Women's Pathways to the University Presidency: A Qualitative Inquiry into University Women Leaders' Career Paths and Presidential Aspirations

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WOMEN’S PATHWAYS TO THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY:
A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO UNIVERSITY WOMEN LEADERS’
CAREER PATHS AND PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS

by

Celeste Andria Wheat

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
ABSTRACT

WOMEN’S PATHWAYS TO THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY:
A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO UNIVERSITY WOMEN LEADERS’
CAREER PATHS AND PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS

by Celeste Andria Wheat

December 2012

Although from 2006 to 2011 the percentage of women college and university
presidents increased from 23% to 26%, the critical problem remains that women continue
to be disproportionately under-represented at the highest levels of university leadership,
especially the presidency. Also problematical to women’s advancement, women are less
likely to hold the key-line administrative positions (e.g., academic dean, vice president,
chief academic officer/provost) that serve as pathways to the presidency.

In response to the dearth of empirical data on the career paths of university
women leaders, the purpose of this research, grounded in a postmodern feminist
theoretical framework, was to qualitatively explore how women key-line administrators
and women university presidents experience and make meaning of their career paths and
leadership/presidential aspirations. Additionally, this study examined how personal
factors (e.g., childrearing, marriage, etc.) influenced women leaders’ career paths and
leadership aspirations.

Using a basic interpretive qualitative design, the primary technique for data
collection involved 16 in-depth, semistructured interviews with a purposive sample of
university women key-line administrators (12) and university women presidents (4)
employed at various types of public and private universities located across the
Southeastern region of the United States. Also, a document review was conducted of personal (e.g., curricula vitae/ résumés) and official (e.g., published speeches) documents which provided first-hand accounts of the participants’ career path experiences. Then, to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, a peer examination was conducted of the research findings.

The data analysis revealed five major thematic categories relating to the participants’ (a) career paths and educational credentials; (b) leadership aspirations; (c) experiences with mentors, role models, and/or professional networks; (d) family relationships and work/life balance issues; and (e) perceptions of gender and leadership. Significantly, the overall research findings of this study provide new and deeper insights into: (a) the participants’ unique, unintentional, and emergent career paths to university leadership; (b) the factors that served to motivate and/or hinder participants’ leadership aspirations; and (c) how personal factors (e.g., family relationships, etc.) influenced many of the participants’ career choices and leadership aspirations. Finally, major implications for research, theory, and practice are presented.
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A Dissertation
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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2012
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in honor of Dr. Martha Dunagin Saunders, the ninth President of The University of Southern Mississippi, who inspired the topic of my dissertation through her groundbreaking path to becoming the first female President in USM’s history. This dissertation is also dedicated to my parents, Nell Marie Wheat and William Lewis Wheat, Sr., for their love, support, and encouragement.
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I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Lilian H. Hill, Associate Professor of Educational Studies and Research, for her exemplary service as my dissertation chair and research methodologist. I truly appreciate Dr. Hill’s dedication in giving generously of her time, expertise, and invaluable mentorship to guide me through each stage of the dissertation process. I would also like to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Aubrey K. Lucas, USM President Emeritus and Professor of Educational Studies and Research; Dr. Amy L. Chasteen Miller, Associate Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology; and Dr. Thomas V. O’Brien, Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Studies and Research for their outstanding service on my dissertation committee and for their valuable contributions to my dissertation research. I would especially like to acknowledge Dr. Miller, a long-time mentor and friend, who first inspired me, as an undergraduate sociology major, to pursue a doctoral degree. I am grateful to her for being a constant source of encouragement, support, and assistance throughout my educational journey to achieving my doctorate.

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I wish to express my gratitude to USM’s Committee on Services and Resources for Women (CSRW) for providing me with a $1,000 research grant to support the costs associated with the travel for my interview research. I am grateful, as well, to the USM Graduate School for awarding me the Ellen Walker Graduate Scholarship, which also served to provide financial support for my dissertation research.

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Special thanks go to each of the university women administrators and presidents who gave of their valuable time to participate in my study. Finally, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to my parents, Nell Marie Wheat and William Lewis Wheat, Sr., for the love, support, patience, and help they have provided me throughout the process of writing my dissertation and realizing my goal of earning a doctoral degree.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Within the field of higher education, scholarly interest in the phenomenon of leadership has contributed to the development of a “rich and complicated literature” (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 102). Drawing from multiple perspectives and academic disciplines, leadership scholars have generated numerous ways of approaching, conceptualizing, and theorizing the various dimensions of leadership (Northouse, 2007). As Northouse (2007) contextualizes, today “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it” (p. 2). Although scholars have not been able to reach a consensus concerning a precise definition or all-encompassing conceptualization of leadership, the on-going challenge of defining leadership has produced a myriad of theoretical frameworks (e.g., trait, behavior, cultural, etc.) for studying the phenomenon of leadership (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006, p. 11).

The research base in the field of higher education has traditionally been defined in male terms and based on male models of leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bensimon, 1989; Bornstein, 2008; Chin, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Hoyt, 2007; Kezar et al., 2006; Nidiffer, 2001; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). It was not until the decade of the 1970s that scholars first began to consider gender differences in leadership (Hoyt, 2007; Kezar et al., 2006). Feminist leadership scholar Hoyt (2007) attributes the absence of gender-related issues in the leadership literature “to a variety of reasons including methodological hindrances, a predominance of male researchers largely uninterested in the topic, and an assumption of gender equality in leadership” (p. 265).
Equally important, the noticeable absence of women and gender-related issues in the leadership literature prior to the 1970s is largely reflective of the invisibility of women in organizational leadership roles in higher education as well as other sectors of American society (Bensimon, 1989; Chin, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Touchton, Shavlik, & Davis, 1993). In assessing the history of higher education, the “late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the times of ‘great men’ presidents” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 341). Indeed, within the broader scope of higher education’s history, feminist scholars point out that even as recently as the 1970s it was largely unimaginable that a woman would hold a high-level position of leadership within higher education or any other organizational context of American society (e.g., politics, business, military, etc.) (Chin, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Touchton et al., 1993). For example, in 1975 women constituted less than 5% of American college presidents (Touchton et al., 1993). In fact, in the early 1970s there were no women serving as presidents of four-year coeducational colleges and universities (Bornstein, 2008). As a result, the majority of leadership studies in higher education have almost exclusively focused on the experiences of white males—“render[ing] women’s experiences as invisible” (Chliwniak, 1997, p. 19).

However, the tides began to turn for women in 1986 when the number of women college presidents increased to 9.5%. Markedly, the 1980s represents the first “decade in which women assumed a larger number of presidencies in public higher education” (Touchton, Shavlik, & Davis, 1990, p. 5). Since the mid-1980s, the overall percentage of women presidents has more than doubled in size (King & Gomez, 2008). According to recent data from the American Council on Education (ACE), since 2006 women have represented 23% of all college and university presidents (King & Gomez, 2008).
Notably, the movement of women into senior-level academic leadership roles and college presidencies over the past 30 years “fueled the scholarly interest in the study of women leaders” and gender-related issues in leadership (Hoyt, 2007, p. 265). In fact, over the past 15 to 20 years, one of the most important trends in contemporary leadership studies in higher education is the use of new paradigms (e.g., postmodern, critical, social constructivist), leadership concepts (e.g., social change, spirituality, collaboration), and theories (e.g., feminism, critical race theory, etc.) for understanding leadership. Significantly, the new paradigms, concepts, and theories in contemporary leadership studies take into account the voices and experiences of women and racial/ethnic minorities who have historically fallen outside the margins of traditional definitions and conceptions of leadership (Kezar et al., 2006).

Strikingly, researchers focusing on women leaders have found that “women tend to define and understand leadership in ways not reflected in traditional models based on all-male research samples” (Kezar et al. 2006, p. 53). Kezar et al.’s (2006) comprehensive review of the contemporary leadership literature in higher education suggests that women’s ways of leading are considerably different from the findings of earlier leadership studies based on samples of male leaders from military, corporate, or political contexts. In comparison to more traditional forms of leadership (e.g., authoritarian and directive), feminist studies on leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonkski, 1996; Nidiffer, 2001) reveal that women’s ways of leading tend to involve collaboration, “empowerment, and an ethic of care” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 22).
Background Issues

In seeking to better understand the background issues that have contributed to the current scholarship on women leaders in higher education and women’s movement into higher education leadership roles, this section of my dissertation addresses (a) traditional approaches to leadership in higher education, (b) contemporary trends in higher education leadership research, and (c) major socio-political events which contributed to women’s advancement into senior-level administrative posts and college presidencies. More specifically, in order to better ascertain the ways in which traditional approaches to leadership have failed to account for women’s experiences, I begin with a brief review of two of the earliest and most prominent approaches to leadership studies, trait and behavior theories, which have served to inform the traditional research base in higher education leadership prior to the 1990s. Next, I review the major changes that have occurred in contemporary leadership studies that have served to broaden and expand definitions of leadership to include women’s voices and experiences. Then, in seeking to address the background issues which have contributed to the advancement of women into higher education leadership roles, I review the significant social and political events (e.g., social movements, federal legislative acts) initiated in the 1960s and 1970s, which were crucial to women gaining access to senior-level administrative positions and presidencies in higher education.

Traditional Approaches to the Study of Leadership in Higher Education

Prior to the onset of the 1990s, Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) set out in their book, *Making Sense of Administrative Leadership: The “L” Word in Higher Education*, to summarize and critically assess six of the most prominent theoretical traditions that have served to inform the empirical research base in higher education,
particularly between the 1970s and 1980s, including: (a) trait, (b) behavioral, (c) power and influence, (d) contingency, (e) cognitive, and (f) cultural/symbolic. Notably, among the aforementioned traditional theories, trait and behavioral theories represent two of the earliest conceptual approaches to the study of leadership. Additionally, trait and behavioral theories have been widely influential in shaping scholarly and popular notions regarding who is considered a leader and what constitutes leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Chin, 2008; Kezar et al., 2006; Nidiffer, 2001; Northouse, 2007).

Rising to prominence during the first half of the 20th century, the trait approach represents one of the earliest attempts to systematically study leadership (Kezar et al., 2006; Northhouse, 2007). Significantly, early trait theories were referred to as “great man” theories of leadership because these studies were based on the identification of the “innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great [male] social, political, and military leaders (e.g., Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, and Napoleon)” (Northouse, 2007, p. 15). In addition to identifying personality traits, early trait studies also focused on identifying the physical traits of effective leaders (e.g., height) (Bensimon et al., 1989; Nidiffer, 2001). Therefore, many of the early traits associated with great leaders are, in fact, culturally associated with masculine traits such as courage, strength, dominance, confidence, and aggression (Astin & Leland, 1991; Chin, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001).

Next, in the mid-20th century, the development of behavioral (or style) theories served to expand the focus of leadership studies to observing “what leaders do” in differing contexts (Northouse, 2009, p. 2). More specifically, behavioral or style approaches to leadership focus on the behaviors, actions, roles, and processes of successful leaders (Bensimon et al., 1989; Kezar et al., 2006; Northhouse, 2009). Earlier behavioral leadership studies sought to identify types of leadership styles ranging from
authoritarian to democratic while more contemporary research has sought to examine the ways in which leaders balance the task and relationship dimensions of practicing leadership (Bensimon et al., 1989; Kezar et al., 2006; Northouse, 2007; 2009).

Taken together, trait and behavioral theories, rooted in a positivist paradigm, are considered “leader centered, individualistic, hierarchical, [and] focused on universal characteristics” (Kezar et al., 2006. p. ix). Also of importance, Bensimon et al. (1998) clarify that scholars have not been able to prove that a certain set of traits are necessary for effective leadership or reach a consensus concerning a particular leadership style that is universally successful in all contexts (Kezar et al., 2006). Although more prominent throughout the 20th century, trait and behavioral theories continue to be researched within the field of higher education today (Kezar et al., 2006; Northouse, 2007; 2009).

Contemporary Trends in Higher Education Leadership Studies

In seeking to update Bensimon et al.’s (1989) earlier contribution to the field of higher education leadership studies, Kezar et al.’s (2006) book, Rethinking the “L” Word in Higher Education, describes the revolutionary changes that have occurred in contemporary leadership studies. In their review of the contemporary leadership literature in higher education, Kezar et al. (2006) summarize the new perspectives, theories, and concepts that have emerged in the empirical leadership research over the past 20 years. One of the most important trends in contemporary studies is the growing use of new paradigms in leadership research including the postmodern, critical, and social constructivist paradigms.

In fact, the authors assert that the “application of new paradigms has led to the revolution that has altered the face of our understanding of leadership in the last twenty years” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 28). Increasingly, the use of new lenses for studying
contemporary leadership has served to “reshape,” “complicate,” and ultimately expand the ways in which scholars conceptualize leadership in the 21st century (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 29). For example, the critical paradigm, in particular, has opened the door for feminists and critical race theorists to question traditional leadership theories, which “privilege certain groups over others” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 21). In applying a critical perspective to the study of leadership, feminists and critical race theorists have begun to question the ways in which traditional definitions and approaches to leadership (e.g., trait and behavior) pose inherent gender and racial biases to social perceptions concerning who is considered a leader and what constitutes leadership (Kezar et al., 2006). In particular, feminist scholars have raised important questions concerning traditional conceptions of leadership, such as “Why are the traits and behaviors associated with leadership such as masculinity and dominance gendered?” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 21).

Over the past 20 years, the increasing application of critical, postmodern, and social constructivist paradigms has contributed to the development of six new leadership theories including (a) transformational leadership, (b) complexity and chaos theory, (c) expanded cognitive theories, (d) social and cultural theories, (e) processual leadership, and (f) team or relational leadership. In contrast to the leader-centric and hierarchical nature of traditional leadership theories (e.g., trait, behavior, etc.), contemporary theoretical approaches to leadership are “process centered, collective, context bound, nonhierarchical and focused on mutual power and influence” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 33). Consistent with the current trends in leadership studies, researchers studying “women presidents, provosts, department chairs, and deans have found that they are less likely to rely on bureaucratic and hierarchical forms of leading” and more likely to work in collegial ways which seek to distribute power (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 140).
Among the new theoretical approaches to studying leadership, social and cultural theories have provided new insights and important implications for studying both women leaders and leaders of color. For example, in relation to studying women leaders, Kezar et al. (2006) report several key findings on women leaders in their review of the leadership literature:

Women tend to be rated more highly on measures of transformational leadership (Daughtery and Finch, 1997), have less hierarchical and more collective views of leadership (Kezar, 2002c), are oriented toward care (Gillett-Karam, 2001), and are oriented toward empowerment (Duncan and Dkarstad, 1995; Howard-Hamilton and Ferguson, 1998; Komives, 1994). (p. 128)

Additionally, Kezar et al.’s (2006) review of the literature suggests that emerging research (Kezar, 2000, 2002; Longino, 1993) examining the intersection between the various dimensions of a leader’s identity (e.g., race, gender) may have important implications for studying women leaders and leaders of color. Kezar et al. (2006) point out that initial studies indicate that the various dimensions of a leader’s positionality (e.g., race, gender, academic discipline, job title, etc.) may contribute to women leaders and leaders of color having a “pluralistic leadership style,” which involves “(1) awareness of identity, positionality, and power conditions; (2) acknowledgment of multiple views of leadership; and (3) negotiation among the multiple views of leadership” (p. 129).

In addition to new theoretical approaches to leadership, the use of new perspectives and theories has given rise to the emergence of eight new leadership concepts: (a) ethics and spirituality, (b) collaboration and partnering, (c) empowerment, (d) social change, (e) emotions, (f) globalization, (g) entrepreneurialism, and (h) accountability. Kezar et al. (2006) clarify that the new leadership “concepts are
important ideas that are combined to develop theories but on their own represent important areas for people to consider as they examine the phenomenon” (p. 5).

Interestingly, among the aforementioned concepts, the concept of empowerment is most prominently represented in the research pertaining to female leaders and leaders of color (Kezar et al., 2006). Also, the research literature suggests that women leaders tend to be associated with the concepts of: (a) collaboration and partnering, (b) empowerment, (c) social change and (d) emotions (Kezar et al., 2006). Overall, the new developments in leadership studies over the past 20 years represent the diverse ways in which scholars are approaching leadership in the contemporary era of higher education’s history.

*Significant Social and Political Changes to the Context of Higher Education*

In part, the changes that have taken place in contemporary leadership studies are indicative of the larger social, economic, technological, political, and global trends which have served to shape the postmodern era of higher education (Kezar et al., 2006). Specifically, Kezar et al. (2006) maintain that today leadership in higher education occurs in a “new context” which is increasingly characterized by (a) calls for greater accountability, (b) declines in state-supported appropriations for public higher education, (c) global market forces, (d) technological advances, and (e) shifting demographics (p. 1). Of particular importance, the authors seek to emphasize that the emergence of new leadership perspectives, theories, and concepts are also reflective of a “world where cultural and social differences are more prominent” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 31).

Indeed, the revolutionary changes in higher education leadership studies which have “opened the door for people to think about leadership in new ways from the past” may also be attributed to the “radical social and political changes of the 1960s and 1970s” (Hoyt, 2007; Kezar et al., 2006, p. 3). In fact, scholars maintain that women’s
initial advancement into senior-level administrative posts and college presidencies is largely the result of a number of significant socio-political events occurring in the 1960s and 1970s (Adair, 2002; Chliwniak, 1997; Cohen, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a, p. 11; Hoyt, 2007; Hurtado, 2003; Kezar et al., 2006; Lindsay, 1999; Solomon, 1986).

Specifically, higher education scholars attribute women’s advancement into leadership roles to the social movements occurring in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Civil Rights, Women’s Liberation) and the enactment of federal anti-discrimination legislation (e.g., Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, affirmative action policies) which, together, placed a “high level of social and political pressure . . . [on] universities to become more inclusive of various demographic groups [e.g., women and racial/ethnic minorities]” in order to achieve greater equity and diversity within American higher education (Lindsay, 1999, p. 187; see also Adair, 2002; Chliwniak, 1997; Cohen, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Hoyt, 2007; Hurtado, 2003; Kezar et al., 2006; Solomon, 1986).

*The Influence of the 1960s and 1970s Social Movements on Women’s Advancement*

Higher education historians trace the early seeds of women’s access and advancement into all levels of higher education (i.e., students, professors, administrators) back to a variety of social movements which “increased awareness and demand for equal opportunity, equal pay, and equal status during the 1960s and early 1970s” (Hurtado, 2003, p. 32; see also Cohen, 1998; Solomon, 1986). Lindsey (1997) establishes that the awakening of women’s consciousness to issues of gender inequity arose “during the turbulent [era of the] 1960s [in which various protest movement groups] (i.e., African Americans, Hispanics, poor people, students, and anti-Vietnam war activists) [were organizing and advocating for] their various causes” (p. 124). Among the social
movements occurring in the 1960s and 1970s, the Civil Rights Movement and Women's Liberation Movement are considered two of the most important social movements in contributing to women’s advancement into all facets of academic life (Solomon, 1986).

Feminist higher education scholar Glazer-Raymo (1999) argues in *Shattering the Myths* that the effects of the Civil Rights and Women’s Liberation Movements, together, placed pressures on the federal government during the 1960s and 1970s to provide protection against sex discrimination.

*The Civil Rights Movement.* First, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s served to raise the level of social awareness concerning the need for racial integration and equal opportunity (Cohen, 1998; Lindsey, 1997; Solomon, 1986). Although the goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to bring about greater racial equality, the movement was highly influential in contributing to a wave of federal anti-discrimination legislation (e.g., Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Executive Order 11246 mandating affirmative action, etc.) which ultimately served to benefit women in higher education as well as other sectors of American society (Cohen, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Solomon, 1986). In fact, Aquila (1981) points out that the “passage of major civil rights legislation in the Sixties formed a backdrop for Title IX. . . [raising the level of] public awareness [concerning] sex discrimination” (p. 7). Indirectly, the Civil Rights Movement also raised women’s level of awareness concerning gender inequities in American society (Astin & Leland, 1991; Lindsey, 1997; Solomon, 1986). Further, the Civil Rights movement contributed to women’s progress in galvanizing both Black and White women together to initiate the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Astin & Leland, 1991; Lindsey, 1997; Solomon, 1986).
The contemporary women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s was inspired, in part, by the “relative increases in the educational levels and labor force participation rate of women” (Blum, 1991, p. 40). Also of importance, the second wave of feminism was sparked by a number of key events beginning with President John F. Kennedy’s establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1960 (Lindsey, 1997; Solomon, 1986). Chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, the Commission was comprised of “professional and club women [e.g., National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs]. . . concerned with women’s economic and political rights under the law” (Solomon, 1986, p. 201). In 1963, the Commission published The Report of the Commission on the Status of Women “documenting the secondary status of women in the U.S., with a special focus on women’s economic disadvantages” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Lindsey, 1997; Nash et al., 2007, p. 64; Solomon, 1986). Feminist scholars point out that the Commission’s Report justified and contributed to the passage of the Equal Pay Act (EPA) in 1963 (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Lindsey, 1997; Nash et al., 2007). Significantly, the passage of the EPA marked the first piece of federal legislation to provide a legal remedy for pay inequities between men and women (Lindsey, 1997). The EPA was passed as an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and required that women and men receive the same pay for “performing jobs of substantially equal skill, effort, and responsibility” (Cornelius & Douvanis, 2005, p. 137).

Second, the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan’s influential book, The Feminist Mystique, also played an important role in the initiation of the Women Liberation Movement in the 1960s (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Lindsey, 1997). Friedan’s (1963) book spoke to women’s limited access in society to pursue goals outside of their traditional
familial roles as daughter, wife, and mother. Feminist scholar Lindsey (1997) observes Friedan’s book “challenged the notion that the American woman was completely content in her traditional homebound role . . . [as] the happy housewife” (pp. 310-311). Then, in 1966, the development of the Women’s Movement gained further momentum with the establishment of the National Organization for Women (NOW), a women’s civil rights organization. Founded by Betty Friedan, the members of NOW advocated for “equal pay for equal work and equality in employment and education” (Cohen, 1998, p. 185). NOW was instrumental in advocating for the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution (Cohen, 1998; Lindsey, 1997; Solomon, 1986). First proposed to Congress in 1923, the ERA “states that Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex” (Nash et al., 2007, p. 64). However, the ERA which eventually went before the House of Representatives in 1971 and Senate in 1972, “fell short of ratification by three states of the thirty-eight needed” (Cohen, 1998, p. 185; Nash et al., 2007).

Also of importance, the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s era gave momentum to the Women’s Movement of the 1960s and 1970s by inspiring women to organize for equal rights. In fact, Solomon (1985) credits the student protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s era, especially the Civil Rights Movement, with awakening “women’s consciousness” to the reality of women’s subordinate status in American society (p. 201). As previously noted, the Civil Rights Movement played a crucial role in catapulting “women’s consciousness . . . to a new level by [witnessing] black people’s demands for equality” (Solomon, 1986, pp. 201). On college campuses across the country, the Civil Rights Movement served to unite black and white female students together, from institutions such as Spelman, Tougaloo, University of Texas, and
Vanderbilt, in the quest for racial equality (Solomon). Solomon (1985) describes the role of the Civil Rights and various protest movements of the era in contributing to the development of the contemporary women’s movement:

Student movements and protests not only served to launch an interracial movement, but black and white women discovered in various [protest] activities bonds of womanhood . . . out of concern with the ideals of democracy came the unexpected awakening of the feminist consciousness. Black women were the first to rebel against the subordinate roles of the civil rights movement, in 1964; soon white women protested against similar treatment . . . In each cause of the sixties, from Free Speech and civil rights to antiwar protests, women worked with men without being allowed to share in the policymaking and critical decisions . . . .

The younger liberationist branch of the women's movement was born of the recognition that participation of females was not acknowledged as equal to that of males. (p. 202)

The women’s movement brought together thousands of women from diverse (a) backgrounds, (b) professions (e.g., journalists, scholars, etc.), (c) interests, and (d) institutional affiliations (e.g. college, volunteer organizations, etc.) (Astin & Leland, 1991; Solomon, 1986). Solomon (1986) points out that some of the women identified with the liberal feminist strand of the movement which sought (a) individual rights, (b) gender equality through legal reforms, and (c) equal access to educational and professional opportunities.

In the context of higher education, the far-reaching impact of the women’s movement “affected the education of women and men in all kinds of institutions, both undergraduate and professional institutions” (Solomon, 1986, p. 204). For example,
Solomon (1986) notes that during the early 1970s the feminist movement influenced historically all-male institutions such as Yale, University of Virginia, and Princeton to begin admitting female students. Further, Solomon (1986) credits the Women’s Liberation Movement with influencing (a) affirmative action policies in higher education admissions and employment contexts, (b) the passage of Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, (c) the expansion of the traditional liberal arts curriculum to include women’s studies courses, and (d) the increase of female students, especially at two-year colleges. Altogether, the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the “public efforts to reduce and eliminate discrimination against women in academia, as well as the work place” (Solomon, 1986, p. 204). Moreover, the Women’s Liberation Movement “helped individuals to assert themselves, [and] to reject age-old prejudices” (Solomon, 1986, p. 204).

The Role of Federal Legislative Reforms on Women’s Advancement

Among the numerous federal regulations enacted in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars point to three crucial federal legislative reforms which served to create greater in-roads for women and racial/ethnic minorities in the higher education employment context including (a) Affirmative Action, (b) Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and (c) Title IX of the Educational Amendments (Adair, 2002; Astin & Leland, 1991; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Lindsay, 1999).

Affirmative action. Feminist scholars make the case that affirmative action represents one of the most important policies in contributing to greater gender equity for women in the higher education employment context (Adair, 2002; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Lindsey, 1997; Lindsay, 1999). Feminist scholar Adair (2002) argues that “affirmative action has been a premier force in theory and practice for women in higher education to
secure fair and equal treatment” (p. 208). More specifically, Glazer-Raymo (2008a) notes that affirmative action has been influential in “restructuring the boundaries of higher education . . . [by ] providing access and opportunity for women and [racial/ethnic] minorities at almost every level of the academy” (p. 11). Higher education historian Thelin (2004) contextualizes that in the 1970s higher education represented a “pervasive ‘chilly’ climate for women” (p. 344). While women in the 1970s represented 41% of college enrollment rates, women’s “representation in faculty appointments beyond [the rank of ] lecturer…was miniscule” (Thelin, 2004, p. 344). However, Cohen (1998) notes that over time women have reaped the greatest benefits from affirmative action policies in higher education with the overall percentage of women faculty increasing from 23% in 1970 to 40% in 1995 (p. 300).

In seeking to define affirmative action, as Fernandez (1996) asserts, one of the most distinctive features of affirmative action centers on the lack of consensus over what the term actually means. Due to the ways in which regulations guiding affirmative action have changed over time, Skrentny (2001) observes that “it is difficult to provide one all-encompassing definition of affirmative action” (p. 4). In the most fundamental sense, affirmative action may be understood as a “global term applied to any one of a number of strategies whose purpose is to promote and ultimately achieve equality of opportunity” (Fernandez, 1996, p. 5). As such, affirmative action represents a “variety of strategies designed to enhance employment, educational, or business opportunities for groups, such as racial or ethnic minorities and women, who have suffered discrimination” (Anderson, 2004, p. 3). Legal scholars Kaplin and Lee (1999) explain that when there has been a history of past discrimination, “courts or administrative agencies may . . . require employers, including public and private postsecondary institutions, to engage in
affirmative action to eliminate the effects of discrimination” (p. 254). Affirmative action policies do not require institutions (or employers) to hire or promote unqualified applicants/employees. However, the concept does imply, with all other qualifications being equal, women and racial ethnic/minorities will be given preference in recruiting, hiring, and promotion practices (Garrow, 2007; Wheat, 2010). Accordingly, Glazer-Raymo (2008a) explains that in order to rectify past injustices in higher education, “college and university administrators have devised affirmative action policies and programs to increase the recruitments, promotion, retention, and workplace opportunities in employment for women and minorities as well as removing admissions barriers” (p. 2).

In examining the historical underpinnings of affirmative action legislation, the concept of affirmative action was first introduced in President John F. Kennedy’s Executive Order 10925 in which he called on federal contractors to “take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color or national origin” (Garrow, 2007, p. 2; Moreno, 2003). Issued during the “height of the civil rights movement,” the original goal and intent of Kennedy’s Order was to rectify past discrimination and preclude future discrimination in employment through taking affirmative steps toward creating a more racially/ethnically inclusive workforce (Kelly & Dobbin, 2001, p. 90; Garrow, 2007; Moreno, 2003). Thus, sex was not originally included as a protected classification in the early affirmative action initiatives. Although Kennedy’s Executive Order is credited with first presenting the concept of affirmative action, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s subsequent “Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 have been the major focus of federal affirmative action initiatives” (Kaplin & Lee, 1999, p. 232).
In 1965, Johnson issued Executive Order 11246 to reaffirm support for Kennedy’s original affirmative action mandate (Moreno, 2003). Mirroring the language of Kennedy’s Executive Order, Johnson’s Order also excluded sex as a protected category. However, in 1967, Johnson issued Executive Order 11375, an amendment to Executive Order 11246, which adds “sex to the list of prohibited discriminations” in federal contracting and employment (Astin & Leland, 1991; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Kaplin & Lee, 1999, p. 233). Glazer-Raymo (1999) explains that Johnson’s decision to issue Executive Order 11375 was prompted by mounting pressure from women activist groups such as NOW. Executive Order 11375, which became effective in October 1968, states, “it is desirable that the equal employment opportunity programs provided for in executive order 11246 expressly embrace discrimination on account of sex” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, p. 15). Specifically, Executive Order 11246, as amended by Executive Order 11375, requires that “federal contractors take affirmative action in the recruitment, hiring, employment, compensation and training of employees regardless of sex, and file compliance reports on affirmative action cooperation” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, p. 15).

In evaluating the implications of including sex as a protected classification in affirmative action legislation, Glazer-Raymo (1999) indicates, “for the first time, universities with federal contracts would be forbidden from discriminating on the basis of sex in employment” (p. 15). Further, Astin and Leland (1991) note that the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare’s guidelines for enforcing affirmative action programs served to “thrust many more women into campus leadership roles to implement federal policies” at colleges and universities during the 1960s and 1970s (p. 95). On a broader scale, the inclusion of women in affirmative action legislation served
to legitimize the contemporary feminist movement and the gender-based discourse of
civil rights for women (Blum, 1991).

*Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.* Also emerging out of the Civil Rights era,
the 1964 Civil Rights Act is considered one of the most comprehensive and influential
pieces of federal anti-discrimination legislation in U. S. history (Cornelius & Douvanis,
2005; Kaplin & Lee, 1999; Kelly & Dobbin, 2001). Representing the centerpiece of
President Johnson’s domestic legislation, the 1964 Civil Rights Act “was intended to
prevent discrimination in a variety of spheres of life, including public accommodations
(Title II), institutions and programs receiving federal funds (Title VI), and . . .
employment (Title VII)” (Skrentny, 2001, p. 1). Of particular importance, according to a
lecture presented by Russ Willis, faculty affiliate in the Department of Educational
Studies and Research at USM, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act is considered one of
the most seminal pieces of legislation affecting the American workplace in providing
millions of employees with legal protection against discrimination (R. Willis, personal
communication, January 24, 2009). In fact, Kelly and Dobbin (2001) consider
affirmative action and Title VII to represent the “cornerstones” of the federal
government’s “efforts to redress employment discrimination” (p. 87). Importantly,
affirmative action coupled with the effects of Title VII legislation served to remove the
legal and institutional barriers to women and racial/ethnic minorities in the American
employment context (Blum, 1991, pp. 20-21; see also Cornelius & Douvanis, 2005;
Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Kaplin & Lee, 1999; Kelly & Dobbin, 2001; Lindsey, 1997).

Prior to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, women and racial/ethnic
minorities routinely faced employment discrimination, such as being relegated to inferior
jobs or barred from advancement (R. Willis, personal communication, January 24, 2009).
Despite President Kennedy’s earlier Executive Order (10925) in 1961 in which he called on federal contractors to take affirmative steps toward engendering a more racially inclusive workforce, these efforts “were not always taken on voluntarily by employers” (Moreno, 2003, p. 16). As a result, the U.S. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Importantly, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act served to provide the “basic statutory framework for affirmative action in employment” (Dale, 2005, p. 2). Also of significance, the passage of Title VII marked the creation of The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the enforcement agency with investigative oversight of discrimination complaints against covered employers.

The extensive scope of coverage under Title VII “applies to all employers [both public and private] of more than 15 employees,” regardless of whether the employer/entity receives federal funds (Cornelius & Douvanis, 2005, pp. 133-134; R. Willis, personal communication, January 24, 2009). Under the statutory provisions of Title VII, covered employers are barred from discriminating against individuals on the basis of: race, color, sex, national origin, or religion in regard to each of the following employment practices: (a) hiring, (b) promotion, (c) transfer, (d) layoff, (e) termination, (f) compensation, (g) benefits, (h) training, and (i) work assignments (Cornelius & Douvanis, 2005; Kaplin & Lee, 1999; Lindsey, 1997).

Similar to the early seeds of affirmative action legislation, the initial Civil Rights Act bill did not provide protection against sex discrimination in employment. As part of the federal government’s response to the Civil Rights Movement for racial equality, the 1964 Civil Rights Act was originally conceived as a means to redress widespread racial discrimination in a variety of contexts of American society (e.g., employment, public accommodations, education) (Garrow, 2007; Kelly & Dobbin, 2001). Thus, the
classification of sex was not originally included as part of the list of protected classifications under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act bill. However, sex, as a protected category, was later added as an amendment to the legislation prior to its passage. Lindsey (1997) recounts the process in which sex was added to the list of protected classifications under Title VII:

The original bill called for the elimination of job discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin. Despite conservative opposition in Congress, Howard W. Smith [a Democratic representative of Virginia], chair of the House rules committee at the time, introduced the words sex to these provisions. The story has since been circulated that Smith was an ultraconservative who did not want to see the bill passed at all and felt that even liberals would consider the elimination of job discrimination based on sex as too radical a step. If this was his strategy, it backfired, and the bill was passed with the words sex included in the amendment. The obvious irony is that someone who would have otherwise taken an extremely conservative position by the standards of the day was responsible for a major advance of a ‘liberal’ cause. (p. 339)

Although the original intent of The Civil Rights Act was to provide protection from racial discrimination, feminist scholars view Title VII as one of the most significant pieces of federal anti-discrimination legislation in providing protection against sex-based discrimination in employment (Lindsey, 1997). In fact, the only way in which Title VII may be “legally circumvented is through a ‘bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ)” in which the employer must prove that discrimination against a member of a protected classification is necessary for fulfilling the job (Lindsey, 1997, p. 340).
Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act also prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace as a form of gender discrimination (McCarthy & Eckes, 2005). In fact, most cases of sexual harassment in employment have been filed under Title VII (McCarthy & Eckes, 2005). Specifically, Title VII provides protection against “quid pro quo harassment” and harassment which is considered a “hostile work environment” (McCarthy & Eckes, 2005, pp. 278-279). Under Title VII, quid pro quo sexual harassment is considered “repeated and unwelcome sexual advances or derogatory statements, gestures, or actions based on sex— if pay raises, promotions, or other benefits are conditioned upon submission to the sexual advances” (McCarthy & Eckes, 2005, pp. 278). In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986) the U.S. Supreme Court held that a hostile work environment constitutes a second type of sexual harassment that is actionable under Title VII. In this case, the Court held that this form of harassment involves “severe and persistent harassment (e.g., sexual advances, abusive language, demeaning behavior based on sex) resulting in a *hostile work environment* . . . ” (McCarthy & Eckes, 2005).

In the 1970s, the enforcement and implementation of both affirmative action and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act were extended to the context of higher education with the passage of subsequent legislation. Garrow (2007) points out that it was not until 1972 that the mandate of “federal anti-discrimination enforcement [was more broadly extended] into the world of higher education” with the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. This act served “to make all colleges and universities, not just those holding government contracts, subject to federal antidiscrimination policies” (Garrow, 2007, p. 9).
Equally important, the Supreme Court decision in *Griggs v. Duke Power Company* (1971) expanded protection in employment by allowing plaintiffs to sue not only in cases of intentional discrimination (i.e., disparate treatment), but also in cases where employment practices had a discriminatory effect (i.e., disparate impact) on a protected group (Kelly & Dobbin, 2001, p. 92). In effect, using the legal doctrine of disparate impact, plaintiffs would need to prove that employment practices and decisions have an “undue impact of members of a protected class” and “demonstrate a pattern of discriminatory hiring overall, regardless of intent” (Cornelius & Douvanis, 2005, p. 135). Consequently, Lindsey (1997) notes that one “accomplishment of Title VII has been the elimination of many policies used by employers which may appear to be neutral but can have a ‘disparate impact’ on women” (p. 340).

*Title IX of the Educational Amendments.* Despite the initial gains from women’s inclusion into affirmative action initiatives throughout the 1960s, Nash et al. (2007) report that in 1970 sex discrimination continued to be a pervasive problem at colleges and universities with federal contracts. In 1970, the newly formed Women’s Equity Action League (WEAL), a moderate segment of the women’s liberation movement, brought a “first class-action sex discrimination complaint” against all institutions of higher education in the country with federal contracts for violating President Johnson's 1965 Executive Order 11246, as amended in 1968, to protect against sex discrimination (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, p. 16; Nash et al., 2007).

Also in 1970, Democratic Representative Edith Green of Oregon, chair of the United States Congressional subcommittee on higher education, enlisted the help of Dr. Bernice Sandler in documenting cases of sex-based employment discrimination at postsecondary institutions across the country (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Nash et al., 2007).
Sandler collected “over twelve hundred pages of testimony documenting massive and persistent patterns of discrimination against academic women” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, p. 16). The testimonies of sex discrimination in higher education coupled with pressures from women’s civil rights groups contributed to the passage of Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, part of the Omnibus Higher Education Bill legislation of 1971 (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Nash et al., 2007). Title IX provides female students and employees with protection from sex discrimination both in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education contexts. Specifically, Title IX requires “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (McCarthy & Eckes, 2005, p. 277). Thus, the scope of Title IX covers all colleges and universities, both private and public, receiving federal funds (e.g., grants, federal financial aid) (Decman, 2005). In fact, Title IX was enacted with the intention of avoiding the use of “federal resources [at both public and private educational institutions] in the support of discriminatory practices” (Decman, 2005, p. 433).

The provisions of Title IX contributed to greater gender equity for women in higher education as students, faculty, and administrators. Nash et al. (2007) explain that Title IX covers “three general areas [including]: admissions, treatment, and employment” (p. 66). In what follows, Nash et al. (2007) explains the regulations guiding the enforcement of Title IX in each of the aforementioned areas:

- regarding admissions, the regulation covered vocational education schools, professional education institutions, graduate schools of higher education, and public undergraduate colleges and universities. The regulation required that
comparable efforts be made to recruit students of each sex, and that people not be
treated differently because of sex in the admissions process. Regarding treatment,
the regulation covered guidance on nondiscrimination and access to and
participation in courses and extracurriculars, including athletics; eligibility and
receipt of benefits, services, and financial aid; use of school facilities; and rules
governing student housing and appearance codes. Essentially, the regulations
required that once admitted to school, all students should be treated in a
nondiscriminatory manner. Finally, the regulations stated that title IX covered all
full- and part-time employees. Like Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX
prohibited discrimination in recruitment, hiring, promotion, tenure, pay, job
assignments, granting of leaves, fringe benefits, selection and support for training,
sabbaticals, leaves of absence, employer-sponsored activities, and all other terms
and conditions of employment. (p. 66)

Also of importance, the enforcement of Title IX required that educational institutions
implement the law through a three-prong approach including “a) a (one-time)
institutional self-assessment, b) the development of a Title IX policy statement and
supporting grievance procedure, and c) the designation of at least one Title IX
coordinator” (Nash et al., 2007, p. 66).

In assessing the impact of Title IX on higher education, Lindsey (1997) articulates
that the comprehensive nature of this law has served to “alter and in some instances
eliminate, blatant discriminatory practices involving the genders in relation to
admissions, promotion, and tenure of faculty . . . formerly sex-segregated programs [and]
financial aid” (p. 345). Markedly, Title IX has had the greatest impact in the area of
women’s intercollegiate athletics (Decman, 2005; Lindsey, 1997). For example, Glazer-
Raymo (2008a) relays, “Title IX has been responsible for a 400% increase in women's participation in college sports” (p. 17). Title IX requires that covered colleges and universities “must ‘provide reasonable opportunities for (scholarships) awards for members of each sex in proportion to the number of each sex participating in intercollegiate athletics’” (Decman, 2005, p. 432). Enforced by the U. S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, institutions which do not comply with Title IX regulations regarding athletics or other provisions (treatment, admissions, employment) under this law will risk the loss of federal funds (e.g., grants, financial aid, etc.) (Decman, 2005).

Overall, Glazer-Raymo (2008a) maintains that Title IX has had a remarkable impact on higher education over the past three decades. More specifically, Glazer-Raymo (2008a) contends,

Since its inception in 1972 (and promulgation in 1975) [Title IX] has opened the door to institutions, programs, and activities for girls and women at all levels of the educational system . . . . In the 35 years since its passage, its meaning has been extended and redefined, primarily through case law but also through the regulatory process, to include employment discrimination, sexual harassment and hostile environment, pregnant and parenting students, and academic and nonacademic programs and services across a range of institutional types and levels (K-12 and postsecondary). (p. 17)

**Summary and Evaluation of the Events of the 1960s and 1970s on Women’s Advancement**

Altogether, the coalescence of the social movements and the federal anti-discrimination acts of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the creation of more equitable conditions for women’s access and advancement in higher education as students, faculty,
and administrators (Adair, 2002; Chliwniak, 1997; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Kezar et al., 2006; Lindsay, 1999). As a result of wave of a major anti-discrimination legislation (i.e., affirmative action, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Educational Amendments) enacted and promulgated in the 1960s and 1970s, “colleges and universities revised their employment policies and set goals and timetables for the recruitment, promotion, and equitable compensation of women faculty and professional staff” (Glazer-Raymo, 2008a, p. 3). As Terosky, Phifer, and Neumann (2008) establish, “by the end of the 20th century American women were well in the doorway of academe—as faculty, administrators, and trustees—and were looking upward pushing hard against multiple glass ceilings, reaching unprecedented career heights” (p. 53). Further, the authors maintain that by the onset of the 21st century the “sound of shattering glass had become part of the culture of American higher education” (Terosky et al., 2008, p. 53).

Statement of the Problem

Clearly, over the past 35 years women have “reaped the benefits of three decades of federal, state, and local legislations and regulations to increase women’s equity and advancement” in higher education (Glazer, 1993, p. xii). Since the 1970s, women have made significant strides in attaining senior-level administrative positions and presidential appointments. Yet, the critical problem remains that women today continue to be disproportionately under-represented at the highest levels of leadership in higher education, especially the university presidency. Also problematical, women’s progress in attaining college and university presidential appointments has witnessed a leveling off trend within the past 20 years and has only increased slightly by three percentage points

Women today have made important advancements in attaining presidencies at some of the nation’s most impressive private Ivy League institutions (i.e., Harvard, Brown, Princeton, and University of Pennsylvania) as well as at two-year institutions and public sector colleges. However, “the greatest discrepancies [remain] between [the representation of] male and female . . . [presidents at] doctoral-granting universities” (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001, p. 213; Madsen, 2008). In fact, “women continued to be [the] least likely to preside at doctorate-granting institutions” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11; King & Gomez, 2008). For example, women represent only 22.3% of presidents among public and private doctorate-granting universities (American Council on Education, 2007, p. 15).

In analyzing the pathway to the presidency, Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) establish that among all institutional types the most common career path to the presidency is the “scholar-president” model which is characterized by “a faculty appointment followed by successive administrative positions of increasing responsibility” (p. 206). In the report, On the Pathway to the Presidency, published by the American Council on Education (ACE), King and Gomez (2008) note the rank of chief academic officer (CAO)/provost tends to represent the most common immediate prior position for “leaders serving in their first presidency” (p. 1).

Yet, women, on average, are less likely to hold the key line positions that serve as pathways to the presidency of academic dean (36%) and CAO/provost (38%) (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 5). Further, ACE’s On the Pathway to the Presidency report indicates that women have made important strides in attaining senior-level leadership positions
In 2007, women occupied 45% of all senior-level administrators (e.g., vice president of administration, senior academic officer, chief financial officer, etc.) (King & Gomez, 2008). Yet, when one considers gender and race together, women of color comprise only “7 percent of senior administrators” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 6). Thus, current statistics indicate that there is a significant number of “white women in senior-level roles who could rise to the presidency” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 6).

Despite women’s overall progress in attaining senior-level leadership positions, there are noteworthy differences in women’s progress based on institutional type (King & Gomez, 2008; Madsen, 2010). Similar to the patterns and trends characterizing women’s progress in attaining presidential appointments, ACE’s On the Pathway to the Presidency survey indicates that community colleges have the highest percentage of women (52%) serving in senior administrative roles while doctorate-granting institutions have the lowest percentage (34%) of women in senior administrative positions (King & Gomez, 2008). In fact, “the percentage of women holding senior administrative positions . . . is lower at doctorate-granting institutions than at any other type of institution” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 8). Indeed, at doctorate-granting institutions women represent only 16% of executive vice presidents, 19% of deans, and 23% of CAOs (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 8). What is more, survey data reveals a lack of racial/ethnic diversity among senior-level administrators of both genders at doctorate-granting institutions (King & Gomez, 2008). At doctoral granting institutions, King and Gomez (2008) report that only 5% of CAOs and deans are Asian Americans, only 2% of African Americans are CAOs, and “no Hispanics or American Indians serve as CAO” among the doctorate-granting institutions participating in ACE’s On the Pathway to the Presidency survey (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 8). Of noteworthy importance, King and Gomez (2008) point out that “the selection of
internal v. external candidates is distinctive at doctoral-granting institutions . . . [in that] these institutions are more likely to appoint internal candidates to senior positions.” (p. 8). Specifically, 55% of all senior administrators at doctoral granting institutions were promoted internally, representing a higher rate than any other institutional type. Thus, King and Gomez (2008) conjecture that the preference for hiring internal candidates into senior-level leadership roles at doctoral granting institutions suggests “that these types of positions could provide an important venue for promoting women and people of color who might eventually ascend to the presidency” (p. 8). Conversely, the one position that represents a notable exception to the selection of senior campus leaders is the position of academic dean (King & Gomez, 2008). As a more prevalent key-line administrative position leading to the presidency, the position of academic dean is “much more likely to [be] filled externally at doctorate-granting institutions than at other types of institutions” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 8).

In seeking to understand the patterns and trends that characterize women leaders’ under-representation at the highest levels of leadership in higher education, earlier studies on women leaders (Astin & Leland, 1991; Chliwniak, 1997; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonski, 1996; Lindsay, 1999; Moore, 1984; Scanlon, 1997; Shavlik & Touchton, 1984; Stumlick, Milley, & Tisinger, 1990; Walton, 1996) focused on (a) gender differences in leadership/women’s leadership styles, (b) external/structural barriers (e.g., gender discrimination), (c) the academic glass ceiling, and (d) demographic profiles of women presidents. In contrast to earlier scholars’ focus on external and structural barriers to women’s advancement, contemporary scholars (Bornstein, 2008; Carter, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Williams, 2005) are beginning to examine how “subtle personal and social barriers that laws alone cannot
remedy” influence women’s career paths and presidential aspirations, such as: (a) work-life balance, (b) family responsibilities, (c) mentoring relationships/networking, and (d) gendered conceptions of women leaders (Glazer, 1993, p. xii).

Rationale

Significantly, in order to better ascertain the factors which may serve to motivate or hinder women in advancing to the presidency, a number of scholars (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Bornstein, 2009; Carter, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Nidiffer, 2001; Smith, 2004; Walton & McDade, 2001) point to the need for more empirical research relating to women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths. In particular, there is a gap in the empirical literature in higher education pertaining to the career paths of university women in key-line administrative positions to the presidency (e.g., academic dean, vice president, chief academic officer) and university women presidents (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; King & Gomez, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Walton & McDade, 2001). In fact, The American Council on Education’s (ACE) reports On the Pathway to the Presidency (King & Gomez, 2008) and The American College President (American Council on Education, 2012) have served to provide the most current and comprehensive statistical data describing college and university presidents and senior level administrators (Marshall, 2009). Madsen (2008) articulates “although there is some research regarding the actual career paths of university presidents, very little is related to women in academia” (p. 136). In part, Madsen (2008) explains that the dearth of research concerning university women’s pathways may be attributed to the small percentage of “women serving as presidents of research and comprehensive institutions” (p. 136).
Walton and McDade (2001) contend that “to fully understand the dynamics of women moving into presidencies, it is necessary to study women in the [Chief Academic Officer] CAO position” (p. 86). However, the authors establish that “scholars of higher education administration have written little about . . . [the CAO] position in general, and even less about women who serve as CAOs” (Walton & McDade, 2001, p. 85). Further, King and Gomez (2008) assert, “there is almost no information on those individuals in the senior campus administrative positions [e.g. academic dean, executive vice presidents, CAO, etc.] that most typically lead to the presidency” (p. iv). Additionally, few studies have considered how personal factors such as childrearing or the role of the male spouse may influence women’s career paths and presidential aspirations (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009).

The dearth of empirical studies on university women’s career paths is made more significant in considering the findings from The American College President report which projects that over the next 10 years there will be a “a significant turnover in presidential leadership” resulting from an impending wave of presidential retirements as over half of sitting presidents are 61 or over (American Council on Education, 2012; p. 49). As a result, the projected vacancy in presidential positions will present greater opportunities for qualified and talented women to advance into college and university presidencies.

Purpose of the Study

In response to the dearth of empirical data on the career paths of university women leaders, the purpose of this research was to qualitatively explore how university women in key-line administrative positions (e.g., dean, vice-president, chief academic officer) and women university presidents experience and make meaning of their career
path experiences and leadership aspirations. Additionally, in seeking to contribute new and deeper insights into how subtle pipeline issues and internal barriers influence women’s career paths and leadership aspirations, this study examined how the personal factors involved with being a female administrator (e.g., child-rearing, spousal relationships) may motivate or hinder women from seeking a university presidency. With this in mind, there are five broad research questions that guided this study.

Research Questions

1. What experiences characterize women’s pathways to university leadership?

2. How do the various dimensions of women leaders’ personhood (e.g., race, gender, class) intersect to influence their career path experiences and leadership aspirations?

3. What life issues or personal factors (e.g., work-life balance, family relationships, etc.) have influenced women’s career paths and aspirations?

4. What motivates women to aspire and advance toward the university presidency?

5. Are women hindered from seeking a university presidency? If so, what hinders women’s career path advancement?

Theoretical Framework

In seeking to understand university women leaders’ career paths and aspirations, this study draws upon a postmodern feminist theoretical framework. In applying a feminist lens to the study of women in higher education, Glazer (1993) conveys that feminist theory and praxis has gained recent currency in terms of “advocating for the importance of women’s perspectives . . . and creating more inclusive systems” (p. x).
Significantly, Glazer (1993) asserts that the application of a feminist framework is useful in critically examining the marginalized experience of women in higher education which “as a field of study has overlooked almost entirely women’s role as shapers and interpreters of the academy” (p. ix). In particular, a feminist postmodernist framework is useful in accounting for the “diverse contributions from the perspectives of race, class, gender, culture, and language…” (Hemphill, 2001, p. 15). As such, this study examined how the intersection of gender, race, class, and other salient identity markers serve to influence female administrators’ and university presidents’ experiences, career paths, and leadership aspirations.

Definitions

*Chief Academic Officer (CAO):* The Chief Academic Officer (CAO), also bearing the title of “provost [or] vice president for academic affairs . . . provides leadership for all academic operations . . .” of a college or university (Walton & McDade, 2001, p. 85). Considered the second highest ranking officer next to the president, the purview of the CAO’s institutional responsibilities relate to the “core functions of higher education—teaching students, conducting scholarly research, and service to the academic community—” (Hartley & Godin, 2010, p. 5). More specifically, CAOs typically oversee (a) the “academic curriculum, (b) the faculty, (c) [the instruction of] students, and (d) [a large portion of the institution’s operating] budget” (Walton & McDade, 2001, p. 85; see also Hartley & Godin, 2010).

*Glass ceiling:* The term, glass ceiling, was first coined in the mid-1980s by *Wall Street Journal* writers, Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt, as a metaphor to describe the invisible barrier that barred women’s advancement at the utmost positions in corporate organizations, regardless of their qualifications (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, &
Nearly a decade later in 1995, The U.S. Department of Labor established the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission which published the report, “Good for business: Making full use of the nation’s human capital,” which identified, based on governmental research, “three levels of artificial barriers to the advancement of minorities and women in the private sector” in regard to (a) social barriers (e.g., lack of educational attainment, gender bias, etc.), (b) internal structural barriers (e.g., recruitment practices, organizational climates, pipeline barriers, etc.) and (c) governmental barriers (e.g., lack of law enforcement, etc.) (pp. 7-8).

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission report distinguished that social barriers (e.g., attitudinal prejudice toward women) “may be outside the direct control of business” and internal structural barriers (e.g., lack of mentoring, placing women in non-advancement track positions, etc.) are within the “direct control of business” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, pp. 7-8). The glass ceiling can also entail comparing women and minorities to the same standards as white males, who have traditionally dominated top organizational leadership roles, in regard to “modes of dress, models of communication, or modes of socializing” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 34).

Intersectionality: A term coined in 1989 by “legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw,” intersectionality was originally conceptualized as “a metaphor to explain the ways in which women of color are often caught between multiple systems of oppression marked by race, gender, and their unique experiences at the convergence of these systems” (Smooth, 2010, p. 32). The concept of intersectionality has become important to feminist theory in terms of focusing “on the differences among women, moving beyond simply the differences between men and women” (Smooth, 2010, p. 32). In particular, scholars
applying black feminist and postmodern feminist frameworks believe that intersectionality is useful in recognizing that “gender does not stand alone as an analytic category and must be considered in relation to other salient practices of power . . . . (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006, p. 134). Thus, in postmodern feminist discourse, the concept of intersectionality is used to refer to the ways in which gender intersects with the multiple dimensions of one’s personhood, such as “race, class, age, sexuality, disability, and other vectors of power” to inform one’s identity (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006, p. 134).

*Key-line administrative positions*: Key-line positions refer to the senior-level administrative positions that are most commonly held by an individual in succession to a college or university presidential appointment. The most prominent key line positions that serve as pathways in the career trajectory to the presidency are an academic dean (36%) followed by an appointment as a chief academic officer (CAO)/provost (38%) (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 5). The key-line position of CAO/provost tends to represent the most prevalent immediate prior position to assuming a college presidency (King & Gomez, 2008).

*Personal agency*: Personal agency refers to claiming the “authority to be the means through which . . . [one] accomplish[es] . . . [his or her] desired goals” (Dean, Bracken, & Allen, 2009b, p. 4). One of the central goals of feminist theory and research is to help women to recognize their own personal agency amidst the “norms, roles, institutions, and internalized expectations [which] limit and constrain women's behavior” (Stewart, 1994, p. 21).

*Postmodern Feminism*: Postmodern feminism seeks to challenge the assumption that there is a unique essence to the experience of being a woman (Bloom, 2002; DiPalma
Postmodern feminists view women’s subjectivity as an “active,” fluid, transformative, and “fragmented” process (Bloom, 2002, p. 291). Therefore, postmodernism feminism problematizes “modernist gender categories . . . [and] invites postmodern energies to deconstruct the presumed foundations of all subject positions . . .” (p. 133). In this sense, gender is viewed as a performance in terms of “something one does rather than something one is . . .” (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006, p. 133). Further, postmodern feminists advocate for the importance of considering the intersectionality between gender and other influences on women’s identity including: “race, class, age, sexuality, disability, and other vectors of power” (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006, p. 134).

Senior-level administrators: For the purposes of this study, senior-level administrators are considered those who are “employed . . . at the level of dean . . . [or above and report] “either directly to the president or a vice president” (Marshall, 2009, p. 195). According to Russ Willis, J.D., faculty affiliate in the Department of Educational Studies and Research at USM, senior-level administrators, in general, may be considered the executive officers of an institution of higher education whose primary duties contribute to the overall management of the institution or a subdivision (e.g., academic affairs, business and administrative affairs, etc.) of the institution (personal communication, January 14, 2009). According to King and Gomez’s (2008) report in On the Pathway to the Presidency, the following list represents prominent senior-level administrative positions at American colleges and universities including (a) central senior academic affairs officers (e.g., associate provost, dean of graduate school), (b) senior external affairs officers (e.g., chief development officer), (c) senior administrative officers (e.g., chief financial officer, general counsel, chief human resources officer), (d) chief student affairs or enrollment management officers, (e) chiefs of staff, (f) chief
diversity officer, (g) executive vice presidents, (h) academic deans, and (i) chief academic officers/provosts. Many of the aforementioned senior-level leadership positions may also be considered key-line positions to the college and university presidency including second prior (e.g., dean) and immediate prior positions (chief academic officer/provost) to the presidency (King & Gomez, 2008).

**President, Chancellor, or Chief Executive Officer:** As higher education scholars Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) establish, “there is no standard definition of the presidency nor description of the expectations placed on the performance of its incumbents” (p. 342). To significant degree, the role of the president will depend on the institutional characteristics and mission (Birnbaum & Eckel). Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) explain: presidents traditionally have no stated term of office but serve “at the pleasure” of a public or private board of lay trustees. Institutional statutes or bylaws commonly identify the president as the chief executive and administrative officer of the board as well as the chief academic officer of the faculty, and they delegate to the president all powers necessary to perform these functions. (p. 542)

Although there is not a precise definition or description of the expectations of the college and university presidency, today’s “college presidents lead complex organizations” and are generally expected to “provide intellectual leadership, embody institutional values [e.g., social diversity], and shape institutional policy” (American Council on Education, 2007, p. xi). Presidents are responsible for an extensive range of responsibilities relating to both the internal and external management of the institution. The president’s internal responsibilities pertain to strategic planning; establishing the institutional vision; engaging in crisis management [e.g., student protest]; “supervising the university administration; ensuring the quality and integrity of academic programs; [and] managing
human, financial and capital assets . . .” (Duderstadt, 2007, pp. 108-109). Internally, the president is also responsible for “personnel decisions, addressing academic issues, and dealing with students” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 343). Externally, the president’s role pertains to “raising funds, building and managing board relations, working with the community groups and representing the institution to external constituents, and meeting with policy makers” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 343). Today’s presidents are not only expected to serve as academic leaders, but also as political leaders in terms of managing the institution’s “political relationship with various constituencies (e.g., state government, federal government and various special interest groups)” (Duderstadt, 2007, p. 110). In effect, the presidential role may be viewed as “comprising administrative [e.g., resource allocation], political [e.g., represent interests of higher education’s stakeholders such as students, faculty, and alumni] and entrepreneurial components [e.g., increasing endowments]” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 342).

Delimitations

The sample for this study had several researcher-imposed delimitations concerning the geographical region, institutional type, and administrative position. First, the sample for this study was delimit ed to the selection of participants from the Southeastern region of the United States. In restricting the geographic region from which the sample of participants was drawn, this study is delimited in speaking to how differences in geographical locations may influence participants’ career path experiences and presidential aspirations. Second, the sample of participants for this study was delimited to women who have current or recent experience (i.e., within the past five years) serving in the key-line administrative positions (e.g., academic dean, vice president, and provost) and university presidencies. Third, since this study sought to
contribute to a greater understanding of how university women experience the path to the presidency, the sample was delimited to participants from four-year universities. Lastly, in carrying out a basic interpretive qualitative design, one delimitation centers on the lack of generalizability of the research findings obtained from the sample in this study to the larger population of university women administrators and presidents. In keeping with the underlying assumptions of qualitative research, the design of this study sought to capture the “holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing” reality of how the female leaders in this study have made meaning of their career path experiences and presidential aspirations (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). As such, the perspectives and experiences of the 16 women leaders who participated in this study may not be assumed to be representative of other women in similarly-situated leadership positions.

Assumptions

In carrying out the in-person interviews for this study, it was assumed that the university women administrators and presidents who participate in this research were truthful in describing how they make meaning of their career paths, leadership experiences, and presidential aspirations. Nevertheless, in considering the dearth of women in key-line administrative positions and university women presidents, one may also presume that some of the participants in this study may have refrained from candidly disclosing information which they feel may reveal their identity or jeopardize their current administrative position.

In building on a postmodern feminist theoretical framework, this study was premised on the assumption that important differences exist among women based on race, class, and other salient aspects of women’s identity. This research presumes that the intersection of the various dimensions (e.g., gender, race, class, etc.) of women
leaders’ personhood influenced how they experience the path to the university presidency and make meaning of their leadership aspirations. Also, in keeping with a postmodern feminist framework, it was presumed that the women administrators and presidents who participated in this study have diverse career path experiences and leadership aspirations.

Potential Benefits and Implications

This research, grounded in a postmodern feminist theoretical framework, provided the opportunity to qualitatively explore and describe how university women in key-line administrative positions (e.g., academic dean, vice-president, chief academic officer) and women university presidents experience and make meaning of their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. The implications of this study make a contribution to the research-based literature in the discipline of higher education administration by providing empirical data which addresses (a) university women leaders’ career paths; (b) the factors which motivate and hinder women leaders’ presidential aspirations; (c) the personal factors (e.g., family responsibilities, work-life balance issues, etc.) which influence women’s career choices and leadership aspirations; (d) the ways in which the various dimensions (e.g., gender, race, age/stage of life, educational attainment, marital and family statuses, spirituality, etc.) of women leaders’ personhood intersect to influence their career paths; (e) the role of mentors, role models, and professional networks; and (f) the influence of gender on women’s career paths, leadership aspirations, and leadership experiences. The research implications of this study may also be of value in guiding the development of policies and practical applications aimed at supporting and advancing university women leaders. As well, in keeping with the goals of feminist theory and praxis, this research, based on women’s voices, experiences, and perspectives, may serve to create knowledge that is instructive to
women in informing, empowering, and changing their own lives (Ropers-Huilman, 2002). Thus, in what follows, I have sought to describe the relevancy and potential benefits of this study to (a) contributing new knowledge to the discipline of higher education administration, (b) informing and empowering women leaders to act with individual agency, and (c) contributing to policy development and practical applications.

Potential Benefits to the Discipline of Higher Education Administration

The research findings of this study presents a number of potential benefits to the field of higher education and the extant literature on women leaders in terms of contributing new and deeper insights into how university women in key-line administrative positions (e.g., dean, vice-president, chief academic officer) and women university presidents experience and make meaning of their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. First, this study presents the opportunity to address the gap in the empirical data in higher education regarding the career paths of university presidents, in general, and women presidents, in particular. As Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) establish, there are very few research-based studies relating to the “career paths that lead to the presidency” (p. 203). In general, there is a lack of empirical data pertaining to presidents’ “backgrounds, aspirations, and the presidential selection process” (p. 215). Problematically, there is even less empirical data relating to the career path experiences of university women presidents (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Madsen, 2008). Also problematical, Bornstein (2009) contextualizes that “much of what we think we know about women presidents is based on anecdote and informal observation, and needs to be tested systematically” (p. 211).

Second, this study presents the opportunity to contribute to the research in the field of higher education administration pertaining to individuals in key-line
administrative positions (e.g., academic deans, vice presidents, chief academic officers/provosts) to the presidency. In fact, Nidiffer and Bashaw (2001) point out that “scholars have yet to produce substantial research concerning [Chief Academic Officers] CAOs of either gender” (p. 6). Consequently, there is a dearth of empirical data regarding the presidential aspirations of women in the CAO/provost position, the most common immediate prior position to assuming a presidency (Phillips, 2010; Walton & McDade, 2001). As Bornstein (2009) articulates, important questions remain concerning the pipeline positions to the presidency such as “are male academic vice presidents and provosts more likely than women to aspire to a presidency?” (p. 234). Thus, this study has the potential to provide empirical data that provide new and deeper insights into the experiences and factors (e.g., work-life balance, family obligations, perceptions of the nature of the presidency) that shape women’s career-path experiences and influence women’s presidential aspirations.

