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Knowing Leaders: Centering Gender and Identity Among Women Leaders in Higher Education

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Abstract

This dissertation centered the experiences of women academic leaders – their backgrounds, educational experiences and leadership styles – to illuminate the intersection of identity and leadership. Using narrative inquiry as a methodological framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013), the researcher conducted a qualitative study by interviewing seventeen women presidents and chief academic officers in a semi-structured format. In exploring and analyzing the stories of women leaders, the researcher avoided unidimensional characterizations and binary comparisons with male leaders. To incorporate the interlocking components of identity, the researcher considered the impact of race, class, gender, and first-generation status, as well as historical and institutional contexts, as a backdrop for those experiences.

The narratives of these women leaders revealed their overlapping identities – who they are as human beings, how they define themselves, and what influences have shaped their lives and careers. The researcher worked within the framework of feminist theory to center the women leaders' experiences, and especially relied on West and Zimmerman's (1987) theoretical work on "doing gender." How the leaders not only perceived, but also performed, their gender became a critical component of the dissertation analysis. In addition, the work of Black feminist theorist Collins (1986) proved foundational, since it highlighted the particular experiences and perspectives of "outsiders within" who have had historically limited access to organizations and communities, and therefore enjoy a special understanding of the challenges and obstacles that limit their full participation. The researcher also incorporated Crenshaw's (2000) theory of intersectionality, which exposed the complexity and interlocking nature of racism and sexism.

In analyzing the provosts' and presidents' "talk" and how they made meaning of their experiences, the researcher identified the systemic concerns in the academy that continue to impact women's lives and careers and the ways in which sexist practices are reproduced. While the women leaders were highly reflective about their own individual experiences, they were not always able to name how they "did gender." The participants portrayed the sexism as an obstacle that needed to be navigated and overcome on an individual basis. As women who achieved professional success but struggled to acknowledge the larger forces at play, they engaged in a type of "discursive disjunction" (Chase, 1995). The dissertation concludes by outlining future implications and sets forth recommendations that focus on leadership advocacy, sustained development opportunities, intentional mentoring, and attentiveness to search processes in order to effect structural changes in higher education.

KNOWING LEADERS: CENTERING GENDER AND IDENTITY AMONG WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

*When you're in a place that was once all-male, a lot is taken for granted, you know? And as women come into the community the stuff that you're taking for granted gradually comes to light and some of it gets changed and some of it doesn't get changed right away. So you're in an environment where, whether it's just the layout of the buildings or where the women's restrooms are, for the kind of... sort of presumption of academe. About people's mobility, the nonworking spouse and all these kinds of assumptions kind of didn't matter when I was just a college student. But somehow this is going to be a profession that I'm entering. And some of these young assistant professors were women who were trying to figure out when I'm going to have children, if I'm going to have children. You know tenure is not set up for that. The way we thought about the tenure clock is not set up to facilitate having children and it's just not... It was set up at a time when there were no women and so that is what I mean when I say gradually you become aware of whatever these structures are that you're living in. The presumed single-sexedness of this and you feel the sort of alienation of the single-sex in some of your environment and you need a way to understand that... You know, like, **why do I feel a little bit like an outsider here?** [Jennifer, emphasis added]*

The preceding passage is excerpted from an interview with Jennifer, one of my dissertation participants. In the pages that follow, I will return to this evocation of the sort of bewildering academic experience that many women academic leaders hint at or report. The uncertain syntax itself seem to translate the very conditions that can engender feelings of alienation in a woman higher education professional. Jennifer recounted how she lacked a true

sense of belonging as a college student attending a formerly all-male institution, and the doubts

she felt in entering a profession that was not created for women students or faculty. This

dissertation about gender, identity and leadership will consider the jumble of precarity,

experience and hope, strategies and disruption that Jennifer elucidated.

In 2016, approximately one-third of new campus chief executives were women,

compared to 10% in 1990. Of the women presidents, 17% were women of color, which

represents 5% of all presidents (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk & Taylor, 2017). At minority serving

institutions (MSI), 35.5% of presidents are people of color, and 32.7% are women of color

(Gagliardi, et. al, 2017). According to recent surveys of chief academic officers, approximately

43% were women (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017) and 14% were people of color (American

Council on Education, 2014)[1]. While these data points may indicate a promising sign that women

in colleges and universities are advancing, it does not tell the full story. A complex, deeply

rooted set of barriers continues to impede women's real progress in acceding to senior leadership

roles. The "pipeline problem" is, in many respects, a myth (Johnson, 2017): there are more

women than ever earning both baccalaureate and doctoral degrees, but they are not advancing to

senior leadership positions. Instead of blaming individual agency, there needs to be a critique of

the structural concerns inhibiting progress (Shepherd, 2017). For, until the inequities for women

are exposed, the "gendered university" (Ford, 2016) will remain a bastion of White male

privilege. Disrupting these norms demands a recognition of the complex, systemic issues, and the

creation of both agentic and institutional strategies with which to address them. My dissertation

makes visible the experiences of women who have managed to achieve success in academia, and

[1] There is no one study that provides data on chief academic officers who are women of color, hence the bifurcated data points.

how they navigated the patriarchal system in ways that both challenged the gendered institutional norms – and at times may have unwittingly, and unconsciously, perpetuated.

Higher education is undergoing a fundamental demographic shift, and undergraduate women have outnumbered men for the past several decades (Snyder, Tan & Hoffman, 2005). As student and faculty demographics become more diverse, new styles and approaches to college and university leadership are necessary (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak & White, 2015). And although women students continue to outpace the number men today (Snyder & Dillow, 2012), institutional leadership fails to reflect that fact. Therefore, recognition and critical analysis of the systemic barriers becomes essential for pragmatic as well as philosophical reasons. Institutions must actively develop inclusive cultures, and embrace a diversity of people who broadly reflect the diversity of their student and faculty populations. When talented professionals are not invested in the organizations, and perceive the barriers as too intense, they will shy away from leadership opportunities. An increasingly diverse and globalized educational environment will require approaches to leadership that engage constituents through connectivity and collaboration, and incorporate an array of backgrounds and perspectives (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Helgesen, 1990; Kezar, 2000; Kezar & Beesmyer, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 2000). Ultimately, colleges and universities, and especially their students, will suffer if their systems remain status quo.

An examination of what women have encountered along the path to senior leadership will help clarify the complexity and perniciousness of the barriers they face and will widen the pathways for future leaders. In my introductory quotation, Jennifer, a college president, referenced the overlapping and historically male-dominated structures in higher education that require interrogation. She notes that many academic policies, practices and attitudes originated in

a different era, when universities were dominated by male students, faculty and staff. Her experience at a formerly all-male institution, and throughout her academic career, revealed that vestiges of that earlier time persist today. The culminating effect of the remnants she evoked was to make her feel like an outsider, with no true sense of belonging. She described the conditions that can muddle and even harm women's experience, and engender a sense of precarity. Jennifer turned to feminist theory as a means of unpacking her sense of alienation, her feeling that she was an outsider within the academy (Collins, 1986). That in turn helped her to understand just what it meant to function in a formerly all-male environment, and also helped her to identify the impediments that persisted.

As Jennifer suggested, the legacy of the all-male college environment is that sexism remains a factor in higher education, from tenure and leave policies to administrative practices. In order to truly accommodate women, as Jennifer later stated in our interview, there must be a recognition and acknowledgment of "the presumed single-sexedness." The personal and professional narratives of my women participants, all of whom served in senior leadership roles at colleges and universities, helped clarify their strategies for navigating the hegemonic structures in order to achieve professional success in the academy. Relics of the male-dominated past continue to influence our current structures of higher education, even at a time when women are in the majority, propagating the "outsider" feeling that Jennifer articulated. Making visible my participants' experiences exposes what has changed, as well as what changes are still necessary in order for women to have any hope of achieving parity.

Statement of the Problem

Presidents and provosts wield significant power in shaping educational access for students and professional opportunities for faculty and staff, and serve as thought leaders and

community catalysts in their own communities as well as nationally (Gagliardi, at al., 2017; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Trow, 1994). Academic leaders can also serve as role models for members of their communities, inspiring students and faculty to consider the possibility of leadership in their own futures. This is especially relevant when one considers the higher representation of undergraduate women in college today. A lack of diversity among academic leaders signifies a missed critical opportunity in bringing diverse experiences and perspectives to the table in decision-making processes (Kezar, 2000). The failure among colleges and universities to realize more significant gains for women suggests that more insidious and pervasive factors may be blocking the pathways to leadership. Perhaps more important, the lack of progress for women as well as for people of color signifies that our colleges and universities have not evolved and adapted in more general ways, which is especially concerning given the rapidly changing student demographics that will impact our institutions in the coming decades (Grawe, 2018).

However, a narrow focus on representational numbers belies the larger, deep-rooted problem of institutionalized sexism and racism. A recent study at Columbia University found that cronyism contributed to women and minoritized faculty members feeling disenfranchised from their departments, an indicator that barriers arose very early in their academic careers (June, 2018). Ford (2016) referred to this phenomenon as the "sticky floor," in contrast to the more widely accepted "glass ceiling." Women continue to shoulder the burden of childcare and home responsibilities, creating a "public-private dissonance" that colluded to slow down their academic career paths (Ford, 2016; Guarino & Borden, 2017). There also exists the matter of hiring and unconscious bias. Due to institutionalized racism, faculty of color experience significant obstacles to career advancement that lead to them feeling marginalized in the academy (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Stanley, 2006). And women of color faculty experience the

intersecting effects of racism and sexism based on historical discrimination (Evans, 2007; Henderson, Hunter & Hildreth, 2010; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Turner, 2002). There are more women of color concentrated at the lower faculty ranks, and fewer that hold full professorships, than men of color (Johnson, 2017).

The same injurious barriers that women experience early in their higher education careers also impact their opportunity to assume future leadership roles. Scholars have speculated that women may not have been seriously considered or even were excluded from opportunities due to a complex "labyrinth" of male-dominated stereotypes regarding leadership qualities (Eagly & Carli, 2007), a perception that women lack business and managerial acumen (Glazer-Raymo, 1999), and even a bias against women in female-dominated academic fields (Garrett, 2015). Once women achieve academic leadership roles, they then (especially women of color) encountered greater scrutiny and criticism (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak & White, 2015). And, women who succeeded in male-dominated roles were further disadvantaged by sexist stereotypes of leadership qualities (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004). Even when women do ascend to leadership positions, they continue to face similar demands of family responsibilities and other "soft work" expected of women (Ward & Eddy, 2013). While it may be hopeful that more women have achieved leadership positions in colleges and universities, they often continue – even as leaders – to encounter institutionalized discrimination that exists once women get there, what Fitzgerald (2014) referred to as the "myth of opportunity."

Purpose of Study

This dissertation centered the experiences of women academic leaders at colleges and universities in the United States. I have eschewed an androcentric approach, and tried for the most part to avoid the trap of contrasting female and male leaders, an approach that ignores the

multi-faceted nature of identity and creates a false binary (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990;

Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Since gender, race, sexual identity and class are all critical,

interlocking components of identity (Crenshaw, 2000), I acknowledged the complexity of

individual lived experiences, as well as the need to consider historical and institutional contexts.

In general, colleges and universities remain conservative, highly gendered, racialized

organizations in terms of culture and expectations (Eddy & Cox, 2008), and are based on White,

heteronormative, male models (Bensimon, 1989; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). While women

leaders have faced various stumbling blocks to success – some overt and others more subtle –

they all have had to challenge, in one way or another, prevailing notions of leadership.

Therefore, I rely on women's voices and narratives to tell their own authentic and complex

stories, in order to evoke the systemic barriers that impede women's progress, and demand

redressing. Based on her own research of women academic leaders in Australia and New

Zealand, Fitzgerald (2014) highlighted the need for dismantling structures themselves in order

for real change to occur:

> The critical challenge is to confront the terms of the game itself and not simply secure
> entry for women as legitimate players. Increasing numbers of women in senior positions
> is only a first-level response. It needs to be accompanied by wider institutional challenges
> about the nature of the organization and the operation of White male privilege. Securing
> entry to senior ranks becomes more about conforming to existing norms rather than
> challenging structural inequities and institutional cultures. (pp.24–25)

The stories and narratives of women leaders are essential in identifying those opportunities for

identity and cohesion, and to identify meaning for both the storyteller, as well as for the

researcher and reader. My dissertation explores the overlapping identities of women leaders –

who they are as human beings, how they define themselves, and what influences have shaped

their lives and careers – in order to illuminate those experiences and histories. In listening to and

documenting the stories, I have also sought to identify the obstacles they encountered, and where there might be additional opportunities for support, empowerment, and potential change.

The participants' stories often exposed systemic issues of inequity and disadvantageous practices in the academy. Their complex and varied identities mattered a great deal in understanding their paths to leadership, their leadership styles and attributes, and how they made meaning of their experiences overall. Because gender and other identity categories are socially constructed, it is critical that the context and complexity of their backgrounds are incorporated into a study of academic leadership. As Nidiffer (2001) explained, there is great benefit in an expansive view of leadership attributes:

> A more desirable model… recognizes a fuller array of leadership competencies. Thus, the accepted definition of successful leadership can draw upon the best elements of the traditional and emergent scholarship. In this model, the skills demanded of a leader include a blend of stereotypically male and stereotypically female attributes – perhaps an integrated set of abilities. The precise mixture of competencies depends, of course, on the individual and the context of the institution; there is no single, ideal type of leader. (p.112)

Portraying a full picture of the participants' experiences and identities, while assessing the influence of institutional culture and systemic forces at work, revealed a more nuanced and comprehensive vision of academic leadership, as well as the dominant practices that persist in limiting women's opportunities.

Theoretical Perspective

In representing women leaders, I worked within the framework of feminist theory, and especially relied on the theoretical work by West and Zimmerman (1987) in "Doing Gender," and Collins (1986) in "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." In their seminal article, West and Zimmerman (1987) claimed "that a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something

that one *does*, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (p.140). How the leaders not only perceived, but also <u>performed</u> and discursively reproduced their gender became a critical component of my analysis. Indeed, the interaction between researcher and participant was in and of itself a performance of gender, since the dynamic of our interviews would have been different had I been a man.

Collins (1986) provided the foundation for Black feminist thought, which was borne out of a place of exclusion in White feminist scholarship. In her groundbreaking article, she focused on the particular experiences of African American women sociologists, who "tap this standpoint in producing distinctive analyses of race, class, and gender" (p.S15). Collins highlighted in particular the production of ideas by Black women, and paved the way for the development of intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 2000), which exposed the complexity and interlocking nature of racism and sexism. The contributions that Collins and other Black women theorists have made to feminist research, including this dissertation, are considerable. Collins explicated how those who have been marginalized and lack full participation in their societies enjoy the benefits of a particular "outsider within" perspective. The historically limited access that outsiders have had facilitates a special understanding of the challenges and obstacles that exist in organizations and communities. Collins' work has applicability to others who by virtue of their identity possess an "outsider within" status. I argue that women in leadership roles at colleges and universities, "who, while from social strata that provided them with the benefits of while male insiderism, have never felt comfortable with its taken-for-granted assumptions" (Collins, 1986, p.S29). Therefore, employing the "outsider within" framework in my own research provided the mechanism through which the experiences of academic women leaders can be centered.

Feminist theory informs how we understand and also how we perceive women leaders in the academy, thereby demanding consideration of the role of gender and other identities, while questioning assumptions and conceptions of ideal leadership. It focuses in particular on the "woman question," that centers women's experiences and how women are socialized, in relation to their leadership styles (Bensimon, 1989). As other scholars of women in leadership have noted, feminist theory allows for the incorporation of leaders' social locations (Eagly & Carli, 2007), and the particular application of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2000) reveals the complexity of their racial, ethnic and class identities (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Academic leadership scholars have also noted the role of organizational culture in the formation of women leaders' identities (Bornstein, 2009; Longman, Daniels, Bray & Liddell, 2018). Culture in particular was an essential line of inquiry in my research and analysis, since the ability to lead successfully was often predicated on an appropriate "fit" with that organization's values and mission, while it also reveals the interplay between leader and organization (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990). Furthermore, women leaders' experiences were shaped by their upbringings, education, faculty mentors and other influences, which in turn created a dynamic relationship with their interlocking elements of identity (Jones, Abes, McEwen, 2007). A metanarrative for all women is highly problematic, in that it fails to account for difference in identities, and sets up unrealistic expectations for how women "should" perform, thereby reinforcing a series of "leadership myths" (Fitzgerald, 2014). Building on the work of other feminist leadership scholars, I employ feminist theory in this dissertation in order to place the experiences of women leaders squarely at the center, thereby disrupting essentialist notions of women's academic leadership. In doing so, I seek a fuller and more complex picture of women leaders' lived

experiences, and identify themes among my participants based on their narratives and meaning-making.

Not only does feminist theory provide a helpful framework for this study, it promotes and facilitates a more thorough examination of academic leadership in general (Kezar, 2014). After analyzing two presidential leaders, one male and one female, Bensimon (1989) argued that:

> Gender theory offers a means of access to [female participant's] experience and thought that normative models of leadership cannot provide. Through such insights we can gain a better understanding of leadership, not only that of [female participant], but also [male participant's] as well (p.155).

As Bensimon demonstrated in her own research, centering women's experiences as academic leaders enables researchers to expand how scholars conceptualize academic leadership. And, by virtue of sharing women leaders' perspectives, other women are exposed to the possibility of senior leadership positions. Building on Harding's (1987) assertion of gender as a fundamental category for meaning and value, Bensimon (1989) further declared that "if the study of leadership starts with the premise that it is a socially constructed phenomenon, gender must be taken into consideration" (p. 148). Examining the experiences of women leaders therefore illuminates our overall understanding of leadership, because gender and their other social identities provides an essential framework for that examination.

Researcher Questions

Several research questions animated this project at a pivotal time in higher education. While some women have ascended to senior leadership positions in colleges and universities, why have others not? Is it because, as Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg (2013) asserted in her popular book, there are not enough women "leaning in"? Or perhaps, as one college president asserted, women are not simply acculturated to leadership roles (Harter, 1993)? To answer their questions only feeds into the dominant, patriarchal system because they are premised on a deficit

assumption about the individual obstacles, rather than institutional and societal obstacles that impeded women's progress. This dissertation seeks to investigate research questions that assume larger, systemwide forces at play and refuses to take on a deficit approach. Therefore, I specifically explored:

- How did intersecting identities and personal development impact and shape women's leadership experiences? In what ways did participants view the historical era in which they came of age, and how did they make meaning of that experience?

- How did the women make meaning of their career opportunities, choices and progression?

  ○ How did the women make meaning of the institutional and other barriers shaping their ascendency to senior academic leadership positions?

  ○ How did institutional culture and type support and/or hinder women's advancement?

- What structural barriers, both institutional and social, did the women identify as inhibiting their ability to assume a college presidency or provostship? What forms of institutional discrimination persist?

While probing the personal and professional paths of my participants, I aimed to explore the factors that impacted their own lives and choices, and to make visible how they made meaning of those experiences.

In a study of women superintendents, Chase (1995) recognized the disconnect between women leaders' talk and the systemic institutional concerns. She argued persuasively for the need to foreground language as a means of revealing those systemic concerns. She wrote that

"even the most privileged women in the American workforce are subject to institutionalized male and White dominance. Yet the place of language in constituting experiences of power and subjection remains undeveloped in most of these studies" (p.5). Turning to higher education, my study attempts to lay bare the dichotomy in language between what women leaders stated regarding their own experiences, and the ways in which our colleges and universities perpetuate gender and other forms of discrimination, as well as the participants' own often unconscious complicity in those processes.

By listening to the women leaders' stories, successes, and laments, I searched for meaning in the interviews based on what was stated – and sometimes what went unsaid – in actually naming those systemic barriers. Research and interviews provided the tools to probe the choices, accomplishments, and failures that impacted my participants' careers and influenced their lives. It is in this narrative space that we can navigate, resist and try to dismantle the subtle and harmful ways in which women leaders face sexism in their lives and their work, and how it impacts them, as well as the future opportunities for others.

Description of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to illuminate the lived experiences and perspectives of women academic leaders in order to reveal the complexity of those experiences and the extent of their meaning-making. I investigate the challenges that they described, including the sexism they overcame; the successes they achieved; and their attitudes and beliefs about, and means of enacting, leadership and power. In so doing, I also expose the structural inequities that persist in higher education, and the ways in which women may be unwitting participants in perpetuating them.

This project began in the spring of 2012 when I conducted semi-structured interviews with two women college presidents on the phone for one hour each as part of my Theory and Appraisal of College Student Development coursework. In the fall of that year, as part of my research for Advanced Qualitative Methods class, I conducted another set of semi-structured interviews with seven presidents on the phone. Those nine women represented a variety of institutional types and were located in various regions of the country. After conducting phone interviews, I was captivated by the participants' stories, and realized that I wanted more time with more women leaders in order to gather additional data.

Upon completion of my PhD coursework and comprehensive examinations, I embarked on my research design process. For my dissertation, I formulated a two-part research design that allowed for an initial phone conversation, followed by an in-person interview during which I could pick up on themes identified in the first interview, probe for expansion and clarity, and introduce the possibility of participant observation. Once I received final Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval, I interviewed nine women presidents and chief academic officers first on the phone, and again in person for approximately 60-90 minutes, depending on their availability. Of the nine in-person interviews, two also agreed to provide me with additional access through participant observations. For those interviews, I intentionally reached out to leaders who were within several hours driving distance of my home in upstate New York. This was largely for pragmatic reasons, since I was working full-time as a senior associate dean and Title IX coordinator in Student Affairs, and was parenting two young children at home. Meanwhile, I sent IRB consent forms to the nine presidents I had interviewed on the phone as part of my coursework: all but one agreed to my using their interviews in my dissertation project. Therefore, I include a total of seventeen senior leaders in this dissertation project. I attempted to build a pool

of participants who reflected a diverse set of identities and represented a number of institutional

types. In my methods chapter, I will describe further my efforts and limitations, including the

fact that all but one of the women identified as White.

Narrative inquiry encourages multiple interactions with participants, in order to gain

familiarity and comfort and to gather stories through several methods (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000; Creswell, 2013). In exploring the rich stories of women leaders, I resisted unidimensional

characterizations. Instead, I sought to formulate "a rich, concrete, complex, and hence truthful

account" (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 3) that rejected the flattening, or comparing, of their

experiences. At the same time, I searched for themes and for the occasional commonalities that

emerge in the interpretation of the women leaders' stories (Creswell, 2013).

Chase (2005) wrote that narrative inquiry has special application in feminist research,

since "narratives provide a window to the contradictory and shifting nature of hegemonic

discourses, which we tend to take for granted as stable monolithic forces" (p.659). The narrative,

therefore, becomes a site of individual empowerment, resisting generalized and male-dominated

assumptions about women's leadership. Focusing on my participants' individual talk proved

essential, as the narrative tool serves as a means of catharsis and revelation for the individual, as

well as for other women. In describing her own experiences in graduate school, bell hooks wrote:

> Despite the fact that the academics who described the way in which sexism had shaped
> their academic experience in graduate school were White women, I was encouraged by
> their resistance, by their perseverance, by their success. Reading their stories helped me
> feel less alone (hooks, 1989, p.390).

As hooks revealed, the story itself becomes a tool for connection among women academics. In

other words, the manner in which my participants talked about the people and events that

influenced their lives and careers was significant, in addition to the experiences themselves. My

understanding of the role of identity in their development was facilitated by an analysis both of their stories and of their discursive practices.

Significance of this Research

Why does this research matter? While other recent studies and dissertations have focused on college women presidents, my work is different in that I place the identity of my participants at the very center – rather than highlighting gender as a comparative category with reference to male presidents (Antonaros, 2010; Eagly, Johannsen-Schmidt & vanEngen, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992; Richardson, 2014; Rosser, 2003). My dissertation disrupts this dualistic approach, as I explored the contradictions and complexities that inhere within the categories of women and leadership. And, by focusing on the women leaders' stories, and analyzing and unpacking the complexity of identity while being attentive to cultural context and external factors, I strived to obtain greater meaning and a deeper understanding of who they are as leaders, while exposing the systemic concerns.

I have sought to identify themes based on participant stories, and to resist tidy conclusions about how women lead, especially in comparison to male leaders. Employing feminist theory has allowed me to focus on their experiences as women and to resist comparisons with men, and to avoid essentialist claims. I signal connections among their stories in an effort to draw conclusions about how these leaders make meaning around varied and overlapping forms of identity.

I hope that my dissertation conveys a sense of urgency. At a time when access for underrepresented, first-generation undergraduates is a growing concern, institutional leadership must strive to reflect greater diversity. While some progress is being made, as noted earlier, the numbers of women at the highest levels of academic administration remain relatively small.

Since academic deans and presidents rise up most frequently through faculty ranks, women leaders can effect or support structural changes – especially regarding tenure – that will make it possible for women faculty at least to consider the prospect of a leadership role. Leaders have the opportunity not only to shape discrete institutions but also to influence policies that impact higher education nationally. It is crucial, therefore, that the opportunity become available to all who desire it, and to those who need to be encouraged to pursue it. Kezar (2000) made an even more compelling case:

> There is a serious unmet challenge in our institutions of higher learning. Although more leadership voices are being brought to campuses, we sorely lack a mechanism for ensuring inclusiveness. There is no framework, guide or model for leadership that suggests ways to make sure these voices are heard. We are at a crossroads where we need to profoundly challenge the way we approach leadership, and we need to learn to think about leadership in new ways (p.7).

As colleges and universities become more diverse, it will become increasingly important that we understand or at least recognize the power relations inherent in higher education. The "pluralistic leadership" that Kezar advocated for demands that colleges and universities incorporate different viewpoints and backgrounds on our campuses and be open to change. For this to occur, we need change agents. A more inclusive and expansive conception of leadership, one that is informed by the experiences of women and people of color, will help to transform our higher education institutions for the sake of our students.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter Two of my dissertation describes the approaches that other scholars have taken in an exploration of women's academic leadership. It reveals the ways in which women's experiences have been ignored, flattened, or essentialized. Some researchers have studied one particular segment of higher education, such as community colleges, or opted to take a more biographical approach in studying one or several women in leadership positions, or compared

women's leadership with men, thereby perpetuating male-dominated conceptions of leading. I also provide an overview of how feminist theory works, and highlight the lack of intersection between feminist theory and research on women's academic leadership experiences.

In Chapter Three, I provide an overview of my research methodology, as well as my own positionality in this dissertation. I explain the turns that my work took, especially given my initial desire to apply an intersectional analysis to my research, and the shifting that occurred due to the lack of racial diversity among my participants.

Chapters Four, Five and Six represent the data analysis of my participant stories. Chapter Four describes how identity formation provides a critical foundation in leadership development. The participants' narratives regarding their families, upbringing and education helped to explain how they eventually emerged as leaders, and some factors that comprise their overall identity, including the era in which they came of age in college and graduate school. In Chapter Five, I explore their early career experiences as faculty members and their leadership development as they progressed in their administrative leadership roles. I highlight how the participants did not intend to become college provosts or presidents, and the sexism that they experienced along the way. Institutional culture is also introduced as a significant factor in their leadership progression. The women demonstrated how they navigated sexism and discrimination at pivotal points in their careers, and the ways in which they made sense of those experiences. Chapter Six focuses on how the women leaders discussed and made meaning of their own power and leadership, exposing the "discursive disjunction" (Chase, 1995) in the participants' talk. I explain the ways in which the participants reconciled (or failed to acknowledge) their privileged stance within institutions that reinforce discriminatory practices that impede women's leadership opportunities.

In Chapter Seven, I argue that genuine change requires an examination of structural barriers to progress and I present a number of promising strategies – including leadership development and mentorship – for helping to dismantle systemic discriminatory practices. I conclude by making a case for the significance of this research to the field of academic leadership, while I also concede its limitations and propose opportunities for further inquiry.

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides an overview of the various ways with which scholars have approached the overall topic of women's leadership in higher education. Some have focused on leadership competencies, others elected to take a biographical approach, while still more adopted a comparison approach between male and female leaders. The advent of feminist theory provided the methodological and contextual framework for women's experiences to be studied on their own terms rather than in comparison to those of men, and began to formulate a new language that took into account multiple identities and experiences based on race and sexuality, among others. In this chapter, I argue the utility of applying feminist theory to academic leadership as a means of understanding the complex web of identity, leadership, and institutional context.

Colleges and universities, like other complex organizations, comprise highly gendered cultural expectations and demands (Eddy & Cox, 2008). For example, the tenure and promotion structure relies on the traditional concept that faculty will be most productive in their early career, a time that coincides with child-bearing years for women. The issue of gender is seen as a women's issue, much like race is viewed as an issue only for people of color. When examining gender and leadership, gender only enters the equation when women leaders and their leadership styles are studied; there is little to no scholarship of the impact of gender on male leaders. The problem is exacerbated by the "think leader, think male" paradigm set forth by Schein (1973), whereby leaders are commonly assumed to be men. Unfortunately, masculine leadership stereotypes persist to modern day (Koenig, Mitchell, Eagly & Ristikari, 2011). Women therefore face a double-bind when they do not comport with traditional leadership standards (Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992; Eagly & Carli, 2007), and yet they are still expected to behave in a traditionally feminine manner, creating a "role incongruity" (Eagly & Karau, 2002). And,

women of color leaders experience a triple-bind, or "triple jeopardy" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) due to the intersections of gender, race and ethnicity. Thus, learning directly from the experiences of women leaders promotes a more holistic understanding of the larger systemic concerns regarding leadership in the academy.

Despite myriad texts and approaches, there is a dearth of scholarship employing narrative inquiry and feminist theory – especially intersectionality – as theoretical and methodological tools when studying the experiences of women leaders. Even with the uptick in numbers of women presidents and provosts, very few examples of recent scholarship have addressed the complexity and intersections of gender and other identities, societal expectations around gender roles, and the impact of institutional context when addressing academic leadership. For this literature review, I will begin by presenting two pioneering feminist leadership theorists (Helgesen, 1990; Helgesen, 1995; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Lipman-Blumen, 2000) who provided a critical framework for several studies of women leaders in higher education. I will then address how higher education scholars have approached women's leadership in the academy, highlighting the ways in which some relied on an "either/and" approach in comparison to men, and the lack of accounting for the intersection of multiple identities, and the nuances that occur within social and historical contexts. For the final section, I will move into a discussion of how West and Zimmerman's (1987) and Collins' (1986) theories on gender and women's experiences undergirded this research, and describe how Bensimon (1989), Chase (1995) and Fitzgerald (2014) employed feminist theory in the study of academic leadership. I will conclude by critiquing several recent doctoral dissertations that centered, with varying degrees of success, on the experiences of women academic leaders.

The Advent of Feminist Research on Leadership Studies

The number of leadership texts and theories presented in academic and mainstream publications are too many and diverse to incorporate in this dissertation. However, two early feminist researchers are worth noting for their pursuit of understanding women in leadership positions across industry, politics and higher education (Helgesen, 1990; Helgesen, 1995; Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Lipman-Blumen, 2000). Several higher education scholars (including myself) have relied on them to inform our work in understanding connective and inclusive leadership styles that resist traditional, male-dominated norms. In this section, I will provide an overview of these particular texts given their applicability to women's leadership in higher education.

In the late 1980s, author Helgesen (1990) interviewed four women executives in an effort to understand their leadership styles. One woman was African American, and the other three White, with no mention of sexual identity; three of the women spoke of having children. With the rising tide of female entrepreneurship in the 1980s, Helgesen intentionally included one corporate executive and one nonprofit executive, as well as two entrepreneurs who eschewed rigid corporate structures in order to achieve success. Helgesen predicated her qualitative study on the work of management guru Mintzberg (1973), who famously published "diary studies" based on his 1968 doctoral dissertation that examined five male industry executives. Like Mintzberg, Helgesen followed the four women throughout their day in order to scrutinize their work habits and interactions with others. Her goal was to "not only describe how women manage companies, but also to define women's impact on the contemporary workplace and, by extension, on the culture as a whole" (p. 17). Employing the use of narrative study, she strived to portray a complete picture of women executives, with specific attention to identifying the

nuances of their leadership. Helgesen incorporated Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986/97) and Gilligan's (1982) methodological approaches of listening intently to how women discussed their experiences. Instead of emphasizing "vision," which tends to be ascribed to male leaders, she focused on "voice" since:

> The woman leader's voice is a means both for presenting herself and what she knows about the world, and for eliciting a response. Her vision of her company might define its ends, but her voice is the means for getting that vision across. And it is in this method, in this concern for means along with ends, that the value for connectedness is nurtured (pp.223-4).

In her findings, Helgesen identified themes that established a style of leadership as different from Mintzberg's men. She posited that since women are more apt to value analytic listening and to engage in collaborative negotiation and conversation, they tend to be more humane leaders.

Helgesen relied on essentialist notions of "women's values," which did not take the complexity of women's experiences into account. Nevertheless, she provided an early and important foundation for the study of women's leadership in higher education by centering women leaders' voices, and situating those experiences within hegemonic organizational structures. While Helgesen did not acknowledge the role of race and other forms of identity in her leadership research and analysis, she did include mention of the structural concerns that inhibit women's opportunities for leadership. She observed that the business organizations themselves were constructed for the most part by men, without the benefit of women's voice and participation. Therefore, "the structures in which women work were not devised by them, and so are weighted in ways that do not reflect their values" (p.229). Helgesen's 1995 book on the "web of inclusion" expanded on the themes identified in her earlier work to argue for a more inclusive style of leadership in organizations for both men and women. Although she did not focus on women's leadership specifically, she again employed a feminist organizational leadership

approach (Manning, 2018). Both books are oft cited in feminist leadership research on women's experiences in higher education (Bornstein, 2009; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, 2007; Fletcher, 1994; Kark 2004; Kezar, 2000; Kezar & Carducci, 2009; Madsen, 2008).

Similar to Helgesen, Lipman-Blumen (1992, 1996) advocated a more connected style of leadership due to the rate of change underway in the business world, especially with the advent of the internet. In a theoretical article that drew from her earlier research on full-time homemakers, as well as research by Gilligan (1982), Lipman-Blumen (1992) argued that American organizations should adopt a more connective leadership paradigm that is rooted in female psychosocial development. She suggested that American leadership images represented a "masculine ego-ideal" that "emphasize individualism, self-reliance, and belief in one's own abilities, as well as power, competition, and creativity" (p.185). This ideal contrasts with female leadership styles, which tend be more relational, connective and collaborative, with a focus on mentoring and shared tasks. Lipman-Blumen encouraged American corporations to disavow competition and instead embrace female leadership in order to succeed in a more international, interconnected economy. While Lipman-Blumen framed her arguments as a general critique of traditional, male-dominated forms of American leadership, she promulgated a strict binary between male and female leadership styles. In assuming that all women shared the same socialization and biological patterns, she delineated a clear difference with men in terms of their leadership styles.

In a later book, Lipman-Blumen (1996) expanded on her leadership theories. She relied on extensive research using three methodological approaches: qualitative interviews of nonprofit, business and political leaders; historical, biographical and autobiographical sources; and

quantitative research based on the "Achieving Styles Model" that she and a colleague developed, resulting in 5,000 data participants. From Lipman-Blumen's data, a "connective leadership" model emerged that espoused a revitalization "of traditional leadership behaviors by harnessing individualism and teamwork through the principled deployment of political strategies" (p.27) in order to accommodate a diversity of people and perspectives across cultures and backgrounds. She mapped a set of nine leadership competencies based on relational, direct and instrumental factors, with connective leadership at the center. She also included a chapter on women's leadership that provided a history of women in the workplace, portraits of women leaders in politics and industry (interestingly, two of the seven women profiled were also included in Helgesen's research), and an identification of the particular styles that women leaders evinced. Lipman-Blumen's research, like Helgesen's, made important contributions to feminist study of leadership through the inclusion of women's experiences, and advocacy of a less hierarchical model in leading. However, both provided a narrow conception of women's leadership that neglected the complexity of women's experiences, including the intersections of race, sexual and other identities.

Women and Academic Leadership

A gradual evolution has taken place in the field of academic leadership. Prominent scholars, including Birnbaum (1988), Cohen and March (1974), Rost (1993), and Schein (1985/97), ignored gender as an integral component of one's identity as a leader. More recent literature addressed women and people of color as separate categories within a broader academic leadership text (Fisher & Koch, 1996; Keohane, 2012). For example, Fisher and Koch (1996) dedicated a separate chapter entitled "Gender, Race and the College Presidency" (pp. 81-95) in their book in an effort to address the experiences of presidents who do not identify as White and

male. Other academic leadership scholars incorporated a feminist perspective to address the specific experiences of women in the academy, including women in senior levels of administration (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). Over the last decade or so, several edited anthologies about women in the academy have included chapters on their specific experiences in leading (Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009; Freeman, Bourque & Shelton, 2001; Gutgold & Linse, 2016; Longman & Madsen, 2014; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Wolverton, Bower & Hyle, 2009). As more women have ascended to academic leadership positions, scholars frequently examined women's ways of leading as different from men's (Antonaros, 2010; Bornstein, 2009; Bucklin, 2010; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Nidiffer, 2001; Richardson, 2014; Richardson & Loubier, 2008; Rosser, 2003; Scheckelhoff, 2007; Wilson, 2009; Wolverton, Bower, & Maldonado, 2006). Several of these studies will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

A variety of categorical approaches comprise the body of scholarship on women's academic leadership. Some scholars have relied on institutional type as one lens of study, while others have studied women leaders based on racial identity. Given the large concentration of women leading community colleges, a significant body of work has focused on that institutional type (Blevins, 2001; Eddy, 2009; Eddy, April 21-25, 2003; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Gillett-Karam, 2001; Green, 2008; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Rhodes, 2003; Stout-Stewart, 2005; Sullivan, 2009; Taylor, 1981). As more African American women have ascended to leadership positions over the last two decades (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk & Taylor, 2017), scholars have placed African American women's biography at the center (Bates, 2007), and studied their particular experiences and the barriers they encountered (Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Harris, 2007). Although studies of African American women represent a relatively small body of work, they tend to be descriptive reviews of leadership styles, and thus provide an incomplete picture

of women leaders' experiences due to a lack of analysis of the larger structures at play. Despite the myriad ways in which gender and academic leadership have been studied together, few have addressed how gender and identity, academic leadership, and organizational context are integrally woven together.

Methodological Approaches to Studying Women Leaders in the Academy

Women's academic leadership scholars have adopted a number of different methodological approaches that have centered the experiences of women leaders. Several relied on interview-based profiles of women leaders in an effort to understand their leadership development (Brown, Van Ummersen, & Sturnick, 2001; Jablonski, 1996; Madsen, 2008; Milligan, 2010). Using a qualitative design, Nidiffer (2001) analyzed the leadership styles of ten women college presidents based on their autobiographical profiles contained in Walton's (1996) book on British and women presidents in higher education (although Nidiffer only focused on the American presidents). She found that the women "espoused a leadership philosophies *[sic]* that sometimes contained traditional elements, but also emphasized emergent traits. The majority possessed an integrated mixture" (p.120). Nidiffer attempted to demonstrate how women leaders exhibit a variety of leadership styles, that are not entirely or stereotypically attributable to men or women. In her overview of leadership theories (but not feminist theory) as they apply to gender and leadership, she described the problematic aspects of using gendered language in describing women leaders, and how effective leadership is often constructed around male norms. Nidiffer acknowledged the "double-bind" that women leaders find themselves in if they do not subscribe to stereotypical female characteristics. However, her premise that male versus female ways of leading can be compared neglected the societal context of gender, including how women are impacted by discriminatory practices and systems. She advocated for a blend of male and female

leadership competencies, but assigned those competencies according to stereotypic attributes. Although Nidiffer asserted that women's leadership style is more beneficial, because women "bring a different type of leadership to higher education," she failed to acknowledge the total experience of women leaders as situated within a male-normed society. Thus, Nidiffer's analysis was incomplete. Accounting for gender, race and other forms of identity, while examining the complex interplay among societal expectations, institutional culture and history, provides a broader, and more complete, understanding of women's leadership.

In a focused study on African American female presidents, Waring (2003) conducted 12 structured interviews of leaders serving at both predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in an effort to understand the intersection of race and gender and its effect on leadership. She concluded that there was great variety among the presidents' leadership styles, but that race was an especially salient factor. Waring emphasized the complexity of individual experiences, and the role of identity, but unfortunately did not analyze the ways in which serving at a PWI or HBCU, or how the size, culture, etc. of those institutions impacted leadership.

A leading scholar on women and academic leadership, Madsen (2008) wrote a book based on a phenomenological study she conducted with ten women presidents from a variety of public (with one private), regional and research universities, and one HBCU. By asking questions about the participants' lived experiences, Madsen examined their career progressions, backgrounds and characteristics, with a particular focus on the early support received from family members and mentors throughout their personal and professional development. She described what motivated them as leaders, while professing suggestions to women who aspire to be presidents. In her conclusions, Madsen identified a number of themes, including self-identity

("knowing and understanding themselves"), self-reflection, passion for learning from failure, and an intense love of learning. While Madsen centered the women's experiences, her research and analysis did not take into account institutional context, thereby neglecting the important consideration and intersection of leadership and organizational culture. In addition, she failed to incorporate any theoretical basis as a means of establishing a larger framework within which the leaders' experiences may be considered.

The Male Versus Female Binary Approach

Several scholars have relied on a binary approach in order to study leadership styles across higher education (Antonaros, 2010; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Richardson & Loubier, 2008; Rosser, 2003). There are several reasons why this mode of inquiry is problematic. The comparative approach to gender creates a strict binary that fails to account for the complexity of gender identity, ignores the impact of organizational context, and sets up the subject(s) in comparison to the accepted norm. The male/female binary also neglects the "triple-bind" that Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) identified in their intersectional study of leaders who are women of color, since they must battle gendered and racialized expectations surrounding leadership.

