this study, data collection was achieved through utilization of a qualitative approach, by conducting an in-depth interview with each participant on campus in their natural work setting. A letter inviting participation was sent to a purposive sample of women college presidents in the western United States. Once each participant was confirmed, a mutually convenient date and time was set in order to conduct the interviews during the summer of 2008. Seven interviews

were conducted in May 2008, and four were conducted in June, 2008. The interview questions were emailed to each participant approximately one week before the date of the interview. On the date of the interview, the researcher met in the participant's office on campus where they serve as college president. Each participant was provided with a copy of the Human Subjects Bill of Rights (see Appendix E) and each then reviewed and signed a voluntary Informed Consent Form (see Appendix F). The researcher set up voice recording equipment and asked the participant open-ended questions. After the interview the researcher sent each participant a thank you card. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and approximately three weeks after the original interview date, a letter (see Appendix G) and a copy of the transcript of the interview were sent to each participant for review and approval. A stamped addressed envelope and transcript approval card (see Appendix H) were included in the mailing. The card gave the participants the option of approving the transcript or approving the transcript with edits. Participants returned pages with edits in the stamped addressed envelope to the researcher. Corrections and changes were then made to the original transcripts and a soft copy of the final approved transcript was emailed to each participant for their files. Once the interviews were conducted, audio recordings transcribed, and participant review and approval of transcripts completed, the researcher commenced data analysis and interpretation.

The interview was the primary mode of data collection and was employed to garner descriptive data in the participants "own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Patton, p. 103). Data collected from the interviews, as well as feedback from the participants upon review of the transcripts of the interviews, was supplemented by extensive field notes and reflective

memos generated by the researcher throughout the data collection process. While qualitative researchers are as conscientious as possible as they approach the interview and conduct interactions with the participant in a natural fashion, “observer effect” (Creswell, 2003, p. 38) was a factor in data collection in the qualitative study. A constructivist approach to data collection in the qualitative study acknowledges the role of the researcher in influencing the setting and interview content to some degree. Corollary to this, the research is also informed by the participant, the lived experiences they offer in their responses to open-ended questions and then by the insights revealed by the data. The qualitative researcher must be “open to being shaped by the research experience and to having your thinking be informed by the data” (Creswell, p. 38).

In adopting a qualitative approach to this study of women college presidents, the lived experiences of the participants were seen as intricately linked to their leadership roles and their perceptions regarding their leadership positions in higher education where women are underrepresented. As Roberts stated: “To view identity as a source of strength contrasts with many discussions of gender, race diversity and leadership, in which cultural difference is considered irrelevant at best or problematic at worst” (p. 350). Considering that people have always explored different roles and parts of their identities in different contexts, it is important to see conversation as a generative force and acknowledge “the critical role of conversation in shaping our lives” (Brown, 2005, p. 21). The constructivist approach to conducting this study considered the dual role of the researcher and participants in a process of engagement that facilitates the sharing of lived experience, and perceptions and opening up to conversation: “It takes two to story”. (Kearney, 2002, p. 45).

Data Analysis

The research questions for this study focused on revealing the perceptions of women college presidents in relation to the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; the strengths and skills utilized to achieve the presidency, the challenges and barriers overcome on the way to achieving the position of college president and whether work/life experiences contribute to their authentic leadership roles as college presidents.

Specific interview questions were crafted in order to obtain data to answer each of the study's research questions as follows:

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions of women presidents in higher education regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in college presidencies?

The interview questions employed were:

- The American Council on Education report published last year found that in 2006 only 23% of college presidencies are held by women, even though they hold 45% of positions considered as “pipeline” to the top. Why do you think there is a continuing underrepresentation of women college presidents?
- When you exclude two year or community colleges from the percentage, only one in five four-year or graduate college presidencies is held by a woman, like you. What do you think about that?
- What contribution, if any, can women who currently hold the position of college president make to address the underrepresentation of women in college presidencies?

Research Question 2. What were the strengths and skills women utilized to achieve the position of president in higher education?

The interview questions employed were:

- What type of strengths and skills do women need in order to make it to the college presidency?
- What skills or strengths were particularly important for you personally?
- How can women who aspire to the college presidency obtain these strengths and skills?

Research Question 3. What were the challenges and barriers overcome by women in order to achieve the position of president in higher education?

The interview questions employed were:

- In order to achieve the position of college president, what are some of the challenges and barriers that women need to overcome?
- What were the challenges and barriers that were particularly significant for you personally?
- What can women who aspire to the college presidency do to overcome these challenges and barriers?

Research Question 4. What work/life experiences contributed to the authentic leadership role of women presidents in higher education?

The interview questions employed were:

- Before you became a college president what were some of the work experiences that you had?
- How do your previous work experiences help you in your current leadership role?

- You have had a varied and active life that continues with your current role as college president. What are some of your previous life experiences that have an impact on you as a leader?
- How do these life experiences contribute to your leadership as a college president?
- In relation to leadership, what do you think authenticity is?
- What is it like to be a college president?

Data obtained from interviews conducted one on one with each woman college president participant was transcribed, coded and analyzed. In addition, during data collection, field notes and memos written by the researcher were typed and analyzed. Once all interviews were completed, transcribed and the transcripts reviewed and approved by each participant, data analysis involved detailed reading, coding and recoding of field notes, memos and interview transcripts. Coding involved highlighting and transcribing key words and phrases on a hard copy of each transcript. Descriptive vignettes and quotes were highlighted for use in the narrative of findings. Once coding of each transcript was completed, key words and phrases were transcribed separately and upon review of all 11 transcripts, a data analysis of the words and phrases resulted in their categorization into subsequent themes that emerged from the data.

Throughout data analysis the study's research questions framed the process of identifying themes in order to identify the perceptions of the participants regarding the underrepresentation of women in college presidencies, the challenges and barriers overcome en route to the presidency, the strengths and skills employed to obtain the presidency, and the work/life experiences that contribute to their leadership roles as

college presidents. During data analysis, the conceptual framework of authentic leadership was utilized as a lens through which the researcher identified connections or disconnects of the participants' lived experiences with the literature.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is an administrator at a university in the western United States and has worked in the field of education in various capacities for the past fifteen years. As the researcher gained responsibility and management experience over the last several years she realized that the university at which she worked was rather an anomaly. Led by a woman president, with a representative and sizable number of women in upper management positions, the university appeared to reflect the proportion of women working in higher education in the United States. However, over time the researcher learned that women were underrepresented in college presidencies. Instead of leading the charge, the lack of women in peak leadership roles in higher education reflected the reality of women in other industries. The researcher decided early in doctoral studies to research this situation and dedicate efforts in the dissertation topic to contribute to the growing canon on women and leadership and women leaders in higher education in particular. The release of the American Council on Education report on the American College President in 2007 as cited above solidified this focus.

The researcher's interests in women's issues culminated in graduate studies in Ireland when the researcher obtained an M.A. in Women's Studies from the then newly launched program at University College Dublin. Later, doctoral studies in leadership allowed the researcher to reengage with women's issues as they relate to higher education. The researcher is a member of the American Association of University

Women which has a mission to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education and research. By studying those women who have made it, who broke through the barrier, who succeeded to the college presidency of non associate colleges, the researcher purposively targeted the “one in five”, the women that lead four year or graduate or research colleges or universities in order to glean their perceptions and insights.

The researcher understood from the beginning that the role as researcher was intricately connected to this study and accepted that her own work and life experiences influenced her perspective. At the same time, the researcher made every effort to pinpoint biases and endeavored not to allow any preconceptions about women and leadership to influence data interpretation. The researcher employed the efforts of colleagues and an external auditor to check coding and interpretation during data analysis and reporting of findings. It is the researcher’s belief that lived experiences and insights of the women presidents who participated in the study make a timely contribution to the growing canon on women and leadership in higher education and elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This study analyzed the perceptions of women college presidents of four year or research or graduate colleges and universities regarding the underrepresentation of women in college presidencies, the strengths and skills required; the challenges and barriers to be overcome and how work/life experiences contribute to the authentic leadership of the woman college president. Data secured from eleven participants was analyzed utilizing the methodology outlined in the previous chapter.

Participant Profile and Description

Eleven participants shared their perceptions in this qualitative study. They led institutions of varying size and scope. Some were first time college presidents and some had served in the role before. Some had only held the role for a short time and more had held the role for several years. Two were new to the upper tier of higher education administration and three were close to stepping down from it and retiring. All of the participants lead four year or research or graduate institutions of higher learning and all of them generously shared their perceptions and insights to inform this study and answer its research questions. A short profile will introduce each of the study's eleven participants and will be followed by a presentation of the study's findings. The participants will be referred to in the order in which the researcher interviewed them for the purposes of identification in reporting i.e. President 1 was also the first participant interviewed by the researcher.

President 1

I think having a deep and passionate love of education (is important), enjoying communicating why education is really America's most valuable resource. I like to speak to groups. I enjoy writing. I am interested in curriculum development, and I also enjoy fundraising, and I try to the degree possible to come up with creative solutions to particular problems, and that kind of creative thinking is something that I really enjoy (President 1).

President 1 leads a private four-year liberal arts college with a very diverse student body of approximately 800. She has held the presidency for over 6 years. Prior to joining the institution, she served in senior administrative roles such as Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean and Director at other colleges and universities. Under her leadership the college's reputation has grown and its majors and facilities have expanded.

President 1 is married and is a mother. Her parents were college educated and they worked in the field of education. She grew up very much aware of the importance of education to her family and ultimately, to her life and career. For President 1, serving as the college president for her institution is:

...an incredible privilege, an enormous privilege to be placed in a position where people trust you and have placed their loyalty in you and to work as a role model and to have the opportunity to make hopefully a positive effect and impact. It is a profound privilege, and it is a joyous experience. I felt that way since my first day, and I still feel that way. I am incredibly honored to be a part of this institution, and I take what I do very, very seriously, and at the same time I enjoy it enormously (President 1).

President 2

I think it's much better to have some discipline about it and reserve time for yourself. But it really means that you have to be very disciplined about it. And you know, for me, I try to get an hour of exercise, I mean, intensive aerobic exercise, every day. And that's sanity for me. And you know, so like tomorrow, so we're starting our alumni weekend. So I'm going to be in alumni events non-stop from tomorrow at lunchtime through Sunday night. But I will get to the gym

for an hour every day one way or another. And I will just miss something, and that's okay (President 2).

President 2 is the president of a private four year college with a student body of over 700 and has held the position for over two years. She had previously held the role of Dean at an Ivy League school, and other senior administrative positions at several universities. President 2 also has considerable experience in industry in the private sector.

President 2 is married and is a mother. Her father played an important role in her outlook on life. For example, President 2 stated that her father's influence and strength had a lot to do with her "going in directions that were non-traditional for women" in that if she was told that girls weren't allowed to do something, she would instead pursue that course of action. Her mother's influence was also significant and as both her parents were college educated, she was very aware of the importance of education growing up. For example President 2 shared that her parents gave her a "sense of belief that I could do anything," with all the confidence and simultaneous pressure that comes with such expectations. President 2 also shared that her mother put her career on hold in order to raise her children and as a result found herself struggling when she tried to reenter her field and the workforce later in life. This was a major influence on the career drive of President 2: "But my entire life I saw that she was held back because she stopped doing research while she had children. And so I was sure from a very early age that I wanted to have children, but I was absolutely determined that I would not stop working while I had children, because I didn't want to go through what my mother had gone through (President 2)".

For President 2, the role of president is never boring, is fun and inspirational. There are challenges and tough decisions to be made but “the fact that it is so challenging contributes to the high”.

President 3

(In relation to focusing on individuals) I just believe that with all my heart in every strategic plan that I have ever led starts with those premises and that’s why I think I’ve been pretty good at getting buy-in from people. I really do. And I’m not bragging, it’s just a fact. Because they do it. I provide the vision; I provide the belief in them – a strong belief in them that I have. I try to set up an environment where they can more easily get their work done, but it’s them – they’re doing it – and it’s exciting. And, you, as president – have got to take joy in that. And that’s why you never care who gets the credit (President 3).

President 3 leads a nonprofit, independent, graduate university with approximately 1,500 students. She has served as president for over 8 years. Prior to joining the university, she served as Chancellor for 9 years at a major land grant institution and held senior administrative positions such as Vice President for Academic Affairs, at other universities. She is the recipient of many grants and awards.

President 3 is married and is a mother. She shared that her mother, who was college educated and worked in the field of education, was a major influence in her life. For example, the mother of President 3 believed that “people did things, not just men” and instilled in her children a “can-do” attitude, stressing that women’s career goals were not to be defined by anyone else in terms of what was possible, or acceptable [in a woman’s career]. President 3 felt fortunate to have benefited from education during a time when it was not at all clear that having a career was an option for women. Coupled with considerable support from her husband in the home while raising her children, her focus was always on obtaining an education and a career in teaching. Graduate level

work followed and she benefited from “a solid education, just a wonderful education, all the way through”.

President 3 described the role as fun, challenging, rewarding, frustrating but never boring, and the president in the role is constantly learning, and being challenged. All of this adds up to the enjoyment of serving in a role at an institution that matches who she is.

President 4

You have to be able to go into a room full of strangers and charm them, convince them – sometimes those strangers aren’t happy about something so you have to be persuasive, you have to have the kinds of communication skills that will carry you through what I call battle, but also good things. You know, the president of an institution is the ultimate advocate and, almost cheerleader for the institution – the public face – and – so you have to be able to get passionate and communicate that to your external, as well as internal audiences. I think people skills are a huge requirement (President 4).

President 4 has led a large state university for over two years, serving a student body of over 4,000. She has amassed over 30 years of experience in higher education. Prior to assuming the presidency, she held positions such as vice president and dean at another large state university. President 4 has vast experience professionally and has served on many committees and boards throughout her career.

President 4 is married and is a mother. She shared how her own mother motivated and influenced her by stressing at an early age, the incentive and motivation to be “self-supporting” in order to avoid a dependence on others for financial support. Growing up knowing how prized education was, President 4 shared that her mother was influential in ensuring that she obtained a college education and pursued graduate level studies.

President 4 described the position of college president as fun, interesting, relentless, ever-changing and dynamic with its ups and downs. However, the underlying vision as to why she serves as president is to be there for students: “to make sure that students are successful and with that, we’re changing lives, were changing the lives of their children, we’re changing the lives of their children’s children, ultimately. So, who can complain about that?”

President 5

It’s easier for people in an academic organization to mindlessly salute a male leader, whereas it takes some thoughtfulness for them to follow a softer and more considerate female leader and that – that should come out. I’m against this adopted masculine stance by some women leaders in education or elsewhere. I think you should maximize your gender advantages for building rather than negating them and trying to be something else (President 5).

President 5 leads a graduate institution with an ethnically and geographically diverse student body of almost 800. She has served as president for several years. She has over thirty years of professional experience in higher education and the private sector. She has served as a consultant to educational institutions around the world.

President 5 was single and/or did not mention a partner or children. She is a member of an ethnic minority and was the only non-white participant in this study. She shared how education was prized in her family. Born and raised abroad, President 5 explained that the country of her birth “really prizes education – just above everything else, so it’s really in my blood. I have carried it within me all these years”.

President 5 described the college presidency as the best job she has ever had. It is a tough job that requires much creativity but: “when you have colleagues that believe in what they’re doing, if you have great students who are hopeful, if you can be appreciative of what you have, if you can be collaborative with everyone on the campus, if you can

give yourself the liberty to be innovative there's nothing better than this". President 5, with reference to the time commitments of the job, cautioned: "Oh, there isn't such a thing as a long weekend – or a weekend –..."

President 6

I think it's also being willing to put yourself out there and do what you think is right. There are a lot of situations for me wanting to do, wanting to put myself out there more. I am doing it more frequently lately than I did in my first year, and my first year I was more focused on the ways in which how wonderful it was that there were commonalities between what I wanted for this institution and what the institution also wanted. I was aware of the consistency, but now I'm much more focused on making sure that I am someone who was hired to bring the institution to places it hasn't been or wouldn't get to itself, and doing it in a way that's consistent but realizing that I was hired for a reason (President 6).

President 6 leads an independent, nationally renowned four year liberal arts college with approximately 1,400 students. She has held the position of president for over three years. As president, her dedication to leadership development has resulted in the creation of programs and initiatives for both faculty and students. President 6 has over 30 years of experience in education and she had served in many leadership roles at previous institutions, such as department Chair and several positions as Vice President.

President 6 is married and is a mother. She emphasized the key role her husband played as her confidant and added source of strength. President 6 has enjoyed a wonderful career in education but noted that she would have been "very happy doing any number of other things as well."

President 6 shared that the college president experiences every range of emotion and reaction:

But it really is a lot of fun. Obviously to participate in the commencement ceremonies and to see the impact that you have, you feel enormously responsible for everything that happens, and even if things go really well I'll see the things that didn't. I'm a type A person, so I never feel satisfied. Even when things are

going well I am trying to do better, and it's also really momentous to realize that the institution counts on you and that's probably what makes a president's work so hard. The pressure is there. You have to prioritize; you have to see where you need to take an institution. In the course of a day you'll experience everything from the terror if this disaster occurred to the great satisfaction in knowing that there are the students whose lives you helped change (President 6).

President 7

I have an excellent board and I participated greatly in the formation of that board, but I really – you know, that's the new – like when you're an academic vice president, the faculty is your main gig. And now the board is your main key relationship. So I've got a great board. So I think presence has – I'm a person that – I probably would consider myself somewhat hands-on and I like to know what's going on. I don't necessarily have to make all the decisions. I do like to know what's going on. I like to be communicated with (President 7).

President 7 is the president of an independent, Catholic, liberal arts college which is nationally recognized for its emphasis on leadership and its culturally diverse student body of almost 2,500. She has held the position for over 8 years. Prior to assuming the presidency, she served as provost and vice president for academic affairs. She has amassed over 30 years of experience in higher education including 10 years as a professor and 20 years in senior administrative roles. She has considerable professional experience and has received numerous awards and fellowships.

President 7 is married. Her father was college educated. She grew up in a family where the importance of education was evident. Her father prized education and was supportive and encouraging of her educational pursuits.

For President 7, the role is demanding, but enjoyable. Describing the presidency as “the best job I've ever had” she added that she did not think one could do it if it was not an enjoyable experience. She shared that she is in contact with another woman

college president that is under “tremendous challenge” in the position and probably should opt to get out of the role.