Third, this research has the potential to contribute to the gap in the literature concerning the personal factors, internal barriers, and subtle pipeline issues, which may influence women’s career path decisions and leadership aspirations. The current statistical data on college presidents suggests that gender does matter in respect to the differences between male and female presidents’ marital and family status. In comparison to male presidents, “a disproportionate number [of women presidents] remain single or childless . . . .—suggesting that combining a family and career may be incompatible” with the responsibilities of senior-level leadership (Marshall, 2009, p. 199). Marshall (2009) maintains that “examining the complexities of managing a career and family may be particularly important” in understanding why more women are not advancing into the highest levels of academic leadership (p. 188).
More specifically, research which provides the “critical perspectives” of women in senior-level administration who have successfully balanced the motherhood and academic leadership offers the potential benefit of providing “insights into how others may do the same” (Marshall, 2009, p. 191). Equally important, this study addresses the gap in the literature concerning how the role of the male presidential spouse influences women’s career path choices and aspirations. Therefore, my dissertation has research implications for providing critical insights into how women in senior-level administrative roles and university presidencies have successfully negotiated their personal and professional lives.

Fourth, no known studies have applied a postmodern feminist lens to study the career path experiences of university women administrators and presidents. Thus, the use of a postmodern feminist framework provides a new analytic lens for studying the unique and multidimensional ways in which university women leaders and presidents experience the pathway to the university presidency. Contemporary leadership scholars Kezar et al. (2006) point out that very few studies have applied a postmodernist perspective to the study of leadership, in general, in higher education. Importantly, contemporary feminist scholars are beginning to apply poststructuralist/postmodernist feminist strategies to understanding the unique differences which characterize university faculty women’s career choices (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2008), academic women leaders’ professional strategies and personal choices (Dean et al., 2009b), and the leadership experiences of female school principals (Blackmore, 1999). However, feminist scholars have yet to apply a postmodernist feminist framework to the study of university women administrators’ and presidents’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations. As a result, the use of a postmodern feminist framework has the potential to provide new
epistemological insights into the study of university women’s career paths and presidential aspirations. In particular, the use of a postmodern feminist theoretical framework has potential implications for providing new insights into how the “positional differences” of gender, race, class, and other salient identity markers intersect to influence women’s career path choices and leadership aspirations (DeValut & Gross, 2007, p. 193). Additionally, this study may potentially benefit the higher education research base in contributing to the emerging studies focusing on leaders’ positionality (Kezar et al., 2006).

Finally, the targeted population of university women in key-line positions to the presidency and university presidents from which the sample was purposefully drawn for this study has important implications for expanding the knowledge base in higher education concerning women’s career path experiences and leadership aspirations. Although previous studies have examined the respective career path experiences of women college presidents and female senior-level administrators, no known studies have examined the career path experiences of university women in key-line positions to the presidency and university women presidents, together. Significantly, women administrators in key-line positions to the presidency may be able to convey valuable insights concerning career path obstacles which women who have achieved a university presidency may not have experienced in their career path to the presidency. Alternatively, through studying university women presidents who have achieved a presidency, my dissertation presents the opportunity to gain deeper insights into how they have successfully navigated their pathway to the presidency.
Potential Research Implications for Informing Women to Act with Personal Agency

In conducting a qualitative study, grounded in feminist theory and praxis, the potential research implications of my dissertation may be instructive for informing university women’s lives, career paths, and leadership aspirations. Specifically, in placing women’s lives at the center of inquiry and giving voice to university women administrators’ and presidents’ perspectives and experiences my dissertation has the potential benefit of empowering and affirming other women to act with personal agency in navigating their career path to leadership. Indeed, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) note, feminist researchers studying people who have been “marginalized also hope to empower their research informants” (p. 43). Ultimately, one of the goals of feminist research is empowering research informants and readers in ways that lead to social change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). More specifically, postmodern feminist theorist Lather (1991) explains that feminist research and praxis “offers a powerful opportunity for praxis . . . [to] enable people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situation” (p. 56). With this in mind, the findings of this study may have potential relevance for informing and empowering the lives of university women faculty and administrators who aspire to senior-level leadership or a university presidency to “work as change agents” in realizing their own potential and power to advance to senior-level leadership positions and university presidencies (Niddifer & Bashaw, 2001, p. 4).

Potential Research Implications for Informing Policy and Practice

Finally, this research presents the possibility of informing the development of practical applications and institutional policies aimed at increasing the number of women in key-line positions to the presidency and university presidencies. Although women have made significant gains in attaining positions of leadership in higher education,
Glazer-Raymo (2008a) asserts that “more needs to be done to increase women’s status . . . in senior-level administrative positions” and college presidencies (p. 2). The need to develop practical applications capable of preparing talented university women for presidential candidacy is made more significant in considering the impending wave of presidential retirements over the next 10 years which will leave vacancies in presidential positions (American Council on Education, 2007). For this reason, the knowledge gained from this study pertaining to university women’s career paths, aspirations, and the personal factors which may motivate or hinder women from seeking a presidency is potentially beneficial to guiding institutions (e.g., colleges and universities) and professional organizations (American Council on Education’s Office of Women in Higher Education) in the development of practical applications (e.g., leadership training, mentorship programs) aimed at advancing women leaders.

Moreover, the research findings of this study may also benefit institutions and organizations seeking to create policies which serve to support and advance women leaders. In particular, feminist scholars argue that the development of institutional policies concerning work and family issues are important for recruiting, retaining, and advancing talented women into the highest levels of leadership (Glazer-Raymo, 2008a, Marshall, 2009). For example, the findings of Marshall’s (2009) study of women administrators with children indicates the need for work-family policy development at the departmental, college, and institutional level regarding such issues as flexible work schedules or parenthood benefits. Significantly, Marshall (2009) argues that the development of work-family policies may contribute to women “remaining in the profession longer and advancing more frequently to its senior levels” (p. 216). Accordingly, the findings of my dissertation may yield information that is instructive to
colleges and universities in crafting effective policies and outreach programs, which seek to create more supportive and inclusive work environments for women who seek to balance personal life issues and professional career goals (Marshall, 2009).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This research draws upon a postmodern feminist theoretical framework in qualitatively examining the ways in which university women administrators and presidents make meaning of their career paths and leadership aspirations. Feminist higher education scholars argue that the use of a feminist framework is helpful in giving voice to the experiences, perceptions, and insights of women administrators and college presidents who, within the context of traditional leadership studies and theories, have largely been “invisible as interpreters of organizational life and leadership in the academy” (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bensimon, 1989, p. 154; Glazer, 1993; Perreault, 1993). Therefore, this review of the literature first seeks to define feminist theory and outline several of the broad categories of feminist thought. Next, this review of the literature addresses the most prevalent trends, patterns, themes, and issues affecting university women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths and presidential aspirations including (a) a statistical portrait of women’s advancement in higher education leadership; (b) women’s career paths and pipeline issues; (c) balancing work-life issues; (d) family impacts on women’s career paths and leadership aspirations; (e) the influence of role models, mentoring relationships, and professional networks; and (f) gendered perceptions of women leaders.

A Review of Major Feminist Theoretical Perspectives

In the most fundamental sense, feminism serves to challenge the status quo which has historically served to socially, economically, politically, and culturally disadvantage women (Lindsey, 1997). In her book, Feminist Thought, Tong (1989) explains that feminist theory seeks to explain the causes and implications of women’s unequal status in
society and to “prescribe strategies for women’s liberation” (p. 1). Birthed out of the Enlightenment era and accelerated by the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, feminism has evolved over the course of three centuries to encompass a multiplicity of various theoretical approaches. For example, feminist theory reflects an array of paradigms, such as (a) liberal, (b) Marxist/socialist, (c) psychoanalytic, (d) cultural, (e) radical, (f) postmodern/poststructuralist, (g) standpoint, (h) global/multicultural, and (i) multiracial and black feminism. Taken together, Lindsey (1997) observes that the multiple strands of feminist theory serve to “reflect sociocultural and demographic diversity . . . [as well as] point to the heterogeneity of feminist thought” (p. 13).

Perreault (1993) points out that the various strands of feminist theory tend to “differ in their goals, analyses of the problem, and recommendations for change” (p. 4). Yet, despite these differences, all of the perspectives seek to place women’s lives, experiences, and perceptions at the center of inquiry (Glazer, 1993; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lather, 1991; Tong 1989). What is more, feminist scholars strive toward “unearthing [women’s] subjugated knowledge” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 3). Hesse-Biber (2007) proposes that feminist thought “opens up intellectual and emotional space for all women to articulate their relations to one another and the wider society” (p. 2). Importantly, feminist frameworks give voice to women, who as a group, have historically been marginalized, silenced, or made invisible. With this in mind, in what follows, I outline five broad categories of feminist thought including (a) liberal, (b) Marxist/socialist, (c) radical, (d) postmodern, and (e) multiracial and black feminist thought.

Liberal Feminism

Considered the most moderate form of feminist thought, liberal feminism is based on the premise that all peoples, regardless of gender, are entitled to equality of
opportunity (Lindsey, 1997; Perreault, 1993; Tong, 1989). Based upon the principles of the Enlightenment era, the development of liberal feminism was shaped by the notion that both men and women possess rational faculties of the mind and that all individuals should be provided individual rights and personal autonomy (Lindsey, 1997; Perreault, 1993; Tong, 1989). Within the contemporary context of higher education, the goal of liberal feminism is to achieve “equality of educational opportunity . . . based on abilities and qualifications” (Perreault, 1993, p. 4). Perreault (1993) explains that liberal feminists seek the inclusion of women into all levels of higher learning and all professional positions in society. In particular, liberal feminists “criticize the relegation of women to lower and marginal educational ranks (such as civil service, part-time, and temporary positions) and to positions as instructors, assistant professors, rather than full professors and administrators)” (Perreault, 1993, p. 5).

Moreover, liberal feminists “seek the opportunity for women to compete for positions without being blocked by sex discrimination, and see higher education as the means for women to obtain the skills and credentials necessary for success” (Perreault, 1993, p. 4). In addition to women’s marginal access to equal educational experiences, this perspective attributes women’s unequal status to the problems of: “sex discrimination, sex-role socialization, and women themselves (for example, women’s unwillingness to seek high-level administrative positions)” (Perreault, 1993, pp. 5-6). Liberal feminists suggest that women can achieve liberation and equality through the assimilation of women into all levels of higher education as well as through the pursuit of legal remedies for sex-based discrimination (e.g., affirmative action) (Perreault, 1993, p. 6).
Indeed, Tong (1989) conveys that over time, the efforts of liberal feminists have resulted in important gains for women in achieving educational access and legal reforms. However, Tong points out that liberal feminism is not without its limitations. In fact, liberal feminism has been criticized by non-liberal feminists on the grounds of (a) theory-building based on a model of middle-class white women, (b) assuming women’s equality can be achieved largely through individual efforts, (c) failing to account for social structures which contribute to women’s inequality, and (d) adopting “male values [e.g., rationality] as human values” (Tong, 1989, p.31).

Marxist and socialist Feminisms

With common philosophical roots in the Marx-Engels tradition, Marxist and socialist feminist frameworks apply a macro-level lens to examining the larger structures which contribute to women’s inequality in society (Lindsey, 1997). Specifically, these perspectives problematize the class-based capitalist economic system in explaining women’s oppression and unequal status in society (Lindsey, 1997). Although both perspectives share a common preoccupation with the capitalist class system, Tong (1989) points out that socialist and Marxist feminisms divide along one important point of distinction. The Marxist tradition seeks to explain women’s oppression solely in terms of class relations, whereas the socialist feminist perspective views both class and gender as playing an equal role in explaining women’s inequality.

Altogether, in applying a Marxist/socialist feminist perspective to the context of higher education, Marxist/socialist feminists attribute women’s inequality in the academy to the capitalist structure of society which perpetuates a patriarchal culture and relegates women to positions of inferior status (Perreault, 1993). Perreault (1993) suggests that Marxist/socialist feminists seek to “criticize the close relationship between male
supremacy and the ‘academic establishment’” (p. 6). As a result, Perreault notes that this type of feminism holds to the belief that creating equality for women can only achieve equality with men through transforming the capitalist and patriarchal structure of higher education and society.

Yet, Tong (1989) establishes that the limitations of Marxist/socialist feminist frameworks centers on the perspective’s use of a unifying or overarching mode of analysis in explaining women’s inequality in society. Specifically, the emphasis on larger social structures of oppression such as capitalism and patriarchy presents “the risk of erasing, or at least eroding, the differences that exist among women” (Tong, 1989, p. 193). Tong relays that critics of socialist feminist theory, in particular, make the case that this framework can arrive as a systematic approach to understanding women’s oppression through accounting for individual differences (e.g., race).

**Radical Feminism**

In contrast to Marxist/socialist feminists, radical feminists seek to explain the ways in which the structuring of the “male-female relationship . . . [influences] all power relationships” (Tong, 1989, p. 95). Thus, Tong communicates that radical feminists attempt to point to the ways in which men have contributed to women’s unequal status in society. Grounded in the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Lindsey (1997) explains that in the midst of the “civil rights and anti-war movements [women] ‘became aware of their own oppression through "the treatment they received from their male cohorts”’ (p. 16). Current radical feminists “view sexism as being the core of patriarchal society, with all its social institutions reflecting this reality” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 16). In viewing men as the source of women’s oppression, radical feminists believe that women can achieve liberation through separating themselves from relationships with men
and patriarchal institutions. Radical feminists believe in the creation of “women-centered institutions” as a remedy for ending women’s oppression (Lindsey, 1997, p. 16). The most extreme form of radical feminism argues for the elimination of heterosexual relationships and the creation of a “woman-identified world” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 16).

In the context of higher education, radical feminists, like Marxist/socialist feminists, share a common concern with changing the larger structure of society which serves to perpetuate women’s inequality. Thus, both types of feminism seek to engender transformative changes to the academy and society (Perreault, 1993). However, in contrast to Marxist/socialist feminists’ focus on capitalism and patriarchy, Perreault (1993) explains that radical feminists focus exclusively on the inequality perpetuated by the patriarchal culture of higher education. Additionally, radical feminists strive to regain the “integrity and sense of wholeness of self . . . [which] existed prior to the fragmentation and dichotomization” created by the forces of patriarchy on women’s lives (Perreault, 1993, p. 5). Accordingly, this type of feminism holds that women’s liberation is dependent upon the reclaiming of women’s integrity, transformation of the patriarchal culture of higher education, and the creation of a “woman-centered university” (Perreault, 1993, p. 7).

Despite radical feminism’s success in bringing greater awareness to women’s issues, Perreault (1993) points out that this perspective presents a number of limitations. Specifically, radical feminism has received criticism based on (a) an overemphasis on the “power of ideas to change patriarchy,” (b) a failure to consider women of color, (c) a tendency to dismiss the reform efforts of liberal feminism, and (d) lack of attention placed on working-class women (Perreault, 1993, p. 13). Also of importance, Tong (1989) notes that radical feminism has also received criticism for its assertion of the
“goodness of women’s nature and the evilness of men’s nature” in seeking to explain women’s oppression through the patriarchy of male dominance (p. 127)

Postmodern Feminism

Positivism has been displaced, or so we hope. The program of making everything knowable through the supposedly impersonal norms and procedures of “science” has been radically questioned. The hope of constructing a ‘grand narrative,’ either intellectual or political, that will give us the ultimate truth and will lead us to freedom has been shattered in many ways. Reality it seems is a text, subject to multiple interpretations, multiple readings, multiple uses. Accepted paradigms and language games…have been relativized and politicized. As the saying goes, all have been “decentered.” What does this mean for social research in a “postmodern age?” (Apple, 1991, p. vii)

Up to this point, my dissertation has reviewed the major categories of feminist thought which reflect a tendency toward providing an “overarching explanation and solution” for women’s inequality and oppression (Tong, 1989, p. 217). In breaking with traditional feminist perspectives, Tong (1989) observes that the emergence of postmodern feminism represents “one of the most exciting developments in contemporary feminist thought” (p. 233). As Apple (1991) suggests in the above quote, postmodern feminists reject the notion of a totalizing narrative feminist framework and open up feminist thought to multiple perspectives, interpretations, and realities.

As a more contemporary theoretical perspective, postmodernism emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the transformation from the modern industrial era to the post-modern age of late capitalism (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). Accordingly, postmodernism reflects the defining characteristics of the postmodern age, namely,
“uncertainty, fragmentation, diversity, and plurality” (Merriam, 2002, p. 10). As Merriam (2002) describes, the developments of a postmodern theoretical framework are in direct contrast to the “‘modern world, where reality is predictable, research is scientific, and there are assumed to be universal norms for truth and morality . . . .’” (p. 1). Indeed, one of the defining features of postmodernism is its rejection of scientific inquiry as a means of arriving at a “single coherent rationality or that reality has a unitary nature that can be definitively observed or understood” (Wallace & Wolf, 1999, p. 406). More explicitly, postmodern theorists challenge the humanist “claims for the existence of a unique, fixed, and coherent self” (Bloom, 2002, p. 291).

In particular, postmodern feminists (Bloom, 2002; DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006) seek to challenge the assumption that there is a unique essence to the experience of being a woman. Bloom (2002) clarifies that postmodern feminists characterize women’s subjectivity as an “active,” fluid, transformative, and “fragmented” process (p. 291). As a result, postmodernism problematizes “modernist gender categories . . . [and] invites postmodern energies to deconstruct the presumed foundations of all subject positions . . . .” (p. 133). In this sense, gender is viewed as a performance in terms of “something one 
does rather than something one is . . . .” (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006, p. 133). Postmodern feminists also hold to the belief that gender is not the only determining category in shaping women’s perceptions, subjectivity, experiences, and interactions.

In this vein, postmodern feminists advocate for the importance of considering the 
intersectionality between gender and other influences on women’s identity, including “race, class, age, sexuality, disability, and other vectors of power” (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006, p. 134). Postmodern feminists believe that women’s positionality within society is structured by multiple categories that intersect to define women’s subordinate identity.
Accordingly, postmodern feminists believe one’s experiences will differ based on the intersection of dominant identifying categories. For example, in her book, *Higher Education Leadership: Examining the Gender Gap*, Chliwniak (1997) notes that while white women in the academy have often experienced the glass ceiling effect in advancing to leadership posts, Black women have often encountered the “‘concrete wall’” effect. More specifically, Chliwniak (1997) posits that Black women often experience a “‘double whammy’—that is, belonging to two groups facing discrimination” (p. 17). In fact, the postmodern feminist framework’s concern with understanding the intersection of multiple dimensions (e.g., race, class, and gender) that influence women’s identity ideologically aligns with two feminist theoretical frameworks which seek to explicitly configure feminist thought through the lens of difference: multicultural feminist thought and black feminism.

**Multiracial and Black Feminist Thought**

Zinn and Dill (2000) assert that one of the central feminist critiques of mainstream categories of feminist thought, especially liberal feminism, is the formation of theory based on the “lives of white middle-class women” (p. 59). Indeed, in their essay, “Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism,” Zinn and Dill (2000) point out that since the 1960s “women of color have taken issue with unitary theories of gender” which fail to account for difference, particularly racial difference (p. 59).

Although multiracial and black feminisms may not have achieved the same status as other mainstream feminist theories, both seek to point to the importance of considering the intersections of gender, race, and class in understanding women’s lives. In accordance with postmodern feminism, multiracial and black feminist frameworks seek to further contribute to deconstructing the modern notion that all women share
“‘universal’ or ‘essential’” qualities and experiences in society (Zinn & Dill, 2000, p. 60). Specifically, Zinn and Dill (2000), state “our focus on race stresses the social construction of differently situated social groups and their varying degrees of advantage and power” (p. 62).

Like multiracial feminism, the development of black feminist thought has contributed important insights to understanding the ways in which the intersectionality of factors such as race, class, and gender serve to shape women’s experiences. Prominent black feminist theorist, Patricia Hill Collins (1986), distinguishes that the development of black feminist thought was “stimulated by Black women’s outsider within status” (p. S 15). Coined by bell hooks, the concept of an “outsider within status” speaks to black women’s vantage point of viewing reality from both “outside and within the margins” (Collins, 1986, p. S15). Collins explains that there are three organizing principles that guide black feminist thought. First, she relays that black feminist thought cannot be understood outside of the “historical and material conditions” that have served to shape black feminists’ lives and experiences (Collins, 1986, p. S16). Second, black feminist thought assumes that Black women share a unique perception, standpoint, and experience. Third, black feminism assumes that while black women may share a common set of perceptions, the intersection of other dimensions of personhood such as “class, region, age, and sexual orientation” will shape women’s experiences in a way that produces “different expressions of these common themes” (Collins, 1986, p. S16).

Taken together, postmodern, multiracial, and black feminist theoretical frameworks share a common concern with the individualized consideration of how women’s experience differ, particularly across the lines of gender, race, and class. However, at the same time, the emphasis on “plurality, multiplicity, and difference” pose
significant theoretical threats to traditional feminists’ attempts to build a unifying or overarching theoretical model for understanding and explaining women’s inequality (Tong, 1989, p. 217). Additionally, Tong (1989) relays that some feminists view postmodern theory, in particular, with its analytic focus on women’s differences, as a threat to the “unity of the feminist movement” (p. 217).

Summary and Evaluation of Feminist Theory

In reviewing a variety of categories of feminist thought, it is clear that feminist perspectives range from a micro-level of analysis (e.g., liberal feminism), which provides for an individualized consideration of women’s status to a macro-level of analysis (e.g., radical, Marxist/socialist) in examining the ways in which the larger social structures contribute to women’s inequality. Then, the more contemporary feminist perspectives such as postmodern, multiracial, and black feminisms serve to interrupt traditional feminists’ quest to develop an overarching explanatory framework in order to examine how difference shapes women’s positionality, subjectivity, and experiences. Arguably, all of the feminist frameworks, both micro-level and macro-level approaches, present the possibility of contributing unique and important insights into understanding women’s unequal representation at the highest levels leadership in higher education. For example, the macro-level approach of the radical and Marxist/socialist feminist lenses are well suited to studying the larger structural barriers to women’s advancement, such as the ways in which the institutional culture of colleges and universities has traditionally been founded on patriarchal principles (Perreault, 1993).

However, I would argue that for the purposes of this research, which seeks to qualitatively explore university women administrators’ and presidents’ pathways to the university presidency, that a postmodernist feminist framework is best suited to the goal
of examining the personal factors (e.g., family obligations) and social barriers (e.g.,
gendered stereotypes of leaders) which may motivate or hinder women’s career paths and
leadership aspirations. The aim of this research is ideologically aligned with the goals of
a liberal feminist framework in terms of seeking to increase women’s participation in all
facets of higher education. However, liberal feminists’ view of achieving these goals
through the means of equal educational opportunities and legal remedies presents a
“narrowness of vision” in light of women’s increased educational attainment and the
implementation of numerous federal anti-discrimination reforms (Perreault, 1993, p. 11).

Indeed, since 1979 women have constituted the majority of students on college
and university campuses. Recent statistics indicate that in 2005 women represented
“57.2% of undergraduates, 49.6 % of first-professional students [e.g., attorneys], and
59.8% of graduate students” (Glazer-Raymo, 2008a, p.3). Also, in terms of women’s
degree attainment, Glazer-Raymo (2008a) notes that in 2005 women earned the majority
of baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degrees. Further, the Survey of Earned
Doctorates demonstrates that the number of women earning doctoral degrees in all
academic fields has been steadily increasing over the past 25 years (Glazer-Raymo,
2008a). In fact, in evaluating degree attainment among female college presidents, in
2006 women college presidents “were more likely than their male counterparts to have

Moreover, in relation to legal remedies affecting the educational and employment
contexts of higher education, women in higher education today have “reaped the benefits
of three decades of federal [e.g., affirmative action, Title IX of the 1972 Educational
Amendments, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, etc.], state, and local legislation and
regulations to increase women’s equity and advancement . . . .” (Glazer, 1993, p. xii;
Glazer-Raymo, 2008a). Thus, I would argue that liberal feminists’ focus on achieving women’s equality through equal educational opportunities and legal remedies are no longer as relevant in seeking to explain women’s under-representation at the highest levels of leadership. Although women today outnumber men in college enrollment rates and degree attainment, there are “subtle personal and social barriers” (e.g., work-life balance issues, family responsibilities, etc.) to women’s advancement in higher education leadership which “laws [and educational credentials] alone cannot [explain or] remedy” (Glazer, 1993, p. xii).

Therefore, I assert that a postmodern feminist framework represents the feminist perspective which most closely aligns with the purposes and goals of this research. Specifically, the use of a postmodern feminist framework serves to provide a critical lens for examining the complex individual processes and choices involved in university women administrators’ and university presidents’ career path choices and leadership aspirations. Importantly, contemporary poststructural feminist scholarship on women leaders in higher education is beginning to examine the ways in which personal and internal barriers influence women’s professional career strategies. Dean, Brackery, and Allen’s (2009c) edited book, *Women in Academic Leadership*, represents one of the first works of scholarship providing a poststructural feminist perspective on women leaders’ professional strategies and personal choices. The research essays and critical writings in this book address issues relating to women leader’s self-efficacy, preparing women of color for the presidency, and the internal barriers to women’s advancement (e.g., gendered perceptions of women leaders).

Of equal importance, a postmodern feminist framework is also useful in seeking to understand how the various dimensions of women’s personhood, such as race, class,
gender and other salient identity markers, intersect to inform female administrators’ and university presidents’ experiences, career paths, and leadership aspirations. In fact, feminist theorist Hawkesworth (2006) notes that postmodern and poststructuralist feminists have raised important concerns in regard to the use of gender, as the only analytic category, to guide feminist analysis. Although feminist research applying the more traditional strains of feminist thought (e.g., liberal, radical, and Marxist/socialist feminisms) have used gender as an analytic tool in illuminating the dichotomies and inequalities that exist between male and female leaders, postmodern and poststructuralist feminists caution that using gender as the only analytic category threatens to ignore the important differences that exist among women based on race, class, and other salient aspects of women’s identity (Blackmore, 1999; Hawkesworth, 2006).

Also of noteworthy importance, although feminist scholars, in general, are beginning to apply contemporary feminist frames to studying women’s lives and experiences, at present no known studies of women in higher education have applied a postmodern feminist framework to the study of university women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths, leadership aspirations, or leadership experiences. For all of these reasons, the use of a postmodernist feminist lens provides the most useful framework in seeking to analyze the “substantive value of [individual] differences” among the career paths and leadership aspirations of university women administrators and presidents.

A Review of the Trends, Patterns, Themes, and Issues Concerning University Women Administrators and Presidents

Guided by a postmodern feminist theoretical framework, the second facet of this literature review seeks to examine the patterns, trends, themes, and issues currently
affecting women’s advancement into top positions of leadership, especially the presidency. Although a great deal of scholarly attention has been placed on women leaders in higher education, a number of scholars (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Carter, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Nidiffer, 2001; Smith, 2004; Walton & McDade, 2001) point to a dearth of empirical data relating to women’s career paths and presidential aspirations. In fact, as Marshall (2009) observes, the American Council on Education (ACE) reports have served to provide the most current and comprehensive statistical data pertaining to college and university presidents and senior-level administrators including King and Gomez’s (2008) On the Pathway to the Presidency and The American College President (The American Council on Education, 2007). Madsen (2008) articulates “although there is some research regarding the actual career paths of university presidents, very little is related to women in academia” (p. 136). In part, Madsen (2008) explains that the dearth of research concerning women’s paths may be attributed to the small percentage of “women serving as presidents of research and comprehensive institutions” (p. 136).

The more extensive and substantive scholarly contributions concerning women leaders in higher education first appeared in the mid-1980s and abounded into the 1990s, coinciding with the advancement of women into more powerful positions of leadership in higher education (Astin & Leland, 1991; Chliwniak, 1997; Jablonski, 1996; Lindsay, 1999; Mitchell, 1993; Moore, 1984; Scanlon, 1997; Shavlik & Touchton, 1984; Sturnick et al., 1990; Walton, 1996). Much of the scholarship during the decades of the 1980s and 1990s set out to: (a) shatter myths about women leaders, (b) combat gendered stereotypes, (c) identify key issues concerning women in leadership, (d) contribute to
theoretical perspectives and models of female leadership, (e) delineate differences in male and female leadership styles, and (f) provide career path development.

Into the 2000s, scholarship concerning women administrators and presidents (Carter, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Nidiffer, 2001; Walton & McDade, 2001) continues to break new ground in terms of contributing greater insights into the themes, issues, and trends affecting women at the highest levels of leadership in higher education. For example, Walton and McDade’s (2001) essay, “At the Top of the Faculty: Women as Chief Academic Officers,” represents the first empirical study to profile the career paths and aspirations of female chief academic officers. Additionally, in the 2000s there have been numerous qualitative studies (Carter, 2009; Clarke, 2003; Gooch, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Smith, 2004; Steinke, 2006), which have served to provide deeper insights into women presidents’ career paths and leadership experiences. For instance, Madsen’s (2008) book, On Becoming a Woman Leader, uses the technique of in-depth interviews with 10 university women presidents in order to chronicle the women’s experiences from their youth to adulthood. In contrast, Clarke’s (2003) published dissertation, “Frances Lucas-Tauchar: A Portrait of Leadership,” employs a biographical life history method in seeking to provide an in-depth look at the influences and experiences that shaped one woman president’s rise to top leadership in higher education as the first woman to serve as president at Millsaps College, a private four-year, Methodist affiliated, liberal arts institution in Jackson, Mississippi.

In increasing measure, this review of literature indicates that many contemporary scholars no longer seek to explain women’s under-representation at the highest levels of leadership in relation to more traditional explanations such as the glass ceiling or chilly climate which abounded in the literature pertaining to women administrators in the
1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Interestingly, recent studies (Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006) based on interviews with current senior-level university women administrators and university presidents suggest that women, themselves, no longer view gender barriers or the glass ceiling as major impediments to career advancement. In fact, women in Marshall’s (2009) study of senior-level female administrators with school age children tend to recognize that personal choices to balance family and career have served as disadvantages to career advancement while the university women presidents in Madsen’s (2008) study recognize issues such as a lack of self-confidence in one’s leadership skills and abilities initially served as barriers to advancing into leadership roles.

Thus, in contrast to exploring the large-scale structural impediments (e.g., institutional culture) to women’s progress toward the presidency, my dissertation, grounded in a liberal and postmodernist feminist framework, seeks to contribute new insights into the unique ways in which women experience and perceive the path to the presidency. Accordingly, in what follows, I address the most prevalent trends, patterns, themes, and issues affecting university women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths and presidential aspirations including (a) a statistical portrait of women’s rise to the presidency; (b) career paths and pipeline issues; (c) the influence of mentoring relationships, role models, and networks; (d) balancing work-life issues; (e) family impacts on women’s career paths and presidential aspirations; and (f) gendered perceptions of women leaders.

A Statistical Portrait of Women’s Progress in Higher Education Leadership

Without question, women’s rise into top positions of college and university leadership has been a slow one, at best. Shavlik and Touchton (1984) assert in their
essay, “Toward a New Era of Leadership,” that males have long occupied top-level positions of leadership in higher education. From a historical vantage point, Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) establish that the “late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the times of ‘great men’ presidents” (p. 341). Indeed, within the broader scope of higher education’s history, even as recently as the 1970s it was largely unimaginable that a woman would hold a high-level position of leadership within higher education or any other sector of American society. In fact, in the mid-1970s, women comprised as little as 5% of all college and university presidencies (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Shavlik & Touchton, 1984; Touchton et al., 1990).

However, the tides began to turn for women in 1986 when the number of women college presidents increased to 9.5%. Markedly, the 1980s represents the first “decade in which women assumed a larger number of presidencies in public higher education” (Touchton et al., 1990, p. 5). In fact, in 1980 there were a total of 219 women college and university presidents. However, by the end of the decade in 1989, the total number of women presidents had increased to 328 (Touchton et al., 1990). Since the mid-1980s, the overall percent of women presidents has more than doubled in size (King & Gomez, 2008). According to the most recent data from the American Council on Education (2012), women represent 26% of all college and university presidents.

*Women’s advancement based on institutional type.* In evaluating women’s progress among all institutional types, it is clear that women have made the greatest strides in attaining presidential appointments within the institutional type of the two-year community college (June, 2007; King, 2008; American Council on Education, 2012; Walton, 1996). In fact, as of 2011, women represent 33% of all community college presidencies (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11). Additionally, “with the
exception of public bachelor’s and special focus institutions, every other type of institution has seen an increase in the share of women who are presidents” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11). Notably, from 2006 to 2011, the greatest gains for women presidents have occurred at public and private doctorate-granting universities (American Council on Education, 2012).

Interestingly, women have also made impressive strides in attaining presidencies at some of the nation’s most elite private institutions. As of 2010, women have attained presidencies at four of the eight private Ivy League universities including Brown University’s Ruth Simmons, Harvard University’s Drew Gilpin Faust, Princeton University’s Shirley Tilghman, and University of Pennsylvania’s Amy Gutmann. Notably, with the exception of Amy Gutmann, all of the aforementioned women presidents represent the first woman to serve as president in the respective history of each institution (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b, p. 187). In particular, Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University, represents the first Black woman to serve as a president of an Ivy League institution (Turner, 2008). Also of noteworthy importance, each of the aforementioned women heading Ivy League institutions ascended to the presidency through the scholar-president career path model (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b, p. 187).

Yet, despite women’s representation in leading half of the private Ivy League universities in the United States, overall women continue to be “more likely to be presidents of public—versus private—doctorate-granting universities” (p. 21). In fact, with the exception of associate intuitions, women have made greater progress in achieving presidencies at public institutions where women represent 29.4% of all presidencies versus private institutions where women represent 21.9% of all presidencies (American Council on Education, 2012). Also of significance, despite women’s recent
gains in presidential appointments at both public and private doctorate-granting institutions, statistical trend data indicates that “women continued to be [the] least likely to preside over those institutions” with women representing 22.3% of all public and private doctorate-granting colleges and universities (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11).

*The influence of race and ethnicity on women leaders’ progress.* While the numbers of women presidents have more than doubled over the past 25 years, there has been significantly less progress among the overall number of male and female presidents of color. For example, from 1986 to 2006 the percentage of racial/ethnic minority presidents has only increased from 8% to 14% (Bornstein, 2008; June, 2007; King & Gomez, 2008; Turner, 2008). Nevertheless, despite this progress, recent data reveals that “the percentage of [racial/ethnic] minority presidents declined slightly from 14 percent in 2006 to 13 percent in 2011” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 6). Strikingly, women presidents of color (20.4%) have achieved greater representation than male presidents of color (12.8%) (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 12). Although statistical trend data indicates that from 2006 to 2011 the percentage of female minority presidents has increased, “since the total number of minority presidents has not grown substantially, the proportion of all presidencies held by minority women is still quite low” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 15). For instance, the percentage of Black female presidents has only increased “2 percentage points” from 2006 to 2011 (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 15). Moreover, in examining the percentage distribution of presidents by race/ethnicity and gender, 7.7% of women presidents are Black, 1.2% are Asian American, 5.6% are Hispanic, .9% are American Indian, 1.6% are listed as Other, and 83% are White (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 9).
Thus, when one factors race and ethnicity into women’s progress, it is clear that white women, who, as of 2011, represent “25%” of all college or university presidents, have fared better than women of color (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 16; Bornstein, 2008; June, 2007; King 2008; Turner, 2008). As Turner (2008) contextualizes, the statistical portrait for women of color in attaining presidential appointments represents a “continuing problem of gross underrepresentation” (p. 240). Consequently, one of the major and “most sobering conclusions to be drawn from the data” in the American Council on Education’s 2006 and 2011 American College President surveys is that there “continues to be little to no change in the diversity of top leadership positions at America’s colleges and universities” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 29). Although the gradual increase in the number of women presidents has served to add greater gender diversity to the ranks of the American presidency, the 2011 demographic profile of the typical college president remains similar to that of presidents in 2006: a white, married male . . .”(American Council on Education, 2012, p. 5).

Current trends characterizing the presidency. Moreover, there are three noteworthy trends which characterize the contemporary pathway to the presidency. First, from 1986 to 2011, the path to the presidency has become narrower with a greater proportion of current presidents coming out of the traditional academic ranks (Phillips, 2011; American Council on Education, 2012). Second, overall, among all institutional types, 21% of today’s presidents are appointed from a previous presidency (American Council on Education, 2012). Third, the aging or graying of the presidency represents one of the most prominent trends that has occurred over the past two decades (June, 2008; Phillips, 2010; American Council on Education, 2012). Accordingly, these trends
reveal a number of important implications for the current status and future outlook of the presidency including (a) the average age of most presidents is 61, (b) the aging of the presidency will result in an upcoming wave of retirements, and (c) there will not be enough sitting presidents to fill every presidential vacancy (Phillips, 2010; American Council on Education, 2012). Thus, the current trends characterizing the presidency signify that in the near future there will be “a significant turnover in presidential leadership” presenting greater opportunities for qualified and talented women and people of color to advance into positions of presidential leadership (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 49).

Summary and evaluation of trends and patterns. Altogether, the statistical portrait concerning women’s rise to the American college presidency indicates that since the 1970s women have made slow, but significant progress in attaining college and university presidencies. Yet, the critical issue remains that women continue to be under-represented at the highest levels of leadership, particularly as college and university presidents. Recent statistics continue to demonstrate that “women continue to be hired into the presidency at lower rates than they are represented in the total campus administration and senior faculty population” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 42). Further, based on 2003 trend data from the National Center for Education Statistics, women represent 45% of “faculty and senior administrative staff in higher education” (American Council on Education, 2007, p. 18). Also of importance, although from 2006 to 2011 the overall percentage of women’s representation among college and university presidents “increased 3 percentage points from 23 percent in 2006 to 26 percent in 2011,” women’s gains are even less pronounced when one excludes associate institutions in which the gains in women’s representation has only increased from 20% in 2006 to 22%
in 2011 (American Council on Education, 2007; 2012). Therefore, overall these trends concerning both women and racial and ethnic minorities suggest that “higher education institutions have slowly expanded senior leadership opportunities for women but regressed in creating these opportunities for minorities” to enter positions leading to the presidency (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 7).

Walton and McDade (2001) contend that “to fully understand the dynamics of women moving into presidencies, it is necessary to study women in the [Chief Academic Officer] CAO position” (p. 86). Walton and McDade (2001) establish that “scholars of higher education administration have written little about . . . [the CAO] position in general, and even less about women who serve as CAOs” (p. 85). Additionally, King and Gomez (2008) assert, “there is almost no information on those individuals in the senior campus administrative positions [e.g., academic dean, executive vice presidents, CAO, etc.] that most typically lead to the presidency” (p. iv). Therefore, in order to ascertain better the factors which may motivate or discourage women from seeking a university presidency, it is important to examine the career path and pipeline issues which characterize women’s advancement to the presidency.

Career Paths and Pipeline Issues

As discussed in chapter one, the most common career path to the presidency is the “scholar-president” model which is characterized by “a faculty appointment followed by successive administrative positions of increasing responsibility” (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001, p. 206). King and Gomez (2008) note in the report On the Pathway to the Presidency that the rank of chief academic officer (CAO)/provost tends to represent the most common immediate prior position for “leaders serving in their first presidency” (p. 1). Specifically, among first time college presidents, 40% held the immediate prior
position of CAO/provost and 85% had previously “served as faculty or academic administrators prior to becoming a CAO” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 1).

*Women’s progress in key-line positions to the presidency.* In examining women’s paths to the presidency, research suggests that the traditional scholar-model represents the most prevalent pathway in women’s advancement to the presidency (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Bornstein, 2008; Carter, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; 2010; Touchton et al., 1991; Switzer, 2006). In evaluating and comparing women's paths to the presidency between 1986 and 2006, “women presidents in 2011 . . . were less likely than men to have been a president in their prior position, they were more likely to have served as provost/CAO prior to assuming the presidency” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11).

Although the majority of women presidents ascended to the presidency from the immediate prior position of CAO/provost position, data collected from *On the Pathway to the Presidency*, ACE’s first study designed to obtain more detailed data (e.g., race, gender, age, etc.) on the diversity of individuals in senior-level leadership positions leading to the presidency, suggests that women, on average, are less likely to hold the key line positions that serve as pathways to the presidency of academic dean (36%) and CAO/provost (38%) (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 5). In fact, King and Gomez explain, across institutional types women are more likely to serve in central academic affairs roles (such as associate provosts or deans of graduate studies) that are most typically staff—rather than [key] line positions; 50 percent of all central senior academic affairs officers are women. (p. 5)
What is more, King and Gomez (2008) relay that people of color represent fewer than 10% of all CAOs and “men of color [are] twice as likely as women of color to be CAOs (6 percent versus 3 percent)” (p. 6).

In assessing women’s representation among all senior-level positions, ACE’s *On the Pathway to the Presidency* indicates that women comprise 45% of all senior-level administrative positions including (a) senior academic officer (38%), (b) academic dean (36%), (c) vice president of administration (43%), (d) vice president of external affairs (49%), (e) vice president of student affairs/enrollment management (45%), (f) central academic affairs (50%), (g) chief of staff (55%), and (h) senior diversity officer (56%) (King & Gomez, 2008). However, there are important differences in women’s progress in attaining senior-level leadership positions based on institutional type (King & Gomez, 2008; Madsen, 2010). ACE’s *On the Pathway to the Presidency* survey indicates “the percentage of women holding senior administrative positions [34%] . . . is lower at doctorate-granting institutions than at any other type of institution” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 8). Also of noteworthy importance, when one considers gender and race together, women of color comprise only “7 percent of senior administrators” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 6). Thus, current statistics indicate that there is a significant number of “white women in senior level roles who could rise to the presidency” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 6).

*Women’s career paths and leadership aspirations.* In relation to women’s career paths and presidential aspirations, Madsen (2008) explains that the research literature indicates that most women leaders, in general, have “informal and emerging career paths” (p. 141). Studies on college and university women in senior-level administrator roles suggest that most women do not have planned paths to leadership (Cox, 2008; Marshall,
2009; Walton & McDade, 2001). For example, Cox (2008) indicated that 12 of the 17 upper-level university women administrators in her study did not plan paths to administration. In fact, several of the university administrators in her study described that “they just fell into the job” (Cox, 2008, p. 126). In their survey of 179 women chief academic officers (CAO) from varying institutional types (e.g., doctoral, master’s, liberal arts, etc.), Walton and McDade (2001) also reported that most female CAO attained their position “without overt and explicit effort . . .” (p. 95). Likewise, the women senior administrators in Marshall’s (2009) study “did not have predetermined professional plans that they followed to achieve their professional successes” (p. 215).

Furthermore, Eddy’s (2009), Madsen’s (2008), Steinke’s (2006), Switzer’s (2006) respective studies involving qualitative interviews with women presidents support the finding that many women presidents did not begin their career path with leadership aspirations. Steinke (2006) notes that the majority of the eight women presidents that she interviewed did not consider the possibility of seeking a presidency until later in their career paths. Similarly, Switzer (2006) notes that only one out of the 15 women presidents who participated in her study set a goal to become a college president early in her career path. In contrast, the “majority of women [presidents] began [their careers] as successful faculty members [and] “described themselves early in their careers in non-presidential terms” (Switzer, 2006, The Journey, para. 3). Interestingly, in Madsen’s (2008) study, “none of the ten presidents had an official career path targeted at becoming a university president” (p. 141). In addition, she characterizes the presidents’ paths as “informal and nonlinear” (p. 143). In fact, most of the women presidents in Madsen’s study did not consider the possibility of seeking a presidency until they assumed the role of a vice president. Also, of particular interest, Madsen’s (2008) study “supports the
notion that various career paths can lead to top level leadership positions in academe” (p. 143). Similarly, Marshall’s (2009) qualitative study based on interviews with 17 senior-level female administrators reveals that a reoccurring theme among the senior-level women administrators in this study centers on the “uniqueness of their experiences” (Marshall, 2009, p. 215).

Comparing men’s and women’s career paths. The uniqueness of women’s career paths is terms of their backgrounds, experiences, and career timing patterns has often been contrasted to men’s pathways. In her article, “Women’s Career Development Patterns,” Schreiber (1998) establishes that, in general, women tend to possess diverse career patterns while males tend to experience “consistent, uninterrupted movement from one stage to the next” (p. 9). The “traditional career pattern,” based on a male career development model, which is characterized by “linear, planful, and predictable [career development] has been associated with career commitment and success” (Schreiber, 1998, p. 9). In contrast, Schreiber (1998) maintains that the diversity that often characterizes women’s career paths may be attributed, in many cases, to women’s “complex process of managing multiple roles throughout their life span,” which may involve negotiating work-life balance issues and experiencing career interruptions (p. 5). Recent trend data indicates that “women presidents are more likely [than their male counterparts] to have altered their careers to raise children or care for their spouse” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 14).

Indeed, Eddy’s (2009) comparative study of male and female community college presidents reveals several key differences in the career paths of male and female presidents. First, in contrast to the male presidents who often intentionally sought to become presidents, Eddy (2009) found “a lack of career planning and intentionality about
becoming a president” among all of the women presidents (p. 20). Additionally, the issue of family relationships with children and spouses only affected the women presidents’ career choices and advancement into leadership roles. In fact, Eddy notes that each of the female presidents in her study “reported a circuitous route to the presidency, often with stop-outs for family obligations or lack of support for advancement” (p. 16). As a case in point, two of the female presidents in Eddy’s study chose not to seek a presidency until their husbands retired and children were grown. Eddy notes that it was easier for women to make career moves on their path to the presidency at the “end of their husbands’ careers” (p. 20). Conversely, the male presidents’ did not indicate that their “career choices were based on the obligations of their partners” (Eddy, 2009, p. 20).

In speaking to women’s presidential aspirations at the Women in Higher Education Mississippi-Network (WHEMN) Leadership Conference, Phillips (2009) relays that among women CAOs, only 25.3% intend to seek a presidency in comparison to 33% of male CAOs. Phillips further indicates that 47% of women CAOs do not intend to seek a presidency and 28% remain undecided. The low percentage of female CAOs with presidential aspirations is made more significant when one considers that women (38%) represent a smaller percentage of the total number of CAOs.

Career path issues for women faculty. The 2007 edition of ACE’s The American College President reveals that a faculty appointment represent the “primary point of entry to the presidential career path” (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 1). In particular, at four-year institutions faculty members who earn tenure are the ones who will be positioned to “pursue future positions of [academic] leadership” (American Council on Education, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, since the most prominent path to the presidency begins with a full time, tenure-track faculty appointment, it is also important to assess women’s progress
within the faculty ranks. Markedly, Bornstein (2008) point out that “more women presidents than men, 46.3% to 28.5% had previously served as a provost or chief academic officer” (p. 166).

An evaluation of statistics concerning women’s representation within the faculty ranks demonstrates that women are disproportionately under-represented in full time, tenure-track faculty positions (Bornstein 2008; King, 2008). Importantly, according to the American Council on Education (2008) issue brief titled, Too Many Rungs on the Ladder,

Although women and people of color generally make up a larger proportion of young tenure-line faculty than other faculty, the low total number of young faculty in tenured or tenure-track positions translates to very few women and people of color in the permanent faculty roles that would position them for future leadership. Across all four-year institutions, only 5 percent of all faculty are women under the age of 45 working in tenure-line positions. (p. 4)

Thus, these statistics suggest that time represents another crucial factor in women’s progress into leadership. Importantly, in evaluating the traditional scholar path to the presidency, one must consider the length of time involved in (a) earning a doctoral degree, (b) progressing through the tenure and promotion process, and (c) advancing through the administrative pipeline (e.g., chair, dean, provost). Mason (2009) reports in The Chronicle of Higher Education that today women can expect to earn a doctoral degree at 34 years of age. However, in general, Phillips reports that 40% of both male and female assistant professors completed a doctoral degree after the age of 40. Further, Phillips (2009) relays that 41 is the median age for women to hold the position of assistant professor.
Altogether, these statistical findings pertaining to the age of women faculty are particularly important when one considers that the traditional pathway to the presidency typically takes approximately 28 years (Phillips, 2009). Consequently, current statistics suggest that with fewer women in full time tenure-track positions and women entering into academic careers in their mid 30s and 40s, there will be a smaller pool of women who will be eligible to move up the traditional academic pipeline to assume presidential positions.

Moreover, the American Association of University Professors’ (AAUP) *Gender Equity Indicators 2006* report reveals that women comprise approximately 39% of full-time faculty within all institutional types of higher education. Additionally, women have not reached parity with men in achieving the rank of full professor. According to the report, women represent approximately 52% of all non tenure-track faculty and 31% of all tenure-track faculty. At doctoral granting universities, women constitute as little as 19% of full professors while men constitute as much as 80% of full professors. On an aggregate level, within all institutional types, women comprise 24% of full professorships versus men who occupy 76% of full professorships. Further, the statistical portrait of female faculty indicates that the greater the prestige of the institution the less likely that women are to achieve the rank of full professor.

Taken together, Bornstein (2008), President Emerita of Rollins College, postulates in her essay, “Women and the College Presidency,” that women’s under-representation “in senior faculty and administrative positions . . . [results] in far fewer women than men in candidate pools for presidencies” (p. 165). Marshall (2009) states that it “remains puzzling why in light of the increasing number of women faculty and administrators in academe, so few advance to senior-level positions” (p.190).
Nevertheless, Marshall (2009) posits that while women are under-represented at the highest levels of leadership, the numbers of women in faculty and administrative posts suggests that “colleges and universities have an existing pool of qualified, experienced women to tap into to enhance gender diversity at the presidential level” (p. 190).

With the increasing presence of women in college and university leadership, Marshall (2009) contends that more research on women in senior-level leadership is needed in order to ascertain better the factors which may serve as barriers for women in advancing to the highest levels of leadership. With this in mind, recent scholarship (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Carter, 2009; Marshall, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Williams, 2005) points to a number of career path issues which may contribute greater insights into “women’s motivations and preparation for the presidency” (Bornstein, 2008, p. 165). The most prevalent pipeline issues concern (a) work-life balance issues; (b) family responsibilities; (c) mentoring relationships, role models, and networks; and (d) gendered perceptions of women leaders.

Work-Life Balance Issues

The balancing of women’s professional careers with personal lives represents one of the most consistent and well documented themes in the review of literature concerning women administrators and presidents (Adams, 1979; Astín & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Drago, 2007; Jones & Komives, 2001; June, 2007; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; LeBlanc, 1993, Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Walton, 1996; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; West & Curtis, 2006; Williams, 2005). The research literature suggests that women, in particular, “face the challenge of resolving the inevitable conflicts between traditional female and family roles and the role of managerial leadership: the work-life balance” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 99). Serving as a
chief administrator in today’s increasingly complex institutions of higher education has been described by a university president as a “24-7 job” with enormous “stress and time commitments” (Selingo, 2005, p. 4). According to Trinity Washington University’s President, Patricia A. McGuire, the demands of the presidential role are not “really structured for people, male or female, who are married and have children” (June, 2007, p. 2). In assuming the presidency at age 36, McGuire articulates that she is not sure she could have assumed a presidency if she had had a “spouse and children” (June, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, Chliwniak (1997) establishes, “a successful professional [academic] career requires early achievement and uninterrupted competition for continued success” (p. 31). However, scholarship has persistently documented that the contours of women’s marital relationships and family obligations continues to serve as a social and cultural barrier to career achievement at the highest levels of leadership in higher education (Adams, 1979; Astin & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Drago, 2007; Jones & Komives, 2001; June, 2007; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; LeBlanc, 1993, Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Phillips, 2010; Steinke, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; Walton, 1996; West & Curtis, 2006; Williams, 2005).

Thus, women who persevere through the academic pipeline to assume the position of president must often make sacrifices, choices, and trade-offs concerning their personal lives. In the late 1970s, Adams’ (1979) study of 60 women leaders from a variety of career fields (e.g., college and university deans and presidents, entrepreneurs, attorneys, producers, consultants, etc.) demonstrates that the issue of balancing personal and professional lives represents a long-standing issue for women in positions of leadership working within all sectors of American society. In speaking to the price of professional success on the participants’ personal lives, Adams (1979) states, “most of the successful
women I interviewed are happy with their choices; their professional success and personal happiness have a clear causal relationship” (p. 169). Adams further notes, “some women recalled clear decisions between professional advancement and opportunities for personal fulfillment that they could not have realized if they continued on their chosen career path” (p. 169).

**Balancing work and family roles.** Throughout the literature of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the theme of balancing women’s professional careers with personal lives continues to represent one of the most prominent issues for women at various levels of the academy including (a) graduate students, (b) faculty, (c) senior-level administrators, and (d) presidents (Conley, 2005; Costes, Helmke & Ulku-Steiner, 2006; Curtis, 2005; Marshall, 2009; Quinn & Litzler, 2009; Steinke, 2006; West & Curtis, 2006; Williams, 2005). Today, scholars contend that women continue to bear the primary responsibility for “managing work and family and for coping with the many pressures associated with assuming both roles” (Marshall, 2009, p. 191). In particular, women “traditionally bear the heaviest load of family work… [in terms of] managing childbirth and child rearing, neither of which is [part of] the traditional male role” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 99).

In Kuk and Donovan’s (2004) interviews with university women administrators from three different generations, the participants conveyed that although they felt a “greater sense of equity at work, the home front is still not viewed as truly egalitarian” (p. 4). The women administrators in this study perceived that their male colleagues did not experience the same level of pressure in carrying out family and domestic responsibilities (e.g., cooking, caring for children) (Kuk and Donovan). In fact, the multiple familial roles that women often assume of daughter, wife, and mother may come into conflict, at different points in time, with the professional academic roles of researcher, faculty
member, or administrator (Curtis, 2005). Significantly, while the younger generation of women administrators in Kuk and Donovan’s study were responsible for caring for young children, some of the senior women were responsible for caring for aging parents.

Today, to great extent, women’s career paths are no longer inhibited or blocked by “legal, formal, and visible” barriers (Curtis, 2005, p. 1). Schipani et al. (2009) explain that the “host of invisible but very real barriers that limit women’s rise to the top executive ranks . . . have fallen through the influence of law and social pressure” (p. 97). Yet, for many women, the “conflict between work and family” continues to serve as a barrier for “entering and advancing in academic careers” (Curtis, 2005, p. 3). Today, the barriers which impede women's career paths and leadership aspirations may be more accurately characterized as stemming from “social, political, and cultural factors that mediate the gender role” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 98). Most notably, the barriers for women take the form of (a) geographic mobility/relocation, (b) career interruptions to bear and raise children, (c) perceptions of the incompatibility of achieving work-life balance, and (d) career choices that accommodate family responsibilities (e.g., part-time, non-tenure-track positions).

In some cases, women have made the choice to forego full-time academic careers in favor of part-time teaching positions which allow women to devote more time to family obligations (Curtis, 2005; Marshall, 2009; Williams, 2005). Likewise in the administrative ranks, Kuk and Donovan’s (2004) study reveals that issues of work life balance affect women administrators’ career paths and aspirations. Specifically Kuk and Donovan (2004) note that all of the women in senior-level positions who participated in their study do not aspire to a “higher level within the administrative hierarchy . . . [because] the women perceive that the more senior-level positions are not worth the
personal costs” (p. 6). In contrast, Curtis (2005) notes that some women have not found it possible to achieve work-family balance and have made the choice to sacrifice having a personal life in order to pursue an academic career. As a case in point, statistics indicate that over 50% of women who achieve tenure do not have children—signifying a high “incidence of childlessness among women academics” (Williams, 2005, p. 100).

Differences in men’s and women’s marital and family status. Strikingly, current statistics concerning male and female presidents and chief academic officers reveals clear and persistent differences between men and women’s marital and family status (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Chliwniak, 1997; June, 2007; King, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Phillips, 2010; Walton, 1996). Current statistics reveal that a “disproportionate number [of women presidents] remain single or childless compared to their male counterparts” (Marshall, 2009, p. 190). Indeed, recent statistical data indicates that only 72% of women presidents are currently married in comparison to 90% of male presidents (American Council on Education, 2012).

Notably, the percentage of women presidents who are married today is greater than the percentage of female presidents (35%) who were married in 1986. Further, the study reveals that in 2011 approximately 6% of women presidents have never been married in comparison to 1% of male presidents who never married. Interestingly, since 1980 the percentage of women presidents who are divorced, separated, or widowed has increased over time from 16% in 1986 to 16% in 2011 (American Council on Education, 2012). In contrast, in 2011 “only 5% of male presidents were divorced, separated, or widowed” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 14). Moreover, in considering the intersection between presidents’ race/ethnicity and marital status, the American Council on Education’s (2012) American College President survey distinguishes that women
presidents (6%, 12%) of color are more likely to have never married or be divorced in comparison with male presidents of color (1%, 2%).

There are also striking differences between female and male presidents with children. While 90% of male presidents have children only 72% of women presidents have children (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 14). Further, only a small percentage of both male (19%) and female (12%) presidents have children under the age of 18 (American Council on Education, 2009). Also, in considering differences in presidents’ family structure based on race and ethnicity, African American (88%) presidents are “more likely to have children than white presidents” (85%) (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 17). Significantly, American Council on Education’s (2012) *American College President* survey reveals that women presidents are more likely than male presidents to have interrupted their career path to “raise children or care for their spouse” (p. 14). In fact, “ten percent of women presidents had either left the job market to work part-time due to family responsibilities, compared with just 3% of men presidents” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 14).

Similarly, the American Council on Education’s (2009) first national survey of Chief Academic Officers, titled the *CAO Census*, reveals significant differences between the percentages of male and female CAOs who are married and have children. According to the CAO Census, 69% of women CAOs are married compared to 91% of male CAOs (American Council on Education, 2009). In comparison to 88% of male CAOs with children, only 69% of female CAOs have children. More specifically, the survey indicates that 26% of male CAOs have children under the age of 18 compared to only 15% of female CAOs (American Council on Education, 2009).
Differences between the marital and family status of male and female faculty.

Importantly, with the most common pathway to the presidency beginning in the faculty ranks, Phillips points to a number of significant differences regarding the marital and parenting status between male and female faculty members. First, recent statistics indicate that only one third of women without children who take a tenure-track faculty position will ever have a child. Second, Phillips relays that within any given year, married women in tenure-track positions are 50% more likely to divorce in comparison to married men in tenure-track positions. Third, 12 years after earning a doctoral degree, 85% of men are married and 74% have children while only 63% of women are married and 55% have children.

In addition, scholars observe that women’s academic career paths are often disrupted by family responsibilities which may be viewed as a factor contributing to the differences in men and women’s progress on the tenure track and in the academic administrative ranks (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Chliwniak, 1997; Conley, 2005). Kimmel (2000) explains how the tenure clock affects the prime years of bearing and raising children:

In a typical academic career, a scholar completes a Ph.D. about six to seven years after the B.A., or roughly by one’s early thirties. Then he or she begins a career as an assistant professor and has six more years to earn tenure and promotion. This usually represents the most intense academic work period of a scholar’s life—he or she works night and day to publish enough scholarly research and prepare and teach his or her courses. The early thirties are also the most likely childbearing years for professional women. The academic tenure clock is thus timed to a man’s rhythms—and not just any man, but one who has a wife or other
family supports to relieve him of family obligations as he works to establish his
credentials. Remember the adage “publish or perish”? Often, to academics
struggling to make tenure, it feels as though publishing requires that family life
perish. (p. 98)

*The maternal wall.* Altogether, in evaluating the overrepresentation of women in
non-tenure track faculty positions, the under-representation of tenure-track women in
four year institutions, and the “dearth of women at the top” of leadership, Williams
(2005) attributes the statistical patterns concerning women in higher education to a
phenomenon which conceptualizes as the “maternal wall” (p. 91). Williams (2005)
argues that “many women never get near the glass ceiling because of a type of gender
bias that has only recently been documented . . . the ‘maternal wall’ . . . [which] inhibits
women’s progress once they become mothers” (p. 91). For instance, Williams points out
that women faculty who have a child after earning their doctoral degree “are much less
likely to achieve tenure than men who have children at the same point in their career” (p.
91). Williams (2005) defines the maternal wall as a type of bias or stereotyping which
“tends to be triggered at any point when maternity becomes salient” (e.g., when a woman
announces her pregnancy, requests maternity leave, etc.). Negative stereotypes may
include assumptions that a woman is less competent once she becomes a mother or that
she does a “disproportionate amount of student advising . . . [because of] her ‘maternal
instinct’” (p. 96).

Moreover, Williams notes that emerging research is beginning to examine the
differing ways in which professional women of color are affected by motherhood
stereotypes. For example, Williams (2005) points to an “important dissertation by Clarke
(2002) [which] documents that the maternal wall for black women professionals deprives
many not only of children but also of partners” (p. 100). Because black professional women in “positions of power are much less likely to find partners,” they may encounter a ‘family wall’ rather than a maternal wall” (Williams, 2005, p. 100).

**The perceived incompatibility in balancing work-life issues.** Significantly, Quinn and Litzler (2009) assert that the perceived incompatibility of achieving work-family balance in academic careers begins in graduate school. West and Curtis (2006) note that recent data indicates that the “percentage of women among applicants for tenure-track faculty jobs does not match the percentage of women among PhD recipients” (p. 14). In observing recent hiring data, West and Curtis (2006) assert there “seems to be a significant drop off among women between receipt of the PhD and application for tenure-track faculty positions” (p. 14). In speaking to the factors which may discourage women from pursuing academic careers, Quinn and Litzler (2009) establish that “researchers (Golde, 1998; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000; Sears, 2003) have found that many graduate students believe that faculty careers are not conducive to balancing work and family roles” (p. 67).

In particular, Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, and Ulku-Steiner’s (2006) research indicates that female doctoral students, both with and without family obligations, tended to report difficulty in balancing the demands of academic life with the goals of their personal lives. West and Curtis (2006) argue that “women’s perception that it is too difficult to pursue a tenure-track faculty career and raise children” may be viewed as one factor that contributes to the “gap between women’s representation among Ph.D. recipients and their presence in applicant pools” for tenure-track jobs (p. 14). West and Curtis (2006) insist that “the academy must make further efforts to convey to women that they no longer need
to make a choice between raising children and becoming tenure-track faculty members” (p. 14).

*Family Impacts: The Influence of Children and Spouses on Women's Career Path Aspirations*

Marshall (2009) contends that while scholars have recently begun to explore how having children influences the career advancement of women faculty members, the “research literature is largely silent on whether having children affects women’s advancement into senior-level [leadership] positions” (p. 188). In addition, Marshall (2009) maintains that the existing “research on women administrators with children is largely negative, outdated, and limited in scope” (p. 193). Thus, Marshall's recent qualitative exploratory study of 17 senior-level university female administrators, with school-aged children, serves to fill an important gap in the literature.

*The influence of motherhood on women’s career paths and aspirations.* Equally important, Madsen’s (2008) and Steinke’s (2006) respective studies of college and university women presidents represent another valuable contribution to the current literature relating to how motherhood influences women's path to the college presidency. In Madsen’s study, nine of the presidents were mothers and some were grandmothers. The majority of the presidents had children while they were earning undergraduate and/or graduate degrees. Notably, all the women presidents had the opportunity to be “involved in part-time professional employment” when their children were young which enabled them to “continue their careers while focusing significant time and energy on raising children” (Madsen, 2008, p. 216). Madsen (2008) articulates that the “presidents’ children were, and continue to be, central in their lives, even with the presidents’ busy and pressing schedules” (p. 216).
Similarly, in Steinke’s (2006) study of eight female college and university presidents who represent the first woman to serve as president in the history of each respective institution, the majority of the presidents were mothers of grown children. The women in this study acknowledge that the “presidency is a demanding professional position” which is often mentally and physically exhausting. Many of the presidents “remarked that they could not envision being in their current positions with younger children at home” who needed their attention (p. 106). Although most of the women presidents in Steinke’s study had grown children, one president is the mother of young children. She expressed often feeling challenged in “trying to run an institution and then going home and running her family” (Steinke, 2006, p. 107). With this in mind, the women leaders in these respective studies (Madsen, 2006; Marshall, 2009; Steinke; 2006) spoke to both the challenges and benefits associated with managing both a professional life and family life.

The influence of geographic mobility on women’s career paths and aspirations.