Eagly and Johnson (1990) compared male and female leadership styles in higher education using a meta-analysis approach based in psychology. They reviewed both organizational studies and assessment or laboratory research studies to determine whether women lead in an "interpersonally oriented" style, versus men in a "task-oriented" style. Even accounting for organizational differences, they concluded some degree of gender stereotypic leadership styles, with women exhibiting a more democratic style generally. However, Eagly and Johnson were reluctant to attribute women's leadership as more advantageous than men's, since

the experimental studies they analyzed relied heavily on stereotypic gender attributes. Instead, they advocated for organizational changes toward a more participatory structure, and a more variable approach to studies of leadership. Twenty-seven years later, Eagly (2007) attempted to resolve the question of whether women's leadership was better than men's by providing an overall analysis of leadership research in a variety of organizational contexts. She found that while women tended to "manifest valued, effective leadership styles, even somewhat more than men do" (p.9), nevertheless the presence of attitudinal prejudice toward women was an impediment to their success.

Although Eddy (2009) adopts a similarly binary approach, her research on the gendered nature of leadership among community college leaders is notable for her promotion of a more complex conception. In a phenomenological study of nine community college leaders, comprising five men and four women, Eddy explored to what extent the leaders relied on gendered stereotypes of leading. In comparing the male and female leadership styles exhibited by her participants, Eddy concluded that the women faced the "double-bind" of performing according to expected gender roles while being judged against a male "hero-leader" standard that emphasized a more authoritative, decisive style. The women participants needed to negotiate these doubly bound expectations, whereas for the men, "their gender is invisible, and they neither address nor comment upon it when they think of their own leadership" (p.24). Eddy encouraged future scholars to adopt a more complex and nuanced approach to leadership that resists the male/female binary.

Promising Approaches to the Study of Women in Academic Leadership

By utilizing biography as a form of inquiry, Turner (2007) provided a more complex analysis of women of color presidents. She examined the experiences of three women – who

identified as Mexican-American, Native American, and Asian-American women respectively –
and were the "first" presidents at their institutions. Turner's study examined the presidents'
experiences within the larger societal structures, while recognizing the gender and cultural
stereotypes and overt discrimination they overcame in academia generally, but specifically in the
presidential search process. An important component of Turner's study was the focus on
institutional fit for these women, all of whom led colleges that serve underrepresented
populations that they felt called to serve. Her approach illustrated an important point made by
Bornstein (2009), who suggested that institutional fit is a better predictor of success in leadership
than is style or gender. Rather than incorporating a critical or theoretical analysis, Turner
conducted three semistructured interviews plus participant observation and other information
gathered about their demographic backgrounds and institutions in an effort to derive themes and
meaning-making. Relying on the stories that the three women leaders told, Turner highlighted
the importance of forging one's own pathway to the presidency despite barriers faced along the
way. Acknowledging the need for a more thorough study that considers their successes and their
failures, Turner chose to focus on the presidents' career achievements and their specific
accomplishments while in office. The article was a promising step in the direction of centering
women leaders and their experiences, in particular the intersections of race and gender.
Furthermore, Turner acknowledged the critical interplay of life history and organizational
context and mission in order to understand the import of institutional "fit."

In a more recent qualitative research study, Davis and Maldonado (2015) explored the
cultivation of women's leadership competencies by centering the experiences of five African
American women leaders using a phenomenological research design. In their findings, the
authors confirmed the centrality of both race and gender in leadership development. They also

identified the following themes that affected the women: family influences that predestined them for success; sponsorship from unexpected sources; the double jeopardy of race and gender; learning how to play the game; and the need to pay it forward. Interestingly, Davis and Maldonado use the term "sponsorship" instead of the more commonly employed "mentorship." According to one of their participants, "A sponsor sticks their neck out for you and advocates in a way that a mentor does not" (p.58). The authors also discussed the presence of White men in "sponsoring" the women's career progressions, noting that "since White men occupy the seats of power in academia, the participants found themselves developing strategic mechanisms to navigate career advancement" (p. 58). Additional studies using similar methodological approaches to those employed by Turner, and Davis and Maldonado – in particular those that center the diversity of women's experiences – broadens our understanding of the larger systemic concerns within higher education.

The Application of Feminist Theory to Women Leaders in the Academy

Feminist theory provides an instructive tool to disrupt traditional and stereotypically gendered notions of leadership by placing women at the center, in an effort to gain a fuller, more complete picture of their experiences as well as the societal context in which those experiences occurred (DeVault, 1999). The researcher's background and perspective are also critical factors in the research process, with hierarchy and power dynamics underpinning what is being studied (Ward, 2010). Therefore, feminist theory illuminates how we understand and also how we perceive women leaders in the academy, because it challenges researchers to consider not only the role of gender but also how other factors impact our study, while questioning our own assumptions and conceptions of ideal leadership based on a hegemonic male model. Incorporating feminist theory into the study of women leaders broadens our understanding within

a broader societal context, challenges the binary comparative approach used by other researchers, and encourages researchers to reveal their personal subjectivity.

In order to provide a conceptual framework for applying feminist theory to academic leadership, for this study I turned to two influential works of feminist theory scholarship by Collins (2004) and West and Zimmerman (1987). While these scholars do not address academic leadership specifically, their theoretical perspectives have significant implications for and applicability to the study of leadership. Informed by an ethnomethodological approach based on prior studies of gender, West and Zimmerman (1987) reconceptualized gender as a broader societal construct. Doing gender, they argued, "involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (p. 126). They asserted that gender is highly socialized; it is created and reified through interactions with others. Furthermore, most roles are marked as gendered in some way – for example, that men are doctors and women are nurses. The fact that we refer to "female presidents," thus establishing "presidents" as the male norm, illustrates West and Zimmerman's claims that adding gender marks women as the exception to male presidents.

It would be a mistake, as explained earlier, to rely on a male/female binary comparison of leadership. Keohane (2014), the former president of Duke University and Wellesley College, stated, "[t]o grasp how odd it is to say that all women lead in similar ways, consider the claim that there is a single 'male way of leading'" (p.128). However, themes can be identified based on women leaders' experiences. While women leaders have faced various barriers to success – some overt and others more subtle – they all have had to challenge, in one way or another, prevailing notions of leaders as men and must perform according to academic conceptualizations of leadership that are based on White, heteronormative, male models (Bensimon, 1989).

Using West and Zimmerman's foundational theories, I argue that how leaders are viewed depends to some extent on how they perform according to gendered conceptions of leadership. Women who succeed at male-dominated tasks, and do not perform according to societal expectations are more likely to be criticized or even vilified (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004; Pasquarella & Clauss-Ehlers, 2017). Therefore, accepting women as leaders will require an acknowledgement of the male-dominated hierarchy implicit both in society and within the higher education institutions they lead. Disrupting traditional gender displays has implications for the individual and for the institution, and doing so can be highly disconcerting because it is viewed by others as unnatural or abnormal. As West and Zimmerman (1987) contended, when the individual performs in non-gender stereotypic ways, it is the individual – not the gendered institution – who will be criticized.

In her groundbreaking article that advanced Black feminist thought and critical race theory as theoretical constructs, Collins (1986) placed the experience of Black women at the center of analysis rather than treating them as the "other." She argued that the application of Black feminist thought has broad applicability to any group of "outsiders" who encounter "the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community" and "have never felt comfortable with its taken-for-granted assumptions" (Collins, 2004, pp. 121-122). Therefore, Collins' work may be applied to the study of women leaders, since they have historically been excluded from positions of power in higher education, and remain in the minority today. Black feminist thought, among its many contributions, provides a more holistic approach to studying and understanding an oppressive system rather than one category of oppression (male/female) versus another (Black/White). Collins revealed the utility of Black feminist thought in exposing the systematic nature of organizations and how the experiences of "others" are suppressed. Yet, she also argued

that it is by virtue of being the "other" that suppressed groups can contribute to the organizations in meaningful ways. Revealing their experiences, and avoiding the use of comparisons, has particular relevance to our knowledge of women's experiences, especially women of color, in academic leadership positions. Reconceptualizing the epistemology of leadership by incorporating all leaders' experiences therefore challenges the gendered norms and systemic nature of the multiple oppressions. By pointing out that binary relationships also are "intrinsically unstable," Collins further argued that the differences "invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical relationships that mesh with political economies of domination and subordination" (p. 110). In other words, setting up the dichotomous oppressions inherently makes one group superior over another. Therefore, the practice of comparing male and female leaders, as other scholars have done, places men in the dominant position with women as the subordinates.

King and Ferguson (2011) drew upon Collins's theories to frame the narratives of Black women's experiences as passed down from mother to daughter, referred to as the "Motherline." In their introduction to the anthology of essays by Black women leaders, the editors advocated for storytelling as a means of centering women's experience, and empowering other Black women. They noted their surprise at the potential contributors' reactions to the request to tell their own stories, since many of the women failed to consider that they in fact were leaders in their communities. The authors speculated that the contributors' reluctance to own the label of "leader" was based on their own negative perceptions of leadership based on cultural and racial projections, as well as how Black women are socialized to downplay their societal contributions. Reinforcing the concept set forth by Collins of an interlocking and systemic nature of oppression, the editors described how the book's contributors had internalized racist and sexist

notions of leadership. King and Ferguson (2011) illustrated how comparisons of Black female leaders to White male leaders denied the ability of the non-dominant group to be successful on their terms, thereby perpetuating the oppressive stance already established.

Applying a strictly gender-based analysis does a disservice to women leaders, especially when women leaders do not perform according to those norms, and proves that colleges and universities remain conservative, highly gendered, racialized organizations in terms of culture and expectations (Eddy & Cox, 2008). Collins' and West and Zimmerman's vital work provided a highly instructive framework within which scholars can better understand the intersections of gender and academic leadership.

Influential Academic Leadership Studies Employing Feminist Theory

Exploring gender and other identities, while acknowledging the impact of society, institutional culture and history, broadens our understanding of academic leadership by analyzing the specific experiences and discursive strategies of individual women leaders. Two seminal pieces of scholarship that influenced my own research were provided by Bensimon (1989), who incorporated feminist theory to achieve a better understanding of women leader experiences in higher education, and Chase (1995), who used feminist theory in her narrative study of women school superintendents. Challenging Birnbaum's cybernetic frame models of higher education, Bensimon employed a feminist reinterpretation of gender and academic leadership, informed by Gilligan (1982) and Harding (1987). She revised an earlier study she and Birnbaum conducted with 32 college presidents by reanalyzing their data from a feminist perspective, or "woman question," in order to "consider how the epistemological and ontological bases of conceptual frameworks may misrepresent the experiences of women as leaders, thereby distorting our specific knowledge of such experiences and our general knowledge of the phenomenon of

leadership as gender-encompassing" (p.145). Bensimon acknowledged the pervasiveness of gender as a theoretical and practical construct: it is something that cannot be ignored (and yet it so often is), and must therefore be considered when examining the frames of leadership. Specifically, she noted the differences in language between the two leaders studies. The woman president tended to use a more integrative description of her role, incorporating the totality of interactions with her constituents, whereas the man employed more visionary terms, thereby reflecting their different conceptions of leadership.

While Bensimon argued that gender must be taken into consideration because of its social construction (p.148), other forms of identity go unmentioned – most notably the intersections of gender, race and class. Bensimon's scholarship promoted the utility of feminist theory in understanding the encompassing nature of gender and the "connectedness" of leadership identity for both women and men, but a closer reading reveals its limitations. As much as she exposed the need for a reconceptualization to include gender as a means of accessing women leaders' voices, Bensimon did not challenge the single-axis assumptions of leadership. There is more work to be done in order to better understand the phenomenon of leadership and identity among women leaders, and the structures within which identity is constructed.

In her study of women superintendents, Chase (1995) employed feminist theory to illuminate the impact of gender and identity on women's careers in K-12 education. She elucidated how successful women can still experience various forms of discrimination, especially around gender, but also related to race, class and sexual identity. Chase described not only how the superintendents experienced discrimination, but also the discursive realm they occupied in order to come to terms with discriminatory acts and attitudes in their careers. In particular, she described how the "unsettled" talk as the women struggled to describe the discrimination they

encountered over the course of their careers, while their talk of professional achievement was much less self-conscious and flowed more easily. She wrote, "[professional women] bring together two kinds of talk that generally do not belong together in American culture: talk about professional achievement and talk about subjection to gender and racial inequities" (p.11) – even when they resisted making overt claims about discrimination. The "discursive disjunction" that Chase identified is worthy of further exploration for women leaders in higher education.

Chase also argued that while the superintendents enjoyed power and privilege by virtue of their position (which is also linked with higher socioeconomic benefits), they nevertheless encountered barriers encountered along the way by virtue of their gender, race and/or socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, despite having achieved these positions, the superintendents were not immune from sexism, racism, classism, etc. As Chase discovered, there exists "an ambiguity of professional women's empowerment in a continually inequitable context" (p.5). In other words, women in powerful positions still experience discrimination because of structural inequities inherent in organizations. Informed by Chase's study, my work seeks to explore the "simultaneous privilege/oppression" construct by probing women academic leaders' encounters with various forms of discrimination despite the positions they hold and achievements they have garnered. Through an examination of the multiple facets and intersections of their situated knowledge, I gained a greater understanding of their experiences and how they made meaning of them.

In a more recent study, Fitzgerald (2014) explored why women seek leadership positions and how they perform leadership in higher education. She conducted semi-structured interviews of thirty women in senior leadership roles in Australia and New Zealand, and also interviewed twenty-five women colleagues to explore their perceptions of the leaders. Fitzgerald was careful

to include the experiences of Indigenous women, in order "to reduce the privilege of White women's voices that can reproduce and intensify the monocultural narratives of the powerful" (p.17). Using narrative analysis, Fitzgerald presented the complexity of her participants' meaning-making that "paid attention to the dissonances and the discontinuities" (p.17). She concluded that women must navigate "dangerous terrain" in order to meet gendered and racist expectations on the part of both male and female subordinates; women leaders reinforce the gendered status quo, sometimes unknowingly; and that feminist women who challenge gendered expectations of leadership do so at their own peril. Fitzgerald's study informed my study in important ways: through her unequivocal feminist research stance, the inclusion and celebration of a multiplicity of voices and experiences among her participants, and her acknowledgment of deeply rooted systems of sexism and racism.

Recent Dissertations

Due to the emergence of more women in academic leadership positions, a literature review should incorporate an examination of unpublished doctoral dissertations in addition to published works. Four relatively recent dissertations (Antonaros, 2010; Bucklin, 2010; Milligan, 2010; Ross, 2006) all explored the lived experiences of women presidents; since Ross (2006) and Milligan (2010) employed qualitative research designs, I will summarize their studies here as examples of how they contributed to the field of feminist leadership, and where they fell short.

Ross (2006) analyzed the experience of one woman president, Theodora J. Kalikow at the University of Maine at Farmington, based on multiple interviews and observations over two week-long periods. Using autoethnography as a mode of inquiry, Ross was guided by interpretivism and feminism and how those theoretical perspectives intersect. By using feminist critical policy analysis, she argued for placing women's experience at the center of the study

rather than as a point of comparison. While her research is limited to a single president, it nevertheless acknowledged the broader role of gender and lived experience in her analysis. Ross chose to focus on President Kalikow's specific approach to leadership, within the context of her institution, rather than comparing her with a male president at a similar institution, or analyzing her leadership style based on a traditional male ideal. Ross centered Kalikow's leadership by allowing her own voice to speak to her experience as a White woman in her 60s who identified as lesbian, and who was president of a state university. Like Bensimon, she made gender the focal point of her analysis, and urged future scholars to explore the notion of women presidents as transformational leaders who employ more relational forms of leadership. As a feminist researcher, Ross acknowledged her own subjectivity and experience in the data collection and analysis processes. With Kalikow's experience placed at the center against the backdrop of feminist theory and transformational leadership style, and by acknowledging her own perceptions, Ross's work made a successful contribution to the study of academic leadership. Using this model provides an opportunity to interview and study multiple presidents for future studies.

Employing heuristic phenomenology, Milligan (2010) documented the backgrounds, views on the presidency, and self-described leadership styles of twelve presidents who were the first women to lead their highly-ranked institutions. Milligan's key findings were: gender may have impacted the women in ways they did not recognize, and that the women employed adaptive techniques, such as adopting a different leadership style, for the sake of leading their institutions. In conclusion, she provided recommendations for women seeking leadership positions, followed by recommendations for future scholarship, including a comparative study of male and female presidents at similar institutions, which "would highlight differences in

leadership style and approach to issues of institutional culture" (p.122). Although I agree that institutional context and culture are important factors to consider when examining leadership, I again caution against any comparative study of male versus female leaders, which would perpetuate the stereotypes and judge women as the "other" compared to traditional concepts based on male leadership. Although gender was central to Milligan's study, it is important to note that she did not incorporate feminist theory (or provide evidence of other theoretical lenses) in analyzing her data. While she rightly acknowledged that the women presidents "are faced with expectations for presidential leadership colored by gender in ways they may not even recognize" (p.115), she failed to interrogate the systems that form those expectations, and how the women leaders navigated them. While Milligan's work provided a promising step in at least acknowledging the intersection of women's leadership and institutional culture, she focused on the need for women leaders "to adjust their leadership and their expectations to the institution's culture" (p.95). Her approach, therefore, provided a limited perspective that did not expand on the larger scope of systemic inequities within higher education. There is more work to be done in this area.

Conclusion

Institutional type, personal background and education, societal norms, and self-identity can impact leadership identity and performance. Comparing female to male leaders fails to account for the complexity of identity, relying instead on a narrow concept of leadership that falls prey to gendered and racist stereotypes. Comparisons also run the risk of providing tacit privilege to those from the dominant group (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Collins, 2004; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), and limits our knowledge of organizations and structures. More to the point, applying an analysis based strictly on dominant White male norms does a disservice to women

leaders. This is especially evident when women leaders may not perform according to those stereotypical gendered norms (e.g. women by nature are more nurturing), thereby creating a double-bind. Bornstein (2009) characterized this theme well, describing how women presidents "are expected to have a different leadership style from men but are criticized as soft if they show themselves to be consultative consensus builders rather than authoritarian change agents" (p. 222). The problem is further exacerbated when women of color are judged according to gendered and racist expectations, thereby creating a "triple-bind" for women leaders of color (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Gender, race, sexuality and other identities, as well as family background and context are all integral to leadership epistemology. However, personal identities are not discrete categories, and instead provide richness and overlapping complexity to leadership styles. This dissertation seeks to revise the leadership study framework to accommodate a multiplicity of experiences and identities while also acknowledging institutional culture, historical era, and the larger systemic forces at play.

Chapter Three: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

For this dissertation, I asked presidents and provosts who identify as women to describe their lives and experiences. My interest in academic leadership, and specifically in women leaders, germinated when I served as chief of staff in the president's office at Hamilton College, a liberal arts college of 1800 students in upstate New York. After working for a male president for five years, I then worked for eight years with Hamilton's first woman president. When Joan Hinde Stewart arrived at Hamilton as president in 2003, I witnessed firsthand her sometimes challenging experiences at an institution that had, up until 1978, been an all-male college. In contrast to my experience working for her male predecessor, I immediately became aware of the gendered politics President Stewart encountered – politics that were invisible to me when I was working for a man (and, I suspect, invisible to him as well). For example, the community's expectations that she be more present, when in fact a calendar comparison revealed that she spent just as much time attending campus events as did her predecessor. My professional experience sparked my interest in the intersections between gender and leadership, which later expanded to a broader and more encompassing interest in identity and leadership.

Positionality of Researcher

Many of my assumptions about gender and identity are informed by my own perspective as a White, middle-class, educated, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied woman. As I progressed through my dissertation, I have sought greater awareness through reflexivity about my own identity, including the tension of simultaneous privilege and oppression. I have long been interested in the complexity of gender roles, and my undergraduate honors thesis was on a woman, Deborah Sampson Gannett, who disguised herself as a man to fight in the American Revolution. But I have also come to realize that I was trapped by the limited perspective offered

by White, middle-class, heterosexual feminists – which also reflected my own solipsistic experience. My awareness of issues around race, gender and sexual identity and the intersections with privilege grew exponentially through my coursework at Syracuse University and in working with increasingly diverse student populations at two residential, predominantly White, historically male, liberal arts colleges. When I served as Title IX Coordinator at my previous institution, I oversaw the College's process for harassment and sexual misconduct complaints based on gender. In that role I encountered the interlocking and subtlety of gender, class differences, heteronormative, and racialized assumptions among students and oftentimes staff and faculty. These experiences problematized earlier assumptions about gender and provided me with a richer sense of the encompassing nature of identity.

Most recently, I have worked directly with minoritized, transgender and physically disabled students – many who are exploring issues of their own intersecting identities – and must navigate the complicated politics and physical realities of a campus that was not built for them. In contrast, students who fit the stereotype of the White, upper-class, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied college student rarely reflect on their privilege – or the fact that the vast majority of administrative leaders look a lot like them. Now that I lead a student affairs division, I have an obligation to be especially mindful of students' emerging and intersecting identities, and to recruit and retain a staff who reflect those identities, and demonstrate a dedication to diversity and inclusion at an institution that (like many others) was originally founded to educate White, Protestant men.

In embarking on this work, I was conscious of the privileged stance I occupied in conducting interviews with college presidents and provosts. The fact that I speak their "language," understand their schedules and challenges, and even look and dress the part of a

senior administrator provided me with a certain credibility. I can walk the walk and talk the talk. In my data gathering process, I was careful to remember that being a woman did not grant me automatic affinity with all women, and remained conscious of the complexity of identity, leadership and institutional culture. I was especially conscious of my identity as a White woman, which I will expand on later in this chapter.

I entered into this project very aware of my professional experience at small, selective liberal arts colleges, especially once I expanded my research to include leaders of community colleges and state universities. While I anticipated early on in my research that some leaders might view institutional difference as a barrier to conversation, in the end I did not perceive this to be the case. All of the leaders I spoke and met with were kind and welcoming, and surprisingly generous with their time. My lack of direct familiarity with institutional mission and culture at places unlike my own did not impede conversation or access. Quite the contrary: the leaders with whom I spoke, and especially those I visited in person, were remarkably supportive.

The challenge, then, became the need to "bracket" my own experiences to focus on those of my participants (Creswell, 2013) – rather than a casual conversation over a meal – and to retain a healthy amount of reflexivity in relation to my research. Familiarity with presidents and their work and my instinctual desire to protect and respect their positions also presented a double-edged sword. In my day-to-day work, I identify as a senior administrator, and work directly and in collaboration with presidents and provosts. In my role as researcher, I attempted to walk a fine line between developing rapport with and maintaining a certain distance from my participants. I remained conscious of the fact that I was not their colleague, but instead a scholar of higher education systems, an interrogator of experience, and a critical observer of behavior.

Methodology and Theory

This project is guided by narrative inquiry and feminist theory as methodological tools, in order to gain a more nuanced and richer sense of women leaders' identities. Narrative inquiry "tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social and historical context, and including the important themes in those lived experiences" (Creswell, 2013). This approach was critical to my research, given the complexity of women leaders' lived experiences and the importance of temporal events as well as historical and organizational contexts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also promoted a "metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*" (p. 50) which highlights the intersection of context and place, personal circumstances, and biography. Narrative inquiry encourages a certain amount of "play" within that space, as the researcher engages with participants to encourage specific recollections and interpretations of events in their lives, and to situate those recollections relative to their current experience and placement. It provides "a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, 2005, p. 656). The chronology of life events offers a key methodological element, since the temporal nature of biographical descriptions creates a structure to the story that makes it easier for the researcher and reader to follow.

The Relationship Between Narrative Inquiry and Feminist Theory

Because narrative inquiry provides an opportunity for a certain reflexivity on the part of the informants, prompting additional recollections and texture, and overall meaning-making, it serves as an especially useful analytical tool when conducting feminist research. In her research on women school superintendents, Chase (1995) used narrative to "describe something broad

and deep: the entire linguistic event through which a woman constructs her self-understanding and makes her experience meaningful" (pp. 24-25). Furthermore, narrative research permits, even encourages, a collaboration between researcher and participant (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Creswell, 2013), thereby providing a more naturalistic and revealing setting for this research. Narrative inquiry is at its core relational (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), as researcher and participant negotiate the revelation of the individual story. I found this aspect essential to my work as a feminist researcher, given the trust that is necessary in collecting highly personal stories that revealed confidential information about my participants' lives, backgrounds, and attitudes. It was also critical that trust and rapport be established early on in the interview process. Without that relational trust, I would have been unable to extract the meaningful and insightful stories that I did.

As an alternative to traditional and stereotypically gendered notions of leadership, feminist theory provides an instructive tool that disrupts a narrow conception of academic leadership based on male experiences (Bensimon, 1989; Eddy, 2003). Feminist theory reveals the personal nature of research, with the recognition that the researcher's background and perspective are critical elements in that work, given the constant presence of hierarchy and power dynamics that underpin what is being studied (Ward, 2010). It also accounts for the intersection of gender, culture and leadership (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Longman, Daniels, Bray & Liddell, 2018). The use of feminist theory for this study illuminated how I understood and also how I perceived women leaders in the academy, because it challenged me to consider not only the role of gender but also how other factors (such as societal expectations) impact identity, while questioning assumptions and conceptions of leadership according to a male ideal.

It was vital that I entered into my research with an openness to the multiple voices and experiences that emerged from the story-telling. My research was greatly informed by the intersections of identity that emerged during the data collection process, and continued through the exploration and analysis. I sought to be especially attentive to the overlapping experiences of my participants who identified as first-generation and lesbian, and make visible my one participant who identified as Black African. Therefore, I relied on the work of Black feminist theorists, whose work was in response to their exclusion from White feminist thought, and who advocated for the application of intersectionality as a methodological tool. The additional application of Black feminist theory in this dissertation facilitated a more complete understanding of the broader societal context and power dynamics evident in the American system of higher education. This recognition in turn problematized for me the binary gender comparative approach used by other researchers (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Richardson & Loubier, 2008; Rosser, 2003), since setting up women leaders as rivals to men fails to account for other differences and contexts such as institutional type, personal background and intersecting identities, societal norms, multiple categories, and multiple forms of inequity and bias. By centering women's experiences, I instead attempted to disrupt accepted and prevailing notions of leadership based on White male norms, and avoided setting up my research participants in comparison to those norms. Through the application of narrative inquiry, and specifically by asking open-ended questions in a semi-structured format, I instead encouraged my participants to share their life histories and how they approached leadership. Doing so then revealed the complexity of their intersecting identities as well as their attitudes on systemic power and structures in higher education.

Gender, Feminist Theory, and Black Feminist Thought

As described in Chapter Two, West and Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" (1987) provided an essential and foundational piece of scholarship for this research. They argued that gender "is an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (p.126). They further asserted that gender is highly socialized, since it is created and reified through interactions with others. The researcher must be attentive to the practice of "doing gender," and incorporate a certain flexibility in the interview setting. There also must be a recognition that gender performance is unavoidable: it is a fundamental aspect not only of who human beings but also the organizations and society to which they belong (pp.136-7). Therefore, those who challenge accepted expressions of gender – through actions, mannerisms, and even professions – also challenge our sense of the natural state of human beings. Because of societal expectations, and because women are viewed are more gendered beings (men are typically not perceived as possessing gender), women adopt stereotypic, gendered behaviors assigned to women, and to which they have been socialized. "Doing" or "performing" gender occurs in interactions with others, with behaviors that are not only developed, but constituted as embodied participants in society.

Employing feminist and critical race theory, Collins (1986) advocated for placing the experience of Black women at the center of analysis rather than treating them as the "other." She argued that Black feminist thought has broad applicability to any group of "outsiders" who encounter "the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community" and "have never felt comfortable with its taken-for-granted assumptions" (pp. 121-122). Focusing on three key themes, her illumination of the interlocking nature of oppression has particular significance for

our understanding of the intersections of identity with leadership. Collins challenged the binary "either/or" approach that is so pervasive in comparison studies of groups – including, I argue, academic leaders. When conceived of as separate and opposing categories, forms of identity are set up not only in opposition but are also hierarchical. By pointing out that these relationships also are "intrinsically unstable," Collins further argued that the differences "invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority." This phenomenon denies the ability of the non-dominant group members to be successful on their terms, since the comparisons automatically place them in an inferior position, thereby perpetuating the oppressive stance already established and privileging the dominant group. With respect to academic leadership, I argue that White men are perceived as the dominant group against which all women leaders are compared and subordinated – and that it is time for the hegemonic approach to be disrupted.

Collins highlighted the contributions of Black feminist thought in exposing how the experiences of "others" within organizations are suppressed – and yet, she also argued that it is by virtue of being the "other" that suppressed groups make meaningful contributions to those organizations. Revealing their experiences, and avoiding the use of comparisons, has particular relevance to our knowledge of the standpoint and experiences of women in academic leadership positions, and provides important justification for why I only studied women. My participants were able to speak to their "otherness" within higher education, given their collective identity as women, but also in some cases as first-generation students, lesbian, and in one instance as Black African. By centering their experiences, I explored and expanded the epistemology of academic leadership, in an effort to disrupt the gendered and other majority norms.

Crenshaw's (2000) groundbreaking work on intersectionality also informed my reading and analysis of other researchers as well as my interpretation of participant interviews. Crenshaw

advocated a multidimensional approach that centered Black women's lived experiences as a means of addressing their subordination in feminist theory and research. An intersectional representation reveals instead the interlocking aspects of Black women's identities, thereby avoiding the "pop-bead" approach to understanding their lives and the ways in which they experience multiple forms of discrimination. This is also true with respect to methodology, as researchers seek to interrogate categorical permutations of identity and the relationships to power (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Although intersectionality did not serve as the primary methodology for my own work, Crenshaw nevertheless provided an exceptionally useful framework as I considered the multiplicity of women leaders' personal experiences within higher education. Researchers Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) similarly advocated for an intersectional approach to the study of leadership, since doing so "provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of diverse leaders" (p.176). Blending feminist theory with narrative inquiry as methodological processes revealed the points at which my participants' understood their gender and other identities within certain contexts and historical locations. With a particular indebtedness to Black feminist theorists, I explored my participants' overlapping identities as modes of exploration in order to achieve a fuller understanding of who they were as leaders.

Procedures

For this project, I conducted a qualitative study of seventeen women presidents and provosts2. Twelve of the participants served as presidents or provosts of liberal arts colleges, one as president of a religiously affiliated liberal arts college, one as president of a community college, two as presidents (one in an interim capacity) of regional public universities, and one as chancellor of a public university system. As described in Chapter One, my data was gathered in

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2 I use the term "provost" as a general term referring to the chief academic affairs officer of an institution.

two stages, beginning with my Syracuse University coursework in 2012, during which I interviewed nine participants by phone using a semi-structured interview format. Upon completion of my coursework, in 2014 I interviewed another eight senior women leaders, once on the phone and then a second time in person. The second interview provided an opportunity to probe on some of the themes and experiences conveyed in the initial conversation. Two of the participants whom I was able to interview in person also gave permission for me to conduct participant observation.

Attentiveness to the women's experiences was essential both in the interview process and in my data analysis. I was especially mindful of avoiding comparisons with male leaders; instead, I asked questions and follow-up probes to gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences. My approach was informed by narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), in particular Chase's (2005) use of a feminist research framework that promotes the centering of women's voices in order to disrupt the hegemonic discourse that has neglected women's experiences. I also wanted to understand the complexity of women's identity and its impact on their leadership development, as well as how the leaders made meaning of their "outsider within" (Collins, 1986) status in a profession that has long been dominated by White men. Asking open-ended questions that encouraged the participants to share their biographies as well as their leadership approaches was therefore a critical aspect of my research process.

Participants

To illustrate the variety and complexity of my participants' individual identities, backgrounds and experiences, I provide here a brief biographical sketch of each[3]:

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[3] The information given regarding each participant is current as of the interview date. In several cases, the leaders have retired or gone on to other positions in the academy.

1. **Sylvia** was the president of a small liberal arts women's college in the northeast. She previously served as provost of a large state university on the west coast, where she began her academic career as an assistant professor. She was a single parent to two children for much of her career. She herself is a graduate of a women's college, and received her PhD in the 1960s from an Ivy League institution that was in the process of moving from all-male to a coeducational university.

2. **Edith** was president of a highly selective residential liberal arts college in the northeast. This is her second presidency; prior to her first, she served as provost of a research university in the northeast. A White, first-generation college student, she attended a state school for college, then transferred to a small liberal arts college, and paid for the majority of her own education. For her graduate program she attended a prestigious seminary school in the midwest.

3. **Leslie** was the president of an urban community college in the northeast, her third community college presidency. She has been in a long-term relationship with a woman, and together they have a daughter who was in college at the time of our interview. Leslie's upbringing was solidly small town and middle-class, with a mother who did not attend college and a stepfather who did. She attended a liberal arts college on scholarship in the 1970s, and was a member of the first coeducational class (it had previously been all-women); her doctorate is from a large state university.

4. **Janice** was the president of a liberal arts college in the northeast. A White, first-generation college student, she attended a small Catholic women's college in the 1970s for her bachelors, an Ivy League institution for her masters, and eventually, after working

for several years, a regional private university for her doctorate. She and her long-time partner, a woman, have two teenage children.

5. **Natalie** was the first woman president of a private liberal arts college on the west coast. She and her husband have three grown children. Growing up in the south, Natalie's father was a school principal and her mother a "stay-at-home mom" who was "totally dedicated to her only child." In the 1960s she attended the women's campus within the state university system, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in three years. Natalie received her law degree from a prestigious university in the south when she was one of less than a dozen women students.

6. **Catherine**, a Roman Catholic nun, was president of a small, regional Catholic university in the northeast. She was raised by two attorneys in a devout, upper middle class household, and attended a women's Catholic college in an urban setting. After she entered the convent in the mid-1960s, Catherine received her masters degree from an Ivy League university and then her law degree.

7. **Wendy** was the vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty at a private regional college in the northeast. She previously served as dean of arts & sciences at a small regional university in the south. An only child who was adopted, she was raised by older parents in a middle-class household. She is divorced with no children. For college Wendy attended the flagship university in her home state, where she also received her masters degree. She took some time off and lived abroad before returning to the States to complete her doctorate.

8. **Elaine** was president of a public comprehensive university in the northeast, having served previously as provost for another public comprehensive. Her parents were both

teachers and first in their families to go to college. She graduated in 1970 from a Catholic women's college in New England not far from where she grew up. Elaine received her doctorate from a large institution in the northeast, having taken some time off in the middle to travel before completing her graduate degree. She is married to her second husband and has no children.

9. **Patricia** was president of a private liberal arts college in the northeast. She first attended a women's college for two years, then transferred to an Ivy League university in the late 1960s when it went coed. She received her PhD from another Ivy League university. She and her husband, who have two grown children, comprise "a dual academic family" and to accommodate both careers, following graduate school they accepted tenure-track positions at the same large state university in the west. Before assuming her presidency, she served as dean of the humanities school at a large state university on the west coast.

10. **Debra** was the academic dean of a liberal arts college in the northeast, and the first woman to hold that position. A first-generation student whose father was a house painter and mother was a part-time receptionist, she grew up in the mid-Atlantic region before attending a small experimental college in the south. She returned to her home state for her PhD program. Her entire career has been at the same college, where she began as an assistant professor in the 1980s. She identifies as lesbian, and her longtime partner has a faculty position at a neighboring institution.

11. **Alice** was the interim president of a public liberal arts college in the northeast. She previously served as provost of the same college until the president decided to retire. Alice is a first-generation college student; her father was a baker and her mother a caterer. As one of three extended family members with a college degree, Alice described

herself as "the weirdo in my family." She is married with two grown children and grandchildren. After graduating high school at age 16, Alice attended an elite liberal arts college on the west coast, and received her masters and doctoral degrees from an elite midwestern private university. Prior to becoming provost at her current institution, she served as a professor and dean of the college at a private liberal arts college on the west coast.

12. **Christine** was the dean of faculty and vice president for academic affairs at a private liberal arts college in the northeast. Originally from the northeast, her family lived in several countries before settling in the mid-Atlantic region during her high school years. She attended a women's college and then a large state university in the midwest for graduate school. She began her career at her current institution as an assistant professor. Calling herself "the accidental dean," she was appointed to her position through a series of unusual events, including leading the college for one year as interim during a presidential transition. She and her husband have one daughter who was in college at the time of our interview.

13. **Julia** was president of a liberal arts college in the midwest. She is married with no children; she and her husband have a commuter relationship. She identifies as first-generation; an only child, she had a peripatetic childhood and moved around a great deal. She attended an Ivy League university the first year it went coed, and then received her doctorate from another Ivy League institution. After teaching at several elite colleges, she eventually landed a tenure-track position at her alma mater, where she assumed several administrative positions before accepting the presidency at her current institution.

14. **Jennifer** was the first woman president of a liberal arts college in the south. She previously served as vice president of a mid-sized university in the south, during which time her husband died of cancer. She is now a single parent with a college-aged daughter at the time of our interview. She grew up in a comfortable middle-class household with well-educated parents. Heavily influenced by her Quaker K-12 education, she attended college in the 1980s at an elite university in the midwest. An accomplished scholar, she received her PhD from an Ivy League university.

15. **Sandra** was the president of her alma mater, a liberal arts college in the northeast. She grew up in a suburb in the northeast, and met her husband at college in the 1970s. The couple have three grown children. A scientist, she received her doctorate from an Ivy League institution. She has spent her entire academic career at one institution, eventually becoming provost and then president.

16. **Esther** was provost of a liberal arts college in the northeast. A Black African woman, she attended a girls boarding school and college in her native country, and received her doctorate in England. She always knew she wanted to be a college professor, and was raised in "a family of educators" (all of her siblings have PhDs). Prior to her current position, she served as provost of an historically Black university in the southeast. She is married to her husband, an academic who lived in another state; they have five adult children.

17. **Martha** was the chancellor of a comprehensive state higher education system in the northeast, the first woman to serve in that position. She previously served as president of a state university in the midwest. She was raised in a small Appalachian town by middle

class parents, and attended the flagship state university for her bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees. She is married to her second husband, and has one son.

Recruitment and Data Collection

Because of my undergraduate and professional experiences at small liberal arts colleges, and because I believe these institutions hold a special place in the taxonomy and history of higher education, I initially thought I would focus this study on that particular segment of higher education. However, after conducting several initial interviews, I quickly realized that restricting my research to one institutional type would prove limiting. Since institutional culture introduces an illuminating contextual element, and context is a key factor in a feminist study of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Neumann & Bensimon, 1990), I decided to involve leaders from a wider spectrum of colleges and universities. Furthermore, it was simply more practical to expand the scope given geographic and travel limitations, and the available pool of potential research participants.

As a college administrator, I was fortunate to have professional connections that opened doors (and emails) to potential research participants. Both during the initial recruitment for my coursework participants, and the additional nine participants whom I interviewed on the phone and in person, the introduction by my colleagues proved essential, since I quickly discovered that "cold emails" from me to president and provosts yielded zero responses. For my 2012 coursework, Hamilton College's president provided a number of initial introductions to her counterparts at other small liberal arts colleges around the country. In 2014, I strived to expand the breadth of institutional type, and to include presidents and provosts within reasonable driving distance in order to conduct in-person interviews. To that end, I asked Hamilton's vice president for academic affairs, the president of SUNY Purchase (a Hamilton alumnus and trustee), and the

presidents of Mohawk Valley Community College and Utica College for personal introductions to their professional counterparts. This technique proved successful, and I was grateful to incorporate women leaders representing a wide array of institutions across New York State. Once a colleague made an initial introduction, I followed up with an email describing my research in more depth, taking pains to describe how our conversation would provide an enjoyable opportunity for reflexivity in the midst of a busy week, and including a copy of my research consent form (for the sample recruitment email, see Appendix B). With few exceptions, the women leaders responded affirmatively to the initial introduction and agreed to participate in my project.

At the outset of my project, and in keeping with an intersectional research study (Bowleg, 2008), I intended to gather a group of leaders with a range of diverse social identities. However, this effort proved challenging especially with respect to women of color, whose numbers are already miniscule at 5% of all college and university presidents (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk & Taylor, 2017). For my 2012 coursework, I interviewed on the phone a former university president who identifies as African American; she later declined my request to include her transcript in my dissertation study. For my second phase of interviews in 2014, I relied on colleagues' connections to contact two African American women serving as presidents of small liberal arts colleges. Unfortunately, both declined. Although I contacted additional women leaders who encompassed varied racial and ethnic identities, including at Syracuse University, I did not have the benefit of a personal introduction, and did not receive responses. It is noteworthy that three of my participants openly shared their identity as lesbians with long-term female partners, thereby providing an important path of exploration. There was also great variety

in terms of my participants' upbringing and socioeconomic class, as is explicated in the above chart, with six who self-identified as first-generation.

For the nine presidents whom I interviewed as part of my 2012 coursework, I emailed them over the course of 2014 to ask whether I could include our telephone interviews in my dissertation research. With the exception of the one who declined, and after some back and forth (with great gratitude to their assistants), the remaining eight participants signed and returned a consent form (see Appendix C). I also gained access, using the above described connections, to interview nine additional leaders, who signed a separate consent form (see Appendix D). For the latter participants, I first scheduled and conducted a one-hour telephone interview, in keeping with a similar protocol for my coursework interviews. I then augmented those conversations by following up with on-campus interviews that lasted one to two hours to further expand on topics and themes introduced in those initial conversations.