President 8

And I switched around fairly much in the first four years or so out of college because I'd get bored, and I had to be learning. I just had to be. My mind had to be engaged in learning something new, and it still does. And there's no way I would be here as long as I've been if I weren't still learning. It's not pushing paper. You've got to be learning. And then, I was a faculty member in two different places before I settled here, and I came here because it wanted to be something different than it was, and the vision excited me (President 8).

President 8 leads a nationally renowned health sciences institution with a very diverse student body of approximately 1,200 students. She has over thirty years experience in higher education as an instructor and held several senior administrative positions at the college before assuming the presidency, a role she has held for many years. She is personally and professionally dedicated to the college and under her leadership the college added several new programs.

President 8 is married and is a mother. She grew up in a family very aware of the importance of education. President 8 shared that it was a different experience “for children who are born into a family of people who are highly educated and those of us who were not” and noted that her parents were very proud of her for achieving a college education.

President 9

Well, I've seen a lot of things and have been exposed to lots of different settings and lots of different kinds of people, and I think these jobs are people jobs. You have to be able to be effective with people; you have to be a good communicator; able to articulate a clear vision that people can get behind. And I think in all of the various positions, I think they provided me with experiences that helped me fine tune those skills. And it really requires not being a “top down” leader, but a “from the bottom up” leader and I think that when people feel that they are a part of your vision and a part of the plan, it makes it much easier for them to get

behind what it is you are trying to accomplish and it can actually help you accomplish it (President 9).

President 9 leads a small, nonprofit graduate institution with a student body of approximately 300 students. She joined the institution in 1999 and prior to assuming the presidency, she held other leadership positions at other institutions including Director of a program that she developed. She has amassed years of professional experience that she brings to her leadership role. She is dedicated to the institution's commitment to diversity.

President 9 is married and is a mother. She acknowledges the points at which her children were born in terms of pauses in her career advancement. President 9 noted that exposure to many kinds of people and viewpoints throughout her well rounded education directly contributed to her effectiveness in leadership roles during her career by "deepening understanding of the diversity of people and perspectives".

President 9 said that the college presidency is "challenging but very rewarding...exciting..." because one can make a difference that impacts not only the institution, and the students but also the community that the students will go on to serve.

President 10

(In relation to taking risks) I think it made me better able to try and look at risks and benefits. So, you know, how great is a risk and what would be the benefit to it? What's the downside, the upside? And I think that's a very measured, you know, you just have to realize that many things have that and measure it. And, you know, I won't say I'm - you'd probably say most presidents are not going to be entirely risk adverse. I mean, if you were to take those personality things I think it would be tough to be in that type of leadership role and be risk adverse anyway. But having had some kind of riskier projects I think it helped me learn how to evaluate that (President 10).

President 10 serves at the helm of a large private, nonprofit university that serves a very diverse population of students. She had just entered the second year of her presidency when she sat down to be interviewed for this study. Prior to her role as president, she served in positions such as Vice Chancellor and Vice President at other institutions for many years. President 10 has amassed over twenty years of experience as a lecturer and professor and has held many leadership roles including serving in the faculty senate and is the recipient of numerous awards and special assignments.

President 10 was single and/or did not mention a partner or children. She grew up in a family where education was valued and encouraged.

Well, I think it's actually a very interesting job. You know, what I like about it is the, you know, the broad variety of things you deal with on a daily basis. Hard to say that there's two days in a row that are even similar let alone the same. And, I think that is why it's such an interesting job and I get bored easily. I like doing different things and so it's probably the best of being able to do that and so that's what makes it so enjoyable for me. And the people that you deal with on a daily basis knowing that you helped this student or you helped this faculty or you helped this employee and that you affect, individual lives (President 10).

President 11

And that's probably one of the biggest skills I think you need as a president, is the skills of communication and keeping people connected to the inspiration of the institution as well as to the realities and the challenges that we need to address. And it's easy. I mean this institution has a lot of inspiration so it's not hard to do it when you're a part of an institution that is – has just a soul that is very inspiring. But it also has a lot of challenges. And how to use the two of them in juxtaposition in ways that enhance the motivation and the sense of commitment and the vision that you're wanting to deliver is what is always the trick and if it's done right it's a lot of fun (President 11).

President 11 leads a private Catholic liberal arts college with a very diverse student body of approximately 1,100. She has held the position for almost 10 years. She had previously held the position of college president at another institution for four years

where she also served in the role of Executive Vice President. She has over 30 years of experience as a professor at several institutions across the country. In addition to her career in higher education, President 11 has held numerous professional leadership positions in educational organizations and is the recipient of honors and awards.

President 11 was single and/or did not mention a partner or children. President 11 grew up in a family where the importance of education was emphasized and where her father expressed determination that all of his children would graduate from college. President 11 loved to learn and knew early on that she wanted to teach because of the many teachers she admired that had a big influence on her life. President 11's faith is central to her personal and professional life and she exudes a passion for the potential of education in changing student lives and their surroundings.

President 11 loves being a college president which she described as being "...fun and awesome, especially at commencement, the culmination of everyone's effort and the future potential of the students". Her fundamental belief in and love for education as a "real power for others" brings her joy.

All of the participants in this study shared a dedication to education and a respect for the college presidency and its functions and possibilities. Their responses to interview questions were coded and analyzed in order to answer the four research questions posed by this study. The answers to each research question are grouped into three themes that emerged, during data analysis, which have been used to categorize the findings. A matrix of the findings from the study is attached as Appendix I. The three themes will be introduced by a re-articulation of the research question. Each theme will be presented in narrative form and supported by quotes and vignettes from the participants.

Findings

Findings Research Question 1

1. What are the perceptions of women presidents in higher education regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in college presidencies?

The three themes that frame the findings are: Theme 1. Multiple Factors, Theme 2.

Discrimination/Gender Influences and Theme 3. Strategies to Address

Underrepresentation.

Theme 1: Multiple Factors

The responses provided by the participants in this study revealed a multitude of factors that contribute to or at least try to explain the widely acknowledged underrepresentation of women in the college presidency. Relating that the type of institution is a factor, President 1 wondered whether or not the fact that half the Ivy League schools are now led by women is more than “an anomaly” than an indication that women will assume the presidency in increasing numbers.

The question is why aren't there more? Right now you have an average age for a college president – I believe it's between 60 and 62 years old, and you're really looking at a generation that probably will be retiring over the next 5 to 10 years, so I don't anticipate that there will be a whole lot of movement until the time that that generation retires. At that point really the crucial moment will be at that passage whether more women who are in that 45% category (of positions in the pipeline) can move up into presidential positions. Of the 23% of women who are college presidents, if you break it down and look at where they have their presidencies that's also very illuminating. You find the greatest number at the community college level, which typically indicates that they have the least money and least status. Then when you go to the liberal arts college level that's where you'll find your second greatest number of college presidents, and finally at the research one institutions that's where you'll find relatively few women even though you have had some women move into the Ivy's which everyone is hailing as a great stride forward, and I think is indeed important. The question is does this mean that it's a trend or an anomaly? And whether this will be followed by future [women] presidents or whether you will see the number of presidents at that level increasing (President 1).

President 3 also related the type of institution as a factor when she described the underrepresentation question as “bifurcated” in that the Ivy leagues have achieved gender parity in the presidency, and the land grant schools remain “a male bastion”.

President 4 cited a multitude of reasons for the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency that include internal factors: “women themselves not wanting to put themselves forward, deciding that the life of a president is too public, too stressful, too demanding perhaps” and external factors: “some gender biases in the external world with boards of trustees who make selections”.

For President 5, the lack of women in the college presidency might be one of choice:

Perhaps they are smarter. These are hard jobs to do and I think women today have a more holistic view of their lives and I think you need to get up to a certain age before you are seasoned enough to consider a presidency, and given all the demands that are put upon the presidency, some – such is the price – that women sometimes say, “These are my life priorities and this kind of job is not on the top of my list (President 5).

President 6 believed that the persistent stereotype of a leader could be a factor: “...that they have a deep voice, are tall, forceful and you start stereotyping the – you start imagining what a man is like even though a lot of men aren’t like that, either, but we still in this country have a stereotype of what a leader is like” (President 6). President 7 does not see herself as having ever been a “one issue person” but she has been very conscious of occasional instances of bias that she has encountered that might partially account for the low numbers of women presidents.

President 8 wondered whether the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency was “a separate matter from the number of women in the pipeline”. She

suggested that the lack of women college presidents is “a carry over from times past when only men occupied these roles”. President 8 noted that more women have achieved the college presidency and at institutions “where previously they would not have considered hiring a woman”. The growing number of women in the pipeline to the presidency is indicative of this “evolutionary trend” and it is a “matter of time” before the underrepresentation of women in the presidency evolves toward parity:

I’m excited that there are that many women in the pipeline and that we’ll see, probably within another 10 years, that number of 23 percent rise to 30. And while it won’t happen in my lifetime, I think it’s reasonable to assume that there will be a majority of women presidents in the future, both because there are more of us and more of us who are better educated and because it has happened in—if you look at other segments of higher education, and 60 years ago there were very few women attending colleges. So, we got a late start. We’re building steam, and I think that it—that when you look at the skill sets that women often bring to the presidency, there’s, I think, little reason to doubt that there’ll be more of us, so those 45 percent should just keep on trucking (President 8).

President 9 noted that the time demands of the college presidency, as well as the scope of the job can be off-putting for women because “...the task may appear somewhat daunting and serve as a kind of negative influence on your desire to want to do it”.

President 10 offered that women network differently from men and that may be a factor in the underrepresentation of women in leadership. For women, networking tends to be “targeted at relationships and friendships and not as targeted at what that networking would help us with professionally”. President 11 observed that women college presidents appointed recently tended to have backgrounds in math and science. She did not think that the 45% of women in positions considered pipeline to the presidency was a significant variable because search committees are beginning to look at “...many

different nontraditional pipelines from politics to legal degrees to advancement positions...so I'm not sure that the pipeline is a good comparative statistic".

For President 5, the phenomenon that is the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency might be attributed to societal factors:

...I don't know if we want to achieve parity or anything like that. It's a phenomenon...I think men are socialized to consider careers central and perhaps foremost, therefore, give less to the other needs – familial needs, intellectual needs, physical needs, whatever. Socialization has a lot to do with it. I tend to think that the female point of view, as I interpret it, is healthier. Therefore, I don't know if I would like to see 50 percent of college and universities presidencies occupied by women – if that means that these woman will have to make decisions and act like the now male presidents (President 5).

President 6 is a member of a group that promotes equity in education and she shared that they had discussed the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency in order to ascertain whether stalled progress was a factor: "... we sit around and we struggle with this phenomenon that there seems to be now this plateau that for a while women were getting presidencies, but now it's leveled off. We're struggling with the same thing..."(President 6).

Several presidents suggested that the type of work background that an applicant for a presidency has is a factor. For example, President 1 pointed out that the traditional path may not work for women:

The traditional path is you will have women faculty who become department chairs who become deans who become presidents. Trying to make that way available for women is incredibly important, and in fact I think last time I checked you have more women presidents than you have deans, and so being a female dean is actually somewhat of a statistical anomaly, and if you look at the path to the presidency most presidents still come having been an academic dean, and that's where you really find very few women (President 1).

President 4 shared that if women do not have demonstrated experience on “both sides of the house” (having experience in academic as well as student services roles) they would not be targeted as candidates or would not put themselves forward as candidates. President 5 also noted that universities expect candidates for the presidency to have substantial background in research and published work, “...whereas many women actually come up the academic administrative tracks, but probably will have been somewhat relaxed in the area of scholarship and research, so these are tough standards to live by”. Other qualifications for the presidency that universities expect their candidates to have preclude the majority of women in the pipeline from stepping forward at all: “A great deal of emphasis has been put upon fund-raising, community relations – again, I believe academic tracks that are traditionally occupied by women tend to be academic oriented or student affairs oriented rather than external fund-raising oriented so those are a combination of factors that, I think, come into play”.

Among the hypotheses that President 6 had in relation to the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency was the route that candidates take to the presidency and persistent stereotypes about the route to take via academic or administrative posts. She herself did not follow the traditional route rung for rung, and did not feel that it had an impact on her candidacy for the presidency she holds. However, she did choose to take a Vice President of Student Services role that a headhunter had attempted to discourage her from taking at the time because it amplified the disadvantageous perception attitude that “women take care of children” and that being Vice President of Student Services is not seen as having the same weight as being Dean of Faculty”.

President 11 remarked that nuns had historically held more presidencies than lay women and believed that the background of the applicant as well and the spiritual base of the institution were influences. She also believed that nuns had an advantage over lay women at religious institutions because there seems to be a greater acceptance of them in a “three-gender society: men, women and nuns”.

Several presidents considered the role of luck or trusting in one’s destiny. President 3 shared that she tried not to worry about what would come next in her career by giving her all in the role that she was holding at that time: “I did it with all the energy and focus I could possibly give it and then that seemed to lead into something else, and you have to trust in that”. President 5 does not think that seeking out the presidency is as pre-meditated as one might think and has even less to do with whether one is male or female. If one has the skills and the credentials, the opportunity to step forward can present itself: “You’re a good professor, you’re a good administrator and one thing after another by circumstances or capabilities or a strong will – a combination thereof – you get into a position where a presidency is obtainable. Then you have to decide whether you want to do that or not”. President 8 also considered destiny as a factor in the underrepresentation of women when she shared that for her personally, the college presidency was not something she had sought and for her it was a case of “being in the right place at the right time and having strong support”. As accomplished and confident as she was, she did not think that it was something she would have sought ordinarily. She added that most sitting women presidents oversee institutions “that are not necessarily mainstream” and it is not a question about whether or not women are qualified, but in

general, “the door’s open, and ...some of these women have just irrefutable strength...it’s a matter of time.”

Several presidents questioned the motivation of leaders to become college presidents. President 3 cautioned aspiring college presidents to consider their motivations for pursuing the role, be it the status, the money or the prestige. She leads from the servant leadership point of view and it drives the type of leader that she is. As a result, the only reason for her to exist as president is “...to facilitate what others do. And if you are in it for any other reason, you better get out because you’re not going to be effective”. She stressed that if a president’s motivations are clear and follower focused, the team can work together to achieve the goal, the vision for the institution. President 4 questioned those who aspire to a leadership role for the title. She noted that such motivation will not breed success in the role of college president because “...there has to be an underlying genuine belief that what you are doing in educating young people and students is of such critical importance and is such a positive thing, that it helps to keep everything going. If you have that set of beliefs and values and behaviors that act on it, then I think you can be an authentic leader”.

President 5 wondered about the type of person drawn to the role of college president and whether or not that might explain the low numbers of women among the top tier:

Some of these positions are for people who are more ambition driven, status driven, rather than substance driven. In other words, you worry about a calling card and you call yourself a president and such, but I think a large number of women would actually like to do the work rather than get the glory, so to speak. So certainly that has a place in part (President 5).

President 5 added that the motivation to achieve the college presidency needed to be well placed. If one achieves the role of college president, and brings to the role an attitude and motivation to wield the power and leverage that comes with the position for the greater good of the institution, then the presidency will be successful. “But if it’s just a blind seeking for either power or authority or glory, then whatever arbitrary lessons that you pick up probably won’t achieve the end”. In relation to motivation as a factor in the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency, President 11 cautioned aspiring leaders, male or female, to question their motives about becoming a college president. She said that she “...would never encourage someone to become a college president just because they want to become a college president...because there will be times when the job sucks”. If one’s presidency is not driven by “...a real desire to make a difference in the lives of people through education” then it has the potential to “...destroy you and diminish your success and effectiveness in terms of your role for others”.

Finally, President 10 wondered if qualified women leaders were “getting pulled out to business” and other fields that are more competitive. For example, she shared that business schools had articulated their concerns regarding the attrition of “some of the best, diverse business school faculty” to industry and careers outside higher education.

Theme 2: Discrimination/Gender Influences

Regarding the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency, the participants perceived influences related to discrimination and gender. Several presidents cited the lack of models as a factor, and that the traditional role of women is an influence, as is the fact that some had been discouraged to pursue leadership roles because they are women. For example, President 1, who came from “a very egalitarian family when it

came to male and female relationships” was surprised to find early in her academic career, that when she was hired at an institution that had just begun to hire women difficulties began to emerge:

I found that I was frequently having really interesting conversations about issues that I thought had been dealt with decades ago. I recall when I came up for tenure there I had a difficult tenure process because there was a feeling with some of the senior faculty members in the department that I was moving too quickly and there was at one point in the tenure process an attempt to create new rules just for me, which I objected to. Ultimately that effort was discontinued, and I received tenure according to the timeline that I had established. It has not certainly been a career without moments where the system in place was saying, “This is what you should do if you’re going to be, so to speak, well-behaved and better tolerated.” At the same time I recognized it as an equity issue and a fairness issue and had to make the conscious decision that indeed I was not going to be well-behaved and that I was going to object and try and work so that a particular end could be achieved (President 1).

President 2 noted that the lack of models is an issue. Like many other women leaders, when you have been “the first woman over and over and over again...you know how important it is to get critical mass”. President 3 shared that the lack of models makes it difficult for women presidents in that if they are selected to serve, they need to be well prepared and have extensive experience. Failure can derail their chances of attaining another presidency. There are different expectations related to mistake-making for male and female leaders. She has not yet seen a woman president recoup after making a mistake “because the reaction to mistake-making when you’re a woman is still, in our society, “see I told you”...Whereas with a man, it’s like in a football game. “Oh, you dropped the ball. Well, pick it up and do it again”.” The upside however, to having low expectations of success for women leaders is that you have a lot of freedom: “...people give you so much latitude because they don’t think you can do it. So, you can accomplish that much more.” Being who you are as a leader, having the background and credentials

to achieve the presidency, is “to change by example, by being forceful...being very clear in who you are, what you believe in, what your values are” (President 3).

President 6 wondered about the gender-influenced obstacles that present themselves for career women en route to the presidency and the impact on the choices they make: “...possibly women start up the career ladder later and then finally there’s the obvious – family. If women have to move a family for their career, are they as likely to do it as men?”. President 6 also noted as an issue the lack of successful role models coming to the presidency via unconventional routes. She recommended that search committees and headhunters research those cases where the background of the president differed from the stereotype and “...also actually show very successful presidents who for years have done great things, and lo and behold they didn’t come out of the Deanship. These very graphic examples will help women over this stereotype of the route”.