First, Marshall’s study reinforces that one of the key factors that may influence women administrators’ career aspirations and choices is the issue of geographic mobility (Marshall, 2009; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; Williams, 2005). Williams’ (2005) explains that relocation is particularly important to career advancement in “academia, where, it is said, ‘if you want to move up, you have to move’” (p. 100). However, Marshall points out that relocation “typically is not an option for women with children in school and in dual-career relationships” (p. 191). Walton and DeFleur (1993) explain that women who may have high-level leadership aspirations “are not as mobile as men and one reason is because many women administrators have spouses who are also pursuing careers” (p. 18). For instance, one interviewee in Marshall’s (2009) made a
“conscious decision not to relocate her family, despite her awareness that this decision limited her career advancement” (p. 198). In Switzer’s (2006) study of women college and university presidents, she found that the “women . . . adapted to the pace and locations of their spouses’ jobs” (The Journey, para. 14). However, none of the participants conveyed that adapting to their spouses’ careers was “debilitating” to their own career paths (Switzer, 2006, The Journey, para. 14).

In the academic context, Williams (2005) states,

Nonmothers including men will tend to move up if they reach a certain level of accomplishment, mothers are more likely than others to be unable to relocate, according to a long line of studies (Bielby and Bielby, 1992; Deitch and Sanderson, 1987; Shauman and Xie, 1996). (p. 100)

Consequently, the issue of relocation tends to represent a “more subtle interaction between the glass ceiling and the maternal wall” in women’s academic careers (Williams, 2005, p. 100). Overall, in balancing work and family, the participants in Marshall’s (2009) study made a number of professional tradeoffs which included “limiting career advancement, setting aside educational goals, limiting involvement in professional organizations, and earning less money” (p. 199). Likewise, in Steinke’s study, one of the women presidents conveys that earlier in her career she made a conscious choice not to pursue a deanship in order to devote more time to caring for her young daughter.

Personal trade-offs. Next, Marshall’s interviews with senior-level women administrators reveals a number of personal trade-offs involved in balancing career and family. Marshall describes that the women in this study often sacrificed personal time for themselves in favor of devoting time to their children, career, and spouse. As a result, many of the participants experienced a lack of personal time for: “downtime, sleep,
exercise, and personal friendships” (Marshall, 2009, p. 200). Additionally, the participants chose to sacrifice personal interests (e.g., reading, gardening) and had “limited time . . . for personal friendships . . .” (p. 201).

Also, two prominent themes in Marshall’s study of senior-level administrative mothers relate to feelings of “missing out” and guilt over “not spending enough time with their children” (p. 204). In fact, for the majority of the women in this study, “the biggest trade-off . . . of being both a mother and a senior administrator was the emotional toll it took on them in the form of guilt” (Marshall, 2009, p. 204). Marshall explains, “these women frequently shared their apprehensions about not spending enough time with their children or not dedicating themselves fully to their careers . . . not giving a 100 percent of themselves to either work or home” (p. 204). Along the same lines, in Madsen’s (2008) research, women presidents frequently felt a sense of work-family conflict. Like the women administrators in Marshall's study, several women presidents expressed a sense of guilt for having to “miss a child's game or event because of an important meeting . . . [as well as a feeling of guilt] when they missed a work meeting to attend a child's game or event” (pp. 220-221).

_The influence of women’s family roles on their leadership._ Although participants shared a number of trade-offs, tensions, and compromises associated with negotiating the dual role of mother and administrator, Marshall (2009) conveys, the “women in this study repeatedly reinforced that the benefits and rewards of their dual roles far outweighed any and all trade-offs associated with it” (p. 208). For instance, the participants shared a number of personal benefits associated with being both a parent and a professional including: “satisfying incomes, enriching lives, and gratification that came with making others proud” (Marshall, 2009, p. 208). Further, the participants spoke to the ways in
which their incomes served to provide material benefits (e.g., private education, extracurricular activities) for their children. Interestingly, the women also noted the ways in which motherhood had positively influenced their work as administrators such as being able to relate to the needs of others and the capacity to demonstrate compassion. Similarly, women presidents who were mothers attribute some of their preparation for the presidency to experiences and skills gained through motherhood (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). As a case in point, the women presidents in Madsen’s study developed numerous leadership competencies as a result of their motherhood role such as (a) multitasking, (b) negotiation skills, (c) patience, (d) perseverance, (e) empathy, (f) communication skills, and (g) resolving conflict. Indeed, the leadership competencies that the presidents in Madsen’s study acquired through their gender role within the family, as mothers, may be attributed to a “gender-role spillover” in which the behaviors associated with women’s gender roles carryover into their professional career roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p. 4). Moreover, Eagly and Johnson note that the spillover of women’s gender roles into their leadership roles may help explain, in part, gender-related differences among male and female leaders such as the view that women leaders, in comparison to their male counterparts, possess more interpersonal skills such as being “friendly, pleasant, interested in other people, expressive, and socially sensitive” (p. 4).

The role of spouses/partners. In addition to the lack of current research on how having children affects women administrators’ leadership aspirations and career paths in higher education, there is also a dearth of current research pertaining to how women leaders’ relationships with spouses may positively or negatively affect their career aspirations, career paths, and presidential roles. In the psychology research literature pertaining to women’s career development, Betz (2008) points to two studies (Gilbert
1994; Gomez et al. 2001) which speak to the “crucial role of a supportive spouse in managing both career and home/family responsibilities” (p. 738). Importantly, three recent qualitative studies, (Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006) focusing on women leaders in higher education provide greater insights into the ways in which spouses influence women's aspirations and career paths as well as how serving as a top administrator affects women's marriages. First, in Madsen’s (2008) study, she describes that among the sample of ten university women presidents ranging in age 53-67 who participated in her study:

five [out of nine] women have remained in their first marriages throughout the years; four others are in committed relationships, with two having been married twice and one four times. Three of the four divorcées said that separations were related to their career choices and advancement ambitions. (p. 211)

Today, eight of the 10 women presidents are in committed relationships. Madsen (2008) reports that many of the participants in her study believed that “it takes a very special man to be married to a woman with such ambition and drive for accomplishment and success” (p. 211). The women presidents in happy marriages and committed relationships characterize their partners as (a) supportive, (b) good listeners, (c) collaborative, (d) encouraging, (e) patient, and (f) a great friend. In particular, Madsen (2008) points out, “friendship and support were the foundational elements of good marriages for these women” (p. 215). In addition, the women presidents’ relationships with spouses equipped them with a number of leadership skills including: “compromise, negotiation, support, encouragement, development of others, [and] interpersonal communication” (Madsen, 2008, p. 215).
Second, Steinke (2006) describes that the majority of women college and university presidents who participated in her study were married. Steinke (2006) states, “many of the presidential spouses encouraged their wives’ careers and also tried to find ways that they could assist their partners in their professional duties” (p. 102). The women presidents viewed their spouses as supportive in terms of serving as trusted confidantes and advisors. In fact, the women in this study viewed the encouragement and support of their spouses as contributing to their “personal and professional well-being” in terms of achieving a greater professional and personal balance (Steinke, 2006, p. 97).

Additionally, the women presidents with successful marriages share the belief that “for a husband-wife team to be successful with the woman serving as president, the man must be willing to play a secondary role to be in the spotlight with the president but in a supportive capacity” (p. 98). Interestingly, the women presidents also spoke to the supporting role their spouses played in assisting with fundraising efforts. For example, the women relay that their husbands (a) attended fundraising events and dinners, (b) hosted and socialized with donors, and (c) accompanied their wives on trips to meet prospective donors.

Astin and Leland’s (1991) earlier qualitative work, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*, affirms the importance of women leaders having a supportive spouse. The participants in Astin and Leland’s study served as leaders in a variety of career fields (e.g., national independent agencies, government agencies, higher education, etc.) during the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. As Madsen (2008) notes, Astin and Leland’s study reflects the importance of women leaders receiving “support, guidance, and encouragement from a spouse” (p. 213). For example, one of the participants in Astin and Leland’s (1991) study notes that her husband supported and encouraged her “to
travel, to do whatever was necessary” to develop and succeed as a leader (p. 53).

Overall, Madsen (2008) observes that the spouses of the women leaders in Astin and Leland’s study “were typically strong and confident individuals who had unique attributes needed to be successful in these relationships” (p. 213). Also, like many of the university women presidents’ husbands in Madsen’s study, the male spouses in Astin and Leland’s study were often willing to share household and family responsibilities.

*Martial strain and divorce.* Conversely, Madsen (2008) points out that among the women presidents who were divorced in her study, one of the common reasons centered on the men’s insecurities or unwillingness to “support a highly ambitious woman” (p. 213). In fact, three of the presidents spoke of early divorce (before children) because of a lack of support for . . . life goals and desires” (Madsen, 2008, p. 214). Madsen (2008) conveys that one of the women presidents in her study express that she could not balance both a highly successful career and marriage. As the participant states,

I think marriage is hard for all of us. It is challenging wanting to balance and have both a career and family. I wasn't successful at doing that, and I have now realized that is part of the price I have to pay for my success. (p. 214)

Similarly, in Marshall's (2009) study of senior-level women administrators with school-age children, martial strain served as a common theme and source of stress for the women in this study. In particular, a number of women reported marital strain due to “their partners’ insecurities about having professional wives” (p. 202). In particular, one participant’s husband “did not like being in the shadow of her career [as a vice president]” (Marshall, 2009, p. 202). Marshall (2009) distinguishes that some of the participants attributed the tension in their marriage to a “lack of time to devote to their relationships, and others blamed it on their partners’ resistance to appreciate their wives
high-profile jobs” (p. 202). Similarly, one of the women presidents in Steinke’s (2006) study attributes her divorce to her husband being young and unprepared “for life in the spotlight—or at least being in her shadow in the public spotlight” (p. 98).

Women leaders and singlehood. While more recent research (Madsen, 2007; Marshall, 2009) addresses women leaders’ successes or failures in their marital relationships, earlier research (Adams, 1979; Astin & Leland, 1991) presents the perspectives and experiences of women leaders who are single and/or never married. Astin and Leland (1991) convey that the women leaders in their study who never married discuss the “cost and frustration(s) of singlehood and its effects on someone who is in a very public role” (pp. 132-133). In speaking to the costs associated with women leaders not having a spouse, Astin and Leland (1991) write,

These costs take many forms: not having someone close to you with whom you can share your frustrations and from whom you can get support, experiencing the sometimes undesirable expectations others have of you, or feeling unprotected from the sexist assumption that you can be available to any man at any time.

These problems are vividly portrayed in . . . [the participants’] words: ‘The first couple of years were rough. First the student body wanted a father figure. I didn't have a husband. I had some credibility problems with the student body.’ ‘For a single woman, I think there is more demand on your time because they don't think they’re intruding on anything.’ (p. 133)

Further, Warner and DeFleur (1993) speculate that singlehood may serve as a barrier to women being selected for high-level positions of leadership in higher education. The authors note that the disproportionate number of women administrators who are unmarried in comparison to their male counterparts may suggest that single women are
not viewed as capable of meeting “social expectations” (Warner & DeFleur, 1993).

Warner and DeFleur (1993) explain,

administrators represent their schools in a variety of community and professional
groups and they are expected to host a large number of social events. Some
people assume that these activities should be carried out with the traditional
husband and wife team. (p. 17)

In contrast, the single women leaders in Adams’s (1979) study seemed to be more
content with their singlehood. Adams (1979) describes that none of the women leaders in
her sample who are single and over the age of 40 “have found their lives wanting in any
significant respect because they either deferred the satisfactions of husband and family or
disregarded them” (p. 129). For example, Adams (1979) describes one participant’s
perspective that the women of her generation could not successfully combine a marriage
and career:

I made a conscious choice between marriage and a career, and my career has been
better to me than most marriages have to the women I know. I knew a long time
ago that I couldn’t handle both, and I don't think any woman can . . . at least, no
woman of my generation. (p. 129)

*Family and friend support systems.* In addition to issues concerning women
leaders’ relationships with spouses, the research literature (Adams, 1979; Astin & Leland,
1991; Betz, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009) suggests that relationships with
extended family members and friends and can serve as an important source of support for
women administrators and presidents. In speaking to the empirical research on women’s
career development in the field of psychology, Betz (2008) relays that connections to
“familial and peer/friend support” is critically important in facilitating women’s career aspirations, achievement, and satisfaction (p. 738).

Madsen (2008) confirms that the women presidents in her study cultivated important support systems in their relationships with “parents, in-laws, grandparents, siblings, friends, church members, neighbors, and colleagues from community work” (p. 215). For example, one president explains, “‘my mother clearly helped make it possible for me to imagine a professional life without compromising my commitment to my family’” (Madsen, 2008, p. 217). Conversely, in Leatherwood and William’s (2008) study of career path differences between male and female community college presidents, the women presidents perceived a lack of family support to be a career path obstacle while the “male presidents did not indicate it was a barrier to the presidency” (p. 266).

Indeed, Betz (2008) notes that family support can play a “crucial [role] in maintaining women’s career commitment after the birth of children” (p. 738). Similarly, for women leaders of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s generations who participated in Astin and Leland’s study, friendships were described as (a) sustaining, (b) empowering, (c) strengthening, and (d) replenishing. In fact, both previous and current research (Adams, 1979, Astin & Leland, 1991; Madsen, 2008) indicates that fostering relationships with other women leaders can serve to “help to build up a network of friendships” (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 139).

**Mentors, Role Models, and Professional Networks**

In addition to the prominent role of work life balance issues and women's family responsibilities, one of the most salient and persistent themes in the review of literature concerning women in higher education points to the critical role that mentoring relationships, role models, and professional networks can play in contributing to
women’s professional development and career advancement on their path to top leadership (Ausejo, 1993; Astin & Leland, 1991; Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Clarke, 2003; Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Gibson, 2006; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006; LeBlanc, 1993; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Lindsay, 1999; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Scanlon, 1997; Schipani et al., 2009; Schroeder & Mynatt, 1993; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). In fact, in their review of the mentorship literature, Schipani et al. (2009) establish that “for at least two decades social research has confirmed . . . that mentoring and networking may help executive women reach the highest positions of leadership within their organizations” (p. 90). Further, scholarship indicates that “women may be in particular need of mentors to serve as role models and to help overcome barriers to advancement” (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006, p. 139). Conversely, research suggests women’s lack of mentoring experiences may contribute to the under-representation of women at highest levels of leadership within all sectors of American society (e.g., business, government, law, education, etc.) (Schipani et al., 2009).

The role and benefits of mentorship. In the most fundamental sense, career mentors can be defined as those persons “who provide guidance and support to help pave the path for mentees in achieving their career goals” (Brown, 2005, p. 659). More specifically, mentoring involves the “idea that two individuals are in a relationship at different levels of power, one more senior than the other in power, influence, position, experience, or maturity” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 101). While mentoring serves the function of promoting career development, mentorship can also serve a “psychosocial function” in terms of providing “‘friendship, acceptance and confirmation’” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 101). Thus, in the context of higher education, the research literature
suggests that mentorship is important for women at all levels within the academy (e.g.,
graduate students, faculty, and administrators) in terms of providing (a) career role
models, (b) career development and advancement advice, (c) sponsorship and greater
visibility, (d) advice for successfully balancing work-family responsibilities, (e) career
guidance and support, and (f) strategies for overcoming gendered barriers (Ausejo, 1993;
Astin & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2005; Chliwniak, 1997; Gibson, 2006;
Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009;
Steinke, 2006; Scanlon, 1997; Schroeder & Mynatt, 1993).

In the student context, Kurtz-Costes et al. (2006) note that research and theory
point to the “importance of female faculty for the success of female students” (p. 140).
Specifically, Kurtz-Costes et al. (2006) state that prior research indicates, “women
doctoral students who had female role models reported higher levels of self-esteem,
instrumentality, work commitment and career aspirations than women with male faculty
role models” (p. 139). Concurrently, Schroeder and Mynatt’s (1993) research affirms
that women who have a female faculty mentor tend to report having greater success in
graduate school in terms of degree completion and professional development. Likewise,
in the faculty context, Gibson (2006) asserts that faculty peer-mentoring can help women
to achieve greater success in the academy by providing female faculty with (a) a feeling
of connection, (b) affirmation of one’s worth, and (c) a greater understanding of the
organizational culture of the academic institution.

Moreover, a number of recent empirical studies (Gibson, 2006; Madsen, 2008;
Marshall, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Steinke, 2006) indicate that mentorship and
networks, both formal and informal, may be particularly crucial in helping women to
achieve top positions of leadership such as senior-level administrators and college
presidencies. In fact, Scanlon (1997) assert that if a woman possesses such attributes as intelligence, a strong work ethic, ability, and ambition that a “mentor can make the critical difference in her rise to the top” (p. 6).

In advocating for the importance of mentorship, Bornstein (2008) articulates,

Some qualified women, lacking mentoring and relevant experience, feel underprepared and simply do not apply [for a presidency]. Women in particular suffer from a lack of support, encouragement, mentoring, training, and visibility. Experienced mentors help women overcome obstacles to advancement and decide when to seek the presidency . . . those who have mentoring are more likely to achieve top positions. (p. 165)

In agreement, Brown (2005) articulates that mentors can serve to build women's self-confidence as leaders by “planting seeds that would empower them to seek college president appointment” (p. 660). Particularly in the context of gaining access to the elite level leadership roles, “a mentor can buffer an individual from overt and covert forms of discrimination, lend legitimacy to a person or position, provide guidance and training in the political operation of the organization, and provide inside information on job-related functions” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 100). For example, Brown’s (2005) survey of 91 female college presidents demonstrates “most female college presidents had a primary mentor who assisted [in] their move up the administrative ladder” (p. 663). Notably, Brown (2005) points out that the “majority [68%] of the presidents’ mentors were male” (p. 664).

Kurtz-Costes et al. (2006) observe that due to lower percentages of women in high ranking leadership posts, aspiring female leaders may have a more difficult time finding a female mentor. Scanlon (1997) points out that “many of the women who are
available to, while often willing to mentor other women, are too busy proving themselves capable of maintaining their newly acquired positions to exhaust themselves on the needs of protégés or to involve themselves in the professional risks of mentoring” (p. 3). In coping with the shortage of available female mentors, Scanlon (1997) suggests that women might choose female role models and male mentors.

**Male versus female mentors.** In fact, both early and current empirical research pertaining to women leaders’ mentoring experiences indicates that women typically have greater access to male mentors than female mentors (Astin & Leland, 1991; Brown, 2005; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009). Since men continue to dominate positions of top leadership positions in higher education administration, Warner and DeFleur (1993) maintain that having a male mentor can be particularly advantageous in helping women to “become known in the ‘old boy network’” (p. 7). Moreover, Brown (2005) holds that cross-gender mentoring/protégé relationships can have a number of positive benefits in terms of a male mentor encouraging his female protégé to learn to be more aggressive, expect crisis, and recover from crisis.

Nevertheless, while Brown (2005) acknowledges that cross-gender mentorships are beneficial to women, she argues that “women should not rely on male mentors alone but should also seek female mentors” (p. 660). Brown suggests that retired female presidents could serve as mentors for aspiring female presidents. Also, Brown proposes that women could benefit from “multiple mentorships” that encompass different types of mentoring relationships (e.g., faculty mentorships, administrative mentorships, etc.) (p. 661). In fact, research indicates that multiple mentorships are valuable in helping women advance in their career path and build self-confidence. For instance, Brown notes that
over half of the female college presidents surveyed in her study reported having “one to three mentors and, in some cases, four or more” (p. 663).

Along the same lines, Marshall (2009) notes that the senior-level women administrators who participated in her study “were among the first to negotiate the work-family dance within the senior administrative ranks in colleges and universities” (p. 213). Similarly, the younger generation of women leaders in Kuk and Donovan’s (2004) study also convey difficulty finding female mentors who are both administrators and mothers. Consequently, the participants in this study lacked female role models and mentors who share the same experience of balancing work-family issues (Marshall, 2009). Thus, it is important for women to have other women role models and mentors in top level leadership positions to “demonstrate how to balance personal and professional life” (Brown, 2005, p. 660).

**Empirical studies on the role of mentorship for women leaders.** Despite a “well-developed body of research on mentorship across many disciplines, leadership and the female college presidency remains relatively unexplored” (Brown, 2005, p. 661). In part, Brown (2005) “posits that relatively few studies exist partly because over previous decades there were too few female college presidents to study” (p. 661). However, there are several recent qualitative studies (Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Smith, 2004; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) that address the influence of mentorship on women presidents’ career paths. In Madsen’s (2008) study of university women presidents, most of the presidents emphasize the importance of relationships with others in their development. Specifically, Madsen (2008) notes that “some other women believe that, as one president put it, ‘few achieve anything without mentors and role models,’ whereas others did not mention individual mentors in their career development” (p. 158).
In comparison, the majority of women college and university presidents in Steinke’s (2006) study spoke to the prominent role of mentors in their career path to the presidency. Additionally, Leatherwood and Williams (2008) report that in their study of community college presidents that “more women than men perceived the access to role models and mentors as a barrier to the presidency” (p. 267).

Indeed, Warner and DeFleur’s (1993) earlier quantitative study of women administrators’ career paths shows a significant relationship for women between mentor sponsorship and administrative position. More precisely, the results indicate, “women are more likely to be in the top-level positions if they are sponsored at entry [level] rather than if they actively sought their first administrative jobs” (Warner & DeFleur, 1993, p. 14). However, Warner and DeFleur’s (1993) research reveals that “male administrators are just as likely to reach senior-level positions without sponsorship as they are with sponsorship” (p. 14). Thus, the authors assert that the “findings suggest that careers in higher education administration may be more restrictive for women than for men” (p. 17).

**The role and benefits of professional networks.** In addition to mentoring, networking can serve to establish support systems to facilitate women's professional development and career advancement (Ausejo, 1993; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Gibson, 2006; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; LeBlanc, 1993; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Networking, both formal and informal, “is a key method for establishing a personal system of support” (LeBlanc, 1993, p. 48).
Conceptually distinct from mentoring, networking may be defined as a “constellation of developmental relationships [both formal and informal] that functions in various ways and contributes to positive career outcomes” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 102).
Although networking is beneficial for both men and women, the literature suggests that networking may be “especially beneficial to women looking to advance their careers” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 115). Similar to mentoring, networking provides the benefits of (a) gaining visibility for future job searches, (b) receiving knowledge and training that leads to career advancement, (c) building developmental relationships, (d) identifying mentors, (e) providing support, and (f) developing self-confidence (Schipani et al., 2009). As a case in point, the younger generations of female administrators in Kuk and Donovan’s (2004) study conveyed the need for “informal and formal networks to be established as a support system to share our vulnerabilities and help one another through difficult times” (p. 6). Additionally, one of the participants noted the desire to participate in a network outside of her campus where she could feel free to share her thoughts without “‘negatively impacting [her] status or job advancement’” (as cited in Kuk & Donovan, 2004, p. 6).

Of particular importance, Schipani et al. (2009) assert that strong connections (e.g., communication) to networks provide women with the opportunity to gain social capital. The authors describe social capital as involving “actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the network of social relationships’” (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 104). Further, both networks and mentors can serve to “build the social capital associated with top managerial leadership” (Schipani et al., 2009, p.104). With this in mind, LeBlanc advises that women become involved in networks both within and outside of the college campus. Specifically, LeBlanc (1993) recommends that “women have key contacts at every level of the organization including the operational, middle management, and executive management levels, as well as contacts with the board, and significant people in the community outside of the campus”
Indeed, in interviewing 13 women college presidents, Carter (2009) found that professional networks served as a crucial factor in contributing to the women's success in attaining a college presidency.

*Gender-based Perceptions of Women Leaders*

The theme of gender-based perceptions of female leadership is one of the most well-documented social and cultural barriers to women's career path advancement into higher education administration (Addy, 1995; Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Brown, 2005; Chliwniak, 1997; Eagly, 2007; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Hoyt, 2007; Jablonksi, 1996; June, 2007; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; 2010; Nidiffer, 2001; Phillips, 2010; Schipani et al., 2009; Smith, 2004; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Turner, 2008; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). In fact, scholars studying women leaders have consistently highlighted the ways in which gendered perceptions, expectations, and stereotypes of female leadership contribute to *internal* and *external* barriers to women’s advancement into the highest levels of leadership in higher education (Addy, 1995; Astin & Leland, 1991; Bensimon, 1989; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Dean, Bracken, & Allen, 2009a; Glazer-Raymo, 2008b; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Although women today no longer face governmental and legal barriers in advancing to leadership positions, scholars maintain that women’s career path advancement continues to be impeded by gender stereotyping and gender bias (Betz, 2007; Bornstein, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Schipani et al., 2009).

More specifically, Schipani et al. (2009) contextualize:

> [Today,] the “glass ceiling is . . . more [attributable] to organizational and social barriers . . . . The more usual forms of discrimination, however, are the subtle but
clear cultural biases and gender stereotypes . . . [in] decision-making, behavior, and job assignment. (pp. 97-98)

While both men and women face the same challenges in achieving presidential legitimacy (e.g., fundraising skills, budgeting/financial knowledge, etc.), Bornstein (2009) maintains that women have the “added burden of overcoming [the informal barrier of gendered] expectations [and conceptions of leadership] derived from a history of male presidents” (p. 215). As such, women in senior-level leadership roles and college/university presidencies often encounter “gender-based cultural biases and discrimination” (Bornstein, 2009, p. 208; Hoyt, 2007). For example, prejudicial and stereotypical views of women leaders tend to be based on the perception that women leaders are “more emotional, more suggestible, less decisive, or less objective than male leaders” (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 4). What is more, gender biases against women leaders are also rooted in the perception that leadership is associated with masculine traits and characteristics.

*Masculine theories and conceptions of leadership.* Indeed, one of the most persistent themes in the research literature concerning women leaders relates to the ways in which traditional conceptions and definitions of leadership have been based on masculine models of leadership (Addy, 1995; Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Blackmore, 1993; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; 1999; Chliwniak, 1997; Eagly, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Nidiffer, 2001; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Despite “women’s increasing presence and participation in academia,” women’s advancement into the ranks of college and university leadership has not “neutralized masculine leadership norms” (Dean et al., 2009a, p. 240).
As noted in Chapter I, prior to the 1990s, conventional definitions and theories of leadership in higher education were largely based on the experiences and perceptions of male college presidents (i.e., Great Man Theories of Leadership) (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bensimon, et al. 1989; Chliwniak, 1997; Eagly, 2007; Nidiffer, 2001; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Traditionally, in American society, the qualities, characteristics, and behaviors commonly associated with leadership represent masculine gender ideals such as aggression, authority, determination, confidence, courage, independence, strength, and vision (Ayman, 1993; Blackmore, 1993; Chin, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Nidiffer, 2001; Northouse, 2007; Warner & DeFleur, 1993).

Feminist scholars argue that the “male imagery” associated with the college/university presidency creates an inherent “advantage for men and a disadvantage for ... women ... who never quite fit” the male model of leadership (Dean et al., 2009b, p. 3; see also Bornstein, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). What is more, Astin and Leland (1991) assert that “great man” theories of leadership based on masculine traits and behaviors imply that women do not possess the “necessary attributes for leadership” (Astin & Leland, 1991, pp. 4-5; see also Blackmore, 1993). Indeed, Bornstein (2008) maintains that “even the most well-qualified and experienced women presidents are impeded by models, values, and expectations based on male norms” (p. 166).

_Feminine leadership styles._ In seeking to deconstruct traditional male-based conceptions of leadership, scholars have examined the ways in which women practice, perceive, and experience leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Bensimon, 1989; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy, 2009; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonski, 1996; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Switzer,
In fact, since the mid-1970s, one of the central questions that has framed the study of gender and leadership is, do women administrators and “presidents lead in traditionally gendered ways?” (Eddy, 2009, p. 8; see also Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Hoyt, 2007; Nidiffer, 2001). As a result, a number of researchers have published studies indicating that women leaders are perceived as possessing “female-associated, leadership skills” and styles (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 10; see also Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Eddy, 2009; 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonski, 1996; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006).

Overwhelmingly, empirical research on women leaders (Astin & Leland, 1991; Helgesen, 1990; Eddy, 2009; Jablonski, 1996; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Switzer, 2006) demonstrates that women’s styles of leadership tend to reflect an ethic of care, empowerment, compassion, empathy, flexibility, consensus-building, reflection, open communications, democratic values, and a focus on relationships. What is more, Blackmore (1999) contextualizes that these studies espouse a “women’s ways of leading” discourse, which assumes that women are “inevitably more caring, collaborative, communicative, consultative, communitarian, [and] consensus-oriented” than male leaders (p. 57). Further, Blackmore (1999) asserts that the “women’s ways of leading discourse” presents the view that women share common “ways of seeing, knowing, organizing and leading” (p. 56).

For example, in Astin’s and Leland’s (1999) intergenerational study of women leaders, the researchers found that the participants represented “a kind of leadership that is nonhierarchical and collective” (p. xvii). Similarly, the seven female college presidents who participated in Jablonski’s (1996) study described their own leadership styles as participatory, empowering, and collaborative. Additionally, the women
presidents in Jablonski’s (1996) study spoke to the importance of practicing “open communication and shared decision-making” (p. 3). Likewise, the majority of women presidents in Switzer’s (2006) study “described themselves as collaborative” leaders (“Leadership,” para. 5). What is more, a study of gender differences between male and female community college presidents, Eddy (2009) found that “gendered stereotypes were evident on some level for all participants, with individuals playing out the expected roles of their gender” (p. 15). More specifically, Eddy (2009) reports that the women community college presidents described their leadership as participatory and all the women presidents valued the importance of relationships in their leadership practices. Although the aforementioned studies involved women presidents from varying institutional types, Madsen (2008) points to a dearth of empirical research pertaining to the “leadership motivations, styles, and philosophies” of university women presidents (p. 241).

Gender-neutral approaches to leadership. In contrast to the body of research suggesting that women leaders tend to possess feminine-associated leadership styles, a number of researchers maintain that “gender has little or no relationship to leadership style or effectiveness” (Hoyt; 2007, p. 266; see also Birnbaum, 1992; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor; 1987). As a case in point, Birnbaum’s (1992) empirical study of college presidents “found no apparent relationships between gender and leadership, either in terms of presidential background, the way presidents thought, constituent support, or institutional change” (p. 44). In speaking to research conducted on gender difference among leaders in the corporate sector, Morrison et al. (1987) conjecture that “gender differences in managerial style may be mainly in the eye of the beholder” (p. 49). In fact, Fisher and Koch (1996) argue that proposed gender
differences between men’s (e.g., assertive, dominant, hierarchical, etc.) and women’s (e.g., empathetic, collaborative, democratic, etc.) leadership styles contribute to stereotypical and exaggerated views of male and female leaders. Eagly and Johnson (1990) point out that, despite the popular assumption that substantial differences exist between male and female leaders, “social scientists have generally maintained that there are in fact no reliable differences in the ways men and women lead” (p. 2). In their meta-analysis, Eagly and Johnson (1990) analyzed research conducted on the presence of gender differences in leadership styles in organizational studies, exploratory studies, and leader self-assessment studies. Eagly and Johnson’s (1990) findings revealed that men and women were actually less likely to engage in gender-stereotypic behaviors in actual organizational settings, whereas gender differences were more pronounced in leadership self-assessment ratings and exploratory studies conducted in laboratory settings. Altogether, in assessing the research on the gender differences between men’s and women’s leadership styles, it is clear that research presents a diversity of views pertaining to the role and significance of gender in leadership (Hoyt, 2007; Steinke, 2006).

**Internal barriers.** Despite the lack of scholarly consensus concerning the presence of gender differences in men’s and women’s leadership style, numerous scholars concur that gendered perceptions and conceptions of leadership contribute to both internal and external barriers to women’s advancement into top leadership (Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Dean et al., 2009a; Eddy, 2009; Jean-Marie, 2010; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; 2010; Nidiffer, 2001; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993,). First, gendered perceptions of women leaders may serve as an internal barrier to women who are socialized into stereotypical beliefs that women and men are better suited to occupational
roles which are associated with traditional gender roles (Betz, 2008). Betz (2008) relays, “numerous studies suggest that although boys and girls start out with equally high aspirations, . . . . [over time girls occupational interests become more limited due to] stereotypes about occupations best suited for males and females” (p. 726). For example, Betz (2008) distinguishes that careers such as physicists and federal judges are considered “highly masculine” occupations while nurses and elementary school teachers are perceived as “highly feminine” careers (p. 727).

Thus, the masculine ideals which are imbedded in conceptions and definitions of leadership models may serve to make it more difficult for women to “perceive their own leadership” potential and abilities (Dean et al., 2009b, p. 3; see also Madsen, 2008; Niddifer, 2001; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). In effect, Kellerman and Rhode (2007) articulate that women may develop a “psychological glass ceiling” as they internalize gendered stereotypes about women leaders (p. 8). In effect, Niddifer (2001) indicates, “limiting who is perceived, and therefore who is subsequently chosen, as a leader” dashes women’s leadership aspirations (p. 104). Indeed, Madsen (2008) explains, women are sometimes their own barriers to leadership positions because of personal and professional insecurities and perceptions. Researchers (Appelbaum et al., 2003, Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Dicerson & Taylor, 2000; Marongiu & Ekehammar, 1999; Thompson & Marley, 1999) argue that some serious internal barriers for women with leadership potential are attitude; fear of failure; lack of confidence in one’s skills; abilities, and risk-taking; and a self-concept that is linked to internalized traditional female stereotypes. (p. 149)
Further, Kellerman and Rhode (2007) assert that “gender stereotypes are particularly strong when women’s representation does not exceed token levels, and too few counterexamples are present to challenge conventional assumptions” (p. 10).

As a case in point, Madsen (2008) notes that the university women presidents in her study initially viewed their own lack of confidence as an internal barrier to advancing into leadership. Although the women presidents were “achievement-oriented,” some held a “stereotypical view of women's leadership limitations” (Madsen, 2008, p. 150). Specifically, one woman president expressed, “I believe I was in the women’s stereotype of what I could do in my earlier years (twenties and thirties). I had a stereotypical female career, so that was a comfortable place for me to be” (as cited in Madsen, 2008, p. 149). In fact, many of the women presidents conveyed that they would not have taken the initiative to advance into leadership roles, if it were not for the “influence and encouragement of people around them” who recognized their leadership potential (Madsen, 2008, p. 150).

Likewise, Switzer’s (2006) interviews with current women presidents from a variety of institutional types (e.g., two-year community colleges, baccalaureate, comprehensive, doctoral) revealed that the majority of women did not initially set out to become a college or university president. Switzer (2006) reports that several of the participants specifically stated, “I didn’t see myself as a president” (as cited in “The Journey,” para. 3). For instance, Switzer (2006) explains that gendered notions of leadership affected one woman president’s perception of leadership as the participant states, “I had a notion of what a president looks like and it is typically a man who doesn’t have a couple of kids running around” (Switzer, 2006, as cited in “The Journey,” para. 3).
Indeed, Betz (2008) notes that in making career-path decisions women tend take into account “multiple-role concerns” (e.g., wife, mother, etc.) (p. 729).

*External barriers.* Second, scholars assert that gendered perceptions of women leaders may also serve as external barriers or obstacles to women’s career path advancement (Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Eddy, 2009; Nidiffer, 2001; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Although today gender discrimination in employment is illegal, feminist scholars contend that women continue to face various forms of “informal discrimination” such as a lack of support from colleagues, being ignored, or verbal harassment (Betz, 2008, p. 735; see also Eagly, 2007; Glazer, 1993; Nidiffer, 2001; Schipani et al., 2009). Nidiffer (2001) asserts that today a chilly climate persists for women, but it takes the form of “less perceptible ‘micro-inequalities’ . . . . [such as] exclusion, hostility, and neglect,” which can serve as barriers for women in advancing through the administrative pipeline to assume positions of top leadership (p. 121). In interviewing university women presidents concerning gender barriers and issues, Madsen (2008) reports that “all of the presidents admitted that gender issues still exist” (p. 145). One woman president articulates that while she faced “terribly blatant” forms of discrimination “at the lower levels” of her career, she had only experienced “subtle [forms of] discrimination” at the presidential level (Madsen, 2008, pp. 148-149). Although each university woman president acknowledged the presence of gender issues and barriers, the participants in this study did not feel that gender barriers ultimately created negative, long-term impacts on their career paths (Madsen, 2008). Interestingly, the perspective of the women presidents in Steinke’s (2006) study pertaining to the significance of gender in their career path and presidency “ranged from consciously advocating and role modeling for women, to
Eagly (2007) established that “attitudinal prejudice against women leaders appears to have lessened substantially . . . [and women today have] far more access to leadership roles than at any other period in [American] history” (p. 9). Nevertheless, research indicates that women continue to “face challenges [and prejudicial barriers] as leaders that men do not face, especially in settings where female leaders are nontraditional” (Eagly, 2007, p. 9).

In particular, stereotypical perceptions of women leaders and attitudinal prejudice toward women leaders can present challenges both during women’s presidential candidacy and after women’s presidential appointment. Specifically, Bornstein (2009) posits that in the presidential search process women candidates may be perceived differently than male candidates in terms of women: (a) appearing to be an “affirmative-action decision” when fewer females are in the candidate pool, (b) being perceived as less qualified due to nontraditional or interrupted career paths, or (c) not “appear[ing] ‘presidential’ because of their own lack of confidence and the stereotyped expectations of campus constituents” (p. 209). Further, Bornstein (2008) maintains that boards may also serve as a barrier to women’s advancement during the search process. Bornstein (2008) explains,

Although search committees today are generally 50% male and 50% female, boards are male dominated. Many men and women feel more comfortable selecting male leaders, especially when fewer women are in the candidate pool and many of those have had nontraditional professional careers. While there is no clear trend, some search committees and boards may feel virtuous about having
already had a woman as president and feel free to revert to men with whose personal characteristics, leadership style, and experiences they feel most comfortable. (p. 167)

Gendered perceptions of women leaders continue to present obstacles to women after they have been appointed to college or university presidencies. In speaking to the culture of higher education, Bornstein (2008) notes that the presidency presents particularly “formidable challenges” to women in “gaining acceptance and legitimacy from their constituents” (p. 167). She states, “in the essentially masculine work culture of higher education, women presidents and their constituents (boards of trustees, faculties, students alumni, community leaders) have limited, if any, experience with women in top leadership positions” (Bornstein, 2008, p. 167). In particular, Bornstein (2008, 2009) asserts, “male trustees are often unaccustomed to interacting with women in positions of leadership” (p. 215). Further, various constituencies which have little experience dealing with women leaders will often have gender-stereotypic expectations of women leaders (Bornstein, 2008, 2009). For example, one of the women presidents who participated in Steinke’s (2006) study conveyed that after announcing her retirement she received a number of interesting “gender-related comments” from male trustees of the institution (p. 76). In complimenting the president on a “job well done,” two of the male trustees confessed, “when you were hired, I really didn’t think you could do it” (Steinke, 2006, p. 76). Further, the participant believed that the trustees’ perceptions about her leadership ability “basically . . . had to do with the fact that I was a woman” (Steinke, 2006, p. 76). However, the participant noted that the trustees’ lack of confidence in her leadership abilities did not offend her as she attributes their perceptions to “their old boys stereotyping” (Steinke, 2006, p. 77).
In speaking to the way in which gendered perceptions have influenced her presidency, Tunxis Community College president Cathryn L. Addy (1995) recalls in her book, *The President’s Journey*, that she has frequently been asked the question, “How does it feel to be a woman president?” (p. 35). In response, Addy (1995) offers the reply, “I don’t know, I have never been a man in this position” (p. 35). Addy maintains that at the heart of this question are cultural assumptions about women, power, and leadership. Specifically, Addy (1995) surmises that implicit within this question are a number of larger inquiries into women’s legitimacy as leaders and their leadership abilities such as,

(a) Are women leaders different? (b) Do women possess different leadership styles? and (c) “Can we be as ‘effective’ as white males have been over the centuries?” (p. 35).

Bornstein (2008) points out, however, that women can gain presidential legitimacy and overcome gender bias through demonstrating “technical competency” in relation to fundraising, developing commercial partnerships, budgeting/finance, legal issues, etc. (pp. 167-168).

**Women’s leadership and the “double bind.”** In addition to the internal and external barriers, the research on women leaders suggests that gendered perceptions and expectations of women leaders often present women with a “double bind” between appearing “overfeminized” if she assumes a stereotypically feminine leadership style or “underfeminized” if she adopts a masculine leadership style (Blackmore, 1999, p. 60; see also Eddy, 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Moore, 1984; Scott & Scott, 2006; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Indeed, some of the women presidents in Steinke’s (2006) study felt the pressure to demonstrate they were “tough enough . . . [to make difficult decisions, but] not harsh” (p. 81). One woman president stated, “I think people want to be assured that I’m not too soft—that I’m tough enough to do the job . . . make tough decisions and
have fiscal discipline” (as cited in Steinke, 2006, p. 81). Similarly, many of the women presidents in Switzer’s (2006) study were aware of their constituents’ “gender-related expectations” for women leaders (“The Expectations,” para. 2). Switzer (2006) states, “many presidents believed their constituents expected them to be warm, nurturing, and sensitive; and at the same time, they wanted them to be able to handle severe pressure . . .” and make tough decisions (“The Expectations,” para. 5).

Eddy (2009) maintains that women also face a double bind when they “act outside their prescribed feminine role” (p. 17). For instance, one of the female community college presidents in Eddy’s (2009) study recalled an encounter that she had with a male community college president while she was serving as an interim dean of academic affairs. During the meeting, the participant described voicing strong disagreement over an issue with the president and in return, “. . . he called me a bitch!” (as cited in Eddy, 2009, p. 16). Eddy (2009) explains, “when a woman tried to assert herself, she was punished for acting out of her prescribed feminine gender role. In a similar situation a man may have been called strong willed or tough, which would have reified the prescribed male attributes” (p. 17). Further, Eddy (2009) surmises that a man would not have been called a demeaning name in the same instance. Similarly, Kellerman and Rhode (2007) confirm that “what is assertive in a man can appear abrasive in a woman, and female leaders risk appearing too feminine or not feminine enough” (p. 7).

Additionally, women risk being viewed as “strident, . . . overly aggressive or ambitious” when they adopt masculine leadership styles (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007, p. 7). Eagly and Carli (2007) also conjecture that another way in which women may face a double bind pertains to the expectation that leaders should behave in a way that exhibits self-confidence in their leadership competencies. However, as Bornstein (2008) explains,
“men are more likely than women to be socialized into behaviors . . . [related to] exud[ing] confidence, assertiveness and decisiveness” (p. 169). Eagly and Carli (2007) note that these male-normed behaviors related to exhibiting self-confidence are in direct opposition to feminine-associated, gender-stereotypic expectations that women should be “selfless and modest” (p. 110). As such, women leaders who act with agency in asserting confidence in their leadership competency may be met with public “disapproval” for their display of traditionally male-normed leadership behavior (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 110).

**Holding women leaders to a higher standard of leadership competence.** In fact, several scholars (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Robertson, Brummel, & Salvaggio, 2011; Williams, 2005) have reported that women, in comparison to their male counterparts, often have a more difficult time establishing their leadership competence. Bornstein (2008) contextualizes that “stereotypically male behavior is associated with competence, and feminine behavior with weakness and incompetence” (p. 170). As such, Williams (2005) writes, “one-half of the glass ceiling involves scenarios that cause women to feel they have to try twice as hard to achieve half as much [as men]” (p. 93). Further, Williams explains,

> Women’s successful performances tend to be more closely scrutinized and then assessed by stricter standards than men’s. Men also have to give more convincing demonstrations of their incompetence in order to be judged incompetent overall.

Thus, women have to “jump through more hoops” to establish themselves. (25)

In studying gendered perceptions of managers, Robertson et al. (2011) propose that a “shifting standards model and status characteristics theory” may be used to understand why, despite equal levels of competency, women are “selected and promoted less” for managerial roles than men (p. 22). The authors explain that, in some cases, the
“standards of ability are high for the low status group (women) and lower for the high status group (men)” (Robertson et al., 2011, p. 22). Consequently, women may face a “double standard” in having to “work harder than men to obtain the same results and rewards as men” (Robertson et al., 2011, p. 22).

The influence of race, ethnicity, and culture on women’s leadership. In addition to gender the role of gender in leadership, poststructural feminist scholar Blackmore (1999) points out that women also experience obstacles, bias and discrimination based on other salient dimensions of their personhood (e.g., race, ethnicity, culture, disability, sexual orientation, etc.). In fact, Blackmore (1999) asserts that to assume all women perceive, experience, and practice leadership in the same ways threatens to ignore the unique differences that exist among women. In particular, scholars suggest that “women of color face both gender- and race-normed expectations that give rise to even more complex challenges” in achieving top leadership roles and leadership legitimacy (Bornstein, 2008, p. 168; see also Chliwniak, 1997; Jean-Marie, 2010; Turner, 2008). In fact, researchers have documented that women of color often face multiple obstacles pertaining to gender, class, race, and cultural biases in leadership (Jean-Marie, 2010; Turner, 2008). In her article, “Women of Color in Academe,” Turner (2008) states:

Racial and ethnic stereotyping, gender bias, and cultural differences that lead to feelings of dissonance and contradiction in the workplace are the primary themes that cut across the literature focusing on Hispanic, American Indian, Asian-American, and African American women in positions of academic and administrative leadership. (p. 240)

Turner further explains that gender, racial, and cultural differences present unique challenges for women of differing racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, Black
women’s progress into senior-level administrative positions and presidencies on predominantly White college and university campuses is often impeded by “racial and gender stereotypes [and] pressure to conform to the majority [White] culture” (Turner, 2008, p. 241). Similarly, Jean-Marie’s (2010) review of the research literature pertaining to Black women administrators suggests that both “‘racism and sexism’” impede Black women’s progress at “both predominantly black and predominantly white” colleges and universities (p. 589).

On the other hand, Asian women who exhibit behaviors traditionally associated with leadership “(power, authority, or fortitude) are considered atypical for women and doubly atypical for Asian women” who are expected to display behaviors commonly associated with Asian femininity such as subservience (Turner, 2008, p. 241). Then, research shows that American Indian women may find it difficult to exhibit directive forms of leadership that may be necessary in some situations (Turner, 2008). Turner (2008) notes that American Indian women tend to prefer a leadership style which is “high in supportiveness, which is reflective of their cultural values” (p. 241).

*Increased attention on women leaders.* Finally, a prominent issue concerning gendered perceptions of women leaders pertains to the increased level of attention that is often placed on their physical appearance, image, and behaviors (Bornstein 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Niddifer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Indeed, Niddifer (2001) explains that the traditional images and beliefs associated with “what a leader should look like, act like, and be like . . . [represent] powerful yardsticks by which candidates for presidency at colleges and universities are measured” (p. 102). Kellerman and Rhode (2007) point out that “in male-dominated settings, aspiring female leaders are . . . subject to special scrutiny and polarized assessments” (p. 10). Therefore,
in a pool of presidential candidates, “individuals who, by virtue of their gender, race, class, or some other variable, [may] appear unlikely to possess leadership traits” (Niddifer, 2001, p. 104). In fact, Warner and DeFleur (1993) state, “it has been reported that women have not been selected for senior positions because they may not ‘look’ or ‘act like’ a dean, vice president, or president” (p. 17).

Bornstein (2009) maintains that gendered perceptions and expectations of what women leaders should look like creates additional pressures for women who are the first woman in an institution’s history to serve in a presidential role. Bornstein (2009) observes, “the first woman president is [often viewed as] an oddity, a novelty, even a cultural misfit” (p. 214). Further, women presidents’ “clothes, language, family arrangements, and management style” are more critically scrutinized than male presidents (Bornstein, 2009, p. 214). For instance, in Steinke’s (2006) study, one woman president noted how the news media “paid more attention to certain aspects of her life, such as her family and husband” (p. 77). Bornstein (2009) notes that some women who are the first woman to serve as a president in an institution’s history feel they are judged more on the basis of their physical appearance than on their leadership abilities.

In Steinke’s (2006) interviews with women who were the first woman to serve as president, all of the participants described being “‘the first woman’ to hold numerous positions” in their respective career paths (p. 73). Therefore, Steinke (2006) conveys, “the newness or the excitement of being the first woman to hold a position had worn off long ago for most of these women” (p. 73). In fact, many of the women presidents in this study seemed indifferent to the role of gender in their presidencies and sought to downplay the role of gender in their leadership. However, other women presidents discussed the significance of gender in being the first woman to occupy the presidency.
One president stated, “I’m definitely not in denial about gender being an issue with my presidency . . . it’s big news and it’s a big change” (as cited in Steinke, 2006, p. 74).

In Switzer’s (2006) interviews with women presidents, she reports that the participants’ “responses indicated that gender is not a factor that they think about overtly when they think of their leadership” (“The Research Questions,” para. 5). However, Switzer notes that the participants’ “stories . . . did not always support this observation” (“The Research Questions,” para. 5). While the women discussed the ways in which their gender served as an advantage in their leadership roles, “they also described times when they . . . [encountered] resistance because they were female” (“The Research Questions,” para. 5). For example, “nearly half of the women said people underestimated their knowledge of finance, facilities, and construction. Four reported that they received messages that were downright patronizing, ‘almost testing to see if I was intelligent enough to do the job’” (Switzer, 2006, “The Expectations,” para. 2). Also, four of the women presidents revealed, “repeated instances at public events (receptions, student orientation) where their husbands or male faculty members were assumed to be the president rather than them” (Switzer, 2006, para. 7). Moreover, the women presidents perceived that faculty and staff often viewed “women presidents . . . [as] more accessible than their male counterparts” (Switzer, 2006, “The Expectations,” para. 7). The presidents observed that some faculty and staff did not afford them the professional deference that accompanies the role of a chief executive officer (Switzer, 2006). For example, one president stated that “‘people think they can just walk into a woman’s office’” (as cited in Switzer, 2006, The Expectations, para. 7).
Summary and Evaluation of Research-Based Literature on
Women Leaders in Higher Education

Arguably, since the mid-1980s scholars have made important contributions in giving voice to women’s perspectives, insights, and experiences as “interpreters of organizational life and leadership” in higher education (Bensimon, 1983, p. 154). Early feminist scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s made important contributions to the field of higher education by highlighting the absence of women’s perspectives in traditional leadership studies, the glass ceiling in higher education, and “the way gender inequities were structured into institutions” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 22; see also Bensimon, 1983; Chliwniak, 1997; Glazer, 1993).

More recently, contemporary scholarship concerning women administrators and presidents serves to contribute new insights into how subtle personal barriers and pipeline issues influence women's career paths and leadership aspirations. This review of the literature indicates that while informal gender barriers (work-life balance issues, gendered perceptions, etc.) continue to persist, empirical studies (Adams; 1979; Astin & Leland, 1991; Clarke; 2003; Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Walton, 1996) demonstrate that the women who have successfully navigated their path to top leadership did not allow “existing barriers to thwart their own careers” (Madsen, 2010, p. 576).

Although a great deal of scholarly attention has been placed on women leaders in higher education, this review of the literature points to the need for further research which examines how the personal factors (e.g., child-rearing, spousal relationships, etc.) involved with being a female administrator influence women’s career paths and presidential aspirations (Bornstein, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006).
Indeed, Madsen (2008) contends “all aspects of women’s lives must be explored to understand how they have . . . become . . . high-profile leaders” (p. 209). Further, this review of the literature highlights the need for studies which seek to understand how gender intersects with the multiple dimensions of women leaders’ personhood such as race, ethnicity, or culture to inform women’s career path experiences and leadership aspirations (Blackmore, 1999; Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Gooch, 2009; Jean-Marie, 2010; Turner, 2008; Williams (2005). Finally, this review of the literature demonstrates the need for more research-based studies focusing on university women’s leadership experiences, presidential aspirations, and presidential pathways (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; King & Gomez, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Walton & McDade, 2001).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In response to the dearth of empirical data on the career paths of university women leaders, this research, grounded in a postmodern feminist theoretical framework, seeks to qualitatively explore how university women in key-line administrative positions (e.g., dean, vice-president, chief academic officer/provost) and women university presidents experience and make meaning of their career paths and leadership aspirations. Additionally, this study seeks to contribute new and deeper insights into how personal factors (e.g., child-rearing, spousal relationships) may motivate or hinder women from seeking a university presidency. As discussed in Chapter I, the research questions that guided this study are (1) What experiences characterize women’s path to university leadership? (2) How do the various dimensions of women leaders’ personhood (e.g., race, gender, class) intersect to influence their career path experiences and leadership aspirations? (3) What life issues or personal factors (e.g., work-life balance, family relationships) have influenced women’s career paths and aspirations? (4) What motivates women to aspire and advance toward the university presidency? and (5) Are women hindered from seeking a university presidency? If so, what hinders women’s career path advancement?

Chapter Overview

With this in mind, this chapter focuses on the methodological procedures that were employed in this study. First, in this Chapter, I discuss the basic interpretive qualitative design that was used in this study and the underlying philosophical assumptions that form the basis for this tradition of qualitative inquiry. Second, I
describe the population, sampling criteria, and sampling techniques that will be used in this study. Third, I identify the methods of data collection that were involved in this study including (a) in-depth, in-person interviews; (b) document review; and (c) peer review. Fourth, I outline the data analysis procedures. Fifth, I discuss the findings from a qualitative pilot study conducted in the fall of 2009 with university women administrators in key-line positions to the presidency. Sixth, I address the validity and reliability strategies that were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research methods and findings. Finally, I discuss issues (e.g., assumptions) relating to my position as the researcher.

Design of the Study

In describing and interpreting how university women leaders make meaning of their career paths and presidential aspirations, this study employs a basic interpretive qualitative design. The basic interpretive tradition of qualitative inquiry represents an inductive approach to understanding how participants construct and make meaning of their lives and social situations (Merriam, 2002, 2009). The rationale for the selection of this design centers on the basic interpretive tradition’s focus on seeking to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved or a combination of these” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). Significantly, the use of a basic interpretive design encompasses all of the primary characteristics of qualitative inquiry in terms of (a) seeking to “understand the meaning people have constructed about their experiences and social world;” (b) relying on the researcher to serve as the “primary instrument of data collection and analysis;” (c) employing an inductive approach to data analysis; and (d) producing a “richly descriptive” account of the research findings (Merriam, 2002, pp. 5-6; see also Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lichtman; 2006).
Philosophical Underpinnings of the Basic Interpretive Tradition of Inquiry

The philosophy of constructionism. Constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism comprise the philosophical perspectives which underlie qualitative research, in general, and the basic interpretive design, in particular (Merriam, 2002, 2009). First, in speaking to the influence of constructionism on qualitative research, Merriam (2009) establishes that “a central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 22). Indeed, qualitative research is grounded in the assumption that “meaning . . . is not discovered, but rather is constructed by human beings as they interact with their social world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 37; see also Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Accordingly, the use of the basic interpretive qualitative design allows researchers to understand “the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (Merriam, 2002, p. 37).

The philosophy of phenomenology. Next, rooted in the work of 19th century German mathematician and philosopher Edmund Husserl, “the philosophy of phenomenology . . . [provides] a focus on experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). In addition, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) point out that phenomenology is also situated within the Weberian tradition, which “emphasizes verstehen, the interpretive understanding of human interactions” (p. 25). As such, the phenomenological approach is concerned with understanding the “essence or structure of a phenomenon . . . from the perspectives of those who have experienced it” (Merriam, 2002, p. 93).

The philosophy of symbolic interactionism. Then, greatly influenced by the work of 20th century American sociologist George Herbert Mead, the symbolic interactionist perspective is grounded in the “assumption that human experience is mediated by
interpretation (Blumer, 1969)” (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 27). Like the philosophy of phenomenology, the symbolic interactionist perspective “also focuses on interpretation but within the context of the larger society; that is, the meaning of an experience is constructed by an individual interacting with other people; meaning is formed as the person intersects with society” (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). Further, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) clarify that the symbolic interactionist approach is centered on the premise that “human beings are actively engaged in creating their world” (p. 27). Moreover, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, “even the self is a social construction, a self-definition generated through interaction with other people” (Merriam, 2002, p. 37).

Therefore, in drawing from the multiple philosophical orientations of constructionism, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, qualitative researchers who employ the basic interpretive design are interested in studying (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2002, 2009). Altogether, these philosophical orientations contribute to the basic interpretive method’s goal of “uncover[ing], interpret[ing], . . . . [and] understand[ing] how people make sense of their lives and their worlds” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24).

Sample Selection

Purposeful Sampling

In order to generate “information-rich cases” concerning university women leaders’ career paths and presidential aspirations, participants were selected based upon purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). As a widely used sampling method in qualitative research, purposeful, also referred to as purposive or criterion-based sampling,
is a form of non-probability sampling in which participants are selected on the basis of their “special experience” and knowledge about the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009, p. 77; see also Creswell, 1998). Further, Merriam (2009) explains,

Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned. . . . Patton (2002) argues that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 77).

Moreover, there are a variety of purposeful sampling strategies including (a) snowball or chain, (b) convenience, (c) maximum variation, (d) homogeneous, (e) critical case, (f) theory based, (g) typical case, (h) politically important cases, (i) stratified purposeful, and (j) random purposeful (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2009).

Determining the sample size. What is more, another important issue to consider in carrying out a qualitative design relates to determining the appropriate sample size. In contrast to larger samples commonly used in quantitative research, a smaller sample size is a more typical convention of qualitative research which seeks to “describe and interpret rather than generalize” the findings (Lichtman, 2006, p. 119). Indeed, qualitative methodologists maintain that, with the exception of grounded theory designs, a relatively small sample size (e.g., 3-10) is particularly well-suited to obtaining in-depth information from qualitative interviews (Creswell, 1998; Lichtman, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Ultimately, determining the sample size is based upon the researcher’s judgment of how many participants are necessary to achieve saturation or redundancy of themes and patterns in the data (Creswell, 1998; Lichtman, 2006; Merriam, 2009).
Research sample. With this in mind, the sample in this study consisted of 16 participants with current or recent leadership experience serving in key-line positions of university leadership or university presidencies in the Southern region of the United States. More specifically, the sample consisted of four current university women presidents and 11 university women currently serving in key-line administrative positions (e.g., academic dean, vice president, provost), and one woman who recently retired from a university key-line administrative position. To the degree possible, efforts were made to seek a diverse sample of participants based on demographic factors such as (a) age, (b) race/ethnicity, and (c) geographic location (e.g., AL, FL, GA, MS, LA, TN). Attempts were partially successful in seeking to generate a diverse sample. First, attempts to achieve a geographically diverse sample were successful, as the research sample includes participants who represent each of the aforementioned states in the targeted geographic location of the Southeastern region of United States. Although the majority of participants were in their 60s, the ages of the participants in the research sample does provide a wide age range from 39 to 70 years of age. Nevertheless, attempts to generate a racially diverse sample were largely unsuccessful, as the majority of the participants in this studied identified their racial classification as White and only two participants identified their racial classification as Black.

Participant criteria. In generating a purposeful sample for this study, participants had to meet a number of criteria. First, in order to add to the research on university women’s career paths and presidential aspirations, the participants for this study had to serve in key-line administrative positions or university presidencies at one of the following types of institutions: (a) doctoral/research universities, (b) master’s universities, (c) historically black universities, or (d) religious-affiliated universities.
Next, in selecting from the population of university women in key-line administrative positions to the presidency, the participants were required to (a) occupy a senior-level leadership position at the level of dean or above that is considered in direct line to the presidency, (b) report directly to a vice president or president, and (c) have responsibilities that contribute to the overall management of the institution or a subdivision of the institution. Also of importance, in order to ensure that participants who are former key-line administrators or university presidents have recent leadership experience, all former administrators and presidents must have served in their former position within the past five years. Additionally, in order to ensure that participants were able to provide ample information regarding their leadership experiences in their current or former position, participants had to possess a minimum of one year of experience serving as a key-line administrator or university president.

Snowball sampling. In initially constructing the methodological design of this study, it was anticipated that the researcher would likely encounter difficulty in locating and gaining access to potential participants who met with the participant criteria of this study in relation to (a) the paucity of university women serving in key-line administrative positions and university presidencies, (b) the busy schedules of high-level university leaders, and (c) the geographical delimitation of the sample to participants located at universities in the Southeastern region of the United States. With this in mind, in the early phase of this study, the researcher intended to use a second level of purposeful sampling, referred to as snowball (or chain) sampling, in generating additional participants who met with the criteria of this study.

Indeed, as Babbie (1999) points out, “snowball sampling is [considered an] appropriate [sampling strategy] when the members of a special population are difficult to
locate” (p. 174). Merriam (2009) describes snowball sampling as a strategy which “involves locating a few key participants who easily meet the criteria you have established for participation in the study. As you interview these early key participants you ask each one to refer you to other participants” (p. 79). However, the use of snowball sampling was not necessary in this study as the researcher was able to identify and gain access to a sufficient research sample who met with the participant criteria of this study.

Identification of participants. Thus, the identification of participants who met the aforementioned criteria occurred through one phase. Potential participants for this study were identified through conducting an internet search of websites for universities located in the Southeastern region of the United States, regional higher education professional leadership organizations, and national professional leadership organizations (e.g., American Council on Education). A total of 40 potential participants were identified in the first phase of criterion-based purposeful sampling. More specifically, the potential participants identified for this study included seven university women presidents and 33 university women leaders in key-line positions to the presidency. Among the potential participants, two of the potential participants were women who had recently retired within the past five years from a key-line administrative position, while the majority of potential participants, 38, were currently employed in a key-line university administrative positions or university presidencies.

Potential participants were first contacted through a formal letter (see Appendix C) which invited potential candidates for this study to participate in an interview for this study. Along with the formal letters, each candidate was mailed an informed consent form in order to provide participants with further details on this study and make potential
participants aware that this study had been reviewed and approved by The University of Southern Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board. Additionally, potential candidates who had recently retired from their administrative positions were mailed a contact form and self-addressed, stamped envelope in order to provide the researcher with their current contact information (i.e., e-mail, telephone) and preference for being contacted by the researcher. After initially mailing the formal letters to candidates, six potential participants took the initiative to contact the researcher to indicate their interest in participating in an interview for this study.

Next, potential participants were sent a follow up e-mail (see Appendix D) to inquire about their willingness to participate in the study. A total of 13 potential candidates indicated by e-mail their interest and/or willingness to participate in this study. Several potential participants responded by e-mail that their schedules would preclude their participation during the time frame of the data collection from April to July of 2011. Additionally, a few potential candidates indicated by e-mail response that they did not feel that they met with the participant criteria and/or intended focus of the study.

Altogether, 19 potential participants expressed interest and/or agreed to participate in this study. However, due to various factors including scheduling conflicts and a natural disaster that occurred in one of the targeted geographic regions of this study, three of the potential participants were unable to participate in this study. Ultimately, therefore, the research sample for this study was comprised of 16 participants, including four university presidents, three provosts, three academic deans, and six vice presidents representing the areas of advancement, communications, student affairs, technology, research, and economic development. Telephone and/or e-mail communications were used to schedule interview appointments with the participants.
Data Collection

In seeking to provide “a rich and complex picture” of university women administrators’ and presidents’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations, the techniques for data collection included interviews and document review (Mathison, 1998, p. 15; see also Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002, 2009;). The primary technique of data collection involved in-person, semistructured interviews. In seeking to supplement the interview data, document review was employed as a secondary source of data collection. In what follows, I describe each technique of data collection in greater depth.

Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is conceptualized as “a general term used to describe a group of methods that . . . [allows the researcher] to engage in a dialogue or conversation with the participant” in order to obtain information about the topic being studied (Lichtman, 2006, p. 116). Qualitative interviewing “involves gathering informants’ reports and stories, learning about their perspectives, and giving them voice in academic and other public discourse” (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p. 173; Lichtman, 2006). Thus, through qualitative interviews the researcher can obtain a more in-depth understanding of the participants’ perspectives, ideas, and experiences concerning the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009; Lichtman; 2006). Significantly, the technique of qualitative interviewing may also be conceptualized as a “potential means of pure information transfer and collection” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 267). What is more, DeVault and Gross (2007) speak to the “complex and nuanced” qualities and capabilities of using the technique of qualitative interviewing:

[Interview research encompasses] . . . the fascinating complexity of human talk—the flexibility and productive powers of language; the subtle shades of meaning
conveyed through the nuances of speech, gesture and expression; issues of translation; the ineluctable locatedness of any moment or stretch of talk; the specialized vocabularies of particular settings or groups . . . the injuries and uses of silence; the challenges inherent in listening; and so on. (p. 173)

Types of qualitative interviews. The structure of qualitative interviews may take on a variety of forms including (a) highly structured or standardized interviews (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau survey), (b) semistructured interviews, and (c) unstructured/informal interviews (Merriam, 2009; Lichtman; 2006). The aforementioned interview structures may be viewed on a continuum with highly structured interviews being more typical of quantitative research and unstructured interviews being more typical of qualitative designs which require fieldwork interviews (e.g., case studies or ethnographies). In the middle of the continuum of interview structures is the semistructured interview which is typically characterized by (a) a guided list of open-ended questions, (b) flexibility of the wording and order of questions, and (c) questions which require specific information from all participants (Merriam, 2009). Further, Merriam (2009) notes that the flexibility of the semistructured “format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 90).