Given the limited opportunity I had to speak with people who have exceptionally demanding schedules, it was critical that I made the most of our time together. As stated earlier, building rapport immediately was essential. For the participants that I interviewed once on the phone, I typically began by thanking them for their time, acknowledging how busy they are, and chatting briefly about our mutual colleague connection before moving into my interview questions. For those whom I interviewed on the phone and in person, I proceeded in a similar fashion, with the understanding that while the initial telephone interview was an important means of gathering data, it also helped to develop rapport as preparation for our more in-depth conversation in person. As a former president's chief of staff, I was familiar with the demands and challenges faced by college presidents, thereby making that immediate rapport-building somewhat easier, but I was also attentive to professionalism and courtesy.

Since I asked participants to reveal information about themselves that they may not wish to make public, it was vital that I assured and respected confidentiality. To that end, I assigned pseudonyms to each of my participants, and altered personal or institutional details in order to protect their identities. Audio recordings and their transcriptions were maintained on a secure, password-protected personal file on Google Drive. All printed transcriptions and consent forms were organized and maintained in my private office in my home. In addition to assigning pseudonyms, I generalized the names of their colleges and universities (e.g. "large midwestern university") and institutional affiliations in order to preserve anonymity.

In my recruitment, I suggested that the interview(s) may provide an opportunity for self-reflection in the midst of their busy schedules. I did not offer compensation to my participants. In fact, several of them treated me to a lengthy lunch. The women with whom I spoke have significant demands on their time, and yet they set aside several hours to speak with me. With my gratitude, I have aimed to represent their stories with integrity.

Interview Process

In keeping with a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I asked each participant to describe her family background, path to college, experience in college and graduate school, career progression, and personal influences using semi-structured interviews. A sample of interview questions is presented in Appendix E. I delved into their life histories throughout college, graduate school and early career as the vehicle to acquire data about their identities. Employing this form of inquiry revealed their sense of who they are and also the ways in which their identities have shaped their talk about leadership. For example, leaders who identified as first-generation and/or grew up in lower-middle class households later talked about how they support and advocate for students who share those identity markers. Therefore, asking

the participants about their life histories, and paying close attention to their discursive style, was

an imperative component to understanding their meaning-making, as well as their motivations

and tactics for exercising leadership.

In addition to personal stories, I explored the leaders' professional roles: what

accomplishments they took pleasure in, the challenges they found vexing, and how they

characterized interactions with colleagues and students. With two participants, I was able to

observe the interactions firsthand through participant observation to provide a richer accounting

of those relationships. As Chase (1995) found, the "analysis of the relationship between culture

and experience is best achieved through a focus on the embodiment of that relationship in actual

practice" (p.6). Flexibility both in interview structure and in terms of observational opportunities

was critical. I discovered that just as people are complex individuals, so too are research settings.

I learned quickly to adjust expectations and resist rigidity with respect to the on-campus

interview in particular, since my participants varied in their willingness and ability to share their

time with me and their openness to permitting observation of their interactions with others.

In accordance with feminist methodology, I strove to respect the complexity of my

participants' identities, excavate their stories, and honor their experiences (DeVault, 1999;

Harding, 1987). Delving into their backgrounds – and what discourses they employed to describe

them – revealed a great deal about who these women are and how they made sense of that

identity. In considering the utility of experience as a tool for making meaning and constructing

identity, Mohanty's (1998) theoretical definition proved instructive:

> Experiences can be 'true' or 'false,' can be evaluated as justified or illegitimate in
> relation to the subject and his world, for 'experience' refers very simply to the variety of
> ways humans process information… It is on the basis of this revised understanding that
> we can construct a realist theory of social or cultural identity in which experiences would
> not serve as foundations because of their self-evident authenticity but would provide
> some of the raw material with which we construct identities (p.205).

Significant meaning can be derived from experiences, and I delved into the "raw" and rich data provided by women academic leaders to determine how they understand their lives and careers relative to their identities.

At times I experienced some tension while probing into my participants' backgrounds. One participant expressed unease in conveying something that happened in college, thereby cutting off conversation and forcing me as the interviewer to move to another subject. She stated: "There are some aspects of personal life here that I'm going to leave out. There was a personal dimension to it but, I don't want to talk about" (Christine). While I was tempted to delve further in an effort to get the leader to discuss what it was that happened, I decided in that moment that further probing would likely shut down our interview. Instead, I elected to respect my participant's resistance to further explication of what had occurred, and moved on. This is the type of decision-making and relationship-building that must be negotiated between researcher and participant in an effort to achieve as much data as possible. I believe it would have been counterproductive for me to continue to push for more information, which I suspect would have diminished the comfort level of the participant in sharing additional private details of her life experience, or even (at the extreme) ending the interview. In fact, one participant did end our first interview abruptly. While conducting that conversation, I realized that she was in a car with at least one other staff member and a driver:

> *MHB: And can you walk me through your first, your next career steps following the completion of your PhD?*
>
> *Martha: You know I really would prefer to finish this interview, I should have done this at the beginning, when we meet in person.*
>
> *MHB: Absolutely.*

Martha: There's a lot of personal stuff here that I'm boring my car with. So, can we do that?

MHB: Absolutely. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak privately in person.

Martha: Okay so we we'll set that up for the 22nd.

MHB: Okay. Thank you so much. Have a good day.

Martha: Bye-bye. [she hangs up]

[OC: I'm a little stunned that the interview ended so abruptly, and sat at my desk for a few minutes to process what just happened. I went back to working and approximately fifteen minutes later, my phone rang and it was [Martha]. She apologized for how the conversation ended and explained that she was unaccustomed to answering such personal questions about her background. She is more adept at speaking about her leadership style, which is what she anticipated our conversation would be about. Clearly, she had not read my consent form before signing on for my project. I responded that I understood, and that I looked forward to meeting her in person the following month. Upon hanging up, I was stunned again – since I certainly hadn't expected her to call back! I was very impressed, even moved, that she took the time to follow up and apologize.]

My observer comments explicated the tensions and emotions I experienced in the initial process, and highlighted the necessity of flexibility and attentiveness to the participant. In addition, there is the situational reality of conducting interviews with human beings who have a variety of reactions, emotions and levels of preparation. I was then forced to make adjustments in order to achieve the desired result of acquiring rich data.

Once I was able to overcome the logistical hurdles of scheduling and travel in order to conduct the interviews, the interviews themselves proved enjoyable, illuminating and productive. For each telephone interview, I began the conversation by asking biographical questions such as "Where did you grow up? What was your family situation? In what ways did they support your path to college?" before moving on to "Tell me about your own college experience. What did you enjoy the most? What sorts of challenges did you face? What led you to graduate school?" I also moved into questions such as "At what point did you entertain the notion of becoming a college president (provost)? Did you consider institutional types and/or cultures?" and "What were your first few months like as college president?" I was able to probe in many instances, and found that an hour on the telephone passed exceedingly quickly, especially when I received lengthy responses – and the challenge then became maintaining control of the interview setting.

The initial interviews I conducted for my 2012 coursework served as helpful training for my later telephone and in-person interviews. For the participants I met with in person, I was able to probe more on themes and comments identified in the first interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), and also gather more in-depth information about their experiences as leaders, such as "How would you describe your relationship with your board? With your senior staff? What are the challenges you experience with respect to students and faculty?" Since asking about gender and other identities in a direct manner did not always yield fruitful data, I attempted to weave in identity questions when conducting probes. For example, I often asked "How do you think gender/race might have shaped that situation/your search process/relationships with your board/faculty?" Finally, asking questions about vexing issues, as well as the enjoyable aspects of their jobs, gave permission to the participants to reveal more personal feelings and attitudes.

Challenges in the Interview Process

In conducting interviews, I faced the challenge of what I termed "moving beyond politeness." I needed to probe, redirect, and challenge when necessary in order to gather data that would prove relevant and informative. As my experience grew, and my "footing" became more comfortable (Goffman, 2001), I began to take more control of the interview, and became more assertive. Earlier in my research, I believe that I was more deferential (and perhaps a little intimidated) than I should have been. Another struggle was getting the women leaders to talk about their social identities. I quickly realized that, for example, asking direct questions about gender, race and sexuality was unhelpful and even counterproductive. Instead, I learned to ask situational questions that provided the space for them to talk about their experiences, and that revealed the centrality of identity in ways that they may not have even realized. Consistent with the advice provided by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), my confidence grew as I conducted more interviews, allowing for greater risk-taking, thereby widening the expanse of space from which to collect leaders' stories.

As I reflect on my footing across the interviews, I believe that at times, especially in the beginning, I confused rapport with gathering rich data. For example, I struggled mightily in my telephone interview with Sylvia, mistaking the crispness or even curtness of her answers with my inadequacies as a researcher.

> *MHB: Now we are recording. So I'd like to begin by asking you to tell me about your own college experience. What led you to college?*
>
> *Sylvia: Well I was always a good student and was professionally ambitious and so, you know, I went to college. I don't think I ever thought that I would do anything other than go to college.*

MHB: Did you have the support of your family and doing so?

Sylvia: Yes I certainly did.

MHB: So when you got to college, I know that you went to [college]. Which of course the time was a women's college. I'm not sure on whether it still is.

Sylvia: It's not really, it's been combined with [state university]. It's still a separate residential, women's residential campus. But it doesn't give its own degrees and all the classes are combined with all of the [name] campuses in the [state] area.

MHB: I see. And did you find your experience at [college] to be challenging academically?

Sylvia: That's an odd question. I did extremely well there. I'm not quite sure what your question means. I enjoyed my work but I didn't find it challenging in the sense of frustrating or difficult. You know I was always very good at academic work. [OC: I feel flustered by her responses, and sense that I've failed to ask the questions properly.]

Sylvia's response that my question was "odd" felt disorienting at the time, and disrupted the flow of our exchange. I also realized (too late) that I may have insulted Sylvia when I asked whether she found college to be academically challenging. The interview was a humbling, even humiliating experience while left me feeling utterly incompetent as a researcher when our conversation concluded. Fortunately, the rest of the transcript proved otherwise. I believe that during the interview I focused too much on her tone of voice, which I would describe as cool and unforgiving, instead of on what she was actually saying. Although I did feel that the interview finally clicked, it was much further into the interview than my others. The conversation became a turning point for me, since I then decided to adopt a more reflexive approach to my interviews, by focusing on and really listening to what my interview subjects were saying rather than rigidly

following a predetermined script. Also, after realizing that I may have assumed a dominant paradigm of women facing academic challenges in college, I made appropriate adjustments to the questions.

An additional challenge came from my initial desire to approach the interviews using an intersectional lens in order to explore how the participants thought about their overlapping social identities. In reading Chase's (1995) work, I felt comforted by her admission that she fellow researcher also too struggled with the "ways gender, race, and ethnicity shape women's experiences," and that asking specific questions about identity categories often elicited awkward responses since "the very fact that we were asking such questions seemed to imply we were looking for certain kinds of answers - for example, that being a woman does make a difference" (p.50). In the end, Chase elected to drop these questions and instead relied on the storytelling itself to illustrate and explicate women's experiences in the workplace. If examples of how gender identity and especially inequality did not emerge, then she added questions later once a rapport had been established. While I attempted to explore identity questions in all of my interviews, I found that Chase's recommended approach worked better with those research participants I was able to visit in person. Regardless of the interview setting, asking direct questions about identity still proved challenging, perhaps the most challenging of any aspect of my research process.

Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded and then transcribed. I personally transcribed all eight of the telephone interviews I completed as part of my 2012 coursework. For the nine two-part interviews conducted in 2014, I also transcribed all of the initial telephone interviews. Since some in-person interviews were well in excess of an hour, I quickly determined that I would

need help with the transcription process. I hired a transcriber, who signed a confidentiality form, to complete five of my in-person interview transcriptions. I then listened to and reviewed her work in order to ensure accuracy of the data, and in order to make notes and additional observer comments. For the interviews that I transcribed, I was surprised to discover that using the "Dragon Naturally Speaking" speech to text software was a helpful tool not only in the transcribing process, but in absorbing the data. Since I needed to actually speak all of the words uttered in the interview, including that of my participants (the software only recognizes a single voice), I was able to soak in the data in a more visceral, concentrated manner. I rolled the conversations around in my head, leading me to reflect and create connections in what I heard, and found myself replaying snippets of talk as I went about my daily work. All of the interview recordings, written transcriptions, and interview questions were organized into a single electronic folder on my personal Google Drive. All of the interviews, including any applicable field notes and printed materials that the participants shared, were also printed and organized into two large binders separated by tabs for each participant.

I then embarked on the analysis and coding process, which proved more complicated than I anticipated as I worked to develop an effective scheme and sorting mechanism (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In an effort to embrace qualitative research technology, I purchased and utilized a subscription to Dedoose, an online coding software platform. I spent many hours coding and loading sections of my interviews into Dedoose, resulting in approximately 750 excerpts and 75 codes with seven different types of parents codes that focused on administrative role, identity roles, leadership, life history, mentorship, narrative, and the perception of power. However, while the tool was somewhat useful as an initial attempt to identify and categorize large patterns, the technology ultimately felt clunky (Luddite that I am). There was so much rich data, and it

was difficult for me to determine how and where to focus while inputting interview sections into the software. I also struggled while using Dedoose with making the data "fit" with what I wanted to write, and instead pay attention to what the participants actually said. I regrouped by reading through my printed binders, in order to make make color-coded notes, highlights, observations and commentaries on the transcriptions and field notes. Since some of my research was several years old, I also focused on my observer comments in an effort to return to the intimacy of the interview.

After re-reading my interviews several times, the family codes that I initially identified through the use of Dedoose morphed into themes. I then began to observe and understand more clearly the threads across interviews that highlighted the participants' biographies and identities, but also the sexism and discrimination they experienced, and the discursive disjunction they employed. During my initial writing process, I analyzed and organized the themes, which sent me back to my printed binders, with their observer comments and scribbled notes. While re-reading the interviews, I was also able to triangulate the data as overlapping themes began to emerge (Creswell, 2013). In summary, the old-fashioned paper and pen approach, coupled with working through themes and ideas in the initial drafting stage, proved most productive in my data analysis. The process of writing, editing and rewriting my data chapters further facilitated my ability to refine and faithfully represent the major themes that I identified.

Trustworthiness

Scholars of narrative inquiry and narrative analysis have struggled with concerns about validity in the research process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), since the acquisition and interpretation of data are rooted in the imperfections inherent to memory and discourse (Riessman, 1993). My own research experience was no different, with the additional challenge of

interviewing participants who had limited ability to devote time and attention to this project. Given my participants' schedules and time constraints, it would have been impractical to conduct follow-up "member checks" regarding the data I acquired (Mertens, 2005). However, in several instances and with different participants, I managed to insert into my questions broad observations as a data "check," thereby establishing some validity to the participants' stories (Mertens, 2005). For example, I noted with several participants the commonality of being members in the first coeducational classes of Ivy League universities, and they shared their individual observations about that phenomenon. I also relied on the interview structure itself to provide consistency and reliability across my data. The temporal pattern inherent in the telling of a life history facilitated a familiar structure and dependability across all of the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and added a predictable arc to the conversations.

My participants all identified as women. However, in the analytical process it was especially important that I not overgeneralize the experiences of all women leaders, and that I not do so in comparison to men. Doing so would have been contradictory to both narrative inquiry, which is inherently fluid and relational (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and to feminist research, which emphasizes the individual nature of life experience (DeVault, 1999). A type of triangulation (Creswell, 2013) occurred when I began to notice that my own overlapping data and themes were similar to those of other researchers who studied women academic leaders, such as women experiencing discrimination, and adapting their leadership style to account for institutional culture (Fitzgerald, 2014; Madsen, 2008; Milligan, 2010; Turner, 2007). While my study provided a distinctive theoretical and methodological approach, nevertheless the resemblances to other researchers' work helped to establish the validity of my findings. Finally, I

had another researcher review my data and analysis several times to ensure that the quotes employed were appropriate, and the analysis sufficiently rigorous throughout the data chapters.

Limitations of Study

My research illuminates the experiences of women leaders, specifically, presidents and provosts, in higher education. However, the inclusion of a total of seventeen women presidents and provosts offers a relatively small sample of leaders whose numbers are growing, albeit slowly. While I would have liked to have conducted two-part interviews for all of my participants, the factors of timing, personal and professional demands, and logistical considerations made this option impossible. It also would have been beneficial to conduct more participant observations; however, only two participants agreed to my requests.

The lack of racial diversity among my participants was a major limitation of this dissertation. Since only one of my participants was a woman of color (who identified as Black African), my study was significantly limited by a large majority of White women's voices and stories. My own positionality as a White woman likely contributed to my limited access, so too did my geographic location at the time of my data collection process. As stated earlier in this chapter, personal connections were essential in gaining access to women leaders and with one exception, the individuals who provided those connections identify as White. In my initial research process, I also relied heavily on a professional network focused on predominantly White, small liberal arts colleges where women of color have been historically excluded (Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Harris, 2007). For all these reasons, I struggled to include a more racially diverse group of participants. The incorporation of a more varied set of perspectives and social identities – including women of color and queer and trans women – would have facilitated a fuller and more complex picture of women leaders, and the centering of their voices. It also

would have promoted a more intersectional analysis and been more in keeping with feminist research's aims to make visible the diversity of women's experiences, especially for those who have felt silenced (DeVault, 1999).

My data were collected in 2012 and 2014. In the years since, and while I have been engaged in the data analysis and writing processes (and having taken a year off while changing jobs), I have paid close attention to other women ascending to presidential and provostial positions. With the exception of Jennifer, the majority of women leaders that I interviewed were in their mid-50s to mid-60s, with several nearing retirement. Many new presidents are in their late 40s and early 50s. Given the importance of historical context, the incorporation of women leaders who came of age in the 1980s and 90s would bring additional richness to the study of academic leaders.

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the methods and theories utilized for this study, including its limitations, the challenges I faced in the research process, and my own positionality as researcher. I also introduced my participants, since they comprise the core of this study, and the variety and complexity of their lived experiences. The following three data chapters will delve into the specific themes and findings with respect to the leaders' background and emerging identities as academics and leaders, and how they made meaning of their positional power, leadership and influence.

Chapter Four: EMERGENCE OF IDENTITY AS ACADEMICS

"I grew up in a generation of women that were trying to find our voice."(Wendy)

Identity formation occurs due to a multiplicity of factors. According to Erikson's (1968) "epigenetic principle," the formation starts with a ground plan and "out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole" (as cited in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 48). Therefore, the exploration of family and upbringing was a critical aspect of the interview and data gathering process in order to gather more insight into the parts that form the whole of the participants' identity as academics and leaders. The results of narrative inquiry reveal the great complexity that form leaders, and facilitates resisting a single story or identity that flattens the experiences of women leaders.

This chapter focuses on how my participants viewed the ways in which their family circumstances and upbringing, their time in college and graduate school, and their early career experiences shaped their professional emergence as academics. Greater complexity in meaning-making is achieved when individuals act within a social context (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Beginning with their upbringing and family circumstances, the participants' narratives provided an important window in understanding their identity development, including the challenges they experienced during particular points in their history. The leaders demonstrated a high degree of reflexivity and openness about these challenges, which often were related to their intersecting identities as women, first-generation students, lesbian, etc. Many developed resiliency at a fairly young age: they conveyed the good fortune that they also enjoyed based on the support they received from family and friends, as well as from their faculty members. However, they also struggled at times, and in different ways that in part depended on the era in which they grew up,

as well as their family circumstances. Therefore, the exploration of their accomplishments as well as their challenges must be analyzed within an historical context. As O'Connor (2002) stated, "*constraint* and *opportunity* are differentially represented across historical time" (p.857). This research was attentive to those contextual and generational factors in order to account for the varying nature of educational access and opportunity across different eras.

Understanding and analyzing the participants' life experiences through the lens of history is consistent with the concept of "sociological imagination" promulgated by Mills (1959/2000), whereby "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (p.3). Their narratives revealed the complexity of the participants' identities by mining their personal stories and experiences that took place within a particular era, and the meaning-making and reconciliation that resulted. Placing the participants' stories within that historical context proved essential to this research, since what was occurring in the nation and in the world had a notable and understandable impact on their lives. As Jennifer made clear in the above quote, the past and the present are indelibly linked, and it is critical that we acknowledge those connections. As part of their personal histories, they had to overcome various obstacles related to their identity; how they recounted and made meaning of those "outsider" experiences facilitates a more complete understanding of who they are as leaders today.

Family Upbringing and Support

Although most participants described relatively stable home lives while growing up, there was significant variation when it came to the support they received from family members, especially with respect to their educational goals and expectations. While some struggled with families who did not believe in education, for others that support felt boundless. The following

two narratives demonstrate those differences. Edith, now a college president, was counseled by
her parents not to attend college at all:

> *Ah, first generation college student, parents not supportive, didn't feel girls needed to go*
> *to college, they were in [midwestern state] and so they were, felt that education led one*
> *to be arrogant, and you just didn't need to be educated. I was not in college prep courses.*
> *I was in home economics. My father agreed to pay for one year of schooling because he*
> *did that for my sister, and she got married at the end of her first year so he thought that is*
> *what would happen to me. Went to [Midwestern State], large state school, and didn't*
> *really like it. Ended up transferring to a small liberal arts college... My father only paid*
> *for one year so I had to work two jobs. Worked about 40 -50 hours a week.*

Edith, a first-generation White woman from the midwestern United States, actively fought
against societal sexism coupled with family forces that colluded to hinder her academic progress.
Her story defied the odds of first-generation students, who are less likely to achieve degree
completion without the active involvement of family members (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). And
yet, after being raised in an environment and at a time in which women's education was not
supported, she demonstrated resilience in managing to achieve educational success. There is
additional complexity to Edith's story:

> *I came out of a fairly conservative background, as you can probably tell. But my father*
> *was fairly open minded and liberal about race, especially race issues, so I was always for*
> *some reason, which I don't really understand except that my father tended to be very*
> *comfortable and feel very strongly that men should not be denied the right to work and*
> *things like that because of race or background. So as early as high school I got very*
> *interested in the civil rights movement and that kind of continued through college and*

then into graduate school where I ended up working on Latin American liberation

movements, then on theology and black civil rights movements. So I kind of had this

predisposition to these kind of moral issues.

Her conservative upbringing was complicated, in that her father taught her the evils of racism at

the same time that he attempted to limit her own opportunities based on sexist notions of

education for women. Ironically, however, the seeds of Edith's social justice leanings germinated

at an early age, and she credits that philosophy to her father. While she counteracted her father's

lack of financial support to attend college, she nevertheless embraced his more progressive views

on race. In reflecting on her childhood lessons, she revealed how she negotiated these tensions as

she sought to "confront the pieces of the self that may be experienced as fragmented and

contradictory" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1997, p.136). She confronted the

contradictory aspects of her dad's views, ultimately reconciling them as she formed her own self-

identity.

Other narratives revealed the complexity of identity and self-formation in early years.

Like Edith, Alice was a first-generation student raised during a similar era, but she received

encouragement and direct support from her parents to pursue a college education:

My mother had always wanted to be a teacher and so she was very enthusiastic about

education. I was very fortunate that I ended up going to [high school in California],

which had a pretty good academic program. I grew up in that period when they skipped

you through early grades and you know my mother, she had spent a lot of time reading to

me and things like that and so I was ahead of myself. And they skipped me through

kindergarten, they skipped me through first grade, they let me hang out in second grade

for a little while and I ended up sort of stabilizing in third grade. [laughs] And so I

graduated from high school when I was, when I turned 16… So I kind of was focused on

academic stuff most of my life. I liked it and I was good at it and my mother was

supportive. It's not that my father wasn't supportive. He worked hard, he was the baker

who got up at three in the morning and made the doughnuts you know. [laughs] They ran

their own businesses so they worked really hard. But they were extremely generous and

supportive about education and always encouraged me.

The differences in Edith's and Alice's first-generation narratives demonstrated the range of experience and habitus within similar socioeconomic class (Walpole, 2003). Alice movingly described, injected with some humor, the support that she received from her parents, neither of whom had college degrees. One, her mother, was openly supportive of educational attainment. Her father, while not unsupportive, was less outwardly so. Debra is another first-generation student from a working-class family, whose father was a self-employed house painter and mother was a stay-at-home parent. She described her college search process as somewhat arbitrary:

Ultimately I went to [small public college in another state] which was kind of the only

place where I applied because they did early admissions. I went down there. My mother

went with me. It was the first time that either one of us had ever flown anywhere. My

parents were not terribly helpful in terms of really talking about the college admissions

process but they were certainly supportive in terms of if I wanted to do something, they

were willing to do what they could to help.

Alice and Debra's stories confirmed the role of parental involvement in encouraging educational achievement (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), and also the range of first-generation experiences. The two narratives they shared revealed the lack of a single story for first-generation students, and the ways in which family context contributed to the formation of their individual identity.

Another participant, Martha, described how growing up in an educated family in Appalachia was no guarantee to college achievement, since gender obstacles and social norms of the time still emerged. Martha and her sister were encouraged by her parents to pursue college, specifically in a traditional academic field for women. However, while her brother was encouraged to study medicine, Martha's advanced degree was "on her own ticket."

> So I grew up in a small town in southeastern Ohio which most people label Appalachia. This was a community of about 10,000 people, my mother was a high school teacher in the commercial fields which meant that she mostly educated young women for secretarial positions and executive secretary positions. My father was a salesman. There were three of us. I'm the youngest of three. There's an identity point for you. And the overachiever is the oldest, my older sister, my oldest sibling. She's a corporate attorney and my brother is a physician. He was always going to medical school and I was a teacher, actually my sister began her career as a teacher as well. My family wanted us all to get educated and certainly supported both my sister's and my baccalaureate degrees but all along they were going to educate my brother to be a doctor with the help of some other people in the community. So the essence of it is that my sister and I got our advanced degrees on our own ticket. I don't harbor any resentment about that because that's the way things were done in that time. And women of my generation and my sister's mostly had a choice to be an educator or an executive secretary or a nurse or something in the field but at that time that's what it was for women. We both went that way but then we got ourselves to a different, to a different place on our own and through our own personal agency. So I think the standards in my family were in large part because my parents were both

educated. They were both educators. They took their role seriously, and if your mother is

a teacher in your school you pretty much pay attention.

For Martha, whose parents were educated and comfortably middle-class, her parents supported educational attainment for her and her sister. However, Martha's gender (like Edith's) presented an overt impediment in receiving financial support in ways consistent to what her parents provided her brother. Interestingly, Martha does not name it as a limitation or obstacle. While she described the high expectations "because my parents were both educated," nevertheless those standards were different for the two girls in the family versus their brother. Martha chose to rationalize that experience as a means of reconciling her family's attitudes, and the financial support offered to her brother, by placing it in an historical context of "that's the way things were done in that time." However, she invoked her own (and her sister's) agency as the driver by which she was able to achieve eventual success, thereby shaping her identity as a woman who overcomes obstacles by virtue of individual achievement, despite her recognition of the larger social forces of sexism.

Esther, a Black woman who was raised outside the United States in a family of educators with economic means, received significant support from her family:

I was born into a family of educators. My father was a principal, among other things that

he did. And then my mother was a nurse and also a tutor. In our household with me and

my siblings, it was never a question that you would go to college or anything like that.

Nobody ever talked about that. What we talked about was what you wanted to study in

college and what you wanted to be. I grew up with that assumption. It was never…

nobody questioned whether you were going on to primary school. After that we went to

secondary school and I went to boarding school. A girls boarding school. When I was

younger… and during that time, during my days of being young those were kind of the

best schools. My dad was there, a high school secondary principal himself and he was

one of the most senior among all the ones in our whole entire region. So in fact it was

never a question. I had always known… one of my earliest memories that I have is that I

have until today is that I had always known I would be a college professor. I actually

remember from a time when I was little, talking and they would ask us, well what do you

want to be? And I said I am going to be a teacher but I'm going to be a teacher at the

university. So I had always known that, no doubt about it. And I never knew to think that

anything I wanted to be wasn't possible. It never crossed my mind until much much much

later that I grew up that I kind of knew that these were not things that people take for

granted.

Esther grew up in a home, and in a country in Africa, where educational attainment for women

was not only supported but expected. It was not until Esther became an adult that she began to

understand how she took for granted her family's expectations. She described how later in her

life, while living in America, with its history of slavery and racial subjugation, that she began to

understand the context of place relative to one's racial identity:

It's actually living in a racialized society like America that heightens that consciousness

for people. I think living here has made me aware of it but it does not control who I am or

what I do.

In her home country, she felt comfortable with her identity as a Black woman; her family also

provided her a certain protection as a child from the forces of racism and sexism. To some

extent, she was oblivious to discrimination until she moved, as an adult, to the United States,

with its history of racial discrimination, where she became more aware of her racial identity. In

acknowledging the interlocking parts of her identity, and the role of location and circumstances in formulating that identity, she demonstrated her "sociological imagination." Esther achieved "a quality of mind" that helped her "to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves" (Mills, 1959, p.5). As a Black woman now living in the United States, her consciousness was raised, and her sense of self shifted, even though she was very clear that it did not represent the totality of her identity: "It does not control who I am or what I do."

Edith, Esther, Martha, Alice, and Debra all demonstrated the varied ways in which family support played a role in their post-secondary opportunities. With the benefit of time and distance, they expressed their "sociological imagination," in an act of identity reconciliation. The participants described how their childhood upbringings and family circumstances played a part in developing who they are, as well as the role that history, location and national origin played in those experiences. The participants' knowledge and understanding of their social locations and histories provided the initial building blocks of their identity as women, especially as smart women who seemed to know early on that they would become educators despite various challenges that they faced. The next section will focus on the emergence of the participants' academic identity in college and graduate school, where, to use Belenky, et al.'s (1997) term, their passion for learning was "unleashed" (p. 140) and they began to view themselves as true scholars.

The College Environment and Formation of Identity

All of the participants expressed the ways in which their college years were highly formative in shaping their identity. They began to develop a clearer sense of self away from home and family, and also began to develop some confidence with their scholarly identity. The

participants described processes of self-discovery and education through their coursework, undergraduate research, and even cocurricular pursuits. The participants shared what they learned in college, and what they learned about themselves. Therefore, the exploration of the participants' time in college and graduate school proved essential to the process of understanding their future identities as academics and leaders.

While recounting their college experiences, many participants described a "lightbulb moment" when a singular experience or interaction with a faculty member determined their future path as academics. Even so, their descriptions of their academic awakening varied, with some describing transformative experiences while honing their particular discipline while others almost "fell into" a particular field. These accounts, with their commensurate emphasis on research, provided a fascinating glimpse into the growth that occurred while in college, especially for those who for the first time in their lives were experiencing an opportunity to learn for themselves. For the participants, college was not about regurgitating a classroom or textbook lesson; rather, it was about discovering the thrill of learning and the discovery of knowledge. For Edith, a first-generation student who was hungry to learn, exclaimed illustratively that college was "just like getting through the best water park in the world!"

College provided a critical turning point for the participants' discovery of self-knowledge, which was influenced to a great extent on their choice of major. Their disciplinary focus had an especially salient impact on how they viewed themselves, even if for some, the choice seemed unintentional or uninformed. Christine, who majored in economics, stated somewhat blandly:

> *I was always interested in math but I also liked reading and I liked English. I was also*
>
> *interested in social policy issues, so I tried economics thinking correctly that it was at the*

intersections of these things. It uses a lot of math but it's very policy oriented and involves reading and verbal skills, so it was a good fit.

In contrast, Sandra passionately declared how fundamental the study of psychology was to her formation of self-identity as an academic, and also how she viewed the world:

I think certainly the study of psychology made me think differently, certainly probably reinforced some of the thoughts I already had. But it definitely turned my thinking around. My whole interest in social psychology became, I guess a set of assumptions that was challenged for me was that people aren't just born into who they become. There's a lot of impact that the environment has on the way people develop and think. So that's probably on one level a set of assumptions I had about human nature that got challenged.

Sandra expressed genuine excitement about psychology, and how her choice of academic major transformed the ways in which she viewed human beings and their actions. In the process of understanding how other people evolved and developed, she demonstrated how she evolved as well. Her passion for college, and for her major in particular, mirrored what Debra described:

I think that academically it was just really a wonderful place to be in a lot of ways. In my first semester I actually thought I was going to do premed. When I took biology, it was taught by somebody who it really should've retired probably about ten years before he did and it was just a pretty awful class in terms of being engaging. At the same time, I was taking a political science course just because I wanted to with somebody who became my advisor that was just a fantastic class. I think that my college experience says a whole lot about how much it matters, how good teachers are. I really became engaged by political science and by thinking about politics.

Both participants loved their college experience, but they felt especially drawn to their academic discipline, which for them provided the initial seeds of a future academic career. While Sandra and Debra explained how they were completely transformed and genuinely excited by their respective choices of a major, Christine explained how economics synthesized her diverse interests as a liberal arts student. For all three, who eventually became senior administrators at liberal arts colleges, the seeds of their academic futures germinated while as undergraduates. The commonality among all three participants is that they all described how they were beginning to integrate the knowledge that they were acquiring, and their level of engagement with their chosen field of study.

Academia felt revelatory to the participants, in that they began to understand that the classroom provided a place where they felt challenged, but they also began to see the presence of sexism in an academic context. Sandra's narrative exposed her awareness of androcentrism within the academy:

> I definitely thought about the gender piece. It was so male… as a student I did not have a single tenured or tenure track faculty member who was a female. I had a lab instructor who was a female and I had a lecturer for one course, a literature course and a one year person for a psychology class. Three classes in all the time I was here that were taught by women. And I did think about that at the time. It was strange that way. And it was such a different era. I remember being interviewed for a fellowship, a [named] fellowship on campus and I walk in to this room of professors and essentially their whole focus was on the fact that I was engaged and could I really be taken seriously with regard to going off to graduate school and really completing a graduate program since I was going to get married. And that was right on the table. They thought it was fun to be asking those

questions and I guess I understood why they were. Think about that now, my God, such a

different context.

Sandra's acknowledgment that she "did think about that at the time" reveals her emerging

understanding of gender and the sexism that she faced not only upon reflection, but while she

was experiencing it. She also was able to make clear meaning of the discrimintation within the

historical context of the 1970s. Another participant, Natalie, conveyed her own story of sexism at

an institution that had recently become coeducational:

And there were other things that would happen along the way… Because I was a math

major in a physics lab with a graduate male student. And I was using geometry because

of these geometric relationships and I knew about the math of course and it made me

faster in the lab. And he gave me a low grade on the basis that I was making it less hard.

And I said to him I'm actually using my knowledge that I've learned as a math major and

I'm doing all of these problems sets correctly. And I didn't agree with that. I could go on

and on. So I could just go on. There were quite a lot of things that would happen. He

could've done it to a male, I'm not attributing it to gender in that case but I do attribute a

lot of my dissatisfaction at [state university] to them just going coed. They weren't really

ready for women.

Both Sandra and Natalie acknowledged their understanding of unfair treatment by faculty

members, although their ability to attribute their experiences to sexism varied. Sandra declared

her recognition of the discrimination, while Natalie seemed less willing to blame it on her

identity as a woman. Nevertheless, they both were able to recall the specific instances when they

realized that, in the context of their academic identity, they were treated differently because of

their gender. Those points of recognition were critical in understanding the ways in which their

gender identity intersected with their academic identity. In both examples, the participants revealed how their experiences in college exposed the broader societal issue of gender discrimination at the same time that they were developing their intellectual identity.

Gender featured prominently in the participants' college experiences, as did socioeconomic class. Leslie described how she did not have a comparative understanding of her family's own circumstances until she arrived on her college's campus. On the very first day, she encountered a type of social class and privilege that had been completely unknown to her until then.

> *It was just a different world. I actually am grateful that I got to know it in that way, through the children of people whose parents held jobs that were not only well compensated but highly influential and from all walks of life. I often think had I gone to [state college], I don't think I would have really had that up close experience with what exactly money can actually buy. It was interesting right down to learning very quickly on the father / daughter weekend who gets invited to the President's cocktail party, the brunch, the lunch and the dinner and what that meant to some of the families who had been to dinner the year before and were only brunch this year. I had never encountered that world. So it sort of snaps your head back.*

Leslie acknowledged her feelings of being an outsider in the wealthier world of an elite women's college, but managed to place that experience in perspective: while it "snapped her head back," she was able to make meaning of the benefits. She relocated her feelings of exclusion into a sense of gratitude for her alma mater, in that she developed a greater understanding of her socioeconomic identity in comparison to her classmates. Leslie expressed the ways in which her social experience was an education in and of itself: it opened her eyes to the world of extreme

privilege. She further described the social stratification at her college, and the benefits of that experience:

> *But there was an active discussion about racial and ethnic diversity even then and this was in 1973. The discussion actually came not only from the diversity office on campus which existed but also from the more left-leaning parts of the student body. We raised those questions. We raised questions of women's leadership, women's authority and in fact, one of the big things that happened during my sophomore year was the college moved to outsource the housekeeping. It created an incredible coalition of people that basically had very little to do with one another on campus but we knew the people who cleaned our dorms. I don't know how to say this delicately but, some of my colleagues were used to having help and they knew the help. It really brought together people to really think about how to address the college on that, especially since these women worked in these positions, many of them held a job well into their 70's so their grandchildren could go to school for free because it was a benefit that they got there. I think the college itself, at least a part of the student body, was keyed into issues of socioeconomic inequality even then.*

Not only was Leslie drawn to activism, she described the coalescing effect it had for her and her peers – some of whom were raised in far more privileged circumstances. Similar to other participants, her experience highlighted the role and impact of historical context, but also of the undercurrents of power, position and privilege. She expressed a keen understanding of her socioeconomic location in college, and an awareness of what was taking place in the early 1970s with respect to student activism. At the same time, Leslie failed to acknowledge the racial

inequities that existed, thereby illustrating Black feminists' claims of exclusion within the

feminist movement in that same time period (Collins, 1986).

In the process of self-discovery, the participants spoke about the emergence in college of

their intersecting identities. Here, Debra explains the beginnings of her scholarly awakening with

her emerging identity as a lesbian:

> *Socially, college was kind of hard. It was a period in my life when I think I was trying to*
>
> *figure out identity issues. Now I identify as a lesbian. Then, I don't think I really had a*
>
> *clear sense of identity. The other thing that is sort of odd about [small college] is the*
>
> *dorms. One rumor is that the dorms were built to be like a hotel so that when the College*
>
> *failed it could become a hotel. They all were very separate. There were no common*
>
> *hallways or things like that that lots of research suggests that these were the kinds of*
>
> *things that even if people don't initially like them, help you to build connections. I think*
>
> *that really during college I just focused much more on what I was doing academically.*

Debra's story portrayed how she struggled in college, and the social isolation she felt. She

described how she felt different, or unconnected, from the other undergraduates because she did

not yet understand a salient aspect of her identity. Her identity as a lesbian was still undergoing

formation through multiple forms of meaning-making (Abes & Jones, 2004). And, her specific

mention of how her dormitory was laid out provides a powerful reminder to college

administrators of the importance of residential spaces in creating a sense of belonging.

According to Abes, Jones and McEwen (2007), identity construction occurs as the result of a

multiplicity of experiences, and dimensions of identity must be seen in relation to one another.

Both Leslie and Debra discussed the ways in which they were figuring out who they were,

despite the challenges they experienced in college. Whether in reconciling socioeconomic

privilege or understanding sexual identity, the participants revealed that college was when their sense of identity, both personal and academic, began to emerge.

Support in College

For virtually all of the participants, there was an individual or group of individuals in college who played a pivotal role in their educational attainment and overall development of self-knowledge. Faculty members were particularly influential. Several leaders, without direct questioning by the researcher regarding mentoring, shared examples of a conversation, even a brief interaction, with faculty that gave them confidence about their intellectual skills and abilities. For example, Edith relayed the following:

> *At one point I took a math class and a professor called me in and told me how incredibly smart I was. And I think that was the first time I'd had a professor, a teacher say that since grade school and told me that it was fine if I got married but he hoped I didn't just do that that I had something else to contribute. That was a very counter-narrative to what I had been raised with. So that was pretty exciting.*

Until that conversation with her faculty member, Edith had internalized the sexist attitudes that pervaded her upbringing, which had dissuaded her from furthering her education. Her father, as well as her teachers, had inculcated in her the idea that women were destined for marriage and children - and not a professional career. Edith described the specific, pivotal moment when a professor encouraged her intellectual aspirations, and her entire future appeared to change in that moment. Other participants spoke of a faculty member who served a similarly influential role. Christine spoke of how her first advisor, who also happened to be her college's dean of faculty influenced her in direct and indirect ways:

Of course, I didn't know who she was. Although I knew she was an important person because she was Dean of the Faculty at the time. They divided up the incoming first-years among the class deans and I guess she helped out with that. I just remember having the sense that oh, **I need to sit up straight.** *She encouraged me to go on with math. I remember this memory of somewhere in that conversation her saying something to the effect of, and when you get your PhD, and I remember thinking what? I didn't really know what a PhD was. She really set the tone in five minutes that we're all about academic achievement and you're part of it and of course I liked that. [emphasis added]*

During first-year orientation, Christine began to develop her specific identity as an academic. Her narrative provided another powerful example of an interaction with a faculty advisor that made a profound, even life-altering, difference in her life. Like Edith, Christine's advisor set a high bar of achievement for a bright young woman who until then did not even know, much less consider, the possibility of earning a PhD. That Christine gravitated to the male-dominated fields of math and economics made the advisor's influence even more significant. Similarly, Sandra credits how one faculty relationship in her junior year set her on the trajectory of an academic scholar to the college presidency:

[T]he primary reason why I am, where I am really started with a class I took my first year, didn't want to take it, College 101, taking it for requirements and really it was there that I met the person who became my mentor, a faculty member who kind of turned me onto an area, a discipline that I didn't know much about and I took another course and ended up holding on to that as a major… I will never forget a pivotal moment my junior year when he said [Sandra], you really should go to graduate school and I kind of looked at him and said why would I want to do that kind of thing? I really hadn't thought about

*it and he was very encouraging, told me what I would need to do. He told me to go think about it. I came back that fall and said okay, I want to do this. Help me out. So I did an independent study with him. He helped me with letters of recommendation and gave me advice on where to apply to graduate school and that just set me on my entire career… I realized being an academic was probably the thing I wanted to do. And then, one thing led to another, you know once I got into academe, but really his influence was just tremendous when I think back on it. **You know, if he hadn't mentored me and sort of pushed me along the way, I don't know what I would have done but, I sure wouldn't be where I am.** [emphasis added]*

Like Christine, it took a faculty advisor to set high expectations for what Sandra could achieve - higher expectations than what she had set for herself. Sandra articulated how the faculty member exposed the possibility of a future academic career, thereby providing the necessary encouragement, and then performing the necessary tactical steps by writing recommendation letters and giving concrete advice. Consistent with research on the impact of faculty on the student experience (Astin, 1993; Light, 2001; Terenzini & Pascarella, 2005), the support that Sandra's advisor provided was both psychological and practical, and pushed her to aim higher than what she initially thought possible. Sandra went on to explain how critical the early encouragement she received from her college faculty was to her future role as an academic leader:

I think I had much lower aspirations than others had for me. That encouragement I got sort of pushed myself beyond where I had expected to go was, I would say, pivotal. That was not just from my mentor, but from a series of faculty. Faculty would sit down and

say, you know, what are you thinking about? You really have the potential to do some

important things.