For President 9, the low numbers of women in college presidency positions is in itself a barrier. The lack of models in leadership roles is not unique to education, and “...when women don’t see people like themselves in a particular role, that can serve as a barrier to even thinking about pursuing it”. President 11 shared that the role of college president is “an all-consuming job. It’s a 24/7 reality” and she did not think that as many women as men would find that type of role desirable. She wondered whether women with families in particular “would perceive it as providing the right balance for the rest of their lives”. President 11 also suggested that the traditional roles of men and women factored into the gender issue “in terms of what’s more acceptable and what’s not acceptable”. For example in the “traditional concept of gender stereotypes, men are freer to choose roles

that are all-consuming” because they have the acceptable support system of a spouse at home.

Three of the participants revealed that they had been discriminated against in the presidential selection process or had been asked inappropriate questions in the interview process. President 3 reported that she had been overlooked for the presidency by a search committee due to her gender. A then highly qualified candidate, having had “every ticket punched” numerous times, she was asked by the board chair “what would I tell all my cattlemen friends if we appointed a woman at (this institution)?” Even though she could have pursued the issue on the grounds of discrimination, she chose to avoid the negative energy that would ensue and instead focused on what the incident could teach her.

President 3 added that she had encountered sexism in many instances during her career because she was frequently the only woman in positions she held. She chose to ignore it because she believes in the fundamental potential in everyone and quoting a Chinese proverb, “women hold up half the sky”, she instead advocated for women and was active on women’s commissions.

President 7, having amassed solid experience in key administrative roles along the path to the presidency was in strategic line to assume the presidency at a previous institution when the president there retired. She was one of two finalists for the presidency; the position was offered to the other finalist. Having been overlooked for the position, she then learned that the other finalist turned the position down and that the committee chose to reopen the search. President 7 found the situation “kind of traumatic, to say the least” especially when they asked her to serve as interim president while the search continued. President 7, opting not to construe the offer as an insult, decided to take

the risk, assume the role and embrace it as a good learning opportunity. The other finalist later ended up taking the job when offered more money and President 7 continued to work with him for another year and a half until a lateral move opened up at a bigger and more complex institution. President 7 added that she had put herself forward for a presidency earlier in her career. Of six finalists, one was male and a sitting president elsewhere. He was selected by the search committee.

The inability of women to envision themselves as leaders was cited as a factor. Eight of the participants observed that they initially did not know they were going to be leaders, that the opportunity to be a president emerged, that they were identified as having leadership potential by others and targeted and groomed to assume the role. For example, President 2 explained that a male mentor in graduate school had the ability to recognize leadership potential in his students and fostered and encouraged it. Later, a female mentor and head of a college department planted the seed that she should think about being a college president, observing: “you have the leadership and ambition and drive that would do well”.

President 3 fortuitously worked for a president earlier in her career who actively supported women and gave her opportunities to gain experience. He encouraged her potential and described her as “a natural leader” and eventually, serving as assistant chancellor for five years, she “literally had a presidency internship, never dreaming that’s what it would be”. President 7 shared that a key male faculty mentor during her graduate course work in higher education was influential in developing her leadership interest and potential. She added that having observed a key female model in the role early in her career did not instill in her any desire to become a president and she felt that the job of

college president “was the worst thing” that one could take on. President 7 did not plot out her academic career progress and the aspiration “evolved over time”.

President 9 served in several leadership roles that she had been approached to assume by others. Earlier in her career she was asked to head up and build a new program at her institution. Later, she was invited to step up to an interim Provost position. When the national search was begun she was invited to apply for the position: “I was so busy doing it I didn’t even think about applying for it. And they hired me and changed the title from Provost to Chancellor”. Motivated by her life long love of learning, and the development through work experiences in industry of a passion for teaching and education, President 10 credited a key faculty mentor with ultimately steering her in the direction of doctoral work and an academic career. His influence was central to the “huge change in career path” that she undertook. Throughout her academic career, President 10 was approached to take on leadership roles because of her abilities. She remarked that if she had been asked 5 years ago if she was “striving to be a college president” she would probably have responded that she “hadn’t thought about it”. Becoming a college president “wasn’t necessarily something that was on my goal chart” for President 11 and she wondered if the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency may be an issue “where there aren’t enough women who see themselves as college presidents...when you see yourself in a role, your potential of being able to achieve that role is probably stronger”.

Ten of the presidents discussed the perception of women and their leadership ability and style, both good and bad, as a factor in their underrepresentation in high-level college leadership positions. President 1 shared an experience she had had when she was

being interviewed by a predominantly male board of trustees for an academic leadership position:

I was there with the male trustees, and one of the trustees asked me over breakfast how I got along working with men, and my response was, “Well, I wouldn’t be here if I couldn’t, would I?” And that seemed to suffice, but there have been points where in a way there is a certain candor that emerges in those moments, and you have to be able to take that as a teachable moment and open that up and have a discussion. I think if I didn’t possess those skills I would not have been able to come and ultimately serve as a president (President 1).

President 2 offered that women who display leadership drive and move up the rungs in academia will “get more criticism for being assertive or aggressive, or fighting for things, than men do”. In addition, the perception of how difficult a position the role of president is for women is a factor: “...it’s much tougher for women to be in the role of president than it is for men. And you see what they go through, and there’s a lot of women who look at that and say, “it’s not worth it.” President 4 belongs to a group of women college presidents and they have discussed whether or not the experiences and challenges they face are any different from those of men. While certain issues around personnel or crises that arise would be common to both men and women, “there are some differences around how people perceive women and women as leaders”. The consequences are such that “we are losing out on a huge resource pool of individuals that are out there – potentially available – so it’s unfortunate”.

President 8 shared that a male supervisor, for whom she had much respect, asked her to apply for a leadership role in a department. He was an example of a leader who identified people who were skilled and “was one of the first men I ever worked with who just, frankly, didn’t care who you were, what you were, or anything remotely related. It was called, “get it done”.” She appreciated the fact that he approached her and saw those

abilities in her. During the interview process one of the committee members asked her if she “could do the job – as a family woman”. She responded that she would be willing to answer such a question “as long as you assure me that you’re asking every candidate”. She was not selected for the position. President 8 added that ultimately, “it’s not about my gender and the presidency as much as it is about the gender and making progress”.

President 9 observed that “...the notion of women leaders has evolved over time” and yet negative perceptions about women leaders and their style and ability to lead persist: “I think women lead differently than men in some respects and so being able to help people understand different styles of leadership can be a barrier”. President 11 suggested that there are still institutions that would prefer to have a man as president because “they see a man as bringing perhaps more prestige to the institution than a woman just by the gender issue”. It is also difficult for institutions that have traditionally had men to “change to a woman”. She said that it would take “a really strong woman...to unlock that door” to assume such a position “or to have equal opportunity in some institutions for the presidency”.

Four suggested that women are sometimes expected to compromise their style which does not reconcile with their belief in playing to their advantages and acknowledging that women’s leadership style has advantages. When President 3 interviewed for a presidency, a colleague advised her to dress conservatively and not draw too much attention to herself by wearing something colorful. Discussing the situation with her husband, she decided to wear what she was the most comfortable in, and it happened to be a colorful blazer. She was determined to be herself, be authentic in the interview and she got the job.

President 6 recalled how a headhunter had advised her to smile less in interviews because it “comes off as softness, a weakness, and causes search committees to question leadership ability”. She did not necessarily take the headhunter’s advice but she did interpret it as a “wake-up” call to the existence of stereotyping in the presidential search process. President 6 sees a key role for women in educating search committees and headhunters in order to “fight these stereotypes”. One way to do it is for women candidates to “be themselves” throughout the process in order to instigate change little by little.

President 7 remarked that committees need to be educated in the relevance of women candidates for the presidency. In her experience, if committees are not familiar with female candidates and what their background means it can cause “...discomfort partly because of ignorance, partly because they’re just not used to it. They don’t expect a woman to be able to perform at the same level as a man”. Strong referees and support can help overcome such lack of inclusiveness by the committee. President 11 believed that there are as many qualified women as men for the college presidency and did not think that they were being “passed by intentionally just because they’re women”, However, she felt that women have to “jump more hurdles” than men do in order to be approached and considered for the job.

While four participants suggested that it was a matter of time before more women entered the college presidency and that change was inevitable they did so with caution. For example, President 2 is confident because she has experienced many jobs in which she was the first woman, and that in the area of math and science the numbers of women in these fields have increased. She noted that past efforts in the 1980’s to have more

women enter high level positions were successful but hit a plateau in the 1990's. She cautioned against the achievement of the milestone of hiring the first woman to a leadership role as leading to complacency: "...once you've had your first female dean of science, your first dean of engineering or whatever, then everyone thinks it's okay to go back to the next four being male". President 3 noted that progress had been made but land grant and research institutions lagged behind the Ivy League schools and private and liberal arts colleges in hiring women as presidents. President 9 acknowledged the persistency of the "glass ceiling" as a factor, not just in education but in other fields that impact the numbers of women that succeed in making it to the upper tiers of leadership. "While we've made tremendous strides and gains in terms of women having the more traditionally male positions, we still have a lot further to go".

Five presidents referred to the democratic nomination for president of the United States as an example of how far women have come in society in terms of being considered for leadership positions, but also how far they still have to go. Senator Hillary Clinton broke new ground for women during the race for the democratic nomination and whether or not her gender played a factor in relation to perceptions around her leadership readiness was frequently debated in the media. President 3 shared that some women leaders have compromised who they are and how they lead because women leaders struggle with the double bind of being seen as weak if they are caring leaders and seen as a trouble makers if they expressed anger. She suggested that neither scenario would be likely to negatively impact perceptions of a male leader. President 4, discussing how women leaders are sometimes perceived differently than men, noted how comments were made in the media regarding Clinton, a female candidate who experienced comments

about what she was wearing or how “her abrasiveness gets interpreted in a certain, different way than male aggressive ambition”. President 7 compared the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency to the race for the democratic nomination for president of the United States, between Clinton and Barak Obama: “Well we’re still working our way, aren’t we? Look at the election. It’s not going to be, you know, a perfect ratio. It is going to take some time”. President 8 noted that having a woman and an African American man contest the democratic nomination for the presidency was exciting because it reflects progress and change. President 9 believed that the fact that a woman and an African American man ran for the highest office in the land would assist in opening up perceptions about what is possible. Even though Clinton was not successful in her bid to secure the democratic nomination for President of the United States, “...the fact that it even happened I think is a statement that things are changing and hopefully they’ll continue to change to make these kinds of leadership positions more accessible to women”.

Theme 3: Strategies to Address Underrepresentation

All of the participants emphasized their ability and responsibility as sitting college presidents to identify talent, and support and mentor potential leaders, to broaden the pool, that they had to promote leadership as an option, and that they would be able to change perceptions about women as college presidents if they had a collective agenda to make it happen. President 1 said that women college presidents could focus on the pipeline, and provide opportunities for women to go into administration and provide funding for those opportunities. President 2 shared that sitting presidents are frequently asked to suggest candidates for open leadership positions. She, like others, is proactive in

that at least half of the candidates she suggests are women and she keeps a list of women that are talented that might be interested in moving up to the next step in their career. She cautioned however, that women presidents can be challenged if they appoint women to senior staff positions and that it is easier to do if their male predecessor had been proactive in hiring women.

President 3 described it as actively “reaching down into the departments” as president to identify and cultivate talent because “when a woman who is in a position of influence and leadership takes an interest in a person who isn’t, it helps them see [themselves] differently – that is, seize their potential to be a leader”. Women presidents can also assist in changing negative perceptions regarding women leaders by mentoring men, “...because you want men to have a view that women are strong leaders” and by being inclusive of men, the potential for change through experience with women leaders is fostered.

President 4 noted that the issue was a problem for both sexes and that men and women need to contribute to its solution. Women presidents “who have crossed the line...need to help work with women in the pipeline do the same thing” as role models, by serving as mentors, and serving on the American Council on Education’s Women’s Commission. President 5 said that women presidents can serve as “happy and productive examples” of the role to encourage other women to consider the presidency. President 6 suggested that women presidents begin identifying potential talent early in their careers and encourage them to think about the college presidency. She is proactive in this endeavor at her institution where she partners with the Dean of Faculty and holds lunches around academic leadership with faculty.

President 6 elaborated on the importance for sitting college presidents of identifying talent early because some women do not see their own potential:

One of the things that I learned early on as a faculty member is I realized that faculty and women did not realize the potential they had, so I'll never forget the time when I had been working with an Honors student's thesis, and she was about to graduate. Off hand I said, "You're going to go to graduate school? You, know, have you applied? And she said, "Wait, really?" It was spring of her Senior year and I just realized, "Oh my goodness." Here I'm thinking she's very talented, and had been thinking about this for years and was on a path, and how horrible I was as a mentor that I didn't think to ask her about it earlier, and that really stuck in my mind and I am mindful of that now, once I meet people who I think have that spark, to be able to remember to mention to them, "Hey, have you ever thought of...?" (President 6).

President 7 believes that women college presidents "who have been fortunate enough to arrive at these positions and enjoy them" have an obligation to identify talent to assist others in achieving the same. Past experience in spotting talent has led President 7 to realize that potential women leaders did not realize they were suited to a leadership role and had not even considered the opportunity and the role of women leaders in "earmarking" future talent is a pivotal one. President 8 noted that the college president was obligated to recruit and cultivate talent, be it male or female, for the institution that they are "pledged to serve". She did not believe that one could be biased about recruiting individuals that were male or female, but "when you see talent...male or female, you need to invest in it".

President 9 was dismayed by the underrepresentation of women and specifically women of color in the college presidency because it is "a statement about where we are in terms of where we need to be". The statistics are evidence that more needs to be done to promote women as candidates for leadership positions "and provide them with the support that they need to be able to do the job effectively".

President 9 elaborated that women college presidents could go a long way in raising awareness to the possibility of achieving leadership roles by encouraging women to consider stepping up, by role modeling to aspiring women that the position was achievable and doable, and by mentoring women so that they can begin to “think about themselves in positions of leadership”. She proposed that the process could be moved forward significantly if “collectively it became an agenda for women leaders”.

President 10 endeavors to identify others that have development potential for leadership roles because she is not sure “that we as women have done a good job of trying to look at colleagues and say, “Oh, this person, if they had this additional skill set could – would make a good leader or good president”.” She began doing this when she was at the Vice Presidential level, by actively mentoring and developing talent.

Adopting a strategic, targeted approach in order to increase the pool incrementally, President 10 suggested that each sitting woman college president seek out and mentor three potential leaders in order to broaden the candidate pool: “...if everybody that’s in a leadership position did that right now then you would triple the candidate pool that we’ve got 5 years from now”.

For President 11, sitting women college presidents can contribute by excelling at what they do. By demonstrating competency in the role, women college presidents will change perceptions about how women are viewed as leaders, and specifically how the role is filled. She also thought that encouraging and mentoring women that display the gifts and talents for the role would encourage other women to consider senior administrative leadership positions and ultimately help address the underrepresentation of women in the role.

Findings Research Question 2

2. What were the strengths and skills women utilized to achieve the position of president in higher education?

The three themes that frame the findings are: Theme 1. Hard and Practical Skills, Theme 2. People Skills, the Person and Attitude, Theme 3. Strategies to Obtain Strengths and Skills.

Theme 1: Hard and Practical Skills

The college president must possess certain hard and practical skills in order to achieve and to be successful in the role. Skills around budgets, fundraising, planning were mentioned by the participants, as were such hard skills as having great energy and stamina in the role. The college president must have political savvy and be well versed politically. The role requires excellent problem solving, strategic thinking, and analytical skills, as well as time management and multitasking expertise. President 7 stressed the importance of a future leader's ability to focus on developing competencies such as analytical skills and strategic thinking skills to complement requisite personal and communication skills.

President 8 noted that the skills women needed to make it to the presidency were not necessarily that different from those needed by men, but a number of things need to be acquired along the way, including "...interpretation of financial statements, bits and pieces about investment, communication skills, political savvy, being able to put yourself in the other person's shoes". She stressed the ability to identify problems initially and then seek out solutions as an important skill set. President 10 viewed time management

as critical to the role because the college presidency requires long hours and being able to better manage one's time will contribute to how successful a president is in the position.

Describing the role of the president of a modern college or university as being "like running a business", President 3 emphasized how critical it is for the president to understand finances, investment and budgeting along with a knowledge of the global economy and have "the hard skills" that go with the financial management aspects of the position. President 11 emphasized the ability to "balance the academic mission of the institution with the fiscal reality of its viability" in order to "remain fiscally viable and academically sound". Fundraising was also evident as an important skill for the college president. President 2, noting how women can be too honest about the level of experience they have or lack, suggested that women seek out opportunities to gain experience in fundraising by reaching out to advancement personnel who are always delighted that talented people are interested in how they conduct business for the institution. Describing the job of college president as "all-consuming", President 3 said that considerable energy was needed. President 6 noted the irony in the fact that sitting college presidents are on average the age of 61, because the job requires so much time, energy and focus and you have to be "willing to work all the time – it's a 24/7 job". For President 7, energy is necessary because the college president is "communicating in some form all day long" and frequently that involves "active listening". President 7 shared that the job is all consuming and requires so much energy to the extent that "it takes everything within you and more than you ever thought you had to give".

The modern day college president must be able to deal with crises, handle stress, and remain calm and level-headed in difficult situations. President 2 noted the negative

societal or cultural perception that persists about women leaders in crisis situations: “there’s always concern or worry that women will not do well in times of crisis...that they’ll just panic.” She advised women candidates to be prepared to answer questions about their ability to handle crisis. President 2 obtained skills in crisis management in her role as Vice President of Student Services, where she dealt with such incidents as suicides and bomb threats. She was able to share with the presidential search committee during the interview how she deals with crisis situations “with icy calm”.

Emphasizing how unpredictable the job is, President 4 offered that one must not panic. Even when feeling panicked by a situation, it is important for the president not to “act it or show it”. For President 4 the college president must be:

...nimble to be able to go from one meeting where a student has had a very unfortunate situation happen to them to the next meeting where you’re cheerleading for the institution, trying to raise money, to the next meeting where the faculty is arguing over which way the curriculum needs to go. So, that kind of up and down and just trying to be level through all of those different kinds of situations [is important]. It’s also what makes the position and the job remarkably fascinating. Getting through those kinds of things you feel like you can really make a difference (President 4).

Similar to President 2 above, President 6 also gained critical experience in how to handle a crisis when she served as Vice President for Student Services. A role that is frequently maligned in academia and overlooked by search committees, it provides insights into the types of situations that Presidents would likely have to contend with at some stage:

...things for example a Dean would never know or would never see it first of all, but as Vice President for Student Services you deal with the most important crises that any college has to encounter: student incidents, parents, fraternities, things a president really needs to know how to deal with, how to respond and how to get others to respond. I dealt with protests. I dealt with every kind of parent controversy you can imagine. These are the kinds of things that really are the underside or the bad side of being a president (President 6).