Interview protocol. Due to the flexibility of the semistructured interview format, the interview protocol (see Appendix A) for this study involved a series of 19 semistructured questions that reflect the key themes from the review of literature concerning university women leaders and the key concepts from a qualitative pilot study conducted in the fall of 2009 with university women administrators in key-line positions to the presidency. Taken together, the concepts that guided the interview protocol for this study centered on (a) career path and aspirations; (b) work-life balance issues; (c) family
impacts (e.g., childrearing, spousal relationships, etc.) on career paths and leadership aspirations; (d) role models, mentors, and professional networks; and (e) perceptions of gender and leadership. Additionally, a structured protocol consisting of 19 questions was used to collect demographic information (see Appendix B) on each participant relating to such factors as (a) age, (b) race/ethnicity, (c) number of children, (d) marital status, (e) educational attainment, etc.

Data collection procedures. The primary data collection procedures involved tape recorded, face-to-face or telephone interviews lasting approximately one hour. The majority of participants were allowed to indicate their preference for an in-person or telephone interview. However, due to limited research grant funding (i.e., $1,000) for travel, four of the participants who were employed at universities located at the greatest traveling distances within the targeted geographic region were invited to participate in telephone interviews. Altogether, 10 telephone interviews and six face-to-face interviews were conducted between April 26 and June 27, 2011. All interviews were scheduled at the time of the participants’ choice, and face-to-face interviews were scheduled at the location of the participants’ choice. All face-to-face interviews were conducted on the participant’s respective university campuses in a setting that ensured privacy, such as a board room or private office. All interviews were transcribed for data analysis.

Informed Consent and Participant Confidentiality

Prior to carrying out the data collection procedures involved in this research, this study was first reviewed and approved by The University of Southern Mississippi’s (USM) Institutional Review Board (IRB). In conducting this study, the researcher sought to maintain the highest ethical standards by carefully adhering to USM’s IRB policies concerning research involving human subjects. Accordingly, all participants were mailed
and e-mailed a copy of the informed consent form for this study. For interviews conducted by phone, the participants mailed or faxed their signed informed consent form to the researcher. Although a few of the participants who preferred face-to-face interviews returned their signed informed consent form in advance of the scheduled interview, the majority of participants who participated in face-to-face interviews submitted their signed informed consent form at the time of the interview appointment. At the beginning of the telephone interview or the face-to-face interview, the researcher explained the study and offered participants the opportunity to voice any questions or concerns that they had about their participation in the study.

In considering the overall dearth of women serving in key-line administrative positions to the presidency and university presidencies, as well as the geographical delimitation of selecting participants located in the Southeastern region of the United States, the researcher made a concerted effort to take every necessary precaution to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in this study. First, in order to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity, all participants were assigned pseudonyms, and all written transcripts of interviews and documents contained only the pseudonyms and no other identifying markers (e.g., university affiliation). Additionally, the location of the participants’ university affiliations are described as located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Further, the researcher did not provide individual participant profiles or biographies containing such identifiable information as an individual participant’s academic field, number of children, or previous career positions, which could conceivably jeopardize the protection of participant confidentiality and anonymity. Thus, in an effort to safeguard participants’ identities, an overall
composite summary of the demographic characteristics of this sample is provided at the beginning of Chapter IV.

Document Review

Next, as a secondary method of data collection, a document review was conducted of personal (e.g., biographies, curricula vitae/résumés) and official (e.g., published speeches, news releases) documents containing first-hand accounts of the participants’ career path experiences. Feminist research methodologists DeVault and Gross (2007) note that documents, narratives, and other texts can provide researchers with “richer and fuller accounts of meaning” in studying women’s lives (p. 138). In fact, DeVault and Gross (2007) maintain that the analysis of documents may serve to (a) “unveil the submerged details” of women’s lives, (b) provide “new meanings,” and uncover “more complete connotations” concerning women’s lived experiences (p. 138). Indeed, Merriam notes that there are numerous advantages to using documents as a source of data such as “furnish[ing] descriptive information, verify[ing] emerging hypotheses, advance[ing] new categories and hypotheses, offer[ing] historical understanding, [and] tracking[ing] change and development” (p. 154).

Official and personal documents. Official documents are produced by “schools, and other organizations . . . for specific kinds of consumption” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 136). Official documents which contain first-hand accounts of participants’ career paths for this study involved published speeches on university websites, published interviews, and news releases. In contrast, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) note that “the phrase personal documents is used broadly to refer to any first-person narrative that describes an individual’s actions, experiences, and beliefs” (p. 133). Personal documents are considered documents providing a written account that is “self-revealing of a person’s
view of experiences” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 134). In this study, personal documents consisted of biographies, self-authored web blogs, and curricula vitae. Altogether, the descriptive data concerning participants’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations that were collected and reviewed in this study included biographies, curricula vitae/résumés, web blogs, published speeches, news releases, and published interviews.

Identification of documents. In generating documents for this study, each participant was mailed a formal letter inviting the voluntary submission a copy of her curriculum vitae or résumé, as well as any other supporting documents which convey first-hand accounts of her career paths. Half of the participants (including one president, two provosts, one dean, and four vice presidents) in this study elected to submit copies of their curricula vitae or résumés. Among the eight participants who submitted their curricula vitae or résumés, two participants chose to submit additional documents including an abbreviated biography and an organizational chart respectively.

Also of importance, many of the personal documents of interest for this study were published in public and popular culture formats (e.g., newspapers, Internet blogs). In particular, the Internet has broadened the “scope of data available to the researcher” (Merriam, 2009, p. 157). For example, many key-line administrators and university presidents have web pages on their official university websites, which contain links to (a) biographical information, (b) published speeches, (c) press releases, and (d) self-authored Internet blogs. Therefore, in addition to the documents (e.g., curricula vitae, résumés) that were provided by the participants, all other documents included in the sample for this study were located on the participant’s official university website. Ultimately, the
selection of documents for this study was based on the “congruence between the
documents and the research problem” (Merriam, 2009, p. 163).

**Data Analysis**

*Data Management and Organization*

The data set for this study consisted of a combination of transcribed interviews and documents. All data was managed and organized using a word processing computer program. The interview and document data was contained in separate word processing file folders (Lichtman, 2006). As data were being stored into the word processing program, I began the process of organizing the data by assigning a pseudonym for each interview transcript and corresponding set of documents. Each interview file and document file contained the participant’s demographic information, as well, (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, marital status, etc.).

Throughout the data collection processes, I prepared and organized the data with the use of a research project folder which contained (a) a research journal file and (b) an “observer comments” file (Lichtman, 2006, p. 167; see also Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lichtman, 2006, p. 167; Merriam, 2009). First, I used the research journal to: (a) summarize data; (b) document emerging patterns, themes, and concepts; and (c) describe my thoughts and reflections on the data collection and analysis processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lichtman, 2006). Second, I maintained a written account of “observer comments” for each data file which was helpful in “keep[ing] track of . . . [my] thoughts, musings, speculations, and hunches as . . . [I] prepare[d] . . . [the] data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 174; see also Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

*Data analysis process.* The data analysis process followed Lichtman’s (2010) “three C’s of analysis—coding, categorizing and identifying concepts” (p. 197).
Lichtman (2010) describes the three C’s of analysis as a general approach to qualitative data analysis that assists the researcher in transferring “raw data into meaningful concepts” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 197). In keeping with the conventions of qualitative data analysis, the data analysis process in this study was “inductive and comparative in the service of developing common themes or patterns or codes that cut across data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 169; see also Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, Lichtman, 2010). Also, the process of data analysis was “conducted along with (not after) the data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 269). Accordingly, as the raw data were being collected and entered into the word processing program, I conducted a “rudimentary analysis” of the data (Merriam, 2009, p. 171; see also Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, Lichtman, 2006; Merriam, 2002). Specifically, the rudimentary analysis involved a process of “sifting, sorting, coding, organizing, and extracting” from the interview transcripts and documents the preliminary themes, concepts, and ideas which relate to the research questions (Lichtman, 2006, p. 166). Throughout the data analysis process I used a color coding scheme to manage and organize the coding and categorization of emerging themes, patterns, and concepts (Lichtman, 2010).

In general, I conceptualized the data analysis process as a funnel in which the researcher progresses from a macro-level perspective to a micro-level perspective of the data. First, I began with a careful line-by-line reading of the transcription texts and documents (Lichtman, 2010). I used a macro-level approach in seeking to identify significant passages, sentences, and phrases pertaining to the research questions (Lichtman, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Then, with the subsequent readings of the text, the data analysis transitioned to a micro-level perspective in which I identified key concepts.
and terms (Lichtman, 2010). Then, I proceeded to “compare one unit of information with
the next in looking for recurring regularities in the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 177)

Specifically, in coding and categorizing the data, I followed the six steps which
guide Lichtman’s (2010) three Cs of analysis strategy. The first step involved comprising
a list of initial codes which reflect the “central idea” of the interview responses or
documents (Lichtman, 2010, p. 198). The initial coding of the data yielded “a large
number of codes” (e.g., 80-100 codes) (Lichtman, 2010, p. 168). Second, I reviewed the
initial codes and identified any codes which were “redundant” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 199).
In the second step, I reduced the number of initial codes by consolidating all redundant
codes into a modified list of codes that addressed the research questions (Lichtman, 2010,
p. 194). The third step involved organizing the modified list of codes into an “initial list
[may] become major topics, while others can be grouped under a major topic and become
subsets of that topic” (p. 199). Then, steps four and five involved reviewing the initial
list of categories in order to determine which categories were the most important and
which categories needed to modified to eliminate redundancies. At this phase of the data
analysis, I followed Lichtman’s (2010) recommendation of narrowing down the initial list
of categories to approximately “15 to 20 categories and subcategories” (p. 194). The
final stage of data analysis involved transitioning “from categories to concepts” through
“identify[ing] 5 key concepts that reflect the meaning you attach to the data you collect”
(Lichtman, 2010; p. 200). Lichtman (2010) suggests that the researcher select a relatively
small number (e.g., five to seven) of “well-developed and supported concepts” (p. 200).
Findings from a Qualitative Pilot Study with
Women in Key-line Positions to the Presidency

In the fall of 2009, I conducted a pilot study which qualitatively explored the experiences of three women administrators in key-line positions to the university presidency at a research university in the Southeastern region of the United States. The goal of this preliminary research was to obtain greater insights into women administrators’ career paths, leadership styles, and leadership experiences. The primary technique for data collection involved the use of in-person, qualitative interviews. Based on the central themes from a preliminary review of the literature pertaining to women leaders in higher education, the interview protocol involved a series of 17 semi-structured questions relating to the participants’ (a) career paths, (b) mentors, (c) administrative role, (d) leadership style, and (e) perceptions of gender and leadership. Prior to data collection, this study was reviewed and approved by the USM Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Purposeful and availability sampling methods were used in selecting participants for this study. The participant criteria involved women employed at the level of dean or above who possessed current or recent (i.e., within the past six months) experience serving as a university administrator. The participants in this study ranged in age from 40 to 60 and possessed one to four years of experience in a current or recent key-line administrative position. All participants were given an informed consent form and permission was granted to audiotape the interviews. All interviews took place at the participants’ administrative offices on the university campus and lasted for approximately one hour.
The data set for this study consisted of interviews which were transcribed in a word for word write-up format. The data analysis procedures followed Lichtman’s (2010) “The Three C’s of Analysis: Coding, Categorizing, and Identifying Concepts” approach to qualitative data analysis (p. 197). The data analysis revealed seven key concepts pertaining to (a) career path and vision, (b) leadership role, style, abilities, and skills, (c) mentors, (d) balance of professional and personal life, (e) gender and leadership perspectives, (f) family impacts, and (g) spirituality/religion. The latter two concepts, family impacts and spirituality/religion, emerged as new themes in the data analysis.

Significantly, the findings of this study mirror the key themes and issues in the research literature in terms of the participants’ (a) possessing traditional scholar (or academic) career paths (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Bornstein, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Phillips, 2010; Touchton et al., 1991), (b) having emerging paths into college and university leadership (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), (c) confirming the challenges of balancing work-life issues (Curtis, 2005; Marshall, 2009; West & Curtis, 2006), and (d) identifying with leadership styles and traits which are commonly associated with women leaders including collaboration, empowerment, and team-building (Jablonkski, 1996; Kezar et al., 2006; Nidiffer, 2001). Interestingly, in contrast to previous research literature (Brown, 2005; Gibson, 2006; Scanlon, 1997; Steinke, 2006) which speaks to the importance of mentoring experiences for women in achieving positions of university leadership, one of the most consistent patterns among the women administrators in this pilot study was a lack of mentoring experiences, especially by female mentors.

Altogether, the preliminary findings for the pilot study were instructive to the development and refinement of the interview protocol and theoretical framework for the
current study. The findings of this pilot study served to influence the interview protocol for this research by reinforcing the key concepts from the literature on women leaders in relation to (a) career paths, (b) work-life balance issues, (c) the role of mentors/role models, and (d) gendered perceptions of women leaders. Further, the emergent theme of family impacts suggests the need for further research which explores the ways in which women’s family relationships with children and spouses affect their career paths and leadership aspirations.

Of equal importance, the selection of a postmodern feminist framework for this research was influenced by the findings from the pilot study. The preliminary findings of the pilot study indicated that university women administrators possess diverse career paths, leadership aspirations, leadership experiences, and personal obstacles. Although several prominent themes emerged in the analysis of data (e.g., work-life balance), the participants’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations suggest that there is not an essence or unified experience to women’s career path experiences or leadership aspirations.

Validity and Reliability

As Merriam (2009) establishes, the goal of all research, both quantitative and qualitative, is to conduct ethical research which produces valid and reliable results (p. 270). Indeed, Merriam (2009) explains:

To have any effect on either the practice or theory of a field, research studies must be rigorously conducted; they need to present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, practitioners, and other researchers. The applied nature of most social science inquiry thus makes it imperative that researchers and others have
confidence in the conduct of the investigation and in the results of any particular study. (p. 210)

In taking into account that qualitative research is based on different philosophical assumptions (e.g., constructionism, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology) than quantitative research (i.e., positivism), many qualitative methodologists argue that “validity and reliability [should be viewed] from a perspective [that is] congruent with the philosophical assumptions underlying the paradigm” (Merriam, 2009, p. 211).

Consequently, some qualitative researchers have chosen to use the terms “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability [as] substitutes for [terms more traditionally associated with the quantitative tradition of inquiry such as] internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (Merriam, 2009, p. 21; see also Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002).

Internal Validity

In quantitative research, internal validity is used as a measure of the researcher’s ability to “capture an objective ‘truth’ or ‘reality’” (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). Yet, as Merriam (2009) notes:

One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research. Assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the ‘reality’ from which they were derived is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity. In this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human
behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. (p. 213)

Thus, internal validity may be more accurately conceptualized in qualitative research in terms of whether the research findings are “credible” (Merriam, 2002, p. 213; see also Janesick, 1998; Merriam, 2002).

Reliability

Further, reliability has traditionally been conceptualized in quantitative research in terms of the degree to which “research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). However, traditional conceptions of reliability present a number of problems when applied to qualitative research designs. First, reliability can be particularly problematic in evaluating human behavior which “is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one person experiences” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). As well, in carrying out a qualitative study in which the researcher is the human instrument through which data is collected and analyzed it is not possible to replicate a study and yield the same interpretation (Merriam, 2002, 2009). As Merriam (2002) establishes, “replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results, but this does not discredit the results of any particular study; there could be numerous interpretations of the same data” (p. 27).

Therefore, qualitative researchers often reconceptualize reliability in terms of the “‘dependability’ or ‘consistency’” of the research findings (Merriam, 2002, p. 27, 2009). In this vein, “reliability [in qualitative research] lies in others concurring that given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). With this in mind, there are a number of strategies that qualitative researchers may use to ensure greater internal validity (or credibility) and reliability (or
dependability or consistency) including (a) triangulation, (b) peer examination, (c) reflexivity (or investigator’s position), (d) audit trail, and (e) member checks (Creswell, 1998; Janesick, 1998; Mathison, 1988; Merriam, 2002, 2009).

**Triangulation of the data.** Thus, in seeking to promote credibility and dependability in confirming research findings, four primary strategies were employed in this study including (a) triangulation of the data, (b) peer review, (c) audit trail, and (d) reflexivity or researcher’s position. First, triangulation is considered a “principle strategy to ensure for validity and reliability” in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002, p. 26).

Triangulation involves the use of “multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings” (Merriam, 2009, p. 215; see also Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002). In this study, the use of multiple methods of data collection, interviews and document review, served as a means of triangulating the data in an effort to evaluate the “convergence of information” between the data collected in the interviews and the information obtained through document review (Creswell, 1998, p. 213; see also Merriam, 2002, 2009). Additionally, triangulation of the data is a “technique which provides more and better evidence from which researchers can construct meaningful propositions” about the social phenomenon that is being investigated (Mathison, 1988, p. 15).

**Peer examination.** Second, peer examination (or peer review) is considered another important strategy for ensuring the trustworthiness of the research findings (Merriam, 2002, 2009). In an important sense, “all graduate students have a peer review process built into their thesis or dissertation committee—as each member reads and comments on the findings” (Merriam 2003, p. 26; 2009). Peer review involves asking a peer who is “knowledgeable about the topic and methodology to review . . . . some of the
raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 220, 2002).

**Audit trail.** The audit trail provides another means through which qualitative researchers can seek to promote consistent and dependable data. Although the goal of qualitative research is not to expect other researchers to replicate the study and arrive at the same findings, the audit trail does serve the purpose of providing “independent readers [the opportunity to] authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of a researcher” (Merriam, 2009, p. 222). Using a research journal or memos, the researcher can describe in detail “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (p. 223). Accordingly, in this study, I also used my research journal to provide a detailed account of the processes involved with data collection and analysis. Also, the audit trail was used to document my “reflections, questions, and decisions on the problems, issues . . . [and] ideas . . . [that I] encountered in collecting data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27).

**Reflexivity or researcher’s position.** Then, reflexivity or the researcher’s position, represents the final strategy that was employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Reflexivity or the researcher’s position may be understood as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). Indeed, “researchers are [increasingly] being called upon to articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study” (Merriam, 2002, p. 26, 2009). Significantly, the clarification of a researcher’s assumptions, biases, and worldview allows others to understand how he or she “arrived at a particular interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219, 2002). Therefore, throughout the course of the research process, I used my research journal to clarify my own experiences, assumptions, biases,
and worldview. As well, in the final section of this chapter, I discuss how my positionality as the researcher has served to influence the development of this study.

*External validity or transferability.* As a final point of concern, I discuss how external validity or generalizability was viewed and achieved in this study. As Merriam (2009) notes, external validity relates to “the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 223). In employing a qualitative research design, the goal of this study was not to make *generalizations* about university women leaders’ career paths and aspirations, as the term is understood in conventional quantitative studies using a random sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Merriam, 2009). Indeed, researchers use small, purposeful samples in order to obtain a more “in depth [understanding of a phenomenon], not to find out what is generally true of the many” (Merriam, 2002, p. 28). Since qualitative researchers use “small, non-random samples [which] are selected purposefully . . . it is not possible to generalize statistically” (Merriam, 2002, p. 28). Nevertheless, as Merriam (2009) notes, “although generalizability in the statistical sense . . . cannot occur in qualitative research,” there are still important lessons and insights that may be gained from qualitative research (p. 224).

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative researchers conceptualize generalizability in terms of the “*transferability*” of the research findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 224). Merriam (2009) describes that transferability (or user generalizability) of the research findings transfers the “burden of proof [from the researcher to those] seeking to make an application elsewhere” (p. 224). As such, transferability is accomplished through providing the reader with a “thick, rich description” of the qualitative data in the research findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 227). Further, Merriam (2009) explains:
reader or user generalizability involves leaving the extent to which a study’s findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations. The person who reads the study decides whether the findings can apply to his or her particular situation . . . . Nevertheless, the researcher has an obligation to provide enough detailed description of the study’s context to enable readers to compare the ‘fit’ with their situations. (p. 226)

With this in mind, I used the strategy of “providing [a] rich, thick description” of the research findings in order to make transferability or user generalizability possible for readers (Merriam, 2009, p. 227).

Researcher Position

One of the defining characteristics of “all forms of qualitative research is that the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). As Merriam (2009) points out, the “human instrument” of data collection and analysis presents the advantages of “expand[ing] his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, processing[ing] information (data) immediately[,] . . . check[ing] with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explor[ing] unusual or unanticipated responses” (p. 15). Yet, on the other hand, Merriam (2009) surmises that “the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study” (p. 15).

In acknowledging that a key feature of qualitative research is the researcher’s ability to interpret his or her understanding of the reality being conveyed by the participants, qualitative researchers do not seek to “eliminate these biases or ‘subjectivities’” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). Conversely, one strategy of ensuring the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis is through acknowledging the researcher’s
positionality in relation to salient aspects (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class, profession, etc.) of one’s identity that may influence the study (Merriam, 2002, 2009). What is more, analyzing how the researcher’s role influences her “understanding of the research process” is also an important strategy for feminist research and praxis (Stewart, 1994). With this in mind, in what follows, I reflect on how my position as researcher has served to influence the contours of this study (Merriam, 2002). Specifically, I provide a critical reflection on how my personal interest in the study of university women leaders has been influenced by my educational experiences in the field of higher education administration, personal career aspirations, professional experience, and positionality.

Educational experiences in the field of higher education administration. In examining my motives to study women’s pathways to the university presidency, my interest in this topic began in the fall of 2007 when I entered the higher education administration doctoral program at USM. My first year in the doctoral program was marked by the appointment of USM’s first female president, Dr. Martha D. Saunders. In the same year, the topic of women presidents captured national-level attention with the appointment of Harvard University’s first female president, Dr. Drew G. Faust. Collectively, the appointment of President Saunders on the regional level and the appointment of President Faust on the national level sparked my interest in the topic of university women presidents.

Throughout my coursework in the higher education administration program, I was able to build my knowledge base on issues relating to female leadership in higher education. In particular, in my first semester in the doctoral program, I had the opportunity to conduct a class research project pertaining to the history of women college and university presidents. As part of this project, I conducted an in-person interview with
President Saunders. Through this project, I gained a deeper interest in prominent themes, patterns, and issues which characterize women’s leadership.

**Personal career aspirations.** Further, through my own self-reflection, I recognize that my own career aspirations of becoming a tenure-track university professor and administrator have also influenced my interest in the study of university women leaders. I am aware that my career aspirations have been significantly influenced by the visible increase in the number of women college and university presidents, both on the regional and national level. In reflecting on my career aspirations, I am personally interested in learning how women leaders (a) balance work-life issues, (b) negotiate administrative responsibilities with family obligations, and (c) cope with gendered conceptions of leadership.

**Professional experience.** Additionally, many of my views and assumptions concerning the role of gender in leadership have been informed by the experiential knowledge I have gleaned through my participation in the Women in Higher Education-Mississippi Network (WHEMN). In serving as the graduate representative for WHEMN, I have had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience working with and observing women leaders in key-line positions to the presidency and women presidents. Based on my observations and experiences, I have learned from interacting with women leaders of different generations that gender does matter in leadership in terms of (a) the ways in which women are perceived as leaders, (b) women’s career path choices, (c) women’s leadership strategies, and (d) women’s experiences in leadership.

**Researcher positionality.** Altogether, based on my formal and experiential knowledge, I approached this study guided by the primary assumption that gender matters in leadership. In part, my view that gender matters in leadership was informed by
my positionality as a white, female, doctoral student in the field of higher education administration. First and foremost, I acknowledge that my position as a woman was, in part, what motivates my interest in studying women’s lives, experiences, and perspectives (Stewart, 1994). Also, I recognize that my gender also influences my interest in women’s lives and my stance as a feminist researcher.

In critically reflecting on my academic career as a student and my experiences as an adjunct sociology instructor, I am aware that gender is a salient aspect of my identity in terms of the ways in which my professors and my students view me. As well, I am aware that my gender intersects with multiple dimensions of my personhood such as my race, age, social class, and religion to influence my identity and subjectivity. As a female who aspires to attain a position of university leadership in my future career, I am also aware that my gender as well as the other dimensions of my personhood will play an important role in how I am perceived as a university leader. Thus, the awareness of the various dimensions which comprise my positionality has also contributed to the assumption that women’s experiences and perceptions are influenced by multiple dimensions of their personhood.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This study qualitatively explored how university women in key-line administrative positions and women university presidents made meaning of their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. Additionally, this study examined how personal factors (e.g., work-life balance issues, family relationships, etc.) influence women’s career paths and leadership aspirations. With this in mind, this chapter presents the key findings of this study.

Chapter Overview

First, this chapter begins by providing an overall composite summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample of participants involved in this study. Next, this chapter presents a brief summary of the overall research findings. Then, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to a detailed description and interpretation of the major thematic categories and subcategories, as shown in Table 1, which emerged from the data analysis. In this section of the chapter, each of the major thematic categories and subcategories are “introduced, explained, and supported by data from the interviews with participants” (Merriam, 2009, p. 248).

Table 1
Major Findings

Categories and sub-themes

I) Career Paths and Educational Credentials
   A. Characteristics of Participants’ Early Career Paths
   B. Family Influences on Participants’ Career Paths
   C. Attaining Educational Credentials
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and sub-themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. The Benefits of Gaining Educational Credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Unintentional and Emergent Career Paths into University Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II) Leadership Aspirations
   A. Gaining a Vision for University Leadership and Leadership Motivations
   B. The Personal, Professional, and Institutional Factors Hindering Key-Line Administrators from having Presidential Aspirations

III) Mentors, Role Models, and Professional Networks
   A. Participants’ Lack of Primary Mentoring Relationships
   B. Multiple Mentoring Relationships
   C. Non-Traditional Mentors and/or Role Models
   D. The Benefits of having Mentors and/or Role Models
   E. Lack of Involvement in Professional Networks/Organizations related to Higher Education Administration/Leadership
   F. The Benefits of Involvement in Professional Networks

IV) Family Relationships and Work-life Balance Issues
   A. Family Relationships and Priorities
   B. The Time Demands of Participants’ Professional Roles as University Leaders
   C. Work-life Balance Challenges and Conflicts
   D. Strategies for Achieving Greater Work-life Balance
   E. The Importance of having Flexible Time and Receiving Support from Others

V) Perceptions of Gender and Leadership
   A. Participants’ Perceptions of Leadership Styles, Traits, and Characteristics
   B. Perceptions of the Influence of Gender on Leadership
   C. Perceptions of Gender Differences in Male and Female Leadership
   D. A Different, Higher, and/or Double Standard of Behavior, Appearance, and Credentials for Women Leaders

Composite Demographic Profile of Participants

This study involved 16 women holding key-line administrative positions or presidential appointments at universities located across six states (i.e., AL, FL, GA, MS, LA, TN) throughout Southeastern region of the United States. Typically, in qualitative
studies using interviews as the major or only technique for data collection a general overview of the major demographic features of the sample, as a whole, is presented in the methodology section (Merriam, 2009, p. 246). Merriam (2009) explains that “some interview-based studies also include short portraits of each participant” at the beginning of the findings section (p. 246). However, as noted in the previous chapter, in an effort to protect the participants’ confidentiality and anonymity who were involved in this study, I chose to present the demographic characteristics of the research sample in this section in the format of an overall composite profile rather than in the form of individual, biographical profiles. Similarly, in one of the few qualitative studies focusing exclusively on the experiences of university women presidents, Madsen (2008) chose to safeguard the identities of the ten university women presidents that she interviewed through providing “a summary of some basic collective demographic information about . . . [the] women [presidents] and their institutions” rather than providing descriptive portraits of each individual participant (p. 9). With this in mind, the demographic information presented in this section describes collectively the participants’ (a) professional, (b) institutional, and (c) personal characteristics.

Professional Characteristics

Administrative positions and professional titles. The sample of participants included four current university presidents, 11 current university key-line administrators, and one recently retired university key-line administrator. Table 2 presents a list of the participants according to their assigned pseudonyms and corresponding professional titles. In particular, as indicated in Table 2, among the key-line administrators who participated in this study, three were academic deans, three were provosts/chief academic
officers, and six were vice presidents representing the major areas of advancement, communications, economic development, research, student affairs, and technology.

Table 2

*Participants According to Pseudonyms and Professional Titles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Professional title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa Atwood</td>
<td>Academic Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Barlow</td>
<td>Provost/Chief Academic Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline Carter</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Ellis</td>
<td>Provost/Chief Academic Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Fields</td>
<td>Provost/Chief Academic Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Gallagher</td>
<td>Academic Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Howard</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Kennedy</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashleigh Landon</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel McNair</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Owens</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Perkins</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Reed</td>
<td>Academic Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Rice</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Whitley</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Young</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ immediate prior-positions. All of the participants in this study held at least two previous administrative positions of increasing responsibility in higher education over the course of their career paths. Prior to assuming their most recent administrative position, the participants held a variety of immediate-prior positions in mid-to-upper tier university administration. First, among the four university presidents, three ascended to their current position from a previous university presidential appointment and one had ascended from the immediate-prior position of a provost/chief academic officer. Among the three who held the immediate-prior position of a university president, two advanced to their first presidency from the immediate-prior position of a provost/chief academic officer and one advanced from a position outside of higher education. Second, each of the three participants serving as provosts/chief academic officers reported serving in an academic deanship at some point in their respective career paths. More specifically, two of the provosts/chief academic officers served in an academic deanship in their immediate-prior position and one held the immediate-prior position of an associate provost. Third, among the three deans who participated in this study, two held the immediate-prior position of an academic department chair and one ascended from a deanship at another institution. The six vice presidents advanced to their current positions from a variety of immediate-prior positions in senior-level university administration including (a) director (2), (b) interim vice president (2), (c) assistant vice president (1), and (d) an associate vice president (1).

Location of immediate-prior position. Interestingly, ten of the 12 participants in key-line administrative positions had been promoted internally to their current key-line administrative position. Indeed, six of the key-line administrators in this study have spent their entire careers in higher education advancing through the administrative ranks
at a single institution. The presidents, on the other hand, were hired externally into their current positions from an immediate-prior position of top-level university leadership at a different institution. Each president possessed career experience working at a minimum of three different institutions of higher education over the course of their respective career trajectories in higher education.

Women firsts and professional administrative positions in higher education. In collecting the demographic information for this study, participants were asked to identify if they were the first woman in the history of their institution to serve in their current administrative position as either a key-line administrator or university president. The majority of participants, 13 out of 16, reported that were the first woman in the history of the institution to serve in their current position. The three participants who reported that they were not the first woman in their institution’s history to hold their current position included: a university president, a provost, and a vice president of student affairs.

Further, one of the participants who indicated that she is not the first woman in her institution’s history to serve in her current position pointed out that she has been the first woman to occupy several of her previous positions (e.g., director, dean, etc.). In fact, seven participants communicated that they were the first woman to hold a position in at least two of their prior administrative roles leading to their current position. What is more, three of the four presidents were the first woman in their institution’s history to hold the office of the president and all of the presidents relayed that they had experienced being a woman first in at least two of their prior administrative positions in higher education. Specifically, one president conveyed that she was the first woman to hold each of her previous administrative positions in her career path in higher education.
Total years of full-time career experience in higher education. In collecting the professional demographic information for this study, participants were asked to select from a range of years of full-time work experience that reflects the total length of time of their careers in higher education. The participants’ total years of full-time career experience in higher education ranged from a minimum of 6 to 11 years of experience to a maximum of 41 or more years of experience. Overall, most of participants in this study, including all of the deans, provosts, and presidents, had acquired over 20 years of full-time experience working in higher education and seven of the participants indicated having 30 years of full-time career experience in higher education. Likewise, the university presidents in this study had acquired numerous years of full-time career experience in higher education with three of the presidents having 30 to 35 total years of experience and one possessing 21 to 25 years of experience.

Future career plans. In speaking to their future career plans, half of the participants plan to retire after completing their tenure in their current administrative position and one participant had already retired at the time of her interview. Among the four presidents who participated in this study, three presidents plan to retire after completing their respective tenures in their current administrative positions and one president is undecided concerning her next career move. Of the presidents who intend to retire after completing their current presidential tenure, two plan to return to the faculty ranks and teach. Similarly, three of the key-line administrators plan to continue engaging in scholarly activities such as teaching, editing scholarly journals, conducting seminars/workshops, giving key-note addresses, and publishing after retiring from their current administrative role.
Three of the youngest participants in this study who are in the middle stages of their respective career paths indicated that their future career plans were to remain in their current vice-presidential positions. Although one of the deans in this study plans to retire as her next career move, one dean plans to advance externally to a provostship at another institution and the other dean plans to advance externally either to another deanship or a provostship at a different institution. Lastly, of the three provosts/chief academic officers who participated in this study, two will plan to retire after they complete their tenure in their current position and one is undecided concerning her future career goals. Although the provost/chief academic officer who is undecided concerning her future career plans does not aspire to achieve a university presidency, she is open to the possibility of either applying for a presidency or working outside of higher education as a practitioner in her academic field.

**Institutional Characteristics**

The participants represented a variety of institutional types including (a) public and private doctoral/research universities, (b) public and private master’s universities, (c) private religious-affiliated universities, and (d) a public historically black university. With the exception of three participants, most of the participants that I interviewed were employed at public universities. Of the three participants employed at private, not-for-profit universities, two served in leadership positions at private, religious-affiliated institutions and one served at a large doctoral/research university. Under the Carnegie Classification System, 12 participants were employed at large-sized universities and four were employed at medium-sized universities. Markedly, the majority of participants (13) in this study, including all four of the university presidents and nine of the key-line administrators, within both the public and private sectors, were employed at doctoral-
granting universities which are designated as research universities under the Carnegie Classification System. Further, among the various institutional types represented in this study, only one participant was employed at an institution which was classified as both a doctoral/research university and as a historically-black institution.

*Personal Characteristics*

Participants were asked to provide demographic information pertaining to several personal characteristics including their (a) race, (b) age, (c) educational attainment, (d) marital status, (e) number of children, and (f) religious affiliation. In looking at the racial composition of the research sample, most (14) participants identified their racial classification as White and two participants identified their racial classification as Black. The participants ranged in age from 39 to 70 years of age. The median age of the participants in this sample was 62. Specifically, ten of the participants in this study, including all four of the university presidents, were in their 60s.

In regard to the highest degree of educational attainment, the majority (14) of the participants in this study had earned doctoral degrees within a range of academic fields including (a) education (2), (b) health (5), (c) liberal arts/social sciences (5), and (d) physical/natural sciences (2). Of the 14 participants who earned doctoral degrees, one participant had earned her doctoral degree from a professional school in a health-related field. In comparison, the highest degree earned among two of the participants serving in non-academic, key-line administrative positions were master’s degrees in the respective fields of business and humanities.

All of the presidents who participated in this study held doctoral degrees. Two of the presidents earned doctoral degrees in liberal arts/social science disciplines and two presidents earned doctoral degrees in physical/natural science disciplines. Additionally,
in speaking to their post-graduate educational experiences, three presidents and one vice president reported completing formal leadership training programs at elite, private Ivy League institutions (e.g., Harvard’s Institute for Education Management).

In regard to marital and family status, most of the participants in this study are married and have children. More specifically, 12 participants are currently married. Although the majority of participants are still in their first marriages, two indicated that they had been divorced and are currently remarried. In contrast, of the four participants who were single, two were divorced and two reported that they have never been married.

In evaluating participants’ family status, most (13) participants have children. The participants’ number of children ranged from one to seven. Interestingly, 12 of the 13 participants who were parents had more than one child with two representing the most frequently reported number of children. Although the majority of participants had adult children, two participants had adolescent, school-aged children and one participant had elementary, school-aged children. Two of the university presidents in this study had grown children and two presidents were childless. Strikingly, the participants in this study with the greatest number of children currently served in top-tier administrative positions as presidents, provosts, and vice presidents. Further, in each case, the participants with the greatest number of children had grown children.

Participants were asked to identify their religious affiliation. Overall, the majority of participants identified with Christian religious affiliations. More particularly, the participants identified the following religious affiliations: Baptist (5), Catholic (2), Episcopal (1), and Methodist (4). In contrast, two participants indicated that they did not have a religious affiliation, one provided no information, and one indicated that she was a protestant without a particular affiliation to a religious denomination. Finally, in
evaluating the university presidents’ religious affiliations, two were Catholic, one was Methodist, and one did not identify a religious affiliation.

*Summary of common demographic traits.* In summary, many of the participants in this study shared a number of common professional, institutional, and personal demographic traits. In regard to demographic data concerning the participants’ professional traits, with the exception of the vice presidents, many of the participants ascended to their current position from an immediate prior-position in academic leadership (e.g., dean, provost). Strikingly, the majority of the participants in this study, with the exception of the university presidents, had internal promotion paths to their current position. In contrast, the presidents in this study had external promotion paths and worked at several different universities prior to assuming their current position. Overall, the participants in this study had acquired many years of full-time career experience in higher education with most participants having over 20 years of experience. Notably, the majority of the women who participated in this study were the first woman in the history of their institution to occupy their current administrative position. In fact, seven women relayed that they had experienced being the first woman to occupy two or more of their previous administrative positions in their career path in higher education. Moreover, the professional demographic data pertaining to participants’ future career plans reveals that half of the sample will retire after completing their current administrative tenure. As well, the data reveals that most participants, who are not already university presidents, do not plan to pursue a university presidency.

The demographic data concerning the institutional characteristics indicates that participants were employed at a variety of institutional types across six different states throughout the southeastern region of the United States. However, the majority of
participants are employed at institutions which have been designated as research institutions by the Carnegie Classification System. Likewise, under the Carnegie Classification System, most participants were employed at large-sized universities. In addition, most of the participants in this study were employed at public institutions.

Many of the participants had several personal demographic features in common. First, the majority of the participants in this study were white and in their 60s. Second, in regard to educational attainment, most of the participants in this study had earned a doctoral degree. Third, most of the participants in this study were married and had grown children. As a final point, most participants in this study identified with Christian religious affiliations.

Overview of Findings

Altogether, five major categories emerged from the data analysis pertaining to the participants (a) career paths and educational credentials; (b) leadership aspirations; (c) experiences with mentors, role models, and professional networks; (d) family relationships and work-life balance issues; and (e) perceptions of gender and leadership. Additionally, within each major category, multiple subcategories emerged from the data analysis. Significantly, the overall research findings of this study contribute to the extant literature concerning the career paths of university women leaders in higher education by providing a more in-depth understanding of (a) how the participants experienced their unique career paths into top-level university leadership; (b) the factors which served to motivate and/or hinder participants’ leadership/presidential aspirations; and (c) the ways in which personal factors (e.g., family priorities, etc.) influenced many of the participants’ career path choices and leadership aspirations. This study also contributes to the postmodern feminist theoretical studies pertaining to women leaders, by
highlighting how the distinctive features of the participants’ personhood (e.g., gender, race, level of educational attainment, martial status, family status, academic field, age, and religion/spirituality) served to influence uniquely their career path experiences and leadership aspirations.

Also of noteworthy importance, the majority (13) of participants in this study, including all of the university presidents, served in top-level positions of university leadership at research institutions, the institutional type in which women are the most disproportionately underrepresented in university key-line administrative positions and university presidencies (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; King & Gomez, 2008; Madsen, 2008). Consequently, as discussed in Chapter I, the limited population of women serving in high-level university leadership positions at this institutional type has resulted in a severe lack of empirical studies relating to the career paths of women leaders at research universities. Thus, in response to the gap in the research literature, the findings of this study provide the opportunity to obtain new and deeper insights into how the participants who were employed at research universities, especially the university presidents, successfully navigated their respective career paths into top-level university leadership. With this in mind, in what follows, I outline several of the major conclusions of this study pertaining to each of the major thematic categories which emerged from the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Career paths and educational credentials. First, the overall research indicated that the participants in this study had unique educational journeys and career paths which were often shaped by the most salient features of their personhood (e.g., spirituality, family statuses, race, etc.). Although each participant had a unique career path, one of the most prominent and consistent findings pertain to the participants’ unintentional and
emergent career paths to top-level university leadership. Indeed, none of the participants in this study began their career paths with the goal of becoming a key-line university administrator or a university president. Therefore, in contrast to having intentional career paths to university leadership, the participants in this study emerged as leaders through (a) being achievement-oriented, (b) demonstrating leadership skills and competencies, and (c) assuming various administrative responsibilities (e.g., coordinating programs). Also of significance, many of the participants who occupied multiple family statuses (e.g., daughter, wife, and/or mother) described how their family relationships had played an influential role in shaping the contours and timing patterns of their educational pursuits and career paths to leadership. In particular, many of the participants who were mothers spoke to how their childrearing responsibilities and family priorities had played an influential role in contributing to their circuitous routes into their first full-time career positions in higher education and/or the delayed timing of the attainment of their highest degree.

In examining the participants’ career path advancement into leadership, all of the participants held multiple positions of increasing responsibility within their respective career paths prior to assuming a key-line administrative position or university presidency. Specifically, in considering the career paths of the participants who achieved university presidencies, all of the university presidents began their career paths in higher education as tenure-track faculty members and advanced through at least one of the rungs (i.e., department chair, academic dean, provost) on the traditional academic ladder to the presidency. In fact, three of the four university presidents who participated in this study ascended to their first presidential appointment through holding the second-prior key-line administrative position of academic dean and the immediate-prior key-line administrative
position of provost/chief academic officer. The fourth, however, advanced to her first presidency through the second-prior key-line position of an academic department chair and an immediate-prior position in a career outside of higher education.

**Leadership aspirations.** Second, none of the participants in this study representing women in key-line administrative positions to the presidency indicated that they had presidential aspirations. Thus, among the participants in this study, only three of the four university presidents reported having presidential aspirations which emerged in the mid-to-later stages of their respective career paths. The university presidents discussed a number of factors which motivated and/or facilitated their aspiration to achieve a university presidency, such as (a) having educational and faculty credentials, (b) possessing diverse leadership experiences, (c) enjoying administrative work, (d) stage of life (e.g., having grown children/retired spouse), or (e) the ability to geographically relocate. The participants who lacked presidential aspirations also described an array of factors which served to hinder their consideration of a presidency, such as (a) the external nature of the president’s role (e.g., fundraising, etc.), (b) inability to geographically relocate, (c) family relationships, or (d) life stage and career stage (e.g., nearing retirement).

**Mentors, role models, and professional networks.** Third, the majority of participants in this study revealed that mentors, role models, and professional networks played a minimal or secondary role in their career path advancement into top-level leadership roles. In fact, most participants indicated that they did not have a primary mentor, male or female, that served to help guide their career paths into top-level university leadership. Strikingly, with the majority of participants in this study being the first woman to occupy their leadership position at their respective institutions, many of
the participants spoke to the paucity of female leaders available to serve as role models, especially during the early and middle stages of their career paths. Among the participants who indicated having mentors and/or role models, the majority reported that they had mostly males to serve as leadership role models (e.g., supervisor) and/or mentors throughout their career paths. Also, among those who discussed having mentors and/or role models, the greatest benefits of these relationships were (a) encouragement, (b) support, (c) career advice, (d) providing opportunities to gain professional experience, and/or (e) learning new skills (e.g., problem-solving skills).

Moreover, the majority of participants were not involved in professional networks or organizations pertaining to higher education leadership. Among those participants who were involved in professional leadership networks or organizations, they described benefiting from gaining leadership knowledge and administrative skills. However, very few participants involved in professional networks or organizations reported benefiting from networking opportunities.

*Family relationships and work-life balance issues.* Fourth, the most prominent thematic category that emerged from the data analysis pertains to how the personal factors of family relationships and work-life balance issues affect women’s career paths and leadership aspirations. The significance of this category is demonstrated in the ways in which sub-themes related to family relationships and work-life balance issues intersect with the other major categories in this study. Notably, within this category, participants’ family relationships represent one of the most salient personal factors which influenced their career paths, leadership experiences, and career aspirations. As an example, the majority of participants who I interviewed explained that their family responsibilities had influenced their career choices and aspirations at various stages of their career paths from...
raising young children in the earlier stages of their career paths to caring for elderly parents at the later stages of their career paths. Many of the participants in this study also discussed how receiving family support (e.g., supportive spouses, support from grown children, extended family support, etc.) had facilitated their movement into university leadership.

Additionally, in speaking to their ability to achieve balance between their personal and professional lives, each of the participants acknowledged the enormous time demands that are associated with serving as a key-line administrator or university president. In maintaining a hectic schedule as a university administrator while striving to prioritize their family relationships, several of the participants spoke the “choices,” “tradeoffs,” and/or “sacrifices” involved with negotiating the balance between their personal and professional lives such as sacrificing sleep or personal time for friendships or hobbies. However, over time, many of the participants described how they have learned strategies for achieving greater work-life balance such as setting boundaries between their work life and home life.

Perceptions of gender and leadership. Fifth, in regard to the concept of perceptions of gender and leadership, the participants in this study shared their perceptions concerning (a) the influence of gender on their leadership; (b) their personal leadership style; (c) gender differences in male and female leadership; and (d) the different, higher and/or double standard applied to women leaders’ behavior, appearance, and credentials. In speaking to the influence of gender on their leadership experiences, the majority of participants relayed that their gender had never served as a direct obstacle to their career path advancement to their current positions. In fact, some of the participants expressed a sense of ambiguity concerning how their gender had influenced
their personal leadership experiences. At the same time, a number of other participants believed that their gender roles as mothers, wives, or caregivers had served to shape their personal leadership styles and practices.

In describing their leadership styles and traits, the majority of participants in this study identified with a multiplicity of feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors (e.g., consensus-building, collaborative, etc.) which have been commonly associated in the research literature with women leaders. Specifically, all of the participants in this study spoke, directly or indirectly, to possessing leadership styles that are consistent with a collaborative model of leadership. Also of noteworthy importance, 10 of the participants spoke to possessing a team-oriented approach to leadership through their emphasis on serving as a team leader, building leadership teams, or working in teams. Although the majority of participants possessed a preponderance of feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors, several of the participants also spoke to the ways in which their leadership style combined both feminine and masculine approaches to leadership. For instance, one participant, Provost Fields, described herself as a “steel magnolia” in terms of her ability to blend feminine traits such as being communicative and “mild mannered” with masculine traits such as being “decisive” or “tough.” Additionally, in describing their leadership styles and traits, several common themes emerged pertaining to the participants’ emphasis on (a) “open,” “transparent,” and/or “direct” communications; (b) decisive leadership and decision-making processes; and (c) demonstrating an ethic of care (e.g., providing encouragement, help, developing others, compassion, empathy, support, etc.).

In regard to participants’ perceptions of gender differences in male and female leadership, most participants (14) acknowledged their awareness of traditional gender-
stereotypic norms concerning male (e.g., authoritarian, hierarchal, etc.) and female (e.g., collaborative, consensus-seeking, etc.) leadership styles, traits, and characteristics. Yet, six of the 16 participants reported that they have not observed “clear-cut” gender differences between male and female leaders. As such, these participants shared how they have observed female leaders exhibiting traditional male leadership traits (e.g., aggression) and male leaders demonstrating leadership traits (e.g., empathy) that have been traditionally associated with female leadership practices.

All in all, the major outcomes of this study serve to portray the ways in which the university women administrators and presidents who participated in this study made meaning of their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. The overall findings of this study also highlight the ways in which personal factors and life issues such as family relationships shaped the majority of participants’ career paths and leadership aspirations. With this in mind, in what follows, I expand upon the major findings of this study by providing a detailed description and interpretation of the major thematic categories and subcategories.

Major Thematic Categories and Subcategories

The presentation of the major thematic categories and subcategories are organized according to how each category emerged in the data analysis. Further, the description of the findings provides answers to each of the five broad research questions which have framed this study. Selected quotes from the interview data are used throughout the remainder of the chapter to provide a “thick, rich description” of the findings of this study as well as support the interpretation of the research findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 227). In an effort to protect participant confidentiality and
anonymity, the selected quotes from the interview data will identify participants, as presented in Table 2, by their assigned pseudonym and corresponding professional title.

Career Paths and Educational Credentials

At the beginning of each interview, I asked participants to describe their academic background and career path leading to their current administrative position. In particular, I inquired about participants’ immediate-prior positions of leadership and the point in which they gained a vision for leadership. Although a multiplicity of common themes emerged from the data analysis concerning participants’ career paths and educational experiences, it is also important to point out that each participant’s path was uniquely influenced by the salient dimensions of their personhood (e.g., race, level of educational attainment, academic field, martial status, age, religion/spirituality, etc). Significantly, for many of the participants, the dimensions of their personhood relating to their multiple family roles as mother, daughter, sister, and/or wife represented one of the most salient influences in shaping their career path choices and leadership aspirations. Altogether, it was fascinating and inspiring to learn about each participant’s unique journey into top-level university leadership. With this in mind, in what follows, I address each of the following sub-themes pertaining to participants’ career paths and educational credentials including (a) the characteristics of participants’ early career paths, (b) the family influences on women’s career paths, (c) attaining educational credentials, (d) the benefits of gaining educational credentials, and (e) unintentional and emergent career paths into university leadership. At the same time, in presenting the key findings pertaining to participants’ career paths and educational credentials, I also strive to underscore the ways in which the various dimensions of participants’ personhood has uniquely influenced their individual experiences and perceptions of their career path experiences.
The Characteristics of the Early Stages of Participants’ Career Paths

As noted earlier in this chapter, one of the most prominent findings of this study pertains to participants’ unintentional and emergent career paths into positions of top-level university leadership. In describing the earlier stages of their respective career paths, the participants collectively expressed a lack of intentionality in planning a career path leading directly to the achievement of a university key-line administrative position or a university presidency. Sandra Ellis who serves as a provost of a research university exemplifies the unintentional and emerging career paths of many of the participants in this study in expressing,

I didn't plan on an academic career and so each step [of my career path] has been, oh gee, you can do that . . . I have a friend who is a dean at another institution in my field and her career path was sort of the same as mine except that she planned it all. She had mentors. She knew that she wanted to be a chair . . . [and] . . . a dean. So, there are people who go both ways [in their career paths]. I didn't really plan . . . [my career path] . . . I clearly never envisioned myself in this position [as provost].

In addition to Provost Ellis who did not initially “envision” herself having an academic career, nine other participants (including two of the four presidents) communicated that they did not intentionally begin their career paths with the goal of having a career in higher education. For example, in asking President Eleanor Howard if she initially planned to have a career as a university administrator she replied, “No, it never occurred to me. [At the beginning of my career path,] I [actually] wanted to be a journalist.” However, she explains, “there . . . [were] . . . never any journalism jobs open . . . [at the time] I was free [to pursue a career in that field].” Although President Howard moved
directly into a career in higher education, half of the participants in this study described beginning their careers working in various fields outside of higher education (e.g., K-12 education, health-related professions, etc.).

*Circuitous paths into careers in higher education.* Thus, in addition to participants’ having unintentional and emerging career paths into university leadership, many participants described taking a *circuitous route* to their careers in higher education. Specifically, Provost Ellis, President Laura Perkins, Dean Vanessa Atwood, and Dean Hillary Reed, who initially began their careers working in fields outside of higher education, communicated that they did not deliberately set out at the beginning of their career paths to have academic careers or serve in positions of university leadership. Many of the participants conveyed that they did not consider a career in higher education until they were “asked,” “invited,” “encouraged,” “offered,” or “recruited” to work in higher education and realized that they enjoyed the nature of the work.

As two cases in point, Provost Ellis and President Perkins described having unintentional and circuitous paths into their careers in higher education after beginning their careers in fields outside of higher education. Both Provost Ellis and President Perkins relayed that they first began to consider an academic career after being invited to teach as an adjunct instructor. Provost Ellis articulates, “I [worked in a field outside of higher education for] a number of years. I had a friend whose husband worked at the university and he said, ‘oh you have . . . [a master’s degree,] would you like to teach adjunct’”? Although Provost Ellis did not initially plan on having a career as a university professor and academic administrator, she explains,

I think you get in a classroom and either you like it or you hate it. I liked it. The department was expanding . . . [so] I applied to be the director of . . . [a] field
experiences [program] and I got that job. I never expected to be here more than five years and [now] I am at the end of my 31st year.

Similarly, in asking President Perkins what first motivated her to begin her career in higher education as a professor, she replied, “only just being invited to . . . [teach].” President Perkins further explains, “I hadn’t thought of teaching . . . [at the] college [level as a career] until I . . . [began teaching as an adjunct instructor] and really liked it.”

The time-path dynamics of participants’ movement into careers in higher education. In considering that many of the participants began their careers in fields outside of higher education, one of the unique features of many of the participants’ circuitous career paths centers on the delayed timing of their entrance into their first career position in higher education. For example, Vice President Alexis Young described how she was recruited to work in higher education after spending a decade of her career path working through the ranks of K-12 education. She states,

Prior to coming to the university, I . . . [worked] in K-12 [education]. I began my career as an elementary school teacher and progressed [in my career] . . . until I became a vice principal. As it turned out, right about the time that I had completed my tenth year, there was more emphasis being placed on the four-year institutions [of higher education] to develop programs [in my academic area of expertise]. So, I was basically recruited to [work in] higher education because of my work in K-12 [education].

In addition to participants like Vice President Young who described a circuitous path and delayed entry into their careers in higher education due to their initial pursuit of career paths in fields outside of higher education, several participants’ discussed how their
family priorities and responsibilities contributed to their circuitous paths and delayed entrance into their careers in higher education

*Family Influences on Participants’ Career Paths*

As noted earlier in this chapter, one of the most salient concepts to emerge from the data analysis pertains to the influence of family relationships and work-life balance issues on women’s career paths and leadership aspirations. Also, as previously noted, the power of this concept is demonstrated in the ways in which it transcends multiple categories in this study. For example, for many of the participants in this study, their family relationships and priorities seem to have had the greatest affect on shaping their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. In speaking to the importance of family priorities in shaping women’s career paths and aspirations, Dean Hillary Reed expresses the perception that “women’s relationships with family, with their children and husbands, have a phenomenal impact on what they aspire to [achieve], what they are able to achieve, and what they want to achieve in their careers.”

Many of the women in this study emphasized how family responsibilities and obligations were a central priority in their young adult lives and often took precedence over their careers at different stages of their career paths. Provost Ellis articulates the sentiment of many participants concerning their family priorities in stating, “family . . . obligations always come first.” Particularly, in describing their early career paths, many of the participants in this study who were mothers described how their family priorities of bearing and raising children influenced their early career path choices and the timing of their career path into higher education. In the following statement, Dean Reed explains how the priority of raising children can affect women’s career paths, particularly in the earlier stages of their careers.
Early in your career, . . . [especially] when you do have children at home, there’s going to be certain opportunities that come . . . [your] way that . . . [are] either physically impossible for you to do because you can’t be two places at once, or it’s just not prudent for you to do because of the other demands on your time from family. So those other responsibilities, . . . based on the needs of your family, are always there.

President Perkins, President Deborah Rice, Vice President Elizabeth Owens, and Vice President Natalie Kennedy discussed how their family priorities influenced their early career path decisions and affected the timing of their late entry into their careers in higher education. For example, both President Perkins and President Rice had their children before earning their doctoral degrees and embarking on their academic careers. President Rice, for instance, notes, “I didn’t get into the academy until I was in my 30s and my youngest child was back in school . . . for the first time.”

Moreover, prior to entering their careers in higher education, President Perkins, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Kennedy described how they chose to interrupt their early career paths in order to devote several years to being stay-at-home mothers. Specifically, these participants described taking a stop out from their early career paths in order to bear and/or raise children. For example, in describing her first career position working in a field outside of higher education, President Perkins stated, “[I] stopped . . . [my career for ten years and] had my family.” President Perkins explained that her “husband traveled in his work a lot . . . [so] it was an advantage [for her] to be able to stay at home with her children.” Although she continued to do part-time, “free lance work” as a stay-at-home mother, President Perkins describes, “[I chose to be a] stay-at-home mom until my kids got to a point where I felt like I could leave
Similarly, during the early stages of Vice President of Advancement Owens’s career path working outside of the field of higher education she communicated, “I [stopped my career and] had children. Vice President Owens further notes that she “became a stay-at-home mom. . .” for a period of nine years after she moved out of state to follow her husband’s career. Vice President of Advancement Kennedy also experienced a stop-out from her early career path outside of higher education as she described, “I had several years at home as the wife of a professional with kids.” In describing their career path experiences, President Perkins, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Kennedy communicated that they enjoyed and valued the time they devoted to being stay-at-home mothers. In reflecting on the totality of her career path, President Perkins commented, “you can probably tell from my [career] history that family came first for me and I was just so lucky that I got to do both.”

Direct and Early Career Paths into Higher Education

In contrast to the many of the participants who described taking a circuitous route to their first career position in higher education, eight participants (President Howard, President Rice, President Claire Whitley, Provost Marie Fields, Vice President Madeline Carter, Vice President Ashleigh Landon, Vice President Rachel McNair and Dean Kathy Gallagher) moved directly into career positions in higher education during the early stages of their career paths. Six of these eight participants earned their doctoral degrees prior to beginning their first career positions in higher education. Strikingly, seven of the eight participants held tenure-track faculty positions during the early stages of their career paths in higher education, although one participant ultimately moved from an academic career to a career in student affairs. In contrast, the eighth participant, Vice President Landon, began her first career position in higher education in the area of student affairs.
Further, seven of these eight participants described spending their entire careers working in higher education with the exception of one participant who has temporarily stepped away from the academy at certain points in her career trajectory in order to work in several positions outside of higher education.

With the exception of President Rice who had children prior to earning her doctoral degree or entering her career in higher education, most of the participants who moved directly into their careers in higher education in the early phase of their career paths were childless at the time they entered into their first career positions in higher education. Among the participants with direct pathways into higher education, three of the participants have remained childless (President Howard, President Whitley, and Provost Fields) and four participants (Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, and Dean Gallagher) had children after beginning their careers in higher education.

*Family Influences on the Mid-to-Later Stages of Participants’ Career Paths*

In comparison to the participants who had their children prior to beginning their career paths in higher education, Dean Gallagher had children after beginning her first career position as a tenure-track faculty member. Dean Gallagher, who also chose to prioritize her childrearing responsibilities, discussed how raising young children “clearly had an impact on . . . [her] career trajectory.” Dean Gallagher recalls,

>[At the time] I got promoted to associate [professor] that’s when my kids were small. It was . . . during that period in my career where most . . . researchers are just going ninety miles an hour . . . [and] . . . really bearing down on their research [that]. . . things slowed down for me. [In] those early years . . . when my children . . . [were] really young, my husband had a job where he . . . was on the road all
the time. I was almost a single mom during the week [and] that clearly had an
impact on my career trajectory. It was really, really hard . . . [and] really stressful.
I decided . . . [that] I could . . . try to work late at night after the kids were asleep,
or I could have hired . . . babysitters to come in the evenings. [However,] I
decided [that] I had kids because I wanted to spend some time with them. It was a
sacrifice [to my career]. I mean, my research career definitely slowed down and it
wasn’t as bright as it might have been. So, I don’t know that [prioritizing my
childrearing responsibilities] influenced my decision about my career goals. I just
recognized that it was not possible to do everything.

In prioritizing her children during the earlier stages of her career, Dean Gallagher
explains that her family relationships did affect the timing of her movement into
academic administration. She surmised, “I probably came into doing administrative work
later [in my career path] because of my kids. Perhaps, I would have moved into a
leadership role or administrative roles earlier if I’d had my children earlier.”

Dean Gallagher observed that her experience of how her children influenced her
later progress into administrative roles may be representative of other women
administrators’ career path experiences, “especially women academics,” who have their
children after beginning their careers in higher education. Throughout her career in
higher education, Dean Gallagher has noticed that “everybody’s always a little older in
academics because it takes you so . . . long to get your Ph.D.” Thus, she infers that the
“time path that women follow . . . might be a[n] . . . essential piece of the story” in
studying women leaders’ career paths and leadership aspirations.

Indeed, seven other participants (President Rice, Vice President Young, Vice
President Carter, Vice President McNair, Dean Reed, and Provost Ellis) reported that
they chose not to move into certain full-time administrative roles (e.g., academic dean, provost, etc.) until their children were older (e.g., school age or teenage) or grown. President Rice exemplifies the view of the participants who chose to prioritize raising their children before moving up the administrative ladder in stating, “as long my children were at home they were my priority. My youngest . . . [child] had graduated from high school when I became . . . an associate dean.” As well, in describing her progression into academic leadership, Dean Reed noted that she waited until her children were “out of high school, . . . in college . . . and out of the nest” . . . to take on “full-time administrative responsibilities” as an academic department chair.

In speaking to the influences of women’s spouses on their career paths, four participants (Dean Reed, President Whitley, President Perkins, and Dean Gallagher) described how being in a dual-career marriage influenced the timing of their movement into leadership positions. For example, President Whitley shared, “I moved to follow my husband three times. So, in that sense, I’ve adapted my career [to his career, but] it’s not like I’ve stepped out from my career path.” Although President Whitley did not have presidential aspirations until later in her career, she notes that she was geographically “site-bound” for a period of time due to her husband’s “employment in the area.” In comparison, Dean Reed has been mobile in the mid-to-later stages of her career as she has been employed at several different institutions. Nevertheless, she pointed out that she was site bound earlier in her career until her “husband, [who had been . . . [a]self-employed owner of [his own business] . . . decided he was ready to retire.” Then, she explains, “at that point, I became moveable.” Likewise, President Perkins notes she could not have geographically relocated in order to advance into top-level leadership roles at an earlier point in her career path. However, at the time she relocated in order to
assume the immediate-prior position that she held before assuming her first presidency she recalls,

I was at a point where I could make those kinds of moves and not be dragging a whole family behind me. My husband . . . [and I] were at a sweet spot in our . . . life because the youngest child had just left for college. [Also, my husband] had some agility in his career and we knew . . . that we could make some strategic [geographic] moves and [we] were willing to [relocate].

Then, in reflecting back to her earlier career, Dean Gallagher expresses that it would not have been feasible for her to have advanced into a leadership role earlier in her career due to the nature of her spouse’s career. She explains, “I don’t know how I would have managed [serving in an administrative position earlier in my career] because [of] my husband[’s] . . . job [which did not] have a lot of flexibility. When he was on the road, there would be no way to juggle [both an administrative career and my family responsibilities].”

*The influence of caring for aging parents on participants’ career paths.* In addition to the ways in which some participants’ childrearing priorities and/or dual-career marriages influenced the contours and timing of their career paths, several participants discussed how caring for aging parents influenced the mid-to-later stages of their career paths. As Provost Ellis points out, “when you are my age you not only have children, but sometimes you are taking care of your parents as well.” In confirming Provost Ellis’ view, Vice President of Advancement Kennedy, who relocated to take a job at another college in order to assist with the care of her aging father, shared the perception:

I am sure that there are many women of my age that toward the end of their career [path] . . . [have] probably [had to deal with] aging-parent issues. I know [a
woman university president who has also struggled with that issue. Her mother and her father were . . . aging and they both passed away during these last few years. And she would drive up every Sunday to see her mother before she died. So that is an example I can [share with] you that is very, very tough. I don’t know how she did it . . . [as her] schedule [as president] is . . . basically [24/7]. So, I think those kind of [aging-parent] issues at the other end of the [career] spectrum are just as pressing at times.

Other participants (Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, and President Perkins) also described the influence of aging-parents issues on their career path experiences.