Sandra clearly connected her professional and academic success to the push she received from her faculty members. In both quotes, her use of the word "pivotal" is notable. Her mentor and other faculty members provided what was essentially a fulcrum for her professional identity, and she credited them with providing the tipping point in her construction of self as an academic. In her own research of women presidents, Madsen (2008) also found that all of her participants could identify at least one individual who had a significant impact on their lives and careers. She posited that "[w]omen don't always know their greatest gifts until someone tells them… Influential people helped them understand themselves" (p.113). While the persona and type of mentoring varied, my participants consistently credited the influence of key individuals who supported and encouraged them beginning with their time as college students. The participants demonstrated the ways in which a supportive and affirming academic community is particularly critical for women college students, who often struggle with personal high achievement and the ways they have been socialized to please others. In her reflections of the role of gender in the classroom, Gallos (1995) highlighted "the importance of relationships and an ethic of caring, not as a substitute for accomplishment and rational discourse, but as an essential component" (p.103). The ethic of caring from faculty emerged in each of Edith, Christine and Sandra's stories, demonstrating the power it had in redirecting their paths and their ability to overcome sexist expectations that they had experienced heretofore. Here Edith provided another powerful story about how faculty actively set her on a different path than what she had embarked on:

I should also talk about gender a bit because that was, particularly given my age of

almost 60, that was a profound experience. So when I majored in religion, the religion

faculty decided I think quite consciously that I would be a great test case to go to

ordination and not to religious education and they never really gave me the option. They

never told me that you could get an academic masters and that I could become a

religious educator. They really predisposed me to seek ordination and to become a

minister. And so I was very engaged in that. I was the only woman in my college doing

that. When I went to seminary, there were a handful of others but you know we had very

difficult experiences so I very early got exposed to feminism and to issues of gender. And

then went on to become a feminist theologian and wrote several books in the field.

Without her faculty's encouragement, Edith might have not pursued the PhD at all. By making

an Edith a "test case," rejecting the convention for women students, they challenged the

gendered norms of the time – and she knew it. Her faculty's encouragement that she pursue the

ministry instead of religious education provided a pragmatic and life-altering influence on her

future career as an academic. Edith's narrative also explicated how that experience exposed her

to feminism, both as a backdrop for understanding how and why her faculty had helped her, but

as a framing of her experience. Like Sandra, she benefited from precisely the supportive

conditions for women that Gallos describes as necessary for success in the academy. Their

faculty demonstrated an active interest in supporting them, and laying bare what opportunities

were possible, especially at a time when women were actively excluded from advancement

opportunities.

In contrast to Sandra's and Edith's pragmatic characterization of the practical support and

encouragement they received from their faculty, Jennifer's narrative of faculty mentoring and

engagement was more philosophical:

And I think that's what… and the mentoring, the willingness to engage with me around those topics, right? It wasn't ever kind of where they tell me things, like speak with your voice and find the questions that really matter to you and pursue those. And don't ever put up with the situation that you really, that makes you miserable just in the interest of whatever the next step in your career is… And I think my debt to these people is beyond measure. And their willingness to engage with someone who knew so much less around the deep questions. That to me is the mentoring. And a willingness to really let me come to my own, you know find my own voice. These were not people who wanted me to think in the way that they thought. They didn't at all. And I was really grateful for that.

Jennifer's faculty encouraged her to find and use her voice, and to make career choices that she finds personally fulfilling, highlighting a critical dimension of mentoring. Taken together, the participant stories are consistent with what Ford (2016) argued as key elements to a successful mentoring relationship, which at its best:

> implies an active relationship in which the mentor makes a personal investment in the success of the mentee. Mentors professionally socialize mentees in the norms and customs of the organization, share wisdom and lessons of experience, provide encouragement and critical feedback, and often facilitate the mentee's career by providing appropriate opportunities to take on leadership roles or encourage career progression in other ways (p. 506).

Ford's definition of mentorship aptly frames the participants' stories, which in turn provide texture to Ford's definition, in terms of the faculty members' encouragement and investment in their success. The participants' faculty mentors encouraged their intellectual and personal development, in addition to their emerging academic identity, while in college. As the participants demonstrated, this type of support is critical in nurturing women's aspirations and in overcoming lower expectations they may have set for themselves.

The self-discovery process described by the participants occurred in other arenas and interactions while in college. Some participants described their participation in co-curricular experiences, and three (Sandra, Martha and Wendy) specifically mentioned their involvement in sorority life. All three cited how these were not only favorable, but transformative, experiences for them during their college years. Martha described the ways in which sorority life was pivotal to her understanding of leadership:

> *I think the camaraderie and learning and I really think that it's hard to … maybe not common knowledge but at that time the women in these highly-performing sororities were really remarkable. They were competitive, they were career-oriented, they were gracious, they were beautiful. We dined every night with china and silver, we learned manners, we learned to speak publicly, we learned to lead, we learned about ethics and values and I think I cannot underestimate how much that changed my … I would call presentation of self. I had a lot of a sense of myself because my mother was a great role model but when I met these outstanding, incredible women, I think it raised my own expectations for myself. Because I was really in the company of really extraordinary women. So maybe that's where it sort of all began. If my mother launched me as someone who knew how to speak and knew how to present herself, I refined that in this sorority.*

In describing her sorority experience, Martha acknowledged the difference in historical location, during an era when opportunities for leadership in college were less available for women. Her description of sorority life, while elitist in its references to china and silver, also conveyed the specific and pivotal ways in which she developed her sense of self, or "self presentation." Based on her interactions with "really extraordinary" women, Martha began to imagine opportunities beyond the expectations set by her parents that she be a teacher. She described how in that

environment, she was exposed to the possibility of leadership. While not as acclamatory as Martha's description, Wendy cited her own sorority membership as providing an important space in contributing to her personal growth and development:

I actually and I don't confess this very often but since this is private I was actually in a sorority. It was a good time to be in one because we didn't really take it very seriously. And it was good for me as an only child again with older parents to really have to interact with people on a daily basis. So I think that was good for me.

Like Martha, Wendy attributed the personal interactions she had with the other women in her sorority as highly beneficial. However, while Wendy wished to acknowledge the role her association with a sorority played in her personal growth, she admitted that she does not openly discuss that affiliation, which I assumed (and wish I had probed further) was due to the exclusionary reputation and discriminatory history of greek life on college campuses. Martha addressed this concern more pointedly. In spite of a glowing description of her own sorority experience, and in response to a question about what challenges she faced in college, Martha acknowledged the limitations of sorority life and racism that took place during the 1960s civil rights era:

Well I think the biggest challenge was cultural. This was the 60s. I was a college student when both Martin Luther King was assassinated. I was a high school senior when Jack Kennedy was assassinated, or I was in high school, I just can't remember the class. I can remember the day, but I can't remember what class I was in. This was the beginning of the Vietnamese war protests and we began to become extremely conscious of what selectivity meant in our sorority based on race and ethnicity. So my proudest moment is that we, it's called rush, we rushed a Jewish woman who became my little sister,

otherwise known as a mentee. But we did not crack the race barrier. So near the end of

my college years I and a few of my friends really considered resigning from the fraternity

in sort of protest to what we thought were racial limitations. I'm really glad I didn't

because I think again it was a sign of the times in the sorority and most sororities, all

sororities, have come to understand the value of diversity but at that time it was tough.

At the same time that Martha describes the benefits of her sorority experience, she admits that

there were uncomfortable discriminatory aspects. In recounting what occurred, she also

rationalizes the racism within an historical context ("it was a sign of the times"), demonstrating

the presence of sociological imagination by locating herself – and the organization of which she

was a part – in that time period (Mills 1959). Martha reconciled the racist attitudes and practices

by placing them in an historical compartment, allowing her to clarify the benefits of sorority life

when considered in the context of place and location.

In virtually all of their narratives, an individual or smaller community of supportive

individuals proved critical in revealing opportunities for the participants, and exposing the

possibility of their advancement in ways they might not have considered previously. In college,

they negotiated their original sense of self, based on what others (especially family members)

had told them, with new possibilities presented by faculty members and peers. Wherever the

support originated, the narratives reveal the extent to which, as Wentworth and Peterson's (2001)

research on first-generation college women noted, "How heavily other people are involved in

offering alternatives to one's current identity" (p.18).

Influences and Points of Recognition in Graduate School

For several participants, the influence and presence of female peers became pivotal in graduate school. During this time, their awareness grew with respect to the role and place of gender in the academy, as Alice described here:

Some of the junior, more junior faculty in the Department hung out with the graduate students a little bit. I wasn't as close to them as some of the guys who talked to them, there were even, even in English there were fewer women in the graduate department. There were I guess about four of us women in the program who spent a lot of time with each other, shared some of the seminar classes. So I would say the students were the main support there.

Alice described both how "the guys" connected with the faculty in the department, and the ways in which women provided support and encouragement to one another. In so doing, she sets up the gender binary that she experienced, thereby revealing the fraught nature of graduate school for the participants. They demonstrated their increased awareness and sensitivity to gender discrimination – or the instances were simply more prevalent than in college – both in and out of the classroom.

Since graduate school represented a critical stage of identity development, as the participants' solidified their standing as academics, the discriminatory aspects seemed shocking at times. In contrast to their undergraduate experiences, several participants described blatantly sexist attitudes and treatment. Christine described the contrast between the empowering environment she enjoyed at her all-women's college, in contrast to what she encountered at a prestigious Research I university:

It was a pretty macho environment. They liked to take each other down in seminars and show that they're smarter than each other. At the same time, there were certainly people who I respect greatly and were kind and respectful. My dissertation advisor was a really wonderful person and I like a lot. I think that moment was the moment that my [women's college] background helped me more than anything else… I had that 'don't shrink from the challenge' feeling that I had gotten [in college]. It was definitely helpful. In my class there were nine women. One was from Wellesley, one was from Smith and me. One of the professors actually said to me and the one from Smith who is still a very, very close friend of mine, he said, oh you know you girls who are from the women's colleges, you're never our smartest students but you always finish so we like taking you. We were like okay, thanks, but we'll take it. Actually we aren't the superstars but that's okay, we didn't go on to get jobs at MIT but we're perfectly happy going to liberal arts colleges. But we finished. Even though it was said in a way that would curl people's hair it was actually true.

Differentiating between those who would go on to teach at Research 1 universities versus liberal arts colleges seemed acceptable to Christine, since she appeared to internalize the differential expectation that the faculty member expressed. While her attitudes and opinions may very well be informed by the fact that she herself pursued a career at a liberal arts college, she clearly experienced sexist behavior from the faculty member, and expressed a type of resignation or even acceptance of his statements. Another, more positive experience was conveyed by Natalie, who also acknowledged the lack of diversity in her law school during the late 1960s, especially as one of very few women:

When I went to law school there were three or four women in the third year class. Fewer than 10 in the second year class, and I believe when I graduated we had 11 women in my class of 179. [OC: She says all of this reflectively] So there were fewer than 20 women in the law school, say 3 times 180 and there were no women faculty. There were no faculty of color either. I mean it was a White male institution. The student body was national, and very bright. And I was in law school and I finished college also during the Vietnam War so we also had returning vets and some who hadn't gone to Vietnam. So there's a lot of concern by those who hadn't got called up that they'd be called up and so on. It was a very socially active time at the law school though. And they were reasonably ready for women. I can remember a few instances in the classroom where some of us felt ticked off or we had to role-play in a particular way. But all in all, the faculty was extraordinarily supportive. I never felt discriminated against. As I said there were a few cases in the classroom where there's a little role modeling, with some of the examples that they would give that were very stereotypical of women, which is annoying. But I'd finally gotten to the top of the pyramid where there were a lot of people who were really smart and I decided I needed to be challenged intellectually. The faculty were really smart and it was great. When I left it was a wonderful experience and I got great support in my job searches from male faculty, male mentors there. So I felt very fortunate when there.

While Natalie expressed gratitude to her male faculty mentors, she also placed her law school experience in an historical context, thereby providing an explanation of why any sexism may have occurred. She conveyed her sense that she was not discriminated against, despite the behavior exhibited by some of her faculty. Any sexism was relayed as simply a natural part of her story ("relative to much of society at that time period"), and therefore less as personally

directed towards her. Both Christine and Natalie performed precisely the type of "discursive disjunction" that Chase (1995) describes in her own research on women school superintendents. At the same time that the participants were describing the sexism, they chose to rationalize the experiences rather than confronting or naming what occurred. For Christine and Natalie, the way to rationalize, or even *excuse* the experiences, was by placing them within a different time period, as something that tended to happen several decades ago. Despite the challenges they faced in graduate school, they waved them away as issues that they faced, but were simply an artifact of the 1960s and 70s. They made meaning by choosing to focus on the positive aspects, and what mattered was they had made it through.

Two participants relayed specific instances of sexism in graduate school, and demonstrated different and contrasting techniques for making meaning of those experiences. Alice's experience with her dissertation advisor crossed the line from sexist attitudes to predatory behavior. She recounted how she was forced to fend off his advances:

> *Well you know you can't really, you still have to get approved for your dissertation from this person! So I was just sort of, I would find myself occupied in other ways a lot and I would sort of, you know, only say yes to going to something if I knew there was going to be other people around and mostly I managed that pretty well. I sort of had to put him off more directly one evening after some event. So you know, as I said he wasn't pursuing me vehemently or anything that you know. It wasn't like I had to slap him down but there was that kind of, you know … you know how that goes, that not quite spoken discomfort on all sides.*

In relating this incident, Alice's voice trailed off as she reflected on what had occurred. Since she readily employed humor, and laughed easily at many times during our two interviews, the

modulation of her voice was almost unnerving. The narrative in and of itself was shocking, but *how* she told her story was equally disconcerting. Her narrative authority appeared to diminish as her "footing," or authority, in the conversation shifted (Goffman, 2001). Fueled by her narrative of the direct harassment that she experienced, Alice then characterized the larger systemic concern about the academy, given her personal experiences with her advisor as well as the competition she endured with a fellow graduate school classmate:

> *You know, those two experiences, neither of which were you know harmful to me or enormously traumatic to deal with but I have to say those two experiences really put me off of academia for a while. I didn't like the competitive, the cutthroat, you know there was no sense of collaboration, no sense of "gee, what do you think about this?" It was all I've got to get this to my credit and I just really didn't like that at all. And then the whole kind of sleazy gender thing, [she makes a disgusted sound like "ick"], you know?*

In her retelling, she attempts to soften what happened despite the fact that they almost derailed her academic career. In fact, Alice took some time off from academia before electing eventually to return and pursue her career. She managed to regroup. She too (like Christine and Natalie) rationalized her experiences by focusing on the fact that she got through *despite* them. Another participant, Elaine, described the generally sexist attitudes in her graduate school, ending with a specific encounter with her department chair:

> *Oh my God! The old guys were so sexist it was laughable. I can't give you anecdotes but I can absolutely say that the atmosphere was not friendly to women… when I told my, our department chair, that I couldn't teach summer school one summer, I told him I was going away. He asked where are you going? I said, I'm going to Greece. He said, oh another starving graduate student. I said actually it's my honeymoon, I'm getting*

married. He said oh great, you're going to quit the program. And I said, if I do quit the

program it's not going to be because I got married. He said no it's going to be because

you got pregnant. I mean, can you imagine?!

While Elaine clearly understood and acknowledged the behaviors as shockingly sexist, she

employed humor in telling her story. In contrast to Alice, whose voice faltered, Elaine's voice

became animated as she relayed her experience. With the benefit of time and distance, she

readily described her graduate school environment as "not friendly to women," ending the telling

of her sexist anecdote with "I mean, can you imagine?!" thereby sharing her sense of outrage

with the researcher. Both participants, albeit using different discursive techniques, acknowledged

how the academy presented barriers to women in more overt ways. While they managed to

eventually overcome the barriers, Elaine and Alice demonstrated the power of those specific

memories in characterizing, and to a large extent rationalizing, their overall experiences.

In graduate school, the participants' sense of gender identity in relation to the structure of

the academy, and the intersections of other, overlapping identities, began to take shape. For

Debra, graduate school provided an opportunity to connect her personal identity with her

scholarly identity, beginning with her doctoral dissertation:

> *Debra: My dissertation was looking at liberalism in the family. I have to think about*
>
> *exactly what my dissertation was on. It was really looking at liberalism child rearing in*
>
> *the ways in which liberal approaches to family created gender roles.*
>
> *MB: Why was that topic appealing?*
>
> *Debra: Hard to say. I mean it is kind of just an interesting topic. I don't know. Because I*
>
> *think that really trying to think about how private life influences politics is first of all*
>
> *something that I think that if you go back in political theory people did that all the time.*

Probably up until liberalism really became dominant although ironically John Locke wrote a book about how to raise kids. I think that it was interesting to me in part just because in political theory I think that that connection and the importance of that connection had really disappeared for a number of years. There was that kind of intellectual element but as part of what I was doing in graduate school was connecting my own life to my intellectual life. I think there are fairly clear parallels there in thinking about public and private life.

MB: Can you say more about what those parallels are?

Debra: Yeah. I think that it is easy enough to see one's self as having a private life that is completely separate from work life even necessarily the way you're seen publicly. But I think that probably you really need to bring those things together in some ways in order to be happy.

In Debra's description of the ways in which her identity was beginning to coalesce around her identity as an academic, her scholarly interests in family and politics, and the confluence of those identities, I was struck by the connection she made with that linkage to happiness. Perhaps unknowingly, she appeared to understand the critical nature of identity recognition and integration (Belenky, et al., 1997). Debra expressed the realization that connecting her private and professional lives enhanced the opportunity for fulfilment. For her, graduate school, and political science in particular, provided the point of recognition for that connection. Wendy also spoke with authority about the intersection of her gender identity and her own academic discipline:

I think it took me into a very good place. As I said earlier, I grew up in a generation of women that were trying to find our voice. And I think doing the literary study of women

doing exactly the same thing, and how we have always spoken or particularly in that

generation, spoken between the lines. You have to learn how to read the text to find out

what the subtexts really are. And I think I found that had been something that sort of in a

way, I had been living my own life. In a particularly male-dominated culture, a male

dominated profession. So I think it was, yes it was an exploration for me to find my own

strength in my own voice in that.

Wendy realized the critical role that her emerging academic identity played in finding her own

voice, and the strength she was able to derive from it – especially in a field with few women. She

explained how her emergence of self intersected with her growing confidence as an academic.

Debra, who earlier is quoted as having in college tried to separate her academic pursuits from her

sexual identity as lesbian, described a similar realization as she made the shift in graduate school

to connect her intellectual and personal development:

In [graduate school], I probably went through about three years where I was fairly

depressed and probably studying psychoanalysis doesn't help with that. But nonetheless I

think that I separated, in fairly strong ways, my own identity and my intellectual life for a

long time. I think some of what it helped me to do was to bring them together and to

really start thinking about myself as kind of an embodied human being with emotions,

which I don't think I had done very well up until that point.

Debra's attempts to separate her personal sense of self from her intellectual identity proved

impossible. As she discovered, the two are intertwined. Consistent with Belenky, et al.'s (1997)

"constructed knowers," Debra rose to a "new way of thinking" once she managed to integrate her

intellectual identity with her sense of self as "kind of an embodied human being with emotions,"

thereby encompassing a more total sense of self and identity. In conveying these points of

recognition that occured in graduate school, the participants also demonstrated their attempts to find their voice, and to reconcile who they were as women with the structural realities of academe. Jennifer's quote at the beginning of this dissertation demonstrated her initial understanding of what she would be confronting as a woman in the academy. Issues around how the impact of the tenure process on women's ability to have children and the challenges of two-career academic couples suddenly became evident. Jennifer, Wendy and Debra described key points of recognition that forced them to begin to reconcile their professional aspirations with the realities of the academy. As outsiders, they began to understand the enactment of gender within the institutional domain (Collins, 1986; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Significance of Era

The generation in which the participants grew up emerged as a strong backdrop in their growth as academics, including the sexism they experienced and how they reacted or responded to it. For those who grew up in the 1960s and 70s, the women faced overt barriers, even restrictions, and suffered from a lack of women role models who had were able to achieve professional success. In order to achieve the professional accomplishments they did, several leaders (including Edith, Martha and Wendy) actively fought against societal and family expectations of what were expected of women during that time. In the 1980s, societal norms and expectations for professional women began to improve, with sexism being less overt or at least socially acceptable (Chase, 1995). Through their narratives, my participants demonstrated the attitudinal shifts that were underway, depending on the era in which they were raised, and when they attended college and graduate school.

One participant, Wendy, who grew up in the 1960s, outwardly acknowledged the generational change that was occurring:

[My parents] were supportive of my going to college, very supportive. They funded my

college education. I think my father really thought I was going to go to college, get

married to the local dentist, settle down about two blocks away and have a bunch of kids

for him to play with. And it didn't quite work out that way... I think like many of my

generation it was a rather bewildering time. We were caught right between the role

models of our parents coming out of the generation of the second World War where it

was expected and right at the time when women were beginning to think outside the box.

I knew that I wanted to have some kind of a career I think but I wasn't quite sure what it

was going to be. And yet at the same time I felt that pull toward, that everybody gets

married. I just never had that mental image of me marrying the local dentist and then

living two blocks away with a passel of kids because I couldn't figure out what I would be

doing with my life. So I know a lot of us who went to college in the late 60's and early

70's went through that, a very similar, this is the model, this is model I've seen in my

household. The expectations are always there that you're going to get married and have

a family and a lot of us just weren't buying into it but didn't really have a lot of other role

models to see what we did want to do.

Caught between generations, Wendy was chafing at the expectations placed on women and the

lack of older role models. For her, the time period created a lack of clarity, leading to a sense of

bewilderment and a certain anxiety of "what then?" The era of her upbringing was a critical

component to her development of identity, but not all participants had the same experience –

even if they were raised in the same time period – thereby revealing the complexity of individual

narratives. Natalie, who also grew up in a traditional household during a similar time as Wendy,

received a different set of messages:

I grew up in [a southern state]. My father was a high school principal in the school system so I grew up around K-12 education. It never occurred to me not to go to college so I think it was just an assumption in growing up that one went to college. So I had education in my family but not higher education except that when I was very young, I had a vague remembrance, memories of living in [flagship college town] while my father was in graduate school. My mother was a stay-at-home mother the entire time so she was totally dedicated to her only child in her way, right? And so my father gave me their professional example I would say.

Despite the generational similarities, Natalie expressed less conflict about her parents' expectations. While Wendy did not feel that she had a female role model for pursuing a career, Natalie looked to her father for her "professional example" at the same time her mother demonstrated a total dedication to her only child. This was different from Wendy, who even though they supported her education, her parents anticipated that she would spend her life focused on raising a family instead of a career. The experiences of both participants demonstrate the influence and intersection of generation and families in shaping their educational pursuits, and the ways in which they made meaning of those experiences.

Once Natalie left home to attend the flagship campus in her state as a member of the first class of women, she encountered a new set of obstacles at the university:

I was enticed in my own head, how a young woman in [southern state] finally gets to go to [flagship campus]. So I was admitted to several other places in the state but there was this big draw, like you're going to be in the special class of women, pioneering so to speak. And I didn't really know any women who had gone to [flagship campus] as freshmen… So most of us were in one residence hall, and I did not find [flagship campus]

appealing my first year either particularly intellectually or socially. On the intellectual side as you can imagine if you put a quota on women, so on average we were a lot smarter than the men in the class. So you can live with that but socially that's awkward too. And secondly I found my courses to be a wide array of very good to so-so. And thirdly, and most importantly, I decided pretty quickly that they weren't really ready for women. I mean they had admitted women but it was still a very male campus by demographics than what they were accustomed to.

So when you went in to see your advisor, they weren't really that inspiring about what women could achieve. So I talked to my parents about it and again they were always supporting me so I applied to the seven sisters and I got into… I didn't get into Radcliffe but I think I got into all the others to which I applied. So that became my option, to transfer out. And by that time I had more time to think about it and I had a lot of advanced placements. So I thought, being a little risk-averse at this point, I could just finish here in three years, and make the best of it, and then go on. Rather than transferring because it would slow me down and I would've had another unknown quantity and I was being risk-averse.

So I stayed and instead of transferring out I finished in three years. So I have admiration for the University. I'm sure they must be better with their women now than they were then. And you have to remember that this was the era of when women couldn't apply for the Rhodes, I mean the list just went on. They weren't sort of thinking about… oh, well, you could apply for a Marshall. No one told me I could apply for a Marshall. I mean they

were just terrible at advising and had I gone on to Smith or Wellesley I'm sure they

would've told me you would, you could've applied for Marshall. It just wasn't, the

alignment was not good.

In contrast to parents who "were always supporting" her, her advisor was not "really that inspiring about what women could achieve." Even as she wrestled with the decision to transfer due to the outright sexism she experienced from attending a college that had not yet adjusted to women, she felt the constancy of her parents' support and advice. During that time, Natalie expressed a clear awareness of the sexist attitudes about women and the ways in which the institution messaged their outsider status.

I was extraordinarily aware of it. That's why I applied to transfer. I mean I even had

incidents. I was a math major, and I went to the professor who was in charge of honors

theses, and he said who have you had, and pretty much escorted me out the door. So you

know I was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate in three years. I don't know if I was in the top but

I was the top few in my class so it was just that kind of thing. And there were other things

that would happen along the way. I just had no regard… I have another example.

Because I was a math major in a physics lab with a graduate male student. And I was

using geometry because of these geometric relationships and I knew about the math of

course and it made me faster in the lab. And he gave me a low grade on the basis that I

was making it less hard. And I said to him I'm actually using my knowledge that I've

learned as a math major and I'm doing all of these problems sets correctly. And I didn't

agree with that. I could go on and on. So I could just go on. There were quite a lot of

things that would happen. He could've done it to a male, I'm not attributing it to gender

in that case but I do attribute a lot of my dissatisfaction at Chapel Hill to them just going

coed. They weren't really ready for women. The other, some of my friends transferred in

their junior year to the other colleges and universities in the traditional sense.

Interestingly, Natalie provided a rationalization of how she was treated by her faculty and the institution as a whole, and professed reluctance to attribute the treatment as gender discrimination. She decided to remain and "stick with it" despite the structural impediments in place. Rather than attempt to fight the system, she chose to put her head down and finish her degree. Given Natalie's ambition and goals, and taking into account the era, her decision was understandable. What is surprising, however, is Natalie's open expression of admiration for the university. In relaying her story, with its acknowledgment of institutional impediment, she resisted labeling the university as sexist, nor did she hold the institution accountable for the treatment that she experienced.

Depending on the decade in which leaders attended college and graduate school, their narratives revealed the structures that were in place (or not) to support women at that time. This theme became apparent in previously relayed stories, such as Edith's depiction of the advice she received from her faculty members to pursue an academic career traditionally held by men. Other participants described the direct impact that the era played in shaping their identities as academics, especially in regards to the type of overt discrimination they faced in the classroom, for example Sylvia:

Well it was just, you know, it was just a world in the late 60s in which even though the

graduate program is about half men/half women, it was clear that the men were going on

for really good jobs. And the women were prize students but it really wasn't quite clear

what they were going to do and just the whole social environment was very much an

undergraduate focused, privileged male social environment.

She bluntly and concisely described the gender but also the socioeconomic dynamic that was taking place in her university. When I probed, Sylvia clarified that the unfriendly environment was more about the "cultural experience" rather than what occurred in the classroom. The experience that Sylvia described reflected the overall shifts that were taking place within the academy, and how the entrance of women highlighted the academic as well as the social inequities within the institution – "it was just a world in the late 60s." The profound changes that occurred in colleges and universities during the turbulence of the 1960s and 70s was a pervasive theme across many of the interviews. Another participant, Elaine, described the ways in which her experience at a Catholic women's college reflected what was taking place within the church during the post-Vatican II era:

> *The department chair was a nun… I even had a nun as an RA on my floor in the dorms. We had nuns on the floor. We had math professors, chemistry professors, my physics, philosophy of science professor, language, English. There were a lot of nuns. This was before the real revolution in the church. You know when I went in they were still wearing habits and veils and the whole 9 yards. And by the time I left they were in regular dresses and of course for me I was there and had to wear skirts the first two years and then by the time I graduated it was jeans. **So the whole world was changing in that time period.** Some of the nuns ended up leaving but mostly they stayed in. Today there are very few nuns left.[emphasis added]*

In that same time period, Patricia described what she was experiencing in the midst of the political unrest that was occurring:

> *The gender politics was quickly subsumed … it was still there – but I graduated in 1971, so that was a very interesting political time. With the Cambodian invasion, then Kent*

State happened, but that was after May Day where [Ivy League university] shut down

because we were anticipating protests which we had, the National Guard was there and

the Bobby Seale trial which was about the Black Panthers. So I guess I want to say is, it

was a very politically charged time but gender was only a part of it. I think that matters. I

mean for me I associate college with a lot of change you know and early 70s/late 60s

where gender was an important aspect but again it was the turbulence of the times were

about a lot of things.

While Elaine and Patricia described the gendered changes that were occurring, they both relayed the larger context of the times. As Patricia stated, "gender was only a part of it. I think that matters." As a means of understanding this larger historical context, I turned to Hall (2001), who explains Foucault's theories on discourse, emphasizing in particular the role of historical location in terms of understanding representation, representation, knowledge and truth. Like Mills (1959), Foucault argued that knowledge about topics was historically and culturally specific. There was discursive evidence of this theory in my participant conversations. Catherine and Patricia described how they were directly impacted by what was going on in the country and the world (and in Elaine's case, the Catholic church), and made certain that those larger circumstances were conveyed in their narratives, thereby adding richness and depth to their personal claims.

Several participants, like Natalie, were members of the first coeducational classes at elite universities. The newfound access to those institutions prompted some pointed reflections on those specific instances of discrimination, but the ways in which the participants made meaning of those experiences varied. For Patricia, she outwardly acknowledged the "strange gender politics" that were taking place:

Well it was like a fishbowl experience. I think many of the men, the [Ivy League]men there, the male students and professors were very happy about coeducation. And then I think there were other professors, particularly those who felt very awkward about it and I think had been at [the university] for quite a while and when it was all over they weren't quite sure how to deal with it. So they were a, you know it was like a fishbowl, it was very exciting, a very exciting time but some strange gender politics… I took a Milton class and there were two women in it and about 12 men. And there was a very uncomfortable dynamic because we would read from the text and I remember always having to read Eve in this and in a very kind of uncomfortable, gender inflected way. I mean obviously the reading could be gender inflected but it was a very strange vibe in that class and I think had more to do with the teacher than it had to do with any of the students.

When I probed Patricia on whether she sensed that the university overall had been ready to welcome women, she responded:

Um, not totally, I don't think they totally, for example they gave us the best dorms which the seniors have been coveting so that set up a certain sort of resentment right off the bat. I was in [residential college]. And again I think there were some pockets of resistance and I don't think they really understood the cultural change that would happen but that cultural change was gradual. Cause 9 to 1 [men to women] makes for some cultural change and I think now it's about 50-50… So I think it's a gradual reshaping of the culture. I don't think they were really prepared at the very beginning.

Although Julia described a remarkably similar experience as Patricia's, also as a member of the first coeducational class but at a different Ivy League university, she resisted assigning responsibility to the faculty for their role in making women feel unwelcome:

There was one faculty member who was an older gentleman and he had taught at [Ivy

League university] for many years and he was the only one I ever encountered who I

think just found it difficult to have women in his class. And I was pretty sympathetic to

that because I thought this is something completely different than what you've ever

experienced, you know. So there were, I was a classics major and classics was a pretty

small major and so I distinctly remember one class that I had with him, where they were

only I think five of us in the class. And two of us actually went on to become classics

faculty members and we were women, so of the five there were two women. And every

day when he came into class, he would greet us as, "good morning gentlemen." So that

was a little odd. [laughs] But that was just about it, and he was kind, I think he was just a

little befuddled by finding women in the classroom. But that was the only time I ever felt

anything a little odd from the faculty. They had really pushed for and were excited about

women arriving.

In Julia's case, she expressed a sympathetic understanding of the inequities and lack of

accommodations that their universities (especially faculty) made in adjusting to women students.

She chose not to be too critical of her faculty members. Patricia's narrative was more

circumspect, and less forgiving of the university's lack of preparation as well as the faculty's role

in accommodating women. However, both participants acknowledged the significant and

historical shift underway at those institutions at a particular period in time. They demonstrated

their ability "to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society"

(Mills, 1959, p.6). At the same time, they revealed the conflicted emotions they felt, feelings that

have persisted over several decades, regarding their entrance into those spaces and the degree to

which they felt welcomed, or not.

These participants attended college and graduate school in the 1960s and 70s. In my interviews I did not ask specifically how old the leaders were, which in hindsight would have been a helpful identity factor to mark. For Jennifer, who attended college and graduate school in the 1980s, the world had changed somewhat, but remnants and vestiges of all-male education were still present. She described how she was able to make sense of her experiences at a former all-male institution:

> *And for me that was feminist theory… But I felt that as a necessity to understanding my own life. You know, like, why do I feel a little bit like an outsider here? Nobody is doing anything to make me feel… I mean [Ivy League university] could not have been more welcoming or more supportive. That was not their intention so you come to a kind of structural analysis and you begin to think about the power of language and the weight of the past and just the sheer enormity of changing it. And that changed my perspective on how I think about everything, **how the past hinges on the present in ways we don't recognize and the importance of understanding**. So I think about the importance of understanding that and the dead weight of it all. [emphasis added]*

Jennifer also articulated how she employed feminist theory as a means to facilitate understanding and give shape to her experiences. Since she attended college and graduate school at a time in the 1980s when feminist scholarship was evolving, that construct proved highly useful. Jennifer also declared a sharp recognition of the structural weight that inhibits progress, and the interlocking aspects of history and the present – again demonstrating the historicization of discourse. Jennifer recognized and relayed the benefit of feminist theory in providing her with an additional epistemological lens from which to view her surroundings at an elite, formerly all-male institution, providing her with an opportunity to place that experience in context. In effect, she

created distance by reflecting on the impact of history and institutional structures, and melded that knowledge and understanding with her personal experience, thereby concluding that her outsider perspective benefited her understanding of the university overall – and of her place within it.

Conclusions

In discussing their personal histories, the participants revealed how they have made meaning of their upbringing and choices, including the importance of institutional context, history and era, and the initial barriers they experienced as women in the academy. As part of their growth process, several participants benefited from the support of faculty mentors, who encouraged (or sometimes urged) their pursuit of innovative intellectual paths, while others overcame examples of sexism and discrimination. Beginning in college, and continuing in graduate school, the participants were beginning to weave "their passions and intellectual life into some recognizable whole" (Belenky, et al., 1997, p.141). The participants' background narratives illuminate our understanding of their growth and early development as academics; the era in which they attended college and graduate school gave shape to their stories. They revealed the necessity of integrating their early development with their academic identity in order to form that more complete and connected whole. The narratives demonstrate the variety in the participants' personal stories, but also how they reconciled what they were experiencing. As Mills wrote, with some allowance for the gendered language, "why it is by means of the sociological imagination that men now hope to grasp what is going on in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society" (p.7). In telling their narratives, they described how they managed the complexity of their "outsider within" experiences, and how they created meaning of those

formative experiences at the intersection of biography and history. The next chapter focuses on the emergence of their identity as academic administrators and leaders.

Chapter Five: EMERGENCE OF IDENTITY AS LEADERS

"Every choice you make in part defines who you are" (Julia)

Numerous circumstantial factors contributed to the participants' emergence and development as leaders. The ways in which they discussed and described those experiences, especially in relation to their gender, proved illuminating about how they made meaning of what occurred in their lives. The participants relayed the multiple personal and professional considerations they took into account as they made career decisions. This chapter in particular focuses on the experiences of women in achieving leadership positions, the contextual and institutional factors involved, and the personal considerations they navigated in their leadership roles. Through their stories, the participants' identities emerged in overt as well as subtle ways. At times the participants directly acknowledged the specific role of gender in their leadership identity, and at other times the intersection of gender and leadership required my probing. I also address in this chapter how the women mediated the role of institutional context, culture and climate with their opportunities for professional growth and success – and at what points discriminatory attitudes and behaviors hindered those opportunities. The narratives that the participants shared conveyed their understanding of what considerations led to their ability to become leaders, and the extent to which their sense of history and place contributed to that development. Chase (2005) described how the use of narrative strategy "draws attention to the complexity within each woman's voice – to the various subject positions each woman takes up – as well as to diversity among women's voices because each woman's narrative is particular." Therefore, in studying the participants' talk about how they emerged as leaders, we gain a fuller understanding of the complexity and intersections of their lives, careers, and identity.

Early Career and Experiences with Systemic Barriers

Once the participants' achieved professional positions, their sense of themselves as academics solidified. They shared observations about what took place in their departments, the role of gender in departmental decision-making, and how they were impacted as women. Several shared how they were "schooled" by their colleagues. Alice, for example, was greatly influenced by a female departmental colleague who did not have a doctorate, but who nevertheless influenced her administrative leadership path:

> *So when I went to my first academic job after graduate school, there was a woman in the English department there who actually had a master's degree in history, but was teaching writing in the English department, who knows? She is a wonderful person. I still consider her a mentor and she was just very I don't know, sort of realistic and hard-bitten… She was a doer. I think my model of a path through academia is strongly influenced by her. She was always engaged in governance. She was the first associate dean on the [liberal arts college] campus, mentored me when I took over the department chairship, and still checks in with me and tries to see how things are going. She's really strong-minded, very brilliant. She's one of those women who was a little bit older than I, and finished her masters, started teaching, did a lot of adjunct work, had her kids, ended up in this department where she really established herself. She would never allow them to promote her to full professor because she didn't have a PhD. So even though she had given her life to this campus and they would've happily several times, the faculty would've promoted her. But she wouldn't allow them to because she said, no, I can't.*

Alice described her mentor in positive, admiring terms – and yet there was a dichotomy due to the systemic barriers that the mentor faced in her own career. The woman she greatly admired,

perhaps aspired to, chose not to advance to full professor because she lacked a PhD. Her narrative illustrated a period of time when women's progress in academia was even more limited than now, and reflected the persistent struggle that female academics face in taking on service responsibilities at the expense of their research agendas. In a recent study, female faculty members on average took on 0.6 hours *per week* of service in comparison to their male counterparts, and 1.4 more service activities per year (Guarino & Borden, 2017). Although the disparity in female workloads represents a systemic inequity that has persisted for decades, Alice does not place her colleague's situation in that larger context. Instead, she uses her mentor's story as more of an example of a woman who made an individual choice to not seek promotion.

When Julia, now a college president, participated in a great deal of service activities as a faculty member, a decision that ultimately played a role in her own unsuccessful bid for tenure and promotion. She described how she took on numerous administrative roles while focusing on her teaching, thereby impacting negatively her scholarship, and ultimately her tenure bid at an Ivy League university.

> *Then, I probably made a bad choice but you know in retrospect it hasn't turned out that way. But I was the first alumna appointed to the faculty of [Ivy League university]. And there were very few women, very few women on the faculty at that time, and I got very involved in administrative things. I was on the advisory committee to the president, I was on a lot of committees. And I just became very involved in the university, and I didn't really write. I don't know what I was thinking. [laughs] I was a great teacher, I had large classes. I was a very popular teacher but I wasn't really publishing at all. So, big surprise when my tenure decision came. I did not receive tenure, so I was right back on the market again.*

Julia's and Alice's experiences represent the struggle that women academics often face in taking on the "invisible work" of academe as described by Guarino and Borden (2017) in their research of female academics, as well as recent reports on the systemic concerns that hold back women and faculty of color (Johnson, 2017; June, 2018). Esther, a Black woman, provided another concrete example of this phenomenon. While serving as an associate dean, she worked over the summer to complete a project at the university, despite the fact that she was not being paid:

> *And [the president] said, you've been working all summer? You're not on that contract with us? We're not paying you? I said no. Then she said, ah! She said I can't believe that. We have to do something. To be honest with you, it did not cross my mind. It just wasn't my concern. My concern was that we had worked the previous year, revamping the center and doing a good job. If I didn't come in the summer then we would not be prepared for the incoming class and all of the gains that we've made would be lost. So I just didn't even think about it. And at first she said that got me thinking but I still didn't think anything more about it. I just went about my business.*

Through their stories, the participants revealed the ways in which gender inhibits faculty women's access to tenure and academic leadership opportunities when they assume a disproportionate share of service work. They even, as Esther recounted in her own story, take on work without proper compensation. The participants also demonstrated the complexity of individual situations within an established and male-dominated reward structure. As my participants explicated, women at times are unwittingly complicit in the discriminatory systems by assuming the invisible labor that can impede their progress toward advancement.