The college president must have a thick skin, be able to function and make tough decisions without taking things personally. President 2 emphasized the necessity for having being either extremely thick-skinned or being extremely persistent because the different constituencies that a college president encounters may interpret what one said or one's intentions differently. As a result, the president needs to be willing to live through criticism that can surface throughout the term of their presidency. President 3 recommended that women leaders take a woman's history course and a male/female socialization course in order to understand the differences in how men and women are socialized and how their behavior is influenced as a result. Such knowledge kept her from personalizing things and served her well as a leader. Knowledge of key socializing influences does not necessarily make it easier to deal with issues that are hard not to personalize, "but at least it's more understandable".

President 7 said that the position is stressful, and the president must be able to separate the issue from the person, and maintain "grace under pressure". Having experience helps the president deal with stressful situations and separate oneself from the problem, but it is a "continual learning position". President 10 stressed the importance of separating the personal from the professional when she shared that sometimes tough decisions are made that negatively affect peoples' lives and as a result, those affected "want to make [the situation] personal". She gave the example of layoffs that happen during tough financial times at colleges and universities. The college president has to make institutional decisions that are hard to make and are hard on people and having a thick skin is necessary because "what they are saying isn't directed at you

personally...you have to let them have the time to vent and get upset...they're saying that to you as the institution".

For President 11, one of the strengths that women bring to the presidency can also be a weakness. Women have the ability to be "relational" in jobs and building relationships with all types of constituents is a real strength. However, it can be our "greatest weakness as a woman because we take things very personally". Identifying weaknesses and areas where one needs to grow is necessary for the leader, especially in this area because issues arise during the presidency and the ability to distance them from the personal will go along way towards making them easier to deal with.

Ultimately, the aspiring college president must be ready for the role by being self sufficient, putting themselves out there as candidates and being career oriented, and being persistent and flexible. For example, President 2 shared that being willing to change is important. In her early academic experience, it was necessary for women to be pushy due to low expectations of women: "So the only way we survive the early stages of our careers is by being unbelievably loud, aggressive, persistent, because you're just not heard. It's like you're invisible because nobody expects you to have an idea". However, when the upper echelons of leadership are reached, women need to adapt their leadership strategy so that it is not perceived as a negative. For President 2, this involved becoming quieter and less aggressive because "...as a president, you have so many different constituencies who want very different things from you, and you have to be comfortable with being different, with having different skill sets that you use to interact with different communities". President 2 advised aspiring candidates to get out there and be a candidate, go through the interview process in order to gain experience. One needs to be

ready for rejection but with a support system of others to help out, the process is a valuable learning experience.

President 6, who shared that she had delayed getting into the presidential search due to family and partner career factors, also stated that she needed to be ready for the role of college president. While others may have the confidence earlier on and the ability to learn on the job, President 6 amassed the experience and confidence along the way before she put herself “on the market”. When she did assume a college presidency, she knew that she was ready, prepared and could run a college. For President 10, aspiring college presidents need to be objective about what their strengths and weaknesses are and how they need to be developed.

Having courage and the ability to make hard decisions are key skills because the college president is charged with overseeing not just an institution of higher learning but a complex organization and handling difficult situations and making hard decisions comes with the territory. President 2 shared how she had to make the decision to let staff members go, an example of “the tough things that you have to do” as a college president. President 3 stressed the importance of being true to oneself when making decisions. Sometimes you need to take the risk that you might fail but “if you truly believe that something is right, you have to be willing to risk that. But your criteria have got to be in the best interests of the university”. For President 4 decision making requires “being decisive but not impulsive”. President 5 emphasized the important skills that surround decision making that the college president must master:

It takes being able to mediate amongst different parties, weigh your priorities, be soft and firm at the same time because decisions do need to get made and articulated clearly. On the other hand, the product of the process will probably be equally important. It’s not a decision just getting made, it’s how you reach the

decision and how you communicate that decision that's equally important in such communities. I think women can do it very well, indeed (President 5).

President 8 shared that the college presidency comes with “position power and role power” and care needs to be taken around how power is used by the president because as a college president “you can’t take off the hat”. In addition, the president needs to be mindful that they are receiving the real picture from people who might be influenced by such power in their dealings with the president. President 9 explained that “balancing multiple constituencies” can be very challenging and requires the college president to juggle or wear many hats: “But if you stay organized and surround yourself with good people who believe in what you’re trying to accomplish, it ultimately is a very rewarding experience”. President 10 remarked that along with making hard decisions, college presidents must be able to take risks. After the research and development around a project has been vetted, ultimately the president must make the decision to implement, to innovate. With risk, there comes success but there must also be a willingness to fail. The college president must “understand that about risk and the benefits to the risk-reward area. And be willing to step up and take a challenge”.

The skills required of the college president are many and varied. President 1 summarized the variety of skills thus:

They need to be well-versed politically. They need to understand how important a network is, both for power as well as influence and support. They need to have, I believe, a very clear understanding of the role and mission of the particular institution. They need to deeply value the contributions of the faculty, and they need to understand that this is a position that is really an endurance position in many ways, and that it can be at times extremely stressful, and they need to explore whether they’re really ready for that kind of a lifestyle because being a president really is a lifestyle choice. It is not a 9 to 5 position (President 1).

Theme 2: People Skills, the Person and Attitude

In addition to the hard and practical skills outlined in Theme 1, the participants shared key people skills required of the college president. The role calls for a leader who enjoys people and has the right attitude of service and strength. Frequently cited was the importance of listening and having empathy. For President 2, effective listening requires focus and giving someone “100 percent of your attention” in that moment and not being distracted by anything else “...because nobody wants to be with the president and think that the president’s thinking about something else”. Effective presidents make everyone feel valued. Soliciting advice and input from faculty and alumni are a key skill of the president. Asking others for their opinion and seeking their advice ensures that there is a sense that “they own your success”. At the same time, you need to have a vision and leadership:

So the thing you really want to do is you want to be perceived as somebody both who has – you know, they need to see that you have your own vision and your own direction, and that’s usually not a problem for women going into these jobs, because you didn’t get there unless you were an extraordinarily directed person with a huge amount of energy. So they need to see that, but they also need to see that you really care about what they want and their perspective, and that you take what they think seriously. And that’ll pretty much get you past any barrier, but you have to do it legitimately. I mean, if you don’t – if you’re not sincere about it, it becomes clear pretty quickly (President 2).

President 3 emphasized the importance of listening as part of the decision making process and the role of language in the president’s tool kit: “Language is so important. It must be inclusive, it must be honest, it must be direct, it must be caring, it must reflect that you have listened to understand – not listened to get your idea across - ...listened to people to truly understand what they are saying before you take any kind of action”. President 4 described the leadership quality and ability of being able to “set a tone” as key in order to motivate others to follow the direction and vision for the university.

President 5 stressed the importance of listening and serving with one's own style in the role of college president:

I would say in this day and age one needs to be broad-minded, tolerant, if not truly upholding diversity, and be understanding and empathic rather than autocratic. Have great capacity for learning – a closed mind will not get you very far, even if you get there, it won't take you far. A great capacity for communication and communication really based on the ability to understand different perspectives. So, again, I come back to listening more than talking. Listening first and then when you communicate, you need to be sincere and – you have to have the institution more than yourself in mind. I think those things are probably natural to women, but we just need to bring those out more (President 5).

President 8 felt that a sense of empathy for and understanding of the perspectives of others is a skill that “women are more likely to possess”. She believes that the college president cannot force the issue and it is their job to build consensus: “I have always believed that if I can't convince somebody of the rightness of something, then I have not understood where they're coming from, not understood what their motives might be, not understood why they might see it differently, and I have failed to address those things in my approach”. For President 9, being open and receptive to diversity is a necessity for the college president if they are to be effective listeners and problem solvers and “...help people see a variety of viewpoints as a positive and not a negative”.

The college president must be able to deal with change and uncertainty. President 8 shared that the ability to tolerate ambiguity was important for the college president because “things just don't fit in nice little boxes” and they have to be able to work within space that is ill defined and still manage to make forward progress towards goals. In addition, having a sense of humor is helpful. President 3 stressed that presidents need to “genuinely enjoy funniness and a sense of humor and having fun and not taking yourself so seriously that you can't laugh at yourself. Because presidents do stupid things

sometimes and taking responsibility when you do [is important]”. President 3 added that staff and faculty want to know that you are human just like them but at the same time “it’s a very fine line...because you can’t be “one of them”. President 7 said that having a good sense of humor helps, as does not taking oneself too seriously.

Expanding on the fact that sitting college presidents are mostly in their early 60’s, President 6 noted that such age and wisdom was a necessity for the job: “...it takes someone who is that old to spend that much time and focus and have the energy to do it. You really do have to have real focus on your school. You cannot stop thinking about it – that’s kind of the [base] of what you need”.

Several participants cited having a clear vision and being in tune with the institution’s mission as being key person skills for the college leader. President 8 said that “determination, vision, leadership far more than management...and the sense of direction” are essential for a college president to have, be they male or female.

Many identified that being collaborative as a college president was essential. President 5 thought that women were better equipped than men in leading an institution with a very diverse power structure due to their collaborative and interpersonal skills: “Women tend to listen more attentively, tend to be more collaborative in nature. They wield soft power rather than brute force. All those are very admirable and appropriate skills and attitudes for a presidency”. President 6 noted that in an academic presidency listening to a lot of people is a big part of knowing the culture which is essential for opportunities to collaborate to be successful that come with the role. The president needs to be both collaborative and independent: “You cannot be autocratic. You need to be

ready to lead and be able to reach out to them and get their opinion. They want to see you do both”.

President 7 shared that she has achieved effectiveness on campus by her presence there. She keeps travel to a minimum so that she is on campus and working with her team consistently. She sustains collaborative relationships with the Board, and with her faculty. Part of this relationship involves being “hands-on” but also working closely with others, with her team. President 10 stressed the importance of being able to build relationships, both internal and external, as a key skill necessary for the college president. This involves making every effort to understand diverse points of view and allowing all voices to be heard as necessary steps along the way to “building a consensus to the vision”. The leader must also stay balanced and focused during this process because decisions have to be made to move the institution forward. President 11 learned in a previous leadership role that sometimes her vision “outdistanced” her partnerships. No one person can achieve the vision. Without buy-in and assistance from others, visions cannot be realized. Presidents must have the ability to collaborate and build strong partnerships with the people who will help “deliver the mission”.

Many participants emphasized that the president is the face of the institution, that it is a very public role and that the institution is always first. President 4 described the role of president as that of advocate, of cheerleader, the public face of the institution. As president, you become aware that everything is public and even if you are out doing personal errands “you are always on”. President 7 noted that how the leader is heard in the organization changes as one advances higher up the administrative ladder. “You have to be very conscious that you’re heard in a different way, even though you might not feel

that yourself” because the words a leader uses become more important to others as the leader advances. She added that as the “face of the institution” the president must represent and tell the story of the college effectively, especially in fundraising activities.

President 8 explained the “consciousness of always being on” as being paramount. Her feeling is that it is not about the individual, it is about the position of president and understanding that the smallest detail, or perception, in error or otherwise, can “ripple through the organization”. President 11 shared that the college president is “never not the president” and there are aspects to this reality that she enjoys and then there are times when she wishes she could “just be an ordinary person” and enjoy anonymity for a change. However, a major component of the college presidency is “to be known” in order for the institution to be known and gain recognition. She likened the experience to being in a “little glass room” where every aspect of your strengths and weaknesses are on display.

All of the participants mentioned being centered, confident, having self belief and self knowledge as vital. President 3 described self belief and centeredness as leading with intuition. Leadership skills can be gained and honed “but there is a lot of intuition to leadership” and one must learn to pay attention to it: “it’s a skill in listening to yourself”. President 4 noted that confidence in one’s ability to lead assists the college president in getting initiatives accomplished. President 8 credits “being led to believe that I could do anything and believing it” as having had key impact on her as a leader. President 10, through many life experiences and dealings with people has nurtured the ability to stay positive in the face of adversity and risk. Her ability to separate the personal from the

professional allows her to remain objective and approach consensus building endeavors with a positive attitude and understanding of others.

Finally, all of the participants underlined the importance of people skills in a position that is a people job, where the president is constantly dealing with diverse constituencies, and needs to be able to build relationships, have excellent social and communication skills, negotiation skills, mediation skills, diplomacy and patience and “a deep and passionate love of education” (President 1). For president 2, to succeed in the role of president, one must really like spending time with people and with “...all kinds of people, because you will spend a lot of time with alumni, with donors, with students, with faculty, with the community, with the business community...if you don’t enjoy that, there’s no sense in being president, because a very big part of who you are is being the person who builds connections for the institution.” President 4, describing the importance of social skills, said that a college president must have the ability to go into a room full of strangers and “charm them, convince them” of what it is the president needs accomplished. This sometimes requires calling on communication skills that will carry the president through “battle”. President 5 shared that those authentic leaders who can project their self confidence are able to gain trust and inspire others to have confidence in them:

You gain trust and confidence by being who you are. If you are a trust-worthy and confident person and then it will show up. It may take longer or shorter periods of time. Eventually it will. If you are really feeling that blind ambition or power, that’s going to show up, too. So, you have to do it for the right reasons. And I think if you can get to the point where you are considered and you are in the position, then ride with your strength and keep on learning about your own shortcomings (President 5)

President 6 underpinned the importance of knowing the culture of a campus as president. College life for students is not all about faculty and classes even if “faculty members think college is all about them”. Campus life surrounds students with influencers and knowing this culture is vital because students learn from each other, from life experience, from staff in the cafeteria: “Everyone on the college campus influences campus culture”. President 7 cautioned that much of the president’s role involves dealing with people-related challenges. There will always be difficult people; those that are “tough to reach”. The ability to intervene in a constructive, fair way, to console, to approach people related issues is required. President 9 stressed the importance of having strong verbal skills in order to communicate effectively with a wide range of constituents. A key role for the college president is making sure that the institution is moving forward and the ability to negotiate “...to help people understand and see the bigger picture...” came in to play for President 9 when it was necessary for the institution to diversify its program offerings. Being patient and understanding with everyone involved helped her through such a challenging time of change. President 11 stressed the importance of communicating effectively with all of the institution’s constituents so that they are continuously connected to the mission and direction of the institution, but also to the realities and challenges that it faces. The president has to be able to “over-communicate” to all groups on campus in an honest, genuine, and inspiring way without being “lofty” or “ethereal”. Excellence in this skill comes with practice.

Theme 3: Strategies to Obtain Strengths and Skills

Having outlined the hard and practical skills and the soft and people skills required of the college leader, the participants went on to suggest strategies that might be

employed by aspiring or existing college presidents in order to amass the requisite skills for the role. Several encouraged obtaining strengths and skills from outside experiences. President 2 recognized the benefits of serving on the board of a company or organization, non-profit or otherwise, in order to expand experience and knowledge outside of academia and to be exposed to “how things function at that level”. Such outside experiences provide aspiring women college presidents with the knowledge of how a board of governors or trustees function at colleges because “...it’s a very complicated relationship between the president and that group. And because they’re volunteers ...expected to give a lot but they’re also your boss”. President 2 added that one can learn much by playing a leadership role in professional organizations. President 5 came to the presidency having amassed a wide range of experiences, including forming an organization from the ground up. Such experience translated well to the presidency in terms of starting something from scratch and having the opportunity to “build it a brick at a time”: from its mission and design, through creating and selling a product. Such outside experience provided “people skills and hard work ethic and the ability to learn new things” which are appropriate for the college president. For President 7, accreditation work proved very helpful because it allowed her to “get into the depths” of another institution. In addition, selectively participating in professional societies and serving on boards added depth to her knowledge and broadened her connections. President 10 suggested that volunteer work, by serving on a board, would help build leadership skills as would membership in professional associations in specific areas of interest. In addition, President 10 brought considerable outside industry experience that served her well in academia and in the college presidency.

Seven participants stressed the importance of experiencing a variety of academic roles because it helps you deal with the presidency and adds to your credibility. President 1 noted that moving through the pipeline in itself can present some challenges:

The challenge is simply moving through the pipeline to become, say, departmental chair and then a dean. Those represent some hurdles, and having the kind of portfolio of experience that search committees look for is really critical. Having experience in fundraising is very important, so having opportunities to do that at some point is really key (President 1).

President 3 reflected upon the benefits of having had a variety of academic roles because they “expose you to the myriad of problem-solving challenges and experiences that you’re going to have when you eventually become a president”. Such exposure provides the president with tools with which to deal with the challenges of the role of president. President 3 described this process of amassing wide experience and a strong academic background as “having your ticket punched” or following the traditional route. She observed that men had occasionally been brought in from other fields to lead universities but it is very rare that a woman president would be recruited from outside of academia. For President 4, the aspiring candidate must “build a portfolio” of experiences which can be obtained throughout the course of a traditional academic career; from faculty member engaging in scholarship and research to department chair dealing with administrative issues, the cumulative skill set amassed throughout gives the president credibility. Discouraging candidates from succumbing to the temptation to jump several rungs, President 4 noted that senior faculty often serve on search committees and the decision makers are looking for “a solid, pretty in-depth portfolio of experiences of what you have done”.

President 5 cautioned those who have followed a traditional academic track and achieved a provost or dean position that you automatically “know it all, but you never know it all. So grab every opportunity to learn”. Self knowledge is a product of understanding one’s own assets through a process of learning and of sharing with colleagues. Such knowledge will show through in a candidate for the presidency. President 6 emphasized the benefits for aspiring college presidents of having had “exposure to many parts of the college” in order to demonstrate to the search committee that “you can deal with anything and show that you have the confidence to deal with whatever would come up”. President 7 said that there was no substitute for competency and a solid educational background will stand the candidate in good stead. Having worked steadily throughout her academic career, and with increasing responsibility in academic roles, President 7 felt ready for the presidency. President 10 shared that her research and teaching experience was very rewarding and gave her a very “tangible view of the academy”. She served on key committees and took on administrative roles while she was still a faculty member. She cautioned that taking on additional responsibilities took a lot of time and effort but gaining a “broad knowledge base” is essential for women in overcoming barriers to the college presidency:

It’s taking on projects that are not in your normal range of duties so you develop a broader understanding because in the college presidency you deal with everything from questions, you know, related to faculty, faculty policies, students, student services, facilities, development, and external relationships (President 10).