Vice President Carter and Vice President McNair discussed how their aging parents had influenced their career decisions relating to career advancement and/or relocation. Vice President Carter recalls that she made a decision early in her career path not to move into full-time administration until her children were grown. However, once her children were in college and she was at the “age and stage . . . [when she] would have been [ready to advance into leadership roles her] . . . mother came to live with . . . [her].” In reflecting back to that stage of her career, Vice President Carter states, “I would have never thought about my mother coming to live with me. . . . So, that certainly altered . . . [the timing of] when I felt I could do [certain things] in my career.” Similarly, at the time I interviewed Vice President of Student Affairs McNair, she described how in the later stages of her career she is now “somewhat influenced by . . . [her] mother being ill.” Vice President McNair conveyed that she was recently recruited to take a career position at another university which would require her to relocate. However, she explained that she is not interested in relocating “because . . . [my mother] is here [in this area] and she needs [my] help.” Although she does not serve as the primary caregiver for her aging
mother, Vice President McNair indicated that one of her siblings did not want her to relocate due to her role in assisting with caring for her aging parent. She articulates,

One of my brothers who doesn’t live here was saying, ‘you can’t move. You have got to be there for . . . [mother].’ [In reply to my brother], I said, ‘you do not live here. Why don’t you move back [here] and do what I am doing [in helping to care for mother]?’ I actually did not say no to him, but it never occurred to him, I don’t think, to believe that it would be his responsibility [to care for mother]. So, I think [the gendered perception remains that] women need to take care of other people. I don’t think that has changed. That is what I find with all the women who work around me—we are all taking care of somebody.

Like Vice President Carter, President Perkins conveyed that she did not “count on . . . [her parents declining]” during the mid-to-later stages of her career path. Unlike Vice President Kennedy, Vice President Carter, and Vice President McNair’s experiences of being in the same geographic location to help care for their aging parents, President Perkins was located at a distance from her parents at a time when “they needed” her to assist in caring for them. She recollects,

I couldn’t be both places [at the same time] and I hadn’t thought of that. I was very lucky to . . . have a few years with my mom [before she passed away] and that meant the world to me. But, you know, nothing is free and that was one thing I didn’t calculate [while advancing in my career path]. . . [At that time,] I thought, no, they are going to live forever. They are going to stay young forever. [So, I paid a price.] Maybe, had I thought about . . . [my parents declining,] I might have made different decisions [in my career path], but I didn’t and it was painful not to be able to help them as much as I would have liked to.
Inasmuch as many of the participants emphasized how their family relationships had influenced their careers at different stages of their respective career paths, many participants also described how their family relationships, particularly regarding their childrearing responsibilities, influenced the pursuit of their educational credentials. What is more, in the same way that many participants experienced a circuitous route and delayed entrance into their first career position in higher education, many participants also experienced a lengthy and circuitous educational journey to earning their highest degree.

*Attaining Educational Credentials*

As noted earlier in this chapter, the highest degree attained among most of the participants (14) in this study was a doctoral degree and a master’s degree was the highest degree attained by two participants. In analyzing participants’ academic backgrounds and educational credentials, one of the notable sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis pertains to the timing pattern of many of the participants’ completion of their highest degree. Although six participants (President Howard, President Rice, President Whitley, Provost Fields, Vice President McNair, and Dean Gallagher) described earning their doctoral degrees prior to beginning their full-time professional careers in higher education, ten of the participants completed their highest degree (i.e., doctoral or master’s degree) after entering their professional career paths in higher education. Also, in speaking to the timing of earning their educational credentials, most participants (11) relayed that a period of time elapsed between the time they earned their undergraduate and/or master’s degree and the period in which they returned to graduate school to begin the pursuit of their highest degree (i.e., master’s or doctoral degree). Consequently, many of the participants did not immediately progress in a
pattern of direct succession from the completion of their undergraduate/master’s degree to the attainment of their highest degree (master’s or doctoral degree).

*Timing of highest degree attainment.* The timing pattern of Provost Patricia Barlow, Vice President Carter, Provost Ellis, and President Perkins’ doctoral degree completion exemplifies the pattern of the participants who earned their highest degree after entering their first full-time career positions in higher education. These participants are also representative of the participants who did not immediately progress to earning their highest degree following the completion of their undergraduate or master’s degree. With all four participants holding master’s degrees in their respective academic fields, Provost Barlow, Vice President Carter, and Provost Ellis were hired as tenure-track faculty members in their first full-time academic career positions in higher education and President Perkins was hired at the rank of an instructor in her first full-time academic appointment. In describing their career paths and academic backgrounds, three of these participants (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, and President Perkins) began their early career paths working in fields outside of higher education which did not require a doctoral degree as an educational credential for employment. Therefore, in part, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, and President Perkins attribute their delay in the timing of the pursuit of their terminal degrees to their early careers working in fields outside of higher education which contributed to their circuitous routes to their first career positions in higher education. In Vice President Carter’s early career path, on the other hand, she was able to move directly into a tenure-track faculty position although she held the educational credential of a master’s degree due to the clinical nature of her academic field.
President Perkins indicated that her first full-time academic appointment as an instructor was contingent upon her attainment of a doctoral degree. She explained, I was “offered a full-time position as an instructor and one condition of getting that job was that I would begin and . . . [complete] a doctorate.” Thus, President Perkins recalled, “I was working full-time as a college teacher and started a doctoral . . . [program].” In describing her route to attaining her highest degree, President Perkins’ sentiments represent the lengthy and indirect educational pattern and career path that several of the participants in this study followed in stating that her experience “was a little backwards . . . [as] not everybody goes that route.”

In contrast, Provost Barlow, Vice President Carter, and Provost Ellis conveyed that at the time they began their academic careers it was not uncommon for faculty members in their respective academic fields, which they described as “clinical” and/or “emerging” disciplines, to hold tenure-track faculty appointments with the educational credential of a master’s degree, as the highest degree of educational attainment. For instance, in asking Provost Barlow if it was common at the time she began her full-time career in higher education for faculty members in her field to hold tenure-track appointments without holding a doctoral degree, she replied,

Yes. [My field] has been somewhat of an emerging discipline in higher education. For instance, in the mid-1980s . . . my own state did not have a Ph.D. program [in my discipline]. So, of the . . . states [within this geographical region of the United States] . . . there were only three [states] that . . . [had doctoral programs in my field.] . . . [However,] now it is pretty well expected in higher education that if you’re going to progress to tenure-track [position] that you would have a Ph.D. or a doctorate of . . . practice [in my academic discipline]
which is considered more the applied doctoral degree. [The doctorate of practice in my field is] kind of like the [equivalent of what the] Ed.D. degree, [doctor of education degree] is to education.

Similar to the shift in expectations that occurred over time concerning the educational credentials for tenure-track faculty members in Provost Barlow’s field, Provost Ellis and Vice President Carter also reported that there is now the expectation that a doctoral degree is a required educational credential for employment as a tenure-track faculty member in their respective fields.

The importance of obtaining educational credentials. In the earlier stages of their careers in higher education, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis and Vice President Carter began to realize the importance of earning a doctoral degree to their career success in higher education. Provost Ellis describes the changes that began to take place in her academic field and the point in her early career in which she realized the benefits of earning a doctoral degree. She states,

I came to the university . . . and I was on a tenure-track line. I was able to secure tenure, . . . but I got to some point in my career where I really felt that without the doctorate [that I] would not really go far [in my career]. [Also, I considered that] if I ever wanted to leave the university, while I was valuable here, things had changed [in my field at that point and] the Ph.D. in [my field] was [a] relatively new [option].

Like Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter recalled the point in her academic career when she realized that she needed to earn her doctoral degree in order to continue to advance in her career path. Vice President Carter explains,
Because our field is a clinical field, I wasn’t as concerned about having a Ph.D. . . . [at the time I first began my career in higher education. However,] the more I taught, the more I realized I wanted to be a part of the academy. [I knew that] if I was going to be a part of the academy [that] I needed [to earn] a Ph.D. . . . I [had] won the Outstanding Teacher Award [in my early career] here at the university . . . So, I knew I could be successful without . . . [a doctoral degree] because I was a good teacher. I could write grants. I could do all these things, and so I knew I had the characteristics. One day, [though,] somebody said, ‘but you don’t have the calling card.’ And I thought, ‘right!’ So, I got my Ph.D.

Time-to-degree progress of participants’ highest degree completion. Although President Perkins completed her doctoral coursework and dissertation while working as a full-time instructor, Vice President Carter, Provost Barlow, and Provost Ellis took a full-time leave of absence or sabbatical from their tenure-track faculty roles for a period of time while they were completing their doctoral degree. For example, Provost Barlow indicated that she took a two-year leave of absence from her university teaching position to complete her doctoral degree. Each of the aforementioned participants reported that the universities where they served as faculty members supported their pursuit of a doctoral degree in terms of granting their leave of absence/sabbatical and holding their faculty position during their absence. In particular, Provost Ellis notes that her institution further supported her pursuit of a terminal degree as she relayed, “the university funded me for the first year . . . of [my] doctoral studies . . . [and] they paid my salary so I could go to school.”

In speaking to their time-to-degree progress, Provost Barlow and Provost Ellis described that they had a rather “quick” time-to-degree completion in earning their
doctoral degrees. In contrast, Vice President Carter and President Perkins described a
lengthier time-to-degree progress due to working full-time in their faculty roles while
writing their dissertations. Vice President Carter, for instance, communicated that she
was able to complete her doctoral coursework in a rather short time frame of 18 months
during her sabbatical from her full-time tenure-track teaching position. Nevertheless, in
describing the length of time involved in her overall time-to-degree processes she pointed
out that it took her “quite a long time” (i.e., 6 years) as she returned back to her faculty
role to teach while writing her dissertation. Also of noteworthy importance in
considering the timing of their degree completion, Provost Barlow, Vice President Carter,
Provost Ellis, and President Perkins were each raising school-aged children while
completing their doctoral degree. Specifically, three of the four participants were raising
two or more elementary to middle-school age children earning their doctoral degree and
one was raising a high-school age child.

*Family influences on participants’ educational attainment.* With many of the
participants bearing and raising children during the earlier stages of their career paths
and/or adult lives, nine of the participants (President Perkins, President Rice, Provost
Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President
Owens, Vice President Young, and Dean Reed) indicated in their interviews that they
earned their highest degree after having children. Two participants (Vice President
Kennedy and Vice President Owens) also described earning their undergraduate degrees
as part-time, non-traditional age students during the period in which they took a stop out
from their early careers to become full-time, stay-at-home mothers. In considering that
many of the participants were managing multiple roles (e.g., as employees, mothers,
and/or wives) at the time they earned their highest degree, several participants discussed
how their family responsibilities influenced their decision to return to graduate school and/or the timing of their highest degree completion. As well, a few participants discussed how receiving family support enabled them to successfully pursue and complete their highest degree.

In the same way that many of the participants in this study described how their family responsibilities (e.g., childrearing, caring for elderly parents) influenced their career choices at various stages of their career paths, several participants spoke to how their family priorities influenced their decision to pursue their highest degree and/or the timing of the completion of their highest degree. For example, Provost Ellis’ sentiments represent many of the participants’ views of how family relationships and priorities can influence women’s educational and career choices as she states, “I do think women . . . see family as their responsibility . . . and I do think it influences [the] choices that they make [concerning their educational goals and career paths].” In describing how her family influenced her educational and career goals, Provost Ellis communicates, “When I made the decision to come to the university I was clearly looking at . . . [issues related to work-life balance] . . . and my family and that seemed to work. In making the decision to earn her doctoral degree after beginning her career as a faculty member, Provost Ellis recalled, “When I made the decision to return to school and earned the Ph.D. I had one . . . [child who was grown and one who was a teenager.] So, I felt like I could balance that.”

President Perkins, who also viewed her family as a central priority in her life, shares the belief, “I think [women’s family relationships] have a tremendous influence on what you do . . . [based on] the expectations that your family has of you, the support that . . . [women] have at home, and the needs—the responsibilities that you might have [in
your personal life].” As noted earlier, President Perkins stepped away from her early career path working outside of higher education in order to become a stay-at-home mother during the early years of her children’s lives. Then, at a later point in her career path when she began her full-time career in higher education and the pursuit of her doctoral degree, President Perkins conveyed that she continued to prioritize her family responsibilities. Specifically, she described how her family priorities influenced her time-to-degree progress in earning her doctoral degree. President Perkins explained,

When I started my doctorate . . . I was a full-time faculty member . . . and a single mom . . . I made choices along the way when I was working on my dissertation and you know how all-consuming that [process] is—it’s like a specter. It’s there waiting for you when you wake up in the morning and when you go to bed . . . I remember consciously making a decision, [though,] . . . [that earning my doctorate] may take me a little longer, but I am not throwing these children away. We have come too far together . . . [So,] I . . . said if it takes me an extra year [to finish my doctorate] —so be it! I'll take an extra year. I was willing to make that sacrifice . . . [for the sake of prioritizing my family]. I was lucky [at that point in my career path] to be able to arrange my work schedule so that I could work on my dissertation while they were in school and I held weekends open [for my children as] they were playing ball [and] doing those [sort of] things. [It was not] until I [reached the point at which I] was . . . absolutely writing . . . [my dissertation that ] I said, [to my children,] ‘ya’ll are going to need to understand [that] I am going to lock myself in this office and I’m going to come out in time for supper.’ And . . . [my] kids were [in support of my pursuit of a doctorate], but you know everybody paid their little price on that.
Vice President Carter also had young children when she began the pursuit of her doctoral degree. Prior to being offered a sabbatical from her tenure-track faculty post to complete her doctorate, Vice President Carter recalled,

. . . My husband and I had already talked about [me earning my doctoral degree]. We had two young children and we didn’t think now was the right time. . .

[However, when the Academic Vice President] . . . offered me a full sabbatical . . . I really had the opportunity to go [back to school] and do a rather quick Ph.D. coursework-wise.

Vice President Carter also conveyed that she received family support from her husband and parents while completing her doctoral coursework. She explained, “[I] took the children with me [back to my hometown where] I grew up. My parents still lived there and they still had the old home [that] I grew up in with an upstairs [area] that nobody was using [at the time].” She also noted that her husband “stayed here and worked so we could afford [my education].” Additionally, some of the participants who earned their highest degree after having their children pointed out that their children, in the words of President Perkins, “were just fine” throughout the process of their degree completion.

Vice President Carter communicates that her children turned out to [be] . . . gainfully employed and happily married and [they] seem to be working all right in the world today.”

Altogether, in evaluating participants’ academic backgrounds, it is clear that the participants in this study did not share a uniform timing pattern and/or degree sequencing pattern in their degree completion progress toward attaining their educational credentials. Clearly, in relation to the timing of participant’s degree completion, some participants experienced a more rapid time-to-degree completion while other participants like Vice
President Carter, who were managing multiple responsibilities (e.g., childrearing, employment, etc.) at various points in their educational journeys, experienced a lengthier time-to-degree process. Also, in evaluating the timing of the degree sequencing pattern of earning their educational credentials, some participants in this study earned their highest degree prior to entering their first career positions in higher education and other participants began the pursuit of their highest degree after entering their careers in higher education. However, regardless of the timing pattern in which participants followed in earning their educational credentials, all of the participants’ career paths reflect the importance and benefits of their educational attainment to their subsequent career path advancement into top-level university leadership.

The Benefits of Gaining Educational Credentials

In describing their career paths and academic backgrounds, many of the participants in this study reflected on the ways in which their educational experiences and highest degree attainment had provided a number of benefits to their career path in higher education in regard to their (a) career promotion/advancement; (b) leadership knowledge and skills, (c) career interest in working in higher education, and/or (d) development of mentoring, networking, and/or professional relationships. In particular, among the various benefits that resulted from participants’ pursuit of their educational credentials, two of the most prevalently cited benefits that many participants experienced from earning their highest degree pertained to career promotion/advancement and the development of a career interest in working in higher education.

The influence of educational credentials on participants’ career advancement and promotion. In describing their academic backgrounds and educational attainment, many participants discussed their awareness, in retrospect, of how completing their highest
degree played an instrumental role in their career promotion and advancement in higher education. Vice President Carter pointed out how earning a doctoral degree played a critically important role in her career advancement into leadership roles. Vice President Carter discussed how earning a doctoral degree placed her in a position to be able to move into administrative roles in the mid-to-later stages of her career path. She articulates, “my Ph.D. . . . was the stepping stone that I needed [to advance in my career]. . . [It] was a very important move for me because I would not have been in line to do the things that I got to do later [in my career path, if I] had . . . not gotten the degree then.”

As Vice President Carter points out, earning a doctoral degree was an important step for many of the participants who advanced through the academic ranks in terms of having the educational credentials necessary to achieve advancement into positions of top-level university presidency in the mid-to-later stages of their career paths.

Indeed, many of the participants directly attribute their movement into key-line position of university leadership to the completion of their highest degree. Although Vice President Carter began her career as a tenure-track faculty member and achieved tenure prior to earning her doctoral degree she explained that her promotion to an associate professor was contingent upon her completion of a doctoral degree. She recalled, “So I was tenured . . . [as an] assistant [professor, but] then the [promotion to associate was, ‘You’re not going to get that [level of position] . . . until you get your Ph.D.’” Once President Perkins completed her doctorate she was able to transition from the rank of an instructor to the status of a tenure-track faculty member which allowed her to “work . . . [her way] up through the ranks as a faculty member” as well as ascend through the administrative ranks to achieve a university presidency.
In fact, all of the participants in this study earned their highest degree prior to their advancement into their first university key-line administrative positions (e.g., dean, vice president, or provost). Vice President Owens who began her first career position in higher education working in a director-level position spoke to the point in her career in which she realized that the educational credential of a master’s degree would be beneficial to her advancement into a vice-presidential position. She explains,

I think it was after I was in advancement here as a director . . . for probably about two or three years . . . [that] I realized that I really wanted to lead a program. That is why I went to get my master’s [degree] because I knew that . . . [going back to college was] the best way to get the experience . . . I wanted to run my own program.

Strikingly, within a short time frame following the completion of their highest degree, some of the participants in this study began to experience career path advancement and/or promotion. Provost Barlow who began her career in higher education as a tenure-track faculty member recollects,

quickly after finishing my Ph.D., the dean position in . . . [my field] here at . . . [the] university opened up . . .[and I was] invited to apply [for the position].” So, for . . . [several] years [I] served as the dean of our school . . . [in my discipline].

Also, Provost Ellis who had served as the chair of her department while earning her doctorate experienced career advancement within a short time frame of earning her doctorate. She recalled,

I came back with the Ph.D. and continued as the chair of . . . [my department]. And then there was a call for someone to . . . [come to] . . . the provost’s office as the associate provost . . . and my Dean recommended me . . . [for the position].
As several of the participants in this study began to experience career path advancement into second-prior and immediate-prior key-line administrative positions, they chose to continue to build their educational credentials by completing formal leadership training programs from private, Ivy League institutions.

The benefits of completing formal leadership training programs at Ivy League Institutions. In the middle-to-later stages of their careers paths in higher education, four of the participants (President Perkins, President Rice, President Whitley, and Vice President Kennedy) in this study completed formal leadership training programs at Ivy League institutions of higher education. Examples include the Harvard Institute for Educational Management and the Bryn Mawr Women in Leadership Institute. Additionally, in moving into university key-line administrative positions (e.g., provost/chief academic officer), President Perkins and President Whitley spoke to receiving leadership training from the programs sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE). The participants explained that the leadership training programs at Ivy League institutions are, in the words of Vice President Kennedy, “somewhat selective” and “very expensive.” Vice President Kennedy further explains,

You have to apply [to attend an Ivy League Leadership Training Program. I . . . appl[ied] and I was selected. . . . Then, . . . your institution has to be willing to pay for [the leadership training [and the cost of attendance] is quite steep]. . . . [The program that I attended] require[d] [that you spend] a month at the campus. Like Vice President Kennedy, President Perkins also specifically noted that at the time she was serving as an academic dean the “President [of her university] . . . paid for [her training].
In addition to the benefits of gaining educational credentials through earning their highest degree, some of the participants who continued their post-graduate education by attending Ivy League Leadership Training Programs spoke to the ways in which this type of educational experience equipped them with valuable leadership knowledge and skills in preparation for serving in key-line administrative roles and/or presidencies. In reflecting over her educational experiences at an Ivy League Leadership Training program, Vice President conveyed that “it was really one of the most . . . interesting experiences I have had [in gaining my educational credentials].” President Whitley who completed an executive leadership program at a different Ivy League institution relayed that the program was valuable in providing her with “information about how to be a better administrator.” Similarly, in discussing her experience and the benefits of attending a leadership training program President Perkins expressed,

. . . the Leadership School . . . was a wonderful experience in just getting information about leadership. I learned a ton of things that I still have in my notes and I hearken back to some of the lessons there. [The lessons in leadership] . . . were timeless and so that was very useful.

The influence of degree attainment on participants’ career interests. Moreover, several participants who began their career paths working in fields outside of higher education described how their pursuit of educational credentials influenced their decision to embark on a career working the field of higher education. In asking Dean Reed what first motivated her to begin her academic career she recalls,

Prior to [beginning my career in higher education] I was a . . . practitioner [in my academic field . . . I got my first . . . degree . . . and practiced . . . [in two different clinical settings] . . . for several years before I went back to earn my doctor[ate]. .
... After [completing] a residency in . . . [my field] . . . I took an academic position. What motivated me to go back to school and to get the doctor[ate] was the fact that I just wanted to know more about . . . [my area of practice] . . . [and] how . . . to achieve optimal . . . outcomes. So, that motivated me to go back to school. Then, once I got back in [graduate] school that sort of [experience] opened up my eyes as to the appeals of an academic career. . .

In the same way that Dean Reed’s experience of completing her doctoral coursework and clinical residency served to spark her interest in pursuing an academic career, Vice President Kennedy’s pursuit of her undergraduate degree, as a non-traditional student, helped her to develop a passion for higher education and opened her eyes to the appeal of a career working in the field of higher education. She recalled,

I was fortunate when I went back to school to get my degree . . . [that the honor’s college] where I did my work . . . [provided me with a] a lot of opportunities for scholarship, but also for some special . . . [opportunities] with the president. I had a good student experience and I just developed a passion for higher ed[ucation] . . . [At the time, I was not] thinking [that] I wanted to . . . [have a future career as] a head of advancement. [However,] I [realized that I] did have a passion and a love for higher education . . . . I think . . . [higher education is] one of the best working environments.

Like Vice President Kennedy, the majority of participants in this study did not have aspirations of achieving a top-level position of university leadership at the time they were earning their undergraduate, master’s degree, and/or doctoral degrees.

For example, Vice President Young is the only participant who developed an interest in leadership through her educational experience of earning a master’s degree. She relayed,
I knew, actually, . . . very early on . . . [in my early career path that] . . . I was interested [in leadership]. I did not recognize this when I was in my undergraduate academic career. I did not even realize this . . . in my first or second year of teaching [in a K-12 education setting.] In my third year of teaching [in K-12 education . . . I began to be more interested [in leadership]. At . . . [that] same time . . . I was working on my master’s [degree]. . . and it gave me the ability to be involved in other types of experiences that . . . perhaps I would not have experienced otherwise. [So,] I think academic pursuit combined with observation of other leadership that I was affiliated with . . . [in K-12 education sparked my interest in leadership].

Further, while Vice President Young gained an interest in leadership while pursuing her master’s degree, she clarified that “having an interest [in leadership] . . . [and] pursuing [leadership roles] are two different things.” In fact, in describing her promotion path into leadership roles, Vice President Young conveys, “to be honest—I did not necessarily actively pursue . . . some of my [leadership] roles.” As previously noted, Vice President Young perceives that attaining her educational degrees played an important role in building the credentials necessary to advance into leadership roles. Vice President Young also relays that her advancement into leadership roles may also be attributed, in great measure, to assuming responsibility and “demonstrating leadership skills” in her previous career positions.

**Unintentional and Emergent Career Paths into Leadership**

As discussed earlier, one of the most consistent findings in this study pertains to the participants’ unintentional and emergent career paths into positions of top-level university leadership. Also, the participants in this study did not set a goal early in their
educational or career paths to achieve a university key-line administrative position or university presidency. Clearly, many of the participants in this study acknowledged, often in retrospect, that obtaining their educational credentials, particularly earning their highest degree, was an important “stepping stone” in their ability to qualify and advance into positions of top-level university leadership in the mid-to-later stages of their career paths. In addition to the importance of attaining the educational credentials, the participants in this study attribute, in great measure, their emergence into leadership roles to their (a) willingness to assume additional responsibilities, (b) demonstration of administrative/leadership competency, and (c) desire to do a good job and achieve success in their previous career positions in higher education.

*Emerging as leaders through assuming responsibility, demonstrating competency, and achieving career success.* Dean Reed exemplifies the career philosophy of the participants in this study who attributed their ability to emerge as university leaders to their career achievement, willingness to assume responsibility, and demonstration of competency in their previous career positions in higher education. In speaking to her advancement into positions of academic leadership as a department chair and academic dean, Dean Reed states, “I’ve always had a certain amount of ambition and initiative. I mean, I’ve certainly always wanted to succeed. I’ve always wanted to take on new responsibilities and learn new skill-sets.” President Perkins, Provost Ellis, and Dean Atwood also represent three exemplars of participants with unintentional and emergent career paths into university leadership. As opposed to intentionally seeking out promotion/advancement into leadership roles, these participants achieved leadership positions in their career paths in higher education through assuming responsibility and demonstrating administrative competency. Specifically, all three participants provided an
account of how they unintentionally began to emerge as academic leaders, in the earlier stages of their career paths working in positions as tenure-track faculty members, through assuming additional responsibilities.

Assuming additional responsibilities. As one case in point, President Perkins, who began her career in higher education as a faculty member, described how she initially emerged as a leader through her willingness to assume additional responsibilities in her faculty role. President Perkins explains,

I have always been . . . excited about what I do. I was always engaged in the work that I did and so I assume responsibility. And I don't mean that as I assume that I'm the boss. I assume responsibility if there is something to do and . . . that places you in a leadership role. [At the time] I was hired, I was the only faculty member in a program that had a lot of students in it. I was the only full-time faculty member so I was . . . [by default.] the program director . . . [since I] did manage the curriculum and those kinds of things. [As it turned out, I] just happened . . . [to] like doing it.

As a second case in point, Dean Atwood recalls how she emerged as a leader within her department and academic division by assuming administrative responsibilities in her faculty role.

[I was] . . . a faculty member at the . . . [branch] campus [of the university] . . . 

By the nature of the [branch] campus, individual faculty ended up sort of assuming quasi-administrative roles. I was, for a while, the only . . . faculty [in my discipline] on the [branch campus]. So, I hired the adjuncts [and] I scheduled the courses. [Also,] I met with all the students who had schedule questions . . . problems, or needed letters of recommendation, [etc.]. And so, . . . [I began to
think] well, gosh, I can do this. There are other people who do this full time . . .
[and] I liked that managerial, administrative part.

Taken together, these participants represent the various ways in which the participants in this study demonstrated their willingness to assume additional responsibilities in fulfilling their career roles in higher education. Through assuming responsibility, the participants in this study demonstrated a strong work ethic and commitment to their career positions in higher education as many of the participants career paths reflect Vice President Carter’s belief that “if something needs to get done and people want . . . it [done], you do it.”

_Demonstrating administrative/leadership competency._ Additionally, in assuming the responsibilities associated with their career positions in higher education, many of the participants reported that their supervisors or other campus leaders recommended or appointed them to leadership roles of increasing responsibility within the university structure after recognizing their willingness to assume additional responsibilities and their demonstration of administrative/leadership competencies. For example, at the point in Provost Ellis’ career when she served as chair of her academic department, she recalls,

I . . . [assumed the responsibilities of] the chair role . . . [because the previous chairperson] left [the position]. When I became the chairperson . . . I did a good job. . . Then, . . . when there was a call for . . . an associate provost . . . [at] the [main university] campus. “My dean recommended . . . [me to serve in the position] . . . because she felt I had good administrative skills.

In being recommended to serve in the associate provost position, Provost Ellis communicated, “I was . . . surprised because I had really not planned to go in this direction [in my career path].”
In the same way that Provost Ellis was surprised by her promotion into positions of academic leadership, many of the participants conveyed a similar sense of surprise concerning their unplanned emergence into leadership roles. Indeed, participants like Provost Ellis, President Rice, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, and Vice President Young directly spoke to how they were “surprised” by their emergence into positions of university leadership as they did not initially envision themselves in leadership roles in the earlier stages of their career paths. For example, in her first experience serving in an administrative role with a research organization in her academic field, President Rice realized that she “enjoyed working with different people [and] helping them achieve their goals.” She relayed, “It was something I thought I was fairly good at which was surprising.” In asking President Rice if she was surprised because she did not initially think of herself as a leader, she replied, “No, I thought of myself as a professor and I was successful and happy with that. So, I didn’t think of myself as doing anything really beyond [being] a professor.”

Although the participants did not intentionally plan to enter leadership roles in the earlier stages of their career paths in higher education, many participants, like President Rice, expressed feeling a sense of surprise in realizing they enjoyed administrative work. For instance, Dean Gallagher reported that she did not begin her career with a vision to advance into a key-line administrative role as an academic dean. She recalls how she emerged as a leader through being offered the opportunity to assume a leadership role and realizing that she enjoyed administrative work.

I guess I had always assumed, ever since I got tenure, that someday I would be[come] [the] department chair. . . [However] I considered that, more along the lines of, everybody needs to take a turn and do that as opposed to something I
[was] actively seeking out. Then, I found out when I was unexpectedly given the opportunity to be associate dean that I actually liked the work. This sounds funny, but I liked the administrative work much more than I thought I would.

Although Dean Gallagher enjoyed administrative work, she pointed out that she did not actively seek out her current position as an academic dean. Dean Gallagher clarified that she was “nominated . . . to be a candidate for dean.” In recalling how she advanced to the dean’s position, she stated,

We had an unexpected turnover in the dean’s office here and so the president and the provost asked for internal candidates. . . I am not sure who nominated me to be a candidate for dean, but I decided . . . to allow myself to be a candidate and then the president and provost selected me.

Although Dean Gallagher did not plan to advance into the dean’s role prior to her nomination for the position, she acknowledged that her colleagues had observed her demonstration of leadership competency as she commented, “I think that people viewed me as a good choice.”

**Career achievement.** Many participants also discussed how being achievement-oriented in the previous career positions that they have held throughout their career path in higher education directly contributed to their emergence into university leadership roles. In fact, many of the participants in this study spoke to their desire to “do a good job” and achieve career success at each stage of their career paths. Provost Marie Field’s description of her career path into top-level university leadership represents the unintentional and emerging career paths of many of the participants in this study. In what follows, she describes how she has enjoyed her career in higher education and has sought to excel in each career position that she has held throughout her career path.
You know I have always been extremely happy with whatever my job was [in my career path in higher education]. There are a lot of people who say they have a career path and they know exactly what they want to do in five years or ten years, but . . . I have loved every job I’ve held [in higher education]. . . . I came here as a department chair and I loved being a department chair. I could not imagine not being a department chair. . . . When I was dean, I had absolutely no plan to do anything other than try to be the very best dean I possibly could be. [While I was a dean,] I had no thought of becoming a provost. [Now,] in my current position [as a provost,] I have no aspirations to become a president. So, my pathway has been one of trying very hard to do a very good job . . . [with] my current responsibilities. So I’ve never been one who had a career path with the idea that in five years I would be a provost or in ten years I would be a president . . .

In this way, Provost Fields represents the career path experiences and philosophies of many of the participants in this study who did not intentionally seek out leadership roles, but rather emerged as leaders through doing a good job and achieving career success.

Specifically, in speaking to their emergence into leadership roles, several of the participants articulated that they were “achievers” or had “achievement-oriented personalities.” For instance, Vice President McNair, Vice President Young, and Provost Barlow specifically identified themselves as being achievement-oriented in their career positions. As one example, Vice President McNair articulates “[I am an] achiever . . . [and I] can’t ever be satisfied . . . because I’ve always got to achieve one more thing.”

Being achievement-oriented and a desire to “do a good job” were also reflected in the participants’ career path philosophies. In speaking to women’s pathways into university leadership, President Whitley, who began her career as a tenure-track faculty
member at a research university, articulates the sentiments of many of the participants in this study concerning their approach to their career paths in stating, “I don’t know how many of us say, ‘I want to be a president and I’m going to do everything in my career path to get there.’” On the contrary, President Whitley conjectures, “I think we’re much more likely to say, ‘This is my job right now. How can I do it well?’” In fact, most participants expressed that they assumed responsibility, demonstrated competency, and achieved career success in their career paths, as part of their efforts to “do a good job” in each career position they have held in higher education. As a result of their achievements, many of the participants indicated that they were presented with opportunities to advance into university leadership roles. For example, in speaking to her career path advancement, President Perkins noted, “[all of] the opportunities that I’ve had . . . [in my career path in higher education were] from doing the job and . . . doing it well . . . and then you get your next job.”

With this in mind, as previously noted, in describing their career paths into university leadership, the majority of participants conveyed that they were “asked, invited, encouraged, etc.” to apply for leadership positions or were appointed to leadership roles. Thus, most participants were not actively seeking or planning to advance into positions of top-level university leadership. For instance, Provost Barlow acknowledged that although she considers herself to be “a self-starter, achiever personality [type],” that she did not, of her own initiative, “apply for the dean position . . . [or the] provost position . . .” More precisely, Provost Barlow distinguished, “I was invited to apply, but I did not seek them out. I did not aspire to either one, though, I think . . . [both positions] were natural progressions [in my career path].” As well, in describing her career path advancement, Vice President Landon conveys, “I didn’t really
seek or ask [for promotions or new professional titles in my career path] . . . I know that is sort of the way [that some people seek new] titles or [pay] raises, but that is not my way.” Vice President Landon further explained, “I’ve never asked or applied for anything in my life, except for . . . my first job [in higher education]. I’m happy to do good work and then see what happens.”

Along the same lines, Vice President Young discusses how her career achievements and demonstration of leadership skills at each stage of her career path in higher education served to facilitate her advancement into a position of top-level university leadership. Vice President Young states,

I began as a coordinator . . . and a few years later, after developing . . . a successful program, they opted to put me into . . . a director’s position. So, I . . . [advanced] from being a coordinator to a director. Then, . . . approximately three years later, . . . after again . . . achieving a great deal of success with that particular unit and building one of the premier programs in the state, it was decided that more emphasis needed to be placed on that area for the university as a whole. So, . . . as a result, a vice president’s position was created . . . which was part of a newly reorganized institutional structure. . . . So, that was the vice president’s position that I applied for and was selected for. [Therefore,] I basically went from being a coordinator to director to a vice president . . . Some of my roles . . . [in my career path have come] . . . about as the result of other people encouraging me to apply. . .  It wasn’t necessarily that I just decided, ‘I would like to do this.’ [Usually,] . . . there would be discussion and talk . . . that would lead to people visiting with me, calling me . . . because I was demonstrating leadership skills. [Therefore, prior to being] selected for . . .
vice president’s position, I do not . . . think I . . . necessarily . . . saw myself in . . . [the vice president’s role], but I think others [saw my] . . . leadership skills [and leadership potential]. Probably, . . . [the reason that] others [at the university] saw that [level of leadership potential] in me . . . before I did [is] because I tend to get very . . . involved [and] very engaged in whatever role I’m in at that moment. I take it very seriously, and so I really don’t think beyond that [position] for myself, personally. [However,] I think beyond that [point] for the program I’m working on and for the program that I might be building or establishing . . . [and] I really put all of my effort into that. I really don’t think about personal gain. It’s just the way that I have pursued my career and the different jobs that I’ve had. So, . . . I don’t know that I would have necessarily even saw that for myself, [if] had it not been brought to my attention.

Collectively, participants like Vice President Young, Vice President Landon, Provost Barlow, President Perkins and President Whitley’s views of their advancement into leadership roles represent the ways in which participants emerged as leaders through their desire to assume responsibility, demonstrate competency, and achieve success in each of the respective positions that they have held throughout their career paths in higher education.

Summary of Career Paths and Educational Credentials

In sum, the description of the participants’ career paths and academic backgrounds reveal the uniqueness of their journeys to their current positions of top-level university leadership. In particular, many of the participants’ career paths and educational pursuits were uniquely shaped by the salient dimensions of their personhood, especially in relation to their multiple familial roles (e.g., daughter, mother, wife).
Clearly, some of the participants’ family relationship and family priorities played a significant role in shaping the contours and timing patterns of their career paths into leadership and the pursuit of their educational credentials. Overall, half of the participants described having direct and early career paths into their first positions in higher education while half experienced a circuitous and delayed route into their career paths in higher education. Notably, the majority of participants who had direct and early career paths into higher education were childless at the time they began their first career position while the family influence of childrearing seemed to play a particularly influential role in contributing to some participants’ circuitous routes into their first career positions in higher education and/or the delayed timing of the completion of their highest degree.

Despite the unique variations that shaped the contours of each participant’s career path into top-level university leadership, the participants’ career paths and educational experiences were marked by a number of common themes. Most prominently, none of the participants in this study began their early career paths with the intentional goal of achieving a university key-line administrative position or a university presidency. Also, each of the participants’ career paths reflect the key role that earning their educational credentials and highest degree played in providing them with the necessary qualifications to advance into top-level university leadership roles in the mid-to-later stages of their career paths. In addition to the importance of gaining educational credentials, each of the participants in this study described how they emerged as leaders through (a) assuming responsibility, (b) demonstrating administrative/leadership competency, and/or (c) achieving career success in each of their career positions in higher education. Ultimately, the participants’ portrayal of their unintentional and emergent pathways into university
leadership reflects the participants’ collective lack of aspirations and career planning, in the early stages of their career paths, to advance into university leadership roles. The participants’ description of their unintentional and emergent career paths, as demonstrated in the following section, also sheds light on the factors which served to motivate or hinder women’s leadership aspirations.

Leadership Aspirations

In addition to exploring the career and educational experiences that characterized the participants’ paths into university leadership as key-line administrators or presidents, one of the central aims of this study was to explore how the participants made meaning of their leadership aspirations. This study sought to understand especially how personal factors (e.g., work-life balance) as well as the various dimensions of the participants’ personhood (e.g., gender, age, etc.) served to influence their leadership/presidential aspirations. In seeking to obtain information on how the participants made meaning of their leadership aspirations, I asked participants to describe the point in their career paths in which they first gained a vision for leadership. Next, in seeking to inquire into participants’ leadership aspirations concerning their future career goals, I asked participants to share their future career plans after completing their tenure in their current administrative position as either a key-line administrator or president. In particular, I asked each of the key-line administrators if they had presidential aspirations or if they had ever considered the possibility of advancing into a university presidency. I also asked each of the participants who currently serve as presidents to describe the point in their career trajectories in which they first began to have presidential aspirations.

As previously stated in the introduction to this chapter, one of the major conclusions in this study pertains to how none of the participants serving in key-line
administrative positions (i.e., academic deans, vice presidents, and provosts) leading to the presidency indicated that they have presidential aspirations or the intention of actively seeking a presidential appointment as part of their future career plans/goals. Consequently, the only participants in this study who described having presidential aspirations were three of the four participants (President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley) who had achieved presidential appointments. The fourth president (President Howard), however, did not describe having presidential aspirations or the goal of achieving a university presidency. Rather, President Howard articulated that after stepping out of her career path in higher education to serve in a leadership role outside of higher education, she was “offered the presidency at . . . [a] college.”

Further, as previously noted, the university presidents who participated in this study reported that they did not begin to consider the possibility of assuming a presidential role until the mid-to-later stages of their respective career paths in higher education. In fact, with all four of the presidents beginning their careers as faculty members, each of the presidents held at least one administrative position within the traditional rungs (e.g., department chair, academic dean, provost/chief academic officer) on the academic ladder to the presidency before they began to give consideration to achieving a presidency. With this in mind, in seeking to delve deeper into the key-line administrators’ collective lack of presidential aspirations and the presidents’ lack of presidential aspirations earlier in their career paths, I asked participants to share their observations of what they perceived to be appealing or unappealing about the nature of the university president’s role.

Altogether, the key findings pertaining to participants’ leadership aspirations reveal two major sub-themes pertaining to: (a) the factors which motivated participants to
gain a vision for leadership and advance into positions of university leadership; and (b) the personal, professional, and institutional factors which served to hinder participants’ leadership aspirations and career path advancement. Also, in the same way that the various dimensions of the participants’ personhood influenced their career paths and pursuit of educational credentials, the participants described a myriad of ways in which the unique dimensions of their personhood (e.g., spirituality, age, marital status, motherhood, educational attainment, professional position, etc.) as well as various personal factors (e.g., work-life balance issues, etc.) have served to influence their leadership aspirations and career path advancement into top-level university leadership.

**Gaining a Vision for University Leadership and Leadership Motivations**

As previously established, in considering that the participants in this study described having unintentional and emergent career paths into top-level positions of university leadership, none of the participants reported having aspirations to achieve a university key-line administrative position or university presidency in the early stages of their career paths. As a result, most of the participants in this study did not begin to consider advancing into a key-line position of university leadership or a university presidency until the mid-to-later stages of their career paths in higher education after they had gained exposure to their first administrative experiences serving in prior low-to-mid level administrative/management positions (e.g., coordinator, director, department chair, associate dean, etc.). For example, President Rice who lacked leadership aspirations in her early career path as a faculty member describes that she “took a part-time . . . administrative position with a . . . [research] coalition commission” which was funded by a national foundation in her discipline. She points out, “that was my first exposure to administration and I decided that I liked it. So, I went on [in my career path] to become .
. . a dean, . . provost, . . [and] president.” In fact, like President Rice, the participants in this study held multiple administrative positions of increasing responsibility in their respective career paths in higher education prior to assuming their current position of university leadership as either a key-line administrator or university president.

Specifically, most of the participants (13) held at least three administrative positions of increasing responsibility prior to assuming their current role. In contrast, two participants advanced to their current position after holding two prior administrative positions and one participant advanced to her current post after holding only one prior administrative position. Thus, overall, the participants in this study described how they did not begin to advance into top-level position of university leadership until they first gained career experience serving in prior administrative positions and realized they enjoyed administrative work.

In considering the participants’ collective lack of leadership aspirations in their earlier career paths, a significant number of participants in this study described how they did not initially envision themselves as leaders at the time they entered their first career positions in higher education. However, in comparison, four of the participants revealed that they had developed a vision for leadership and/or considered themselves to be natural leaders prior to beginning their career paths in higher education. Nevertheless, among both the participants who viewed themselves as natural leaders and the participants who did not initially envision themselves as leaders, one of the common threads of experience that binds each of the participants together in this study centers on the participants’ collective lack of leadership aspirations during the earlier stages of their career paths in higher education. The participants’ portrayal of how they developed a vision for leadership and achieved career path advancement also reveals that gaining
administrative experience represented a key factor in motivating and preparing participants to serve in positions of university leadership. Thus, none of the participants, including those who viewed themselves as natural leaders, spoke to having the aspiration to serve in a top-level position of university leadership prior to gaining administrative experience working in at least one prior position of university leadership (e.g., department chair, director, etc.).

*Natural leaders.* In exploring the point in which participants first gained a vision for leadership, several of the participants (President Howard, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, and Provost Barlow) described how they were aware from an early age that they possessed natural leadership traits and abilities. For example, Provost Barlow pointed out, “leadership was . . . a pull on my spirit . . . all along the way, during high school, college, and in [my] early years here [as a faculty member].” As a result, these participants had difficulty determining the precise point in their life experiences in which they first gained a vision for leadership. Although these participants thought of themselves as “natural leaders,” they did not begin their careers with aspirations of achieving a top-level position of university leadership. In fact, President Howard, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Landon all gained several years of administrative experience in higher education prior to assuming their first administrative position. President Howard, for example, did not aspire at the beginning of her career path in higher education, as a tenure-track faculty member, to become a university administrator and president. She communicated that the possibility of working in a career as a university administrator “never occurred to me [as a career option in my early career path], but [as] it turned out I was a pretty good administrator so I started working in academic administration.” She did not assume her first presidency until she had gained
significant administrative experience serving in leadership roles both in academia and in a field outside of higher education. Although President Howard did not have aspirations to become a university leader at the beginning of her career path in higher education, she points out that she was aware from an early age that she possessed natural leadership skills and abilities. In asking President Howard when she first gained a vision for leadership, she replied,

You know, I’m not sure . . . I think I was a natural leader in college, in high school, and [in] elementary school. I was always [assuming a leadership role as the] president of something or editor of something.

Similarly, both Vice President McNair and Vice President Landon, who have administrative responsibilities in student affairs, communicated that they realized before they entered their first professional career positions in higher education that they possessed natural leadership skills and abilities. In asking Vice President McNair when she first gained a vision for leadership, she expressed,

I don’t know if I know the answer to that [question]. I think . . . probably when I was in high school . . . [Also,] I was president of some organization when I was an undergrad[uate in college]. . . . [It] seems to me [like] when I’m in a group, I’m almost always going to take up . . . [the] part [of] the leader of the group . . . So, I think it’s part of how I define myself.

Although Vice President McNair viewed herself as a leader, she did not begin her career with the aspiration of becoming a vice president. However, she did note that in her first career position working in student affairs that she made known to her supervisor that she “wanted to be a director . . . [in an effort] to begin to get administrative experience.”

Vice President McNair spoke to how gaining administrative experience from each prior
position that she held in her career path in higher education ultimately prepared her with the leadership skills and competencies to advance into a vice presidential position. She describes,

I became the associate director, which was a gateway to becoming the director of the . . . center [within an area of student affairs] here. And doing that work gave me experience in a variety of areas . . . [of student affairs such as] psychological counseling, career counseling, . . . the educational support program, . . . and academic advising. . . Then, [prior to becoming a vice president,] I became [an] assistant vice president and that job gave me the further breadth in my administrative responsibilities.

Yet, although Vice President McNair defined herself as a natural leader and had acquired “a breadth . . . of experience in a variety of areas” throughout her career path in student affairs, she pointed out that prior to assuming her current position of top-level university leadership, “I really had to make some decisions about whether or not I had aspirations to be a Vice President.”

Likewise, prior to assuming her first full-time career position in higher education, Vice President Landon conveyed her awareness that she possessed, “a lot of leadership gifts . . . Therefore, she articulated, “[before I began my career path in higher education,] I thought of myself as a leader . . .” Nevertheless, she points out, “[I] had to start at the entry [position at the beginning of my career path in higher education].” Prior to gaining career experience working in higher education she recalled, “I wanted to get my Ph.D. and become a professor.” While serving as a coordinator within a division of student affairs during her early career path in higher education she had the opportunity to gain part-time university teaching experience. In comparing her initial teaching
experiences with her early work experiences in student affairs administration, she stated, “I realized I don’t want to teach. I love [student affairs] administration!”

Like Vice President McNair, even though Vice President Landon realized that she possessed natural leadership gifts and enjoyed working in student affairs administration, she articulated that prior to interviewing for a vice president’s position, “I didn’t really [have the aspiration of becoming a vice president.]” She states that prior to assuming her current role, “I didn’t really think about [becoming a] vice president.” Yet, as previously discussed in addressing the participants’ patterns of career path advancement, Vice President Landon, like many of the other participants in this study, did not intentionally “seek or ask” for career promotions into positions of university leadership. In keeping with the theme of participants emerging as leaders through assuming responsibility, demonstrating competency, and achieving career success, Vice President Landon clarifies that actively seeking out leadership roles “is just not my way [as] . . . I’m happy to do good work and see what happens.”

Further, Vice President Landon communicated, “when I came down to . . . [this university] for an interview . . . I didn’t even know [at the time that] I was being interviewed for . . . [the] vice president[’s] role. . .” She explains that when the new president was appointed, the president “knew . . . [her and] . . . knew of . . . [her] work [in student affairs.]” Therefore, Vice President Landon recalls, [Prior to my interview the new president,] “just said, ‘Come down here and lead students.’ And I’m like, ‘Okay.’” [So,] I didn’t really know [I was going to be interviewed for the position of the vice president of student affairs]. [In fact], I [did not realize that I was being considered for the vice president of student
affairs] . . . [until] . . . the . . . [on-campus] interview . . . when . . . they . . . mentioned . . . [the vice president’s position] . . . for the first time.

In asking President Landon, if she would have gone for the interview if she had known that the position was for a vice presidential role, she replied “‘yes, because I love student . . . [affairs] and I felt like at that point [in my career] . . . I had been given experience in every area’” of student affairs. Thus, President Landon’s description of her career path advancement into top-level university leadership reveals how gaining administrative experience in student affairs contributed to her interest in accepting a vice president’s position. Her remarks also suggest that her previous administrative experiences not only served to build her leadership skills and competencies in the area of student affairs administration, but also served to further enhance her confidence in her leadership abilities.

Altogether, while President Howard, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Landon conveyed that leadership represented one of the unique dimensions of how they defined their personhood, their accounts of how they advanced into their current administrative positions underscores the key role that acquiring administrative experience played in influencing their career advancement into positions of top-level university leadership. Despite these participants’ awareness of their innate leadership traits from the outset of their career paths in higher education, they did not begin to consider the possibility of serving as a key-line administrator or university president until they first gained administrative experience in their respective career paths in higher education. Vice President McNair and Vice President Landon’s accounts of how gaining administrative experience influenced their promotions into top-level leadership highlights the crucial role that gaining administrative experience from serving in their prior career
positions played in helping them to prepare for working in positions of top-level leadership and in continuing to build their confidence in their leadership abilities. Like the majority of participants in this study who did not envision themselves as leaders at the beginning of their career paths, the participants who considered themselves to be natural leaders advanced to top-level leadership positions only after first gaining administrative experience serving in one or more positions of university leadership. Thus, for these participants, viewing themselves as natural leaders was not directly related to having the leadership aspiration to achieve a top-level position of university leadership. Accordingly, their descriptions of their promotion paths into university leadership seems to suggest that gaining administrative experience is one factor that played a significant role in motivating and preparing them to advance in their careers to positions of top-level university leadership.

*Developing a vision for university leadership through gaining administrative experience.* In contrast to the participants’ who defined themselves as natural leaders from the outset of their career paths in higher education, many of the participants in this study conveyed that they did not envision or define themselves as leaders at the beginning of their career paths in higher education. For example, participants such as President Perkins, President Whitley, President Rice, Provost Fields, Provost Ellis, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, Vice President Owens, Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy, and Vice President Young spoke to how they did not initially envision themselves serving in positions of university leadership at the beginning of their respective career paths. Therefore, many of the participants who lacked a vision for leadership at the beginning of their career paths in higher education described how they developed a vision for university leadership through gaining administrative experience.
In particular, a number of the participants (President Perkins, President Whitley, President Rice, Provost Fields, Provost Ellis, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, Vice President Carter) who began their early careers in higher education as faculty members described how they lacked a vision for leadership in the early stages of their career paths. Many of the participants who began their careers as faculty members attribute their lack of leadership aspirations in the earlier stages of their academic careers to the enjoyment and satisfaction that they found in the teaching and research components of their faculty roles. President Rice, who conveyed a sense of surprise by her advancement into administrative roles, embodies the sentiments shared among many of the participants who began their careers as faculty members and did not initially envision themselves as university leaders. In asking President Rice if she envisioned herself in a position of university leadership in the early stages of her academic career she replied, “No, I thought of myself as a professor.” President Rice explains that she did not envision herself as a university leader because she found career satisfaction and success in her role as a faculty member as she explains, “I was successful and happy . . . as a professor . . . So, I didn’t think of myself as doing anything really beyond [being a faculty member].” As another example, in Dean Reed’s early academic career she attributes her lack of leadership aspirations to the satisfaction that she found in her career as a faculty member. Dean Reed discussed,

... very early on in my [academic] career, I think I . . . avoided . . . administrative responsibilities . . . [I] did not enjoy committee meetings because they took me away from the things that I did enjoy more such as . . . doing research. . .

However, many of the participants who initially lacked leadership aspirations in their early faculty careers described how they began to develop a vision for leadership
after gaining administrative experience serving in their first administrative roles. For instance, Vice President Carter began her career as a tenure-track faculty member, but advanced in her career path to achieve a vice presidential role. She is representative of the participants in this study who lacked a vision for university leadership in their early career paths in higher education due to experiencing career satisfaction in their faculty roles. Vice President Carter articulates,

So, my career started out as a full academic [and] I did everything [that] an academic would do. I was a full professor before I came over to . . . [work in administration]. [In my early career path I was thinking,] ‘I love . . . teaching [and] I don’t care about all that other stuff . . . [in administration]. [So], I didn’t have any leadership aspirations [to become a vice president or work in university administration]. So, it’s really funny. I mean, I just did not. . . It just all came to me, and I never would have thought about it. At the time when I was thinking about it [in the mid-stages of my career path], after I’d . . . [experienced a crisis with my health], . . . I really was reassessing . . . [my] life [and my work]. I had decided I was going to go practice . . . [in my clinical field] because I loved it and I knew I was good at it. . . . I just was going to do that and teach once in a while, and that would be a new pathway for me. . . . Then, the door opened. . . [when the university president at that time] asked me to . . . to work . . . [on] a capital [fundraising] campaign [for the university]. [Prior to that point in my career,] I certainly didn’t think, “Boy, I’m going to work . . . [on a major fundraising campaign] and work on the strategic planning for the university and then work [as the vice president] right next to one of the most successful . . . [presidents] that we’ve ever had” [in our institution’s history]. I mean, who’d have . . . [thought]
it? That wasn’t my aspiration. I didn’t have a clue [earlier in my career path that I would advance into the role of a vice president of advancement].

*Enjoying administrative work.* Like many of the participants in this study, Vice President Carter developed a vision for university leadership through gaining administrative experience and realizing that she enjoyed administrative work as she articulates, “I decided to try [administrative work] and [I] loved it.” She further explains, “that in accepting the president’s ‘offer to help [with the capital campaign] . . . it allowed me to sit at the [President’s] table on Monday mornings [with the executive cabinet].’” In gaining experience serving on the executive cabinet, she considered her administrative role to be, “a great opportunity as she . . . [realized that she] love[d] strategic planning. . . [and] organizational [work].” Through gaining administrative experience, many participants like Vice President Carter, Vice President Landon, and President Rice realized that they enjoyed administrative work. For instance, Dean Gallagher represents many of the participants’ reactions to their first experiences working in administration as she states,

> This sounds funny, but I liked administrative work much more than I thought I would. So, I liked being [an academic department] chairman more . . . [than I thought I would] and . . . I’ve been dean only for a year, but true to my previous [administrative] experiences, I like this [role] more that I thought I would.

As another case in point, President Whitley who did not have leadership aspirations when she first began her career in higher education as a faculty member describes how her first administrative experiences served to spark her interest in university leadership. In asking President Whitley when she first gained a vision for leadership she stated,
I would say [I first gained a vision for leadership] when I was an associate professor. [At that time in my career path,] I had the opportunity to become director of a new institute . . . [in my academic field] . . . So, that was my first step into academic leadership. I think the most transformative step, however, was when I had the opportunity to be . . . [in an administrative role] at . . . [a national foundation for research in my academic field] for two years . . . [From that experience,] I really saw that I could contribute to . . . [my discipline] as an administrator. . . So, that was a big transition point [in my career path].

Although President Whitley first gained a vision for leadership as an associate professor, she pointed out that she did not begin to have presidential aspirations until “late in . . . [her] career.”

*Developing presidential aspirations through gaining administrative experience.*

The four participants (President Howard, President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley) who have achieved presidencies each pointed out that that when they began their career paths in higher education as faculty members they did not consider the possibility, at that time, of moving into a position of university leadership or advancing to the presidency. For example, President Rice notes that earlier in her career path, “I wasn’t thinking of being a president.” President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley attribute their lack of leadership aspirations in the early stages of their careers, in part, to the career satisfaction that they experienced in the earlier phases of their career paths in higher education.

For instance, President Perkins communicated that she did not plan a path into university leadership in the early stages of her career path as she found career satisfaction in her role as a faculty member. She recollects that she did not gain a vision for academic
leadership until she gained administrative experience serving in her first position of academic leadership as an associate academic dean. In speaking to how she gained a vision for leadership, she stated,

I think [I first gained a vision for leadership] when I was invited to be the associate dean. The . . . dean [at that time] had a practice of . . . giv[ing] faculty the opportunity to come in . . . [and serve as] associate deans . . . in 3 year cycles . . . [in order to] kind of get a taste of what administration was like and then go back to their faculty world. In this case, I never went back. So, that’s when I first started thinking about it. A lot of changes were happening at our campus at the time and I was invited to stay and become the dean. So, . . . that is when it first started coming to mind to do administration.

Then, she noted that she did not begin to have presidential aspirations until the mid-point of her career while she was serving as an academic dean. At that time in her career, she recalls that the president of her institution suggested that she would “make a good president.” Prior to this point in her career, she noted that she had not considered the possibility of achieving a university presidency as she was satisfied with her work as an academic dean as she conveys, “I really liked what I was doing].”

In the early-to-mid point of President Whitley’s academic career path, she also noted that she was not thinking “‘I want to be[come] a president and I’m going . . . [to plan a pathway] to [achieving a presidency].” Rather, she conveys that at each stage of her career path she was focusing on her job at the time and how she could “do it well.” Therefore, although she gained a vision for leadership through her experience serving in her first administrative role, she recalls that she did not begin to consider a presidency until the later stages of her career path. She communicates,
I guess when I was a provost I went to some of the opportunities that [The American Council on Education] ACE offered about the pathway to the presidency and I thought about . . . [becoming a president] then. . . . and so I . . . [did not begin aspiring to a presidency until] late in my career. . .

Similarly, in asking President Rice when she first gained a vision for leadership she communicated, “probably in my first . . . leadership position” with a national research foundation in her academic field. Although President Rice did not initially envision herself as a leader earlier in her career path as a faculty member, after working in her first administrative position she recalled, “I found I enjoyed [the work] . . . and it was something I thought I was fairly good at . . .” Like President Whitley and President Perkins, while President Rice gained a vision for leadership through her initial experience working in her first administrative position, she pointed out “I really didn’t start aspiring to a presidency until very late in my career.”

In fact, President Whitley, President Rice, and President Perkins spoke to gaining substantial academic leadership experience serving as deans and provosts before they began to consider applying for a presidential appointment. Gaining administrative experience seemed particularly important to inspiring President Rice’s presidential aspirations as she articulates, “[I began to have presidential aspirations] only after I had been a provost for about six years.” After she had gained significant experience serving in her previous university leadership roles she conveyed, “I figured . . . you know, I think I can probably do this. Let me try [to achieve a presidency.] So, that is when I got . . . [my first presidential] job.” The participants in this study placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of gaining administrative experience prior to advancing as leaders in their current positions of top-level university leadership.
Gaining confidence from administrative experience. In addition to how participants like President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley developed a vision for university leadership through gaining administrative experience, their accounts also seem to suggest that gaining administrative experience gave them a greater sense of confidence in their ability to continue to advance into positions of increasing administrative responsibility in their career paths. For instance, as previously noted, President Rice felt like she had the skills and competencies to seek a presidency after she had advanced through her career path and gained substantial academic administrative experience serving in several positions of academic leadership (e.g., associate dean, dean, provost). Also, as previously noted, although Vice President Landon viewed herself as a natural leader, her previous work experiences in student affairs administration helped her to feel prepared to assume a position of top-level university leadership as she had been “given experience in every area” of student affairs administration through her previous leadership positions (e.g., coordinator, director). Likewise, Dean Atwood, in her first experiences assuming “quasi-administrative roles” in her work as a faculty member, realized that she “liked . . . the managerial, [administrative] part” of her faculty responsibilities and had gained a “certain level of organizational skill” from her initial administrative experiences. Thus, as she began to consider that “there are other people who . . . [serve in administrative roles] full time,” she said, “‘well, gosh, I can do this’ [too].”

Vice President of Advancement Owens is also another example of a participant who “did not have an ambition” to serve in a top-level position of university leadership. As she progressed in her career path, she notes how gaining administrative experience helped her to develop a vision for university leadership. In speaking to the point in her
career when she first gained a vision for leadership, she recollected, “I think it was after I was in advancement here as a director of development for . . . two or three years [that] I realized that I wanted to lead a program.” She explained that despite her lack of early leadership aspirations, “once I got into . . . [a director’s role in advancement] . . . and realized where I could go, . . . I started on the path to being successful.”

Vice President Owens also describes how gaining experience in her first administrative position opened the door of opportunity for her to advance to a vice president’s role.

Well, I think one of the keys, for me, that I have found out is that it’s not always about your path. It’s about being aware of the opportunities because . . . I never in a million years [would have] thought [that] I would be in this position, but the opportunities kept opening up for me. If at any point [in my career path] I had not pursued those opportunities or been afraid . . . I would not . . . be where I am today.

Vice President Owens’ previous statement also reflects how gaining experience helped her to have the confidence to accept opportunities to serve in administrative positions. What is more, in the following quote, Vice President Owens speaks to her perception of how women’s lack of confidence may hinder women’s leadership aspirations and career advancement.

And I think that . . . women, in general, do not have as much confidence in their ability to lead, and so I think sometimes that keeps them stifled in positions when they really are qualified [for administrative positions] . . . Or, even [if they are not] qualified [for certain administrative positions, . . . [they] could definitely be
an asset at a higher level or a different level, [or perhaps even in a] . . . different field.

Clearly, gaining administrative experience through assuming official leadership roles played a key role in helping the participants in this study to gain a vision for university leadership as well as in helping some of the participants to develop a greater sense of confidence in their leadership abilities prior to advancing into high-level positions of university leadership.

In addition to how gaining administrative experience served to spark participants’ initial leadership aspirations as well as provide them with confidence to advance to positions of university leadership, many of the participants spoke to how their first opportunities to gain administrative experience in higher education provided them with exposure to other motivations for continuing to move through the administrative ranks in their career path advancement into university leadership. For example, in speaking to her motivations for advancing into a key-line administrative position, Dean Atwood pointed out that “it wasn’t any one catalyzing event” or any one factor that served to spark her interest in leadership and career path advancement into a university leadership. She explains, “it was sort of a series of steps [such as gaining administrative experience, accomplishing goals, and receiving positive feedback, etc.] that kept gently nudging me in that direction.” Vice President Kennedy also spoke to the interplay between several factors which served to inspire her vision for university leadership. For instance, she noted that she began to develop a vision for leadership in her first career position working for an educational institution through gaining experiences “doing just the smaller leadership kind of things . . . because I would manage staffs and I would manage programming.” She explained that she was motivated by the opportunity to engage in
meaningful work as she described having a “passion and a love for education.” Thus, in exploring the participants’ leadership aspirations and career path advancement, many of the participants pointed to a combination of factors which, as Vice President Kennedy described, “conjoined” in forming their motivations for career advancement into key-line administrative roles and universities presidencies.

*Additional Factors Influencing Participants’ Motivations for Leadership*

Although the participants’ discussed a number of factors (e.g., new challenges, interactions with different constituencies, etc.) which served to motivate their leadership aspirations, each of the following types of experiences served as the most common motivating factors in helping participants to develop a vision for university leadership and advance into positions of university leadership, including (a) receiving encouragement and positive feedback, (b) achievement and goal attainment, (c) engaging in meaningful/purposeful work, (d) feeling a calling to one’s career path and leadership position, and (e) the influence of spirituality and/or religion on participants’ career paths. Notably, in evaluating participants’ leadership motivations, there is a noticeable absence of “the motivation of money.”

*Lack of external motivation for money.* In fact, throughout most of the interviews there was a noticeable absence of the mention of money/salary as a motivating factor for participants’ career path choices and/or leadership aspirations. For example, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, and President Rice each noted their perception that women place a higher priority on having a “satisfying job” versus a job with a “big salary.” Further, Vice President Carter notes, that “sometimes [an] . . . academic administrative role . . . could . . . financially . . . be very motivating . . ., but I don’t know lots of women who are motivated financially.” Only six out of the 16 participants
mentioned money/salary and when they did reference money or salary it was often to
note that it was not a powerful motivating factor in guiding their career path decisions
and aspirations. In fact, none of the participants who had achieved university
presidencies in this study mentioned money as a motivating factor in their decisions to
assume a presidential role. However, one of the commonly reported external motivations
for many of the participants in this study pertained to receiving positive feedback and
encouragement from colleagues and supervisors concerning their administrative
performance and career path advancement into university leadership.

Positive Feedback and Encouragement

The majority of participants in this study discussed how receiving positive
feedback and/or encouragement regarding their administrative performance and career
path advancement played a key role in motivating them to aspire and achieve top-level
positions of university leadership. Twelve of the participants (Dean Atwood, Dean
Gallagher, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President Landon, Vice
President McNair, Vice President Young, President Perkins, President Whitley, Provost
Barlow, Provost Ellis, and Provost Fields) in this study spoke to how receiving positive
feedback on their administrative performance and/or encouragement to advance into
leadership roles from supervisors and/or colleagues served to inspire their leadership
aspirations and facilitate their career advancement. In considering that the participants in
this study were not actively pursuing career advancement into leadership roles, several
participants (Dean Atwood, Provost Fields, Dean Gallagher, Vice President McNair, Vice
President Landon, Vice President Young, and President Perkins) discussed directly to
how receiving encouragement and positive feedback concerning their early experiences
serving in administrative roles motivated them to gain a vision for leadership and further advancement through the ranks of university leadership.