The Impact of Personal Considerations on Career Advancement

Starting when the participants embarked on their careers as faculty members, their personal and family circumstances played a strong role in determining which opportunities to pursue and when. Several described the challenge of a two-career household. When faced with transition opportunities, their personal lives, and especially the desire to remain with a spouse or partner, foregrounded a job search. Others noted that, given the academic job market, they were limited in their ability to seek positions in another geographic area. Martha, a chancellor of a large state system, vividly captured the challenge she faced early in her career:

> So I couldn't help myself, by the time I got my PhD four years later, I was ready to be an administrator, an academic administrator. But I had this little nubby problem. I was place bound and at that time, we had this phrase called a "place bound female scholar." I thought it was in a dictionary somewhere. I am not a woman or a whatever or whatever or a mother or a wife: I am a "place bound female scholar." Isn't that interesting? So as it turns out for the sake of my marriage, I stayed on at [state university] thinking that it would surely be obvious to these people that I was ready for tenure-track and this was just a little hiccup that I would be appointed as a what I think is called at [state university], an "administrative and professional appointee," which is a not so much, so not a tenure-track appointment. I did that for eight years until I realized that my peers who graduated with me and went off to Timbuktu were being assistant professors, associate professors. In the meantime, I was actually made director of undergraduate programs in the college which meant professors were reporting to me. So here was this immense irony that I was advancing on the administrative academic leadership track

actually running faculty members, hiring faculty members and I was not a faculty

member, and so on.

In her narrative, Martha recognized and highlighted the ways in which as a "place bound female scholar" she was prevented from advancing in her academic career. While she expressed a current understanding of the ways in which she was limited by institutional structures, she also acknowledged her naiveté. Martha asserted her narrative authority by acknowledging, without regret or lament, the intersection of her marital circumstances and personal choice with her career. She was actively "doing gender." Martha also evoked the lack of transparency in the tenure and promotion process: she assumed that the university would understand that she was ready for a tenure-track role. No one seemed to tell her otherwise. This lack of clarity and inconsistency in tenure processes can be a significant barrier for women's advancement in higher education, especially for women of color (Moses, 2009).

Another participant, Patricia, described how she and her husband addressed the two-career issue, by heading off (to use Martha's term) to "Timbuktu," a place that seemed like a foreign land to a woman raised in a large metropolitan city on the east coast.

So we went to the [large western university] to start our lives, which was a totally

unfamiliar place and my friends [on the east coast] ... I mean were we were both kind of

provincial easterners and our friends [back east] thought we were falling off the face of

the earth. But the opportunities for both of us to be at a university which is the flagship

university in the state and to be parts of departments where we actually really liked the

people and thought that they were building something. I mean already good or building

something, that was quite exciting. Those were examples of taking advantage of an

opportunity but at the beginning didn't seem like an opportunity. I think like, you know, it

was outside of our experience but the people I know who refused to leave [eastern state]

are no longer working in the profession. So again I think the gender part of it has to do

with being open to you know thinking about things you might not have thought or on your

track to begin with or whatever.

The inflection of gender is evident in both Martha's and Patricia's narratives. In both cases, they were faced with the choice to remain with their spouses, and whether to stay put or consider alternate options. For Martha, the decision was to become "a place bound female scholar," a limitation that she eventually overcame. Patricia, on the other hand, understood at the time that in electing to move to an entirely different part of the country, she was making a compromise for the sake of her and her husband's careers. Both acknowledged the sacrifices they made in those choices, albeit with a different situational lens, and the role of gender in their decision-making. An additional option for a two-career couple was to adopt a commuter relationship, which is what Esther and Julia did. Esther, a provost, lives in another state than her spouse:

He is also an academic… So yeah, I'm here in [small city] and he is still in [another

state]. But we actually manage that okay because I go to [the other state] every month

and he comes up here every month and we meet at different places because our children

are all grown now.

Esther stated that her situation was only manageable situation because their five children are grown, thereby acknowledging the role of family considerations. Julia, who does not have children, described how she found herself in the situation of explaining her marriage to the presidential search committee. She expressed how she and her husband were comfortable with a longstanding arrangement of living apart due to their disparate career choices. However, their commuter situation became a topic of consideration when she sought a college presidency:

I think they asked me about my marriage, you know how did we do commuting.

[Husband's name]and I now have been together for about 30 years and we've never lived

in the same place. So I just dismissed that. I said it just wasn't an issue and they didn't

seem bothered by that. That may have been, you know it was almost certainly inflected by

gender I guess.

In Julia's search process, she acknowledged the role that her marital status played and the way in which it intersected with gender, although unlike Martha, her admission ("I guess") was made somewhat reluctantly. Rather than acknowledging the illegal line of questioning by the search committee, Julia "dismissed" the concern by simply rejecting it. In her theoretical work on feminism and family research, Ferree (1990) described the "gendered conventions" that persist despite women's professional advancements because our gendered notions of work and family have not evolved. Julia's talk provided a specific example of the depth of those conventions. The committee asked the question, but she refuted it instead of recognizing the illegality and discrimination imbedded in the question. The gendered conventions will need to be upended in order to contest the structures and attitudes that create barriers to women's advancement.

The role of children emerged in other participant conversations. Several participants specifically alluded to their children while recounting pivotal professional decisions. For Sylvia, who was a single parent, childcare responsibilities were a major factor:

While you know when you're vice chancellor or provost, the number two person, people

are always approaching you asking if you want to be a candidate. I was a single parent

through much of my career and so I was always very, you know, conscious of my

responsibility to my kids. I actually didn't want to leave [state university] because I

> *thought the steadiness of being in one place was important to them. But when they were*
>
> *out of the house I started thinking about other opportunities.*

Like Martha, Sylvia was "place-bound," but for the reason that she did not wish to disrupt her children's lives. Sylvia highlighted the conscious decision-making process she underwent before considering upward advancement, and her concern about disrupting their lives. Given her circumstances, the pursuit of leadership opportunities was more about personal circumstances than professional interest. Another participant, Leslie, described concerns she had about taking a particular position due to the potential impact on her young daughter:

> *Well I had only been a VP for about a year and a half… There was not any of the toxic*
>
> *stuff that I had seen before. I thought that role was really horrible up close. Do I really*
>
> *want to do this? My daughter was very little. She was 17 months old and I remember*
>
> *saying to them, well I am not going to miss the stuff that's going on with [daughter's*
>
> *name]. [The president] said no you can figure that out, I am sure you can figure that out*
>
> *and he said really you will have to figure it out at some point. You may as well do it now.*
>
> *I just thought personally, I was not ready and I was not sure professionally I was ready.*

Leslie described how she tried to convince herself that she was not ready because of her daughter's age, but her (male) president advised her from a place of privilege "to figure it out" – thereby ignoring the very real concerns of the impact that a presidency would have on her family, and that the system required her to figure it out. The reality of Leslie's situation, as a woman with a young child, may very well have been different than what the president experienced as a man. Her lack of assurance was an impediment, but her personal considerations, like Sylvia, were at the heart of her hesitation. And the advice she received served to reinforce, rather than disrupt, the system of inequality – especially with respect to family care. The

participants demonstrated the overall and continuing concern that women face in managing

practical, familial concerns with their opportunities for advancement in the academy. The

concerns are reflected in the overall disparity between male and female presidents: 89% of men

have children, versus 74% of women, and 16% of men have altered their career for a

spouse/partner or parent, versus 32% of women (Johnson, 2017). As women in our society

continue to bear the brunt of family and childcare responsibilities, the imbalance of trying to

"figure it out" will remain.

The Circuitous and Serendipitous Path to Leadership

In narrating their progression, all of the participants described the circuitous manner in

which their career paths unfolded, as they moved from faculty member to administrator to senior

leader. With the benefit of hindsight, the women noted the seemingly minor decisions that

created stepping stones in their professional journey, and the ways in which unexpected

opportunities presented the chance for career advancement. In her own research on women

leaders in Australia and New Zealand, Fitzgerald (2014) also discovered a lack of intentionality

among her participants, finding that careers "are less predictable and increasingly disorderly"

and "tend to be patchwork and frequently marked by serendipities" (p. 57). With that in mind, an

important aspect of my research was exploring how the leaders had achieved their current

positions and what factors they had weighed in order to get there, in order to gain a deeper

understanding of the variety and depth of issues that women encounter over the course of their

academic careers.

Clearly, there is no single path to senior leadership, but for most of my participants, they

expressed surprise and occasional bemusement that they ever landed in leadership roles. For

many, it was not at all part of their consciousness, or much less their plan, until later in their

academic careers. Jennifer described her thoughts soon after becoming president of a small

liberal arts college: "Well it's kind of, you know I spent a lot of time wondering who would

make me president of their school, right? [laughs] Like what kind of insanity was that?!" Leslie,

a president of a community college, expressed:

> I think this is the best job in the world. I fought it for years. In fact, I am quoted in a
>
> dissertation from the early 90's of saying that if I ever look at about becoming a college
>
> president, I hope someone shoots me.

When I probed as to why Leslie originally thought the job looked horrible, she responded:

> I think I was working for someone who did it… I don't want to say not so well, but I
>
> would say awkwardly. There are some people who have this role who have never met a
>
> fight they didn't want to have and that was the case. So it just looked like one big long
>
> argument to me and it doesn't need to be.

Leslie's apprehension about pursuing a presidency is not uncommon, and is due at least in part to

ingrained, male-dominated conceptions of leadership. According to Freeman and Bourque

(2001), women are acculturated to a stereotypic leadership model that emphasizes hard-fought

power and transactional (i.e. "if you give me this, I will give you that") authority. Therefore,

many women find the very manifestation of leadership to be an unappealing prospect, and it is

perhaps unsurprising that Leslie determined that a presidency was undesirable. Leslie's example

of a president who was always looking for a fight illustrated a leadership approach that ran

counter to her more collaborative style. Similarly to Leslie, Elaine opposed the thought of a

presidency at an earlier point in her career, but for another reason:

> It's funny, when I first went into administration I remember my mother saying, oh would
>
> you ever want to be a president? And I said, heck no all they do is raise money! So it

wasn't back then. So I'm guessing it had to be after I became provost. I mean when I was

a dean I thought if I get to be a provost I'll just you know stay there. But after I became a

provost I realized, I really wanted to be a president and I thought it was actually a more

interesting job. And right now one of my missions in life is to talk women chief academic

officers into aspiring to presidencies because it is a better job than provost and it is more

fun and it is more varied and just, I don't know, it's a much better job. So I started going

to some professional development programs: AASCU's program on seeking the

presidency, I went to the Harvard program, I went to all the Harvard programs I went to

the MDP [Management Development Program] and the IEM [Institute for Educational

Management]. I went to AASCU's [American Association of State Colleges &

Universities] millennial leadership Institute. You know I've been through a lot of

professional development programs. And it just, each one kept giving me confidence that

I had the skills it took to be president.

In both cases, Leslie and Elaine suffered from an initial misunderstanding of the presidential

role, which led to their early opposition. For Elaine, it was not until she became provost and got

closer to the presidency that she released its appeal. She also needed to become more confident

in her skills and abilities. The professional development opportunities she attended made visible

what was possible, and provided her with validation. Leslie's perspective and confidence in

pursuing a presidency also grew; in her case, she needed the encouragement of someone she

admired:

Then I had a wonderful chancellor who asked me to do it and I did it and it wasn't

horrible. It's really wonderful and you can really actualize the passions that you have,

that brought you in to higher education in the first place.

Until they were able to get proximate to the role, with others validating their abilities as well as their potential, the illusion of the presidency served as an intimidating barrier for the participants. Eventually, Leslie and Elaine learned how they could perform the job in a manner that felt authentic to them, including providing them with a platform to effect positive change for the institution.

The lack of career planning and aspirational goals that Jennifer, Leslie and Elaine described was not uncommon among my participants. Several of the leaders connected the dots of their serendipities, decisions and opportunities – and the role that family circumstances played – in their career advancement. They also identified the ways in which they actually benefited from the occasionally haphazard (or at least not at all intentional) twists and turns taken in their careers. This was certainly the case with Christine, a provost, who never really intended to go into college administration full-time, and was turned off by the "politics:"

> *MHB: Talk to me about what attracted you to administration?*
>
> *Christine: Well nothing! [we both laugh] One of my colleagues calls me "the accidental dean." I was initially attracted to faculty governance. I was on every committee you can imagine being on. I was Chair of the Faculty which is our Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee and then I was department chair. This is over a 15 year period from when I started. I was very active in committee work and leading up to being Chair of the Faculty and then I was department chair. Then, after I was Department Chair, I thought, I just really wanted to do my work. There was a time of a fair amount of unhappiness on campus, a lot of tension between the administration and the faculty. I thought I'm just going to keep my head down and do my work which I was very happy doing. At the time I had a child. I have one daughter, who… was at the time about 10. I was really enjoying*

> *spending time with her and so I just was going to be happy living my life and stay out of politics.*

Later on, Christine was asked by the interim president to step into the interim provost role following the unexpected death of the former provost:

> *We get to the middle of May and [the former dean] has died, [name] is about to become Interim President and he just came to me and said will you do this for two years as an interim? How do you say no! I had not been looking to be in administration. I had no idea if I would like it or not.*
>
> *MB: You hadn't been an Associate Dean or you hadn't really risen up in that manner?*
>
> *Christine: That's right. So one could say, it was gutsy, definitely high risk. I had the faculty governance experience so in that context I had sat on the President's Planning and Priority Group for four years, which is the Budget Committee so I was very familiar with budget and related issues, a lot of high level issues but I had no managerial experience except for being Department Chair. At least I had been Department Chair. Yes, I had not been an Associate Dean. So he asked me to do it and I felt like in the circumstances I couldn't really say no.*

Although Christine did not consider the possibility of a senior leadership position, and in fact had not served in the dean's office prior, she answered the call to serve when asked. Eventually, she discovered that she enjoyed the role, and transitioned from an interim to the permanent provostial role. Like the other participants, she did not see what senior career possibilities existed until someone else presented it to her. However, what became clear from her narrative is that in fact Christine – like the other participants – did possess the skills and abilities to do the job.

With respect to when and whether to advance to a presidency, two provosts, Debra and Christine, discussed more specific concerns. In addition to the family considerations, they highlighted misgivings about their lack of budgetary and fundraising experiences. Debra conveyed hesitancy in her ability to handle the financial management aspects of a presidency, but her response morphed into a larger concern:

> *I guess one of the things that makes me to some extent make me not want to be a college president, is that I really do think that for institutions like this one, the future is really going to be tough and honestly I'm not sure that I think I have the skills to deal with it. I mean I'm not sure I think, maybe most people do, but the financial management and all of that is in many ways… I think in many ways I'm fairly good at that kind of stuff because numbers don't scare me but I'm also not sure. I also think that if you go to a place with a huge endowment, it's one thing. That's not the kind of place that we are. It's not probably the kind of place where I would get a job. And so I think the challenge of managing these institutions and being responsible for them is immense. Honestly, I'm not sure whether I want to take that on. So in some ways it maybe it's an easier job but in other ways, it's not. The sheer amount of responsibility is kind of overwhelming in some ways.*

Debra described the "sheer amount of responsibility" in a president's portfolio, as opposed to her more limited (albeit highly challenging) role as provost. Ironically, her oversight of the academic area in all likelihood comprised the largest chunk of the college's budget, and therefore she would be more equipped than others to take on the college's overall finances. However, her insecurities went deeper. Debra professed uncertainty over whether she might be able to take on the presidency of a more financially unstable institution. I was left wondering why she believed

that a potential presidency would necessarily be at an institution whose future was tenuous in comparison to her current one. Why was she selling herself short? Why did she not believe that she would be a candidate at a place that was just as, if not more so, financially secure? Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2013) postulated that a "second-generation bias" that relies on those stereotypes in order to justify women's exclusion from leading also inhibits women's potential. While the answers to my questions are complex, Debra's hesitancy about her own skills may very well reflect a larger concern of women feeling that they need to emulate (or exceed) stereotypic notions that are based on a seemingly confident, male model of leading (Freeman & Bourque, 2001) that leaves little room for doubt or uncertainty.

For Christine, another provost, her reticence in considering a presidency was tied to the specific fundraising aspects, which she described as highly unappealing:

> *And it's just kind of an ego feed. It's not the sort of thing to build a good life on, that sort of reacting to that feeling of being wanted. So yeah I just think this job suits me well and I think I'll be happy to do it for a while longer. But I love to teach and I think I'll do this for whatever length of time makes sense. One thing that put a point on it for me is that if I had to choose how to spend 10 years of my life and I was choosing between spending time with donors and spending time with students, there is no question that I would spend time with students. No question.*

In characterizing fundraising as "an ego feed," Christine's talk focused on its most unseemly aspects. Like Debra, she had talked herself out of the possibility of becoming a president. The hesitancy that they both conveyed, and specific reasons why they did not wish to pursue presidencies, is not uncommon among women provosts. In a 2003 study of women chief academic officers, 63% of them expressed a lack of willingness to seek a presidency for three

principal reasons: first, they had a concern that a presidency will distance them from the academic core of the institution; second, they relayed a lack of interest in the fundraising and social components of the presidency; and, third, they expressed the desire to have more balance in their lives (Dean, 2003, as cited in Bornstein, 2009). Similar themes emerged in my conversations with Debra and Christine. Since the chief academic officer (CAO) role is the most common pathway to the presidency, and 40% of CAOs in the United States are women (Gangone & Lennon, 2014), the reluctance that they described portends a concerning future for the number of women presidents.

Several participants illustrated the "disorderly" path that Fitzgerald (2014) described, but they also explicated the structural and attitudinal impediments to administrative advancement, and the ways in which women have bought into gendered leadership traits. The presidents spoke about their initial misgivings in seeking a presidency, which the provosts reflected in their more current narratives. When the participants embarked on their careers in higher education, they did not envision senior leadership roles, much less plan for them. In several cases, they assumed (incorrectly) that they were ill-equipped to perform the job. They demonstrated how to some extent they have bought into a homogenous stereotype of leadership, that fails to account for a diversity of background and experience (Eagly & Chin, 2010). As women, who also reflected intersecting identities and experiences, they themselves did not believe that they possess the necessary skills or "right stuff" to be leaders. The participants' stories revealed the depth and extent to which questions of legitimacy for women in the academy can be internalized (Bornstein, 2009), thereby magnifying the problems of inequity and opportunity to senior leadership roles.

The Convergence of Institutional Culture and Personal Identity

The participants relayed that, once they resolved to seek a senior leadership role, institutional context, culture and location mattered a great deal. Whether they felt a sense of personal connection to a college or university were crucial factors in their ability to perceive themselves as possessing successful leadership abilities. In our conversations, I asked the participants specifically about the institutional aspects they considered before accepting a presidency or provostship, since understanding their decision-making process was instructive in the participants' development and meaning-making as academic leaders. Questions about how they came to be presidents and provosts served as a key component of our conversations, and their responses were as diverse and complex as the leaders' individual experiences. Once Elaine committed to seeking a presidency, she was highly intentional in what type of institution she wished to lead, and why:

> *I wanted a place that I thought was a good fit. So I was talking to another mentor, [name] … and we were having lunch one day and she said I'm not sure you would make a good president and I said why not? And she said, I'm not sure you're able to impose your will on an institution. And she had heard me give these presentations at HERS [a women's leadership institute] about my philosophy of leadership and it's very bottom-up and you work with the potential you've got and stuff like that. And she said I'm not sure you'd be able to impose your will on an institution. And I said [name], I don't want to go to an institution that's a wreck and have to knock it down and build it up again. I want to go to a place that's good and that wants to be better, and that's where I'm going to thrive. And she said you know I never thought of that. And the reason she didn't was because she was always going to places that were wrecks and trying to rebuild them. She had to go in and fire people and all that kind of stuff and I didn't want to go to a place*

like that. So I was very careful when I selected the schools that I looked at and a couple

of times search consultants got me into searches that I didn't want to be there. I just

didn't think that I was going to thrive there, so I backed out. I dropped out.

Elaine described a clear sense of self, her abilities, and her desires for what type of college she wished to lead – and where she thought she could be successful. She possessed the self-knowledge that leading a financially stable institution was for her a better fit, and she proactively pursued those searches (and backed out when the fit was not right). More importantly, Elaine knew that she could apply her skills and talents at an institution that could be even better, perhaps one that did not know its own potential. In our follow-up interview on campus, Elaine summarized what motivated her:

I love being able to make a difference. I'm hoping that when I leave there's going to be a

very nice story about the transformation that the college went through and how we were

able to focus more on student learning and on student outcomes. I think in the past we

were bragging about our inputs all the time but not talking very much about, so what

happens to the ones once they're on campus?!

Her "bottom-up" style of leadership afforded her the opportunity to engage a community in collective institutional achievement with a singular focus on student achievement, thereby illustrating Bensimon's feminist reinterpretation of leadership, which advocates a more holistic view that emphasizes relationships and institutional needs rather than the leader itself (1989). In other words, it is less about personal ambition than it is about making a difference for the institution. She demonstrated the "connective leadership" that Lipman-Blumen (1996) espoused. The desire that Elaine describes to make an institution even better reflects her strong self-awareness, and an integrative understanding of leadership.

Another president described the intentionality with which she approached her transition from a large, public, comprehensive system to a residential liberal arts college:

So I enjoyed what I was doing at the [west coast university] but being a provost at a large university is a very different kind of role than being a president of a liberal arts college. And I did think about institutional, I thought the [west coast university] was great but I wasn't sure that I wouldn't miss, that you wouldn't be, how do I explain this, totally an administrator and not as close to the intellectual life as a provost. To me as Dean, you are still, I mean again there are political challenges, but there are others. I was close to faculty, I still taught every once in awhile, I was on dissertation committees. And I thought that wouldn't be possible at the [west coast university]. As the next step that you would be more of an administrator, more part of a very big bureaucracy and I respected people doing that I just wasn't sure that I wanted that. The president of a liberal arts college, at a place like [liberal arts college], it's a very intimate place and I have a lot of contact with students which I love and you lose that when you're provost at a major research institution. So for me it wasn't about being a president it really was more about the particular institutional role and the kind of culture.

Patricia conveyed her priority in remaining connected to the academic core of a university, as well as her concern that in advancing at a large bureaucratic institution, the direct connection would be weakened. So, she eschewed the positional power of a Research I provostship, and instead focused her search process on the presidency of a liberal arts college, where she had a higher likelihood of retaining the connections with students and faculty. Similar to Elaine, she illustrated a commitment to what Freeman and Bourque (2001) referred to as "reciprocal leadership," whereby there exists "a dynamic set of relationships among followers, leaders and

their mutual mission" (p.8). The opportunities for mutuality and relationships in a smaller environment were critical components in her search process.

While Patricia discussed the type of institution she sought for a presidency, Jennifer expressed a different, and more specific, rationale for how she came to lead her particular institution:

It's a pretty small school but across the generations the institution has changed a lot over that time and everybody attributes their sort of ethical grounding and spirit of absolute free intellectual inquiry to the place. And the more I came to know [small college] and the kind of distinctive set of characteristics that it combines, the more I just wanted to be a part of the community. And then to be able in this moment in [small college]'s history and in the history of higher ed, to be able to articulate on behalf of this institution what liberal arts education here does, why it's worth it, who benefits, and why it's important to our society even to people who don't come here. That seemed to me to be a really worthwhile task. And [small college] is kind of distinctively positioned to kind of exemplify that kind of education at a moment when that kind of education is under fire… The environment that is created here to help students build really powerful bridges between how they learn and how they live… The opportunities here to reimagine liberal arts education such that it includes students getting ready to enter the world. It's just very very rich… and the culture of trust that is created here is distinctive. And so I wanted to be able to figure that out, describe and advocate what we do here at a time when I just think that that's really important. I don't know, I mean I took it almost like a really distinctive opportunity.

The "distinctive opportunity" that Jennifer described reflected an amalgamation of factors that led her to the presidency of her particular institution. Jennifer, like Patricia, previously served a large urban university, but was attracted to the qualities and values of a small liberal arts college, where she could "reimagine liberal arts education." Her attraction to the college was palpable, based on its resources and characteristics, and her narrative demonstrated the power she felt to do something important in leading that college. Leslie articulated a similarly strong pull to the community college she leads, based on its geographic location and ethos:

> *[Northeastern city] is gritty and community colleges I think thrive in areas of the greatest need. Where I was in [East Coast state] was lovely. The college was doing fabulously well. I could have stayed there forever but I didn't feel we were getting at it. The college serves two of the top five wealthiest counties in America. While there were certainly pockets of need in those two counties, it's nothing like [Northeastern city]. So I was really interested in the idea of getting to an institution where you really could get busy doing some good for a community that really needs you and there certainly lots of opportunity here for that.*

For Leslie, like Jennifer as well as Elaine, her college allowed her to connect her professional calling, where she could make an impact on a community that presented greater needs. At her current institution, she identified a better match at a place that shared her values for positive growth and change. When Leslie and I met on her campus, she further explained her motivations for becoming president of that college, and the influential opportunity it presented:

> *It's really wonderful and you can really actualize the passions that you have, that brought you into higher education in the first place. My goal is to leave this place as an*

institution that has got students fully in focus and I just think that would be a wonderful

accomplishment and I'm in a position to do it which is pretty cool.

For Leslie it was not a matter of institutional status, or positional prestige, but about connecting with an institution and working in behalf of its students. In so doing, she was able to get at some of the larger societal and community concerns evident in an urban environment where opportunities for higher education were limited. In a qualitative research study of faculty members, Lindholm (2003) presented the frame of "person-organization fit," which "reflects the congruency between the values, interests, needs and abilities of an individual and corresponding characteristics of the organization" (p.128). When the fit works, Lindholm's faculty participants identified a sense of "institutional place." In another qualitative study, using a grounded theory approach, women leaders working in faith-based institutions also relayed the critical role of organizational "fit" with leadership style (Longman, Daniels, Bray & Liddell, 2018). Leslie provided a good example of the need for congruence between personal values and institutional mission. Achieving "person-organization fit" was critical. Several participants sought a sense of institutional place where they could connect with the institution on a deep, personal level that made a difference for the institution, and especially the students.

Other aspects of identity as related to institutional fit and culture revealed themselves throughout the participant interviews. In particular, several participants spoke of their specific identity as first-generation students. Edith discussed how her first-generation identity impacted her role as a college president, and the ways in which she serves as a role model for first-generation students:

It's really about making sure that safe, supportive structures are there. I think it's about

role-modeling. Not too long ago I had a first-generation event at my house where we

invited all of the first-generation students in the first-year class and 5 or 6 faculty and a

couple of administrators and myself were there and we all sat around and told our

stories. You know, very powerful. For the kids to hear those stories too, it's very

powerful. You want them to know that it will be okay. I also think this is important that

people understand that groups new to education have to do this too in different ways. I

try to help people understand what it is like for these first-generation students. That many

have my experience, which is that college is grand. It's just like getting through the best

water park in the world! It was just the greatest thing. What's difficult is going back

home. And trying to negotiate one's own cognitive gap between one's parents and one's

friends and those kinds of things. I think faculty whose parents went to [an elite college]

or what. You know, it's really hard to understand that. So, I think also trying to help

interpret where those pressure points is important.

Edith's commitment to first-generation students demonstrated a critical intersection of her

identity as an academic leader, and as a first-generation student. Not only did she devote herself

to easing the experience for her first-gen students, she also expressed a strong desire to have

others at her institution truly <u>understand</u> what those students are going through, and use her

positionality to shape their experiences in positive ways. She laid bare her own story, conveying

the power of personal narrative in supporting students. Another first-generation president, Alice,

shared a similar sense of obligation:

Yeah, I always, when the occasion arises, I'm pretty open with people that I'm a first-

generation college student. So if there's ever, there's an opportunity in conversation with

students not to just push that down their throats, I always contribute that. I think

probably the most… I haven't reached out to that group per se on the campus but in our

enrollment conversations, that is something we think about pretty actively. Particularly

with access opportunities program. And we've had a lot of back and forth actually

because first-generation is not, has not been a qualifier for our TOP programs. It's

mostly socioeconomic which sometimes overlaps but not always. So we've been talking

about how to include or incorporate that into our strategic planning more.

For Alice, her first-generation identity was evident, and she used her power and influence to foreground the experience of first-generation students in institutional decision-making. Her claim that she did not actively seek out opportunities to connect with first-gen students belied her commitment to supporting their interests at the institutional level. Alice remained mindful of her first-generation identity in the context of her leadership capacity. She validated her own identity as a means of influencing systemic change at the college. Like Edith, Alice openly claimed her responsibility to use her "outsider within" (Collins, 1986) status in advocating for first-generation students and low socioeconomic status students.

The participants expressed a belief that their presidencies provided the platform to make important contributions to their institutions. In deciding whether to seek a senior leadership role, the institutional fit was critical: they expressed a clear desire to connect their skills and values with the institution's mission. Several also sought to make a difference for students who were not always treated equitably, such as first-generation or community college students, in order to break down barriers and create systemic change. Furthermore, their intersecting identities provided them with epistemic privilege that served to enhance their leadership abilities. To accomplish this work, they acknowledged the importance of understanding the institutional context and culture. Mariko Silver, the president of Bennington College, recently reflected this same sentiment:

… understanding our environment is very important. Once understood, we can begin to identify opportunities to leverage our personal resources and those afforded by our position in order to influence not just our own professional trajectory but the culture of the institution as a whole (Silver, 2016, p.108).

Transitional Challenges with Institutional Culture

The participants openly discussed the intersection of institutional culture and their leadership performance. For several participants, especially those who moved from one type of institution to another, institutional "fit" and culture played a memorable role beginning at the time of the presidential search and transition processes. As Natalie commented:

There were some older trustees, a few of the older faculty, and some of the older alumni who were probably skeptical that I'd been chosen. I came from this liberal research university …, not a liberal arts college. I was from a law school, right? Not arts and sciences. I was a woman.

In acknowledging the male-dominated context into which she entered, Natalie acknowledged the challenges that she faced as a woman and as an outsider. Her description evoked Collins (1986), who explained the ways in which the experiences of Black women are applicable to others who move into spaces of historical exclusion, that "highlight the tension experienced by any group of less powerful outsiders encountering the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community" (p.S29). Natalie's gender, as well as her unconventional academic background (at least in the eyes of the older male trustees, faculty and alumni) afforded her the recognition that comes from her outsider status.

Those participants who moved to a smaller college and community as new presidents also described the particular challenges that those transitions presented. Sylvia described the significant change from an urban West Coast environment to a liberal arts college in a small New England village, where going to the dry cleaners became a far more public act:

But at [liberal arts college], anything… you know I would go to a store downtown and people know who I am, they notice that I've gone into the store. To me that was one of the things that I had to get used to. It was very very different living in a small community, being a celebrity in a small community, and really basically once I stopped outside of my house not having any privacy.

Sylvia's description of small town college life was fairly perfunctory and unemotional. She seemed to accept what she had signed on for, even though she did not appreciate the loss of privacy. As Sylvia demonstrated, the decision to lead a college that aligns with her values comes with some trade-offs, especially with respect to location. Many small liberal arts colleges are located in more rural areas than large university towns, making privacy – especially for someone with a highly visible position – more challenging. While Jennifer had an experience similar to Sylvia's when moving to a small town, she was able to justify the lack of anonymity due to her college's proximity to a larger city:

I miss the occasional anonymity, I miss the anonymity. I miss… There are great things about living in [small college town], it reminds me of living in [my hometown] in so many ways but it was the thing that I most… I have to say the lack of anonymity and I miss the energy of the 24-hour day urban environment. But there is a lot that is great about this town. It is a functioning town. There's a movie theater, grocery stores. You can actually structure your life and not drive. There's something really great about that. I think I would have a harder time if we were farther away from the city but [city] is not very far away and I love [the city]... So from that perspective it's a small town, a small and very interesting and well-managed town that's close to a vibrant and growing and interesting city.

Jennifer's lament of what she lost in moving to a small town was a relatively brief aspect of our conversation. She genuinely enjoyed her experience, but the location was something about which she was acutely aware, especially with respect to the challenges it presented given the visibility of her leadership role. While both Sylvia and Jennifer acknowledged the adaptive necessity to a new environment, they appeared to struggle in reconciling their feelings about moving from a large, anonymous Research I university to the intimacy of a small college in a small town. They attempted to articulate the positive and the negative aspects of location, context and identity.

Several leaders who led small, residential liberal arts colleges also discussed the high expectations that the president be present and actively involved in campus life. How they navigated those expectations differed to some extent. For Janice, she assumed a high level of engagement in campus life:

> *[My predecessor] liked basketball so he would go to basketball games but I don't think*
>
> *he ever went to a theater performance. I don't think he ever went to a concert. I know he*
>
> *never went over to the dining room like I do just to have lunch with the students. He*
>
> *never had people into his home. So the expectations that were set for me in that way were*
>
> *very low. I just don't see it that way. I think that if we want people to feel good about the*
>
> *college, we want them to graduate and feel like there was something important here that*
>
> *happened, it needs to be a full experience, not just a classroom experience. They have to*
>
> *feel as though people value them which means that I need to show up for these things like*
>
> *my college should be showing up for these things so I'm also setting an example for them.*

For Janice, showing up at a variety of events demonstrated care for the community and especially for her students. The fact that she believed she was "setting an example" for a diverse array of students with different interests speaks to that commitment. Janice also explicated the

way in which she felt the need to be visible in a way that her male predecessor did not, thereby demonstrating an "ethic of care" in a relational manner of leading that Gardiner (2014) also identified in a study of women academic leaders in Canada, the United States and the Phillipines. By being present on her campus, she evinced the mission of the college by modeling the personal academic experience that her residential liberal arts college provides.

However, the "ethic of care" for leaders in a small college environment can be a double-edged sword, with particularly vexing expectations for women. One president, Julia, questioned the more unsavory aspects of leading a college in a small town, and the ways she experienced those challenges as a woman president. Having taught at a Research I university in a larger town prior to becoming president of a residential liberal arts college in a small community, Julia described the frustration she felt in attending to the community's expectations:

> *I think for me it has been this "community" thing. I find that, I find that there's a mythology of community here that is, actually how can I say… It's to my mind much more of a bludgeoning tool than it is a cozy blanket. It's usually invoked to, it's usually invoked against someone. You know, "they don't get the community," or "that's not the [liberal arts college] way." And I've actually lost two senior staff members because the community was just too hard on them. So the mythology of it is that we're so loving and wonderful and we're so friendly but in my view, the reality of it often is you're either one of us or you're not. And that's been a very, that's been very hard for me, because I just don't… It's not who I am. You know it partly has to do with my background. The idea that you would live in one tiny town for the rest of your life is a nightmare to me. But it's the ideal for many of the people with whom I work, right?… And so that has been the*

toughest part for me I think. Is this constant sort of emphasis on, I don't know, these

apparent "community" values.

Julia, who was preparing to step down from her presidency, specifically named the intensely

gendered aspects of the community expectations:

But I think the one thing that, I guess the one thing that I hadn't thought about from

going from an environment that I was familiar with to going to a small college

environment in a very teeny town was this emphasis on what I will say is "community."

And I had not been in an environment where there is this kind of familial aspect to the

organization and the surrounding community. And I gather now, after almost 10 years in

this environment, I guess probably almost all small liberal arts colleges who expect the

president to be sort of very chummy, very visible, attending everything. And I think that's

an expectation I think of all presidents. But I think it was a little more. I think there was a

bit more of it because I was a woman. I think at some level people kind of expected a

mothery sort of figure. And I couldn't be farther from that. So I think that, I think that

was maybe people put expectations on me that were just not, just didn't suit my

personality or my expectations...You know, I don't just hang out on a bench. But there is

this kind of Mr. Chips aspect to that. It's not a good, I'll just be honest, it's just not a

good fit for my personality. I'm just not that kind of person. I think they want to see you

in the dining hall, they want to see you at all the athletic events, they want to see you

walking down [the center of campus] all the time. And I spent a lot of my time in

meetings and on conference calls and traveling for the college and I don't think there's a

real understanding from much of the community, both faculty and students, about what a

president's role really is. So I think they expect you to be kind of, kind of a magnified

faculty member. The roles are really quite quite different.

After ten years as president, Julia conveyed a palpable weariness with the small community politics endemic to that institution. Her disillusionment was apparent in her description of how the "mythology of community" was in fact "a bludgeoning tool" – and the perceived gendered expectations had clearly had taken its toll. In addition to the gendered aspects, her depiction also conveyed the lack of understanding on the part of the community of the president's roles and responsibilities as a leader; instead, they were seeking more of a caretaker or parent. And, Julia's perception of what she faced as a woman president intensified the unreasonableness of those expectations. She felt that she had to be both a mother and a president to the community, placing her in an untenable situation that she could not reconcile. Her statement "it's not who I am" encapsulates the tension that she felt between the institutional set of expectations and her core personality, as well as her recognition of the gendered hurdles that proved impossible to overcome.

Both Julia and Patricia arrived at their respective small colleges from larger, research universities and struggled to adjust to the emphasis on personal relationships endemic to small college life. In a tone that was more measured than Julia's, Patricia assessed the special set of expectations as both a positive and a negative:

One of the things I learned at the [west coast university] was that sometimes rules make

things fairer rather than only bureaucratic. And so my reaction was that if there was a

rule and it should be changed for this particular person, this were a particular benefit

thing, that it was worth considering that if the person were not beloved would you still

want to do the same thing? ... I think one of the things you get at a public institution, is

trying to take the better parts of what happens in the large system and you know thinking

how it might help you in terms of access or fairness, at a smaller place where you benefit

from the personal but sometimes that is not always the situation that lends itself to total

equity.

As both Julia and Patricia described, the downside to the intimacy of a small college community is a familial or clubby environment that felt exclusionary. At Patricia's small residential college, the "personal" expectations highlighted the lack of equity that can occur within a collegial institution, in a culture that emphasizes interpersonal relationships (Birnbaum, 1989). When any leader transitions to a new institution, reading and learning the institutional norms and context are critical to their success. And, any change proposed that has the potential to disrupt an institution's fundamental ethos, even when (as Patricia elucidated) it is done in the interest of equity and fairness, and reveals the extent to which the leader may be wading into turmoil. Bornstein (2009) cautioned that change initiatives be developed in such a way that the constituents accept them as legitimate and in keeping with the institutional culture. In transitioning from large, more bureaucratic systems, both Julia and Patricia acknowledged the need, and occasional frustrations they experienced, in navigating and leading their smaller, more collegial environments. However, they also managed to successfully make that transition. Employing "legitimate" processes demonstrated their fundamental understanding of a different institutional culture, but also the necessary investment of intense emotional work.

Julia and Patricia were nearing the end of their college presidencies. Jennifer, on the other hand, was in her second year of her presidency and demonstrated in our interview an outright enthusiasm for the small college she had only recently joined. But she also expressed awareness of the challenges:

There were expectations around sort of reaching out to people, just sort of reaching out to people with no apparent agenda, just calling people to say hello or checking in with people. And I'm not very good at that. And I think that was kind of the culture, partly the culture of the [region] and partly the culture of [liberal arts college] and this kind of weekly or monthly kind of check-in. You know, how is that going? Before I got to know people. That was really hard for me to think about and so I struggled along with the initial relationship building. And I'm still not completely sure, I mean I know I haven't completely figured it out yet. And you know it's sort of a whirlwind opportunity to meet people and remember. And I realized I would have to become a lot more disciplined and organized and directed and intentional about how I come, how I spend my time. And I'm not a person, I'm not a very routinized sort of person and I sort of rebel against it. I'm not that way. So I learned the importance of the kind of organizational routine and it's not that I live up to it. But I do understand why I need to be intentional about my routine and what I'm doing about follow through.

Jennifer's intentionality in overcoming what was not necessarily natural to her – the casual "glad handing," if you will – demonstrated the positive and critical connections among leadership, self-awareness, and institutional culture. She understood the necessity of employing a more intentional, personal approach to her routine in order to reflect the college's values and expectations. Jennifer possessed the situational awareness and understanding of the culture, as well as her place within that culture as its leader, and committed to making the necessary adjustments to succeed. With the knowledge of an "outsider," she demonstrated how she made meaning of the ways in which her identity intersected with institutional expectations.

Managing Time/Personal Life: "I wouldn't call this balance"

In moving from faculty members to senior administrative roles, the participants described a shift in how they managed their time as provosts and presidents. Presidents and provosts contend with 24/7 schedules, which can make choices on how one spends her time absolutely critical. The participants demonstrated how their ability to seek leadership roles was influenced by a great many factors – family, geography, and other personal considerations. Once they achieved leadership roles as provosts and presidents, those considerations continued to have a constant presence, and at times introduced further complexity as they now negotiated their identities as partners, spouses, and parents with their roles as leaders. In addition, they expressed the extent to which they struggled to locate a balance between their personal and professional roles, especially given the unrelenting nature of their work.