Many participants encouraged aspiring presidents to take on more responsibility to address deficiencies in skills, and to be strategic in filling their tool kits. For example, President 2 suggested women seek out associate positions, such as associate dean or associate vice president because they are chosen by the person on the job, and not by a

search committee. However, she cautioned women leaders about overstaying in a pipeline position. The temptation to stay in a leadership role that is comfortable must be overcome by a strategic choice to take on a position with more responsibility and to gain further skills. To this end, President 2 opted to take on a Vice Presidency in the “service side of the house that covered everything to do with students” a role that involved “the stuff that nobody else wanted”. The role providing her with essential experience that she had not previously been exposed to.

President 3 shared that at each level of leadership one has “a span of influence” and the further up the hierarchy one moves the broader the time span becomes. She noted that unlike men, there is a tendency for women to stay too long in lower positions, frequently out of loyalty. Also, women are reticent to take on more challenging roles because of an inability to recognize how their skills and experience are transferrable. Women need to take the risk to go to the next level and to seek out opportunities to advance. President 4 stressed the need to gain experiences on both sides of “the house” and sometimes this involves stepping outside of one’s boundaries. For example, someone with a background primarily in academic areas should make every effort to gain experiences working with student affairs, or athletics. She suggested making oneself available for opportunities to work with constituencies that a president interacts with, such as the board of trustees or alumni groups as a way to obtain “solid campus-wide experiences”.

President 6 emphasized the importance of gaining experience broadly so that you know how colleges are run. President 7 always “stayed a good time” in a role and did not “jump around” institutions during her career so that when it was time to move up to the

next level, she left the institution stronger than she found it. Having experience at several institutions permits one to build connections, get to know colleagues, and organizations. President 10 encouraged aspiring leaders to determine their strengths and weaknesses with an objective mentor, and then “target opportunities” to address areas where skills need to be augmented. Taking on additional assignments or projects, in areas outside one’s expertise, to obtain a broader set of skills, is a strategic method of gaining experience. President 11 encouraged women to use their current roles to practice the skills that they would need in order to obtain and serve effectively in a college presidency.

Finally, eight participants emphasized the importance of professional development, seeking professional help from coaches, consultants, attending workshops, and leadership programs provided by organizations such as American Council on Education. President 2 noted that in academia, seeking out coaches, or participating in leadership seminars tends to be looked down upon. Some women avoid seeking professional support from coaches so as not to be seen as weak or lacking in skills. She personally found working with an executive coach very valuable and highly recommended that aspiring women leaders attend management and leadership training programs. President 6 encouraged the use of coaches in the professional development of a president and noted that some college boards have in the past hired coaches for new presidents in order to assist them in the transition during their first year.

President 7 recommended that leaders have someone, possibly a professional, that they can “really, really level with or could level with you”. Having someone to ask advice of, someone without any vested interest and yet someone who is really interested

in you, involves being able to receive and learn from constructive criticism. President 9 recommended that women attend professional development opportunities to obtain additional strengths and skills. President 10 recommended women enroll in executive leadership programs. President 11 recommended that women seek out others to help and coach them in skills in which they are lacking. For example, if they are weak in the area of finance, they should “seek out ways to grow in that area”. President 11 believed that women are “comfortable” with identifying areas where they need to grow as leaders. In terms of reaching out and seeking help in addressing areas of weakness, she did not think that “women ever have to be embarrassed by the areas in which they need to grow”.

Findings Research Question 3

3. What were the challenges and barriers overcome by women in order to achieve the position of president in higher education?

The three themes that frame the findings are: Theme 1. Perceptions and Realities, Theme 2. Personal and Familial Challenges, Theme 3. Approaches and Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Barriers

Theme 1: Perceptions and Realities

When contemplating the challenges and barriers in relation leadership, the participants shared perceptions and personal experiences that shed light on the perceptions of the role and reveal the realities of being a leader in higher education.

Several participants shared that it is a lonely job. President 1 shared that reality of the college presidency may differ from how others perceive it to be:

...being president at times is – it can be a very lonely kind of position, and it’s often very difficult to know who to talk to when you have problems, and often presidents are not always comfortable sharing all of the issues with their Board

Chair or with their Board, and they would like to be able to speak with someone in a confidential circumstance (President 1).

For President 3 “there is a reality to the loneliness at the top, because if you’re going to be a good leader, you cannot let yourself – because of the status of the office – it’s the Office of the President, first. It’s not about me the person, it’s about the Office. In order to maintain the objectivity and the detachment that’s necessary to make good decisions, you cannot have close administrative and faculty and student friends. You just can’t”. President 6 echoed the sentiment that “it’s a lonely job, you’re isolated, you’ve got to make tough decisions; you cannot talk to others” but that having a partner at home with you as a confidant is a strength to help you deal with the isolation.

President 8 noted that because it is a lonely job, the college president needs to have outside support, “some kind of collegial relationship” to call on when problems arise because the president “cannot confide in people within the institution”.

Five participants mentioned encountering stereotypes or working in a hostile environment as a reality. President 2 experienced a difficult situation at one institution in her career, in being the first female vice president and the youngest in years. It turned out to be “a pretty hostile environment” and one where she was discouraged from achieving several of the goals she had initially declared to the search committee. Such experiences or the possibility of encountering such experiences may well be off-putting for aspiring women leaders: “...there’s been a lot of pressure to have more women in these feeder positions, but they often face the kinds of things I faced, which is you’re coming with a completely different approach to management, partly because you’re a younger generation, partly because you’re female” (President 2).

President 3 cited the existence of stereotypes that need to be overcome: “Stereotypes are there about both men and women, and you just have to transcend them. You just have to. That’s where your own authenticity and your own sense of yourself are so important.” President 4 identified “vestiges of gender bias” that still exist as a barrier for women to overcome. For example, there still exist some men that are uncomfortable working for a female boss and this is linked to persistent stereotypes around what women presidents should be like and even look like.

Six participants shared that the process of headhunting and the role of search committees was an issue and that an overhaul was needed in order to identify candidates outside the typical pool, and the need to educate search committees. For President 1, selecting a president is an involved process. The search committee is tasked with finding someone with the requisite skill set but also someone who will be successful:

I know when I was interviewing, and I think what is clearly still an issue is when colleges look for presidents this is a huge investment for them. It’s an investment of not just money but time and effort, and they really want someone who will perform at a very high level, and so there’s a high element of risk in that, particularly if this is a president – if this is someone who has never been a president before and who has limited experience in fundraising, and so a lot of conversation needs to take place about one’s aptitude in that regard. Colleges more and more are most interested in presidents who’ve been presidents, and so after you’ve been president for 5 years and you’ve had a successful presidency that makes you extremely marketable. That, though, doesn’t help if you’re trying to actually track new people into presidencies if you start recycling former presidents (President 1).

President 6 suggested that search committees broaden their scope in terms of experience and roles held by candidates that they are looking for. For example, the position of Vice President of Student Services which she held provided her with a lot of valuable experience that serves her well in the presidency “...but I don’t think search committees - certainly the faculty - wouldn’t see it that way. I think that that’s something

we need to work on with the search committees, that people develop expertise from a variety of routes. If we don't, then it will contribute to not hiring women".

President 10 suggested that the reluctance of search committees "to look outside the normal pathways" to the presidency in assessing candidates was an issue. President 10 remarked that in higher education "we tend to appreciate diversity as much as any industry. However, I'm not sure sometimes we fully believe or are committed to it". For President 10, part of this endeavor includes the academy looking outside the "normal channels" in order to develop a diverse candidate pool, because impending retirements in higher education over the coming years will impact the internal pool of future leaders to draw upon for, not only the college presidency, but also for administration and faculty. She wondered how committees might implement standards in the search process to ensure diversity in the candidate pool and to actually "look outside the box" to find "different candidates to bring to the search".

Many of the participants shared from personal experience that it was a hard job, had an effect on family life, was dynamic, diverse and time consuming: a 24/7 role. President 2 described the presidency as "one of the hardest jobs you can have on the face of the earth. It is also one of the most rewarding, but it is really hard." Being able to overcome and learn from challenges, or "crashes" during one's presidency involves understanding that "adversity and challenge is part of the job" and achieving a "delicate balance" in dealing with all of the institution's constituents. President 3 described the presidency as demanding and draining and cautioned leaders to "plan for revitalization" because they and their institutions would suffer if the president burned out.

President 5 shared her personal perspective on being a college president: “It takes a lot of out of my life. It’s very demanding and not entirely rewarding, so – it’s not a price, it’s an obligation of service, I think”. President 7 said that the college president must have the courage to make very difficult decisions and how such decisions are communicated is paramount. She added that it is a hard job and “you have to love it to do it well”. President 8 noted that while women have made inroads into boardrooms over time, in the past it was unusual to find women in leadership positions because women could not handle the long hours, the demands of the role and having to be tough. President 8 vouched for the fact that it is demanding, and that one has to be pretty tough but “does that mean you can’t do it if you’re a woman? Obviously, I think not”. She explained that the perception that women cannot do the job because it is so tough or so demanding may still persist. The answer to dispelling such a perception and overcoming such a barrier is for more women to attain the role and excel in it.

Theme 2: Personal and Familial Challenges

In relation to challenges and barriers, the participants shared that personal and familial factors can prove to be difficult to overcome. President 5 suggested that challenges and barriers are “probably more cultural and more personal than gender-based”. Leaders need to be culturally astute in dealing with diverse people, environments and issues. Others suggested that family, career choices, not having support, having children presented challenges. President 2 noted that having families or spouses makes it more difficult to move up into leadership positions because it frequently entails having to relocate. President 4 shared that search committees want to know about a woman candidate’s spouse or partner, children, and how her personal life will work in

conjunction with her role as president. A woman college president shares the same challenges as other working women in terms of managing a household. President 4 added that her husband is there to help with the day to day chores and wondering how single women college presidents manage, she is "...in awe of what they are able to do without having somebody else in their lives...".

President 6 acknowledged the role of family in the availability and timing for a woman to become a college president. Having been approached to consider entering presidential searches on many occasions, she had to consider the needs of her family and her partner's career "so I delayed getting into the presidential search for a few years longer than I would have if I were not in those circumstances". She had the benefit of inside knowledge from a friend who had moved without her partner to assume a college presidency and who learned how difficult it was to be apart but also that having a partner with you for support on the job was so important. President 7 shared that her husband has been a major influence in her life as a friend and supporter and he participates in events and entertaining with her on campus. Not having had children has in a way "simplified" her life in terms of her career and profession and she wondered if she would be in a college presidency if she had children: "I just really admire other women who manage it all..." President 9 shared that advancement during her academic career was delayed at times when she became pregnant "so no more promotions for me because there is a direct link between child birthing and these professional moves".

Many participants acknowledged that achieving a work/life balance was a challenge and can delay getting to the presidency. President 3 shared that she married young and had a family, so "the balance of family and work" was a challenge for her all

her life. However, a balance can be struck by being intentional about family life and making time for both family and career. President 4 found balancing career and family difficult when her children were younger and delayed taking on an academic leadership role in administration that would have involved a greater time commitment than she could give at that time in her life. President 7 remarked that many of her peers have few or no children and that might influence timing or whether or not to take on upper management roles. However, she does not see having children as being an “inhibitor” and that organizations are becoming “much more attuned to accommodating” leaders with children.

President 8 shared that it was very important for her to have balance in her life. Her husband has a successful but hectic career and with two children, having a supportive family to allow both of them pursue their career goals was essential. Having a partner who is supportive is “critical” if one is to serve as a college president. President 9 observed that the college presidency is at times a very stressful position in terms of coping with the “multiple demands” that come with it, along with trying to raise a family: “...and so balancing family and career can be challenging”. President 10 emphasized the time commitment that grows exponentially as one moves up the rungs to higher positions on the pipeline. For women, taking on roles with increased responsibilities and demands becomes a “balancing act” for women to handle “the many pulls of their lives” so that it can be difficult for women to envision taking on more.

Theme 3: Approaches and Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Barriers

In acknowledging the existence of challenges and barriers that aspiring or existing college leaders can encounter, the participants shared key approaches and strategies that

can be employed in order to overcome obstacles to success. Several stressed the importance for aspiring presidents to have their ticket punched: have held key roles in academia and have the credentials for the role. President 4 recommended that aspiring women college presidents “look at the odds”, consider the statistics regarding how presidents are appointed and be strategic in the career path that is followed. She recommended that women follow the traditional avenue of achieving academic roles that will later allow the candidate to be positioned before a search committee with “the appropriate credentials, plus confidence and wherewithal to put yourself out there and to get appointed”. President 6 shared that her experience as a faculty member gave her a perspective on what a department Chair’s role is, which in turn informed her in understanding “what’s important to faculty and their contribution to the college”. In addition, her experience working in advancement served her well in understanding the component of the president’s role that is charged with “raising money and selling a college” in order to advance the institution. President 7 said that serving in key academic roles provides good preparation for the presidency. For example, Academic Vice President or Dean positions are complex and tough roles but if one can survive them they are the best preparation for the college presidency.

Several participants shared that having peer support or being part of women support groups was an important strategy. President 2 benefits from being part of a group of senior women leaders that participate in events together to share experiences and provide mutual support, especially during tough times. Another valuable resource for women presidents is having a network of women leaders at other institutions upon whom one can call for advice on policy or other issues and know that you will get a response

within 24 hours. President 3 also shared the benefits of belonging to professional organizations of women, and mentioned the Office of Women in Higher Education at the American Council on Education which offers programs for women leaders:

I committed to do those my entire career. They were a great source of support. Women getting together, talking about what the challenges were, giving each other support, seeing that they were not the only ones out there with those same problems. Younger women being mentored by older women, older women being able to hear some of the newest ideas from the younger ones coming up. A very reciprocal kind of experience (President 3).

President 6 said that for those presidents who do not have a partner in whom to confide, having a network of other sitting presidents to call upon or to be mentored by is beneficial. President 10 maintains a number of contacts that she can reach out to for advice or suggestions and recommended that women build “broader networks” to tap into when needed. President 11 suggested becoming involved in organizations that support women in advanced administrative roles such as the American Association of University Women that “...are actively engaged in ways that continue to put light on the gifts that women bring to administration and to leadership in higher education”.

Many participants stressed that leaders should learn from other models, both good and bad examples. Describing the experience as indirect mentoring, President 2 emphasized how valuable it was for her to have observed sitting women presidents; the way they operated and mistakes they made. In addition, she deliberately sought out a mentor in a woman leader from whom she could learn “to schmooze”. For women leaders, direct and indirect mentoring is a way of giving back. President 4 recommended that women put themselves forward in an intentional way to obtain a mentor, someone from whom to learn.

President 7 had an example of a good and bad female model to share. One model was very personable but had problems being effective in the role and President 7 was able to observe in her what works and what does not work. Describing herself as an imitator, President 7 used her skills of observation to learn what works and who is effective: “I chose to follow what I consider to be very good models of administration, some men and some women...And then in turn I feel that I need to enable other women in that position now of the reverse role of assisting others because I know how important...the connection or the influence or the support of somebody that can assist. And so this is a way of giving back...”

For President 8, aspiring college presidents should observe those who are successful in the role and reach out to someone who is, and seek their advice, their mentorship. She advised that the main route to obtaining skills is always “practice, practice, practice.” It is also advisable to observe those who are “doing it poorly” and try to figure out why because frequently it can be an issue of differences between the president and the institution in terms of culture or values. President 9 shared that, earlier in her career, having encountered a president who was very difficult to work with (who contributed to her decision to leave the institution), she took some key learning from the experience. Later she utilized that learning experience as a college president and it helped her “understand both the importance of working collaboratively with people, but also it really helped me in my ability to manage difficult situations”. President 10 had the good fortune to work with several strong leaders and she was able to observe how they operated. One male president with whom she worked was very strategic in implementing plans for the institution and watching him was “...a good resource to learn and watch

how to stay on focus and on message no matter what other little things were bubbling up out there”.

Finally, almost all of the participants said that networking, positioning, having supporters, and being intentional about one’s goal were important. For President 1, hers was an atypical route to the presidency. Encouragement from a male president in one of the institutions at which she worked earlier in her career was significant as was her decision to take on jobs that she was discouraged from taking such as Affirmative Action officer, described by peers as a “kind of a dead end” role and assuming more responsibilities when the institution underwent personnel attrition in key positions. President 1 also strategically sought out a Dean’s position to gain more experience.

For President 3 the first step is getting oneself out there in order to be considered:

Just plain old getting people to look at you, and that was the importance of affirmative action. A lot of people do not believe in affirmative action, now, because maybe it did go overboard a little bit at one point in time – but the point is, there would be no women presidents today if – because we couldn’t even get looked at. It wasn’t a matter of not being qualified. It was a matter of you couldn’t get your qualifications looked at. So, nowadays, at least we are looked at, and that’s what you want to think about. How, what are the things I can do to position myself – and you’ve heard, they’ve positioned products – well, people can be positioned, too. It’s very naïve not to think that you have to do that because you have to get over that barrier of getting yourself to be positioned so you can be seen as a leader. And the best way to do that, of course, is to accomplish something as a leader. Whether you’re the curriculum coordinator or the – you know, whatever you are – just do it as well as you possibly can and then ask for another responsibility. Don’t be shy about asking for another responsibility. That’s the odd part. There’s so much to do in the world that if we lined everything up, there would never be enough people to get it all done (President 3).

President 7, in addition to her qualifications and experience, also credits key supporters in securing positions in her career. Having maintained a network of support and mentorship throughout her academic career, she was able to draw upon a credible,

influential supporter known to the institution at which she had applied. Positioning and utilizing key referees can set a candidate apart from the rest of the field for a search committee. In return, President 7 will go out of her way to help and support qualified candidates that are looking to make network connections for career advancement.

President 8 was fortunate in having the opportunity to work with an “incredibly gifted leader” who had the ability to chip away at a problem and eliminate it. Working with him was “an incredible experience” and she observed and learned key approaches to problem solving and innovation that she applied in her presidency. President 9 suggested that the first strategy to overcome challenges and barriers is to accept the fact that they exist and that encountering them is to be expected. Once women take the first step by “acknowledging that they are there”, they can then endeavor to “move beyond them”. President 10 observed that women need to begin the process of networking, self representation and promotion. This has not been easy or comfortable for women but those who have been successful at advancing their careers have been able to think long term about their goals and “take ownership of accomplishments”. One part of this process is conducting annual assessments of one’s career path and accomplishments and planning development initiatives for the coming year. Acknowledging that this process can be challenging for women, President 10 shared that she only began self assessment after she began mentoring others.