*Encouragement and positive feedback from colleagues.* Vice President Young describes how receiving encouragement from colleagues throughout her career path played a major role in developing a vision for leadership, in general, and leadership aspirations to become a key-line administrator, in particular. In speaking to what first inspired her to develop a vision for university leadership, Vice President Young states “encouragement more than anything [else].” She explains that she did not “actively pursue” some of the leadership roles that she has held throughout her career path both working in K-12 education and higher education. Rather, she relays, “to be honest . . . some of my roles came about as the result of other people encouraging me to apply . . . [for a leadership position].” In fact, throughout her career path in higher education she conveys that she was often “encouraged” or “approached” by others to consider applying for positions. She discussed that she gained a vision to serve as a vice president in realizing that her colleagues and the campus leaders at her institution recognized her leadership abilities and believed in her potential to become a top-level university administrator. She recalled,

[there] was . . . [a] moment when I saw that there were others that saw me in that type of leadership position . . . [So, it was at] that point [that I gained a vision to become a vice president] when I saw that somebody else believed that I could be a top-level administrator at a university.

Additionally, although Provost Fields, Dean Gallagher, and Dean Atwood did not have a planned career path into university leadership, each spoke to how receiving encouragement from their faculty colleagues inspired them to assume leadership roles. In
reflecting on how receiving encouragement from her faculty colleagues motivated her to assume a deanship during the mid-point of her career, Provost Fields stated, “the dean’s position became available and the faculty came . . . [to me] and asked me to . . . be their dean.” She shared her belief, “the only reason you should want to be a dean is when the faculty want you to be one.” In receiving encouragement from the faculty within her college to assume the role of the dean she notes, “[so] I . . . [decided] to be [the] dean . . .” Dean Gallagher was also “nominated [by a faculty colleague] . . . to be a candidate . . . for dean.” Although she did not aspire to attain a deanship, she communicated that her colleagues realized her leadership potential as she noted that in nominating her for the dean’s role they “viewed me as a good choice.” As a result, she relayed, “I decided to allow myself to be a candidate and then the president and provost selected me.”

While serving in her immediate-prior position as a department chair, Dean Atwood was selected by the executive campus leaders to assume the responsibilities of the acting/interim dean of her college. Dean Reed speaks to how receiving encouragement and positive feedback from the faculty in her college in response to her leadership concerning her administrative performance as an acting/interim dean represented a strong influence on her decision to apply to fill the vacancy for the deanship at her institution. She explained,

I was very surprised when the provost at the time . . . came to my office . . . and said we need you to come be the acting dean for the college . . . [The provost] made it seem . . . [like] this is what the president wants [and] this is what I, [as the provost] want . . . Well, when I became interim [dean], I knew that it would be a little over a year at the minimum. [So,] I sat down with the associate dean and [we] made some goals that I thought we could achieve in one year . . . [and] we
achieved the goals in about 6 or 7 months . . . There is an annual process whereby faculty members anonymously provide feedback to administrators through the faculty senate and I got really positive feedback in that process. So, the combination of feeling like I could . . . [accomplish goals] . . . and make a difference and receiving . . . generally positive feedback was enough to make me say, ‘I want to keep doing this.’ So, that’s why I applied [for the dean’s position].

In addition to how receiving encouragement and positive feedback served to influence her desire to apply for the deanship, in the above quote she speaks to how other influences such as accomplishing goals and making a difference through her administrative role also represented motivating factors in her decision to apply for the deanship. Thus, for Dean Atwood, receiving encouragement and positive feedback represents “one of several . . . influences . . . that pushed . . . [her] to begin thinking about . . . [serving in a position of leadership].” In this way, her description of how she developed the aspiration to become a dean not only served to reflect the key role of receiving encouragement and positive feedback, but also represents the ways in which multiple factors (e.g., goal accomplishment, making a difference) served to motivate many of the participants’ leadership aspirations and career path advancement.

Encouragement and positive feedback from supervisors. Several of the participants spoke to how their supervisors recognized their leadership potential and encouraged them to assume positions of university leadership. President Perkins attributes her initial interest in achieving a presidency to the encouragement and positive feedback that she received earlier in her career path from the university president regarding her administrative performance as a dean. She recollected,
About that that time, when I was dean, we had a president who . . . was very supportive of . . . his junior administrators. He was very interested in how we were doing and he mentioned to me one day . . . in compliment[ing] me . . . he said, . . . “you’re doing a good job . . . and you would make a good president.”

So, I was flattered. . . , but he also said . . . we have taught you all we can teach you here. You are going to have to got to some other places and learn some other things.

President Perkins establishes that it was her president’s “mentioning” that she “‘would make a good president’” that first sparked her presidential aspirations as she had not previously considered achieving a presidency. After receiving the positive feedback, encouragement, and career advice from the president of the university where she served as a dean, she communicated “. . . I moved very quickly [and] . . . I got a job as a vice president for academic affairs and shortly thereafter . . . [I] became a president.”

Vice President Landon and Vice President McNair also spoke to how their various supervisors along their respective career paths have given them opportunities to gain experience assuming new administrative responsibilities and/or encouraged them to apply for leadership roles. For instance, in reflecting on her career path in student affairs, Vice President Landon states, “I’ve always been thankful to have encouraging supervisors.” In particular, she recalls that one of the supervisors in the earlier part of her career path “. . . was so kind and encouraging” and provided her with the opportunity to gain exposure to “all areas of student affairs” administration. As well, after gaining experience in a variety of areas of students affairs administration serving in a director’s position, Vice President McNair recalls, the “Vice President [of Student Affairs] . . . encouraged me to apply for . . . the assistant vice president position.” Therefore, many of
the participants in this study spoke to how their supervisors were often the first to recognize their leadership potential and encourage their career advancement into top-level university leadership.

Some participants also spoke to how at a certain point in their career path that their supervisors created or facilitated opportunities for them to gain leadership experience. For example, Provost Ellis points out that while she had “really not planned to go in . . . [the] direction” of serving in positions of university leadership during her early career path in higher education, her “dean recommended her . . . to be in the provost’s office [to serve as an associate provost] . . . because she felt . . . [Provost Ellis] had good administrative skills.” Similarly, Provost Fields recalls that while she was serving as an academic dean that “we got a new president and he wanted me to come be his . . . provost as he began his presidency at the university.”

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter pertaining to the concept of participants’ career paths and educational credentials, one of the central sub-themes in this study pertains to the ways in which the participants in this study emerged into leadership roles through assuming responsibility, demonstrating competency, and achieving career success. In receiving encouragement and positive feedback from their colleagues and supervisors, many of the participants in this study were receiving external recognition for achieving success in their administrative roles. In turn, many of the participants attribute their movement into positions of university leadership, in part, to others recognizing their achievements and successes as administrators. For example, Provost Ellis’ supervisor recommended her for a position working in the provost’s office because she observed how she “did a good job . . . [in her administrative work as a] . . . department chair.” Likewise, as President Perkins noted, her president observed her
potential to be a “good president” because she was “doing a good job” as an academic dean. As discussed earlier, many of the participants in this study voiced their belief in the importance of doing a good job. However, as previously noted, they were not motivated to do good work in order to receive external rewards, such as career promotions. For most of the participants in this study, achievement and goal attainment were internal motivations which demonstrate their strong work ethic and commitment to excellence.

Also as previously discussed, many of the women leaders like Vice President McNair or Provost Barlow who participated in this study identified themselves as “achievers” and discussed how being an achiever represented one of the unique dimensions of their personhood. In this way, participants’ orientations toward achievement and goal attainment not only served a critical role in their emergence into top-level positions of university leadership, but also served as an internal motivation which inspired their leadership aspirations and influenced their decisions to enter positions of top-level university leadership.

Achievement and Goal Attainment

Indeed, all of the participants in this study, either implicitly or explicitly, addressed the ways in which they have achieved career success and attained numerous goals throughout their career paths in higher education. Collectively, the sources of data, both from the interviews and document review (e.g., curriculum vitae, biography, etc.), reveal the multiplicity of ways in which all of the participants in this study have been motivated to achieve success throughout their respective career paths in higher education. Most participants (13) directly spoke to how achievement and goal attainment has served as an internal motivation which has guided their leadership aspirations and facilitated their career path advancement into university leadership. As one example, Vice President
Owens explicitly addressed her desire to achieve success in her career as she states, “I’ve been pretty . . . consistent and worked pretty hard to get where I am [today in my career path as a Vice President of Advancement].” Vice President Owens describes herself as a leader who is “committed to success.”

Vice President Young is a participant who is highly motivated by achievement and attaining positive outcomes that benefit her institution. Notably, like many of the participants in this study, Vice President Young is motivated to achieve success in order to produce positive outcomes that benefit other constituencies (e.g., students) at her institution versus achieving success with the motive of producing personal outcomes (e.g., self-advancement). She describes that she is motivated to create and maintain successful programs that “serve students’ interests.” She explains,

I haven’t stepped into jobs or positions just for the sake of advancement or . . . for any other reason . . . than . . . [being] interested in that job . . . Creating . . . successful . . . programs interests me. Serving students interests me. So, I tend to give 110 percent . . . [to my roles or jobs]. . . I think about . . . how can I do this [job] to the very best of my ability? . . . How can I grow . . . [a program] into something that is a premier program . . . [that provides] premier services? I look to make it the best that it can be and I really tend to put . . . all of my effort into that. . . I really don’t give much thought to the outcomes for myself, personally.

Other participants like President Rice and Vice President McNair spoke to how they were motivated to help others achieve their goals. For example, when President Rice initially gained a vision for leadership through her first administrative role with a research foundation she realized that one of the aspects of serving in a leadership role that she enjoyed and found motivating was “working with different people . . . [to] help . . .
them to achieve their goals.” Similarly, in serving in her administrative role, Vice President of Student Affairs McNair discusses how her career success has been the “byproduct” of her motivation to help others achieve their goals. In what follows, she explains how achieving the institutional goal of student retention has been the byproduct of helping students to be successful. She also speaks to her motivation to give her best effort in her vice presidential role in order to help the university president to achieve success.

So, in some ways, . . . success is a byproduct . . . it’s kind of like when I think about retaining students at this institution. If I actually help students to be successful, retention is a byproduct. My retention numbers will go up as a byproduct. Now, the way the world will measure us is whether or not we retain the students, but actually it’s just the byproduct of helping students to be successful. So, if I have my goal on helping students to be successful, I don’t have to worry about retention. I’ll count it, but it’s a byproduct . . . If I deliver, if I do the job, the other stuff is a byproduct. It’s a nice byproduct, but a byproduct. So, . . . I try to do my best so that others do their best. So, for [example,] I always tell our president—and I mean this—that I always have her back. I try to do the best I can [in my administrative role] for her so that she can be successful. One of . . . [the] songs that I used to like was ‘The Wind Beneath Your Wings.’ So I like being the wind beneath . . . [others’ wings in helping them to be successful.]

Thus, a number of participants in this study are internally motivated by the goal of helping others achieve their goals. For instance, President Perkins relayed, that she enjoys “working with my vice presidents . . . and helping them solve their problems . . .”
In some cases the participants’ career achievements and successes have been the result of helping others (e.g., students, staff, faculty, colleagues, etc.) to be successful.

In addition, participants like Vice President Carter indicated that the opportunity to achieve “common goals” represented one of the major motivating factors in her decision to serve a top-level position of university leadership. She explains how the opportunity to achieve institutional goals motivated her to accept the vice president’s role.

[At the time same time that I accepted a role as the vice president of advancement], I could have also been the department chair . . . [or] I could have been the dean. [However,] neither one of those [roles] appealed to me. I loved . . . [the university] and [at that time] I [did not] think we had achieved our potential yet. So, I took on administration because it was . . . [an] opportunity to try to make it happen. . . [When I became Vice President,] we checked off the seven things that we said we were going to achieve and . . . [within a short time frame]. . . we had . . . [achieved] all . . . [the goals] that [were] on the list.

Likewise, for Dean Reed, achievement and goal attainment were the chief motivating forces which inspired her to earn her doctoral degree and serve as an academic administrator. From her early career in higher education as a faculty member to her current post as an academic dean, she has achieved “success . . . in every position” she had held in her career path. For instance, in speaking to her motivations for assuming positions of academic leadership, Dean Reed replied, “I’ve always wanted to succeed, . . . take on new responsibilities, and learn new skill-sets.” Now, in her current role as a dean, she conveys, “I choose to . . . work very, very hard . . . [and] long hours . . . so that I can do a great job . . . because it is exceedingly important to me to be a good dean . . .
[and] an effective dean.” Dean Reed also exemplifies many of participants in this study who are motivated to achieve success and accomplish goals in their administrative roles so that they can “make a difference” in higher education. For example, she describes that she was motivated to move into academic leadership after observing “other people . . . work[ing] . . . in administrat[ion] who were making a difference and who were doing good work . . . which [she states] is something that appeals to me.” Indeed, in their roles as university leaders, many of the participants in this study spoke to the career fulfillment and satisfaction that they have experienced through “making a difference” by engaging in meaningful and purposeful administrative work.

**Meaningful and Purposeful Work**

As previously noted, some of the participants in this study, especially those serving in faculty roles, attribute their lack of leadership aspirations at the beginning of their career paths in higher education, in part, to the career satisfaction they experienced serving in their previous career positions in their earlier career path in higher education. However, as participants began to advance into administrative roles, many participants also experienced career satisfaction in serving in leadership roles that provided them with opportunities to engage in meaningful and purposeful work. For example, Vice President of Student Affairs McNair exemplifies many of the participants’ sentiments in expressing her perception of the importance of engaging in meaningful and purposeful work.

I find that a lot of . . . the people with whom I work [with in student affairs] and with most of my colleagues [at the university] that if they could make all the money in the world, and it didn’t have a purpose, I don’t think they’d be happy.

Fourteen of the sixteen participants in this study spoke to how the opportunity to engage in administrative work that “makes a difference” served as a powerful influence
in motivating their career path advancement into top-level university leadership. For example, although Dean Gallagher does not have presidential aspirations, she points out that the opportunity to “make a difference” is a factor which she finds appealing about the university president’s role. She notes,

We’ve got a real dynamic president who . . . in just a few years has really made a difference in this institution. And so the opportunity to really make that kind of difference . . . is very appealing . . . [to me]. [The opportunity to] figure out what works [best for the institution] and figure out what could be made better . . . appeals . . . [to me.]

Similar to how Dean Gallagher viewed the opportunity to make a difference that contributed to the betterment of a university to be an appealing and motivating factor, a number of participants in this study spoke to how their leadership aspirations and decisions to move into positions of university leadership were influenced by their desire to make a positive difference in the overall quality of their universities. A number of participants also spoke to their motivation to serve in top-level positions of university leadership that provided them with the opportunity to “make a difference” in students’ educational opportunities and experiences. Several of the participants serving in key-line administrative roles found special meaning in serving institutions which provided educational opportunities for “first-generation” college students. What is more, some participants spoke to how they were motivated to assume leadership roles after “feeling a calling” to serve in leadership roles that provided them with opportunities to engage in meaningful and purposeful work. Notably, among the participants who reported feeling a calling to university leadership, they each spoke to how their professional calling was inspired by their religion and/or spirituality.
Making a difference for the university. In speaking to their motivations for serving in key-line positions of university leadership, a number of participants such as Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, and President Perkins described how, through their roles as administrators, they found meaning and purpose in engaging in administrative tasks that make a positive difference in contributing to the effective day-to-day operations of their respective universities. For instance, in serving as the chief academic officer of a research university, Provost Ellis realizes the influence that her leadership role represents to various campus constituencies.

Clearly, you’re a very focused face of the university, especially to the academic side. You’re in a leadership position . . . [and] what you say makes a difference. I work with the faculty, I work with new programs, I work with personnel, I work with promotion/tenure grievances, [and] collective bargaining. I have all those roles and responsibilities and clearly you have to make decisions . . . that [are] the best decisions for the university.

Provost Fields who also serves as the chief academic officer of a research university speaks to the career satisfaction that she has found in serving in her administrative role as she communicates, “I love what I am doing. I really enjoy working with the faculty and the students.” She also speaks to how she enjoys working in a role that contributes to the effective “day-to-day operation of the university.” In serving in a position of top-level university leadership she recognizes that she has the opportunity to make a positive difference as she describes, “I . . . enjoy . . . working with deans, department chairs, and faculty to solve a problem . . . [and] make the university a better place.”

Although President Perkins acknowledges that a large portion of her time in fulfilling her role as a university president is devoted to external relations (e.g.,
fundraising, community events, etc.), she describes the meaning and purpose that she has found in fulfilling the presidential duties associated with the internal/academic side of the university’s operations. She explains,

I don't equally love . . . [the external role of the president] . . . I think I am good at it, but you know my heart is on the campus, my heart is with the students [and], my heart is with the faculty. My best day . . . [is] on Mondays. I try to always be on campus . . . [on Mondays]. I don't let anyone off campus get in to see me . . . [on that day] and I don't leave campus, if I can possibly work it that way. We have our staff meetings, but they are the best days of the week because . . . I'm doing, what . . . my husband . . . [refers to as,] . . . ‘the Lord's work.’ I'm doing what we do at the university and when I'm hands on with the university, I'm happier . . . [I enjoy] working with my vice presidents and finding out how things are going, and . . . [for me,] that's a great day.

Making a difference for students. Many of the participants also spoke to the meaning and purpose they have found in serving in leadership roles that make a difference in the quality of students’ experiences and educational opportunities on their campuses. Provost Ellis, Vice President Kennedy, and Vice President McNair are each employed at research universities which serve student populations which are comprised of many students who are the first in their families to attend college. Each of these participants addressed the ways in which they have found special meaning in helping to contributing to educational opportunities for first-generation college students. For example, based on her own background as a first-generation college student, Provost Ellis describes the meaning and value that she has found in knowing that she is serving in a leadership role at an institution that provides educational opportunities to many first-
generation college students. She states, “I . . . grew up in a family where my parents did not have an education, but highly valued education. So when I go to commencement and . . . [see] many students who are the first to graduate – that's always a value to me.”

Vice President Kennedy also speaks to the meaning she has found in providing educational opportunities, especially to first-generation students, through serving in her role as the vice president of university advancement. She conveys,

Well, . . . I tell people . . . all the time [that] there is no better work environment to me . . . than a college or university. [I] think . . . the product . . . [of working in a higher] . . . educational setting . . . is so worthwhile. And one of the most wonderful things about being in advancement is that we hear the stories of how students were impacted by the things that donors do. I remember one . . . story [that] always sticks out to me from the small college I worked for in . . . [the Midwest region of the country.] They had six Rhodes Scholars from this little, private college. It was an excellent liberal arts college with high acceptances to medical and law school . . . [In particular.] I remember this one farm boy from this little community. He . . . [is] now a grown man, but he said, “I will never forget. My father had left us, . . . but when I came to this college [in the Midwest], the professors . . . went above and beyond. . . [to] help me.” He ended up going to . . . [a large, prominent research university in the North] and . . . [became] a noted mathematician . . . And you just don’t find that in any other setting. There [are so] many . . . really wonderful . . . stories [about] . . . the [educational] opportunities [for students] and the changes [it has made in their lives]. And we here [at this university] have so many first-generation college
students. [So,] it’s worthwhile and I feel good about what I do every day. So that has always been meaningful to me.

Clearly, for Vice President Kennedy, the opportunity to make a difference in providing educational opportunities for students, especially students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, is a central motivating factor that has inspired her career in higher education and her desire to serve in a top-level position of university leadership.

Vice President McNair, who has administrative responsibilities in the area of student affairs, also works at a research institution that serves a large number of first-generation college students. In the following statement she explains how she is motivated, in her role as the vice president of student affairs, to engage in work that “makes a difference” in the students’ experiences at her institution.

I have been very blessed in that I have been solicited to apply for jobs. I had been nominated for . . . [a leadership position working at] another big . . ., fairly prestigious . . . institution and I’m pretty sure they would have offered me that job, if I hadn’t withdrawn my name. [However,] . . . I told the other university that it was my preference [to stay here and work at my current university]. I think . . . my preference . . . [to] withdraw my name . . . had . . . to do with feeling a calling to this position. I felt like the students here needed me more. Now, this is my hometown, and my family lives here. [Yet,] that . . . [was] not [the] . . . deciding factor. [The deciding factor] was that I felt called to do this job [as vice president of student affairs]. And the students at . . . [this] university appreciate all of us. I think . . . they want us, [as administrators,] to be involved with them and I believe they need us to be involved with them. So, . . . I believe that many
women need a *purpose-driven life* and I think [that women have a] real strong need . . . to make a difference . . .

In discussing her motivation to make a difference in students’ lives, Vice President McNair represents several other participants who also described how they felt a calling to serve in positions of university leadership.

*Feeling a Calling to Leadership*

Like Vice President McNair, three other participants (Vice President Carter, Provost Barlow, and Vice President Landon) described how “feeling a calling” to leadership has served to influence their leadership aspirations and movement into their roles as key-line administrators. For these participants, feeling a calling to leadership was, in part, motivated by their desire to engage in meaningful and purposeful work that makes a difference. Provost Barlow described how she felt a calling to her academic discipline, profession, and to leadership. In the following quote, she articulates,

> I have felt since I was a young woman, actually a teenager, called to . . . [serve in a clinical professional role in the medical field] which is my [academic] discipline. [So,] I prepared myself through the master’s level for a career in . . . [this field] and [I] came to . . . [the university as] my first position after completing my master’s degree to teach. [I] quickly saw that . . . [higher] education was something that I wanted to invest my career in. And . . . all along the way, during high school, college, and in early years here, leadership was also a pull on my spirit, I guess you could say.

As previously noted, Provost Barlow represents one of the participants who recognized from an early age that she possessed natural leadership traits and abilities. Although she mentions that she has felt a call to leadership prior to beginning her career in higher
education, she conveys that she did not begin her career with leadership aspirations of becoming an academic dean or provost. Rather, Provost Barlow describes how, after teaching as a tenure-track faculty member for a period of time, she began to feel a call to leadership that was grounded in her desire to “make a difference” in the overall direction of the academic program.

[I began to feel a call to leadership] during those first five years of teaching here. I began to feel . . . [that] the way we were doing . . . education [in my academic department] at the time . . . wasn’t the best way for this university, etcetera. So I think a call to leadership sometimes is born out of a [feeling of] restlessness about the leadership that you work under, or not necessarily the leader you work under, but the direction that you’re working under. . . . To me, the call to leadership oftentimes comes with a restlessness that you think you could do something a little better or differently that would make a better way for students, in our case, [in higher education]. Or, in the case of industry, . . . you could do something to . . . make a better way . . . for the company’s success.

*The Influence of Spirituality and/or Religion on Participants’ Leadership Motivations*

Although the original design of the interview protocol for this study did not include any questions pertaining to participants’ spirituality and/or religion, this concept emerged during the course of several of the interviews in which participants described how their spirituality and/or religion had influenced their leadership aspirations and career paths. Half of the participants referenced how their religion and/or spirituality had influenced some aspect of their career path experience and/or leadership experience. For example, President Rice noted that the “Christian beliefs . . . definitely guide my style of leadership.” Several participants also communicated how their religion and/or
spirituality had served to guide their career path decisions and movement into leadership roles.

Markedly, each of the participants (Vice Presidents McNair, Vice President Carter, Provost Barlow, and Vice President Landon) who were motivated to enter leadership roles after “feeling a [professional] calling” to their career paths in higher education and/or leadership positions described how their professional calling was related to their spirituality and/or religion. For instance, in asking Vice President McNair, who spoke at length about her calling to leadership and her spirituality, if she believed that feeling a calling was linked to women’s sense of spirituality and/or religion, she stated,

For some, [their professional calling is related to their spirituality and/or religion, but] not for all [women]. . .  [Personally,] I don’t consider religion and spirituality the same thing. That’s why I struggle with . . . [identifying my religious] denomination. I mean, I go to a . . . Church [within a Protestant denomination], but in reality I . . . don’t think I care what I would be called. I go to the church because that’s where my family . . . [and] my friends go [to church] . . . [However,] . . . prayer has a place in my life. Faith is big, big, big . . . in my life! And, [for me,] that calling thing is very spiritual . . . [In speaking to my perception of other women’s experiences,] I think that even if women don’t see themselves as having religion or faith, I think a lot of them have a need to make a difference [and] a need to do something that has purpose.

Among the 14 participants in this study who spoke to being motivated to serve in leadership opportunities that provided meaningful and purposeful work, five of these participants (Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President Landon, Vice President McNair, Provost Barlow) conveyed that their religion and/or spirituality had
served to inspire their movement to university leadership positions based on, in part, their motivation to engage in meaningful and purposeful administrative work. Most of the participants who addressed the concept of spirituality and/or religion, with the exception of Vice President McNair, did not explicitly clarify whether they conceptualized their religion and spirituality as one concept or as two distinct concepts. Among the five participants who spoke to how their religion and/or spirituality has motivated their call to leadership, two (Vice President Landon and Provost Barlow) were employed at private, religious affiliated institutions and the other three participants were employed at public institutions without religious affiliations.

For instance, in describing herself at the beginning of her interview, Provost Barlow conveyed that her religion and/or spirituality represented one of the most important dimensions of her personhood. She articulated, “my relationship with God is the first . . . priority in my life . . . [and my relationship and responsibility to family is the second [priority].” As previously noted, Provost Barlow indicated that she had felt called to her academic discipline, professional careers both inside and outside of higher education, and her leadership roles in higher education. Since Provost Barlow spoke to both the role of feeling a calling to leadership and the influence of her religion and/or spirituality on her career path choices, I asked Provost Barlow if her sense of professional calling was related to her religious and/or spiritual beliefs. In reply, she states,

Yes. I do hold tightly to a belief that we are all created by God and that he draws all of us to him and that a level of maturity in that relationship with God is yielding one’s own ideas and ways to what you think may be God’s best [plans] for you, rather than . . . what you think may be . . . your best [plans]. And having tested those across the course of my life and my career, I have a firm conviction
that God’s ways are not always our ways, and sometimes we have to sacrifice our own personal kinds of ways in order to find God’s best [ways]. And really I loved . . . [working in a] clinical [role in my field before entering my career path in higher education]. I did a master’s degree and was planning for . . . a clinical specialty role, but sometimes things just don’t work out . . . I was interviewing for that job [in a clinical field outside of higher education], [and] the job offer that was coming to me was a bit convoluted from what I really felt called to do. . . And then I get this call to come to . . . [this university] to teach, and it was not what I wanted. And I did exercise [a] kind of a yieldedness. . . There were some things about it that made me feel like, indeed, God’s hand was over this [job opportunity working in higher education], just [in terms of] the circumstances and so forth. . . . So, I yielded to my second choice [of university teaching], not my first [choice of working as a clinician in my field]. And I have other examples [in my career path] as well. [For instance,] I wasn’t particularly looking to leave . . . [my faculty role], and the dean’s . . . position was, I still say, the best job I ever had. I was really at the top of my game . . . Yet, . . . again, . . . [I] felt a restlessness . . . [concerning] a call to serve outside my comfort zone and expand my horizons [in serving in a provost’s role]. So yes, my particular view . . . [of what I] personally felt [when] I reference . . . [feeling] a call, is a yieldedness to God . . . [I believe in] spending time in prayer and then watching to see what happens after you pray for God’s best . . .

Provost Barlow also spoke at length to the ways in which her religion and/or spirituality had influenced her desire to engage in meaningful and purposeful work. She explains how her spiritual beliefs have “opened doors” of opportunity for her, as a university
leader, to engage in meaningful work that makes a difference for other institutions of higher education. She discussed,

I told God . . . in my prayer . . . that the next opportunity that I took—I wanted it to matter. I told God that the most fulfilling thing that I had done recently was to help this fledgling school in [another state in the Southeast] with their accreditation. Well, I got a phone call from a colleague who asked me to . . . [travel abroad to] to help a fledgling country [in the Middle East] with their system of higher education . . . It’s like this was God’s answer to that prayer. Well, me, a Southern woman, flying to . . . [a country in the Middle East was] . . . not something that my little circle of friends does every day, but I knew that it was of God because of that very direct prayer . . .

The influence of spirituality and/or religion on participants’ career path advancement into university leadership. Although Vice President Owens did not speak to “feeling a calling,” she did speak to the ways in which her religious and/or spiritual beliefs have shaped her career decisions concerning her career path advancement into university leadership. Like Provost Barlow, in speaking to her priorities, Vice President Owens established, “my faith and my family . . . [are the most] important . . . [priorities in my life].” In addressing the role of faith and/or spirituality in her life she articulated, “I have a lot of faith and I really believe that God sets you where you’re supposed to be . . . [in your career path].” She recalls that at a pivotal point in her career path she had to choose between whether to accept a job offer to work in a position in advancement for an organization outside of higher education or accept the university president’s offer to “promote . . . [her] to assistant . . . vice president” of advancement. In making this career
decision, she speaks to how her religion and/or spirituality motivated her career decisions leading to her achievement of a position of top-level university leadership.

I’ve got this great job . . . offer . . . down-the-road [with an organization outside of higher education . . .] and [the salary] was almost twice what I was making [in my position in higher education] . . . So, I decided I [would] accept the position [working outside of higher education]. [However,] [when] I went in . . . to do an exit interview with my president, [I received an] . . . offer from my president . . . to promote . . . [me] to assistant vice president . . . [So,] all of a sudden I was right in the middle of . . . [needing to make a career decision] . . . [I had to ask myself], what should I do? . . . I really prayed about it and prayed about it, and then I just had this peace about [it] . . . [to] just stay. . . [in higher education and accept the assistant vice president position] . . . [Then,] all of a sudden . . . my vice president . . . [resigned his position and I ultimately advanced into] the position [of the vice president of advancement]. [So,] I really believe that the whole process was orchestrated by God . . . I give it all to God because I can’t make these decisions on my own.

Vice President of Advancement Carter, who also spoke to the profound role of spirituality in her life and career path, expressed her belief “that God has a lot to do with your [career] path.” Like Vice President McNair, Provost Barlow, and President Owens, Vice President Carter spoke to the influence of spirituality in her life in stating, “I believe that [the] deep spirituality that I have been blessed with is probably as important to me as anything else in my life.” She elaborated on how the role of religion and/or spirituality has influenced her career path advancement and the sense of calling that she has felt to the career positions she has held in higher education:
I have deep, deep spiritual belief in people and their good and their worth and that God put us all here together to help each other. . . So understand that God is, perhaps, directing you. . . [in] your path. So, ask for his advice sometime because I think that can be a real eye-opener. . . So, if you asked me, “What has made you successful?” Well, I’ve . . . been blessed with opportunities [for career advancement], but I do believe that I have a deep, deep sense of God’s role in our lives and that we are instruments of God. And if you’re an instrument of God, then you’ve got to be an instrument of God, not when you want to [be], but when you’re called . . . to be an instrument of God. So, I do believe that [spirituality] plays a huge role [in your career opportunities and career path].

In addition to the ways in which these participants holding key-line administrative positions discussed how their religion and/or spirituality had influenced their career paths, three participants (Provost Barlow, Vice President Landon, and Vice President McNair) spoke to the ways in which their religion and/or spirituality had influenced their thoughts concerning achieving a university presidency.

The influence of spirituality and/or religion on participants’ presidential aspirations. Although Provost Barlow, Vice President Landon, and Vice President McNair do not have presidential aspirations, each of these participants expressed how they would be open to pursuing a future presidential appointment if they felt a calling to a presidency that was inspired by their religious and/or spiritual beliefs. For example, Provost Barlow notes that she does not feel “passionate” about the idea of seeking a university presidency. However, in “searching and seeking . . . for Gods’ best . . . option for the next step” of her career path she states, “I’m trying to be open . . . [and] yielded to God’s ways.”
Vice President Landon, who described herself as “a believer” in God, relayed that she also lacks presidential aspirations. Yet, Vice President Landon speaks to how she would consider advancing to a university presidency if she felt a calling that was influenced by her religion and/or spirituality. She communicates,

I am not ruling . . . [a presidency] out, but I would have to say to the Lord, “Lord, I am not going to seek it . . . and if it comes to me and it is clear and this is the work that you would have me to do, then I would do it,” but I would not proactively seek it . . .

Although Vice President Landon does not feel a call to serve in a university presidency at this point in her career path, she has felt a calling to serve in her current position of top-level university leadership. She communicates that she advises other women who are considering a career in student affairs administration “to feel a calling to go into it . . .”

Likewise, although Vice President McNair does not have aspirations to achieve a university presidency, she articulates that, “if I felt a calling . . . to become a president . . . I’d do it.” As noted earlier, Vice President McNair considers the experience of “feeling a [professional] calling . . . [to be] very spiritual.” In considering that her spirituality plays a “big” role in her life and her career decisions, she states, “If it was clear to me that . . . [achieving a presidency] was a calling, I’d do it with very little hesitation.” In expressing their lack of presidential aspirations, Provost Barlow, Vice President Landon, and Vice President McNair are representative of the other key-line administrators who participated in this study who also do not aspire to achieve a university presidency.

A Lack of Presidential Aspirations

Indeed, as previously noted, none of the participants in this study who represent key-line administrators (i.e., academic deans, vice presidents, or provosts) reported
having presidential aspirations or the intentional career goal of seeking a university presidency. Thus, the only participants in this study who described having presidential aspirations were three (President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley) of the four participants who had achieved university presidencies. Although none of the key-line administrators who participated in this study reported having presidential aspirations, several of the key-line administrators (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Young, Vice President Landon, Vice President McNair, and Dean Gallagher), conveyed, with some degree of reluctance, that they would be “open” to the consideration of a presidency and/or they, in the words of Vice President Landon, “would not completely rule out” the possibility of assuming a presidential role in the future. As previously discussed, while Provost Barlow does not have presidential aspirations, she communicated that she will remain “open” to the idea of assuming a university presidency. Nevertheless, her sentiments concerning her lack of presidential aspirations epitomize the sentiments of many of the other key-line administrators in this study who also lacked presidential aspirations as she stated, “I have never particularly felt [that I needed to achieve a presidency] . . . as a goal that makes me passionate.”

In lacking presidential aspirations, the participants who represent key-line administrative positions (i.e., academic dean, provost, and vice president) provided rich insights into the unique combination of personal, professional, institutional factors which have served as hindrances to their consideration of achieving a university presidency. Significantly, most of the participants attributed their lack of presidential aspirations to a combination of personal (e.g., age, family relationships, geographic mobility, etc.) and professional factors (e.g., educational credentials, diverse experiences, etc.) in comparison to institutional factors or formal barriers such as gender discrimination. With
this in mind, the remaining section of the findings pertaining to the concept of leadership aspirations focuses on a description of the personal, professional, and institutional factors which served to hinder the participants’ presidential aspirations and career path advancement to the presidency. This section also presents the perspectives of the university presidents who participated in this study concerning their views of why more women do not have presidential aspirations and are not achieving university presidencies in greater numbers.

**Personal Factors which Hindered Participants’ Presidential Aspirations**

In speaking to their thoughts concerning the pursuit of a university presidency, the participants discussed how each of the following personal factors had served to influence their leadership/presidential aspirations and career path advancement to the presidency, including (a) age and stage of life, (b) work-life balance issues, (c) the influence of family relationships and priorities (childrearing, marital relationships), and (d) geographical mobility. The findings concerning the personal factors which contributed to participants’ lack of presidential aspirations highlights the ways in which participants’ family relationships and priorities intersect with other personal factors such as their geographic mobility.

**Age and stage of life.** One of the personal factors which hindered many of the key-line administrators’ consideration of achieving a university presidency pertained to their current age and stage of life. As previously noted, the median age of the participants in this study was 62 and the majority (10 out of 16) participants were in their sixties. Also as previously noted, the majority of the participants in this study had acquired over 20 years of full-time career experience in higher education and seven participants indicated having 30 or more years of full-time career experience working in
higher education. Consequently, slightly over half (9) of the participants (President Howard, President Perkins, President Rice, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Dean Reed, Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy, and Vice President McNair) plan to retire after completing their tenure in their current administrative post, including the one participant in this study who was recently retired from her post as a key-line administrator.

In speaking to her perception of why more university women in key-line administrative positions do not have presidential aspirations, President Whitley conjectures,

[Although] it’s difficult to speak for anyone [else, one factor that might hinder women from pursuing a presidency is their] stage of life . . . [as] sometimes women in those positions [e.g., provost or vice president] are a little bit older . . . [So,] they [may] reach . . . [a key-line administrative position] and think of that [position] as the end of their career path.

Indeed, eight of the participants in key-line administrative positions (Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President McNair, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Dean Gallagher, and Dean Reed) who were nearing retirement age or would be near retirement age at the point in their career path in which they would be positioned in an immediate-prior, key-line administrative position (e.g., provost) to the presidency, described how their age and stage of life represented one factor which would hinder their achievement of a university presidency. For example, in speaking to her future career plans after completing her tenure in her current post, Vice President of Advancement Owens states,
Probably the next position that some vice presidents [of advancement] are searching for is to be the president of a university . . . They’re going more and more to[ward] using advancement individuals because . . . the primary position that the president holds [today] is . . . a marketer of the school, but I don’t think that at my age I would do that. [However,] I’m sure if I were younger, I would probably pursue . . . [a presidency] because . . . that [role] seems like [it] . . . would be a wonderful link to a fundraiser’s position . . .

In considering the dynamics that characterized the contours of many participants’ career paths in higher education (e.g., circuitous routes into first career positions in higher education, movement into administrative positions in the mid-to-late career stages, etc.) some participants pointed out that they might have considered achieving a presidency if they had entered their career paths in higher education and/or first administrative roles at an earlier stage of life. For instance, Dean Reed who began her career path working outside of higher education explained how her late entry into her career path in higher education represents one factor that hinders her from aspiring to achieve a presidency at her current age and stage of life. She communicated,

I really haven’t [considered moving up the academic ranks to achieve a presidency] . . . Now, . . . I might have considered [a presidency] . . . if I had gone into academics a little bit earlier [in my career path] . . . [because I] would have had a few more years on the end of my career.

Vice President McNair, who also plans to retire from her full-time career in higher education after completing her tenure as Vice President of Student Affairs, explains, “for me to aspire to be a president . . . I would have to have . . . maybe ten more years of work-life in me.”
Similarly, Dean Gallagher, who is not planning to retire as her next career move, believes that her age would prevent her from achieving a university presidency by the time she progresses to the point in her career path in which she would be positioned in an immediate-prior position (e.g., provostship) to achieving a presidential appointment. Although Dean Gallagher would like to consider seeking a provostship as a future career goal, she pointed out that at this stage of her career,

> I really have not [thought about a presidency]. I’m pretty old so usually by the time you go through and . . . you serve your time as a dean . . . [and] as a provost, then I’d be up in my sixties before I would be looking for a presidency. I guess it does not seem plausible to me. [Yet, at the same time,] I might feel differently [about pursuing a presidency] . . . in ten years.

*Age and physical stamina.* Another personal factor which hindered two participants (Vice President Kennedy, Dean Gallagher) from having presidential aspirations pertained to the high level of physical “stamina” that is required to fulfill the university president’s role and responsibilities. Vice President Kennedy notes that she is in her mid-sixties and plans to retire “in the next five to seven years.” In asking Vice President Kennedy if she has considered pursuing a presidency she states,

> I have been so close to working with presidents [and] . . . I think it is one of the most challenging [jobs]. [So,] I don’t know that at this point in my life [that] I would have the stamina to do that job. I watch . . . [our current president] and . . . [this president] is the hardest-working president I have [ever] worked for. . . [Also, one must take into consideration that] . . . it’s a very tumultuous time in higher ed[ucation] . . . with the . . . growing challenges of budget and resources, even for some of the big private [colleges and universities]. . . [Therefore,] . . . I
don’t know . . . at this point in my life and my age [that] I would think of myself
pursuing something like that . . .

Along the same lines, Dean Gallagher surmises that by the time she reaches the stage in
her career path in which she would be ready to pursue a presidency that she might not
have the physical stamina to fulfill the time commitments placed of the president’s
schedule. In observing the university president’s level of involvement on the campus,
she points out,

I know our president goes to every athletic event . . . [and] every dramatic
presentation [on campus] . . . and I think . . . [the president’s level of]
involvement . . . is wonderful . . . [However,] I think I would wear out on that
[aspect of the president’s role.]

President Perkins, who is in her sixties, confirms that fulfilling the president’s role,
particularly concerning the president’s external role, is “physically hard.” She points out
that within a period of one month she may make four or more trips outside of the state
and/or country. She describes the challenges of maintaining one’s physical stamina while
performing the external duties associated with the university president’s role.

[The] travel [associated with the president’s external responsibilities] is hard, . . .
being away from home is hard, packing suitcases, and running through airports is
hard. . . The travel includes going and talking with alumni groups, fundraising,
[and] friend raising . . . You know, you are . . . meeting strangers, . . . smiling at
people that you don't know, . . . and . . . that can drain you. . . In working a room
. . . you are answering the same questions over and over [such as], “how’s the
university going?” “It's great! Everything's great!” You never have more than a
three-sentence conversation with people and then you’re on to the next one and
it’s really draining, but it is *critical* work. [As the president, you] must do that and . . . if you can’t handle that, and a lot of president’s can’t, then you shouldn’t be a president. [So,] I sometimes have to gear myself up for those visits. I'm going to . . . [a state in the Pacific region of the country] at the end of the month. We will be hosting a group of alums [in that state]. I'll be calling on people . . . So, if you do too much of that, you just wear yourself out. So . . . [fulfilling the external role is physically] harder [than fulfilling the responsibilities associated with the president’s internal role on the university campus].

*Ageism.* A few participants also spoke to their concerns of how others may view presidential candidates who are in their sixties with an age bias concerning their physical stamina to perform the president’s duties and role. Vice President McNair and Dean Gallagher describe their perceptions of how ageism, as a form of employment discrimination, represents a hindrance to male and female presidential candidates who are in their sixties or older. Vice President McNair who is in her sixties and nearing retirement age relays,

> I believe that if I wanted to be . . . vice president much beyond when my [current] president is here—that . . . [there is] probably a good chance that . . . a new president . . . wouldn’t want me to be the vice president . . . [as] I think ageism is going to be a factor.

Likewise, one of the reasons that Dean Gallagher believes that “it doesn’t seem plausible” for her to plan to achieve a presidency in her sixties is because she perceives that “other people . . . [will not] be interested in” her. Dean Gallagher surmises,

> I haven’t observed . . . [ageism] directly [in higher education], but that’s the kind of stuff you’re always reading [about] . . . in the corporate world. You’re always
reading about women or men, saying stuff like, “Oh, it’s hard to change jobs after you’re fifty.” That kind of ageism exists. So, . . . if that’s true, . . . I guess I wouldn’t be surprised if it worked in academics as well. Everybody’s always a little older in academics because it takes you so . . . long to get your Ph.D.

Popular culture makes me think that there probably is something to this ageism thing.

Although Dean Gallagher points out that she has not directly observed an age bias in higher education employment practices, Vice President McNair discusses how ageism was a factor in the search and selection process of a former president at her university. Vice President McNair explains,

So I think that in terms of . . . being a president, even though we get an opportunity to work longer, I think it’s very important to . . . be concerned about age. I don’t think that you cannot be concerned about it. In fact, back when the previous president was applying for the job, I remember that people . . . wondered whether or not . . . [the candidate] had the [physical] stamina to be the president. Of course, . . . [what they] were saying [about the candidate’s age] . . . was illegal, but nevertheless people said it . . . So, how old do you think . . . [the candidate] would have been? I’ll tell you. Fifty-nine [years old]. And, [at that age,] people were wondering about . . . [the candidate’s] stamina. That’s pretty amazing, isn’t it? It’s also amazing [that] anybody would say that out loud, but it’s what people . . . [discuss] behind closed doors.

Based on Vice President McNair’s observation of how ageism was as a factor in the search and selection process of a former president at her institution, she advises,
So, if you want to be a president, I would say pace yourself and try to make sure you’re moving in that direction while you’re still at least in your fifties. . . . Although I think you could . . . still [be in your] early sixties and do it, . . . I think I’d be heading that direction. I’d probably be trying to make sure I was positioned with a provost[ship] or dean[ship] . . . by the time I’m fifty-five, so that I could be . . . looking [for a presidency]. [I] could be wrong, but . . . I honestly believe that [ageism exists], and I think you’re going to hit ageism [when you reach your sixties].

Additionally, a number of participants who are in their sixties and nearing retirement spoke to their concerns of the difficulty in maintaining work-life balance if they were to pursue a university presidency. At this age and stage of life, several participants (Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy, and Provost Ellis) spoke to their desire for greater flexibility in their schedules to spend time with their grown children and grandchildren.

Work-life balance issues. Overall, eight of the participants in key-line administrative positions (Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President Landon, Vice President Young, and Provost Ellis, who are at various ages and stages of their careers, spoke to their perceptions of the challenges and/or incompatibility of achieving work-life balance as a university presidency. Also, each of the university presidents who participated in this study spoke to the enormous time demands that are placed on the university president’s schedule. Both President Perkins and President Rice indicated that the demands on their use of time as university presidents “can be 24 hours a day, seven days a week.” Also, based on her experiences in serving as a university president, President
Whitley notes, “it is not a forty-hour-a-week job . . . it’s seven days a week and it’s on call at least 12 hours a day.” She notes that working seven hours “would be a short day [so a] 9-10 [hour work day] is more common.” In providing details regarding the time demands on her schedule as the president of large research university, President Perkins states,

[My schedule] . . . can be . . . 24/7. There's something . . . on campus all day, everyday. I have to pick and choose what I go to [and I] try to attend as many student events [as possible]. I [also] try to wrap them around cultivation events. I am on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I have a different ring tone for each of my vice presidents and in the middle of the night when that phone rings and it is the vice president for student affairs or the police chief, I know I better jump up fast, run, and be awake [be]cause it's bad, it's bad! And so I know who's calling and the time it takes me to get to the phone [so] I kind of am ready. . . for them [and] I'm ready for that. The only time I'm really not on duty is when I close the campus at Christmas and I can shut the phone off, or [at least] I don't have to have it clutched in my hand every minute. That's really the only time that I stop because I'm [ultimately] responsible [for the university]. So, you have to be ready to do that . . . and that's okay. That's why it's so important that you have a team . . . [so] that [they] can do the heavy lifting so that I'm not getting called all the time. But they know they better call me. If it's important, they are not to ever hesitate . . . [to call me because] I'm never so busy [that I can’t take important calls from my team] and I don't care where I am. My good time does not outweigh what they may need from me.
President Howard and President Whitley also describe the time demands placed on their use of time, as presidents, on the weekends. President Howard points out, “there are a lot of weekends when I’m occupied.” As an example, President Howard shares, “I just went through my mail [today] and I probably had 6 invitations to do something [such as give a speech on] a Saturday in September . . . [when] we don’t have a football game that weekend.” Similarly, President Whitley states, 

oh, your weekends are absolutely university time between athletic events that you have to go to [or, the] theater events that you have to go to. . . Then, again, [there are] external invitations [to attend events] in the community. So, there is no weekend.

In considering the enormous time demands placed on the president’s schedule, President Whitley and President Rice both speculate that one factor which may hinder some women from seeking a university presidency is, in the words of President Rice, the “demands that the presidency has on . . . [one’s] personal time.” In considering the dearth of women currently serving in university presidencies, President Whitley questions, “do women just not aspire to . . . [the presidency in] seeing the length of time [that a president works in a] day . . . [and] say, ‘This isn’t a good job!’ ‘Why would I do this?’” In providing her perception of why more women do not have presidential aspirations, President Rice discusses her observation of the differences between men’s and women’s career goals and views concerning work-life balance. She states,

One of the fundamental differences, I think, between men and women is that men define themselves by their job. For women, the job, or the position, is just one of several facets of their lives . . . They don’t define themselves as clearly by the job as men do which means that they want time to explore and enjoy other facets of
life . . . [so that] the job doesn’t become their [entire] life. But with men, the job becomes their life and I think a lot of women will look at that and say, “I don’t want that!” . . . And, [I believe,] it depends on the quality of life that one wants for oneself. And women define quality of life differently [than men]. If I could stereotype a little bit, . . . a man wants a big job with a big salary [and] a woman wants a satisfying job and a comparable salary . . . [In addition to her career,] a woman wants . . . other things . . . [such as] a good relationship at home with a stable environment, time to spend with girlfriends, and time to explore other facets of her personality and her desires as she matures.

In confirming President Rice and President Whitley’s perceptions of how work-life balance issues may hinder some women from having presidential aspirations, many of the women in key-line administrative positions spoke to the ways in which the schedule of the president has hindered their consideration of achieving a university presidency. Vice President of Advancement Kennedy, for instance, conveys “I think my schedule is bad, [but] I don’t even whine [about my schedule] because I know what . . . [the president’s schedule is like and] it’s just awful.” Thus, participants of various ages and stages of life, from participants who were the mothers of young children to participants who desired more time to spend with grandchildren, spoke to the ways in which the president’s schedule would hinder their consideration of achieving a presidency.

*More flexible time to spend with grown children and grandchildren.* Three of the participants (Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, and Vice President Kennedy) who are in their sixties, discussed how their desire to have more “flexible schedules” in order to spend more time with their grown children and grandchildren represented a hindrance to
their consideration of achieving a presidency at their current age and stage of life. In speaking to her thoughts on pursuing a university presidency, Provost Ellis notes,

Well, you know, people have approached me about that and . . . I have not made that step. I think I need to . . . see if that’s something I really want to do. As I said, I didn’t plan on an academic career path. . . . I didn’t really plan [my career path into university leadership] and I would have to think if I really wanted to take the next step and make that much commitment [of my time] . . . it would be exciting to do new things [in a role as a president]. [However.] I also have to see what I want to do with my life. I see the president and . . . [serving in a presidency] is all [of] your time. I don't know if I want to do that.

In speaking further to her desire to have a greater work-life balance as she nears the later stages of her career path, Provost Ellis notes, “I’d really like to be a little freer now at my age . . . [to] take a long weekend and visit [my grown children and grandchildren].” She points out that her current role as a provost requires a “great commitment of time.” Yet, in observing the president’s schedule she describes how that role requires an even great commitment of one’s time, as she articulates,

I see the president [and in addition to having the internal responsibilities of the presidency,] she has the additional responsibility of being out there in the community and raising money and having people report to her so . . . [being the president] is a great commitment of time.

Likewise, Vice President Kennedy describes that she plans to retire after completing her tenure in her current position in order to have more time to visit with her grown children and grandchildren. She explains,
I’m starting to think about maybe the next chapter [in my life]. My children live on either Coast . . . [and] my grandchildren are here and around and so I imagine I will think about some kind of retirement in the next five to seven years.

As another example, Vice President Carter, who is in her sixties, notes that “as far as [her] health and age,” she could continue to advance in her career to serve in a presidency as she points out that “many college presidents are in their late sixties and [in] their seventies.” Although Vice President Carter conveys that she could “probably [work] for another ten years, [she questions,] but why [would I want to in considering that] I could not . . . [spend as much time with] my grandbaby?” In fact, Vice President Carter described how she was offered the opportunity to apply for a presidential appointment in the later stages of her career path. However, at this age and stage of life, Vice President Carter and her husband want more flexible time to spend with their grandchildren. Thus, instead of advancing to a presidency, she plans to retire. She notes, Now . . . I . . . had an offer . . . to go to a smaller university as their president, [but] I didn’t want to. I didn’t need the money. I wanted to have time for my grandchild. [At that point,] I . . . [had] one grandchild . . . and I really just had not had what I’d call the quality family time that I wanted on my own schedule, so my husband and I looked at retirement [as another option] and . . . we just decided, “Let’s don’t do this. Let’s do something that makes us happy and not go the grind.” Because I’m a twenty-four/seven person, and so if I’d have gone and done that, I’d have been [working] twenty-four/seven. And making appointments to see your grandchild just doesn’t feel right [to me].

Both Vice President Young and Vice President Landon, who are two of the younger participants in this study, indicated, in the words of Vice President Landon, that
they will “not completely rule out” the consideration of a presidency. However, for these participants, a major factor which would hinder their aspirations to achieve a presidency pertains to their observations of the university president’s schedule. Vice President Young explains,

A hindrance to me, to be just very honest, is the [president’s] schedule. It is an extremely difficult schedule to maintain and takes a great deal of energy to be able to do all of the things that a president is expected to do. . . . I have nothing but admiration for . . . [my president] as well as other [presidents] across the states . . . that I know who are in those types of roles because they are extremely difficult roles to be in . . .

Vice President Young represents many of the key-line administrators’ concerns about being able to maintain some degree of work-life balance while fulfilling the time demands placed on the university president’s schedule. In asking Vice President Young if she would take into account work-life balance issues if she were to consider pursuing a university presidency, she states,

Yes, absolutely, because it is extremely difficult . . . [and] I don’t necessarily think it’s the [president’s] workload. I think it’s the schedule. The president is a public official and is required to attend many, many events, both day and night, [on the] weekends, and even during holiday periods, etcetera. [The president] maybe on the road for days at a time and so because of that, and then still maintaining the day-to-day operation, I think that would be a real challenge. I think my concern for myself would be that I would not be able to [balance my work and personal life as] I’m still learning when it comes to that. I haven’t mastered that . . . I’m much better at . . . [balancing my work and my personal
life] than I used to be, but I haven’t mastered it. So, I think if I could ever get to a point where I could master that portion of it, then I probably would not be as concerned about taking a presidency. [However,] . . . at this point in time, I think [trying to achieve work-life balance as a university president] . . . would be a real issue for me.

Similarly, Vice President Landon notes that she works “with such an unusual, wonderful president who can seem to do it all” in terms of performing the internal and external roles of the president. In speaking to her consideration of a presidency, she expresses her concern about being able to achieve a work-life balance as both a mother of young children and a university president. She notes,

. . . Some people have talked to me about the presidency, . . . [but] “who wants to be a president?” You literally have to pour your life out. I mean, you just have to pour your life out, and . . . [my husband and I] have two kids.

The influences of family relationships and priorities in hindering women’s presidential aspirations. In fact, eleven participants spoke to the ways in which the influence of their family relationships with their children and/or spouses had served to hamper their consideration of achieving a university presidency. Although the majority of participants in this study who were mothers had grown children, most of the participants perceived that having young children would hinder many women from pursuing a university presidency. For example, while Vice President Young’s children are grown, she perceives how “hav[ing] small children . . . [would] weigh heavily” on a woman’s decision to assume a “senior-administrative level [position] like a vice president or a president.” As well, although she has grown children, Vice President Owens notes that the schedule of the university president represents a major factor that would hinder
her from considering a presidency. In asking Vice President Owens to describe one of the aspects of presidency that she finds unappealing, she explains,

The hours [that the president works]. You know, [as a vice president of advancement,] . . . I work a lot of hours and I am really glad that I didn’t get this position until my children were older because it would be very difficult for a mother of young children to have this responsibility because of the hours. I work a lot of evenings and weekends and the president works more than I do. So, as far as a woman with a family goes, I think [in] being a president of a university, there would be some constraints on time . . . [that] I think . . . could be a deterrent for some individuals.

Vice President Kennedy, who has grown children, expresses her perception that being a senior administrator or president while maintaining a family life is “a balancing act.” She conveys,

I think there’s always some balancing that has to take place . . . Certainly, if you are very directed toward the presidency, you just [have to] make the choices that you need to make. I really have to say, “Hats off,” [to women who balance the presidency with their family roles] because I think it’s very hard to cover all the bases, all the time . . . [because] I think [there is] the demand on all levels . . . [that] is attached to a presidency.

Vice President Landon is one of the younger participants in this study and the only participant who has young, elementary-age children. For Vice President Landon, one of the personal factors that she attributes to her lack of presidential aspirations is her perception of the incompatibility between the responsibilities that accompany her role as a mother of young children and the time commitments and responsibilities that
accompany the president’s role. In asking her if she perceives that it would be challenging to be a president with elementary-age children, she responds, “Yes, [it would be] 100% challenging [to be both a mother of young children and] to be a president.”

Vice President Landon poses the question, “I would like to know if there is a woman who is a president with elementary age children and how she does it [in balancing her work-life responsibilities]?” Vice President Landon “does not think [that] it can be done [to balance both roles,] unless you have a spouse who stays at home [or who] has a flexible [work] schedule.” Currently, in fulfilling her role as a vice president of student affairs, she describes that “there is literally not . . . [another] minute” in her day. Thus, Vice President Landon cannot envision herself, as a mother of young children, being able to manage the dual roles of a mother and a university president.

The influence of participants’ marital status and the role of the male spouse.

Several of the participants spoke to the important role that their marital relationships with their male spouse played in their consideration of advancing to a university presidency. Eight of the participants (President Perkins, Provost Ellis, Provost Barlow, Dean Reed, Dean Atwood, Vice President McNair, Vice President Carter, and Vice President Landon) who are married indicated that their spouses have been supportive of their career advancement into university leadership. Dean Reed notes, “I couldn’t have done what I’ve done [in my career path] without the support from my husband . . .” She points out, “he’s retired now and he continues to be extremely helpful to me and very, very supportive of me.” In contrast, Dean Reed conjectures,

If your husband is not supportive of your career aspirations, it’s going to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to achieve those aspirations. I mean . . . . . you are not going to be successful . . . if you are blocked at every step, if there
is no support whatsoever and nothing but antagonism for everything you try to
achieve, or [if you have] someone at home making fun of you, or making it
impossible for you to do the things that you need to do to be successful . . .
Dean Reed acknowledges, “although . . . [my advancement into university leadership]
was a bit of an adjustment initially for my husband . . ., once he made that adjustment [to
my career movement into leadership] he’s been extremely supportive of me.”
Likewise, a number of participants described how their husbands have supported
their career advancement into key-line administrative roles by making adjustments to
their careers and sharing household and/or childrearing responsibilities. Nevertheless,
some participants indicated that their marital relationship represented a hindrance to their
consideration of a presidency in regard to their husbands’ discomfort concerning
assuming the role of the male spouse of a female president. Provost Barlow notes that
although her husband has been supportive of her movement to a provostship, that one of
“the things that [would] hold me back from being excited [about pursuing a presidency is
a] personal [concern related to my] husband.” She explains how her husband would not
“relish” holding the status of the male spouse of a female president. Provost Barlow
states,
my husband tolerates the academic life, but would not relish being the first man.
What do you call the husband of a college president? We call . . . [the wife of the
president] here the first lady. [So,] the first gentleman would not be a role that he
would relish. He would do it and he would not hold me back. And, I guess, in his
mind, . . . he is preparing for that [as] I think he sees it as the next logical step [in
my career path].
Vice President Landon, who is hindered from having presidential aspirations as a mother of young children, also shares her concern about her husband assuming the role of a female president’s spouse. She explains, “I don’t know what that would look like for us, [as a couple,] for me to be a president [because I am very conservative . . . that way in [preferring to serve in a] supporting [role to my] husband.” Although Vice President Landon’s spouse has “always been encouraging” of her career, she notes that “he would probably be . . . [a] reluctant president[’s] [spouse] . . . [since] we have two [small] kids . . .” Yet, at the same time, Vice President Landon notes that her husband, who has a career as both a faculty member and a university administrator, has “said . . . jokingly [to her,] ‘yes . . . [you should] be[come] a president so I can just . . . go somewhere and write.’”

In speaking to the role of her spouse, President Perkins notes that her husband has had a significant influence on her career path and leadership aspirations. She relays, “I have a retired husband who is wonderful . . . [and] he’s my champion . . .” She points out, “. . . even before he was my husband he was just really supportive about . . . [pointing out career path opportunities for me.]” For instance, she notes that he would say, “‘you might want to think about this [opportunity] and you might want to think about that [opportunity]’ . . . because he's a great sort of think outside the box [kind of] guy.” She conveys, “I’ve told him before, ‘if this ever is too much for you we’ll do something different.’” In providing her advice about the role of the female president’s spouse, President Perkins states,

I would certainly advise anyone thinking about a presidency, you better sit down and talk with your partner and you better take an objective look at that partner because not everybody is cut out to be the spouse of a president and men
especially. I mean there's only like three. Most women presidents are single. So, a male spouse or partner is kind of on his own. Now . . . [my husband] loves it because he says, . . . “I get to define the role [of the male spouse].” [Also,] . . . he’s a self-actualized guy. He’s won all his prizes. [So,] he’s fine [being the spouse of a president]. [Nevertheless, being] the spouse of a president . . . can be a brutal job. People can be unkind, especially to women’s spouses. They can be thoughtless [and] they can be harshly critical, especially [if,] heaven forbid, she has her own life. If anybody’s thinking about being a president they need to . . . really look at who their hooked up with and say, “how’s this team going to work in this very public arena where every move you make is spotted [and] critiqued? You know, can they take it?” And some [spouses] do it better than others.

What is more, based on her experience working “for a number of presidents,” including several “male presidents and . . . one female president,” Vice President Kennedy has observed key differences between the roles and responsibilities of the female spouses of male presidents versus the male spouse of a female president. She commented,

the interesting part is that the other [male] presidents for whom I worked, their spouse carried a lot of the load that . . . [the female president] carries as a woman. Now, . . . [the female president’s] husband is just charming and engaging, but she lets him pick and choose . . . [what events to attend]. They work out [a situation in which] he doesn’t come to everything . . . I found that the male presidents with a [female] spouse, . . . for the most part, that spouse carried a lot of . . . the load that this female president still carries. That’s just my personal observation.
The hindrance of singlehood. Vice President Kennedy, who is single, views being unmarried as a hindrance to her consideration of a presidency. In contrast to some of the married participants who spoke to how issues with their marriages (e.g., dual-career marriage, etc.) would hinder them from considering a presidency, Vice President Kennedy observes, that being a “unmarried. . . can [also] be a hindrance sometimes.” Although Vice President Kennedy points out that there might be “some institutions [of higher education where being single] would not [be a hindrance,]” she surmises that “in a . . . more traditional part of the country . . . I think it is a help to have a spouse.” In asking Vice President Kennedy if being single is a hindrance to her consideration of a achieving a presidency she conveys,

. . . I’m unmarried and I think that there are a lot of demands on the spouse [of a], male [president] or female [president]. I think, [though,] it’s more so for women, frankly, still, because some institutions are still very, very traditional, and their alumni and student body and everything [expect the president to have a spouse], especially in the South, they’re very traditional. And they would like to interact with a president and his or her family, so I think it’s never been something that I thought would quite fit me, especially as I’m getting toward the age I am [now in my sixties].

Conversely, President Rice and President Howard, who are both unmarried, did not describe their singleness as a factor that hindered their progress toward achieving a presidency. However, President Rice, who is divorced, perceived that it would have been very challenging to serve in the president’s role at an earlier point in her career path while she was still raising her children as a single mother. She described, “being divorced . . . I think it would have been awfully hard . . . [as] a single parent . . . [to have been a
president and manage] these kinds of demands” associated with the president’s role and responsibilities. [Yet,] on the other hand, she perceived that “if one had a spouse [while serving as a president and raising school-aged children] it probably is a lot more doable.” In comparison, President Howard, who is single, viewed being unmarried as a factor that allowed her to be more mobile in relocating to take career positions at different institutions throughout her career path. She noted, “I was not married so I did not have . . . [the] problem . . . [of being place bound due to a spouse’s career.]”

The influence of family relationships on participants’ geographical mobility. In addition to the ways in which participants’ marital status and family relationships influenced their consideration of a presidency, a number of participants spoke to the ways in which geographic mobility and relocation influenced their presidential aspirations. For the majority of participants in this study, their geographic mobility and ability to relocate were directly related to their family relationships with their children and/or spouses. Four of the five participants in key-line administrative positions who cited geographic mobility and relocation as a hindrance to their consideration of a presidency, described that they were currently place bound due to their family relationships with children and/or spouses.