The participants described how they managed professional commitments with family obligations, especially earlier in their careers, which varied to a great extent based on personal circumstances. One president described how she prioritized her time while serving as provost of a large state institution when she was also a single parent with young children at home:

> *Well I was very strict about priorities. I never… you know you get invitations to do stuff all the time, go to this meeting, travel to this place. I did my job and my kids. Just those two things. And I tried always to be home for dinner and had enough flexibility in my job. I've also always been a very efficient person. So I could be there for them at important times.*

Sylvia did not describe her personal/professional situation as having been especially easy, but she made it work thanks to a clear sense of priorities and efficient time management. Moving

from the personal to the systemic, Esther made visible the ways in which American attitudes toward childcare place a high burden on professional women:

> *And let me say something. Because it makes it sound like somebody is a super woman, so let me explain that back when I was in [African country], and if I were in [my home country] right now, I would have a lot of support. There was a lot of family support. In [my home country], when I would have my kids I would have a live-in nanny and somebody else to help because my mother would make sure that somebody trained in how to take care of babies and all that. So let me really be clear about that. Because when you look at child rearing in this country and everything that one person has to do, is a whole lot. So I did have support. The kind that may not be available to me if I were doing it here now.*

Esther demonstrated empathy in her desire to acknowledge the pivotal support she received when her children were young. She also demonstrated a recognition of the lesser support that women in the United States have access to, reflecting the gendered nature of work-family systems (Ferree, 1990). Sylvia credited her personal agency for how she managed her family circumstances. Esther, on the other hand, declared the importance of understanding the inequities of situational context, and the larger social factors at play. The attitude of both women illustrated the claim by Freeman and Borque (2001), who noted that the impact of motherhood on women's leadership "is felt in a variety of contradictory ways and consequently is one of the central paradoxes surrounding women's leadership" (p.16). In other words, the experience of women leaders with motherhood is complicated, and depends a great deal on situational factors. Despite their individual abilities to overcome the challenges of parenting while pursuing their careers,

Sylvia and Esther explicated how American society is not set up to support domestic labor, and serves as an impediment to women in particular.

In navigating the demands of senior academic administration and family life, several leaders conveyed their struggle to do both simultaneously. The grueling nature of the job, which often included a great deal of travel (especially for presidents) and evening and weekend events (for both presidents and provosts), impacted their ability to spend time with family and friends, and to recharge. Some described the limits and parameters they constructed, while others described balance to be more of a challenge. Janice, a president who is married with two children from her partner's prior marriage, described her attempts at balance in this way:

> *I don't know. As I said, I don't think I balance it as well as I should. My partner and I try to travel with each other. When I'm going on a trip sometimes she'll come with me. She usually does it just enough to prove to herself that she shouldn't do it. She got this advice from the wives of presidents before I took the presidency. She was advised that if you think that you're going to travel with [Janice] and she's going to be attentive to you and it's going to be a vacation, forget about it. Because she's going to be thinking about whatever it is, the next appointment she has to do. She's going to be dictating things. She's going to be talking to people and all of that is true. We try to set aside time in the evening, albeit after dinner usually if we're hosting people. But if we can set aside an hour or two, we really consider that a victory. She's a wonderful person, very supportive, wants my presidency to be successful, has always also worked in small college environments and so knows what the demands are, so I'm lucky that way. My daughter's 24. She's in Washington D.C. My son is at boarding school. He's going to be going off to another college this fall. He's home for three weeks on vacation. I missed the first week*

*because I was in California. I have events every night this week. Some people wouldn't and couldn't make those choices. We've decided that we're going to take a family vacation which we haven't taken for ten years so the four of us are actually going to be together this summer. We're going to go away and be together and so I think its strategy. When I go down to Florida to do a development week, [my partner] is going to come down and we decided to take three days and block them in my schedule, a weekend. Saturday, Sunday and a Monday so we can actually spend time together alone, down there. I think what I do is the best that I'm able given the priorities that I've set. If I thought that my family was suffering, I would make a different decision. I think they're okay and I think [my partner] and I are okay. One thing I have started doing for myself more recently is I go swimming three or four times a week and to be honest I've chosen that as my exercise because no one can talk to me while I'm in the pool. It's just that simple. I really need a little bit of time alone every day if I can get it. Even without that, I just need time alone to think so I don't mind driving if I have to go somewhere. I'm okay with that. I've always been a hard worker so the idea of hard work doesn't trouble me but I do need to keep working on this. I haven't reached the point of balance yet. **I wouldn't call this balance.** [emphasis added]*

While Janice did not describe exactly what balance might look like, she conveyed that whatever she was seeking remained a work in progress. She demonstrated an understanding that she needed to be vigilant in her assessment of the ways in which her work impacted her family, thereby revealing a healthy situational awareness of her position and its demands. At the same time, she failed to acknowledge the unreasonableness of those demands, exposing a dichotomy with her earlier account of being present at sporting events, musical performances, etc. Janice's

talk about the unrealistic expectations of maintaining a president's schedule – and assigning blame to herself for not achieving balance – illustrated the inherent conflicts between having a personal life and fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of president. In keeping with Ferree's (1990) theoretical construct of separate work and family spheres, Janice signified how she struggled to accommodate the dichotomies rather than transform the system itself – as much for her sake as for the people who work for her.

Christine, a provost who was married to a man with a child away at college, also acknowledged the importance of having a stable home life in managing the demands of her job:

Well, there's kind of an ebb and flow. I think it would be better for me if I worked a little bit less. But it's a lot easier since my daughter is gone. She's a senior in college so this is her fourth year that she's been gone and now she'll be sort of even a step further gone in that she's going to have a regular job. We'll still be seeing her but not bringing her back and forth from college and that sort of thing. So in terms of like the average evening at home, I can focus more on my own stuff and I guess it's not only that she's gone but she's happy and doesn't have, you know we're not dealing with challenging issues that she has. Even though she's in college, if she was having a lot of difficulty, then that would be a big distraction.

Christine acknowledged how not having a child at home facilitated her ability to focus "on her own stuff," including – presumably – work obligations. However, anything could go wrong with children or other family obligations, and therefore that ability to maintain close control and balance remains tenuous. Christine went on to describe the stability of the relationship she shares with her husband:

And my husband and I are very happy together. We like being together. There's you know almost no tension ever at home so that's a huge help. There have been many days when I thought oh if I were going home and I had to be thinking about how to bring up such and such or how to handle this or that at home, that would really do me in. So I think the fact that I'm in a stable home situation is huge.

Christine did not take her home life for granted, and demonstrated a healthy reflexivity in conveying gratitude for her situation. In terms of her ability to practice self-care, she also enumerated the strategies she employs:

And stuff like exercise, I'm you know, doing okay… So when things are going well, I manage four times a week, when things are not going well it's two times a week. Like many people. So I'm okay there. We're pretty active members of a church in town. That's something that my husband cares a lot about too so that's been really helpful. The way it's been particularly helpful in the last few years is we're part of a small group of nine people who meet anywhere between once a week and once a month following a practice that's basically a Quaker practice of self-reflection and kind of sharing. That's been really great. I have a therapist who I work with … It's almost an hour drive to get to him over in the [nearby region] which feels like a retreat because I go between every two weeks and every four weeks so it's once or twice a month. I started going not out of any particular issue, but just kind of to have a little space away with somebody where I could build a relationship to have somebody I could talk to... Those are kind of the basic building blocks.

While both Janice and Christine highlighted the challenges in taking time for their families and for themselves, they also articulated the active self-care strategies they employed. For Janice, it

was spending time in the pool "because no one can talk to me," while Christine sought out a church for self-reflective practices, as well as time with a therapist and exercise. The two participants' relationships with their spouses, which both described as healthy and happy, also proved to be a significant support. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how a stressful home life would make it possible for the women to carry out the demands of their positions. Christine's particular use of the term "basic building blocks" was revealing, in her acknowledgment of the need to create the support structures and scaffolding in her life to make her professional work manageable. In both cases, the participants articulated the intentional ways they sought balance, rather than questioning the unreasonable pressures that their jobs placed on them, thereby making that balance elusive.

For Leslie, a college president, she attempted to integrate her family life with professional responsibilities by bringing her daughter to the many community college events she needed to attend. After discussing her initial hesitation about applying for a presidency (discussed earlier in this chapter), and the potential toll it might take on her 17-month old daughter, we had the following exchange:

> MB: *How did you manage with your daughter and working in that job, which is very demanding?*
>
> Leslie: *I just took her to a lot of stuff. She was incredibly cute and I got her some [college name] swag. If I had to go something at night, she usually went with me or on the weekends, she went with me. Obviously, she couldn't go to a Board meeting. A lot of what you do in this role is show up for the college and because many of my students when they show up need to show up with their kids, it wasn't a big deal.*
>
> MB: *In what ways do think she benefited from attending all these events and being such*

a part of the college life?

Leslie: I think, certainly in California, she got very involved with the idea of, as she called it then, "Mommy's college" and what we did and how it was different from the University nearby. In California, a lot of her friend's older siblings were at my school and she liked that. She liked knowing about those things.

The multiple demands of work and family can be a particular challenge for leaders with young children especially at institutions where, as stated earlier in this chapter, the president is expected to be highly present on campus. In being visible on campus, Leslie demonstrated care and role modeling for her students, some of whom also brought their children to events, at the same time she was spending time with her daughter. Rather than approaching her family and professional lives as separate spheres (Ferree, 1990), Leslie opted for integration as best she could, although she was notably silent on how she and her female partner were visible on campus. By neglecting to describe how her partner fits into the work/life conversation, she exposed the separateness that persists when it comes to her lesbian identity.

For many women leaders, family demands with children but also with aging parents present particular complications. During a series of roundtable discussions with women presidents in the late 1990s, Brown, Van Ummersen and Sturnick (2001) concluded that "having – or not having – a family tends to complicate women's lives more than their male counterparts" (p. 5). Gender proves to be a significant factor in navigating work and family obligations, where women are expected to be the primary caretakers at home as well as for the institution. As my participants explained, they chose a variety of approaches to balance, but the demands of juggling family responsibilities with professional obligations remained a constant. As Manning (2018) wrote, "struggles with work-life balance are seen as a personal issue rather than a conflict

created by the public/private split of organizational life. Such struggles to maintain high standard at work and at home are viewed as a personal problem, not one created by the gender norms of the organization" (p.96). Leslie, as well as Janice and Christine, described the strategies they employed in negotiating the demands of work and family, while conveying the personal responsibility they felt to somehow make it work within an impermeable system.

The participants conveyed individual strategies to balance work and family life, using a multitude of approaches and self-care strategies, but the system of exploitation persists and remains unchecked in their stories. In response to a question about how she manages the highly demanding nature of her work, and the ways in which her identity factors into her ability to manage the stress, Esther responded with:

> *And I have a lot of happy places where I go to. My children ground me. So I think yeah it's just important to remain in touch with oneself, with the essence of who one is, to not lose that. As I sometimes joke, I do have access to more than one person's side of me when I am dealing with the situation. I have that capacity because I'm totally bicultural. And so I can actually advise myself and I can actually tell myself often and I can actually say you can look at it this other way. If I switch and I am totally capable of switch. Between you know, between my two sets of worldviews. So that's helpful. You know it allows you a capacity to be in something and also be outside of it at the same time. So you just don't take yourself too seriously.*

Esther addressed in a philosophical manner how she sought and achieved complementarity in her own life, and great clarity about her identity. She expressed an appreciation for the ability to adapt and "switch" based on her experiences with two cultures, while her children provide the grounding she needs to remain true to herself – and an escape when the work proves difficult –

but the stresses of the work were still very much present. Another participant, Alice, described

how she affirms her own sense of self:

> *So that's… I mean I don't have a real good… the thing I like about the academy is that*
>
> *there isn't a hard and fast line between life and work. And I'm sure this is somewhat*
>
> *generational also… I'm a little bit, I don't deal well always with the conversation about*
>
> *work/life balance because to some extent, I sort of go, huh? You know, it's not that I*
>
> *don't make one, it's just not a real-well defined boundary. And sometimes I think those*
>
> *conversations are today, are more about boxes and cubicles than blend. And what I like*
>
> *is the blend. So when I'm reading, of course English is wonderful because when I'm*
>
> *reading novels I could say that I'm working but I'm not. [laughs] So you know I like, I*
>
> *mean I love reading about higher education. So if I'm doing that over the weekend, I*
>
> *don't feel like I'm working. Some would define that as work. But I don't because it's not*
>
> *directly functional for what I am doing. It's big picture thinking. I find it really exciting*
>
> *and so it is rejuvenating. So I just don't, I don't experience that. But you know I don't*
>
> *think … we'll see as I get closer to actually changing my life pattern a bit, but you know I*
>
> *don't think I'm going to feel that I'm, you know that my life disappearing when I stop*
>
> *doing this particular kind of job because I've been so interested in all of the fringes of it.*
>
> *There's lots of stuff to pick up out there. That's not tied to one institution or to one little*
>
> *piece of my identity, you know? So we'll see. I don't know, that's my theory.*

Alice clearly viewed her work and leisure time as fluid, with the academy firmly placed at the

center of her identity. Furthermore, she readily acknowledged the comfort she derived from "the

blend" of professional and personal interests. However, there remains a contradiction inherent in

Alice's story as well as in Esther's, in that they are required to make sacrifices in order to

achieve success. The fluidity and lack of boundaries that Alice described also contributed an inability to escape her professional demands. Work was a constant in her life: Alice characterized her strategies in a positive light, but they also prevented her from taking necessary time away. Similarly, Esther acknowledged her ability to "switch" identities, without recognizing the systemic barrier that prevented her from actually integrating those identities as a professional academic leader and a bicultural woman. In their talk about the challenging and frequently oppressive time demands, the participants reinforced Kellerman and Rhode's (2014) characterization of colleges and universities as "greedy institutions" in which the demands of running a highly complex organization, with evening and weekend commitments, butt up against any significant family caretaking responsibilities. In order to survive in their roles, my participants found a way to reconcile competing demands. However, they failed to acknowledge the fundamental lack of accommodations for family and self-care, because institutional leadership expectations were formulated for men who had spouses to attend to family caretaking responsibilities.

Conclusions

Through their narratives, the participants described their emergence as leaders, but also how they negotiated and overcame hurdles in their professional journeys. They reconciled their emerging sense of identity as leaders as they settled into their leadership roles, even when they expressed surprised at having achieved success. Understanding institutional culture and climate were critical factors in how they made meaning of those experiences, and their "outsider within" perspective facilitated a deeper comprehension of those institutions. At the same time, the participants struggled to name systemic obstacles to women in achieving success, and instead focused on their individual abilities and choices they made to navigate and overcome the

impediments. At times they assumed a deficit perspective, highlighting their own inadequacies to resolve situations and challenges rather than on the larger, discriminatory forces at play. Despite the challenges they faced, with multiple demands on their time, and the impossibility of balancing personal and professional lives, the participants described joy and satisfaction that they derive from their roles.

Given the challenges I have enumerated, why have my participants chosen to do what they do? In varying degrees, they identified their commitment to students as a powerful motivating factor, as well as applying their skills to make their institutions even better. They directly addressed the need to find the right "person-organization fit" in actualizing their goals and forwarding the mission of the institution – even when the institutional demands proved significant. Throughout their stories, the participants reinforced their commitment to providing inclusive, collective leadership that centers the academic mission, and retains a focus on students. The next chapter will delve more deeply into the participants' attitudes on power and decision-making, and how they made meaning of their experiences with sexism and discrimination while performing their leadership roles.

Chapter Six: PARTICIPANTS' MEANING-MAKING ON INFLUENCE, POWER and LEADERSHIP

You know thinking about power and agency and, in moving away from a kind of essential notion of the self towards this notion that selves are constituted relationally and that the way we get constituted as subjects in relation to each other expresses sort of our relationship of power. Power is an unusual term, right? Not a bad term. And our freedom of action is always constrained… Other people provide the conditions of their own freedom in sort of real ways. So my understanding of my position in the world is very dependent on these theoretical constructs. So I understand my position, I understand my job, I think, in light of those theories though I would probably never use that language to say, like, that's my job here. My job is to listen to other people's aspirations and to try to encourage them to elevate those aspirations and to extend their reach. And then to say back to them these aspirations and listen to all those aspirations from many constituents and say this aspirations back in a way that everyone recognizes and from them craft a collective vision for the institution. So it's a very, I mean it's sort of listening and saying it back and trying to get people to elevate a little bit their aspirations and speak in terms of their… You know speak in institutional terms and I say that back to people. This is what you said, this is what I heard, this is what I'm hearing and to craft a vision in an iterative way and so it's almost leading by being able to listen and then articulate back for people powerfully what you've heard. And if you can't do that in an environment like this you can't be effective. To be effective I really depend on all these really smart people around me for the good ideas, this sort of fuel, the development of our vision. And then I try to synthesize it all and say it back in ways that I think they understand. (Jennifer)

Jennifer's quote explicated the collective approach that several women leaders described as they enact their power and positionality. In this chapter I will focus on my participants' notions of power, and how they conveyed their capacity for effecting change, in order to better understand how they made meaning of their role and its relationship to power. Jennifer's clear expression of power revealed her understanding of how her position as president is performed within a consensus-driven environment. Other participants articulated similar clarity and understanding of their leadership role in an academic setting, although their narratives varied on a continuum of the practical to the theoretical. Other participants' narratives illuminated the ways in which they were forced to reconcile – sometimes reluctantly – the relationship between gender identity and their positionality. This chapter seeks to explore the participants' lived experiences with both power and leadership, and how they learned to lead. I also will address the discursive disjunction that resulted as they reconciled their leadership experiences within an organizational context of inequality. I will dive a little more deeply into the individual ways in which the participants articulated their sense of what they faced on their paths to provosts and presidencies, as well as the discrimination they encountered once they arrived, and how they have made meaning of their experiences. Finally, the topic of mentorship will be discussed, as the participants described with some variety their philosophies and tactical approaches in assisting other women.

Finding Voice, Setting the Agenda, and Convening Conversations

Coming to terms with power provided a steep learning curve for some participants as they transitioned to new leadership roles, especially in moving from faculty to administrative positions. A presidency or provostship presented a particular challenge in the extent to which they were able to assert their personal opinions. Unlike a faculty member, who in the collegium

possesses a strong affiliation with her academic discipline, the college leader represents the interests of the institution as a whole (Manning, 2018). Esther, a provost, spoke about how she felt that inherent tension when she became an associate provost at her prior institution:

> *That's when I made the transition from being faculty member to administrator. And I think the biggest one was a certain loss of voice that you don't expect. As a faculty member, you have your voice, you have your opinions and you can think aloud and say whatever you liked. I was a very engaged faculty member, I was vice president of the senate, so I had opinions. But I actually found that when I became an administrator people were taking me way more seriously than I took myself. If I just said something that I'm just thinking out loud, there was this, oh that is what an administrator is thinking now. While temporarily I felt that loss of my voice. But I regained it, maybe in six months or so I regained it. But it's a different voice.*

Esther needed to establish new footing as an administrator. While she could express her opinions freely as a faculty member, she realized that in her newfound role, she was representing the institution, which limited her freedom. Since my first conversation with Esther ended on that point, I was able to pick it up again when we met in person, and probe on how she regained that voice:

> *You know, what that taught me or what that experience taught me, what I remember vividly... what I didn't know prior to that was how much people were looking for leadership in so many things. You know things that we all talk about. Automatically I find that people turn to me for an answer. You know if a question came up, or we're trying to deal with the situation, they just will automatically look to you once people are looking for answers. So I knew that regardless of what I thought, my role had changed. I knew it*

had changed in my mind, but it changed more radically first in the minds of other people. Because I saw the job and I see, where I see my provost's job, as a position that you hold in trust for other academic colleagues. But the difference is, I have access to more information. But I also have fiduciary responsibility to the institution, which comes first. In everything. So that's kind of different. And then in looking at those fiduciary responsibilities, it has to be comprehensive, you know. I find that when I look at things now, I look at impact. Impact on the institution, impact on faculty, impact on students. And I'm more aware of unintended consequences than I did as a faculty member.

Here, Esther described the expansion of her institutional view, and the understanding of her personal impact on the entire institution. For her, the fiduciary responsibility is critical – and a marked change from the responsibility of an individual faculty member. Her statement that hers is a position that "you hold in trust for other academic colleagues" proves consistent with Bensimon's (1989) research on women leaders. Employing Bensimon's feminist reinterpretation of leadership, Esther's language demonstrated the connectedness between leader and institution, that serves to "shape the very identity of the leader" (p.154).

In addition to the more expansive institutional view that transitioning from faculty member to a senior leadership role required, the participants articulated how they were forced to shift their work habits and acquire a certain mindfulness regarding their new roles. Jennifer described her surprise at this shift during her first few months as president:

And so it's a little bit, I feel a little bit like running a marathon without having done the training. The days are long, not a lot of downtime. There's not a lot of opportunity to determine what the next steps are after each meeting and I'm a kind of "lots of balls in the air at the same time" kind of person. I realize that people take unbelievably serious

every word I uttered which scared me to death. I mean, I think out loud. I just say stuff

and you know fully half of what I say is crazy and somebody has to push back, right? Or

else I'm going to have to change my mode of being. And so I could have five ideas in the

course of 15 minutes over the course of the meeting and someone has to say, you know

ideas one, three and five are terrible and maybe we might talk about two and four we can

talk about and we might find some combination in the middle of those two. Someone

needs to say that to me and of course people weren't comfortable saying that. They've

never been in an environment where that was the case. So that was hard to get used to

and then sort of understanding what my role is in every room I'm in. Before I go in I

think about this while I'm still outside the room and I think what is my role inside that

room. And so when I'm going to the faculty meeting, my role is almost certainly not to

debate the issues with the faculty, which is my inclination.

Both Esther and Jennifer explained that as faculty members (especially those with tenure), they

enjoyed a hefty amount of freedom to speak their individual opinions. They also demonstrated a

recognition that provosts and presidents must speak more carefully due to a heightened level of

scrutiny at the leadership level (Sullivan, 2009). In their first few months on the job, Esther and

Jennifer understood the necessary adaptation from a faculty voice to a senior administrator voice,

thereby acknowledging their own understanding of context and positionality.

Christine described how she viewed her administrative responsibilities as provost, and the

ways in which she employed power. She provided both a philosophical position as well as

practical examples of the ways in which she works with the president in crafting and executing

initiatives to move the institution forward:

*I think that in some ways, sort of from a practical standpoint, power resides very heavily in the realm of **being able to effect the agenda**. I think when I use power most effectively it takes the form of kind of stepping into a void… it's being able to say we're going to focus on this and not on that… We are spending time on renovating the social sciences building and renovating the humanities building and renovating the arts building and creating new professorships and focus on the other things that desperately need focus. In choosing what to focus on, if you ignore something that is in fact a huge issue that can result in the faculty insisting … Like, if there was a large enough contingent on the faculty to push this particular issue they could do it. So we don't have absolute power but that would just be an example of setting the agenda.* [emphasis added]

Christine's framing of power as "setting the agenda" is striking. A provost or president may, in consultation with colleagues, determine what is discussed in a meeting, how resources are allocated, and what task force gets convened. This, in effect, typified former Wellesley President Diana Chapman Walsh's (2006) description of leadership as "making significant things happen" (p.14). Christine expressed an understanding of her ability to exercise leadership as provost by focusing on the important initiatives. She understood her role as articulating an agenda in order to shine a light on what is truly meaningful in the interest of moving the institution forward.

In the following narrative, Jennifer articulated another framing of connective leadership, one that pivots slightly from Christine's description of "setting the agenda" to a leader as "convener of conversations:"

I don't know how much of… in other words I guess I would say in terms of some notion of power is that my effectiveness, my ability to be effective depends very much on my relationships with these, the community of which I am a member. And maybe I am the

> ***convener of conversations*** *then it becomes the basis for the vision but I'm certainly not*
>
> *the, I'm not the source of that vision.* [emphasis added]

Jennifer resisted the notion that she alone has all of the ideas that will propel her institution forward, or even maintain its functioning. Rather than being the sole visionary, she brings the right people around the table and builds community through relationships by employing connective leadership (Bensimon, 1989). Walsh (2006) described the importance of creating these supportive communities "to define and experience leadership as a collective project that derives its power and authority from a cooperative attachment to mutually defined commitments and values" (p.24). Power is not having authority <u>over</u> others, but is the ability to bring others together in an effort to effect progress and change. Jennifer seemed to ascribe, perhaps unwittingly, to Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model of "connective leadership," that emphasized, among other qualities, the importance of convening the right people, and directing the conversation. This, again, was reflected in Bensimon's (1989) research, which found that women presidents tended to resist formal, positional notions of leadership as based in ego and domination, adopting instead a more holistic approach in furtherance of institutional goals. Bensimon named shared leadership as gendered activity. Thus, centering the experiences of women leaders can reframe the very model of leadership. Making any progress on initiatives requires the involvement of others. Manning (2018) characterized connective leadership as feminist, since it rejects a top-down approach that is more typical in a male-dominated traditional leadership model. Through their narratives, my participants demonstrated their own sense of leading from a communal, shared imperative that eschews a hierarchical model and approach, and reconceptualizes the notion of power.

This is not to say that the participants exercised power easily, especially in regards to managing dissent. Esther described how she responded to resistance from those who disagree with her, especially when they are expressly standing in the way of projects and initiatives:

> *However you define power, whatever that is, that is that the same values that make you powerful also make you powerless. It is exactly the same things. Actually, in this position, you may have less power than you have as a faculty member. I had back-to-back abilities as a faculty member to inhabit a world where things are black and white and you can as an administrator, you don't have that luxury anymore. And in the same way that your position gives you voice and gives you authority and power, if you want to use that, the very definition of those roles if you do them well make you not wield any power. Makes you not want to wield any power. Actually, I think the best situations are a result without anybody wielding any power. Because, as Provost I find myself wanting to include all voices, looking for collaboration. And always the best solutions come when everybody arrives at the same solutions together. You always know you have the authority to do certain things. But that authority is one that one uses very carefully and extremely rarely. And the very fact that, the very fact that I hold that authority makes me so careful about how I use it. So, on one level, it's very empowering but at the same time, it's also a strong moderating force. But that responsibility that you could use that authority and do so much damage if it's not well used. There's a lot of question there.*

Esther's description of power typified her clarity of outcome and direction, coupled with a willingness to listen and refine that plan based on the input of others. Her discourse conveyed a firm and quiet confidence without being rigid or inflexible, and she expressed a desire to employ consultation and collaboration in order to achieve her goals. Thus, she too signified feminist

connective leadership in contrast to a bureaucratic style of decision-making (Bensimon, 1989). Esther articulated her sense of where she wanted to go, and was committed to achieving that vision. Importantly, she actively sought the input of others. In another example, Esther's expressly mentioned how her identity as an African informed her leadership approach:

> *I'm an African so I know the evil of presuming that you know people's problems. And coming with solutions without talking to the people you might create more problems. So I never forget that, when I'm dealing with any group of people.*

Esther's identity as African proved central in her leadership approach, especially with respect to how she dealt with people. In that brief statement, she revealed the weight of her history and its intersection with how she leads. Not only did Esther demonstrate an awareness of her role, but also of how her identity informed and even contributed to that role. Bensimon's theoretical application is especially important in acknowledging women's experiences, thereby providing a more complete and intersectional understanding of academic leadership, and the symbiosis that results from studying identity and leadership together.

Enacting Power

Two leaders, Catherine and Janice, described situations when they, despite their best efforts, had difficulty employing their power to effect positive change. Catherine, a nun and president of a religiously affiliated institution, described tensions that manifested among her senior team members. While she was president, the senior leadership of the college had shifted from nuns to laypeople, both men and women:

> *The nuns just went ahead and did their jobs and didn't get all hot and bothered about these things. So the nuns were just loyal, and one by one they retired and I replaced them with laypeople and these conflicts became more complex and sharper than when they*

arrived. And you know when new personalities came in and there were some obvious

tensions between this one and that one. And so I think it was partly that I was a little

naïve in thinking that we you know can all get along well, we can all work together,

wouldn't this be lovely. And then to realize that, I think part of this is more normal than

what I had expected or participated in. But I don't know, my experience is limited. I've

only been at this one place. I haven't been in other places so I really can't compare.

When I probed Catherine to provide an example of the tensions, she provided the following:

And then we were talking about something two months ago, you know vis-à-vis this

enrollment decline… But one of the newer deans… weighed in and we decided to do

whatever it was he suggested. And after that one of these women came in and said it

seems to me that the men are having a lot more influence in getting to run things and I

said, well, no, what he said was good, it was a good idea and we're going to do it. But

her perception was that the men are now being given or have more clout or are being

given more authority. So that's another part of this, the friction that's there. There is

definitely a gender element.

When I asked how Catherine was managing the conflict, she candidly described her frustration, and her inability – despite active effort – to change what had developed into an unhealthy dynamic:

I just try to keep you know working with [my senior team], talking with them, making

them talk to each other, I try to bring them back to the table to get past these things. I

don't know what else to do because as I said we brought in these facilitators, both of

whom are good facilitators but they just, they just weren't able to crack this open in a

way that enabled us to deal with this effectively and to adapt to new roles. So I'm not

saying that I do well but as I said we do get the job done it's just that it would be, you

know, more pleasant, happier, more fun if there weren't these currents running

underneath the conversations. And I always say to them, look, the last thing I want you to

do is to sit here silently in the room and then leave and go talk about each other. And I

know they do that. [pauses] So I try to address it. I try to be as direct as possible and it

just doesn't seem to be working.

Catherine acknowledged how the issues she experienced were inflected by gender, as well as the weight of institutional culture. Although she adopted several strategies to try and "fix" the problem, she nevertheless was unsuccessful. Her discursive hesitation, with the pause noted in the above quote, also revealed the struggle and resignation she felt. By her own admission, she failed to create a cohesive senior leadership team. Her narrative conveyed humility and reflection regarding the limits of her ability to create meaningful change, despite her best efforts. She may have placed too much blame on herself for the lack of cohesion; in attempting to contend with a larger cultural change underway at her institution, the role of gender as well as cultural context may have exceeded the abilities of any leader.

Another president, Janice, described how she confronted faculty opposition and attempting to move change forward. In this narrative, Janice explained the significant resource constraints at her institution, and the challenges she faced in educating faculty about fiscal realities:

I do the best I can to get people involved. Some of them will just have to go away. They'll

just have to retire and they can retire feeling frustrated that I didn't understand them. I

don't know. There's a lot on the line in being this kind of college right now and that's not

going to stop. I mean we're going to continue to be challenged in ways. It's not a cyclical

thing. I don't believe that. Some of our faculty say we've seen it all before, it's all

cyclical, this will all go away. That is just crazy thinking in my opinion. I think culturally

we're not the same place. Financially, the world is not in the same place. There aren't

the same borders that will hold talented students here. They feel much more mobile.

There are all kinds of reasons why I just don't believe that anymore. On the retention

side, we have retention issues here which have a lot to do with the fact that we try to fund

a lot of kids who have a lot of financial need and we also reach to take kids that we

probably shouldn't. We try not to do that and I've lopped off the left tail is what I call it,

trying to move against bringing students here who might find it difficult. We still have

some of them and some of them don't make it and so I commissioned a [committee] that

again is made up mostly of faculty because the faculty were complaining that they didn't

like the way things worked. They didn't like the students that the admission office was

bringing. They didn't like the fact that we had to bring so many kids who need so much

financial aid and that cut into their raises. Our faculty got raises in every one of the last

five years and in fact, when I first came here our faculty were making about 85% in the

median of their peer group and now they're all making over 100% of the median of their

peer group.

Janice's and Catherine's narratives highlighted how institutional context played a key factor in

modulating their approaches to challenges. They expressed palpable frustration in trying to fix

their respective problems. In attempting to keep her financially strapped institution afloat, Janice

clearly perceived that members of the faculty were unwilling to accept the changes being

implemented and the realities of the current situation. She tried to gain buy-in. By creating a

faculty committee, she attempted to make them part of a solution. However, she had arrived at a

point where she was now willing to simply wait them out ("some of them will just have to go away"). In a recent talk (adapted into an article) the president of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) postulated that women leaders who run counter to institutional expectations that they build consensus face an even greater hurdle by defying gender stereotypes (Pasquarella & Clauss-Ehlers, 2017). Janice and Catherine conveyed their exasperation, and the sense of responsibility they felt, in trying to lead change efforts, while experiencing active resistance from the community.

Other participants articulated the ways in which they wielded power carefully in order to create change, while recognizing the limits of that power within a shared governance model. Leslie conveyed how she attempted to move her agenda during her first few months as president:

> *I've been at lots of different institutions but that isn't an experience shared by most of the people here. So I spent the first semester really listening and trying to figure out where were the places where people shared my frustrations… For example, when I came in, there was probably a bookshelf full of reports over time detailing general frustration with the front door [O.C. I took this to mean the admission and student services functions]. Well, I had to believe I wasn't the only person ever to see those reports and the campus is pretty well read about the stuff that it produces. So I started just you know in general, what are you thinking about, what I'm thinking about, do you have any thoughts about, seeing if there was a conversation… So when I found places where that conversation was underway, I asked people what information they thought would be most important to gather to figure out what to do about it. So people said well you know students' voices, we don't know anything about student voices. We think this is it but we don't know what students think so I organized one of the student governance committees. It's called the*

student experience committee. So their charge for this year was to illuminate that student

voice vis-a-vis all of those services and they produced a report that did that and there

was nothing new in the report. So I was able to say WOW, this is powerful stuff and we

heard it here and we heard it here and we heard it here. So I think it's time for us to do

something about it. You don't do that without having some idea of what you think the

something is. But I gave some ideas to a group to shape, brought the ideas back and

implemented the change and said now we're going to do it this way.

Leslie in effect held up a mirror to the faculty and staff so they might see for themselves what

changes were necessary. In a demonstration of connective leadership, as a "convenor of

conversations," Leslie brought people together to create a shared sense of purpose and promote

inclusive change that promoted buy-in. While the problem of "the front door" had been

identified in numerous reports, no one had sufficiently focused on the issue to figure out what

could be done. Leslie illuminated the issue by involving people, rather than simply telling them.

Similarly, Sylvia described how she navigated budgetary concerns at her institution:

When we came out of the budget crisis, we had on the one hand faculty saying we were

responsible, we did what needed to be done, we made the cuts, but now don't bother us,

just value us now for what we are. And the board was saying this is the canary in the

mine shaft. You have to be making far more sweeping changes that you made. The

conversation was not going in a terribly productive direction with the faculty blaming the

board, you're all corporate types, you don't know what you're doing. And the board

blaming the faculty, you're ostriches, you're putting your head in the sand. And so I

developed something I called the futures initiatives. And we had a kind of conversation

between a selected group of faculty leaders and the board about the future of higher

education. Trying to build a culture of greater understanding at [liberal arts college] of

the trends in higher education and some of the challenges and opportunities they might

present.

Sylvia brought the representatives together in order to achieve mutual understanding of the

bigger picture, and then have the constituencies work together in order to identity constructive

initiatives on how those challenges could be addressed. Both Leslie and Sylvia engaged in the

connective leadership that Lipman-Blumen (1995) described: team-oriented and adaptable that

embraces an inclusive model, incorporating feminist ideas (Manning, 2018) grounded in

relationships and collaboration. This phenomenon is consistent with the research that women

leaders tend to exhibit a communal style of leading (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Moskowitz, Suh &

Desaulniers, 1994). Both leaders, without naming their leadership styles as such, seemed to

intuitively understand the necessity and effectiveness of connective leadership and transparency

within a shared governance system. They also demonstrated the necessity of presidents and

provosts exhibiting authenticity (Bornstein, 2014) in navigating the concerns and demands of

different constituencies – especially between the faculty and the board.

Several leaders with whom I spoke acknowledged the need to exert power judiciously

and occasionally. Taking a philosophical tack, Esther described the care with which she wielded

direct power:

But as a rule yes, if something is dangerous and damaging than of course I use authority,

but it is something that we can talk about. I never lose sight of where I am going, let me

be clear. I really know from the get-go what my, and I know where I get my values-side

from it, and I just do it. Where I carried people along. And my yardstick really for a good

decision is one that I think that when explained to a reasonable person, they can see why

you did it. And so if I'm making a decision I do ask myself, I do not make decisions that I

cannot explain. Let me say that I cannot explain to a reasonable ... person, and where

it's possible to do that with support from other people, I do it. And I find it if it's

reasonable, it's not very difficult actually convince people to come along with those

decisions.

Even when Esther needed to employ her positional power, she understood the need to "carry

people along." Instead of relying on positional or formal authority, Esther conveyed her respect

for others and their opinions. She still managed to employ collaboration and consultation when

exercising power. It was critically important to her that she be able to explain the decision, even

to someone who disagreed, with honesty and integrity. Alice, who was serving as interim

president at the time of our interview, echoed some of the same themes. In the following

description of how she approached diversity initiatives at her institution, she explained when it

was necessary to apply positional power:

So I worked really closely with a lot of the junior faculty as I hired them. I pushed. We

started a diversity advisor role for all of the search committees. We did some special

training with faculty because as I said there, I say here, although we have less fewer

resources to do it with here, but I said when you hire, if you hire well or ill, you hire for

40 years sometimes and so you don't get many opportunities on a small campus to

change out your faculty. So if you're going to push diversity, you got to do it hard. So we

did work really hard, we were part of the consortium for faculty diversity. We did some

diversity pre-doc and postdoc fellowships. We tried to hire those people in areas where

we knew. We had planned about three or four years out, so we were trying to hire pre-

and post docs in areas where we knew we would have tenure lines coming open. It was

somewhat successful, not wildly successful, but somewhat successful.

Given her passion for faculty diversity hiring and retention, Alice pushed forward an initiative using all of the tools at her disposal. She expressed a certain imperative and the need to "do it hard" in order to effect change. However, she still employed the use of "we" when explaining how she went about it, demonstrating that she did not act unilaterally. In so doing, she embraced pluralistic leadership to move a diversity agenda forward, using a full range of leadership competencies (Kezar, 2000; Kezar & Eckel, 2008).

Power, Gender, and Institutional Context

In most of the participant interviews, as exhibited in the above examples, the leaders were reluctant to admit how they employed power, and yet they provided examples of how they in fact exercised power cautiously and even quietly, but with desired effect. The attitude of one of the presidents, Martha, was notably different. She focused the bulk of our conversations on openly exercising power: getting it, reflecting on it, using it. The concept was woven throughout virtually all of her answers to my questions, and therefore it is worthy of special attention. Martha, who served as president of a state university and was a chancellor of a state system at the time of our interview, conveyed a very clear sense of what she wanted and what steps she needed to attain her goals. In addition, she demonstrated little discomfort with asserting formal power whenever necessary, even when it means risking her relationships with colleagues.

Well, I think that my greatest attribute is that I get things done. So it's very hard to

undermine someone who gets things done. You might not like them. You might resent

them. You think they get special privilege because they work out of the dean's office. I

don't care. I never have cared. I get the work done. There's no discussion. So at the time

we were getting ready to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the college. I took that

on. I not only started in the office of field experiences for the college of education but

then I took on the undergraduate programs. I took on the anniversary [celebration for the

university]. I was still good at accreditation because lo and behold, I was there long

enough that it came around again, every five years and I like to think that I was smart

and personable. But I think fundamentally, I got the job done and I got it done actually

better than a lot of the men who surrounded me.

Martha viewed her work ethic and clear sense of purpose as significant strengths, which led to a

highly successful career in academic administration. However, it is important to note the

institutional context of state university systems within which she had always worked. Her style

and approach was likely successful in a more bureaucratic environment than that of a smaller,

more collegial institution (Birnbaum, 1988). Over the course of her career, Martha was rewarded

for her ability to "get things done" within organizations that did not require wide consultation or

collaboration.

When I asked Martha what appealed to her specifically about the presidency, she

responded exuberantly with the following:

Being in charge, girl! Being in charge! I just figured out way early on that I could do

this. I can lead meetings. I can get things done. I get the meetings over with. I think I

have a fairly thick skin. I don't let the curmudgeons get to me. I understand what

visioning and then execution is all about, so I need to be a president. And I watched [her

previous boss] pretty closely, and other presidents as I saw them and began to catalog

the things that work and the things that don't work… So as you watch closely how people

approach the podium, what notes they have; how they give their speeches. It's just 1000

things that I have always been a keen observer of; curious mostly, just curious and then

trying to apply it to myself. I felt comfortable in the role. I knew I could do this if I could

just get a chance to do it. I had a pretty good idea of how to do it.

Martha's narrative style was unusual among the participants in its assertiveness, hubris and

candor; both quotes are emblematic of our overall conversation. However, even in a bureaucratic

system, she too acknowledged the importance of engaging with constituents:

You know a lesson I had learned [at a prior institution] and replicated [for the next

presidency of] all the constituent groups. We had 10 statewide meetings and we had this

hypothesis and by that time, it was the third time I had done that. And by the way, I never

saw [a male leader of a large state university] do a strategic plan in the entirety of his

tenure at [large state university]. Where did it come from? [Name of male leader]. So I

knew I wasn't going to do that. So… when [current institution] said what are you going

to do for us? I said, I'm going to give your vision at the hands of many and then we're

going to act on it. And that's it. I'm going to get the budget to do it and I'm going to be

the tireless storyteller. Those are my five points on leadership and when I'm asked to

come and speak to women students, whatever, I say, well I do have a theory of

leadership, I do, and here it is. [pounds the table] And so… that's it.