Findings Research Question 4

4. What work/life experiences contributed to the authentic leadership of women presidents in higher education?

The three themes that frame the findings are: Theme 1. Personal Life Experiences, Theme 2. Work and Professional Experiences, Theme 3. Leadership Style and Substance

Theme 1: Personal Life Experiences

In addition to the perceptions of the participants in relation to challenges and barriers, and strengths and skills for the college presidency, the work and life experiences that they had to share offer a window into the authentic leadership development of each president. Their generosity in this regard and their articulation of their growth as leaders makes a significant contribution to authentic leadership theory and to authentic leadership development. As well as sharing personal work and life experiences, the participants also expound upon how these experiences influenced their growth as authentic leaders and continue to strengthen them as college presidents.

Four participants shared personal life factors that had a direct impact on their leadership roles and perceptions. President 11 shared how her “spiritual core” and personal belief system has been extremely important to her as a leader and she brings it to everything that she does as a college president. President 1, in acknowledging how university and college presidents are expected to project a certain image, was determined to be open with the community when she had a personal health issue: “people recognized that I was dealing with this situation in a very authentic and open way, they were extraordinarily supportive and comforting in return”. Overcoming personal challenges had a sizeable impact on this president to the point where she shared: “I don’t have a lot of fear left, let me put it that way!” (President 1). President 2 shared that experiencing adversity due to health issues had a direct impact on her and her role as a college president. She elaborated that, as with an unexpected health incident, all the preparation

and experience in the world cannot change the fact that a college president must develop a new skill set to deal with what is an entirely new type of role: ‘When you become president, nothing is as it was before’ (President 2). President 5 noted how her impoverished upbringing formed a lasting perspective on what one needs to survive in life. This experience has made her fearless. A firm believer in “eco-affluence”, or limiting consumption to only what one needs in this world, be it food or goods, President 5 appreciates what she has achieved in life and has in place a good value system with which to live it and carry out her role as college president:

What’s central to a meaningful life, which is finite and getting more finite by the minute... this job has to be really important for your life. And for me, the realization that the human basic needs are small and, therefore, the aspirational leverages are great. It’s a good life lesson that I have (President 5).

Motherhood as a factor in their authentic leadership development was cited by several participants. President 1 described having a child as “the most important experience in my life”. In each interview for leadership positions in academia, President 1 made sure that everyone involved in the selection process had “the advantage of full disclosure” but shared that it helped to have “strength in numbers” when other leaders at the institution had children.

“I made it very clear, though, when I was being interviewed that being a mother was extraordinarily important to me, and that everyone needed to understand that I was going to be a dedicated mother and that my son would not feel as though his mother – that there was separation. That did not mean that I would not work hard and that I certainly intended on being very successful, but to be successful and not have that very close relationship with my child would have meant that I was not successful at all. That was actually very well-received (President 1).

President 9 expressed her belief that the experiences of raising children contributed because no two children are exactly the same and such knowledge serves the college

president well, as does “being able to not win all the time as you know with children, that is often the case”.

Early leadership experiences that some participants were exposed to remain as examples of early influences that remains with them as college presidents. President 3 shared that childhood experiences in groups, at camp, or girl scouts or at church fostered leadership ability and opportunity. Also, being the eldest in her family, she found herself supporting her mother in running the household at an early age: “even though consciously I wasn’t seeing myself as a leader, unconsciously, I was taking that role”. President 3 noted how each leader has unique experiences that influence why they become leaders and all of our experiences add up to who we become. President 7 had leadership opportunities in school during her formative years and the seeds for future leadership roles may have been sown at an early age.

Several participants emphasized the importance of escape, balance, self-nurture and having time to oneself to avoid burnout as key for the college president. President 2 explained that the demands on the president’s time are such that you could end up attending official functions for breakfast, lunch and dinner. To avoid burnout, she recommended that college presidents figure out strategies to carve out time for themselves. It requires discipline but it is a necessity. Intensive daily exercise is “sanity” for President 2. Meditation has been central for much of President 3’s life and it is one of the things that she has outside of the university that sustains her. Part of her success as a leader has been her ability to “protect her other interests” which also include serving on non-profit boards and working on child advocacy issues. Such outside activity is important for the leader as a person: “If you only focus on your work and you’re not a

whole person...it makes it harder to do the job”. President 8 has always participated in skilled recreational activities that take her away; activities that are challenging and satisfying and all consuming to the extent that everyday distractions are dispelled completely. President 9 advised that women leaders needed the “ability to self-nurture” in order to avoid burnout in what is a very demanding role. A necessity is getting plenty of rest. Also, like many other participants, President 9 enjoys traveling to experience new places and on a weekly basis, she ensures that she fits in a fun activity such as reading or a movie “...something that takes your mind off the day-to-day challenges that you’ve been confronting”.

The participants shared how important learning from experiences and mistakes in life contribute to how they are as leaders, and how they lead as college presidents. Such experiences and mistakes make them who they are as authentic leaders and had a direct impact on their ongoing authentic leadership development. For example, President 1 shared how early in her educational career, she learned how obtaining a certain scholarship depended on who you knew as opposed to what you knew. She raised objections and was successful in obtaining the scholarship the following year. An early academic work experience for President 1 brought her to a new place of experience as an “other” in terms of her gender and religion. She shared that the experience taught her a lot of “important life lessons and also just how to work within a difficult situation and turn that into a positive situation”.

President 5 stressed the importance of learning from one’s mistakes, part of which involves “plain speaking” and avoiding the tendency found in academia to talk oneself out of trouble with “euphemism and metaphors”. It also involves allowing others to call

you on your mistakes and you on theirs: “Nobody’s infallible. In fact, I also say, “If you can’t fail, you can’t innovate.” So, we give each other lots of leeway, but you can’t be reckless when it comes to important things. So, you don’t make big mistakes – you experiment with little things and get the result you need”. President 7 noted that some leaders look outward in order to avoid facing up to mistakes, affixing blame or trying to explain why someone other than themselves caused a specific outcome. True leaders take responsibility for their actions and their locus of control. President 9 shared that “the lessons you learn in life are always with you in whatever you are going to be doing” and that they contribute to who she is as a leader. For example, being able to deal with conflict in her personal life has assisted her in handling conflict in her professional life.

Theme 2: Work and Professional Experiences

The participants shared how work and professional experiences throughout their lives inform and nurture their authentic leadership ability. For several, a demonstration of such authenticity is the hiring good people, and surrounding oneself with capable staff with whom to carry out the duties of the college presidency. President 2, a self-described eternal optimist, does not hesitate in recruiting personnel that are more knowledgeable than her in many areas, because as president she has the self confidence to surround herself with “star players” and not let that bother her. President 4 said that “having a good team around you”, a team that shares “the same set of values and beliefs and ambitions for the institution” is an important asset for the college president to have. President 7 shared that leaders that are secure in themselves are willing to hire the right people, even if they are more competent than they are. If you “have a pretty good self-concept, you feel okay with yourself, and are comfortable in your own skin” you can surround yourself

with talent and build a strong team with which to lead. President 11 shared that presidents must have the ability to hire people who can “complement your limits and utilize your strengths”. Part of this ability is the authenticity of knowing oneself and one’s skills and weaknesses and being able to hire people that “are smarter than you” because it is the task of the president to bring together the best team for the institution.

The participants are the accomplished leaders that they are because of the acknowledged role that mentors played in their authentic leadership development. President 2 had key mentors during her academic career and continues to have a “community” of people that she can call on for support and mentorship. President 3 credited key male mentors at opportune times throughout her career that were supportive of advancing women, one of whom, a president, started a woman’s commission for the institution and asked her to serve as chair. President 6 suggested establishing good mentorships early in one’s career as a way to understand academic posts not held previously, so that an in-depth understanding of “what a college is all about” is obtained. President 7 shared that a female mentor was very influential early in her administrative career who “really believed” in her, and from whom she gained working knowledge and expertise. President 7 had the benefit of also working closely with several influential male mentors “because they were the people that I encountered along the way that I clicked with and that were very supportive”. One in particular played a pivotal role in her academic career progress. Working closely with him, she gained solid experience and was positioned for advancement as she later assumed his role at the institution.

The participants’ perceptions revealed the ongoing nature of authentic leadership development and their individual all consuming yearning for life-long learning and

scholarship factor into their continued leadership success as college presidents. For example for President 1, maintaining scholarship while serving as an administrator underpins her qualification and credibility:

What also has been very important to me has been maintaining my scholarship and research over the years. I love teaching and I equally love research. Also when I was a faculty member I have to admit whenever tenure and promotion decisions would come up I would always question the qualifications of the administrators who were making those decisions because all too often they would be individuals who did not have a great track record as scholars, and I thought, “Who are you to judge?” And so when I became an administrator, knowing that that had been one of my frequent criticisms, I was determined to maintain my scholarship and research (President 1).

President 3 enjoyed life-long learning which will extend into her retirement plans for further study. It informs everything that she is as a leader. She believes that aspiring women college presidents must consider themselves life-long learners also. President 1 realized early in her career that she would always be learning and would learn by doing. She has amassed knowledge about how to be a better leader and president over time by serving in different roles and learning from others.

A central tenet of authentic leadership revealed by the participants is the ability to solicit input, obtain a variety of viewpoints, consult with others and obtain evaluations on performance. President 1 recommended taking advantage of mentoring programs and consultants that can support leaders one-on-one as “a really valuable resource”. President 2, having received evaluation feedback early in her term as president to develop her listening skills, developed personal, self-coaching strategies in order to serve with consistency and with input from others before making decisions. President 3 agreed that women leaders build their skills by “asking for honest assessments from people you respect” and being open to constructive criticism as a continuous growth strategy.

President 7 described this trait as being a consultative person and knowing when to reach out and ask advice of others. She cautioned that there may be some “personalities that feel if you ask advice then someone could see some inadequacy in you and that is not the case” but the reality of the job is that “you are tackling issues all the time” so gathering as much information, evaluating situations by “thinking and by reading and by talking to people and reflecting with people” is a required ability. President 8 amassed wide experience by serving in different positions because of a need for continuous learning: “My mind had to be engaged in learning something new, and it still does”. President 9 suggested that aspiring women leaders need to identify someone to mentor them so that they are there to listen to you when challenges arise. President 11 shared that requisite skills such as communicating effectively come with practice but also by listening to feedback from others about where you need to improve. By being receptive to input from others and willing to change as a result, leaders will learn and grow and improve upon their effectiveness in communicating with disparate groups on campus.

The participants revealed that drive, determination and being relentless are essential to success as a leader. President 1 shared that determination and a propensity for hard work is personal and “ingrained”:

Well, certainly hard work is something that’s ingrained, not nature, and a very high work ethic. I had a history of being confronted with difficult situations that I’ve had to try and negotiate, and I’ve lived in various kinds of stressful situations, whether it’s living in a society and culture where obviously I was not a part of the majority, or whether it was trying to make my way through administrative positions where again, I was not in the majority. You could only make your way through if you had the ability to bring people together and to try to work out solutions that can satisfy everyone (President 1).

All of the participants shared that having diverse experiences was important to their authentic leadership ability. President 3 urged women leaders to “continuously learn

– formally and informally...and get as much and as varied experience as you can possibly get and use other people as resources”. Unlike men, women leaders are sometimes cautious about reaching out to mentors to expand their knowledge for fear of being perceived as weak: “Women tend not to do that and one of the reasons is because they think that if they have to ask for help, people will think they’re not good enough, and we women need to do it.” President 7, starting with whatever one is doing at the present, urged aspiring leaders to excel at whatever they do, learn the field and as a result you will be known: “...do it as best you can so that people would look at you and say, “I’d feel very bad if you were to leave”...It’s sort of like green light ...people that you give energy, you add to the community, you add competence or creativity...and you’re there, you’re working”. For her, good work ethic, having a good attitude, and working hard cannot be underestimated. President 9 has had a varied background that exposed her to different settings and people which equipped her well to deal with what is a “people job”. The college president has to be effective in articulating “a clear vision that people can get behind”. Diverse work and life experiences allowed her to “fine tune those skills”.

Theme 3: Leadership Style and Substance

The participants revealed how honesty, integrity, truth, being straight up, having core values, and maintaining full disclosure are central to their authentic leadership. President 1, in describing the job as “a constant”, cautioned those who try to ‘act’ as President that eventually “cracks will begin to appear”. In serving as president, she is open and candid in her dealings with constituents on campus. President 2 stressed that a “track record of actions will cause you to be seen as authentic...but you need to realize that even when you're being completely honest, there will be things that you absolutely

cannot talk about that will cause you to look like you're being dishonest". The president must recognize and deal with the fact that "people who are disagreeing with you are being authentic too". President 3 described integrity as putting your money where your mouth is, and being consistent in word and deed. She believed that her participation in this study illustrated clearly that as she is an advocate for women and a scholar, and that turning down the invitation would have violated her sense of integrity. Truth and authenticity are intertwined:

...but the academic pursuit is about the search for truth and so if we as leaders don't behave in truthful, ethical and authentic ways, then we're being the biggest hypocrites or we're being Machiavellian or worse, we're being malicious. And so that's why I think that's so important to authenticity. And I think there's a notion and there's uniqueness in authenticity, but there's also a notion of freedom in authenticity. You know, the more authentic you are, and the more you commit to trying to be and learning how to be authentic, the freer you can be. I think, the more [you are] interesting to others, the more interested in others, the more joy you can take in others [is key], because you can take joy in yourself, too, despite all of our weaknesses. So, I think all those things are a product of authenticity. And, boy-oh-boy, it's the one quality of leadership that if you don't have it, people know it in a minute (President 3).

President 4 cited leadership attributes such as sincerity and passion for the vision and mission of the institution as being important. Equally essential are having core values that are consistent with integrity and honesty and a true commitment to education and students. For President 5, a sense of goodwill that extends to a willingness to work with others is central: "It's a matter of "Do what I do, not do what I say." President 5 tries not to "exact from my colleagues anything that I don't put out myself and I think that's important". President 6 spent much of her life traveling and it informs her approach to how she leads the institution as an advocate for international students as well as study abroad opportunities that are conducive to student success, regardless their backgrounds.

A life long advocate for diversity, her values dovetail the mission of the institution she serves which “clearly values diversity and lives diversity”.

President 8 described integrity as central to her leadership approach, as is having a sense of purpose and a sense of making things happen. She likened it to her relationship with the Board, in that she could never do anything in her role as president that she could not tell them because “I have to look myself in the mirror every single morning, and I have to like what I see”. President 8 continued by emphasizing the importance of being straight up with people and being able to own your mistakes, face them and move on. She considered how the political system propagates people who will say what they need to in order to achieve an end, but “it doesn’t feel authentic”. She shared that “it’s hard for me to imagine a component that’s more critical” in leadership. President 9 said that leading an institution of higher learning requires of the president the ability to engage all constituents in moving forward and described the college presidency as requiring a leader that serves “from the bottom up” as opposed to the traditional, hierarchical top-down approach because “when people feel that they are a part of your vision and a part of the plan, it makes it much easier for them to get behind what it is you are trying to accomplish and it can actually help you accomplish it”. President 11 described integrity as “the most important quality” that one can bring to the presidency. Decision making and compromise go hand in hand and the college president may not always get what they want but “choosing a pathway that may not be everything you want” is acceptable, so long as one’s integrity is never compromised.

In describing authenticity, the participants emphasized being real, genuine, being true to oneself as essential tenets for the leader. President 1 shared that she had had the

opportunity to observe other presidents and their styles but she made a conscious decision when she was interviewing for the role of President to interview in a very truthful and authentic way: “When I interviewed here I thought, “I’m not going to try and be anything other than who I am,” because if I try and act a certain way or try and project a certain persona that is not who I am eventually, because I know the rigors of the position, I won’t be able to maintain that. Eventually *I* will come out (President 1)”.

President 3 explained that being true to oneself involves a willingness to face who you truly are, “warts and all” and recognizing that each one of us is unique but imperfect. We all have a role in reaffirming the best of the unique in each other. Knowing ourselves is a continuous journey and with it comes an appreciation for oneself “because if you cannot appreciate yourself, you cannot appreciate others”. President 5 explained that being authentic is something that everyone can sense in a leader and it can affect everyone on campus in a very positive way. If it is a trait that is missing in the college president, that too will appear:

You gain trust and confidence by being who you are. If you are a trust-worthy and confident person and then it will show up. It may take longer or shorter periods of time. Eventually it will. If you are really feeling that blind ambition or power, that’s going to show up, too. So, you have to do it for the right reason. And I think if you can get to the point where you are considered and you are in the position, then ride with your strength and keep on learning about your own shortcomings (President 5).

President 6 was also determined to “be upfront with the search committee” regarding the importance of her partner securing a position at the institution so that they could be together. Being candid and upfront served both parties well. President 7 stated that being yourself involves being the best self that you can be and this involves learning from other people as well as knowing what one’s particular personality and gifts are.

President 8 did not believe that a president can lead “without people perceiving you as authentic” because those you serve need to believe in you. President 9 stressed the ability to “be real” as a person and not presenting a façade that is not who you really are: “if people feel that you are real with them they’re much more likely to join you”.

President 10 explained that being genuine in how you communicate your feelings to others was important; others recognize the truth in what you say about your feelings on a topic or situation. President 11 said that part of knowing who you are as a president involves being in touch with the reality of the institution. A president who is in touch with who they are and what the institution is can “define, communicate and refine” this reality with “honesty and openness”. This reality cannot be manufactured or construed by the president to be something other than what it is. Such knowledge is not obtained by reading reports but by “hearing and listening to people and staying in touch with the people, especially the students. They are so honest. And so unburdened by clutter, you know”.

Part of leading with authenticity and at the core of being an authentic leader is leading by example, not compromising and doing what you say. For example, President 3 emphasized that women leaders “...have to be authentic”. For many women leaders being authentic and yourself involves being caring and expressive openly even if stereotypically they are viewed as weak. Being who you are will facilitate change but it is tough. “You run into incredible challenges and you have to be decisive and you have to be tough, but you can also be tenderhearted. In other words you can care”.

President 5 cautioned that the job of college president is so complex and varied that a perfect job description does not exist. The perfect candidate does not exist either. A

search committee can be faced with a very strong candidate on paper but the choice cannot be made unless the most important criteria are met: leadership and passion.

President 5 explained:

...the people that are mediocre in everything will lead you to a mediocre place. You really need to be passionate and really good about something and then if that talent is unleashed and people see that, it's like a Northern Star that can lead the institution one way or another. So, I mean, there is – some people might say that a college presidency and leadership are oxymorons because your management is cut. I beg to differ. I think leadership is unbelievably important because you need to manage so many parts and you can't do it by fear. When you can really garner all those powers together, you really move a place and that's probably – I mean, you're coming back to motivation. Why would you ever want to do this? The right reason is, you want to make a difference. You want to take this place, this institution, to a different level. You want to differentiate and fulfill your mission that you care about. It's got to be mission driven. That mission has to speak to your personally or else it's just a job (President 5).