The influence of childrearing responsibilities on participants’ geographical mobility. Eight participants (President Rice, President Perkins, Provost Barlow, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, Vice President Young, and Dean Gallagher) indicated that they would not be willing to uproot their school-age children from their local school and community in order to relocate for an opportunity to assume a higher-level position of university leadership. As well, many participants did not move into their current positions of university leadership until after their children were adolescents or grown.
Vice President Young noted that when she began working for her institution, she decided to commute to work each day rather than uproot her children in order to relocate to a town closer to her employment. She explained,

It would have been easier [if] . . . I [had] moved. I commute almost an hour each day, each way. . . And it would be much easier [if] . . . I . . . had [relocated] . . . because . . . the hours are even longer for me because I have such a long way to commute as opposed to others who may live locally. At the time, however, I was not willing to relocate my children and so . . . it just became easier for me to make the commute than it would [have] be[en] for me to move . . . [my family].

Vice President Owens, who also chose not to relocate her family in assuming her current position of top-level university leadership, speaks to the ways in which being place bound can limit one’s opportunities for career advancement. She perceives that being place bound “does really limit you [in your career options and career advancement] . . . if you have the . . . [opportunity to choose among positions located throughout the] whole country.” However, Vice President Owens notes that geographic mobility and relocation represent one reason that she would not seek a presidency or any other position that would require her to relocate her family to another state. She discussed,

Well, there have been some positions I would probably have applied for, but I don’t have the flexibility of . . . moving out of state and doing those things . . . [due to my roles as] a mom and . . . a wife. . . [Therefore,] staying in this area has kind of prohibited me from maybe moving to some other [career] positions . . . [So,] as far as transferring, moving to another state, [or] doing anything like that, my family definitely has been one of the reasons that I would stay here. . . [However,] there was one point in time when I was [in a ]director’ s position in
the area of university advancement] . . . and was looking for a promotion . . . and so at that point in time I looked for another position and did find a job that I was going to take and then was asked to stay [at my current institution]. But . . . even . . . [at that time when] I [was] . . . looking [for another job position,] I had a limited [geographic] area that I could look. I tried to stay within sixty miles of . . . [the city] where I live . . .

Moreover, both President Rice and President Perkins spoke to how they waited until their children were grown and left home for college to advance into certain key-line positions of university leadership (e.g., dean, provost) which would demand more of their time and require geographical relocation. President Rice, for example, noted,

My children . . . were my priority . . . as long as . . . [they were] at home [and] I was determined to keep their lives on an even keel. So, until they grew up, I didn’t pursue anything outside of that geographical area. . . So, that limited me [in terms of my opportunities for career advancement into top-level positions of university leadership].

Thus, President Rice notes, “I think . . . my children [while they were still school-aged at living at home] . . . were my limiting factor” . . . in considering moving into a top-level position of university leadership. President Perkins also notes that she remained place bound while her children were school-aged and living at home. She describes that one factor that facilitated her ability to relocate in order to assume a provostship, as an immediate-prior position to achieving her first presidency, was “because the youngest child had left for college.” In asking President Perkins if she would have been willing to relocate in order to advance toward achieving a presidency prior to raising her children, she explained,
Not as easily... It would have been hard... [on my] whole family... [and] I don’t think I would have done it. I really think I would have... looked at the cost [because] there would have been such a personal cost for me to have made those kinds of moves...[in terms] of dragging a whole family behind me... [If I had aspired to pursue a presidency at an earlier point in my career,] I think I probably would have just waited... five years... and [contemplated to myself that] when the time is right for me personally, then I will do that.

As well, a number of key-line administrators (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Dean Gallagher, and Vice President Carter) described how their family relationships with spouses and/or children influenced their decisions not to relocate in seeking to pursue career advancement at this point in their career paths. Dean Gallagher and Provost Barlow describe how they are unwilling, at this time, to uproot their children from their current geographical location. For example, Dean Gallagher notes that one reason “it [would] be really hard [to relocate] now [is because she has a child] who’s still in high school... [and] it would be tough for [her child] to go someplace [else].” Additionally, Provost Barlow notes that “right now for the first time... life issues... in regard to my...[child] are indeed impacting the way I’m thinking about the next leg of my career.” In order to achieve a presidency, Provost Barlow recognizes that she would need to relocate to another institution. In speaking to her thoughts on relocation, she notes, “I’d love to relocate,... but I am not the only one that would be relocate[ing], and I don’t think it’s the best [choice] for everyone [in my family].” Further, she explains, I have... a special needs child...[and] one of [my child’s] greatest assets is this community...[as it provides my child] with a local support structure. So, I can’t quite see...[how] moving [my] special-needs [child] from [this]... community
. . . [would be in my child’s] best interest. So, the drawbacks for me [in relocating to seek a presidency] are personal [and] family-related.

In comparison, Provost Ellis, Dean Gallagher, and Vice President Carter note that they are currently “place bound” due to their marital relationships with their spouses’ careers and/or preference not to relocate from their current area of residence.

The influence of participants’ marital status and marital relationships on geographic mobility and relocation. In speaking to her perception of how family relationships influence women’s career path decisions and leadership aspirations, President Howard communicates, “I think what really affects . . . married . . . women’s . . . [lives] now . . . is whether their spouses can be moved for opportunities.” She speculates that family relationships can influence women’s career paths and aspirations if “they’ve got a husband who can’t move . . . [as] that’s the major thing in terms of being able to move around a little bit before you get a presidency.” Indeed, in speaking to the importance of being mobile in order to achieve career advancement, President Whitley notes, “I think if you really want to move up a career ladder you have to be willing to move whether it’s to a presidency, . . . [a] provost[ship,] or [a] dean[ship].” Both President Perkins and President Whitley, who had dual-career marriages at the time they began to have presidential aspirations, discussed how their relationships with their spouses affected their ability to relocate. For instance, at the time President Whitley began to have presidential aspirations she was “not really looking for a presidency . . . [because she] was . . . site bound . . . [due to her] spouse[’s] . . . employ[ment] in the area.” Likewise, President Perkins points out that her spouse “had some ability in his career and we knew we couldn’t [just] go anywhere, but that we could make some strategic moves [so that he could also be able to transfer his work to another location.]”
In contrast, as previously noted, President Howard, who is unmarried, pointed out that in being single was a factor that facilitated her ability to relocate to take career positions at different institutions on her pathway to the presidency. Similarly, President Rice, who was divorced at the time she began to pursue a presidency, noted that she had the “flexibility” to relocate after her children were grown.

Among the key-line administrators who participated in this study, both Provost Ellis and Vice President Carter, who began their careers as faculty members, experienced internal promotion paths to their current positions as key-line administrators. However, both describe how they are hindered from seeking a presidency, which would require geographical relocation, due to their spouses’ lack of interest in relocating to another area or region of the country. Vice President Carter noted that one of the factors that serves as a hindrance to her consideration of a presidency is that “my husband . . . [is] just not interested in moving . . . [as] he loves [our home] here [and] he loves [this town]. So, he just [has] . . . no intention of moving.” Also, in speaking to her consideration of relocating to achieve a university presidency, Provost Ellis notes, “I feel like I’m sort of place bound [as] my husband is from [this state] and he’s not really interested in living anywhere else.” She also points out that her husband owns a professional “practice here and so it’s not like he’s a faculty member and we could start looking . . . for a job elsewhere [as] it would be a matter of selling [his] practice and starting elsewhere.” Further, she notes,

[she] get calls from headhunters [looking for presidential candidates] all the time and I got a call once from . . . [a] university . . . [located in the] North[ern] [region of the United states]. However, “I said, “oh no . . . I don’t think . . . [I’d be
interested in a presidency in that region of the country because] my husband likes . . . [a warmer climate].”

As previously noted, with the exception of one participant, all of the participants who indicated that geographic mobility and relocation was a hindrance to their consideration of a presidency cited family-related reasons (e.g., a desire not to uproot school-age children, a spouse’s career, etc.) for being unable to relocate in order to accept a position of university leadership at a different institution. However, Provost Fields, who is in her sixties and single, notes that one of the reasons she does not “have any plan to move to a different or higher administrative position” is that she does not want to leave her current university at “this stage in . . . [her] career.” Although she does not plan to retire in the immediate future, she is in the later stages of her career path and does not desire to relocate at her current age and career stage. She explains,

I guess, early in my career, [if] the opportunity to move and go someplace else was there . . . I would have seized the opportunity. . . [However,] at some point in time, you’ve got to look at establishing roots and staying where you are. That’s the way I look at it. So, at this particular point in time, I would not leave the university.

Professional Factors which Hindered Participants’ Leadership/Presidential Aspirations

Inasmuch as a combination of factors (e.g., gaining administrative experience, achievement, meaningful work, etc.) served to motivate participants’ leadership aspirations, the participants in this study also spoke to a variety of both personal and professional factors which served to hinder their consideration of a university presidency. As one example, Vice President Kennedy is hindered from seeking a presidency by a combination of both personal factors (i.e., age and stage of life, work-life balance, etc.)
and professional factors (i.e., lack of presidential credentials, external nature of
president’s work). In fact, all of the participants serving in key-line administrative
positions spoke to at least one professional factor that had served to hinder them from
having presidential aspirations. Among the various professional factors which served as
hindrances to participants’ consideration of a presidency, the most prominent
professional factors which served to hinder participants from having presidential
aspirations pertained to a) career satisfaction in their current roles; b) the nature of the
president’s role, especially the external nature of the president’s work (e.g., fundraising,
etc.); and c) a perceived lack of presidential credentials (e.g., educational credentials,
scholarly/faculty credentials, etc.)

*Career satisfaction in current positions.* As previously noted, the majority of
participants in this study, especially the participants who began their careers as faculty
members, reported experiencing career satisfaction at each stage of their career paths in
higher education. For instance, Provost Fields who began her career path as a faculty
member has held a variety of academic leadership positions through her career path in
higher education including a department chair and an academic dean. In describing the
career satisfaction that she has experienced throughout her academic career states, “I
have always been extremely happy with whatever my job was [in my career path in
higher education].” Also, as discussed earlier, many participants were motivated to serve
in positions of university leadership by the career satisfaction that they experienced in
having the opportunity to engage in meaningful and purposeful administrative work (e.g.,
providing educational opportunities for first-generation college students).

A number of participants attribute their lack of leadership aspirations in their early
career paths, in part, to the career satisfaction that they experienced in their early careers
in higher education. For instance, President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley spoke to how the career satisfaction that they experienced at each stage of their academic career paths is one factor that contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations in the earlier stages of their career trajectories. President Rice, for example, relays that she did not have leadership aspirations or the aspiration to achieve a presidency earlier in her career path as she was “successful and happy” in her role as a faculty member. President Perkins also pointed out that she did not have presidential aspirations earlier in her career path as she conveys, “I always have liked what I was doing [in my career in higher education].”

Additionally, at the present stage of their career paths, nine of the key-line administrators (Provost Fields, Provost Barlow, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon) Vice President Young, indicated that a professional hindrance to their presidential aspirations pertains to the personal and career satisfaction that they have experienced in their current roles. For example, Provost Fields communicated that one of the reasons she does not aspire to a presidency is because “I love what I am doing [in serving as a provost so] . . . I don’t have any plan to move to . . . a higher administrative position [as a university president].”

Several of the participants (President Rice, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Carter) shared their perception, based on their own personal experiences and observations, that women place more importance on having a career that provides a sense of job satisfaction and less emphasis on other factors such as occupational prestige or financial compensation. In speaking to her perception of why
some women working in faculty roles may not aspire to move into positions of university leadership, Vice President Carter explains,

I think women probably have some needs for personal satisfaction sometimes that a faculty position gives you. . . . This university has . . . [a number of] women who are very much now in what I’d call those next-level positions. [In particular,] we’ve got a [woman] who’s now in charge of our residential college and she’s somebody who could be a college president at some point, but I don’t think she wants to because . . . she loves the students. . . . If you truly are a faculty who interacts with students, . . . you get with the students and you realize what you could do. So, I just think many of us enjoy the nurturing role and that nurturing role keeps us from really wanting to look at other things to do.

In further reflecting on the personal satisfaction that she experienced as a faculty member, Vice President Carter articulated,

I must tell you I loved my academic career . . . [which involved] teaching, . . . research, and working on [service projects]. It was so much fun and it was manageable. I was making nice money and I had lovely people to [work with]—so it was a great life.

Therefore, in considering the career satisfaction that Vice President Carter personally experienced earlier in her career as a faculty member, she speculates that other women faculty who also experience career satisfaction in their faculty roles may question, “So, why get into a[n] [administrative] structure?” Based on her experiences and observations, Vice President Carter surmises, “I think that women have some needs for personal satisfaction sometimes that a faculty position gives you more than maybe a deanship, or assistant dean[ship] or whatever [type of administrative position].”
Vice President Young, for example, is representative of the participants serving in key-line administrative positions who do not seek to advance into another administrative position or a university presidency due to the career satisfaction that she is experiencing in her current position of university leadership. In asking Vice President Young, if she had ever considered pursuing a presidency, she explains,

Well, I’m really kind of where I was before [I stepped into the position as vice president] in that I really don’t see [a presidency for myself]. I’m not actively pursuing . . . [a presidency]. I’m very happy with what I’m doing in the role that I’m in right now and I don’t immediately see myself in the role as a president. . . So, . . . I haven’t immediately thought about pursuing a presidency, [but] I’m not saying [either] that I wouldn’t [consider a presidency.] . . . I don’t take on roles just for the sake of advancement or for the sake of . . . any reason other than I’m interested in that job. . . I don’t go into roles or jobs for self advancement. So, I think that that’s why, even now, I don’t immediately think about, okay, “what is my next step?” I think about what I’m doing right at this moment and how I can do this [job] to the very best of my ability.

Thus, in making decisions regarding her career advancement, Vice President Young places a great deal of emphasis on engaging in interesting and enjoyable work that provides her with a sense of career satisfaction.

Similarly, Dean Atwood desires to work in leadership roles that provide her with the opportunity to engage in interesting and enjoyable work. For instance, in discussing the immediate-prior position that she held before advancing into an academic deanship, she noted, “[I] thoroughly enjoyed . . . [being] the chair of . . . [my academic] department.” Dean Atwood conveyed that she has enjoyed the work related to her
current role as an academic dean. Yet, Dean Atwood relays that she is hindered from pursuing a university presidency because she “does not think that . . . [she] would enjoy the [nature of] work” associated with the president’s role. She explains,

I've consistently said that I don't want to be a president and it's not about any false modesty or anything like that. It's the nature of the work from where I sit.

Presidencies appear to be very externally focused. While, as a dean or a provost, . . . you do . . . sometimes . . . interact with donors, supporters, . . . legislators, and trustees, [this type of work is] . . . not your primary focus. [In fulfilling the role of an academic dean,] your primary focus [is on issues related to] students [and] . . . faculty. . . My concern about the presidency is that I would somehow lose the focus on teaching and learning in the middle of all the fundraising . . ., budget wrangling, and dealing with renovations to the campus facilities. . ., or [in determining which] vendor to select as food service [for the campus]. So, while I could really see myself down the road . . . perhaps [becoming a] provost at a larger, comprehensive university, I really still don't see a presidency for . . . [myself] because I don't think that I would enjoy the work.

The nature of the university president’s role. Like Dean Atwood, all of the participants representing key-line administrators (Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Provost Barlow, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, and Vice President Young) described what they perceive to be the unappealing aspects (e.g., fundraising, being a public figure, lack of privacy, etc.) of the nature of the president’s work and role, especially in relation to the external nature of the president’s role. In particular, a number of participants who serve in positions of academic leadership as
academic deans or provosts described how they found certain aspects of the university president’s external roles and responsibilities to be unappealing in regard to fundraising, interactions with local and/or state governing boards, working with the legislature, and/or serving as a public figure in representing the “face” of the university. For example, although Dean Reed enjoys serving in a position of academic leadership, she notes that she is hindered from seeking a presidency due to certain aspects of the president’s role. She stated,

I’ve never had any desire to leave . . . [my academic disciple in a health-related field]. I’ve always considered myself to be a . . . practitioner, . . . an educator, . . . [and] an administrator . . . [within my academic field]. . . . [My academic discipline] sort of defines who I am and I don’t think I could maintain the same enthusiasm and passion for solving the problems of multiple schools . . . I’m passionate about . . . [my field] and I think I would have a hard time being as passionate about other schools. [Also,] . . . if I were a university president I would spend more of my time doing things that don’t appeal to me. . . . [For instance, I wouldn’t want to spend all of my time fundraising. I wouldn’t want to spend all of my time listening to . . . [alumni] complain about . . . [some aspect of an athletics program.]

The external role of the president. Like Dean Reed, seven of the participants in key-line administrative positions spoke to various aspects related to the external nature of the presidency that serve as hindrances to their consideration of achieving a university presidency. In describing what hinders her from having presidential aspirations, Dean Atwood relays,
the people that I have known who’ve been good presidents all seem to get energized by . . . [the] . . . external focus [of the president’s] work and to me it’s draining. I can do it when I need to, but it’s draining. [For example, in regard to my fundraising efforts for the college] . . . I’m exhausted . . . [after] talk[ing] for four hours . . . with donors. [So,] I don’t think I would enjoy the [external focus of the] work.

In asking Provost Fields if there is anything about the nature of the university president’s role that hinders her from considering a presidency, she describes how several of the external responsibilities of the president’s role would serve to deter her from seeking a presidential appointment. She explains,

Well, a president’s job is more external. The president spends a tremendous amount of time working with the legislature [and] working with potential donors. The president’s role is more external to the university. The provost’s job, [however,] is more [related to] the day-to-day operation of the university. . . [The provost’s job involves] working with the faculty and [with] the students and I really enjoy working with the faculty and the students. [In contrast,] I really do not enjoy the external opportunities. . . . When you’re working with prospective donors, there are a lot of opportunities to play golf, to wine and dine, to travel to places where they are, and those are things that I would really not be particularly good at and [I] would certainly not enjoy doing. I would much rather be in the [provost’s] office, working with deans, department chairs and faculty . . .

The fundraising role of the president. Although a number of participants (Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, Vice President McNair) serving in various positions of university leadership have fundraising responsibilities that are associated with their current
positions, several participants expressed that they would not enjoy fundraising as a primary or core responsibility of their jobs. In asking Vice President of Student Affairs McNair, who does not aspire to a presidency, what she finds unappealing about the president’s role, she discusses how fundraising, as the president’s “core responsibility,” represents one of the main factors that she finds unappealing about the nature of the president’s work. She describes that one factor which hinders her consideration of a presidency is the president’s use of time in cultivating donor relations.

I like working for division one schools and that means that the presidency for those institutions is being fund-raiser. I don’t mind fundraising. I still . . . [fundraise] for student affairs now and I’ve done it for community organizations. [However,] I’ve never had it as my core responsibility. . . . [Also,] I think it requires a lot of cultivation and a lot of hours . . . [in terms of] the length of time it takes to cultivate and do everything you need in order to do the job. . . . So, I think that for the kind of work that it is, it’s not enough for me to want to put in that kind of time, doing those kinds of activities. . . . I believe [that] the presidency . . . [as well as] the vice president for student affairs, [and] the vice president for development, . . . [are the] positions [that] are probably more relationship-based than any of the other officers. So, you have to cultivate a lot of relationships. So, it’s not the actual . . . [number of] hours [in] a day [that] you work. It’s the work to get it all pulled together in order to get the job done. That’s what I mean . . . It’s a lot of relationship time, and when you fundraise, you’ve got to take care of a lot of people. You’ve got to cultivate . . . relationship[s] [with donors] . . . and know them. You’ve got to be willing to bend to their will some[times], and I don’t want to do it.
Similarly, Dean Atwood described that she engages in fundraising as part of her role as an academic dean. She conveys, “certainly fundraising has been a big part of [my role] . . . [as well as] managing various fundraising events [for the college].” However, like Vice President McNair, Dean Atwood does not want to serve in a leadership role that requires fundraising, at the university level, as a core responsibility. She shares the perspective, “as I get closer and closer to presidents it seems to look [like] . . . more and more that . . . [fundraising] is all they do.” Although she does not mind the fundraising component of her role as a dean, she points out that she would not enjoy the wide-ranging fundraising responsibilities of a university president.

I do [fundraise for the college] . . . [and] I meet regularly with a number of donors. But at least, at this level, I’m . . . not fundraising for the football team. I’m not fundraising for a new student center. I’m fundraising for our programs and so it still feels connected, to me, to the primary academic mission.

In comparison, although Vice President Landon, who has administrative responsibilities in the area of student affairs, is sometimes “call[ed] on . . . [to] meet with donor[s] . . . [concerning] student initiatives,” she notes that the president’s “fundraising [role] . . . probably would be [one of] the . . . [aspects of a presidency] that would be challenging for me.” Vice President Landon is employed at a religious-affiliated university which has traditionally prohibited women from serving in executive-level leadership roles such as a university presidency due to the beliefs of the denomination. Thus, she expresses her concern over a female president’s ability to successfully fulfill the president’s fundraising role within this institutional type. Based on her perceptions and experiences, she states,
. . . I think there is kind of a maleness to raising . . . money. And I hate to say that, but you have to raise like $200,000 [or] $500,000 a day, or whatever amount it is to keep the ship running . . . [each] day. . .  [Also,] when I think about the [fundraising] meetings that . . . [the president] has to [attend in order to] make that happen, it would be difficult for me to understand. I have not seen . . . a woman [president be] able to do that, so I would have to figure out what that looked like.

Although many key-line administrators in this study perceived the president’s fundraising responsibilities to be an unappealing aspect of the university president’s work, some participants also spoke to other unappealing aspects of the president’s external responsibilities pertaining to: (a) interactions with state legislative bodies and/or governing boards, and (b) serving as a public official in representing the face of the university.

The president’s role in working with governing boards and/or the state legislature. Several participants indicated that the university president’s external responsibilities concerning political interactions with governing boards/structures (e.g., state systems of public higher education, local public/private university board of trustees, etc.) and/or the state legislature to be an unappealing aspect of the president’s role.

Inasmuch as some participants indicated that they would not relish having fundraising as a core responsibility of their work, five key-line administrators (Dean Atwood, Provost Fields, Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy and Vice President Landon) reported that they would not enjoy, in the words of Dean Atwood, working with “legislators and trustees . . . [as part of the] . . . primary focus” of their work. Although Vice Presidents of Advancement Carter and Kennedy do not view the president’s external responsibilities concerning private fundraising and university advancement to be an
unappealing aspect of the president’s role, both participants view the president’s external relations with political entities such as the state legislature and/or governing boards/structures to be a hindrance to their lack of presidential aspirations. Vice President Kennedy notes, “as an external person, I really am pretty free to develop relationships [in my role as the vice president of advancement] that aren’t particularly political.” Vice President Landon also relays that one factor that she finds unappealing about the presidency, in observing the external role of the president at her private university, relates to “seeing [that the nature of the work] you have to do [as a president] . . . is a little more political.”

Moreover, Vice President Carter, who has acquired significant “upper-level, administrative experience in external relations . . . working with alumni, . . . [university] development, . . . and [fundraising] at a public university, . . . described how she is hindered from seeking a presidency at a public university due to the president’s role in working with the state legislature and university governing board/state system for public higher education. She states,

Now, . . . [at a later stage of my career path,] I . . . had an offer . . . to go to a smaller [public] university as their president. [However,] I didn’t want to . . . [because] I looked at the . . . [state] legislature and the . . . [governing board for the state system of higher education and the] administrative kinds of things that you’d have to do, and I thought, [this aspect of the presidency] “does not appeal to me at all” . . . You [have] got to deal with state legislators . . . [and some of them] do not have the same kind of personal and professional behaviors that I have . . . [In my past experience working with certain state legislators, I had to realize that and forgive them sometime[s].]” So, why do some things that you
might not like to do? If you . . . [become a president of] a public university, you . . . [have] to be able to deal with politicians and with . . . [state] administrative board[s].

The public role of the presidency and lack of privacy. In addition, three key-line administrators (Dean Atwood, Provost Ellis, and Vice President Young) expressed that the president’s role, as a public official and the public face of the university, represented an unappealing aspect of the university president’s external role. As Vice President of Advancement Owens observes, one of the “primary . . . [responsibilities] that the president holds is . . . [related to] public relations . . . [as] a [principal] marketer of the school.” She perceives “that the president, now, is [considered] more the [public] face of the university.”

Indeed, many of the participants serving in key-line administrative positions commented on their observations of how a large portion of the president’s time, at their respective institutions, was devoted to his/her role as a public official in representing the public face of the university. Both Provost Ellis and Vice President Young, who view the president’s schedule as a hindrance to their consideration of achieving a presidency, have observed that along with the president’s internal responsibilities that he or she “has the additional responsibility [as a public official and representative of the university] of being out there in the community.” More specifically, Vice President Young noted that one of the factors that she finds unappealing about the presidency pertains to the use of the president’s time in serving as a public official of the university. She explains,

[The] president is a public official and is required to attend many . . . events, both day and night, [on] weekends, and even on holiday periods . . . [in addition to]
still maintaining the day-to-day operation [of the university] . . . [which I believe] would be a real challenge.

_Intrusion into one’s personal life._ In addition to the time demands placed on the president’s schedule in fulfilling his/her responsibilities in serving as a public official and representing the university, Dean Atwood notes that the intrusion of privacy into the university president’s personal and family life, in serving as a high-profile public figure within the local community, is one factor that has served to hinder her from having the aspiration to achieve a university presidency. In the following quote, she describes how she considers the president’s role in serving as the public face of the university to be an unappealing aspect of the university presidency. Dean Atwood conveys,

> From early on people said, “oh, you’re going to be a president one day” and that kind of thing. [In reply, I would say,] “oh yeah, yeah, I might do that.” [Yet,] . . . I always kind of had . . . [a] concern [about the president’s public role] even in the earliest years of academic administration . . . [However,] I kept saying [to myself,] “I don't know [that I would want to be a president]” It's kind of like when I was young, people said, . . . “[you are] going to be a congresswoman” and I would say, “No, maybe I'll work for a congresswoman, [but I do not want to be a congresswoman.]” . . . I'd love to run a congressional office, but _I don't want to be the face!_ I don't want to be that person. Being [the] dean here has been very hard because I'm in the newspaper a lot. [I have been in the local news media] a lot more than I wanted to be. . .

Also, Dean Atwood, who conveyed during her interview that she had recently accepted a job offer to assume a key-line administrative position at another institution of
higher education, commented on how the local news coverage concerning her new job position affected one of the family relationships in her personal life. She recounts,

> When the story came out that I was leaving the university my . . . [teen-age child] was really mad at me for about four or five days because all of . . . [my child’s] friends had read it in the paper before . . . [my child] got the chance to tell them. So, that level of . . . intrusion into your life is about as far as I've ever want to go, to be honest.

Thus, Dean Atwood is not only hindered by the president’s high profile position within the local community, but she is also hindered by how the lack of privacy that is associated with the president’s role as a public official would affect the relationships in her personal life. In speaking to the lack of privacy that accompanies the public role of the president, President Rice describes the lack of privacy that she has experienced in her personal life. She states,

> Oh, you just never have any time that’s just your [time] . . . to be an ordinary person. When you go to the mall, people will talk to you. [Or, when] you go to the drug store and you’re standing in line [to check out] and somebody [recognizes you and] says, “I know you. Let me tell you about this or that.” Or, “can you do something about this?” “Can you help here?” “Can you hire me?” [Therefore,] it’s not having a lot of privacy . . . and not having much of . . . a personal life.

*The challenges and rewards of serving as a university president.* Each of the presidents who participated in this study spoke to their perceptions of both the challenges and rewards of serving in the university president’s role. Like President Rice, each of the university presidents spoke to the various challenges of fulfilling the university
The president’s external role and responsibilities. For example, in regard to the president’s role as a public representative of the university, President Howard relays that serving as a public official represented one of the most important roles and responsibilities of her position as a university president. In fulfilling the external role of the president and serving as a public official she notes that as “a public person . . . you have to be extremely careful about your behavior.” Based on her experiences, President Perkins pointed out that as a public official, the president’s “work [takes place] in this very public arena where every move you make is spotted [and] critiqued.”

The presidents also spoke to how the responsibilities associated with their external roles occupied a primary use of their time. For instance, President Howard indicated that “a quarter of my time [is devoted to] community leadership . . . [while] fundraising . . . takes up about a quarter of my time.” In speaking to the use of her time in fulfilling her external responsibilities, President Perkins notes that her responsibilities pertaining to “[speaking to] alumni groups, fundraising, . . . being a citizen of the local community,. . . [and her work related to] lobbying” at the state and national capitol takes up about “50 [or] 60%” of her overall time.

*The personal satisfaction of serving in a presidency.* Although President Perkins and President Rice acknowledged that being a president is “hard work,” they also spoke to the aspects of their roles that provided the greatest career satisfaction and enjoyment. In contrast to how some of the key-line administrators viewed the time demands placed on the president’s schedule in regard to being visible and present at many events on campus and in the community to be an unappealing aspect of the president’s role, three of the presidents (President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley) described the enjoyment and personal satisfaction they have experienced in representing the university
through attending numerous campus and public events. For example, President Rice notes,

[In] being [relatively] new [to my position] . . . the [time] demands on weekends and evenings are still quite high . . . [because] I’m somebody that people want to meet. So, I get invited to everything which I generally enjoy.

President Perkins also points out that in performing her role as a public official that “being visible [and] . . . present . . . [on] the campus . . . [and in] the community . . . is important” to her. She intentionally tries to “be out and about” both on campus and in the local community and she especially enjoys “attend[ing] as many student events” as possible when she is on campus. Similarly, President Whitley conveys that she gains a great sense of personal satisfaction in her work as a university president. For example, she states,

[I] get a lot of personal satisfaction and enjoyment out of . . . a lot of [the] things I do at the university. . . . So, for instance, if I’m at a football game, even though I’m working . . . and talking to people, I absolutely enjoy being there.

Altogether, the presidents who participated in this study spoke to the challenging aspects that are related to performing the president’s external roles and responsibilities (e.g., lack of privacy/personal time, being in the media spotlight, the physical stamina required to perform the president’s external responsibilities, a demanding schedule, etc.).

However, compared to many of the key-line administrators who were hindered from seeking a presidency by the external nature of the president’s role, the presidents who participated in this study did seem to express that the external nature of the presidency had served to hinder their own presidential aspirations. In contrast, as previously addressed, the factors which served to impede three (President Perkins, President Rice,
and President Whitley) of the four presidents from having presidential aspirations or pursuing a presidency at an early point in their respective careers pertained to personal factors such as being in a dual career marriage, geographical mobility, and/or childrearing priorities. Although the presidents acknowledged that some of the aspects of their external roles were more challenging than the internal responsibilities related to the internal operations of the university, they also spoke to the aspects of the president’s role which have provided them with the greatest sense of career and personal satisfaction such as attending campus (e.g., student performances) and/or community events.

*Lack of perceived presidential qualifications.* In addition to how the various aspects related to a university president’s external role hindered some of the participants in key-line administrative positions from having presidential aspirations, a number of key-line administrators spoke to the ways in which their perceived lack of educational credentials and professional qualifications served as hindrances to their advancement into a presidency. Many of the participants in this study in both key-line administrative positions and university presidencies described the types of credentials and/or qualifications that they perceived are necessary to achieve a university presidency including (a) the educational credential of a doctoral degree, (b) scholarly and/or faculty credentials (e.g., tenure, teaching experience, etc.), and (c) diverse experiences in various areas (e.g., finance, student affairs, facilities, etc.) of university operations.

*The educational credential of a doctoral degree.* As previously noted, the highest degree attained among the majority (14) of participants in this study was a doctoral degree and two participants (Vice President Owens and Vice President Kennedy) held a master’s degree. Both Vice President Owens and Vice President Kennedy, who serve in non-academic administrative positions in the area of university advancement, conveyed
that not having the educational credential of a doctoral degree was a factor that served as a hindrance to their consideration of achieving a presidency. For example, Vice President Kennedy perceives that her level of educational attainment would serve to hinder others’ consideration of her as presidential candidate. She explains, “I don’t have a Ph.D. . . . [and] I think . . . in all honesty . . . that would hamper me as a viable candidate. So, I’ve never thought of myself as pursuing a presidency.”

In discussing her educational credentials and career path advancement, Vice President Owens described the differences between how the internal and external constituencies viewed her movement into a top-level position of university leadership without holding the educational credential of a doctoral degree. She states, Well, I know when I got the position [as vice president of advancement], I had a lot of people [at the university who were] really excited that I got the position. They would [say,] “You’re normal” and I think what they meant is that most people [in top-level leadership positions] have PhDs. I do not [have a Ph.D.] . . . [and] the CFO, [Chief Financial Officer,] does not [have a Ph.D.] I think they expected another man from the college of business [with a Ph.D.] to be moved into this position. It really was good for morale to see a woman, someone that was internal [to the institution], [and someone] that had moved their way up . . . [receive a promotion to the vice president’s position.] . . . So, I think it was received well by the other faculty and staff. . . . [However, in contrast,] externally, people were thinking, “wow, . . . she doesn’t have a Ph.D. How did she get that job?”

Although having a master’s degree as her highest degree of educational attainment did not hinder Vice President Owens’ progress into a university key-line administrative
position, she expresses that she is hindered from seeking a presidency without holding a doctorate. She explains,

In my situation, I think credential wise, I would be more comfortable . . . in a presidential position, . . . if I had a Ph.D. I . . . think I would want to do some more studies because my degrees have been very focused . . . [toward my career field.] So, I think if I were going to . . . [pursue a presidency,] I would want to go into another [academic field] studying another specific area . . . , but I’m not sure what . . . [field I would want to study.]

What is more, both Vice President Owens and Vice President Kennedy perceive that in order to be viable presidential candidates they would also need to possess scholarly and/or faculty credentials.

Scholarly and/or faculty credentials. The majority of the participants in this study, including those who have academic (e.g., academic dean, provost) and non-academic career paths (e.g., university advancement, student affairs), shared the perception that having scholarly (e.g., a record of peer-reviewed publications and research presentations) and/or faculty (e.g., tenure-track faculty status, teaching experience) credentials are important qualifications for achieving a university presidency and leadership legitimacy within the organizational context of higher education. As previously noted, the majority of participants, including each of the university presidents, began their full-time career paths in higher education serving as tenure-track faculty members. Four of the participants who had achieved presidencies described having a “scholar-model’ or academic career path and each president held at least one academic administrative position (e.g., department chair, dean, provost) in their career pathway to the presidency. As well, nine of the 12 key-line administrators (Provost Ellis, Provost
Fields, Provost Barlow, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair) who began their early career paths in higher education as tenure-track faculty members, with the exceptions of Vice President Carter and Vice President McNair, have advanced through the academic administrative ranks to achieve their current positions as key-line administrators.

Although Vice President McNair began her first full-time professional position in higher education as a tenure-track faculty member, she transitioned early in her career path into a staff position in the area of student affairs. However, as she progressed through the administrative ranks of her career path in student affairs she assumed a tenure-track faculty status. Thus, she currently holds the dual status of a non-academic key-line administrator in student affairs and a tenure-track faculty appointment. In comparison, Vice President Carter, who began her early career in higher education as a tenure-track faculty member, transitioned into a non-academic administrative career track in university advancement in the later stages of her academic career path.

Additionally, although Vice President Young did not begin her career in higher education as a tenure-track faculty member, she assumed a dual-status position as both a non-academic administrator and a tenure-track faculty member after completing her doctoral degree. Vice President Young explains that early in her career in higher education while serving in a non-academic staff position, she began her doctorate and progressed “from adjunct status to [an] instructor status to [a tenure-track] professor status.” She communicates, “so even though I’m an administrator now, I’m also a [tenure-track] faculty [member].”

The value of a scholar-model/academic career path in understanding faculty culture and the organizational context of the academy. Ten participants (Dean Atwood,
Dean Reed, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, President Howard, and President Whitley, Vice President Young) spoke to their perceptions of the value of possessing scholarly and/or faculty credentials, as a university administrator or president, in gaining, the respect of the faculty and “faculty acceptance.” Many participants described how a university leader’s experience serving as a faculty member can contribute to his/her understanding of the culture and environment of the academy. For example, President Howard expresses the sentiments of many participants in stating, “in my experience . . . you have to understand the academy [in order] to be able to really lead the academy.” Further, Provost Fields explains that higher education represents “a different environment” than other organizational contexts as she distinguishes that “in academia you are a leader among peers, [but in other organizational contexts such as] industry you are [a leader] at the top. People either do it the way you want to do it, or they’re no longer there.” In contrast, in understanding leadership in a university environment, the faculty represent, in the words of Vice President Young, “a very large [and powerful] internal constituent[cy].” Dean Reed further explains, “the faculty [are a powerful constituency because they] own the curriculum . . . and have a tremendous amount of input in[to] . . . decisions [regarding] . . . hiring, . . . promotion, . . . and tenure.” Thus, Dean Reed points out that in a higher education environment,

[if a university leader] want[ed] [to terminate the employment] of a certain faculty member . . . [who wasn’t a good citizen . . . [and] was creating trouble . . . [the university leader could not] just walk down the hallway, open their door, and say, “You’re not going to be here next year. You better be working on finding another job.” That’s not the way it works [in the academy.] . . . There are very complex
processes that have to be followed to get rid of anyone [including:] a faculty member, a staff member, a dean, or anyone else who isn’t doing a good job.

Participants also highlight the ways in which having scholarly and/or faculty credentials is a key factor which assists a university leader in gaining “respect” and “acceptance” from the faculty.

*The influence of scholar/faculty credentials in gaining faculty respect and acceptance.* In addition to how many of the participants who worked as faculty members experienced personal and career satisfaction in teaching at the university level, Vice President Young explains how, within the context of higher education, gaining faculty credentials served to assist her in attaining “faculty acceptance,” in her role as a university administrator.

So, even at my level, [as a vice president], . . . part of the reason [that] I teach . . . [is, first and foremost, because] I enjoy it. I’ve always taught, ever since I [first began my early career path as . . . [a] teacher [in K-12 education] . . . So it’s not like I started [teaching for the first time] . . . when I got into this [administrative] role [at the university]. I was doing that before, but I didn’t realize at the time how valuable that would be. [Although I realized the value of teaching from the perspective of] my own personal satisfaction of teaching and interacting with students, . . . it wasn’t until after I got into director’s position [and] then a vice-president’s position that I realized the value [of teaching] . . . [in terms of gaining] faculty acceptance . . . As a result . . . [of gaining] . . . teaching . . . experience [and assuming the status of a tenure-track faculty member], I gained the respect of my faculty peers and [the] faculty committees on campus because I was a faculty at that point.
Many participants agreed that having faculty and/or scholarly experience is particularly important to serving in a position of university leadership that, as Vice President Young articulates, “deals with issues that . . . seriously affect faculty.” She explains that, in many cases, university leaders with faculty and/or scholarly credentials are better able to gain the respect and acceptance of the faculty because “they often feel like you are walking in their shoes.” As an example, Provost Ellis notes, in my current role, I do . . . have the respect of the faculty . . . [and] I think having been a tenure-track faculty member before coming to the provost’s office was extremely helpful in understanding and working with faculty which is my primary job . . .

As well, Vice President Young describes how gaining tenure-track faculty status enhanced her ability to relate and interact with the faculty in her administrative role. I think that when some decisions are having to be made, or when certain initiatives are moving forward, there’s a different . . . level of acceptance because . . . they’re talking to somebody who has been there and done it . . . [So, based on my experience as a faculty, I can say,] “I understand what you’re talking about when you have issues with students. . . . [or] when you have issues . . . [with] a system that you’re trying to put your grades in on.” . . . I can relate to everything they say because I’m doing it, too, [as a faculty and] . . . I think that makes a very big difference.

The value of earning tenure in gaining faculty acceptance as a university leader.

In seeking to gain faculty acceptance as a university leader, several participants (Vice President Young, Provost Reed, President Whitley, and President Howard) also spoke to the importance of earning tenure. Dean Reed expresses, “the most important thing for all
of us in academics is to work our way through the ranks and that needs to take precedence over all else.” Dean Atwood and Vice President Young communicated that they did not want to be granted promotion and tenure as part of their appointment into a key-line administrative role, but each indicated that they wanted to “earn” tenure based on the merit of their scholarship and quality of their teaching. Dean Atwood notes, “I didn’t want to be promoted [because I was appointed] as dean. I wanted to be promoted on the strength of my research and teaching record.” Vice President Young describes how “earning tenure” helped her to gain acceptance and respect among the faculty at her university.

When I came on [board as vice president,] I was given an option as . . . a senior-level administrator to be granted tenure . . . because of my years of service. [However,] I said, no. I wanted to earn it like every other faculty . . . Working towards tenure, I think carries a lot of weight with the faculty, with the deans, [and] with the department heads . . . [in terms of demonstrating that] I’m not just a senior-level administrator, [but] I’m also one of them. Again, it’s about respect. So it’s not like people can say, “Well, they just gave . . . [tenure] to her [as part of her administrative position]. She didn’t earn it. She’s not one of us. She doesn’t have a clue what we’ve been through.” No. You might be able to say that about some other [administrators], but not me because I do know. As an administrator, . . . all of those things that we do . . . [such as] setting a vision, goals, and strategies . . . require buy-in from the faculty. There’s not really any major initiatives that would not involve the faculty. I mean, that’s why we’re all here is to serve the faculty and the students. So, as a senior-level administrator, when I’m promoting and I’m moving forward with some of these things, I know that I can count on
them to trust that I’m going to make good decisions . . . [Also,] I think sometimes senior-level administrators are not as successful as they could be because they’re not respected. They might be respected and valued for their knowledge and expertise . . . [but,] if you don’t have . . . [the] respect . . . of the faculty and students . . . it sometimes makes it extremely difficult for you to be successful in your role because you don’t have [the] buy-in [from the faculty] for it.

Additionally, a number of participants indicated that the process of earning tenure and promotion is a valuable way to “prove” and “demonstrate,” as Dean Reed conveys, a “clear record of success” prior to assuming a position of top-level university leadership. For instance, President Howard relays that if you have presidential aspirations, “you really ought to get tenure some place first because most universities or colleges will not look at someone who hasn’t really come up through [the] traditional [academic] ranks.”

Correspondingly, President Whitley notes,

Well, [I advise] any woman . . . that’s coming up through the academic route . . . [who] talks to me [about achieving a presidency], [that] you absolutely have to become a full professor. . . I think that if you have aspirations, you have to pay your dues and get to be a full professor. You have to prove yourself in your discipline first. So, I think . . . [for] women coming up the academic pipeline, there’s no shortcut there.

*The scholar-model career path.* In fact, President Howard, Dean Reed, Provost Fields, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Young shared the perception that the scholar-model/academic career path represents the most prominent pathway for women to achieve a university presidency in terms of advancing, as Vice President McNair
explains, from a tenure-track faculty member to “a department chair, [to a] dean[ship], [and to a] provost[ship]. Likewise, President Howard advises,

... The easiest way to move up [the administrative ladder to the presidency] ... [is] to start out [your career as a faculty member] and be a very good academic. ... Watch your department chair when you get your first academic job and see what it takes to be a department chair. ... Then, [begin to take on administrative] responsibility [and] be[come] a department chair at some point. ...

The participants who advocated for following a scholar-model path to the presidency shared Vice President Young’s view that having faculty and/or scholarly credentials “makes a very big difference for people who may be pursuing presidencies [because ... the faculty are the driving force behind the institution and being able to have their respect is [of] monumental ... importance.”

Several participants pointed to examples of university presidents from non-academic career paths in higher education or career paths outside of higher education who were unsuccessful in their presidencies due to their inability to gain the support of the faculty. For example, Vice President Kennedy, recalled that one of the presidents who hired her for a career position in advancement “received a vote of no confidence from the faculty.” She relayed,

The president ... was a very bright man ... [who] had been an entrepreneur, [but he] didn’t really fit the classical kind of scholar model that I think many of the more traditional liberal arts faculty would have liked [to have as their president].

Provost Fields points out that “there certainly are some examples [of successful university presidents] ... from outside academia.” Nevertheless, she asserts that since the culture and organizational context of “academia is very different from other
institutions . . . [so] I think coming up the faculty rank, with the research and the teaching, is the best way to go about . . . [advancing up] the career ladder in academia.”

In comparison, although Vice President McNair has advanced into a key-line administrative post through a career path in student affairs, she explained how she has been solicited to apply for presidencies because of her scholarly credentials. She states,

I think that if you’re not [one who has followed a scholar-model career path] . . . then you have to begin to look like that. I had only one . . . [opportunity] where I was a little bit interested in being a president, and it was at . . . [a university in the Northern region of the country where] . . . I’d done a keynote address. [Giving] the keynote address [at this university had] brought me to the attention of a faculty member on the [presidential] search committee [at this university] . . . She went back to the search committee and . . . she said, “oh, I’d like her to be my president” . . . and they pulled up my credentials. [Then,] the headhunter [for the presidential search committee called and] said, “. . . we ordinarily would not be looking at a student affairs person, but [we are interested in considering you for the presidency] . . . because of the way your record looks . . .” and it was a scholar record that made them [interested in me as a presidential candidate]. So, if you’re not going to . . . follow a scholar model [career path], then you need to look the part. You need to still do your scholarship. I think that at every level, the . . . thing that made me stand out more than any . . . [other aspect of my credentials] is my scholarship and my professional involvement . . . [in terms of giving] professional-level presentations and being published. It made me look different than other people . . . [in non-academic areas] and when faculty are on search
committees, looking at a person like me, they identify with that. So, I think more than anything, . . . [my scholarly record] has served me well.

*Lacking scholarly and/or faculty credentials.* In recognizing the importance of gaining the acceptance and respect of the faculty as a university president, Vice Presidents of Advancement Owens and Kennedy, who do not possess faculty or scholarly credentials, share the perception that their lack of faculty and scholarly credentials would hamper their ability to achieve a presidency and obtain “faculty acceptance.” In contrast to the ways in which a scholar-model president can often gain a sense of mutual understanding with the faculty and other internal constituencies of the university, Vice President Kennedy notes,

Well, one of the things about being [in] an external [role in university advancement is that] you have . . . faculty, students, and staff . . . within . . . [the] campus [who] don’t really understand what goes on in my division [and] they don’t quite understand your function. Now, that’s probably not as true for [an area of university operations such as] student affairs or something more internal with the life of the campus . . . One . . . perception [that others have] . . . [of] advancement folks . . . is [that] . . . you’re just at parties . . . and you party a lot. They don’t know how hard that [it is] to cultivate and build [donor relations] . . . [Therefore,] I don’t know if people would think, “well, she’s not a serious academie”—which I’m not.

Consequently, since Vice President Kennedy does not have faculty or scholarly credentials, she points out that, “I don’t know that I would be able to . . . balance all [of] the completing kinds of agenda, [as a university president,. . . [particularly in relation to] faculty [issues and concerns.]” Likewise, Vice President of Advancement Owens relays
that one factor that hinders her consideration of achieving a university presidency pertains to her lack of scholarly and faculty credentials as she states, “as far as academics and those types of issues, I don’t have a lot of experience [and] I’ve never taught [at the university level.]”

Similarly, although Vice President of Student Affairs Landon does engage in scholarly publishing, she perceives that it would be more challenging to serve as a university president without having faculty credentials, a strong scholarly record, and a scholar-model career path. In observing the president of her university who followed a scholar-model career path to the presidency, she noted,

“our president does such a great job, authoring lots of books . . . [and] I don’t understand how, . . . as a president, . . . you would have that kind of responsibility and still find time to be so productive in your academic life [in order] to be respected by the faculty. [Therefore,] academic writing . . . would . . . probably . . . be [one of] . . . the things that would be challenging for me [as a president] . . . Now, in my [role as] vice president, . . . I find it very difficult [to find the time to engage in] . . . academic writing. [However,] I try to do a journal article or [write] a [book] chapter a year.

Gaining diverse experiences in various areas of higher education. Several participants also noted that their lack of diverse experiences in various areas of higher education represents a hindrance to their pursuit of a presidency. For instance, Dean Gallagher relays that “one reason” she would not consider pursuing a presidential appointment at this point in her career path is because “I’ve only done this [job] for one year so . . . I don’t have a long enough track record to be very attractive to other institutions right now.” However, in developing a track record of administrative
experience she conveys that “I might be interested in seeking a provost position [as this type of position provides a greater] depth of knowledge about . . . what goes on across the rest of the university.”

In asking Vice President Carter if she would have considered pursuing a college or university presidency at an earlier stage in her career path, she describes how her lack of senior-level administrative experience and diverse experiences in other areas of higher education would have limited her ability to achieve a university presidency. She states, I’ll tell you that . . . it would have been a foolish move for me [to advance into a presidency] without having had the experiences that I had . . . [in] upper-level [administration]. So it would have been a foolish move for me to look at or even try for anything until I’d had the experience . . . [of] working with alumni, . . . working with development, [and] . . . raising . . . big money . . . [As a faculty member] I really [did not understand] . . . that part [of the president’s role. Prior to transitioning from a faculty role into an administrative role in advancement,] I understood faculty and [I] knew how to deal with faculty, staff, and students, but I didn’t have a clue about alumni or those kinds of things.

Provost Ellis points out that although faculty gain experience in their academic fields, they often do not have experience in other important areas of university operations. She explains, “I think when you’re a faculty member you deal in one area primarily, but do you understand facilities, . . . [or] do you understand finances and those kinds of things?” In agreement with Vice President Carter and Provost Ellis, President Whitley advises presidential aspirants that it is increasingly important to obtain “diverse work experiences” outside of one’s academic discipline or area of expertise. She states,
If you’re a woman in the sciences you have to show [that] you know and appreciate the arts. If you’re coming up out of student affairs, you’re going to have to show you understand the budget. If you’re coming . . . [into higher education] out of a legal career, you’ve got to show you know higher ed[ucation]. So, I think a diversity of background [is] . . . [becoming] more and more . . . important.

In contrast to how a lack of diverse experiences in various areas of university operations served to hinder some participants’ confidence in their ability to qualify for a presidency, possessing a diversity of background in a variety of areas of university operations increased the confidence of some participants in their ability to assume a presidential role. For example, President Rice pointed out that as an academic dean, “[I] broadened my avenues [of experience] beyond . . . [my academic field of expertise] and looked at undergraduate education, in general, which was invaluable [in preparing to assume a presidency].” Although Provost Barlow, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, and Vice President Young do not have presidential aspirations, each conveyed that having diverse experiences in several areas of higher education has served to increase their confidence in their qualifications to achieve a presidency.

For example, although Provost Barlow does not aspire to become a president, she describes how she has been solicited to apply for presidencies. In the following quote, she speaks to her awareness of how the “rich” and diverse experiences that she has acquired throughout her long-standing career in higher education have prepared her for achieving a presidency.

Well, both of the people with whom I have shared my résumé in the last few weeks have been for presidencies . . . In one of the presidencies that’s open . . .
read quite a bit of detail about the profile for that presidency, and . . . it was one of the most extensive profiles I’ve ever seen [with] pages of . . . what the committee members are looking for, [and] what the university needs, etcetera. With a couple of exceptions, I felt like I could bring something to that position of value. So that is a reality. The experiences having served here as provost over these many years have been rich. The university’s been transformed during this time, lots of new program startups, lots of building campaigns, . . . [and we have] raised the profile of terminally-degreed faculty up to 85 percent . . . So, . . . there are so many lessons that I’ve learned . . . [along the] journey . . . that I know I could take to another position. So, . . . I do have experience that could perhaps be of value elsewhere in higher education and I know that’s the case.

Although Vice President Young “does not immediately see . . . [herself] in the role of a president,” she also points out that she does have a diversity of experience in higher education that would qualify her to achieve a presidency. She states, “I do know that I’ve gained enough experience over a significant number of areas and that my range of ability is pretty vast. I could cover a number of different things at this point in my career.”

Institutional Factors which Hindered Participants’ Leadership Aspirations

Although all of the key-line administrators discussed a combination of personal and professional factors that had contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations, three participants spoke to how factors related to their institution and/or institutional type have contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations pertaining to feeling a sense of institutional loyalty to the university where they are currently employed, and/or the long-standing tradition of male presidential leadership within the denominations of certain religious-affiliated institutional types. As previously noted, nine (Dean Atwood, Dean
Gallagher, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, Vice President Young) out of the 12 key-line administrators in this study experienced internal promotion paths to their current positions. Eight of the nine participants who had been promoted into administrative positions within their institutions spoke to being “place bound” due to family relationships with children and/or spouses.

Institutional loyalty. In addition, Vice President Carter and Provost Barlow described how the deep sense of loyalty and passion that they felt toward their respective universities had influenced their decisions concerning geographic mobility and relocation. For example, Vice President Carter relays that one reason she did not advance into a key-line administrative position or presidency at a different institution was because “I didn’t want to leave... [the town where the university was located because] I loved... [the town], and I loved... [the university].” In speaking to her sense of loyalty, she wanted to serve in an administrative role that would allow her the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the university in “achieving... [its full] potential.” Vice President Carter relayed that in order to externally advance to a presidency at another university that she would have to feel a “love of... [and] passion” for the institution.

Markedly, Vice President Carter and Provost Barlow, who both described feeling a professional calling to their careers in higher education as faculty members and university administrators, expressed how their sense of professional calling was also linked with their passion for their universities. In speaking to one factor that hinders her from advancing into a presidency at another institution, Provost Barlow articulates how she does not desire to leave the university where she first felt called to a career in higher education.
This is probably not totally uncharted water for women, ... [but] just to be perfectly honest ... I am extremely loyal to this institution ... [in having a long-standing career] here. I hold an undergraduate degree from here. I really ... can't see myself anywhere else in higher ed[ucation] as easily as I can see myself back where I belong, ... [and at the university] where my first calling was.

*Gender-related obstacles for women’s advancement at conservative, religious-affiliated institutions with a strong tradition of male leadership.* Moreover, although the majority of participants in this study did not describe encountering formal or institutional barriers to their achievement of a presidency and/or aspirations to achieve a presidency, two participants employed at religious-affiliated universities (Provost Barlow and Vice President Landon) noted that women seeking presidencies within the denomination of this institutional type do encounter institutionalized barriers to their career path advancement. Although some denominations of religious-affiliated universities do allow women to serve in presidential roles, Provost Barlow and Vice President Landon described how the religious beliefs that govern the denomination associated with their universities have traditionally prohibited women from serving in positions of presidential leadership. Provost Barlow explains,

I come from a fairly conservative [religious] denominational background. ... [which has traditionally not had] ... women [serving] in presidencies. [So,] ... [on a broader scale,] [gender diversity within the presidential ranks is] just not happening yet. There are probably, though, some ... colleges [within this religious denomination] outside of [this university] that are more ready for a woman president ... [than this university is], if that makes sense. [However,] it’s not really something that drains me, personally. I appreciate the issues. The
model that [my university,] . . . and other schools like . . . it, has taken for its president . . . is that the president is also in the pulpit quite a bit. We have a few women pastors, but not very many. I don’t particularly have a trailblazer personality. I could do it, and I’m not sure that I won’t do it [at some point], but it’s just so far not been something that I have felt . . . [like] I need[ed] to do.

Therefore, due to the long-standing tradition of male presidential leadership that is associated with the religious affiliation at Provost Barlow’s and Vice President Landon’s universities, both participants are aware that their gender represents a formidable barrier to their achievement of a presidency within the religious denomination of this institutional type.

**Summary of Leadership Aspirations**

In summary, the findings pertaining to the concept of leadership aspirations reveal important insights into the participants’ motivations for serving in positions of university leadership as well as contribute deeper insights into the personal and professional factors which served to hinder the participants in key-line administrative positions from having presidential aspirations. In relation to the participants’ motivations for leadership, the participants’ accounts of how they first gained a vision for university leadership highlight how their initial experiences serving as administrators marked a “transformative step” in inspiring their interest in university leadership. Many participants spoke to how the opportunity to gain administrative experience helped them to realize they “enjoyed” administrative work and served to increase their confidence in their leadership abilities. In having the opportunity gain administrative experience, participants were able to realize a number of other factors which served to inspire their leadership aspirations and career path advancement pertaining to (a) receiving encouragement and positive feedback, (b)
career achievement and goal attainment, (c) engaging in meaningful/purposeful work, (d) feeling a professional calling to leadership, and (e) an awareness of the influence of spirituality and/or religion on their career paths.

As previously established, one of the major outcomes of this study pertains to the key-line administrators’ collective lack of presidential aspirations. As a result, this study provides new and deeper insights into the personal and professional factors which served to hinder the key-line administrators from aspiring to achieve a presidency. As well, the perspectives of the participants who have achieved presidencies provide greater insights into the factors which facilitated or hindered their pathways to the presidency. The presidents also provide valuable insights into their perceptions of why more university women do not possess presidential aspirations.

Overall, the findings indicate that a combination of personal (e.g., childrearing responsibilities, stage of life, etc.) and professional factors (e.g., lack of presidential credentials) versus institutional factors represented the most commonly-reported hindrances that had contributed to the key-line administrators’ lack of presidential aspirations. Similar to the ways in which the contours of each participant’s career path was marked by unique features, each of the key-line administrators described how an individualized set of personal and/or professional factors had contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations. The most prominent personal factors that had influenced the participants’ lack of presidential aspirations related to their (a) age and stage of life, (b) work-life balance, (c) family relationships and priorities, and/or (d) geographical mobility. Issues relating to participants’ family relationships with children and/or male spouses intersected with multiple personal factors (e.g., work-life balance, geographic mobility, etc.) which affected participants’ leadership aspirations. Additionally, three of
the four participants who had achieved presidencies highlighted the ways in which various personal factors had influenced their presidential aspirations and the timing of their advancement to the presidency.

Each of the 12 participants in key-line administrative positions also spoke to several professional factors which contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations relating to (a) experiencing career satisfaction in their current roles; (b) the nature of the president’s role (e.g., fundraising, etc.); and (c) a perceived lack of presidential credentials (e.g., educational credentials, scholarly/faculty credentials, etc.). One of the most prevalently cited reasons that many key-line administrators, especially academic administrators (i.e., academic deans and provosts), did not aspire to achieve a presidency pertained to their perception that they would not “enjoy” the external nature of the university president’s role and duties (e.g., fundraising, dealing with governing boards, interactions with legislators, etc.).

Five key-line administrators (Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Dean Gallagher, Vice President Kennedy, and Vice President Landon) in this study, particularly administrators serving in non-academic positions of leadership, spoke to how their perceived lack of presidential qualifications at their current stage or a previous stage in their career trajectory served a hindrance to their consideration of achieving a presidency in terms of lacking educational credentials (i.e., doctoral degree) and/or professional qualifications (e.g., faculty/scholarly credentials, diverse experiences in various areas of higher education). Although the findings pertaining to participants’ leadership aspirations indicate that most of the participants in key-line administrative positions were hindered from having presidential aspirations by a combination of personal and professional factors, three participants described how factors related to their
respective institution or institutional type represented hindrances to their presidential aspirations in regard to: (a) institutional loyalty, and (b) gender-related barriers to female presidential leadership within the denomination associated with certain religious-affiliated institutional types.

Mentors, Role Models, and Professional Networks

In seeking to further explore what experiences characterized participants’ pathways to key-line administrative roles or university presidencies and what factors served to facilitate or hinder their leadership aspirations, participants were asked to describe what type of role that mentors, role models, and professional networks/organizations have played in helping them to advance to their current positions. As previously discussed in the beginning of this chapter, a major outcome of this study relates to the ways in which the majority of participants perceived that mentors, role models, and professional networks have played a minimal or secondary role, in comparison to other factors (e.g., achievement, assuming responsibility, building credentials, etc.), in directly contributing to their career advancement to positions of university leadership. For example, Provost Barlow clarifies that mentors and role models have helped “very little, actually, in terms of moving into leadership roles.” Similarly, Dean Atwood is aware that mentors have “not [played] as much [of a role in her career advancement] as they should have.” Also, in asking President Perkins what type of role that professional networks have played in contributing to her career path advancement to the presidency, she replied, “I would only have to say a minor role.”

Although most participants did not view mentors, role models, and professional networks as playing a major role in their actual advancement to positions of university leadership, many participants did speak to the ways in which mentors, role models,
and/or professional networks had provided them with benefits (e.g., skills and training, information and career advice, encouragement and support, etc.) which served to increase their confidence in their ability to advance to administrative roles and/or build their credentials in becoming qualified candidates for leadership positions. For instance, although Provost Barlow indicated that mentors and role models did not “help me get this position . . . [they] have helped me learn my position [and] do a better job in my position.” Similarly, in speaking to her involvement with professional networks/organizations in her field of student affairs, Vice President Landon states, “I would say it didn’t help me advance, but it’s helped me professionally . . . [in terms of gaining skills].” President Perkins also relayed that professional networks/organizations have been helpful to her in “doing the job, [but] not in getting jobs.” What is more, in evaluating the influence of mentors, role models, and/or professional networks on participants’ career path advancement, it is also important to distinguish that more participants reported receiving benefits from having role models and mentors in comparison to the benefits of their involvement in professional networks and/or organizations. This finding may be reflective of how the majority of participants lacked involvement in professional networks and/or organizations related to higher education administration/leadership.

The minimal or secondary role that mentors, role models, and professional networks played in the majority of participants’ movement to administrative positions, may also be explained, in part, by their unintentional and emergent career paths to university leadership. In fact, several participants attribute their lack of primary mentoring experiences by individuals with university leadership experience as well as their lack of involvement in professional networks in higher education administration to
their unplanned career paths to university leadership. For example, in considering that Provost Barlow did not aspire to achieve her immediate-prior position as an academic dean or her current role as a provost, she explains, “I just didn’t look at . . . the dean position . . . [or] the provost position . . . and say, ‘that’s something I’d like to do and therefore I need a mentor or role model to help me develop the skills that I need [in order to] to get into those [positions].’” In comparison, Vice President Carter, who did not plan to become a university administrator, conveyed, “I didn’t even know the term mentoring [in my early career]. I really didn’t even think about that until much later in my career.” Therefore, in considering that the majority of participants did not begin their careers in higher education with aspirations of achieving a key-line administrative position or presidency, many of the participants did not realize the need to have mentors and role models with university leadership experience and/or participate in professional networks related to higher education administration/leadership at an earlier point in their career paths.

The minimal or secondary role that mentors, role models, and/or professional networks played in the majority of participants’ movement to positions of university leadership, may also be attributed, in part, to the ways in which the majority of participants described other factors as being more influential in facilitating their advancement to university leadership. Although participants acknowledged the benefits of having mentors, role models, and/or involvement in professional networks/organizations, most participants attributed their advancement to leadership roles to other factors related to their own “achievements,” “efforts,” or abilities to “do a good job,” “produce credentials,” and/or “build a professional reputation.” As one example, Vice President Young states, “my [educational] degrees, my credentials, [and] my other
experiences . . . have really played more of a [prominent] role [in my career advancement]” in comparison to the role of mentors, role models, and professional networks. She further distinguishes that the factors (e.g., educational credentials) which have facilitated her career advancement are largely reflective of “[what] I’ve had to do own my own [and the] things that I have actively pursued on my own in terms of building credentials.” President Howard, who lacked traditional career mentors and role models and indicated that professional networks had “not particularly” played a role in her pathways to the presidency, described that her advancement to top-level university leadership was the result of her efforts to “build up a reputation and then people recommended me . . . [based on] what I had done in various roles.” This finding is congruent with the finding related to the concept of participants’ career paths and educational credentials, which reveals that most participants were “promoted,” “invited,” “appointed,” etc. to assume positions of university leadership after being recognized by supervisors or senior university administrators for their career achievements and demonstration of leadership skills/competencies.

With this in mind, the four main sub-themes pertaining to the concept of mentors, role models, and professional networks details (a) participants’ lack of primary mentoring relationships; (b) participants’ multiple mentoring relationships; (c) the gender dynamics characterizing participants’ role models and mentoring relationships; (d) non-traditional mentors and role models (e.g., friends, peers, and/or family members); (e) the benefits of having mentors and/or role models; (f) participants’ lack of involvement in professional networks/organizations related to higher education administration/leadership; and (g) the benefits of involvement in professional networks. Notably, the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues intersects with the concept of mentors, role
models, and professional networks in relation to the ways in which some participants described how the relationships from their personal lives (e.g., family members and friends) provided them with non-traditional mentors and role models.

The Lack of Primary Mentors to Guide Participants’ Careers

With the exceptions of Vice President Owens and President Whitley, the majority of participants in this study reported that they did not have a “key” or primary mentor in a more senior-level position of university leadership, male or female, who served to “guide,” “help lay the groundwork,” and/or “sponsor” their progress to their current positions of university leadership as key-line administrators or university presidents. For example, President Perkins notes,

When I think of mentors there is no one person that guided my career. I wish to heaven that—that person had emerged because I know people who had that person that says, “now go left, now go right, take two steps forward [and] smile.” I never had that [type of mentoring relationship].