Even though Martha exuded a clear sense of her positional power, even pounding the table to

emphasize her assertions, she also acknowledged the importance (in contrast to a male former

colleague) of crafting "the vision at the hands of many." Per Kezar (2014), women leaders tend

to demonstrate a commitment to a "collective vision." Helgesen (1990) also theorized that

women leaders tend to see themselves at the center of an inclusive and connected organizational

web. While in comparison to the other participants, Martha professed an exceptional attraction to

power and being in charge, her commitment to involving others in the execution of her leadership was not. In short, her story problematizes an overly simplistic, binary analysis of women and leadership.

Another president shared her reflections on power, and the specific intersection with gender. Elaine, the president of a small state university campus, described how she talks to aspiring women administrators:

But a lot of the messages that I give them are about how you can be a humane administrator, how you can empathize, how you can figure out what are the alternatives instead of always doing it the way that it's always been done. Not break the rules, but reinvent things and I think that's important for women to see that they can make a difference in different ways, in a different way of thinking. You know we talked a little bit last time about do women lead differently than men? And I don't think there's any one answer to that but I think that you can be more creative sometimes by questioning well, why is it this way? Instead of just saying well we're going to do it because that's the way you do it.

In addition to expressing her views on power, I was struck by how Elaine infused her narrative with the epistemic advantage of being the "outsider within" (Collins, 1986), as one who can ask the important question "why is it this way?" Rather than provide a simplistic analysis of how women may lead differently from men, her talk illustrated the disruptive acts that outsiders can perform by resisting tradition and infusing new ideas and approaches.

With their varied styles and philosophies on power, Martha's and Elaine's narratives revealed the complexity and range of the participants' views. Despite their different attitudes, nevertheless there emerged the consistent theme of common purpose, involving others, and a

commitment to making a difference for the greater good of the institution. Their motivations were consistent with Madsen's (2008) qualitative study, who concluded that women leaders "share power, information, and decision making with others and are participatory, flexible, ethical and connective" (p.262). Both Elaine and Martha demonstrated their understanding of power as listening to others and achieving a collective as opposed to singular vision in order to further the mission of their institutions. Furthermore, the prevalence of gender in their narratives emphasizes its centrality in how they both approached leadership, as well as how they formed and articulated their identity as leaders. For women leaders, this shift may pose a particular challenge due to their gender and others' perceptions within a hegemonic system. As Bornstein (2009) described, they "must overcome structural and gender-based cultural biases and discrimination; many carefully monitor their own attitudes and behaviors to avoid reinforcing sex stereotypes" (p.208). As outsiders, and in order to seek leadership "legitimacy," the women still must be mindful of their gender performance, and navigate the expectations of their constituents.

Discursive Disjunction Among College Leaders Talk

At times, the participants were reluctant to attribute any barriers they may have experienced in their careers to the issue of gender specifically. However, as stated above, the gender factor was often present. While the participants may have struggled at times to outright "name" or describe overtly the ways in which their gender impacted their professional careers, nevertheless they wove into their narratives specific examples of gendered situations or experiences. This phenomenon proved consistent with the research that Chase (1995) conducted with women school superintendents. Chase determined that successful women can still experience various forms of discrimination, especially around gender but also race, class and

sexuality, and yet they struggled to reconcile their success with those discriminatory experiences. The women that she studied exhibited various distancing strategies in order to separate themselves from how they experienced discrimination. In my own research interviews, I discovered similar elements of what Chase termed "discursive disjunction."

In relaying their narratives of professional ascension, several participants relayed stories of sexist behavior they encountered early in their careers. Martha recounted a story of blatantly sexist behavior by several of her colleagues, and the encouragement she received to sweep it under the proverbial rug:

> One of the deans that I then worked for because the guy who hired me moved on, we hired this next dean. You know how you have to train the deans. So I didn't get along too well with one of the associate deans whom he hired because he was an outright sexist and I called him on it every time. Finally the dean who didn't like conflicts would say, "you've got to quit. Get off Jim's back. Leave Jim alone. Quit fighting with Jim." And that was another motivator for getting the hell out of Dodge. I'm going to fight with him because he's a jerk. He says awful things about women and he's a total sexist and you should see that. Your wife is a professional. You shouldn't like that and don't pull rank on me. Just tough, tough, and got things done and probably worked well with men because, they're a particular breed and the ones I worked with seemed somewhat helpless. This guy… I'd set up a meeting and had a podium and there were noise in the microphone, he was a real button-down guy and he would step back and look at me like okay, fix the mic, you. You know that stuff. I think there was just an accumulation of lack of respect for what I was doing for all of these people. I could survive, but in the end you want to survive _and_ be respected.

Here, Martha described a certain "pragmatic adaptation" that Madsen (2008) also discovered in

her research on women college presidents, who "practiced rationality in the face of obstacles"

(p.96). In Martha's case, she recognized the sexism and the fact that she could not win the fight

against her colleagues, or achieve the respect she deserved. Instead, she made the rational choice

to seek another position where she could thrive instead of just survive. While the leaders did not

exactly shrug off the sexism, their discursive use of humor as well as an acknowledgment of the

historical location of what occurred served as tools in assisting them with making sense of the

situations. In another example, Christine relayed sexist behavior, although she was somewhat

reluctant to name it as such, as the first woman in her department to go through the tenure

process:

> *MB: The fact that you are a woman, did you feel that that was an issue in the tenure*
>
> *process?*
>
> *Christine: I would say in the tenure process itself, probably not. Although, I think they*
>
> *were conscious of the fact that I was the first woman and sort of proud of themselves for*
>
> *getting a woman through. My department was very supportive and I think they were glad*
>
> *and relieved to actually have accomplished having a woman get tenure. Except for one*
>
> *faculty member who was already on his way out of the department, who was clearly*
>
> *sexist and possibly predatory, I never had any kind of untoward or dismissive or any bad*
>
> *gender related experiences. The one thing that I would say though that was related to*
>
> *gender is that I was very happy to have student course evaluations. I know everyone*
>
> *complains about student course evaluations all the time. I remember in the middle of my*
>
> *second year, one of the senior members of the department, a big supporter of mine and*
>
> *very friendly and all that, he said to me, you know we need to make sure that your*

evaluations are going to be okay to help you through your reappointment. I just went to

my office and I got them out and I knew that they were near the top of the department and

I took them to him and I said here why don't you take a look at these things and see if you

think it's going to be okay. So he came back with his tail between his legs and said I'm

sorry I ever doubted you. It was so helpful to have those numbers that people think of as

objective.

In listening to Christine's story, I was reminded of Steele's extensive research on stereotype

threat (2010), specifically what he terms "identity contingencies," which are the ways in which

we adapt and cope with the circumstances of our identities. Christine actively resisted the

stereotype that women faculty receive lower evaluations than do men. The adaptation response

that she conveyed in her narrative served to counteract the sexist attitudes that her senior

colleague demonstrated. Using hard data, she was able to prove him wrong, thereby dismissing

his gendered assumptions about her student evaluations, while rejecting the stereotype.

While some participants openly acknowledged the ways in which gender inflected their

experiences, others did not. In the following example, Janice mused generally about the reasons

why women may not seek a presidency:

And if you're going to invest your time and you're going to invest your personal

resources, you know I don't want to get into the mother thing, I have two children, right?

But if you're going to make that decision, I do think that women stop and think a little bit,

maybe a little bit longer about those choices. And I wouldn't be surprised if you know

that's one of the things that keeps women from going into presidency. I'm hoping there

isn't still some baked-in bias against women leadership. I don't think so. I think we

probably have gotten beyond that but I think the idea that women are more reflective,

maybe a little more introspective maybe now that you've mentioned hubris and maybe that's true … if you don't have it you can say men do. It could be culturally, it could be just that, you know people … It's interesting people sometimes ask, you know this is interesting. [OC: her speech had become somewhat halting as she speculated, she then paused and suddenly her voice became more assertive as she relayed the following anecdote].

When I'm with new students, we have this matriculation ceremony but I made this a real event for kids to remember. You know they sign this book here, sign into the community and I always run these ceremonies myself. This is something I do with them, in very small groups, and their parents are always there. And I will ask them. I will show them the [liberal arts college] bell and I will tell them that only the president gets to ring it, and only the president gets to ring it once… a year, at commencement and I say there's never been a [liberal arts college] graduate who's ever been the president of the college. Would you like to do that? And in my four years of doing that, not once has a woman raised her hand.

In her discourse, Janice at first seemed to struggle to convey why fewer women seek leadership positions. Her pauses and hesitations demonstrated how she was trying to articulate, even reconcile, the phenomenon without outwardly naming any sexism or other discrimination. She then switched to sharing the anecdote about how female college students seem less assertive, as a means of providing an explanation for how women may not be socialized to consider leadership roles, and her tone became more confident. Interestingly, she did not speak of any sexism she

herself may have experienced. The shift from her typically confident discursive manner to one that was more tentative and speculative revealed a struggle to make meaning of discrimination.

Like Janice, Elaine hesitated to name gender identity as a factor in her leadership, and yet it was still there as an undercurrent. She relayed the following story, with a similar discursive interruption in her speech:

> *Well I told you my whole long saga about grad school about how I wasn't sure that I wanted to be there and I wasn't sure I wanted to do academics and then when I got into teaching… [long pause] it was still kind of a struggle to write and to feel like I was the authority on something. It took me a long time to develop the self-confidence as an academic that I had something to say, that I could do something other people should pay attention to.*
>
> *And truthfully I've carried over a little bit of that into my presidency… I see some of my [male] colleague presidents, it's like it's all about them. And they are the institution and they helped to make the name of the institution but they make sure that everybody hears it from them. So I'm trying to strike a balance of not having it be about me and yet at the same time being a forceful advocate for this institution in as many venues as I can. I guess, I went to Catholic school and I remember one of the nuns telling me, I told her I didn't do very well on an exam, and she said 'it's good for your humility dear.' And so maybe I have some of the little Catholic school humility thing going. But I need to push myself to be able to brag more. So that's one of my projects that I work on.*

While Elaine's commentary is more reflective of her own experience than what Janice conveyed regarding students, the role of gender is apparent in both narratives. Although Elaine blamed her

lack of confidence at times on her Catholic schooling, it is important to acknowledge the

gendered discourse. In comparing her leadership skills and abilities with those of her male

counterparts, Elaine blamed herself for a perceived deficiency of not being self-promotional ("to

be able to brag more") in comparison to her male counterparts. She appeared to demonstrate a

particular understanding of leadership that suffered from the acceptance of a male-dominated

model, typifying what Freeman and Bourque (2001) termed the "paradox of leadership."

Elaine's sense of her own power and abilities were placed in a dichotomous relationship with

male leaders, but she did so in a self-deprecating manner. While her identities, as a woman and a

Catholic, contributed to her formation as a successful leader in her own right, they are not

necessarily deficient. She typified a struggle that women leaders face when assessing their

capabilities within a male leadership norm. Based on her own scholarship and experiences as a

woman and president, Bornstein (2009) makes the following observation:

> Female presidents face the same legitimacy hurdles as their male counterparts, but for
> women, the legitimacy bar is higher. Women must overcome structural and gender-based
> cultural biases and discrimination; many carefully monitor their own attitudes and
> behaviors to avoid reinforcing sex stereotypes. Expectations for the role of college
> president are based on traditional male models, and the position is located within taken-
> for-granted gendered structures. (p. 208)

Elaine's monitoring of her behaviors reflected her struggle to find her voice and self-confidence,

and to resist the sex stereotypes that Bornstein described. While her style may run counter to the

more confident, and stereotypical, male way of leading, it is not necessarily the wrong way to

lead. Elaine's characterization resonated with what Fitzgerald (2014) described in her own

qualitative study of women leaders. She identified the "dangerous terrain" that women leaders

must navigate in meeting leadership expectations. On the one hand, women must ascribe to

male-dominated notions of leading; on the other, women should lead in softer, more gentle ways,

and "[t]hese universalizing and reductionist discourses make leadership difficult for women if

not impossible" (p. 6). In my interviews with women leaders, like Elaine, their own discourses reflected an internal struggle to reconcile their own contradictory sense of how they should be leading, and the ways in which that struggle mirrored broader campus and societal expectations.

Internal and External Gender Performativity

Undertones of gender appeared in the leaders' descriptions of their sense of pride in accomplishments, and what problems and issues they struggled with. For some, a discussion about achievement, and any professed pride in that achievement, was inherently challenging. One provost, Christine, stumbled through her answer in the following manner:

> *Well, I would say… I guess I'd say that I have…. Well one thing I'm proud of is I think I've made some really good hires. I think that I succeeded in moving some people out, encouraging people who really needed to leave, to leave without actually laying them off and I've made some really good hires. So I think as a team of academic administration, I think we're in really good shape and I like that's a big accomplishment. I have worked hard at trying to make our policies and procedures sort of clearer and more transparent, more available to people. So I think that's, that's an accomplishment. I think in term of the … I guess another category would be strategic planning. I co-chaired both of our strategic planning committees with a board member...*

Christine's faltering style of narrative ("I think," "I guess") reflects the difficulty that she had in articulating her accomplishments, while listing the significant steps she had made to develop a strong academic administration team. The other items she listed are initiatives that have facilitated transparency, difficult decisions regarding personnel, and leadership of a strategic planning process – all of which were significant and laudable. Unlike Chase (1995), who found that interviews facilitated a methodological tool for women to claim their achievements, I found

that the leaders evaded that claiming. It simply proved more difficult for them to talk about experiences of which they were proud versus vexing issues, when the responses and conversations flowed much more easily. As a counter-narrative, I asked Christine to describe what she has struggled with in her role, and she responded, with some assertion, in this way:

> *In spite of my interest in mediation and negotiation, I don't like dealing with people who are bringing high emotion and who are unreasonable, in my view, in the way that they're disagreeing. I really like having genuine discussions about how to solve a problem and in that kind of context, I really don't mind hearing people saying it's really frustrating that we don't have this or that but this very ego driven, highly emotive, almost childlike demands for what seems unreasonable. I just don't really like dealing with that although over time I've learned to recognize that sort of behavior in different ways but I don't really like that.*

With ease, Christine described how she felt challenged as provost – in her case, with certain individuals who put forth unreasonable demands – but the facility of her narrative is what stood out in contrast to her expression of prideful acts. This example almost certainly demonstrated a "doing" of gender, as several of my participants struggled to express their individual agency and accomplishments (Moskowitz, Suh & Desaulniers, 1994).

The topic of gender emerged in several ways in my conversations with presidents about their interactions with trustees, and introduced another form of discursive disjunction. For many, the participants were the first woman to serve as president of their college, and they were working with boards – essentially, their bosses – who were overwhelmingly comprised by White men. On the whole, the leaders expressed the sense of support that they felt from their boards,

but issues of identity emerged in some interesting ways. One president, Julia, acknowledged that her gender led some trustees to caution her against hiring too many women:

> *Yeah you know one of the things that I did get flak for, which was obviously because I was a woman, was that I had several trustees contact me and say, the next appointment you make has to be a man. You're only appointing women. And in fact I appointed exactly equal numbers of men and women. See you do still run into those kind of things, no question.*

Julia also recounted the way in which gender emerged as a factor with respect to her relationship with her board chair:

> *I do think you know when I first came… the then chair of the board, I think my leadership style seemed unusual to him. [laughs] And again I think that's a little gender related. And we've always been good friends, we worked together very well. In the beginning I think he expected me to be more kind of top-down and I remember we were, we were organizing a retreat I think for the trustees. And I had organized it in such a way that was going to involve people, you know the trustee kind of doing some group work together, doing discussions in small groups. And I think he was really nervous about that. He thought there should be more, kind of a top down. But it worked out fine and he became comfortable with that.*

In acknowledging the different styles and set of expectations from her board chair, Julia revealed the confluence of institutional culture with gendered expectations. There was the obvious difference between a higher education, shared consensus model versus a "top down" corporate approach, but she also admitted to the more gendered elements. Instead of a direct and decisive style that her board chair expected from a leader, Julia performed a more consultative, inclusive

and feminist leadership style (Manning, 2018). Similarly, Janice recounted the gendered dynamic that existed between her and her board chair, a male doctor:

> *It's hard for me to say for sure though honestly because my most recent board chair who was [a physician], who when he came into being chair the board he treated me like a nurse. And it was very interesting for me but he grew out of it, he grew out of it as he became more and more comfortable in his role as chair rather than as [a physician] as the chair. So he actually started to treat me very differently but it's taken time.*

Janice went on to explain the overall gendered dynamic that she perceived and how it may have been different from the experience of her male predecessor:

> *But I would say that I have not been discriminated against overtly because of my gender except perhaps in one way which I do suspect. And that is you know I am not someone who will go to the bar and throw a couple of beers back and you know we have a number of board members who are inclined to do that and ended up with the former president. And I never rejected an invitation to do that. I would go and be with them and we would have a cordial conversation but I think it would be the same experience for them if they had invited me to do that but I do think that is the difference. And they do relate to me differently. It's hard to quantify. You know it's hard to tell. You can't do a controlled experiment here.*

In Janice's narrative, I noted again the discursive tool she employed when explaining her experience: "You can't do a controlled experiment here," and her hesitancy to name the ways in which she may have experienced that discrimnation. She evidently felt, and clearly described, how her gender inflected her relationship with the board members, but expressed reluctance in claiming her authority in that experience. She engaged in a type of "disrupted talk," conveying

her sense of subtle discrimination, and then immediately downplaying it. It proved difficult for her to include the discourse of inequality in her story-telling (Chase, 1995), and therefore she minimized the experience by questioning its validity.

Both Julia's and Janice's narratives illuminated the complicated nature of the president/board dynamic, and how it is fraught with gendered expectations of power and leading. Natalie, another participant, shared a more pointed story of the hegemonic structure into which she entered as the first woman to serve as college president at her institution:

> *And I think here… that coming in after two incredibly long serving men, I joked about it, but I still think it was hard for some of [the trustees]to adjust. That they actually had a woman president. I really really do. And there were some of them who wanted me to fail. They would have said they wanted me to fail because of this tribalism that they had. That I couldn't possibly understand them, but they're not that friendly to any females. This group… so I don't think it's over but I do think it's just part of being in their tribe cause there are hardly any women in their tribe. Now if they were to hear me say this they would say we don't discriminate at all. Well it's not that, it's that you're just not affirmative, what I call being affirmative, you're not welcoming… you're not affirmative. You don't go the last mile to join, to find a woman to join your tribe, that's just how I think about it. So I think probably they and some of the older male trustees felt more comfortable, well, were bullying me a bit. I don't think they would have bullied a male the same way.*

Despite her individual leadership accomplishments, Natalie did not feel fully accepted as a woman president. She recognized the specific and discriminatory aspects of gender and leadership. Within Natalie's board of trustees group, "there are hardly any women in their tribe."

In her story-telling, she conveyed how she felt like an outsider within (Collins, 1986). Through her narrative, Natalie made visible the male-dominated environment, or "tribe," into which women leaders enter, and the pervasive obstacles that women leaders still must overcome.

All presidents experience a great deal of scrutiny in their roles, both on campus and off, and therefore their self-presentation becomes a public act. The attention that women leaders receive can be especially intense, when "family roles, children's behavior, and one's own behaviors such as dress, exercise, alcohol use, and sexual activity are potentially up for public scrutiny" (Wilson, 2009, p.9). For at least one participant, Jennifer, the external presentation of self became a clear means of gender performance, which became an area of exploration and discussion in our conversation. Jennifer bluntly addressed how she is aware of and marks her identity as a woman:

> *Well, so I dress like a girl. I mean I dress like a woman and I don't in any way… I make no concessions to the fact. Like, I don't dress in an androgynous way. I mean I wear high heels, you know. And I think for [liberal arts college] that came as a surprise.*

Since gender is socially constructed, declaring one's gender through dress also declares one's sense of identity. Through her clothing and appearance, Jennifer "did" gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (p. 127). Leaders are frequently observed and examined, and the clothing choices they make can be a conscious means of performing style (think Gordon Gee's famous bowties), but also leadership. This is especially true for women leaders, who experience an even higher level of inspection than do men (Fitzgerald, 2014). Bornstein (2009) commented that for presidents who are the first woman to serve in that role, like Jennifer, they are seen as "an oddity, a novelty, even a cultural misfit.

Constituents may feel that she does not look or act like a president. They scrutinize her critically - her clothes, language, family arrangements, and management style" (p. 214). As a woman leader, Jennifer was making the conscious choice to embody her femininity through her clothing (Esposito, 2002). In choosing to "dress like a girl," she asserted her gender, and her status as the first woman president. Jennifer also described how the scrutiny she experienced extended even to her hairstyle:

> *And there was somebody who said something like, "why, you're such an attractive woman, you should do something with your hair!" And it was, you know, clearly from someone who had no clue about hair, and I said, "oh, really, what do you think I should do? Do you have any suggestions?" So it's things like that where you know…*

The fact that someone believed that they could comment on the president's hairstyle and attractiveness is in and of itself a gendered act, since it seems highly improbable that the same commentary would be made directly to a man. But Jennifer's reaction and response incorporated an undercurrent of power, and a small site of resistance to community expectations. As the first woman leader, Jennifer was performing her gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987), deliberately distancing herself from her male predecessors, thereby resisting the community's expectation of what a leader looks like. The participants struggled, and at times identified sites of resistance, in reconciling their own internal expectations of performance as well as their self-presentation as women leaders.

Women's Leadership and the Metaphor of Family

A critical component of this research was addressing with participants the ways in which they made meaning of their gender and leadership identities in relationship to community expectations. What arose from those conversations were how gendered those expectations were,

and their relation to the metaphor of the family. Janice, a president of a small liberal arts college, captured some of the nuances that contribute to the style and characteristics that are often attributed to women leaders, while carefully acknowledging the acculturation that helps to explain the ways in which men and women might lead differently. In our first conversation, she discussed how she tried to make herself as gender-neutral as possible. However, by the end of our second conversation, she had changed her mind:

I think that for a lot of my career, I may have even said this to you when we first talked and if I did, I'm taking it back because for a lot of my career I thought that because I tried to be gender-neutral because I thought I knew that in a highly male environment, if I was too much female that I wouldn't progress. I actually think that I was right about that piece. I think in the environments that I navigated through early in my career, I think that that was true. I know other women who feel the same way. In fact when you go to Wall Street, you see all the women dressing in tight, dark suits, kind of looking like the guys would look. I think that that's still true. In some environments particularly business environments, I think people get the idea that there's a certain way to be and it's more male in some ways. I think what I've learned through this presidency is that I was deceiving myself to think that people expected the same things from me that they expected from men. I think that was probably true early in my career but the higher up I got in the leadership level, I think the less true that became and I do think that people expect a completely different approach from me than they have expected from all of my male predecessors. That has become clear to me recently actually, through some feedback. In the last six months that I've gotten from some colleagues here who have told me that they believe that's true. They believe that I'm being judged differently because of the fact that

I'm a woman. They need me to make decisions here and they need me to take a

leadership stand but they don't want me to be bossy and they think I'm bossy just because

I'm doing the same kind of decision that my male predecessor would do and I'm probably

doing it in a much more political way than he ever did but it's still not good enough.

Honestly, I'm reconsidering this and after sitting down just in San Diego about two

weeks ago with a group of women who attended the ACE Women's Leadership Network

meeting and being challenged with these ideas again, I think it's not true. I think I needed

to believe that they expected the same thing from me in order to get through all the

transitions I've made but it's not true and honestly, I don't know how I'm going to satisfy

that for them because I am not their mother. I am not their confessor. I do not need to be

more compassionate than any of the men that they've ever worked with. I should be as

compassionate as I can be but I really think that I am held to a different standard in that

regard. The longer I'm in this job the more obvious that becomes…"

Here, she asserted a discursive authority about her gender, her leadership style, and the

intersection of the two. Janice demonstrated a heightened awareness of the role that her gender

has played and continued to play in how she was perceived as a leader. And, she expressed the

realization that her community held her to a higher double-standard as a woman leader. Her

narrative explicated perfectly the depth of the woman leader paradox that feminist leadership

scholars Freeman and Bourque (2001) described, whereby "our prevailing stereotypes still

include gentleness, emotionality rather than rational powers, the priority of interpersonal

relationships over independent achievement. In sum, our stereotypes still insist on an intuitive,

subjective perspective and a domestic focus" (p.7). Janice struggled to reconcile her identity as a

strong and decisive leader with the community's expectation that she provide them with

emotional, motherly support. Although she was reluctant to admit it at first, she eventually was able to name the dynamic as gendered.

The participants' gender identity seeped into their leadership in other ways. One president, Julia, who does not have children, described her efforts to support women employees, especially regarding maternity leave policies and childcare:

> *I don't see myself as a kind of mothering figure at all but I am a staunch feminist. And so I think it's important for women leaders to see whether there are any… There are two aspects to why I did the childcare and the maternity leave thing. I think it's important for women leaders to be sensitive to whether, when there are women employees, whether faculty or staff members, are being disadvantaged in any way. And early on I met with women faculty, and they were being disadvantaged. Our existing maternity leave policy was really bizarre. I think you got six weeks or something. Well that might be sensible for a staff member but not for a faculty member. You're either teaching a course that semester or not. And how can you teach half of a course, right? And so I discovered, I learned from the women, that what they would do is that they would have to kind of, they would have to request of their colleagues that someone would take over their course. It was kind of a begging situation. [laughs] So I said that makes no sense. I changed that. So in one way I made some of those decisions because I just tried to be sensitive to women's issues.*

Julia recognized the "bizarre" institutional maternity leave policy - even if she did not have personal experience as a mother. Her declared identity as a "staunch feminist" undergirded her ability to identify the inequity, and she employed her power to enact more equitable practices. Tarule, Applegate, Earley and Blackwell (2009) argued that:

> Like the issue of balancing the private and public domains or the personal and the professional lives, the issue of one's feminism or one's female status as a leader requires thought and negotiation. There is no way to erase the fact that one is a female and in a leadership role. It leaves, thus, the issue of how much one assimilates and resonates with dominant practices and how much one does not. (p. 45)

Similarly, Carmen Twillie Ambar, the recently named president of Oberlin College, described the concept of "corescendency," that is the "attribute of transcending gender when necessary to reach a broader audience, but not so much that you lose the core of who you are, rendering your gender irrelevant" (Ambar, 2016, p. 12). The participants often expressed a type of balancing act between their leadership identity and their gender. At times they were forced to reconcile, or transcend, their gender in order to meet the community's care-taking expectations.

Jennifer explained the particular complexity of negotiating her status as a single woman with her role as the first woman president, including the manner in which she interacts with alumni:

> *Well the hardest relational part is dealing with, is trying to help people find another mode of interacting with the president. So I don't really want them to ask me out, which happens occasionally. Although less now than it did a while ago. I don't, you know I would like to get past the kind of sexual innuendo although you know it doesn't bother me. And to find a way to find a meaningful relationship that is comfortable for them and that means it's not going to be the kind of relationship who were all parents, you know … so here's this person from the outside who's also a woman and I think that's been relationally, that's been the hardest thing for me. I think learning how to lead and be effective in a place where the metaphor for community is family. And where the metaphor for the workplace is family. It's just very complicated. And then also, that's partly a gender thing, but it's also kind of like, it's not a good metaphor for workplace. The*

workplace is a complex metaphor for the [liberal arts college] family. Thinking that

through raises a lot of issues. I mean you can do it with a real sense of irony in that

deciding to approach it using the notion of the family, with all the irony that the notion of

family would suggest.

Jennifer's use of the "family" metaphor is striking, especially since invoking the model of family

as applied to an organization can be especially problematic for a woman leader. The fact that she

was unmarried, and that she was "occasionally" asked out, reinforced for some that she was a

single woman, and not necessarily the leader of their alma mater. The notion of a college as

"family," with a woman at the helm, is intensely problematic, as Jennifer discussed. She

struggled with being seen as an authoritative leader of a complex organization, instead of as the

"mom" of the (college) family. As recounted in Chapter 5, Julia (who was also the first woman

president of her institution) also struggled with the notion of "family" and "community," which

she described as serving at times as a "bludgeoning tool." The positive, metaphorical attributes

of a family can easily give way to a negative, especially when there is a community expectation

that the woman president serve in a maternal role.

Given the 24/7 demands of a president, and the entertaining that is often required, several

participants raised the issues they faced in determining exactly who would take on the support

role that was often held by the spouse (typically the wife) of the president. For the participants

who were married, their spouses had other careers and could not realistically assume the

entertaining and other household responsibilities of being the "first spouse" - responsibilities that

also, historically, were taken on as unpaid labor by the president's wife. But for Jennifer, who

did not have a spouse or partner and was the first woman president at her institution, the

concerns were expressed more keenly:

And then there are a lot of, there's a lot of entertaining. Part of it… sometimes I feel the, you know, I feel like I'm doing two things. I'm both being the sort of host behind the scenes and of course was supposed to be engaging all the guests. Well it's hard to do both of those things.

And I'm both the president, and there are some activities that are conventionally here what the president's spouse has done. And so I do both those things. So it's kind of thinking all those things through. Just [laughs], it's just different. And it takes a little time to have to think about it in a way that perhaps no one has before. We're talking about women, the history of [liberal arts college] in particular, is that unbelievably powerful women who were the sort of first ladies of the place. They had independent existences from their husbands. They led at the college in ways that served the college well. So it's not really a question of a support role exactly. It's that you're missing half of the team where the work is done by the other team member who was in a leadership role, right? And I think the people feel the absence of that. So figuring out how to negotiate that is, it's not just that they were making sure the house was clean, stuff like that. It's that they were leading discussion groups and building relationships with the community and serving on boards and being a mentor to some of the students, and you know what I mean? Because of the nature of these women's leadership, they were very strong leaders. And so basically the college got two leaders for one job…

It does not appear that Jennifer's institution prepared adequately for the shift to a single, female president, but neither did she challenge the inequities of past models whereby "the college got two leaders for one job." She struggled to negotiate the shift from a traditional marital model

since, to use her language, "it's hard to do both things" – that is, performing the role of the president and the spouse who handles the entertaining. Traditionally, the entertaining and other invisible (but certainly uncompensated) responsibilities have been fulfilled by the female spouses of male presidents (Brown, Van Ummersen & Sturnick, 2001). Jennifer's particular institution had not accommodated the needs of a female, single president who did not, and should not, have the support of a spouse or partner. Interestingly, and despite her feminist framing, Jennifer failed to acknowledge the historical inequity of women's unpaid work, as well as her college's current failing to accommodate her personal circumstances.

The Power of Mentoring Others

In Chapter 4, the participants movingly described the role of mentors, especially from faculty, in encouraging them to imagine higher aspirations. And, in Chapter 5, I demonstrated that women in the academy tend to take on a disproportionate share of work related to service, that often is not recognized by the institution as "scholarly" endeavors. While discussing how they actually practiced leadership, several participants connected the two themes as they reflected on the dearth of women in leadership positions. More to the point, they noted the absence of mentoring for women at early and mid-career stages. Debra, a provost, made the specific observation regarding women faculty at her own institution:

> *One of the things that I find kind of interesting and I don't know what to make of it is, that most of our associate deans are women. If you look at our faculty council, the chair of that has almost always been male. And I don't know what that means. I don't know whether that means the sort of day-to-day actual work is, as in much of the world, being done by women whereas when we elect people and you kind of have these roles, and I don't mean to suggest that they're not working hard in these roles, but they're a different*

kind of role. And they're almost always men on this campus. So it may be that actually

the kind of mentoring that women on this campus need isn't to go into an administrative

roles, it's to go into leadership roles among the faculty which has really begun to occur

to me recently. That, that pattern is there and I'm not sure that the mentoring really is to

go into administration.

In acknowledging how skewed the opportunities for women are on her campus, Debra raised the matter of misguided mentoring and the impact on women. She mused that faculty leadership roles are where in fact the power resides, which open up possibilities for longer-term senior leadership roles. For women to gain and enact more power in higher education, they need to be directed away from the trap of "mom work" that women faculty often assume unconsciously within gender-dominated cultural settings (Tierney & Bensimon, 2000). The opportunity to combat this cultural phenomenon, as several participants noted, may arise through intentional mentoring.

Esther, a provost, conveyed a deep sense of responsibility to assist other women, both students and colleagues.

So, I have received a lot of help along the way, and even being associate provost, I did

not apply for the job. I was a professor. I was just called and offered the job. So when you

have that kind of experience really, it's a no-brainer. It's a duty to pass that on to other

people. It's totally, it's not even something for me to debate or think too hard about. I put

myself out there to anybody who is junior to me, or even senior and needs support.

Anybody who reports to me, I have these conversations. I am meeting with you and I'm

saying what are your aspirations? What are your plans for the future? And once you can

tell me that, you know I am sending them for training, and giving them projects and

things to do on campus that will build their expertise. And I'm watching, and supporting

as if I'm your supervisor, not a boss. I want people to be successful because I find in my

own experiences that being successful makes you more successful. So, yeah, I owe a lot to

a lot of people. And so I try to pass that on.)

By "putting systems to their own service" (Belenky, et al., 1997, p.140), Esther illustrated the

cyclical nature of mentoring, thereby demonstrating her moral sense of responsibility to others

and passing on the mentorship she received in order to pay down her debt to others. Not only did

Esther describe how she "put herself out there," she enumerated the specific ways in which she

provided encouragement, and opportunities to enhance their training and skills through clear,

tactical guidance.

The practice of mentorship is also critical to addressing, and eventually redressing, the

inequitable structures that are contained within colleges and universities. Esther described her

particular resolve in mentoring other women of color with great intentionality:

I can think of quite a few people who seek me out. Maybe, I don't know, maybe because

I'm going to all of these training things and maybe just because yeah, I'm a woman and

I'm a minority, and there aren't too many of us. Yeah, and therefore I make it my

business to mind their business… And in one instance, one woman who was in the

business office an accountant, just very smart. I just told her, you know you need to go

get a PhD or EdD or something. You just have to. And she thought I was joking. So I

said, look, now I am on your case... She registered and I was so glad this last May,

because she sent me a card that she completed her… EdD. So that just makes me so glad.

She said that and said okay [Esther], I've done it, I've done it!

In this example, Esther illustrated how she laid bare the opportunity for advancement to another woman of color that heretofore she had not conceptualized – much like my participants (described in Chapter 4) had not considered future possibilities until someone else encouraged them. Esther's commitment is consistent with research conducted on mentoring experiences among women of color: those who served as chief academic officers experienced significantly higher rates of mentoring over the course of their careers (Dean, 2009). Given the combined forces of sexism and racism, fostering intentional mentoring opportunities for women of color are crucial for their future success (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). As Dean explained, "When organizational structures are not equally permeable for all members within them, people and networks become the critical conduits for career mobility" (p.131). Esther exercised a form of power through her attentiveness to helping other women of color.

Other than Esther, many of my participants struggled initially to identify other women with whom they were engaged in a mentoring relationship. When I asked Leslie the extent to which she was committed to assisting other women overcome structural barriers, she responded with the following:

> *I have no idea. [OC: she says this deadpan, and we both laugh] Well that's probably not true but, [pauses] typically I think I have the biggest impact on folks in the academic area, it's really the area I feel most passionate about… I'm always looking for people who are department chairs and like it because, I want to grow them to the next level of academic leader. People who are in the sort of elected faculty positions, I always try to spend time with them to make sure that there's a climate in the faculty conducive to talking about those core academic questions of purpose, scope, sequence, quality, connection to the broader world, things like the breadth of a canon, the kinds of*

questions that you really hope a college is having. I always end up with people who ask

to be mentored, typically from student services and sure, of course, if you want to grow,

I'm a teacher at heart and so I enjoy those relationships. [OC: she appears to struggle

more with answering this question more than other questions.]

Since I was struck by her hesitation, I followed up by asking her for an example of someone she

may have mentored. To this question, she responded with more ease, and relayed the following

story of a woman whom she has pushed to seek higher opportunities:

I have one young woman in New Jersey that I'm still working pretty closely with. When I

met her she was an analyst in institutional research; bachelors degree, doing work that

was important to the college but her personality was just not IR, you know? She spent

every waking minute with the student activities people and whenever there was a call for

volunteers, the first person in the door. Frequently, I hold random group lunches where I

just invite people from different departments. They don't usually know each other, so it's

fun. So I had one of those and she was at it and I said do you ever think about doing

something different? She said, well am I not doing a good job? And I said, as far as I

know you're doing a great job but, here's my reflection. I see you in IR and everything

that comes out is fine and lovely and bound and perfect and then I see you over here and

everything feels better. You're doing this and all of the students know you as [name].

Every time I go to an event they know you as Miss [name], they always call you Miss

[name], but they don't know you. And she said oh, I love that. And you know what I think,

because of course, when you pull the cork out of the bottle, she's been thinking about this

stuff for years. She had great ideas, so when a position came up, I just moved her. I said

we're going to do an internal search only, anybody else that's interested in this, let me

know. No one was, so we moved her over and she's fantastic. She's now gone back,

finished her masters, is enrolling in a PhD program, you know has a great future in front

of her I think because she is doing what resonates with her. Sometimes you can see that

from a distance with people. Most times people are doing jobs because they got bills and

they don't dare look left or right.

In telling this story, Leslie described how she made visible what perhaps seemed opaque or even invisible to her mentee. Like Esther's example of the woman in the accounting office, Leslie acknowledged how the mentee, and others, do not necessarily have aspirations for themselves because perhaps they do not know that greater opportunities exist, or they are simply in survival mode ("doing jobs because they got bills and they don't dare look left or right"). At first, however, Leslie did not name her actions as mentoring. She demonstrated some unease with that label, even though she provided the type of encouragement that recast a woman's career by exposing the possibility of higher achievement than what she initially envisioned.

Like Leslie, other leaders demonstrated similar difficulty in thinking of examples of how they might have mentored someone, even after discussing how they themselves were mentored. It is hard to know whether they simply had difficulty naming specific individuals, or whether they reflected a sense of humility about their mentoring. Or, a more likely explanation may be that they had internalized a conventional attitude toward mentoring that prevented them from recognizing informal conversations as actual mentoring. In one interview, when I asked how Christine how she mentored people she supervises, she responded with:

I start off by meeting weekly. I just tell people, we'll meet weekly and we can talk about

whatever you want to talk about and then when you get to the point where meeting every

other week is enough, just tell me we'll go to every other week and we'll slow down the

pace. So I just set up that structure. And then I find that just through the process of

having regular meetings, whatever issues there are, it creates enough time and space to

talk both about particular problems that they need to solve and what development

opportunities they might want to pursue. So that's basically what I do.

When I probed by asking for specific examples of people she has mentored more actively, she replied:

I'm struggling to think of somebody who I would sort of designate in a formal sort of

mentorship role but I've done a fair amount of informal mentoring. When I was on the

faculty the former dean called me maybe once every six months to say will you be willing

to work with a particular junior colleague who's having some trouble. I like advising, I

like mentoring but I can't rattle off a list of… [trails off]. So I guess I try to kind of weave

mentoring in the conversation like with [name of supervisee] you know I was trying to get

her to think strategically about the opportunities that she has and I would call that

mentoring.

While Christine struggled to identify a particular mentee, she nonetheless described the accessibility and demonstration of care that are critical to mentoring, and the benefits that the mentee acquire in the relationship. In other words, she was in fact performing the role of mentor (Brown, 2005). This played out during my participant observation with Christine, and I watched her provide direct coaching to a faculty member, "Laura," who served as director of an interdisciplinary program. In my field notes, I documented their interaction after Laura delivered an assessment report during what Christine referred to as "deans meeting:"

Christine asked Laura other questions such as "I think I could weave this out myself, but

I'd like to hear you do it" and "what are the implications for students?" and "I actually

have a suggestion and I don't think it will take a lot of work." ... She asked Laura to review other program reports for ideas, and then recommended that she consider "what are the consistent themes of challenge and success?"

When Laura stopped talking, Christine says "I'm making this up as I go along ... but I'm saying that you should look for patterns, and then how we should consider staffing and priorities." Laura seems to take this in stride, and appears to listen thoughtfully. Mary, to whom I've now figured out that Laura reports directly, chimes in that "we can discuss this further in our bi-weekly meetings."

Later in the meeting, Christine's advice to Laura became more pointed:

At approximately 9:50 (the report section was supposed to conclude by 9:45), Christine asked Laura "in our remaining time, what would be most helpful for us to know?" Laura then launched into an explanation of the issues she had with administrative support – namely that the administrative assistant was excellent, but that she was spread too thin across projects. At this point Christine turns to me and explains that another administrative assistant is out on a medical leave for 2-3 months. Laura continued to talk and at one point Christine put up her hand and stated "wait, wait," which I interpreted as pushing back about a point she had made. In her report, Laura said there were problems with the nature of the position, which Christine then asked about. Laura complained that "no one responds to my emails" and "it's a weird position" and "I'm a glorified admin."... Christine responded "you're right that you don't have power, but what you have is the opportunity to develop strategy, what solutions could work, and to let Mary and me know where we should exert pressure. You need to determine your

comparative advantage and influence." She concluded what I would characterize as a

pep talk to Laura by stating "you're in a better position than we are because you're

closer to the ground." Laura stated "things just take a tremendous amount of time and I

like to get things done." Christine responded "yes! yes they do" while looking directly at

Laura seemingly to emphasize her point.