President 6 describes it as “being willing to put yourself out there and do what you think is right” even if it involves taking a risk on something you believe in and believe is right for the institution. President 10 said that as a college president one must focus on “doing what you believe is right whether or not it's popular” and the ability to do this stems from “centering yourself” so that you are in tune with what is best for the institution, as opposed to some who “get too invested in the role”. President 11 explained that honesty, which involves saying what you mean to everyone, is essential because they count on it:

...be willing to be open and honest with people who come to you. Now that doesn't mean that you need to tell everything to everybody, but that what you do say to people is really open and honest. And that you don't promise things that you're not going to work your heart out to achieve and deliver. That you're going to be the first out there to carry the flag and to assure that it gets delivered...and they know they can believe what you say to them (President 11).

The participants described authentic leaders further by noting that they value people, share the credit, focus on the individual and are dedicated to the development of

the leader/follower relationship. President 2 shared that dealing with different constituencies and valuing everyone and their contributions was an integral part of the role of president as was having “your actions follow your words”. The ability to match one’s interaction with the people that you are with at that moment involves “being willing to find ways to be yourself and to be authentic, but to respond – to be very flexible in the way you interact with people” be they board members, or graduate students. President 3 described it as the president “getting buy-in from people”, allowing others to excel and to be seen to excel, and not caring who gets the credit for accomplishments. Sincerity on the part of the president is central “because it has to be genuine...you can’t fake it. You’ve got to really feel that way”.

President 5 enjoys the opportunity to learn from experiences as a daily occurrence by coming in contact with different constituents at the institution. Each has the opportunity to be the other’s learning instrument. This cycle of learning sustains and replenishes everyone at the institution: “It’s not just a job. We’re a learning organization. Our mission is education. We continually renew the organization. There’s just so much that we can gain just being here and listening to one another and you can’t get a better job than this”.

President 6 feels that accumulated work experiences help her “see the whole campus” and she values everyone on it as a result. Her interactions with them are informed by her knowledge of their roles and duties. President 7 stressed the importance of valuing others and recognizing their contributions and gifts and giving credit. Gratitude is central to acknowledging that “it does take a village, that you don’t really do anything alone, that you cannot run a college alone”.

President 8 emphasized the importance of having people that will give you the real picture and are not afraid to tell you if something is wrong. One way to cultivate this is to be open and honest and be “willing to spread as much of the credit around as you can and take the blame and be human”. The trickle-down effect is pronounced; from a college leadership that is honest and courageous, authenticity permeates the institution, to the faculty and staff that see it as a place where they like to work, to the students who feel satisfied and content to learn.

President 9 underlined the importance of the leader/follower relationship in a successful college presidency: “It’s really about being able to meet people in their corner of the world and help them, then go to where you want to go, as opposed to pushing them to where you want to go and hoping that they will follow”. President 10 is driven by her passion for education and the variety of things that the college president deals with on a daily basis adds to the enjoyment of knowing that individual lives are affected by actions taken for students, faculty and staff:

Sometimes, as a leader of any type whether it’s a college president or a senior leader in some instances...sometimes you’re so focused on the forest you forget that there’s individual trees in there. And, you know, that to me is if I can keep remembering those individual trees that’s what I thoroughly enjoy about the job (President 10).

President 11 stressed the importance of “maintaining the integrity of your student-focused mission as an institution”. Part of this involves accepting that the role of president is bigger than the person that occupies it, and that everything that the president does must not be done for personal gain but “for the common goal of the institution which is the advancement of our students”. President 11 stressed the importance of understanding the culture of an institution as paramount. For example, those who come to

the presidency from a nonacademic background need to learn about academic culture and respect and understand that culture.

Summary

The study participants shared insights that provided thick description for data analysis and answers to the four research questions posed by the study. All of the participants mentioned that they have a passion for education and for improving students, for making a contribution; that it is a calling more than a profession. For President 7, the role is very complex but fun and because it involves educating students and making a difference in peoples' lives "it's a very upbeat profession". For President 8, the college presidency has been "an incredible opportunity" for which she feels blessed. Knowing that she has been able to make a difference during her service at the helm of the institution will allow her to move on "when the time is right". President 11 does not view the college presidency as a job, but "a call" and she brings forward all of the things that she has learned in her previous experiences which have formed and informed her. For President 11, "...we define education as enabling others to develop to the fullness of their potential". Working in a learning environment that develops students excites and energizes her and continues to motivate her "in terms of how I get engaged and to what I put my own energies".

All of the participants emphasized the importance of fit. They each mentioned that leading an institution that shares their values, and has a mission that is aligned with their beliefs is essential. The president and the institution must fit together to be successful. For example, President 1 withdrew from an initial presidency search because the institution was struggling with the notion of having their first woman as president:

When I went on campus for the interview I would have been the first woman president, and clearly the campus was trying to deal with that. In the course of my interviews people kept remarking upon that I was female. I had already been the first female Dean in that particular college's history, and I had gone through 5 years of, "Oh, you're so different from the previous Deans" that I really was not necessarily looking forward to having to deal with that issue yet again when I moved to a presidency (President 1).

That and other reasons caused her to withdraw from the search because "it wasn't the right timing, it wasn't the right fit". The presidency that she currently holds is a mutually beneficial fit in terms of shared values and commitments, such as a deep dedication to diversity. President 2 advised candidates to put their "heart and soul" into the process and "really be who you are" so that it is clear to all parties in the search process that it would be a true fit. President 3 leads an institution that is in sync with her values of social justice and diversity. More than a value statement, the institution "walks the talk" and this fit was one of the reasons that she chose to serve as its president.

President 6 leads an institution that is in tune with her background of interest in people and diversity in education, which is in turn a fit with the institution's mission. President 6 noted this when she was being "courted" for the position of president "I thought, "This is a college that goes along with my entire upbringing and educational experience and my inclinations as a scholar." So it's just kind-of a perfect place for that reason". It was her intent to make sure that she was "the kind of person that fits with this institution...that there were commonalities between what I wanted for this institution and what the institution also wanted". President 8 noted that if the match with the institution is ill-fitting the college president will not be successful in the role. Finding the right fit is important and involves matching values with those of the institution and also with its culture. President 8 added that a culture clash between a president and an institution

would undermine the success of the presidency. President 10 offered that it is helpful that her background and interests are so similar to the focus of the institution she leads.

The perceptions provided by the participants regarding the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency revealed three themes: Theme 1. Multiple Factors, Theme 2. Discrimination/Gender Influences and Theme 3. Strategies to Address Underrepresentation.

The participants shared insights into strengths and skills that are required for the college presidency and the three themes that frame the findings are: Theme 1. Hard and Practical Skills, Theme 2. People Skills, the Person and Attitude, Theme 3. Strategies to Obtain Strengths and Skills.

The participants offered perceptions regarding the challenges and barriers that need to be overcome to succeed in the college presidency and the findings were framed by three themes: Theme 1. Perceptions and Realities, Theme 2. Personal and Familial Challenges, Theme 3. Approaches and Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Barriers

Finally, the participants shared personal work/life experiences that contribute to the authentic leadership of their college presidency and the three themes that emerged are: Theme 1. Personal Life Experiences, Theme 2. Work and Professional Experiences, Theme 3. Leadership Style and Substance

The following chapter will provide an analysis of the findings of this study and present implications and recommendations that emerged as a result, followed by recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to ascertain the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; the strengths and skills required; the challenges and barriers to be overcome and how work/life experiences contribute to the authentic leadership of the woman college president. The previous chapter presented the personal and professional perceptions of eleven women college presidents. This chapter will present a discussion of findings and will be followed by conclusions drawn. Based on the findings from this study, recommendations will then be made for both future research and practice in relation to women and the college presidency.

Discussion

The findings as presented in Chapter 4 in response to the four research questions posed by this study will be discussed in relation to the themes that emerged from perceptions revealed by the study's eleven participants during the interview process.

Underrepresentation of Women in College Presidencies

The perceptions provided by the participants regarding the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency revealed three themes: Multiple Factors, Discrimination and/or Gender Influences and Strategies to Address Underrepresentation.

The limited representation of women in the college presidency, a phenomenon that researchers have grappled with and struggled to understand, would appear to have multiple contributory factors. Labyrinthine in quality (Eagly and Carli, 2007), as opposed

to constituting a single layer of glass overhead, the reasons for the low numbers of women in the college presidency are many. The backgrounds of those women in the pipeline to upper tier positions in higher education and the positions and experiences they held may well be contributory factors coupled with the notion that men have traditionally held leadership roles can lead search committees to see prospective candidates through a restrictive lens. As a consequence, without a deanship on their resume, for example, many experienced administrators may not view themselves as qualified. Others who hold key positions in the student services side of the house, as opposed to the academic side, may not fall into the candidate pool that search committees are looking for. Several of the women in this study disprove this argument by their own success, having come to the presidency through non-traditional routes. It must be mentioned however, that the type of institutions at which they serve (i.e. non Land Grant institutions) is telling.

It would also appear that qualified women are opting to stay in the pipeline and forego the college presidency, a very public, stressful and demanding role. Maintaining a balanced work/home life outweighs the draw of the upper tier for many women. On the other hand, others, willing to assume the responsibilities of executive leadership, may be poached from academia to comparable positions in other industries that offer more competitive compensation and benefits.

The persistence of gender biases in relation to careers and to leadership in general factor into the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency. The lack of female models in leadership roles impacts the perceptions of women who might otherwise aspire to lead and this is also true in higher education. The lack of models is a result of the persistent influence of the traditional role of women, as is the fact that some

women are discouraged from pursuing leadership roles because they are women.

Instances of gender discrimination in the presidential selection process or use of gender inappropriate questions posed in the interview process, although not all-pervasive, persist for some.

Gender influences in relation to the roles of men and women in society affect the self perception of women and their ability to aspire to leadership roles. As a result, women are unaware that leadership is an option or a role within their scope of ability. Some women college presidents succeeded because of persistence and determination, regardless of the factors involved, and through the efforts of mentors that identified their leadership potential and targeted and groomed them to assume the role. They succeeded despite the fact that skewed perceptions of women and their leadership style persist and are therefore sometimes expected to compromise their style and play down their gender rather than being encouraged to play to their strengths and acknowledge that women's leadership style is different and equally effective.

The American Council on Education report (2007) found that the underrepresentation of women and minorities in the college presidency needed to be addressed. While the percentage (45) of women in the pipeline to upper tier leadership roles might support the notion that it is a matter of time before more women enter the college presidency and that change is inevitable, as the women presidents in this study cautioned, women have come far but have further to go. Strategies need to be employed to address the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency and sitting women college presidents can play a key role. Having achieved the college presidency despite the odds, they are in a position to identify talent and promote leadership as an option, and

support and mentor potential leaders in order to broaden the pool of available candidates. Such a strategy would help change perceptions about women as college presidents and open up the possibility to other women.

The contributory factors to the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency were illuminated by the perceptions of the participants in this study and as presented above, they are many and varied. One important element that emerged was the overarching motivation of leaders, women or men, to become college presidents. The underrepresentation of women and minorities in the college presidency needs to be addressed. However, achieving parity in numbers, or even exceeding the number of men, is not necessarily the goal. Cultivating ambitious leaders motivated by a passion for higher education and a dedication to students, as opposed to those attracted by the title, prestige or power of the presidency, is not a small task, given the enormity of the role and the stress and responsibility attached.

Strengths and Skills for the College Presidency

The position of college president requires strengths and skills which can be categorized under the themes of hard and practical skills, people skills, the individual and attitude and the strategies developed to obtain these strengths and skills. These skills concur with many of the findings in previous studies of women college presidents (Darden 2006, Madsen, 2008).

The hard and practical skills that college presidents need include knowledge about budgets, experience in fundraising and having political savvy. To handle the complexity and variety of the position, having energy and stamina are needed as well as drive and competitiveness. The college president must be astute at problem solving and strategic

thinking, able to apply analytical skills, and be successful at time management and multitasking. Being able to deal with the various crises that can occur on campus, handling stress, being calm and remaining level in difficult situations can make or break a presidency. Having courage and being able to make hard decisions requires a thick skin, and the ability to not take things personally as a result. College presidents must be ready for the role, be self sufficient, be visible as a potential leader by being career oriented, and ultimately, must be persistent. As several participants noted, hard and practical skills that the college president must have are not unique to men or women; all college presidents must develop these strengths and skills if they are to be successful. However, the concern that women lack or cannot obtain them persists, as does the notion that women have to work harder, make more compromises or deliberately seek out additional responsibilities in order to add such skills to their leadership toolkit.

In addition to the hard and practical skills required of the college president, key people skills, such as an astute listening ability and having empathy for others, emerged. Others included having a refined ability to cope with change and ambiguity as well as having a clear vision as a leader and being in tune with the institution's mission. Because the position of college president is a "people job", the occupant deals with diverse constituencies, and must have excellent social and communication skills including the ability to negotiate, mediate, be diplomatic and be patient.

The ability to be collaborative and form relationships is essential on a college campus and women college presidents who have had work experiences in student services have gained people skills that are highly transferable to college presidency positions, where interactions with diverse constituents is the norm.

The college president is the face of the institution, and it is a very public role that demands much from the leader, who is “always on”. As a result, the occupant must be centered, confident, and have keen self belief and self knowledge, findings that concur with previous studies on women leaders in higher education (Kampel, 2006, Rodriguez, 2006, Wootton, 2006). Having a sense of humor and being “older and wiser” would appear to be strengths that complement the role too.

The traditional pipeline to the college presidency may not provide women with opportunities to obtain and experience the essential strengths and skills required for the role of college president and deficiencies can be addressed by obtaining these skills from roles outside of academia, for example in volunteering. Within the academy, a career in which the aspiring college president has experienced a variety of academic roles enhances skills needed for the presidency and adds to the leader’s credibility. Any aspiring woman college president needs to address deficiencies in skills, and be strategic in order to fill their leadership tool kit. No longer viewed as a stigma or demonstration of weakness, professional development opportunities, in the form of assistance from coaches or consultants, and workshops and leadership seminars, are an excellent means by which leaders can obtain strengths and skills which they are lacking, as other studies have noted (Rodriguez, 2006).

Challenges and Barriers to the College Presidency

Challenges and barriers that were revealed in the study’s findings were classified into three themes: Perceptions and Realities, Personal and Familial Challenges, and Approaches and Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Barriers.

The perception of the role of college president can differ from the reality. It is a sometimes lonely job, a frequently hard job, and one that has a considerable effect on family life. At the same time it is dynamic, diverse and time consuming, and requires of the occupant a “24/7” commitment. These are significant challenges and barriers that aspiring women college presidents must grapple with. Others include the discouraging reality for some of the participants in this study who encountered stereotypes or worked in hostile environments. This indicates that more must be done by institutions of higher learning to eradicate such barriers. The persistence and determination of the participants in overcoming these challenges and barriers en route to their college presidencies leaves open the question of whether or not others who encountered similar scenarios opted out or gave up on their quest as a result.

Beyond gender, cultural barriers may exist for some aspiring college presidents because the role requires cultural astuteness in dealing with diverse people, environments and issues that arise on campus.

For many women, other challenges around managing the household, dealing with family and children, and coping with or without support from a partner impacts their career choices. As it is for career women in other fields, striking an acceptable work/life balance is a challenge and can delay or detour a woman’s route to the presidency as other studies have also found (Back, 2007). Interestingly, the study’s married participants marveled at the ability of single women college presidents to manage without a partner at home to support them and the unmarried participants praised their married-with-children counterparts in their ability to manage it all.

Challenges and barriers exist for many on the pathway to the college presidency and given the underrepresentation of women and minorities in the role, succeeding in reaching the presidency is, in itself, a challenge. Acknowledging that certain challenges or barriers exist and striving to move beyond them is required. Aspiring women college presidents can overcome obstacles when they have their ticket punched by having held key roles that demonstrate the credentials for the job. In relation to navigating gender issues, having peer support and participating in women's support groups or professional organizations is recommended. Another strategy is to observe other models, both good and bad, to gain insights into leadership styles and practice. Finally, networking, positioning and promoting themselves, having supporters, and being intentional about achieving the goal are strategies that women need to embrace.

Work and Life Experiences and Authentic Leadership

Personal work and life experiences that contributed to the authentic leadership of college presidents were collected into three themes: Personal Life Experiences, Work and Professional Experiences and Leadership Style and Substance.

Life experience shapes and informs the leader and certain events or realities can have a significant impact on leadership approach and style. Personal health issues that were overcome and surviving an impoverished upbringing are examples of life experiences that had a direct impact on the authentic leadership of the participants. Motherhood was for many a major influence and for others early leadership experiences had a direct impact on their leadership roles and perceptions. Sustaining one's strength for many involved spirituality, escape, balance, self-nurture and having time to oneself to avoid burnout. Learning from the experiences and mistakes in life contributed to how

women college presidents served as leaders. Love for, and emphasis on, education, nurtured early in life and sustained throughout their careers, motivated women college presidents and allowed them to lead an institution of higher learning with authenticity.

Women college presidents bring to the role extensive and diverse work and professional experience that they have amassed throughout their careers. Mentors played a key role during their careers and in turn women college presidents are identifying and mentoring future leaders. Life-long learning and scholarship continues to inform their presidency. Work and professional experiences instill the leadership confidence that allows them to hire good people and build strong teams with which to lead the institution. A lifetime of career experience of the importance of seeking input, obtaining a variety of viewpoints, consulting others and obtaining evaluations on performance informs their leadership. A strong work ethic, drive, persistence, determination and being relentless underpin their success as women college presidents.

The details shared by the participants in this study reveal a long and continuing path to their individual authentic leadership development. As authentic leaders, they demonstrate their competence on campus in fostering the essential leader/follower relationship that is central to the successful authentic leader. They surround themselves with competent team members and value outside opinion. They lead from their core, firm in the knowledge that how they do so is infused by their personal values and integrity. They exude confidence that has emerged over time, sustained by countless experiences, personal and professional; some painful, others ecstatic, all learning opportunities. They are accomplished, hard working, focused and inspiring. They could probably be doing any number of things professionally. They chose to dedicate themselves to steering an

institution of higher learning, an all-consuming, demanding role. For doing so, they each in their own individual way, are authentic leaders.