It was clear to me that Christine was engaged in a mentoring exercise, as she encouraged Laura to think more strategically about her program, and to provide the necessary leadership to accomplish the work. She also provided guidance on how Laura should view her role, in behaving more authoritatively "to determine your comparative advantage and influence." She acknowledged that Laura does not have power, but that she does have the opportunity to "develop strategy" – thereby echoing Christine's earlier observations in this chapter on how power is about "being able to effect the agenda." Christine provided Laura with invaluable advice and direction. While Christine may not in the aggregate view herself as a "mentor," nevertheless I observed her providing invaluable coaching to Laura as she struggled to transition from the role of faculty member to administrator. If mentorship can be defined as "an exchange of behaviors that are mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee" (Brown, 2005, p.659), then Christine was clearly providing active mentorship in her conversation with Laura, whether she chose to name it as such or not. It appeared to be an organic activity that was incorporated into the daily work that Christine performed as provost.

Another provost, Wendy, provided more apparent advice that she gives generally to early career administrators who are women:

The other advice I always give people and it doesn't matter whether they're moving up or

not is that the first thing you always have to remember is don't take anything personally.

If you can't live in that world then you will be very unhappy in this type of a position. But I think I would certainly encourage and particularly in the past tried to encourage women to think about moving on into different positions. I personally think the more of us that are in these positions the better it's going to be.

While Christine and Wendy had different points of recognition about mentoring, nevertheless they both conveyed the importance of engaging in the regular practice of giving advice and guidance to women they work with. Esther and Leslie, on the other hand, provided clear examples of women they mentored; Esther overtly named how she felt a responsibility to "give back" since she herself benefited from active mentoring. The range of responses demonstrated that the participants provided active support to women at work – support that (as articulated in Chapter 4) they themselves received at critical points in their own lives and careers. Whether through a formal mentorship relationship, or informal conversations and interactions in meetings, the participants described how they gave important feedback and advice to other women, leading to benefits not only for the individual themselves, but also in cultivating leadership more generally for women.

Conclusions

When it comes to academic leadership, gender and other forms of identity matter. The way in which my participants discussed power, in terms of their ability "to effect the agenda" and "convene conversations" proved instructive, and demonstrated their sense of communal leadership – even if they did not outwardly name it as such – by articulating the imperative of including a variety of constituents in administrative decision-making. The participants involved others in the collective exercise of identifying needs and formulating next steps in a collaborative manner with faculty, staff and trustees. In this way, they exercised power.

Gender also seeped into the ways in which the participants viewed their leadership styles, as well as how they interacted with faculty, staff, trustees and the community. They provided examples of how they were scrutinized and judged in ways that were undoubtedly inflected by gender – including the expectation that they engage in the caretaking of the institution. The participants had varied reactions to the "mom work" that women leaders are expected to perform, and served as a form of discrimination. Although several named the gendered dynamics at play, they did not go so far as to suggest that the structures of oppression required changing. Rather than viewing the organizations as sites of potential resistance, the participants developed their own methods of personal adaptation. They also tackled some aspects of inequality (e.g. childcare) that could be accomplished incrementally. But the participants did not articulate the need to dismantle the overall inequitable systems within higher education, such as tenure, work expectations, as well as sexism and racism. They chose to work within the system, rather than expressing a desire to take it apart. However, several expressed a sense of dedication to empowering and mentoring others, specifically other women, thereby providing some promise in developing a next generation of leaders.

Chapter Seven: CONCLUSION and IMPLICATIONS

For this dissertation, I explored the backgrounds and leadership experiences of seventeen women academic leaders in order to understand how they made meaning of those experiences, and the larger societal and structural forces that inhibit women's leadership opportunities in higher education. I employed narrative inquiry as a research method in order to ensure an attentiveness to women's voices and experiences, and to promote researcher/participant engagement within the inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). Rather than engage in a comparative analysis of women versus male leaders, I sought to center women leader's experiences in keeping with a feminist research approach (DeVault, 1999). West and Zimmerman (1987) provided the theoretical framework of "doing gender" that undergirded my research and discussion, while Collins (1986) laid the foundational construct for the "outsider within" status that several of my participants described. With indebtedness to Crenshaw (2000), I also problematized the binary approach used by other researchers by introducing nuanced identity factors, including race, class and sexual identities, as well as the importance of historical and organizational context. In so doing, I have promoted a more complex analysis of academic leadership and of the imbedded hegemony that impacts women leaders in higher education organizations.

My final chapter summarizes my findings, in order to answer the research questions that I presented in Chapter One, namely (1) How did intersecting identities and personal development impact and shape women's leadership experiences? In what ways did participants view the historical era in which they came of age, and how did they make meaning of that experience? (2) How did the women make meaning of their career opportunities, choices and progression? How did the women make meaning of the institutional and other barriers shaping their ascendency to

senior academic leadership positions? How did institutional culture and type support and/or hinder women's advancement? and (3) What structural barriers, both institutional and social, did the women identify as inhibiting their ability to assume a college presidency or provostship? What forms of institutional discrimination persist? In addition to answering these questions, I will present the importance and implications of this work, recommendations and strategies for change in higher education, and the limitations of this study as well as opportunities for future research.

Summary of Findings

Based on this dissertation research, three significant conclusions can be drawn about the larger structures at play for women leaders within higher education. First, women leaders have complex identities that are informed by their family upbringing, educational experience, race, gender, sexual identity, marital status and children, etc. My interviews demonstrated that the women leaders were highly reflective about their own individual experiences in how they achieved leadership positions, and how they approached their roles. However, they were not always able to name how they "did gender" and the intersection with other identities while developing and evolving as academics and eventually as administrators. Second, and similarly, the participants who identified as White did not discuss how race may have contributed to their success. As a researcher who also identifies as White, I too experienced discomfort in even raising the subject of race with my participants, thereby illustrating how Whiteness is normed within a racialized society. The topic is simply not discussed among those who enjoy its privileges. Third, in spite of the sexism that my participants described, they failed to acknowledge how the structures of higher education perpetuated the discrimination. The broader concerns hung in the air, but sometimes remained unstated in our conversations. The sexism they

faced oftentimes was presented as an individual effort needing to be navigated and overcome, rather than a systemic challenge to be addressed.

My findings followed a temporal format, beginning in Chapter Four when I investigated the role of family and upbringing, and experiences in college and graduate school to women leaders' identity formation. The participants' stories revealed the extent to which they were encouraged by family members to pursue their educational goals, and how some were forced to overcome financial and attitudinal barriers to their education. Several participants were first-generation, and while some received considerable support from their parents, others did not. Virtually all of the women acknowledged their faculty members for encouraging them to aspire higher than what they thought possible. At the same time, it was in college and graduate school that the participants experienced overt sexism, especially for those who were the first women to integrate formerly all-male institutions. Several of my participants explained how they began to formulate their identities as academics, but also as women, as first-generation students, as lesbians, etc. They accomplished this self-realization within the context, norms and influence of a particular era, many of whom came of age in the 60s and 70s, which created some richness and depth in their understanding of what was occurring at that time. The type of institution they attended also proved pivotal. For example, Martha and Wendy both attended large public institutions, and derived their encouragement and support from their participation in sororities. Other participants – like Sandra, Edith, and Jennifer – named specific interactions with faculty who provided encouragement in more intimate, small college settings. However, in almost all cases, and regardless of the institutional type, the women relayed the obstacles as individual experiences they needed to overcome as opposed to the structural discrimination that was present in their collegiate settings.

Chapter Five examined how the participants made meaning of their development as leaders, and how they were forced to overcome sexism and other obstacles as they progressed in their careers. My participants recounted points of realization when they began to understand the clash of personal choices and circumstances with higher education structures. For example, Martha's use of the term "place-bound scholar" illustrated how women must make choices, and oftentimes concessions, in order to accommodate a partner's career. The participants also recounted additional impediments and specific instances of sexism, including departmental cronyism and lack of mentorship, subtle (and occasionally overt) forms of harassment, and heavier service loads, all of which are factors that conspire to inhibit women's careers (for a thorough assessment and analysis of barriers to women and minoritized faculty, see Aguirre, 2000). In spite of these challenges, my participants managed to achieve professional success. In several instances they described how their identities influenced their leadership imperatives – for example, Edith's and Alice's shared commitment to first-generation students. Several, such as Jennifer, acknowledged and made meaning of their "outsider within" status (Collins, 1986) within the academy. With varying degrees of recognition, they all demonstrated how they circumvented sexism in order to climb the career ladder.

In Chapter Six, I endeavored to demonstrate how the women leaders expressed an understanding of power and leadership. My participants articulated a strong commitment to communal or "connective" leadership, which involves participation from a variety of constituencies, thereby reinforcing a feminist approach to leadership espoused by other scholars (Bensimon, 1989; Helgesen, 1990; Kezar, 2000; Lipman-Blumen, 1995), and that researchers have found to be more attributable to women (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Moskowitz, Suh & Desaulniers, 1994). Unlike many other leadership researchers, however, I was careful to

acknowledge the complexity and intersections of other identity factors, including but not limited to class, race and sexual identity, in the formation of leadership identity. The extent to which my participants understood how they "did gender" varied (West & Zimmerman, 1987), with some readily acknowledging gendered dynamics in leading while others were reluctant to do so. Many, if not most, of the leaders engaged in a type of "discursive disjunction" (Chase, 1995) with a focus on their individual accomplishments rather than structural impediments. This extended to the ways in which gendered expectations crept into their leadership experiences, in particular how as women they were expected to engage in the caretaking of the institution, thus reinforcing a maternal ideal. Finally, my participants acknowledged to varying degrees the importance of mentoring and supporting other women in their ascendancy to leadership positions. This sense of responsibility was expressed most keenly by Esther, who declared a sense of moral obligation in helping other women of color.

Illuminating the participants' narratives and the ways in which they made meaning of their experiences revealed not only the variety and complexity of women's stories in higher education, but also made visible the larger institutional structures. The participants experienced gendered attitudes and instances of discrimination, even when they did not directly name them as such. They navigated, and survived, those experiences and in relaying what occurred, the participants demonstrated, like Chase's (1995) female superintendents, their own discursive disjunction. At times they failed to name the structural impediments that continue to make the academy unfriendly to women. In their own assessment of women administrators in higher education, Pasquarella and Clauss-Ehlers (2017) commented that:

> Interestingly, among women who indicated that they are not interested in a leadership role because it exacts too high a price, many either fail to identify the gender discrimination in their own experiences or consider acts of discrimination to be individual events, rather than a function of institutional structures of gender discrimination… we

will not make real progress until we embark on structural changes that align the academy with the lived experience of a diversified faculty, as opposed to reward systems that privilege masculine behavior and reify the separation of the public and private spheres in which women continue to do the majority of unpaid domestic work (pp. 5-6).

I agree. To reinforce the authors' point, my participants framed any experiences with discrimination as individual occurrences, without sharing an understanding of the larger structural forces at play that inhibit access to leadership for all women. To compound the problem, my participants also engaged in excessive self-scrutiny when they experienced discrimination and/or faced obstacles.

Importance of Study

Our institutions of higher education are facing a leadership crisis at a time when the 24/7 demands of being a president or provost are complex, heavy and significant (Gagliardi et al., 2017). For women, those demands can be even more acute due to sexist attitudes and practices. Women academic leaders enter into what Fitzgerald (2014) referred to as "dangerous terrain" given the work demands plus gendered expectations of leadership. And, feminists can feel an intense pressure to remain true to their ideals while working within organizations that continue to perpetuate discriminatory practices and policies. In this dissertation, I attempted to demonstrate how the preservation of gendered, racist, homophobic and other stereotypes does *all* academic leaders a disservice, as well as the institutions and students they serve. In their study of leadership, Fisher and Koch (1996) openly contested a reliance on gender stereotypes as representing "exaggerated, charged, and ideologically motivated incantations that are designed to buttress preexisting parochial views of the world" (p.89). I would argue that *any* stereotypes serve to reinforce that parochialism, with women of color facing particular challenges as they are forced to contend with embedded racist as well as sexist attitudes. And, that disruption is necessary to ameliorate current demands as well as prepare for the future.

I hope that my participants' experiences revealed how women leaders have had to navigate the academy, and the work that is still needed in order to dismantle the hegemonic structures that persist. Mariko Silver, the president of Bennington College, wrote in a recent essay that:

> We must work to send a message to all women in the academy that their voices are valued, that their presence is welcome, that this is their community to inhabit and to shape. The first step is to recognize the culture; the second is to recognize that the culture needs to shift. Anyone in a leadership role, not specifically women, must be ready to contribute to that shift, and maintain an active role in the process (2016, p.102).

Silver made a critical point about the necessity of all leaders (not just women) to engage in this work of cultural transformation, and that recognition of the problem is the first step. This dissertation seeks to promote the inclusive work that Silver advocated: 1) through women leaders' narratives, the problematic aspects of higher education culture are exposed and 2) only with the newfound recognition of the problems can we argue for needed systemic change.

Implications for College and University Leadership

There is a practical dimension to this scholarship. In 2017, twenty-two percent of college presidents reported that they plan to step down from their positions in two years, more than half will do so in five years, and seventy-eight percent within nine years (Gagliardi et al., 2017). To prepare for this substantial and impending shift, institutions must not only consider the possibility of a non-White male president, but actively promote and prepare for women and people of color to assume the role, and recognize the sexist and racist barriers that may stand in the way. The recognition must include the necessity of seeking leaders who possess a different set of competencies and experiences than what institutions have searched for in the past, and resisting the "fit" criterion, that has served to exclude women and people of color from leading institutions of higher education.

The demands on college and university leaders may seem intimidating, but the women with whom I spoke conveyed the rewards and immense satisfaction they felt in fulfilling their responsibilities. They clearly articulated that the work they accomplish matters to their institutions and especially to the students they serve. Promoting opportunities for women to share with one another the psychic rewards will help make the work less daunting. However, it will be important that women who do not necessarily possess the type of scholarship and research credentials that have long been a requirement for senior leadership roles are encouraged to advance their careers. Ensuring that a wide and diverse group of individuals are mentored and supported is increasingly necessary in order to ensure a broad pool of talent for the future.

Paying attention to the ways in which gender, identity and academic leadership intersect promotes an understanding of the ways in which dominant structures inherent in higher education institutions require interrogation. Women leaders' experiences, which incorporate a complex sense of identity, will promote a more expansive understanding of higher education, and the changes that are needed. In so doing, a more inclusive environment will be created for all that "breaks the conspiracy of silence" (Turner, 2002). As stated above, creating those changes takes both awareness and effort, as well as coordination among multiple constituencies. Feminists can make visible the challenges that women face, but we must recruit more allies and partners in the effort to "strike out" and create change (Kark, 2004). Only through deliberative, tactical approaches that encompass equitable partnerships will the systemic change occur (Blackmore, 2010). In other words, we need to move from the theoretical to the practical to disrupt the power systems that have perpetuated discrimination against women and people of color. This disruption is at the heart of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990), which is why additional research that explores the particular experiences of women of color is also required.

The experiences and voices of women leaders provide them with a privileged epistemological lens through which to view higher education structures. As "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986), they bring new ways of understanding and interpreting institutions. More women and people of color ascending to senior leadership roles in the academy certainly will disrupt traditional expectations about leaders. But institutions need to change as well. In order to hasten that change, others in the academy will need to create fissures in our operative frameworks and theories of leadership, that resist essentialized leadership styles based on prejudicial gendered norms that serve to oppress women (Koenig, Mitchell, Eagly & Ristikari, 2011). An important place to start is by understanding how past and current women leaders make meaning of their backgrounds and identities as well as their approaches to leadership, in order to recognize and then address the disconnect.

What often goes unacknowledged in leadership studies is the personal strain that the leadership role can create. In addition to the relentless schedules that leaders maintain, they must make decisions that have a major impact on employees and students, and sometimes those decisions are gut-wrenching. And, it may have an especially gendered component for women. As Fitzgerald (2014) explained, "leadership is emotional work. Leadership involves making judgments about priorities, values, professional relationships and individuals. This emotional work is never ending, tiring and infrequently acknowledged. Primarily it is work that women undertake that may further contribute to the feminization of their labour" (p. 75). Many women are balancing family obligations, especially with raising children, are therefore taxed with "emotional work" both at home and in the office. And the toll this can take is very real. Another, less frequently acknowledged concern is the particular pressure many women, and especially women of color, feel because they must represent women due to their minority status (Sanchez-

Hucles & Davis, 2010). An "intense pressure not to fail" (Fitzgerald 2014, p. 83) undergirds their daily lives, and adds another layer to the scrutiny already felt. Thus, another reason for future research that focuses on the experiences of women of color.

As described in Chapter Five, managing personal time with professional obligations can be especially challenging for women leaders, creating a problematic intersection of family life and leadership. Almost 20 years ago, the American Council on Education's Office of Women in Higher Education conducted a series of roundtable discussions with women presidents. Those conversations concluded, among other findings, that "having – or not having – a family tends to complicate women's lives more than those of their male counterparts" (Brown, Van Ummersen, Sturnick, 2001, p.5). Women continue to bear significant responsibility for balancing home, family and work (Ford, 2016; Guarino & Borden, 2017). The former president of Princeton, Shirley Tilghman, participated recently on a panel of women presidents, and stated that "We haven't figured out how to get through those old expectations and those old cultural practices to make it possible for women to think about work and family as complementary … Until we figure this out, I think we're always going to be sort of running uphill" (June, 2015). My participants illustrated a number of the same struggles set forth by other researchers and leaders in their efforts to manage personal lives with professional obligations. Nancy Cantor (2007), who has been a chancellor/president at three different institutions, explained in a speech to the Emory University Women's Symposium the added challenge that women face is in accepting the help, at the risk of being perceived as "less than" their male counterparts. She asserted that "the experience of conflicting identities is the *pervasive* one for women. What most women lack is - not a 'wife,' as some of us joke - but a 'third space' that gives us the time, the structures, the flexibility, the support, and the encouragement to carry out our multiple roles" (p.7). It is

important, therefore, for institutions to acknowledge the problem, and then create family-forward policies and practices that will service to mitigate the challenges that women face, and that will provide assistance to their male colleagues as well.

Academic leaders can play a critical role in modeling the possibility of leadership for others, and through their experiences, revealing what inequities exist that serve to oppress others. Some specific strategies will be enumerated in the next section. To return to the point made by Sandberg (2013): the act of "leaning in" will be insufficient if any real progress is to be made for women academics. As Ward and Eddy (2013) noted, "merely leaning in to traditional male systems fails to question the assumptions behind a culture of overwork and lack of work-family integration." More systemic changes are necessary.

Recommendations and Strategies for Achieving Change

With the leadership imperative outlined above, I will offer several practical strategies for how to ameliorate, if not slowly eradicate, the problems that persist in the academy and the forces serve to discriminate against women and especially women of color in achieving and serving in leadership positions. The first step will be to not only declare that a gender imbalance exists, but that something must be done to prepare for inevitable and looming leadership shifts. To correct the inequities, focus must be given to disrupting the system. Looking inward at the structures that inhibit women's advancement, rather than identifying the problem as a pipeline issue, will bring attention to the issue and help to identify solutions. In addition to acknowledging the gendered nature of leadership, applying an intersectional analysis that takes into account the interlocking nature of oppression will also promote a more inclusive set of approaches. I will enumerate several specific strategies here.

Leadership advocacy

The phenomenon of "invisible work" is very real for women, and should be both acknowledged and combatted. College and university leaders can advocate in behalf of their female faculty and staff, and the advocacy must start early. As Esther explicated in her example of taking on a summer project, the invisible work also can go unpaid. One helpful antidote is providing resources to free up time for scholarly work in the pre-tenure process. Since women and faculty of color are often asked to serve on committees or commit to other university service work, they are disproportionately and negatively impacted in terms of the drain on their time, and their ability to focus on research pursuits (Henderson, Hunter & Hildreth, 2010; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Turner, 2002). Along with faculty chairs, deans and presidents can wield their power and influence to advance procedural changes to ensure that men and women have more equitable opportunities to pursue research, and that service obligations are redistributed. In addition, the current faculty rewards system unfairly privileges research over service. Student support needs to remain at the heart of faculty work, and should not only be shared by men and women, but also must be rewarded as part of the tenure and promotion processes. Presidents and provosts have an opportunity to lead efforts that reimagine the system. In so doing, they can work to disrupt the family metaphor in the academy, and the ways in which it contributes to structural oppression – including more provisions for child support and enhanced family leave policies in order to mitigate the disproportionate burden that women continue to bear. Leaders are well-positioned, and indeed have an obligation, to promote, even demand, that organizational structures are reimagined in such a way to promote greater opportunities and access.

Sustained development opportunities

Other scholars have addressed the need to increase and enhance leadership development opportunities for women in the academy (Kezar & Carducci, 2009; Kezar & Beesmyer, 2009;

McDade, 2009; White, 2014), even beginning at the undergraduate level (Keohane, 2014).

Several organizations, such as the American Council on Education Fellows program and

associated networks, Women's Leadership Academy at the University of San Diego, the Harvard

Graduate School of Education development programs, and Higher Education Resource Services

(HERS), all support women's leadership. HERS recently underwent a significant revision in its

format and curriculum, including a reduction in the number of days in residence required, in

order to adapt to more modern demands on women's times (White, 2014). However, it is

important to note that programs such as these, while highly beneficial to the women who

participate, are by nature time-consuming and, in some cases, extremely expensive. This will

continue to be an issue for aspiring women leaders who serve less-resourced institutions,

especially community colleges and minority-serving institutions. A more inclusive approach

might involve a more grass roots effort, with brief, local shadowing opportunities that would

encourage women in different departments to develop their leadership skills by observing current

women leaders, or a case study approach that facilitates mid-career women in a geographic

region to gather and discuss through leadership challenges. These are just two possible ideas.

Most importantly, leadership development programs for women should encompass a broad array

of services that promote diverse opportunities for women to understand the complexity of a

provost or president's role, hone their leadership and supervisory capabilities, develop their

financial management acumen, and share collaborative strategies so they may challenge the

status quo.

Intentional mentoring

Intentional mentoring holds great potential to break apart the existing systemic inequity

that continues to plague our institutions. The more women and people of color who ascend to

leadership positions, the greater likelihood that "mentoring cultures" (Dean, 2009) will be fostered, thereby expanding opportunities for others. However, simply increasing numbers will be insufficient. Guarino and Borden (2017) asserted that department chairs and deans (both men and women) need to recognize and correct the current imbalance imbedded in academic institutions. In addition to challenging the system, as noted above, the individual mentoring of women and people of color would serve to correct the added challenge that they face in performing the invisible (and often unpaid) work. It is simply the right thing to do – starting with new faculty. The anthropologist Yolanda Moses, who served as president of City University of New York/The City College from 1993 to 1999, astutely wrote that "Failing to reach out and mentor new faculty members is analogous to inviting someone to visit you and live in your home and then proceeding to ignore the person, although you periodically expect him or her to participate in family life without the person knowing the internal dynamics of the family or how it works" (2009, p. 191).

Mentoring is a necessity that must begin at the level of new faculty members, and must be integrative, focused and sustained in order to have the type of fundamental structural improvements that are necessary to create a more inclusive academic environment. This is especially true for women of color at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) who face the nefarious confluence of racism and sexism in achieving career advancement (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Stanley, 2006; Turner, 2002). White women are important allies, but may not realize that they are at times reinforcing privileged systems. When possible, Henderson, Hunter and Hildreth (2010) advocated for a peer mentoring structure for African American women faculty, "that is characterized by mutual edification, interdependence, and the inclusion of functional and psychosocial support, as a tool of resistance, coping, and transformation" (p.38). Therefore,

creating a webbed system of networking that includes multiple individuals with different

backgrounds, identities and experiences will ultimately be more effective overall.

While peer mentors are important for all the reasons just listed, targeted strategies are

also necessary, and more experienced mentors must offer more than simply providing emotional

support. One approach that Davis and Maldonado (2015) advocated is through "sponsorship,"

rather than "mentorship," in order to promote an active, rather than simply advisory, role. A

sponsor will take a more intentional and directive interest in addition to providing consultation,

e.g. forwarding resumes, making calls to colleagues, actively encouraging applications for

administrative positions, serving as a reference, etc. Intentional sponsorship of women requires

actual advocacy, and is work that can be shared among multiple supporters who are committed to

advancing an individual's career.

Attentiveness to search processes

Finally, institutions should not only be attentive to the end of the pipeline, but must

actively ensure that women and people of color are put forth for leadership roles. When seeking

new presidents, search committees and boards of trustees will need to think innovatively about

the required skills, which are different than a traditional path that includes service as a faculty

member and scholar. Search consultants share in this responsibility as well, and should not be

contracted with unless they demonstrate a genuine commitment to, and have a proven track

record of, putting forth candidates who demonstrate a range of competencies and identities.

There is one promising strategy suggested by a recent quantitative study. The researchers

demonstrated that having more than one woman or person of color in the finalist pool

substantially changed the likelihood that a woman or person of color would be the successful

candidate (Johnson, Hekman & Chan, 2016). Having multiple, diverse candidates mitigated the

leadership bias toward White males, and overcame the feelings of tokenism directed against women and people of color. A philosophical commitment to diversity is important in a search process. However, any attempts at concerted change will require specific tactics that disrupt the traditional approaches and expectations that have conspired to prevent talented candidates from being considered.

Limitations of Study

I will reiterate here what I made clear in Chapter Three: this dissertation is limited by the lack of participants who identify as women of color, and by my own experience as a White, heterosexual, cisgender female administrator. Future feminist research on women and leadership will be significantly enhanced when the voices of women of color are centered, and their particular leadership pathways are studied. This may require that more women scholars of color, due to their own research positionality, are encouraged to engage in this work. Given the complexity of studying women of color in leadership, and the "gendered racism" that they face (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), I hope that intersectionality will be the preferred methodology as a means of underpinning their research. With respect to other intersecting identities, it is worth noting that this research was conducted at a time when there was less recognition of transgendered identities. As greater awareness and understanding of gender fluidity emerges, there will undoubtedly (and hopefully) be leaders who do not identify along a strict gender binary and therefore will contribute to a more inclusive understanding of academic leadership.

A notable challenge for my study were fundamental time constraints, given how busy presidents' and provosts' schedules are. For several participants, especially Jennifer, I would have liked the opportunity to delve more into some of the themes they introduced, but finding a time to follow up (after several attempts with their assistants) proved impossible. For example, in

my conversation with Jennifer, she explicated the gender performance that occurs in her clothing choices and other forms of self-presentation. In hindsight, I regret that I did not pursue this specific topic with other participants. There are possibilities for future research in how women leaders specifically perform gender through dress and other identity markers.

In addition to the limited time I was able to spend with the participants, there were few opportunities to also engage in participant observation. Although I made that request during my recruitment process, most leaders expressed discomfort with my interest in observing them in non-interview settings, and declined the opportunity for access. Since the ability to observe interactions with others would have given further shape and context to this work (Creswell, 2013), I regret that more participants did not agree to this research method. While I reconciled myself to accepting whatever time and access the leaders were willing to provide me, I acknowledge the limitation that one-on-one interview settings provided.

Finally, none of my participants led Research I universities or MSIs at the time of our interviews, and only one led an all-women's college. While I attempted to gather a set of participants across institutional types, the majority of my participants represented predominantly white, residential liberal arts colleges. In hindsight, it is not surprising that I did not have more women of color participants, given the types of institutions that I tapped in the participant recruitment process, and from which they have been historically excluded. The research would also have benefited from including more women who led larger and more complex organizations with multiple schools, colleges, and hospitals – or deans of schools within those larger enterprises. In this dissertation, I aimed to demonstrate that institutional mission and context was critical to understanding individual experiences. Thus, a broader inclusion of women who

represented a diversity of identities, and leadership of diverse organizations, would have expanded and enriched this research.

Concluding Thoughts

In higher education, the structural barriers coupled with individual disinclination to pursue presidencies conspire to maintain a shallow pool of potential applicants. The overt and subtle gender discrimination faced by the participants in my research affirm the urgency for structural changes in the academy in order to create a more equitable environment for women (and men) overall. The unrelenting nature of the work, coupled with the compromises leaders must make in order to perform their jobs and meet institutional expectations, makes it especially challenging for women leaders to overtly oppose the structural barriers. Fitzgerald conceded that while performing leadership "There is little time, energy or space to debate issues of gender equity, social justice and inclusion" (Fitzgerald 2014, p. 21). Centering women's leadership experiences in the academy facilitates a recognition of the issues, and serves as a catalyst for change – and reinforces the need for strategic partnerships. Women should not bear sole responsibility for structural change. Men will need to be involved as well.

Women leaders "do gender" every day in fulfilling their roles as presidents and provosts – even when they do not recognize or acknowledge it. Presidents and provosts navigate and perform their own internalized notions of what it means to be a leader, oftentimes reinforcing the gendered aspects. Following West and Zimmerman's argument, if the current leadership paradigm is to truly be disrupted, we must first reveal the variety and complexities of individual experiences. Listening to a diverse set of voices facilitates a more inclusive environment for the sake of future leaders, and for our students. Only in so doing will the institutions be reinvented,

so women may achieve, as Cantor (2007) asserted, "the balancing act – of individual survival

and institutional transformation" (p.3).

Appendix A: Participant List and Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Title	Number of times and method of interview	Identity Markers	Institutional type
Sylvia	President	1 time by phone for one hour	White, Heterosexual	Private all-women's liberal arts college
Edith	President	1 time by phone for one hour	First-generation, White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Leslie	President	2 times, first by phone for one hour, followed by 90 minutes in person over lunch in her office	First-generation, White, Lesbian	Public community college
Janice	President	1 time by phone for one hour, followed by one hour in person in her office	First-generation, White, Lesbian	Private liberal arts college
Natalie	President	1 time by phone for one hour	White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Catherine	President	1 time by phone for one hour	White, Member of religious order	Religiously affiliated private liberal arts college
Wendy	Provost and VP for Academic Affairs	2 times, first by phone for one hour followed by 75 minutes in person in her office	White, Heterosexual	Private masters-level college
Elaine	President	2 times, first by phone for one hour, followed by 90 minutes in person in her office, then lunch in the university dining hall and a brief tour of campus	White, Heterosexual	Public masters-level small university
Patricia	President	1 time by phone for one hour	White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Debra	VP and Dean of Academic Affairs	2 times, first by phone for one hour followed by 75 minutes in person over lunch in her office	First-generation, White, Lesbian	Private liberal arts college

Alice	Interim President	2 times, first by phone for 75 minutes followed by 2 1/2 hours in person over lunch	First-generation, White, Heterosexual	Public liberal arts college
Christine	Dean of the Faculty and VP for Academic Affairs	2 times, first by phone for one hour followed by one hour in person in her office, then 90 minutes of participant observation while attending her dean's leadership meeting and an approximately hour-long tour of campus	White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Julia	President	1 time by phone for one hour	First-generation, White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Jennifer	President	1 time by phone for over an hour (attempted multiple times to schedule a follow-up interview)	White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Sandra	President	1 time by phone for one hour	White, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Esther	Provost and Dean of Faculty	2 times, first by phone for one hour followed by two hours in person over lunch	Black, Heterosexual	Private liberal arts college
Martha	Chancellor	2 times, first by phone for approximately 30 minutes followed by one hour in person in her office	White, Heterosexual	Public university system

Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Emails

Request to include 2012 Interview in Dissertation Research:

Dear *Name*,

I write to follow up on a phone interview that I conducted with you in 2012. You may recall that I am a PhD candidate in the School of Education at Syracuse University, and that *name of contact* connected us.

When we last spoke, I interviewed you as part of my coursework for Advanced Qualitative Research. I am now at the stage of preparing and writing my dissertation. In reviewing the transcript from our conversation, it became clear that your insights and experiences would contribute to my research on the intersection of women's identity and leadership in the academy.

Would you be willing to grant permission for me to include our interview in my dissertation? Please rest assured that our conversation will remain confidential. Your name and identifying information, including the names of your institutions, will be changed in any written work or presentations I may give.

I attach a research consent form, which has been approved by the Syracuse University Institutional Research Board. If you are willing, please review and sign the form, and return it to me via email, fax or mail (my contact information is below). Of course I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Meanwhile, thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,
Meredith Harper Bonham

2014 Interview Request:

Dear *Name*,

I write to follow up on the email introduction that *name of contact* provided. As he/she mentioned, I am a doctoral student in higher education at Syracuse University, in addition to my administrative role at Hamilton College. My dissertation research interests center on the intersection of identity and academic leadership. Therefore, I am conducting a qualitative study of women provosts, deans and presidents to explore their growth and development as senior academic leaders. Thank you for indicating your initial willingness to speak with me. I hope that the following additional information is helpful; a copy of my IRB consent form is also attached.

My research approach is to conduct two interviews, during which I will ask a series of questions about your background and career, and in general try to learn more about who you are as well as your leadership style. The first interview may be conducted over the phone or in person, and should take approximately one hour. Our second conversation would be in person on your campus. Should your schedule allow, I would also like to spend a little time together as you go

about your day. Having served as chief of staff to two Hamilton College presidents, I realize that this is a significant request. Please rest assured that I will be respectful of your time and commitments, and that our conversations will remain confidential. Although our interview will be recorded and transcribed, your name and identifying information, including the name of your institution, will be changed for the purpose of any papers, articles, or presentations.

Please let me know whether you have any specific questions or concerns about my research, and whether I may work with your assistant to schedule a time for our first interview.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I look forward to meeting you.

Best wishes,
Meredith

Appendix C: Consent Form for 2012 Participants

Study on Women Senior Academic Leaders
IRB #13-239

My name is Meredith Harper Bonham, and I am a PhD student in the Higher Education program at Syracuse University. I am asking for your permission to include in my doctoral dissertation research study the interview that I conducted of you in 2012 as part of my coursework. Your decision to provide permission, and therefore to participate in my doctoral research study, is entirely voluntary. This document will explain the study to you. I encourage you to ask any questions, and I will be happy to explain anything further in detail.

For my doctoral dissertation, I am exploring the complexities of identity and leadership among women in senior leadership roles at colleges and universities. In 2012, I interviewed you on the phone for approximately one hour as part of my data collection for my College Student Development class with Catherine Engstrom, or for my Advanced Qualitative Research class with Professor Sari Knopp Biklen. The interview was then transcribed. I now would like your permission to use that interview as part of my dissertation research.

All information will continue to be kept confidential. The interview in which you participated was audio-recorded digitally, with your oral permission, and stored on a password-protected computer. It was transcribed by me or by a transcriptionist who signed a confidentiality agreement, and is now stored on my password-protected computer. For my dissertation, a pseudonym will be used instead of your actual name. The name of your institution and other identifiable details will be changed. Three years after completing my degree at Syracuse University, I will destroy the recordings. Additionally, I will continue to use pseudonyms for any articles or presentations I make using data I collect for this study.

The risks to you of participating in this study are that in the interview you may have revealed personal information about your life, career and experiences. These risks will be minimized by maintaining the confidentiality of our conversation and employing the use of pseudonyms in written materials.

If you have any questions, I may be reached at mbonham@hamilton.edu, 315-859-4802 (office) or 315-723-4067 (cell). If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research, please contact my dissertation chair Professor Catherine Engstrom at Syracuse University at cmengstr@SYR.EDU or 315-443-4763. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than myself or my advisor, please contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

Please review and sign:
All of my questions have been answered, I am over the age of 18 and I provide permission to include my interview with Meredith Harper Bonham in her research study. I have received a copy of this consent form, and I agreed at the time of the interview to have the interview

audiotaped.

◆ I agreed to be audio recorded
◆ I did not agree to be audio recorded

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Printed name of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Printed name of researcher: Meredith Harper Bonham

Appendix D: 2014 Consent Form

Study on Women Senior Academic Leaders
IRB #13-239

My name is Meredith Harper Bonham, and I am a PhD student in the Higher Education program at Syracuse University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study for my dissertation. Involvement in the study is entirely voluntary. This document will explain the study to you. I encourage you to ask any questions about the research, and I will be happy to explain anything further in detail.

I am interested in exploring the role of identity in the lives and careers of women in senior leadership roles at colleges and universities. With each president or senior academic dean, I plan to conduct two interviews. The first interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes and will take place over the phone or in person. For the second interview, I wish to spend another hour with you in person, and then a few more hours with you (schedule permitting) on campus to learn more about what you do and how you interact with others over the course of a normal day. Since I plan to observe your natural interactions, I will strive to make myself as unobtrusive as possible while you conduct your daily business. The one-on-one interviews will be audiotaped; while shadowing you, I may take handwritten notes.

The benefit of this research is that you will be contributing to a field of research that seeks to understand how women leaders understand and perceive the role of gender and other forms of identity. By taking part in the research you may enhance your understanding of how intersecting identities have impacted your own life and career.

All information will be kept confidential. The interviews will be audio-recorded digitally, and stored on a password-protected computer. Interviews will be transcribed word for word with a pseudonym instead of your actual name. The name of your institution and other identifiable details will be changed. The recordings will be used as part of my dissertation research for data analysis purposes. The only individuals who will have access to the recordings are myself and a transcriptionist, who will be bound by confidentiality. Three years after completing my degree at Syracuse University, I will destroy the recordings. Additionally, I will continue to use pseudonyms for any articles or presentations I make using data I collect for this study.

The risks to you of participating in this study are that you will be revealing personal information and about your life, career and experiences. These risks will be minimized by maintaining the confidentiality of our conversation and employing the use of pseudonyms in written materials. At any point in the study, you may decide that you no longer wish to continue and therefore you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. I may be reached at mbonham@hamilton.edu, 315-859-4802 (office) or 315-723-4067 (cell).

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research, please contact my dissertation chair Professor Cathy Engstrom at Syracuse University at cmengstr@SYR.EDU or 315-443-4763. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than

myself or my advisor, please contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at 315 443-3013.

Please review and sign:
All of my questions have been answered, I am over the age of 18 and I wish to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this consent form, and agree to have the interviews audiotaped.

◆ I agree to be audio recorded

◆ I do not agree to be audio recorded

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Printed name of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Printed name of researcher: Meredith Harper Bonham

Appendix E: Sample Interview Questions

First (telephone) interview questions:

Let's start by having you tell me about your upbringing. Where did you grow up? What was your family situation? How did they support your path to college?

Tell me about your own college experience. What did you enjoy the most? What sorts of challenges did you face?

What led you to graduate school? Can you describe your career path since graduate school?

What significant opportunities have you taken advantage of, and why? What opportunities have you turned down, and why?

How have family and other personal factors impacted those choices?

At what point did you entertain the notion of becoming a college president/provost? Did you consider institutional types and/or cultures? Can you describe your experience while you were engaged in the presidential search process?

What were your first few months like as college president/provost?

How would you describe your relationship with your board? With your senior staff? What are the challenges you experience with respect to students and faculty? How have your identity and background shaped your relationships with different constituencies?

What are the most vexing issues you have faced in your presidency? What do you enjoy the most about your job?

In looking back on your career, what accomplishments are you most proud of? What might you have done or handled differently?

How do you balance your personal life with your professional demands? How do you find time for yourself?

Second (in-person) interview questions:

Based on our first conversation, can you say more about the ways in which [NAME] and [NAME] mentored you? How have you mentored others? Can you explain more about the role of the gay and lesbian caucus?

You mentioned in our first conversation that college "was a period in my life when I think I was trying to figure out identity issues. Now I identify as a lesbian. Then, I don't think I really had a clear sense of identity." Can you say more about how the process through which you developed your identity?

How much do you interact with students? How does your own identity and background shape your relationships with students?

I'm interested in exploring your sense of what sort of power you hold in your position. You mentioned that "on the one hand you have responsibility and on the other hand you don't really have much power." Can you say more about that? What are some examples?

You also remarked "One of the things that I think I've always been good at is not necessarily reacting the way I feel like reacting. I'm not actually at all convinced that growing up as a gay person in this society in the 1970's doesn't prepare you well for that." In what ways?

Can you talk me through a typical day or week? What do you most enjoy doing? What do you not enjoy doing?

You said in our first conversation that if you do anything for too long you begin to get bored. To what extent are you thinking about next steps? Have you considered the possibility of becoming a president? Why or why not?

What advice do you have for women faculty who are interested in a senior leadership role?

Is there anything you would like to add?

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university presidents say about effective leadership*. Stylus Publishing.

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EDUCATION

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Ed.M., concentration in administration, planning and social policy *June 1998*

Kenyon College, Gambier, OH

A.B., *cum laude* with high honors in history *May 1992*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Kenyon College, Gambier, OH

Vice President for Student Affairs *2015-present*

Hamilton College, Clinton, NY

Division of Student Life

Senior Associate Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator *2011-2015*

Office of the President

Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Trustees *2009-2011*

Executive Assistant to the President and Secretary to the Board of Trustees *2001-2009*

Assistant to the President *1999-2001*

Office of Communications and Development

Associate Director, Annual Giving *1998-1999*

Office of Admission

Assistant Dean of Admission and Coordinator of International Admission *1995-1997*

Assistant Dean of Admission *1993-1995*

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators 2015-present

    Panel presentation on "Student Affairs and Athletics: Collaborating for Student Success" March 2019

Panel presentation on Kenyon's diversity initiatives, Kenyon Alumni Association May 2018

NASPA Alice Manicur Symposium for Aspiring Chief Student Affairs Officers January 2014

Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) Training and Certification Course October 2011

Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities 1999-2011

    Chair, 2010 Board Professionals Conference 2009-2010

    Vice Chair, 2009 Board Professionals Conference 2008-2009

    Member of Board Professionals Leadership Group 2008-2011

    Member of Board Professional Staff Membership and Marketing Committee 2007-2011

    Presentation at 2008 Conference on "Board Succession Planning"

National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education 1999-2011

    Presentation at 2007 Conference on "The President's Role in Shared Governance"

Member, External Review Team for the Whitman College President's Office September 2010

Accreditation Teams for Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA	April 2016
Thiel College, Greenville, PA	March 2007
King's University, Wilkes-Barre, PA	March 2004
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WRITINGS

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