The participants in this study were a purposeful sample of the one in five, the women who occupy 20% of college presidencies at four year or graduate or research colleges. In terms of leadership style and substance, as leaders they stressed the importance of honesty, integrity, having core values, and engaging in full disclosure in authentic leadership, as other studies have found in relation to authentic leadership (Nekoranec, 2007). In addition to these action qualities, personal traits such as being oneself, being genuine, and being true to oneself are indicative of the authentic leader. Both action qualities and personal traits contribute to the link between leadership effectiveness and authentic leadership and these include not compromising, leading by example and “walking the talk”. The authentic leader’s emphasis on valuing people, sharing the credit, focusing on the individual, and honing the leader/follower relationship were important as examples of what Hofman described as infusing one’s “conscious-authentic leadership behavior”, one’s personal beliefs and values into the practice of the college presidency and how business is conducted (Hofman, 2007). Ideally, this occurs when the authentic leader holds a deep dedication to the institution (Wootton, 2006), which the participants in this study exemplify.

The leadership style and substance of the women college presidents are formed by the primary motivational factors of internal processes that are directly linked to their values and beliefs (Scalise, 2007). They serve as college leaders because of their deep respect and dedication to education and to making a difference. Frequently describing the

presidency as a calling or a service, their role is firmly connected to their sense of self and contribution to the betterment of others through education:

Authentic leaders are characterized as hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and transparent. These leaders are described as moral/ethical, future-oriented individuals who make the development of others a priority. By being true to their own values and acting in ways that are consistent with those values, authentic leaders develop their associates into leaders themselves. (Fry and Whittington, 2005, p. 185).

Conclusions

Women (and minorities) are underrepresented in the college presidency and the contributory factors to the phenomenon are many. It is widely acknowledged that this limited representation must be addressed. The notion that it is just a matter of time before comparable representation with white men is achieved has been countered by the American Council on Education report (2007) which suggests that without intervention retirees from the college presidency won't necessarily be replaced by more women and minority leaders.

Persistent evidence suggesting that women face unique issues on campus due to gender must be acknowledged. The demands of family and the workload imbalance in the home between the genders are keeping some women out of the leadership pool for practical as well as personal reasons. Practices rooted in discrimination and inequity, however infrequent, must be eradicated. Denying the potential of even one qualified leader due to gender or other biases is unacceptable.

Strategies revealed by this study, and in particular, the generosity of sitting women college presidents in identifying and mentoring future talent, while helpful, are not sufficient. Concerted efforts to seek out qualified, motivated, passionate, authentic leaders, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or background are

called for. Recruiting leaders who actually aspire to the college presidency with all of its responsibilities and challenges, must be a priority for higher education if the United States is to remain competitive on a global level.

The strengths and skills, both personal and professional, needed to achieve the position and to succeed in the college presidency are consistent with those revealed in previous studies (Darden, 2006, Madsen 2008). Whether or not to obtain them by pursuing a strategic, traditional route and getting one's ticket punched or in other roles outside the academy depends on the receptiveness of the search committee to reconsider the profile of a viable candidate and broaden the pool by being willing to recognize diverse positions held by women within or beyond the academy. A growing shift in the responsibilities of the college president, from more academic and curricular oversight to that of a fundraising, chief executive officer figure, will require search committees to adapt their search strategies accordingly.

Implications

The findings of this study concur with the American Council on Education report (2007) in acknowledging that women are underrepresented in the college presidency, despite the fact that they occupy 45% of positions considered pipeline to the top tier of academic leadership. This study also concurs with the report in finding that a concerted effort is required if the imbalance in representation of women and minorities is to be reversed. Much needs to be done by colleges in order to address the looming talent shortage in leadership and to institute programs that directly endeavor to diversify the college presidency.

The findings outline the strengths and skills required of the college president and they are not unique to any one gender. What sets the successful college president apart is a deep and profound dedication to education and steering an institution that is a fit, personally and professionally. The motivation that drives the aspiring college president to choose to lead an institution of higher learning is central. As the participants in this study demonstrate, women leaders can and choose to serve. To address their underrepresentation and those of other minority leaders will require that search committees look beyond the typical pool of candidates and the standard resume.

Recommendations

- 1) Women who aspire to the college presidency must first consider their motivations to ensure that they are well placed. If they are willing to embrace the responsibilities and challenges that come with the role, women leaders should seek out opportunities to address any strengths or skills that they might personally need to hone, in order to achieve and succeed in such a role.
- 2) Candidates for the presidency must possess strength in both the personal and professional areas of their lives. Seeking out mentors and opportunities outside of their comfort zone will allow women to build their leadership tool kit and obtain a sense of the scope of upper level leadership in colleges. Finally, seeking out support from other women, and participating in groups to share best practices and address struggles and solutions in common is recommended and will provide needed solidarity and support.

- 3) Sitting women college presidents should continue to identify and groom talent in order to broaden the pool of future college presidents to include more women and minorities. The potential of a significant collective contribution from sitting women presidents is considerable but given the demands of the presidency, no small task.
- 4) Institutions of higher learning must recognize the impact that a talent shortage will have on their organizations in the mid to long term future and acknowledge the urgency of institutionalizing succession planning that targets the pipeline to the presidency by initiating programs across the organization to identify and develop future leaders. Improved policies and programs that allow for a better work/life balance for all potential leaders are needed. Programs implemented must make a concerted effort to expand opportunities and encourage and support women and minorities so that they will consider and aim for leadership positions in academia. This is a strategy that will not only preempt the looming shortage of talent in the upper tiers of leadership, but also diversify college leadership so that it better reflects the constituents and communities that it serves.
- 5) Challenges and barriers encountered by some women in the search process call for an overhaul of the system and training of the headhunters and committee members involved, if they are to identify candidates outside the typical pool, and to actively seek out qualified women and minority leaders to diversify the college presidency. Search

Committees and head hunters must revisit their approach to the search process to include a broader lens with which to view candidates, to include those that come from nontraditional backgrounds, but whose experience and skills would equate with those who have followed the traditional route through the academy of getting one's ticket punched.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research include conducting a parallel study on perceptions of sitting men presidents regarding the underrepresentation of women in the college presidency and a study of the women who were presidents when the underrepresentation of women was even more pronounced, such as when women held 1 in 10 of college presidencies. A future study to investigate the success of efforts by American Council on Education and colleges in general to diversify the presidency would be fruitful. Studies that investigate multiple factors that impact the college presidency, such as age, class, and ethnicity are recommended. Further studies that provide insights into authentic leadership theory and practice in relation to leadership in higher education and beyond would add to the literature on this emerging theory of leadership. Finally, conducting a similar study with other underrepresented groups in the college presidency, to include minorities such as gay and lesbian leaders would also make a significant contribution to the canon.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Organizations that focus their efforts on the advancement of women in leadership and education, such as the American Council on Education, Office of Women in Higher Education and the American Association of University Women, can utilize the

perceptions and insights of the women college presidents that participated in this study as well as the findings of this study in existing and future programs that advance and develop women leaders. In addition, women college presidents and human resources departments at institutions of higher learning may apply the study's findings to programs and succession plans in which they seek to identify and groom women and minority leaders at their institutions.

An investigation into the actual position of college presidents is overdue in order to determine if the qualifications required by search committees and the profiles of candidates that are solicited require updating and revision. Such an investigation would also need to address why capable and qualified leaders are steering clear of the college presidency for work/life balance or other reasons, and also to question the motivation of others who seek out the role for its prestige and title. Given the recent spate of college presidents resigning due to drunk-driving arrests or other scandals, further investigation into those who fail in the position and why they do, is warranted.

Concluding Thoughts

...the more we write about it and talk about it and speak about it, the more likely we will be influencing people to think of this as a possibility for them (President 9).

It was the intent of this study to obtain the perceptions of sitting women college presidents in order to provide women who aspire to the college presidency with information and tools with which to pursue their goals. In addition, the findings of this study provide recommendations for search committees and institutions of higher learning with regard to reviewing the college president search process. Suggestions for institutions of higher learning in the training of future leaders in the pipeline and beyond emerged, as

well as recommendations for future research regarding women and leadership in higher education and more. Finally, the study makes a contribution to the growing canon on women and leadership theory and practice and the emerging area of authentic leadership theory in particular.

This study brought together the perceptions of eleven purposefully selected women college presidents. Their insights and experiences cannot be generalized to all women college presidents but because the findings concur with prior studies, inferences can be drawn. To say that the women who succeed in achieving the college presidency are extremely determined is an understatement. Despite challenges and barriers that some of them encountered along the way and the struggles that they deal with in an all consuming, demanding role, an underlying passion for education and higher education in particular, with all of its potential, drives and sustains them. Their generosity in sharing personal insights into their work and life experiences reveals a deep and sustained link with their personal values and beliefs and the institutions they serve as authentic leaders.

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Appendix A

IRB Application # 08-042 - approved

IRBPHS

April 24, 2008

Dear Ms. Corcoran:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #08-042). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

IRBPHS - University of San Francisco
Counseling Psychology Department
Education Building - 017
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080
(415) 422-6091 (Message)
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irbphs@usfca.edu

<http://www.usfca.edu/humansubjects/>

Appendix B

Letter to Participants

Dear President Doe,

I am a doctoral student in education at the University of San Francisco, in the Leadership Studies department and I am about to embark on my dissertation journey on women in leadership in higher education. I have been an administrator in higher education for many years and as a result, my studies have very personal and professional significance for me.

As you know, the American Council on Education's recent study on the American College President (2007 edition) found that 23% of college presidents in the country are women, up from 9.5% in 1986. However, the report concluded that women and minorities are increasing their representation at slow rates. The underrepresentation of women in college presidencies has been the subject of growing research and interest over the last several years, which has succeeded in revealing the perceptions and contributions of women college presidents and I look forward to my study adding to this important canon.

I am conducting a qualitative analysis of the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in college presidencies; the strengths and skills they bring to their roles; the challenges and barriers overcome to attain their roles and to learn how work/life experiences contribute to their leadership roles. I would be honored if you would participate in my study. I am aware of your dedication to women's issues and diversity from reading your biographical information on the Ultimate Graduate University website and I hope you agree that your participation in this study will provide insights to women who aspire to ascend to a college presidency one day.

I will be interviewing women college presidents to gather data for my study and the names of participants will be kept confidential. I plan to conduct interviews in the summer of 2008 and will provide interview questions in advance. At any time, you may contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Patricia Mitchell, at: mitchell@usfca.edu

Could I ask you for some time out of your busy schedule to allow me to conduct an interview with you? I would be most grateful as I understand how precious your time is.

I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Cathy Corcoran
ccorcoran@usfca.edu
cell: 415-***-****

Appendix C

Follow Up Letter to Participants

Dear President Doe,

I am writing to follow up on my previous email inviting you to participate in my study on women college presidents.

I am conducting a qualitative analysis of the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in college presidencies; the strengths and skills they bring to their roles; the challenges and barriers overcome to attain their roles and to learn how work/life experiences contribute to their leadership roles. I would be honored if you would participate in my study. I am aware of your dedication to diversity and leadership from reading your message on the Ultimate University website and I hope you agree that your participation in this study will provide insights to women who aspire to ascend to a college presidency one day.

I will be interviewing women college presidents to gather data for my study and the names of participants will be kept confidential. I plan to conduct interviews in May and June of this year and will provide interview questions in advance. At any time, you may contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Patricia Mitchell, at: mitchell@usfca.edu

Could I ask you for some time out of your busy schedule to allow me to conduct an interview with you? The interview itself will take no more than an hour and will be conducted in your office. I would be most grateful as I understand how precious your time is.

I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Cathy Corcoran
ccorcoran@usfca.edu
cell: 415-***-****

Appendix D

Interview Questions

WOMEN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS: MOVING TOWARD AUTHENTICITY

A qualitative approach to research allows the participant to share lived experiences as they relate to the study. Participant answers to these open ended questions may during the interview prompt the researcher to utilize probing or additional questions for further detail and rich description.

- Could you tell me about your background and upbringing?
- Could you describe your education and how it influenced you?
- The American Council on Education report published last year found that in 2006 only 23% of college presidencies are held by women, even though they hold 45% of positions considered as “pipeline” to the top. Why do you think there is a continuing underrepresentation of women college presidents?
- When you exclude two year or community colleges from the percentage, only one in five four-year or graduate college presidencies is held by a woman, like you. What do you think about that?
- What contribution, if any, can women who currently hold the position of college president make to address the underrepresentation of women in college presidencies?
- What type of strengths and skills do women need in order to make it to the college presidency?
- What skills or strengths were particularly important for you personally?

- How can women who aspire to the college presidency obtain these strengths and skills?
- In order to achieve the position of college president, what are some of the challenges and barriers that women need to overcome?
- What were the challenges and barriers that were particularly significant for you personally?
- What can women who aspire to the college presidency do to overcome these challenges and barriers?
- Before you became a college president what were some of the work experiences that you had?
- How do your previous work experiences help you in your current leadership role?
- You have had a varied and active life that continues with your current role as college president. What are some of your previous life experiences that have an impact on you as a leader?
- How do these life experiences contribute to your leadership as a college president?
- In relation to leadership, what do you think authenticity is?
- What is it like to be a college president?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share that we have not already covered?

Appendix E

Human Subjects Bill of Rights

Appendix H: RESEARCH SUBJECTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, I have the following rights:

- (1) To be told what the study is trying to find out;
- (2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;
- (3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes;
- (4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;
- (5) To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;
- (6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;
- (7) To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;
- (8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;
- (9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and
- (10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher or the research assistant. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects.

I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to
USF IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology
Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street,
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

IRBPHS 2001 MANUAL

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Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Purpose and Background

Ms. Cathy Corcoran, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is doing a study on women college presidents to investigate the perceptions of women college presidents regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; to identify the strengths and skills that allowed those women who serve as college presidents to attain those roles; to identify the challenges and barriers they overcame; and to determine how previous work/life experiences contribute to their leadership roles.

I am being asked to participate because I am currently a woman college president of a non associate's college in the western United States.

Procedures

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in an interview with Ms. Corcoran, during which I will be asked about my perceptions regarding the continuing underrepresentation of women in the college presidency; my strengths and skills that allowed me to attain the role of college president; the challenges and barriers if any that I overcame; and how previous work/life experiences contribute to my leadership role.

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. It is possible that some of the questions in the interview may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.
3. Because the time required for my participation may be over one hour, I may become tired or bored.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the perceptions of women college presidents.

Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement

I will not receive payment for my participation in this study.

Questions

I have talked to Ms. Corcoran about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call her at (415) ***-**** or Dr. Patricia Mitchell at (415) 422-2079.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Consent

I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights" and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a student or employee at USF.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's Signature

Date of Signature

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date of Signature

Appendix G

Transcript Letter

Office of the President
Ultimate Graduate University
1010 Higher Education Blvd.
San Francisco, CA 94105

June 30, 2008

Dear President Doe,

I hope you are having a pleasant and relaxing summer so far. I have conducted the remaining interviews with participants and am about to begin the data analysis phase of my study.

Please find enclosed a copy of the transcript from our interview held on June 8th for your review and approval. Also enclosed is a copy of your signed Informed Consent Form for your files. If you have edits/corrections, please mark up those pages and return them to me in the enclosed envelope. If the transcript meets with your approval, please indicate this on the enclosed card and return it to me. I will then email to you a soft copy of the final transcript.

I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Cathy Corcoran
ccorcoran@usfca.edu
cell: 415-***-****

Appendix H
Transcript Approval Card

Interview with President Doe on 06/08/08

Please check one:

- _____ I have reviewed and approve the interview transcript
- _____ I have made edits/corrections to the transcript (see enclosed pages)

Additional notes/comments:

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The researcher, Cathy Corcoran, will email to me the final transcript for my files

Appendix I

Matrix of Findings

Finding	Pres 1	Pres 2	Pres 3	Pres 4	Pres 5	Pres 6	Pres 7	Pres 8	Pres 9	Pres 10	Pres 11
RQ1											
Theme 1											
Type of Institution	x		x								
Internal (personal)				x							
External (board)				x							
Women choose not to					x						
Leader stereotype						x					
Bias in perceptions							x				
Presidency a Male Role								x			
Role is off putting									x		
Way women network										x	
Educational background											x
A Phenomenon					x	x					
Work background	x			x	x	x					x
Luck/Destiny			x		x			x			
Motivation for the role			x	x	x			x			x
Other industry										x	
Theme 2											
Lack of models	x	x	x			x			x		x
Discrimination			x				x	x			
Did not see potential		x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
Women as leaders	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Compromise style			x		x	x					x
Matter of time		x	x					x	x		
(Election) women not there yet			x	x			x	x	x		
Theme 3											
Sitting President identify talent	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
RQ2											
Theme 1											
Budgets	x		x				x	x		x	x
Fundraising	x	x		x	x	x					
Energy/Stamina			x	x	x	x	x				x
Political Savvy	x		x			x		x			
Drive/Competitive	x	x		x				x			
Analytical, strategic skills	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	
Crisis Management		x		x		x	x		x		
Thick Skin		x		x			x			x	x
Be ready for role	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Courage/take risks		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Finding	Pres 1	Pres 2	Pres 3	Pres 4	Pres 5	Pres 6	Pres 7	Pres 8	Pres 9	Pres 10	Pres 11
Theme 2											
Listening/Empathy		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		
Ability to change				x				x			
Humor			x				x				
Older/Wiser					x	x					
Vision					x			x	x	x	x
Collaborative					x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Public Role	x			x	x	x	x	x			x
Confident	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
A People Job	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Theme 3											
Experience outside academe		x		x	x	x	x			x	
Variety academic roles	x		x	x		x	x			x	x
Take on more responsibility	x	x	x	x			x			x	x
Professional Development	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x
RQ3											
Theme 1											
A lonely job	x		x			x		x			
Hostile environment		x	x	x		x					x
Search committees	x	x				x	x	x		x	
A difficult job		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Theme 2											
Cultural reasons					x						
Family/children	x	x	x	x		x	x		x		
Work/life balance			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Theme 3											
Have ticket punched			x	x	x	x	x				
Peer support		x	x	x				x		x	x
Models		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Networking	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
RQ4											
Theme 1											
Personal issues	x	x			x						x
Motherhood	x		x			x			x		
Early leadership experiences			x		x		x				x
Balance		x	x					x	x		
Learn from experiences	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Theme 2											
Hire good people		x		x			x				x
Have mentors	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Life long learning	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x
Seek input	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
Good work ethic	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Theme 3											
Honesty/Integrity	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
Being real/true to oneself	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lead by example		x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x
Value people		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x