Similarly, Vice President Kennedy relayed,

I can’t really pick out someone that I thought really mentored my career . . . [so] I don’t really have a key mentor that I thought, “okay, they’re going to tell me how to get down this road to this position [that] I have.” [Consequently.] I’m kind of just hacking my own way through the forest.

Although Dean Gallagher had “an important mentor who’s [now] a [retired] senior faculty member” prior to advancing to her current role, she also points out that there was “nobody clear-cut” with university administrative experience who served as a primary mentor to her. She explains,
I mean, on different occasions, like I’ve heard our provost here and she’d be speaking at some event and I’ll think [to myself], “Oh, that was really good! I really like the way she did X, Y, or Z.” . . . [However,] that’s not really the same as being a mentor.

*Primary mentoring experiences.* In contrast, Vice President Owens and President Whitley described how having a primary mentor, with experience as an executive-level university administrator, played an important role in helping to facilitate their career advancement to their current positions of university leadership. Vice President Owens, who has administrative responsibilities in the area of university advancement, conveyed,

Well, I [have] . . . [a] male mentor, [who] had been [the former] president of several universities . . . [and] he has really helped me from the ground up. . . I [first] met [him] at a conference several years ago when I was in school, doing my thesis and this gentleman offered to review my thesis when it was finished . . . When I applied for the position of vice president, he assisted. I mean, he helped me just review my documents and really has been a true, true mentor. I’ve really experienced a real great sense of security in my efforts by having him . . . [So,] I just cannot say enough for how much that’s helped [and] I think that having . . . mentor is really responsible for a good part of my success.

President Whitley also discusses how her primary mentor was instrumental in guiding and sponsoring her career pathway to top-level university leadership. She states,

I would say that people talk about this, but it’s very, very, very true that if you are mentored by someone, they look for opportunities for you . . . I know that I would not be where I . . . [am] today if . . . the [university] president of the last institution I was at had not picked me out to mentor and put me into positions. He
put me into [interim] positions that I . . . did not apply for, and then after unsuccessful national searches, [I] applied for [the positions]. So his mentoring is absolutely what got me here today. [So,] I think it’s extraordinarily powerful [to have a mentor].

Notably, as indicated in the above quotes, both Vice President Owens and President Whitley conveyed that their primary mentors initiated their mentoring relationships as Vice President Owens’ mentor initiated a relationship with her through “offering” to assist her with her dissertation and in terms of President Whitley’s mentor who “selected” her as his protégé/mentee.

Participants’ Multiple Mentoring Relationships

Although most participants did not report having a primary mentor who served to guide their career advancement to positions of university leadership, the majority of participants (15), including the two participants who had primary mentors, described having multiple mentoring relationships at various points across the span of their career paths. For example, Vice President McNair discussed having a total of six important mentoring relationships (e.g., dissertation advisor, peer mentors, etc.) across the span of her career path. Vice President McNair is representative of many other participants in describing that her mentoring relationships have often been “serial” in their order. Similarly, President Rice relayed, “I’ve had good mentors . . . and many of them . . . all along the way.” Also, in speaking to having a series of mentoring experiences across her career trajectory, President Perkins expresses, “at key intervals, somebody stepped in with a word [of advice] and I took it and ran with it. So, they were the ones who made the difference.” In comparison to the experience of having a primary mentor who guides one’s career to leadership, participants who indicated having multiple mentors often
described how these types of experiences provided them with what President Perkins referred to as “little assists” at certain points in their career paths such as providing a word of “encouragement” or “career advice.”

*Viewing supervisors as role models and mentors.* As many of the participants (President Perkins, President Rice, President Whitley, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, Dean Atwood, Provost Ellis, Provost Barlow) advanced through various stages of their career paths, they described how they viewed their supervisors who served in various positions of university administration (e.g., dean, director, provost, vice president, president, etc.) as their mentors and/or role models. For instance, although President Perkins did not have a primary mentor, she exemplifies the experiences of many participants in describing how her supervisors served as her role models. She stated, “I think I learned from everyone [that] I worked for . . . [as] they all had their strengths.” As another example, Dean Atwood described how two of her former male supervisors served as her mentors.

When I was division chair . . . there was . . . [a] gentleman . . . who was at that time the campus dean and he was very much a mentor . . . [Since,] he was a person who kind of saw himself in that role, [as a mentor,] . . . he took pains to connect me to a network of deans and division chairs . . . and he paid for me to go [to the conference] the first year . . . [Also,] my former dean was certainly a mentor in some respects. He was a good friend and a good colleague. I felt like he gave me opportunities and in many ways made it possible for me to do what I do today because he completely empowered me. He was like, “oh, your competent, go!”
Having more leadership role models than mentors. The majority of participants reported having more traditional career role models than mentors. Dean Reed explains how she learned important lessons about leadership from observing role models who held administrative posts at her university. She states,

even though I . . . didn’t really have any mentors, I did have some role models. There were a number of people that I could look to who were being successful, who I admired and wanted to learn from. . . Now, almost all of those were men, but you can learn a lot by observing others’ . . . successes . . . [and] you can also learn a lot by observing their mistakes.

Vice President Carter, who also lacked traditional career mentors during the earlier stages of her career path, spoke to how she selected various individuals on her campus to serve as her role models. Vice President Carter selected two male faculty members on her campus during the early stages of her career who, she notes, “were my ideals of what you . . . [should be] as a faculty member.” She explains, “one of them knew . . . [that I viewed him as a role model and] . . . the other really had no clue until very late in his life.” She points out that her role models were “people like that along the way that you, through osmosis or observation, learn [from] . . . [as you] watch them.”

Gaining mentoring experiences and role models through career advancement to university administration. Also, 11 participants (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, Dean Gallagher, President Perkins, President Rice, President Whitley, Dean Atwood, and Dean Gallagher) described how they did not have mentors and/or role models with experience serving in senior or executive positions of university leadership until they entered their first key-line administrative post. In speaking to her mentoring relationships, Vice President of
Student Affairs Landon notes, “when I came here [to this university] there was a female provost and she and I got along so well from the beginning.” As another example, Provost Barlow describes how she was involved in a “formal mentoring program” through her participation in a leadership institute in her first key-line administrative post as an academic dean and later in her career path] “as a new CAO [Chief Academic Officer].” She conveys that one of the female mentors that she was paired with “has . . . become a personal role model for me.” In addition, she relays, “I have an extremely strong role model in my own president . . . [who] I’ve learned everything I know about academic administration in recent years from this person and [my president] is a man, not a woman.” Like Provost Barlow, many participants in key-line administrative positions reported that the presidents at their respective institutions had served as their role models and/or mentors. For instance, Vice President Carter notes that . . . the president of her university is “my hero, . . . he . . . [is] my role model.”

The Gender Dynamics of Participants’ Role Models and Mentoring Relationships

Among participants who described having traditional career mentors and/or role models, Provost Ellis exemplifies the majority (14) of participants’ experiences in conveying, “I would say that most of my mentors [and role models] were male.” In fact, in interviewing participants concerning their mentoring relationships and role models, many sought to emphasize that most or all of their mentors and role models had been males as Dean Atwood clarifies, “notice . . . both [of my mentors are] male[s], there’s no women.” In contrast, only one participant, Vice President Landon, who represents the youngest participant in the sample, indicated “having more female mentors” than male mentors. She reported having three traditional female career mentors serving in university key-line administrative posts at various institutions. Although most
participants who had mentors did not describe being the first to initiate their mentoring relationships, Vice President Landon noted that when she was selected for her current administrative role that she sought out two female mentors who were “vice president[s] of student life” at two different universities to help familiarize her with the “nuts and bolts” of her new administrative role.

In comparison to Vice President Landon’s experience, most participants, especially participants who represent the first woman to hold their administrative position at their respective institutions, spoke to the dearth of female university leaders to serve as role models and mentors. Dean Atwood represents half of the participants’ experiences in pointing out, “I’ve had no female mentoring whatsoever.” Consequently, Dean Atwood exemplifies the shared sense of recognition among many of the participants in this study by stating, “I’ve been keenly aware that there was sort of this paucity of female mentors out there for somebody like me.”

*Female mentors.* Nine of the participants (President Rice, President Perkins, President Whitley, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Owens, and Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, Dean Gallagher) in this study described having a female career mentor (e.g., faculty member, peer mentor, professional outside higher education, research organization supervisor, etc.) at a certain point in their career path. For example, although President Perkins had mostly male mentors, she described a female faculty member who served as a mentor in her early career.

When I was a new faculty member there was another woman [faculty]. You know, there weren't many women on the faculty and she had only been hired like a year ahead of me... Yet, she took a lot of her precious time just to, kind of,
show me the ropes. She’d sit me down and say, “. . . honey here's what you need to know and here's what you need to keep your eye on.”

Of the participants who reported having a female mentor, only three participants, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Landon and President Rice, reported having a female mentor who had experience serving in a university key-line administrative position and only one participant, Provost Ellis, reported having a female mentor who was a university president. In fact, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Landon and President Rice reported that they did not have a female mentor with experience in university leadership until they entered their first key-line administrative post (e.g., dean, vice president). For example, Provost Ellis, who was the first woman to serve as a provost in her institution’s history, has had mostly male mentors throughout her career path. However, she indicated “we [now] have a president who is a female . . . and I really feel like I’ve been mentored by [her . . . in the past] year.”

Few female leaders to serve as role models. Participants also spoke to having only a few, if any, female role models serving in positions of university leadership. Similar to the pattern concerning female mentoring, most participants did not begin to have female university leaders as role models until the mid-to-later stages of their career paths, often after the participants had achieved official positions of university leadership. For instance, Provost Barlow points out, “I don’t really know that there were that many women that served as role models for me while I was dean . . . , but there certainly have been in this provost position.” President Perkins explains that when she began to have presidential aspirations in the mid-to-later stages of her career path, “there were not a lot [of women presidents to serve as role models,] but [there were] a few.” President Perkins further describes that when she began aspiring to a presidency, “the numbers [of women]
were growing. I think the term I heard . . . [was], we were in the pipeline . . . There were growing numbers of women in the pipeline—moving up into deanships, [and] provostships.” Similarly, although President Whitley had a few female mentors and role models who were employed as administrators at a research foundation in her academic field, she noted that she did not have a female presidential role model until she achieved her first presidential appointment. In speaking to her female role models in leadership, she recalls,

I had a female president at one point who was terrific and wonderful . . . [She] was the first person to reach out to me when I became president here. She wasn’t a personal mentor when I knew her, but she certainly reached out to me when I reached this point . . . [Then, I had female role models] . . . that were very high-ranking people . . . [who were my] bosses, . . . [while serving in my first administrative role] at [a research foundation]. . . . [However,] they were few and far between and so they could not mentor everybody.

*The paucity of females to serve as role models and mentors to participants who are women’s firsts.* The gender dynamics of the majority of participants’ experiences concerning the availability of male university leaders to serve as role models and mentors and the “paucity of female [university leaders to serve] mentors” and role models may be attributed, in part, to how most of the participants (13 out of 16) in this study, with the exceptions of President Whitley, Provost Fields, and Vice President Landon, were the first women to serve in their current position as a key-line administrator or university president at their respective institutions. Although President Whitley was not the first woman to serve in the presidency at her university, she reported that she was the first woman to hold each of her previous university administrative roles (e.g., academic dean,
provost, etc.). In fact, like President Whitley who had the experience of being the first woman multiple times in her career path in university leadership, four other participants (President Howard, President Rice, Vice President Carter, and Dean Reed), who were each over 60 years of age, described how they have lacked female role models and mentors as they were the first woman to occupy most or all of their previous administrative positions in their respective career paths. For example, President Perkins notes,

there weren’t any women ahead of me [as] . . . in all of . . . [my leadership roles.] I was [the] first woman dean, . . . the first woman provost, . . . I was the first woman [president]. . . So, I didn’t have a lot of women to watch.

President Rice also characterizes the uniqueness of her experiences as the first person of her race and gender to hold certain administrative positions in her career path. She describes, “being the only woman and the only African American . . . was my world . . . for a long time . . .”

Although most of the women firsts indicated having female leaders to look to as role models in the later stages of their careers, President Howard and Vice President Carter, who represent two of the older participants in this study, recalled that prior to moving to positions of top-level university leadership they were not aware of any female leaders to serve as role models. In asking President Howard if there were other women serving in presidencies that she could look to as role models in her career path to the presidency, she conveyed, “not particularly . . . [as] I was usually the first [woman].” Vice President Carter, who was the first-ever woman to serve in a key-line administrative post and serve on the university president’s executive cabinet at her institution, conveyed that prior to her appointment, “they didn’t even have any women deans.” Provost Carter
also described that when she began her academic career as a faculty member “there were very few women who were faculty and so I didn’t really have mentors that were women.” The experiences of participants like Vice President Carter, President Howard, President Rice, and President Perkins are also reflective of the distinctive generational differences among the participants who are over sixty years of age.

Generational differences among women firsts. Although the participants who are the first woman to occupy their current position represent a wide variety of ages, with two of the youngest women firsts in their forties, the majority of the participants who were over sixty years of age sought to emphasize, in the words of President Howard, the “generational differences” of their career path experiences concerning the severe lack of university women faculty and administrators to serve as role models and mentors in the early and middle phases of their careers in higher education. In asking Provost Ellis, who is in her mid-sixties, if there has been a lack of university women to serve as her role models and mentors, she replies,

Yeah, you have to understand when I came to the University in [the early 19]80[s] . . . all of the female faculty on campus could meet in one person's house. There were very few female faculty, [and] most of them were colleagues. The chair of [my] . . . department was a woman. She had some good skills and she was also supportive of my going ahead. When I came into the provost’s office, I was the only woman in the provost’s office . . . [and] I have been the only female ever here . . . But, [in general,] there has not been very many women in what we call administration now. You know, you have the typical Dean of Education [or] Dean of Nursing, but I think now we’re having more and more females [in
various positions of university leadership. [So, there are now] more and more people we can mentor.

As a woman who has experienced many firsts in her career, Dean Reed, who is the same age as Provost Ellis, also contextualizes the generational differences concerning the lack of mentoring experiences for women within her academic discipline, which represents a discipline in which women have historically been under-represented in the faculty and administrative ranks. She discusses,

In all honesty, I think [many] women of my generation and of my age in . . . careers [in my academic field] . . . missed out on mentoring. There just were not any mentors available to us, and frankly we probably didn’t understand the importance of mentors, either. I know there are exceptions to that, and that may not be the case outside of . . . [my academic discipline], but I do think it is largely the case in . . . [my field] . . . I worked my way through the ranks at the [first] university [where I began my academic career and] I believe I was the first woman ever to be tenured at the university. So, it’s not like there were a lot of women on faculty who could mentor me. There really weren’t any. . . Some of the men who were a little bit more senior [in the faculty ranks] may have been doing a little bit of mentoring for the guys, but they weren’t doing any mentoring for me. Now, I should quickly add that I should accept some of the responsibility for that, and I do, because it may very well be if I had reached out and asked them to mentor me, that they would have . . . I’m sure some of them would have, but I didn’t understand at that time that [that having a mentor] . . . was important. There wasn’t a lot of discussion back in the [19]70s about, or even the [19]80s about mentoring or the importance of mentoring. . . [Then] at the time that I
went to [another] university [to become a department chair], which was [19]92, I think I was probably only, at least as far as I knew, I was only about the third or fourth female department chair . . . [in my field] . . . [Also] at that time there were probably about 200 to 250 departments in schools . . . [in my field] in the country, and there were only like three [women chairs] other than me. So, you can see, there just weren’t very many women who were being allowed to move into administrative positions at that time. Furthermore, three years later when I became a dean at [another university,] I was the first female dean in . . . [my field] in the Continental United States who was in a public [university system]. . . There were two other women, prior to me, . . . who had become dean[s] in private . . . schools. . . So, I was the third female . . . dean [in my field] in the Continental United States and the first one in a public . . ., state-supported . . . [university]. . . [Also,] I’m now the longest-sitting, female dean, female . . . dean [of any institution] in the country [in my academic field].

In comparing the generational differences between the experiences of participants who represent the generation of university women administrators who were over sixty years of age to the experiences of participants between the ages of 39 to 57 who represent younger generations of women administrators, the younger generations of women administrators such as Vice President Landon who reported having “more female mentors” spoke to their awareness of the greater presence of university women leaders to serve as role models and mentors. Yet, despite the increases in the number of university women administrators, as one of the younger participants in this study, Dean Atwood, who is in her late forties, pointed out, many of the women of her generation continue to
lack female mentors and role models. In asking Dean Atwood if she had female leaders that she could look to as role models, she replied,

Well, I was vaguely aware of some, but I didn’t know enough about them to really view them as a role model. For example, . . . I was aware of [a female president at a private university within the state], but I never knew her. I’d never spoken to her, but there was an awareness [of her]. [Also,] there was an awareness of a woman . . . who used to be the president of . . . [a university in the] north[ern] [part of the state], but I had only met her once. I was aware of a [female] vice president who’s now going to be the president of [a] community college [in the state], . . . but I had only met her once. [Therefore, I] didn’t know much about her. So, I don’t think I actually modeled myself after any female academic administrators because . . . I knew so few of them or was even aware of so few of them and . . . I didn’t think I had much in common with them, which is probably not accurate. For some reason, I didn’t think they had the same kind of issues or career path that I did.

Altogether, the majority of participants’ status as a woman first and their collective lack of female role models and mentors serves to reinforce the problem of the continued under-representation of women serving in positions of top-level university leadership. President Perkins, who reported being the first woman in all of her leadership roles, wittingly notes that, “I really hope this is the last time I am the first woman anything.” With a more serious tone, she states, “We’re in 2011 [and] . . . it’s time . . . that [a woman holding a position of top-level university leadership] stops being remarkable.”
Participants serving as mentors and/or role models to others. Like President Perkins, most participants in this study had an acute sense of awareness concerning the dearth of university women leaders to serve as role models and mentors. Accordingly, several participants (President Perkins, President Whitley, Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, and Vice President Landon) mentioned how they seek opportunities to serve as role models and mentors to others, especially in providing career advice. For example, Vice President Landon points out that in working for a religious-affiliated university with a strong tradition of male leadership, that “there’s not a lot of [female] role models [as] it’s just me and [one other woman who serve in top-level leadership roles]. Thus, she notes, “I mentor [college] women” through providing them with career advice.

Provost Barlow, who is also employed at a religious-affiliated university which has traditionally prohibited women from serving in top leadership roles, especially presidencies, also speaks to her “commitment” to serving as a role model to other women, especially female students. She expresses, “[I] really do feel called to be an example for [female students] . . . and I actually try to help . . . women . . . [in leadership] development.” She points out that women represent “65% of the total [student] population” at her institution and at other institutional types within this religious denomination. In addition to helping students, she is also collaborating with “a group of women administrators . . . [to write and publish] a book [related to] helping to build women leaders in higher education.” Provost Barlow explains that achieving a presidency is not a goal that “I have felt that I need to do . . . for me.” However, she acknowledges, “if there is a group that I need to do it for, it would be the women students that aspire to leadership as well as other women [faculty and administrators]” at religious-affiliated institutions that lack a tradition of female presidential leadership.
As another example, Dean Reed, who did not have any mentors, male or female, spoke to the importance and satisfaction that she gains from serving as a mentor to others, especially women. She states,

I do believe [mentoring] . . . is very valuable . . . and . . . the opportunity to mentor people, both men and women, . . . [is] one of the things I’ve enjoyed [the] most about my academic career . . ., especially as I’ve become [an academic administrator]. I have especially enjoyed mentoring women and I know they get overlooked sometimes. . . So, I’ve really enjoyed having an opportunity to provide career direction and long-term mentoring to a number of young women [who are faculty] and also some men faculty.

Also, since Dean Atwood has not had any female mentors, she notes,

[I] have made it my business to mentor the female department chairs . . . [and]

I’ve tried to be both friend and mentor. Likewise, with our female associate dean, I’ve tried to make a point of spending time with her, offering her professional development opportunities, [and] career advice . . .

Although participants like Dean Reed and Dean Atwood, who represent women firsts in their administrative roles, lacked female role models and mentors, they are representative of the participants who looked beyond gender to find male mentors and/or role models.

Having more male university leaders as mentors and role models. Although many of the participants who represent women firsts in their current and/or previous administrative roles are aware of the uniqueness of their status as a woman first, most participants did not view their lack of female role models and mentors to serve as a hindrance or obstacle to their career path advancement. As such, many participants
discussed the value of having male leaders as their mentors and/or role models. For example, Provost Ellis notes,

Most of my mentors were male . . . [and I felt like they] were interested in what I brought to the table and [in] giving me good advice. [In particular,] I think . . . when I came to the Provost’s Office, [as an associate provost,] that the provost, [who was a male,] was interested in my leadership skills, . . . helping me to develop [as an academic administrator], and giving me some insights on how he dealt with people and how he problem solved.

As another example, President Perkins recounts,

As a matter of fact . . . [my mentors] were all men. And they were men that were, what we now call, “evolved men.” They weren’t threatened by women in the workplace [and] they weren't threatened by a woman moving into a position of leadership. I think they welcomed that and they were fine. . . [Also,] they were not father figures they were just good, decent people who recognize[d] some ability in me and they wanted to encourage it. So, I took the encouragement.

Vice President Carter, who lacked female mentors and role models, advocates for a non-gender based approach to identifying potential mentors and role models. She expresses,

I’ve never been, [the type of woman who thought,] “you have to be a woman for me to look at you.” . . . So, I’ve never been a gender-based person that felt like I had to have a woman to teach me how to do things. . . As I reflect on my career . . . I [have] realized that, no, there weren’t a lot of women, and what this university needs is some women who are role models. . . At one point [in my career path,] it made me mad that there weren’t women here . . . [However,] we also need to teach people . . . [and] it might be a man [that teaches you, or it] might be your
child, for that matter. So you need to look beyond gender, I think, to find your mentors. So, I don’t think you have to have women as your role models. I think you have to have successful people. So, I never had a lot of female role models, [but] I didn’t need them because I had male role models . . . [and] I thought [that] it was okay. So, I think you have to be very careful when you . . . [say,] “Oh, I didn’t have female role models.” [In response, I would say,] “Well, go find some others. [The] ones that wear pants can help you, too!”

In addition to having traditional career mentors and role models, male or female, Vice President Carter also suggests that one may also learn important lessons from non-traditional mentors such as friends and family members. She advises, “you’ve got to be flexible in . . . [selecting mentors and role models] and you’ve got to look around for other folks.”

*Non-traditional mentoring relationships with family, friends and/or peers.* As previously indicated, the concept family relationships and work-life balance issues intersects with the concept of mentors, role models, and professional relationships in terms of how some participants in this study looked to the relationships in their personal lives to find role models and mentors. In considering that many of the participants in this study lacked primary mentoring experiences with traditional career mentors who possessed university administrative experience, especially female mentors, six of the participants (Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, President Howard, President Whitley, and Vice President Landon) described how their family members, friends, and/or peers have served as non-traditional role models and mentors. Vice President McNair represents many participants’ mentoring experiences in stating, “I think that when I consider mentors, they are . . . not always in traditional roles,
[al]though some [of my non-traditional mentors] have played those [traditional mentoring] roles from time to time, for me.” Also, President Howard, who did not report having a mentor who had university administrative experience, noted that she viewed her peers as playing a mentoring role to her in her early career path as she states, “in many ways it was my fellow graduate students that actually helped my career.” As another example, Vice President Carter described how at an earlier point in her career path a group of women on her campus, who lacked traditional mentoring relationships, formed a “mentoring group.”

I, to be perfectly honest, have not had a true female mentor here [at this university]. I did, however, in the late [19]80s begin to have a group of women who were role models for me . . . [and] it was totally in jest that we formed. We couldn’t belong to [the local] Rotary [club], so we were [a] non-rotary [club] . . . [which was comprised of] . . . faculty . . ., administrators . . ., and a [staff member]. There were probably twelve women who just socially got together, and that group was interesting because we did say, “Well, you know, why don’t you go be chair at the commission?” Or, “Why don’t you go be chair of faculty senate?” Or, “Why don’t you do this?” So we’d kind of suggest things for people . . . I never looked at it as that role-modeling kind of thing, but it really was a mentoring group, . . . [and] we were mentoring each other . . . Now, ten years later we all laughed because two of us were sitting in administration [and] three [of us] had gone to other universities . . . [to go] into administration. So, that group of women who were [gathering] in jest—I mean, we drank a glass of wine, and we’d laugh at the men. [Also, at that same time,] . . . the Commission on the Status of Women was just emerging as something that universities were doing and
so that was kind of the gel that got us to going. So, that group of women, I think, was very important to teach me some skills and to give me some networking that I wouldn’t have had.

Vice President McNair also described how her friends have served as her role models. She relays,

[As] . . . an African American vice president for student affairs, my girlfriend . . . was always going before me. She was the director before me. She was the vice president before me. So, I did get to see her doing things, and then I’ve just had women friends who are achievers. They achieve, and so it’s the circle that I’m in . . . [in which] almost all [of us are working] in higher ed[ucation], . . . except for my very best friend [and] she’s an educator [in the K-12 system] . . . [So,] we all expect each other to achieve. I don’t think anybody puts any pressure on [anyone], but it’s just the way it is.

Family serving in non-traditional mentoring roles. In addition to the role of friends and peers, several participants described how various members of their family have served as their role models and mentors. In particular, three participants (Vice President Landon, Vice President Carter, President Whitley) indicated that they considered their mothers to be their role models and mentors. Vice President Landon, for example, notes,

My mom [who was a college] . . . professor . . . was kind of like . . . [my mentor.] In the 1970s she was . . . a member of NOW [National Organization for Women]. So, she was like a hard-core feminist . . . [and] she was . . . always very, very encouraging to me.
President Whitley also describes how her mother and the women in her family have served as important role models in influencing her career path to leadership. She states,

Well, I came from a long line of very influential, powerful women, and . . . [I have been] surrounded by mostly women in my personal life. [In my family,] I had a grandmother, a mother, . . . sisters, a daughter, . . . granddaughters, a mother-in-law, and a poor husband who had to put up with all of us. So, I think I’ve had a lot of strong, female role models in my life . . . [These role models were] independent women who, when you look back, carved out very wonderful lives for themselves, one way or another.

As another example, Dean Atwood, who did not have traditional female career mentors or role models, speaks to how her sister has influenced her career path to leadership. She explained,

Probably, one of the most significant relationships that has influenced me, leadership wise, is got to be my older sister. She and I are very similar. She chose . . . [another career field] . . . I think . . . she and I have always kind of understood that we could do whatever we wanted to, if you put your mind to it and you set it up so that you can succeed—you will succeed. [So,] we sort of reinforced one another in our careers over the years. [We’ve] given each other permission [to advance into leadership roles in our careers]. . . [So,] when I was trying to decide whether or not to apply . . . [for a leadership position] the first person I called, after talking to my family, was my sister. [I said,] “What do you think? Should I do this?” and she said, “Go for it!”

Although Vice President Carter considers her parents to be role models and mentors, she discussed how her brother served as a non-traditional career mentor in her early career
path by helping her to develop professional behaviors and dispositions that would ultimately contribute to her career success and advancement as a university leader. She discusses,

I had an older brother [who worked in a profession outside of higher education] . . . [he] understood the world . . . better than I did . . . So, when I came here [to the university], . . . he showed me some ropes of being successful in the world. [For instance,] he said, “Here are five suits that you’ll need to wear” [because] I had to dress up [for work]. . . [Also, he said,] “If you’re going to work in a group, here’s the behavior you need to have . . .” I never realized how much of a role model he was for me until later in his life and later in my life, but he definitely had a huge influence on my [professional] socialization and my understanding. . . So, some things that . . . [my brother] gave me would be very, very important in the whole scheme of things.

The Benefits of Mentoring Relationships and Role Models

Clearly, as demonstrated in participants’ descriptions of their relationships with both traditional and non-traditional mentors and role models, the participants experienced similar benefits from both types of relationships such as encouragement and support. In evaluating the overall benefits that participants received from having both traditional and non-traditional mentors and role models, the three most commonly reported benefits pertained to participants receiving (a) encouragement and support, (b) career advice and information, and (c) skills and/or training.

Encouragement and support. Many participants perceived that receiving encouragement and support represented one of the most valuable benefits of their relationships with mentors and/or role models. Eight participants (President Rice,
President Perkins, Dean Atwood, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, Vice President Landon, and Vice President Young) described how they had received encouragement and/or support through their relationships with both traditional and non-traditional role models and mentors. Although President Perkins did not have a primary mentor, she notes “I did have people that encouraged [me] and were . . . generous with their time.” In fact, she points out that “all along the way from grade school [and] up there . . . were people who encouraged me . . . to be the best I could be.” In particular, she speaks to the importance of the encouragement she received from a mentor earlier in her life as an undergraduate student. She recalls,

When I was a student in college my boss, who was a dean, was wonderfully encouraging and he would push me to do things I would never think to do. [For instance,] he nominated me for almost every honorary society on campus. I would say, you know, I don't think I qualify [for membership and] he would say, “oh, go on, you should try that.” And that was at a time when women didn’t get encouraged to do anything, but he just thought that I was bright and he was always sort of pushing me. You know, that kind of mentoring, [in which someone encourages you by saying,] . . . “you can do this and it’ll be fun!” And if you fail, that’s OK too.” So it was a real wonderful acceptance and appreciation for some ability they saw in me.

Similarly, in asking Vice President Young how mentors and role models have influenced her career advancement, she replied,

a great deal primarily just through encouragement . . . and interactions between myself and others who have encouraged me to do different things or be engaged
in different types of activities to give me a range of experience so that I am actually a qualified applicant [for leadership positions] . . .

As another example, Vice President Owens described the support she has received from having a female role model who can identify with her experience of being the only woman at her institution to serve on the university president’s executive cabinet. She notes,

I had a friend who was a former Vice President at the university . . . [and is now] retired. I have used her a lot to just kind of vent and talk about being a female working in an all-male [work environment]. I mean, I’m the only female on the president’s immediate staff of vice presidents . . . and so we shared a lot [in common] . . .

Also, President Rice points out that although most of her mentors were male, “I [have] had women [role models and mentors] at different times in my life who were real supportive.”

Career advice and information. Receiving career advice and information represented another commonly reported benefit of participants’ relationships with mentors and role models. Eight participants (Provost Ellis, Provost Barlow, President Perkins, Dean Atwood, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Landon) spoke to the value of receiving career advice from traditional and/or non-traditional mentors and/or role models. Vice President McNair describes the valuable career advice and information that she received when she began her professional career in higher education. She explained,

When I first started going to major conferences, there was a woman who was on the faculty [and the] chair of the department in a small school where I worked.
She was the one who told me about conference behavior . . . and how I needed to comport myself. . . . That was great advice. . . . She was very esteemed and I looked up to her . . .

Vice President Landon also shared how, prior to entering her current position, two female mentors, with experience serving as vice presidents of student affairs, provided her with career advice and information pertaining to the responsibilities that accompanied the role of a vice president of student affairs. In recalling an experience with one of her female mentors, she relays,

She sat down with me . . . for . . . two hours [and] she said, “these are the list-serves you need to be [on]. This is how I lead a staff meeting . . . [These are] the professional networks [in student affairs]. . . . [These are] . . . the challenges [of this role, and] this is how you act in cabinet [meetings].” I mean, I couldn’t believe it. It was incredible [career information and advice].

Skills and/or training. Additionally, eight participants (President Perkins, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Dean Atwood, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Landon) described the benefit of gaining skills and/or training through their relationships with mentors and/or role models. A few of the participants (President Perkins, Dean Atwood, and Vice President Carter) described how their mentors and/or role models provided them with opportunities to gain formal leadership training. Vice President Carter recalled how the president of her university, who served as her role model, provided her with formal training in preparing to assume her role as the vice president of advancement. She recollects,

. . . the development part [of the vice president of advancement’s role], I didn’t know a thing about it, but . . . [the university president] . . . said, “you just hang
on and . . . we’ll get you the education you need” . . . [He] hired a coach for me . . .

. [and he] hired an outside consultant group.

Participants also described how they obtained skills and training through their opportunities to work with and observe their mentors and/or role models. For instance, Provost Fields notes,

I have been very fortunate to be able to work with very capable administrators throughout my career and they have served as [my] role models and mentors. It has been very helpful to me to have the association that I have had with them. Their leadership style has given me the opportunity to learn effective strategies for handling issues.

Although all of participants who reported having traditional and/or non-traditional mentors and/or role models described experiencing a variety of benefits from these relationships, the majority of participants reported receiving fewer benefits from professional networks as a result of their lack of involvement with professional networks related to higher education administration/leadership.

Lack of Involvement in Professional Networks/Organizations related to Higher Education Administration/Leadership

Indeed, although many participants reported that they were actively involved in professional networks and organizations related to their respective fields (e.g., academic discipline, advancement/fundraising, student affairs, etc.) in higher education, especially in the early and middle phases of their career trajectories, only two participants (Provost Barlow and Dean Atwood) indicated being involved in professional networks or organizations related to higher education administration/leadership. Provost Ellis represents the experiences of many participants in noting, “my professional networks
have been all in my [academic] discipline. . . [and] I have not been involved in professional networks outside of that.” Although Dean Gallagher conveys that she has been involved in professional networks related to her academic field she also points out, “in terms of leadership, . . . [I have not been involved in] any formal kind of groups or networks.” As a result, the majority of participants did not view professional networks as playing a significant role in their career advancement to leadership roles. For instance, Provost Fields conveys the sentiments of most participants in stating, “I have not been that involved with professional associations as [a] provost. Therefore, that would have played a much lesser role in my development in this position or in other administrative positions.” Similarly, Vice President Young views her involvement with professional networks as contributing a “small percentage [or] a small amount in terms of [adding to] the professional credentials . . . on your [curriculum] vitae.” She describes, 

. . . I’m certain this is different for other people, but for me, personally, I can’t say that any organization has seriously been instrumental in my success. Certainly, if you would look to opportunities . . . to do presentations [at] symposiums, . . . then I guess you could say, “Yes, maybe a little bit in that, as a result of the organization, you were able to make professional presentations . . . So, from that perspective, well, I guess I should say, “Maybe, a little.” Overall, [though, professional networks have] not [played] as much [of a role in my advancement].

Involvement in professional networks related to higher education administration/leadership. In contrast, Provost Barlow and Dean Atwood described the benefits of their involvement in professional networks related to their leadership roles as academic administrators. Provost Barlow has been involved with two organizations related to the religious-affiliation of her university which provide opportunities to
participate in “leadership development” programs and training. She notes that she has
“relied heavily on those kinds of entities.” Also, Dean Atwood describes her
involvement with a professional network for academic leaders.

The[re] . . . [is a national] Council [comprised of] deans and associate deans . . .
I’ve gone to some of their annual meetings [and] I’ve presented at their annual
meetings. At various times, I’ve been a member of [a] listserv for associate
deans which was very helpful. People would sort of post their current questions
and everybody would say, “well here’s how we do it at our school.” I’ve gone to
some specialized training offered by [this organization] . . . on fundraising, . . .
budget models, and . . . conflict resolution and mediation. So, that was sort of my
primary venue. We’ve attended and once even hosted a regional organization. . .
and there’s a little bit of networking and sharing of ideas there.

Notably, although Dean Atwood and Provost Barlow spoke to how they gained
information, training, skills, and/or experience through their involvement in professional
networks related to higher education administration/leadership, the other participants who
participated in networks and/or organizations related to their respective fields (e.g.,
advancement, student affairs, etc.) did not view gaining information, training, skills,
and/or experience as a major benefit. For example, President Landon perceives that
professional networks and organizations “have not helped me advance at all.” She
explains,

I was able to find this network . . . of people who work in student development, . .
. [but] I couldn’t find a lot of ideas that I could apply right away, either for budget
reasons, . . . staffing reasons, or philosophy reasons at my school.
Vice President Owens notes that while the “conferences are great” in the professional organizations that she is a member of related to fundraising, “I haven’t really utilized them for any real resources other than attending conferences.”

*A lack of networking opportunities.* Although a number of participants pointed out how the “networking connections” that can develop through one’s involvement with professional networks/organizations can be beneficial to an aspiring leaders’ movement up the administrative ladder, the majority of participants did not credit professional networking as playing a major role in their career advancement to their current posts. Although President Perkins did not experience opportunities for advancement through professional networking, she points out,

I know people who have . . . utilize[d] . . . networks . . . in getting jobs, . . . though, and that’s almost like an angle that you can play. You sort of get your name out there and then people will call you when opportunities arise.

*Networking and Ivy League leadership programs.* Three of the four presidents (President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley) who earned additional educational credentials through attending Ivy League Graduate Programs in Educational Management noted that some individuals are motivated to attend these types of educational programs for the purposes of networking in seeking career advancement. Based on her experiences attending an Ivy League leadership program, President Whitley explains, some “people go thinking [that] they’ll get contacts that’ll help them move up.” However, each of the three presidents who attended Ivy League leadership training programs conveyed that their involvement with these organizations did not provide them with networking opportunities that assisted in their career advancement to leadership
roles. President Whitley represents the other presidents’ perspectives in stating, “I didn’t’ see them as networking [because] . . . I was going [to] learn [administrative] skills.”

Participants who benefited from networking opportunities. In contrast to the majority of participants who did not experience the benefits of networking opportunities through their involvement in professional networks or organizations, several participants (President Rice, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, Vice President and Dean Reed) reported that they had benefited from the networking connections that they established through their membership in professional networks or organizations. Among the participants who benefited from networking opportunities, two participants (Provost Barlow and Vice President Owens) reported obtaining mentors through their networking opportunities at professional conferences. Provost Barlow, for example, noted that through the leadership training institute which was associated with a professional network that she obtained role models and mentors through participating in a “formal mentoring program.” In comparison, Vice President Owens described how she developed relationships with two mentors through her involvement in professional organizations related to university fundraising and advancement. As previously noted, she first met her primary mentor, a former male university president, at a professional conference she attended as a graduate student. Then, she noted that she developed a relationship with a “second mentor, who was a . . . [woman] in my [regional] chapter who had a lot of experience.” Vice President Owens describes, “she was younger than I am, but she was a consultant and had a lot of experience and she’s helped me a lot.”

As well, in contrast to the majority of participants’ experiences, President Rice indicated that her involvement with professional networks and organizations related to
her academic discipline “played a strong role” in contributing to her advancement in the early and middle stages of her career development. She discussed,

. . . I’ve been a member of [a national organization in my academic field] since I’ve been in college [as an] undergraduate . . . and they’re meetings were always stimulating and inspirational . . . [Also, a professional organization comprised] of women . . . [in my field] . . . encouraged me to stick with it in going to their meetings, both the local and national [meetings . . . Also, they] provided me with a network of people outside [and] . . . inside . . . [of my local area] . . . to fall back on.

Dean Reed, Vice President Carter, and Vice President McNair also spoke to the value of the networking opportunities in professional organizations related to their respective fields. Dean Reed expressed that professional networks and organizations in her academic field have played a “tremendous role” in terms of helping her “to establish a name for . . . [herself] . . . and to meet other professionals. In particular, Dean Reed explained that involvement in “professional associations . . . is critically important . . . to develop[ing] a national reputation for yourself” as a faculty member and an academic administrator. In describing how professional networks can help one build a national reputation, she explains,

They may nominate you for positions and opportunities, not only at schools, . . . but nominate you for important roles within those [professional] organizations. . . [Also, you can learn a] lot about leadership by serving on committees and boards within those organizations. You can make a lot of good, professional contacts with people in important places through those associations.
Dean Reed also perceives that in addition to other factors such as her record of success as a department chair and researcher that “if I hadn’t had . . . the record of leadership with a national association, I would have never been considered for this position.”

Vice Presidents Carter and McNair have also served in leadership roles within their professional organizations. Prior to moving to an administrative role in university advancement, Vice President Carter discussed how as a faculty member she had the “opportunity to do some national work” on the board of a professional organization in her academic field. Through her leadership role in this organization, she gained “exposure to . . . other people . . .” and gained experience in fundraising. Vice President McNair spoke to the importance of “building a reputation across the country.” Due to her involvement in national organizations in student affairs, she notes, “I get offers all over the place to come and do work and that’s from building a reputation and knowing people.”

Nevertheless, several participants (President Perkins, Vice President Young, Vice President McNair, and Dean Reed) sought to distinguish that while networking can be important in making contacts that help aspiring leaders to move up the administrative ladder, other factors, namely achievement and demonstrating competency, are equally important or more important than networking. Vice President Young, who notes that networking only played a “little” role in her career advancement, pointed out that “networking is really important, but that alone doesn’t help you to get there.” She explains, “the other portion of that is being able to produce credentials, which is what happens as part of the job [in showing] that you’re qualified [to assume leadership roles].” Correspondingly, Vice President McNair believes that it is “essential” to engage in networking in building a national reputation. However, she clarifies:
It’s not enough, though, to network. You have to do your job. You have to be willing to do the work, and I think that’s sometimes what will get lost. . . 

[Although I believe] it’s not enough just to network, . . . I do think people have to know you in order to recommend you for anything [and] in order to feel comfortable that you can deliver. So, . . . what I try to do, though, is not just network. I try to do . . . something worthwhile . . . for other people [and] I try to look out for their best interests. . . . [As a case in point,] I serve on the board of directors of the [national association within my academic field]. When I’m in that board [room] I try my darnedest to . . . be present . . . [and] do a good job, and if people like me, or if people want me to do something, it’s a byproduct of trying to do a good job there. . . . [Also,] I know that they’ll have some expectations of me, like I’m expected to be able to keep the whole gender/racial/ethnic thing on the table. Nobody says that out loud, but that’s an expectation, and I accept that responsibility. So that’s what I mean. I try to do my best . . .

With this in mind, while participants like Vice President McNair viewed professional networks as playing a role in contributing to their ability to build their professional credentials, most participants shared her perception that other factors like demonstrating competency were more influential in contributing to their advancement to leadership roles.

Summary of Mentors, Role Models, and Professional Networks

A major conclusion of this study pertains to the ways in which mentors, role models, and/or professional networks played a minimal or secondary role, in comparison to other more influential factors (e.g., credentials, achievement, etc.), in most participants’ advancement to key-line administrative positions or university presidencies.
This key finding is related, in part, to participants’ emergent and unintentional career paths to key-line administrative positions and university presidencies, as well as their portrayal of the key factors (e.g., demonstrating competency, assuming responsibility, etc.) that contributed to their movement to university leadership. The minimal role of professional networks and organizations in contributing to most participants’ advancement to leadership may be explained by their lack of involvement with networks and organizations related to higher education administration/leadership. Moreover, the secondary role of participants’ mentoring experiences in contributing to their career advancement may be attributed, in part, to how most participants lacked primary mentoring experiences by an individual or individuals with experience serving in a higher-level position of university leadership.

Although most participants did not have a primary mentor who served to guide their careers into university leadership, the majority of participants described having multiple mentoring relationships and/or role models (e.g., peer mentors, traditional career mentors and role models, non-traditional mentors and role models, etc.) who provided “little assists” throughout their career paths such as encouragement or career advice. Clearly, in evaluating participants’ accounts of their experiences with role models and mentors, most participants in this study reported having more male than female mentors and role models. Notably, the participants who represented the generation of women who are sixty or older highlighted the important “generational differences” that characterized the severe lack of university women faculty and administrators to serve as role models and mentors, especially during the early and middle stages of their career paths.
The findings also reveal the participants’ perceptions of the benefits of mentors, role models, and professional networks. The majority of participants in this study reported receiving more benefits from their relationships with mentors and/or role models than their involvement with professional networks. Three major benefits of participant’s relationships with mentors and role models relate to receiving (a) encouragement and support, (b) career advice and information, and (c) skills and/or training. In comparison, the two participants involved with networks and organizations related to higher education administration/leadership described how they benefited from receiving leadership training, skills, and information. Other participants who were involved with professional networks and organizations related to their respective career fields in higher education (e.g., academic discipline, student affairs, university advancement, etc.) spoke to the benefits of networking in building their professional reputations.

Family Relationships and Work-Life Balance Issues

As previously established, one of the primary goals of this study was to explore how the personal factors related to participants’ family relationships (e.g., spousal relationships, childrearing responsibilities, etc.) and work-life balance issues have served to influence their career paths and leadership aspirations. Accordingly, participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to how family relationships and work-life balance issues have influenced their career decisions and goals. First, in regard to family relationships, participants were asked to share their general perceptions concerning how the relationships that women administrators/presidents have in their personal lives affect their career paths and leadership aspirations. Then, participants were asked to describe how the significant relationships (e.g., relationships with spouses, children, etc.) in their own personal lives have influenced their career paths and leadership aspirations. Next, in
regard to work-life balance issues, participants were asked to briefly outline the most important roles and responsibilities that accompanied their leadership positions. Additionally, participants were asked to describe what kind of demands that serving in a position of university leadership makes on their time. Participants were also asked to discuss their ability to achieve balance between their personal and professional lives. Finally, participants were asked how issues related to work-life balance have influenced their career decisions and goals.

The concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues represents one of the most salient concepts that emerged from the data analysis. The power of this concept is revealed in the ways in which themes related to participants’ family relationships and work-life balance issues intersect with each of the other major categories that emerged from the data analysis. Clearly, as demonstrated in the presentation of the research findings, many of the participants’ experiences concerning their career paths, educational pursuits, and leadership aspirations were significantly influenced by their family priorities and work-life balance issues. Also, in regard to the concept of mentors, role models, and professional networks, several participants spoke to how their family members (e.g., mother) and/or friends had contributed to their career development by serving as their non-traditional career mentors and/or role models. What is more, in relation to the concept of perceptions on gender and leadership, participants spoke to the ways in which their personal life roles as mothers and/or wives had served to influence their leadership styles and skills (e.g., encouraging, nurturing, etc.) as university administrators.

The majority of participants indicated that family relationships and work-life balance issues have influenced their career choices and leadership aspirations. Another
noteworthy finding reveals that, while the participants in this study did not set out at the beginning of their careers with intentional plans of attaining a position of university leadership, many of the participants who were mothers, wives, daughters, and/or grandmothers often made “conscious” or “intentional” career choices that reflected their family priorities. With this in mind, this section of the findings contributes new and deeper insights into how the personal factors of participants’ family relationships and work-life balance issues have influenced their career paths by focusing on each of the following sub-themes including (a) family relationships and priorities, (b) the time demands of participants’ professional roles as university leaders, (c) work-life balance challenges and conflicts, (d) strategies for achieving greater work-life balance, and (e) the importance of having flexible time and receiving support from others.

**Family Relationships and Priorities**

As previously noted, the majority of participants in this study are married (12) and have children (13). In addition to many of the participants’ roles as wives and/or mothers, a number of participants also occupied other significant family roles including being a daughter, grandmother, and/or sibling. As such, many of the participants in this study described how, at certain points in their career paths, they have played multiple family roles in terms of (a) maintaining a dual-career marriage, (b) raising children, and/or (c) caring for an aging parent.

*Family priorities.* One of the most prominent sub-themes to emerge within the category of family relationships and work-life balance issues pertains to the ways in which participants who were wives, mothers, grandmothers, and/or daughters of aging parents have made choices concerning their career path advancement and/or leadership
aspirations that underscore the importance of their “family priorities.” In speaking to how her family has influenced her career path, Vice President Owens exemplifies the sentiments of many participants in articulating, “I have to put my family first . . . [because] nothing is as important to me as my . . . family.” She further explains, “I’ve had to work . . . to try to learn how to juggle both lives, but my focus was always on taking care of my family.” Indeed, the findings relating to participants’ career paths and leadership aspirations reveal how many participants’ family relationships and priorities served to influence the unique contours of their career paths and leadership aspirations. For example, some of the participants chose to prioritize their family responsibilities by: (a) interrupting their early careers to become stay-at-home mothers, (b) delaying their advancement into administrative positions until their children were older or grown, (c) remaining place bound due to a spouse’s career and/or childrearing responsibilities, and/or (d) adjusting their career plans to help care for an aging parent.

_Prioritizing childrearing responsibilities._ In discussing how their family relationships and work-life balance issues had influenced their career paths and leadership aspirations, the 13 participants who were mothers (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, President Rice, President Perkins, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President Landon, Vice President McNair, Vice President Young, Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, and Dean Gallagher) each provided examples of how they have prioritized their childrearing responsibilities at differing stages of their career paths. As previously indicated, among the participants who were mothers, most had grown children, two had adolescent-age children, and only one had elementary-age children. Of the four presidents who participated in this study, two had grown children and two were childless.
Several participants (President Perkins, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Kennedy) prioritized their childrearing responsibilities, as President Perkins notes, “on the front end” of their career paths by choosing to take a stop out from their early career paths in order to become stay-at-home mothers while their children were young. The participants who were employed in full-time careers in higher education while raising small or school-age children also spoke to the ways in which they sought to prioritize their childrearing responsibilities as “working mothers.” For example, although Vice President McNair waited until her child was grown to assume a key-line administrative role, she described a strategy that allowed her to prioritize her child’s needs while maintaining a full-time career. She explained,

... I have a rule ... [that] I learned ... from the ... previous vice president, and I apply it to ... myself. ... I always, always take my son’s calls. From the time he was ... a little boy ... I always took his calls ... It did not matter to me with whom I was talking. It could be the [university] president, [or] it could have been the president of the United States. He always was number one. He’s now ... [grown] and I still take his calls. So that’s the first thing because I think it’s really important for working moms—I don’t know about dads—but working moms to be accessible to their children. I think your child needs to know that you’re there for them. So, that [rule] worked and ... my son, I think, did not feel slighted.

Further, a number of the participants (Provost Barlow, Vice President Owens, Vice President Landon, Vice President Young, Dean Atwood, and Dean Gallagher) shared their experiences of raising small school-aged children while serving as key-line administrators. Provost Barlow noted that when she entered her first key-line administrative post as an academic dean she had young children. In her tenure as a
provost, she points out, “I have raised . . . [my children] over these years that I’ve been in this office . . .” Provost Barlow discussed how she has prioritized her relationship with her children by making some difficult choices concerning her professional endeavors. She states,

. . . I’ve missed a lot less [with my children] than I thought I might have to because I’ve made hard decisions [concerning my professional career]. I’ll never forget being ready to go . . . [to an accreditation] meeting, and I had my flight scheduled and so forth, and the[n] [my child’s music] recital got . . . [rescheduled]. So, I cancelled the flight. Looking back, it was a good thing [because] it was the only . . . recital I ever was going to as a mom because . . . [the music] lessons didn’t last long and I didn’t want to miss that . . . [Also,] two different times I was signed up to go . . . [out of the country] with a group of women from the . . . college world [to work] on some very important projects. [However,] both times, I cancelled because of something coming up with [my] kids. So, you make hard [decisions].

*Delaying career advancement in order to prioritize family responsibilities.*

Additionally, as previously discussed, seven participants (President Perkins, President Rice, Provost Ellis, Dean Reed, Dean Gallagher, Vice President Carter, and Vice President McNair) discussed how they prioritized their family relationships by choosing not to move into full-time roles as key-line administrators or presidents until their children were older or grown. Vice President Carter expresses the perception,

Well, I think probably [one reason] women don’t get into the positions that they can leverage until later . . . [is] because of their own personal life circumstances
[with] their families . . . They like to have this balance [between their personal and professional lives].

As one example, President McNair described, “I applied for and became the vice president . . . [after] my son graduated . . . from high school.” She explained, “I think I became a vice president a little later [in my career path, but] . . . I was much more committed to making sure my son was okay.”

*The priority of maintaining dual-career marriages.* Also, as noted earlier in this chapter, in relation to geographic mobility and relocation, some of the participants who were in dual-career marriages were place bound in their career advancement at certain stages of their career paths due to the location of their spouse’s career. For example, President Perkins, President Whitley, and Dean Reed described being place bound until their husbands were able to retire or transfer their work to another location. Dean Gallagher, who indicated that she will wait to externally advance in her career to another institution until her youngest child is grown and her spouse has more flexibility in his career, shares the perception: “I think that men and women are tied some by their spouse or partner’s career opportunity [and] I think that makes a difference [in women’s career choices and advancement].” Similarly, Dean Reed who waited on her spouse to retire before she externally advanced to a deanship notes that she has observed that in her field “sometimes women don’t become dean until their husbands retire.”

*Prioritizing the care of aging parents.* Moreover, as previously discussed, in the mid-to-late stages of their career paths, several participants (Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, Vice President Kennedy, and Vice President McNair) spoke to how the priority of caring for their elderly parents influenced their career decisions and leadership aspirations. As an example, Provost Ellis noted, “I did have two years before my mother
passed where she was ill . . . [and] taking care . . . [of her was a priority.] . . . In my mind, family obligations . . . are the things that you have to do first.”

*Viewing career choices as family decisions.* Another way in which participants demonstrated their commitment to their family relationships was through involving their family members in their career decisions. President Perkins, President Whitley, Provost Barlow, Vice President Carter, Vice President McNair, and Dean Atwood each spoke to her perception of the importance of making one’s movement to a key-line administrative position or university presidency a “family decision.” For example, President Perkins states,

> If I could advise anyone . . . taking on this kind of leadership role that consumes you, . . . I think it would be very important [to] think on the front end what you’re willing do. Talk to your family. Talk to your husband, . . . to your kids, and to your parents and say, “Here’s what I’m getting ready to do and it’s big and it is going to take a lot of time and are y[ou] all in?”

Dean Atwood describes how her family has been involved in her career decisions to advance into leadership roles. She explains,

> It's actually been a conversation with my family to say, “okay here's what I'm wanting to do [and] here's how it would work. This is the commitment that I would be making to the institution [and] this is the commitment that I'll be making to you. How does everybody feel about this?” And we actually talk it over as a family.

Similarly, Provost Barlow recalls how her decision to assume her current post was influenced by a conversation with her oldest child.
One of the things that I am most thankful that I did [was to make] . . . our oldest son, [who] was middle-school age when I became provost, part of the conversation on accepting the position . . . I knew as soon as . . . [the president] asked me about the position that it was something that I had felt called to do. [However,] I wanted to make sure it was a family decision so that . . . later, if there were times when I was working late, [my son] felt like he had been a part of the decision and was invested in the fact that I’m going to be working late some. So, that was a key, significant part of this harmony that I’ve tried to achieve [between my personal and professional life].

Vice President McNair also described how her son influenced her decision not to externally advance into a key-line administrative position at another university:

When I tested the waters to see if I were interested in being vice president . . . at a[nother] school, . . . [my son] was a sophomore in high school. . .  [and] he said, “Well, Mom, you can take that job if you want to, but I’m not going. I have too many important things here to do.” And I said, “Well, okay, son, then I won’t apply for another job until you graduate from high school.” So, . . . [my professional] life was influenced by raising my son.

The Time Demands of Participants’ Professional Roles as University Leaders

In addition to describing the influence of their family priorities on their career paths, each participant shared the professional responsibilities and time demands associated with serving as a university key-line administrator or president. As previously noted in the findings pertaining to participants’ leadership aspirations, eight of the key-line administrators indicated that a personal hindrance to their consideration of achieving a presidency pertained to their perceptions of the incompatibility between balancing their
personal life roles (e.g., mother, wife, etc.) with the professional demands of a university president’s role. Also, as established earlier, the university presidents who participated in this study spoke to the “24/7” nature of a president’s schedule in fulfilling the wide-ranging purview of responsibilities (e.g., strategic planning, fundraising, serving as a public official, engaging in crisis-management, etc.). For example, President Howard broadly describes the allocation of her time in fulfilling her most important roles and responsibilities as follows:

It’s sort of divided between [the] real leadership of the institution which takes up about half of my time, community leadership [which] takes up a quarter of my time, and fundraising which takes up about a quarter of my time.

President Whitley also summarizes her most important roles and responsibilities as she communicates,

[My roles and responsibilities] . . . are like every other president’s. It’s keeping the university fiscally sound. It’s hiring a good administrative team. It’s fundraising for the university. It’s conveying [information] about the university to the external community. It’s making sure we observe all the right laws. It’s working with the board. It’s building new buildings. So, it’s a long, long, long list [of roles and responsibilities].

Vice President Young expresses the perception of many key-line administrators concerning their observations of the president’s demanding schedule and all-encompassing responsibilities in stating,

as responsible as I am for my section of the university, the president is responsible for all of it, so there is a lot of responsibility there and a very heavy weight on the individual to be at all of the [university] functions, to be visible, to be attentive, to
be responsive, to do all of these things and do . . . them exceptionally well. [So, it is a] much, much higher expectation.

*The time demands and responsibilities associated with key-line administrators’ roles.* Although many key-line administrators pointed out that their schedules and responsibilities were not as demanding as a university president’s schedule and responsibilities, all of them spoke to the ways in which serving in a key-line administrative position requires a greater “commitment of [one’s] time” and a “higher level” of responsibility. Vice President Young’s schedule is representative of many of the other key-line administrators’ schedules, as she describes,

I put in many, many, many extra hours [as well as] many nights and weekends. [My schedule] varies from week to week, [but] I haven’t put in a 40-hour work week in years. It’s always going to exceed 40 hours.

More specifically, each of the key-line administrators described their work schedules as follows: two (Dean Atwood and Vice President Owens) participants worked 40-50 hours per week; five (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Dean Gallagher, Vice President Landon, and Vice President Young) worked 50-60 hours per week; two (Dean Reed and Vice President Carter) worked 70-75 hours per week; and two (Vice President Kennedy and Provost Fields) worked 80 or more hours per week.

*University leaders’ primary roles and responsibilities.* Although each participant’s responsibilities varied depending on her professional title and institutional type, the majority of participants spoke to a common set of responsibilities associated with serving as university key-line administrator or president including (a) managing personnel and personnel issues, (b) providing a vision, (c) strategic planning and decision-making, (d) financial management/budgeting, and (e) fundraising. Among
many of the participants, two of the most frequently reported responsibilities that represented a significant use of their time related to “personnel management” and “providing a vision.”

The role and responsibilities of personnel management. First, in relation to personnel management, Dean Reed, articulates, “[as deans] we like to tell people that we’re leaders [and] that we spend all of our time leading, but in reality we spend some of our time leading and, rightly or wrongly, a lot of our time managing.” Provost Fields also notes that “personnel management takes up a significant amount of my time [and] . . . personnel problems are probably some of the most stressful issues to deal with.” Dean Gallagher, as well, offers an example of the type of personnel issues she deals with as an academic dean at a large research university, as she states, “a great deal of time is spent either on considerations of recruiting . . . [in] hiring new faculty and in promotion and tenure for existing faculty. . .” In comparison, Vice President McNair describes some of the responsibilities and challenges of her supervisory role in managing the personnel in the division of student affairs. She discusses,

Communication and people—that’s what it’s all about. I’ve got to know how to motivate people. I’ve got to get them to do the job. . . . The people who work in student affairs don’t have big salaries. So, they have to love it. You have to figure out how to keep them motivated and rewarded in other ways because it is not with a [pay] check. I have to know how to bring people together to make things happen, and one thing that I have found challenging is [that] I have to know how to supervise at the appropriate level with every individual who reports to me. In some ways, I expect [that] people just ought to know what to do because if they report to me, they’re pretty high-ranking. [Although] they kind of
know what to do, [they] . . . still require some supervision. So it’s . . . discerning.

. . . the appropriate level of supervision for the person that I’m responsible for.

Vice President Young communicates that one’s level of responsibilities in managing personnel will also depend on the number of employees that one supervises and the size of the institution. She relays,

dealing with personnel and personnel issues . . . is very, very important [and] I probably spend more of my time now doing that. I think that’s normal for anyone in my type of role. I think it also depends on how many people you supervise and how large the organization [is]. . . . Perhaps you’ll have fewer issues . . . [with a] smaller . . . organization . . . But the more people that you supervise, the more problems you have.

In confirming Vice President Young’s perception, Vice President Carter, who supervised “a staff of 90 to 100 people,” conveyed, “I found that the deeper I got into administration and the broader my role was, the more personnel matters I had to deal with and those are not easy.” In comparison to the supervisory roles of key-line administrators, two of the university presidents (President Perkins and President Whitley) described their responsibilities concerning the management of an executive-level administrative team.

As one example, President Perkins relays,

While I’m here on campus I’m hiring and firing vice presidents [and] what I mean by that is [that I am] building a team and meeting with my team to hear what they’re up to. Together, we set goals and then I’ll let them go do their work.

The role and responsibility of establishing a vision. Next, among both the key-line administrators and presidents, one of the most important roles and responsibilities of serving as a university leader relates to establishing a vision for a division or the
university. President Rice notes, for example, that her “main role is providing a vision for the university [and] keeping people focused on that vision.” President Perkins also explains that as a university president,

You have the duties of the job [such as] the building of the buildings, running of the programs, the balancing of the books. [However,] I have people who do the heavy lifting there. My main job is to be looking 10 years ahead [in order to make] . . . . sure that we are going in the right direction, and then sort of steering the boat, if you will, while everyone else does the paddling.

Likewise, six key-line administrators (Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Young) spoke to their responsibilities concerning establishing a vision for their unit, department, or division of the university. Vice President Owens, for instance, discusses the importance of providing a vision for the advancement division at her university.

Well, I think that most important is setting the vision, and then also supporting that vision with a strategy. . . . So I see myself as, really, the cheerleader. I mean you really . . . have to have people excited about what you’re trying to get them to do, and it can’t just be your vision. You have to get people together to share the vision . . . [which] makes it much easier to accomplish.

Also, Vice President McNair speaks to the importance of setting a vision that not only serves her division, but also benefits the entire university.

I’ve got to have vision about what is good for students and about what is good for this university. So I have to be fully engaged with what’s going on with students, but I have to also have a big vision for the university. So, I can’t just do student
things [because] I’ve got to think about what’s in the best interests of the university to move it forward—way beyond when I’m here.

Work-Life Balance Challenges and Conflicts

After describing the schedule and the major responsibilities associated with their administrative roles as key-line administrators or university presidents, each of the participants was asked to describe her ability to achieve work-life balance in her current administrative roles. Many of the participants’ responses to this question reveal the challenges of negotiating work-life balance as a university leader. For example, in speaking to their ability to achieve work-life balance some of the participants’ responses included: “that’s probably my greatest weakness,” “very poor,” “a struggle,” “a continuing challenge,” and “I’m getting better.” In contrast to the majority of participants who spoke to the challenges of negotiating work-life balance, only one participant, Vice President Kennedy, who is currently divorced with grown children, indicated that she was “very able” to achieve work-life balance due to her lack of family responsibilities at this age and stage of her life. Although for most participants in this study issues relating to work-life balance centered on the challenges of managing their family roles with their professional roles, two of the participants (President Howard and Provost Fields) who have never married and are childless also spoke to current or previous struggles with maintaining a work-life balance. Additionally, some participants like President Perkins, President Howard, and Dean Atwood, who have struggled with work-life balance issues at earlier stages of their careers, described how they have learned over time to achieve greater balance between their personal and professional lives. With this in mind, the most prominent work-life balance issues pertain to (a) the infringement of participants’ professional responsibilities on their personal lives; (b) work-family
conflicts; (c) sacrificing personal time for self-care, hobbies/interests, and friendships; (d) work-life balance strategies; and (e) the importance of flexible time and support.

The infringement of participants’ professional responsibilities on their personal lives. In considering the additional responsibilities and time demands associated with serving as a key-line administrator and/or university president, many of the participants conveyed that one of the major difficulties of achieving work-life balance pertains to how their professional responsibilities carry over into their personal lives. As previously noted, the majority of the participants, including both the key-line administrators and presidents, described how the responsibilities of their professional roles required them to work additional hours in the evenings and on weekends. Vice President McNair exemplifies the participants’ experiences in conveying that, “there’s no leaving the office behind.” She further represents many participants’ experiences in stating, “there’s very little division between when you’re at work and when you’re not at work.” Although most of the participants in key-line administrative positions indicated that their work hours ranged from a minimum of 40 hours to a maximum of over 80 hours per week, Vice President McNair notes, “my job is 24 by seven.” In speaking to her responsibilities in leading the student affairs division at a large research university, she explains,

I almost always work a ten-hour day at the office, and then I work when I go home [Also,] I sleep with my Blackberry [phone] right at my head . . . [In explaining my schedule,] a part of what you’ve got to . . . understand [is that] a vice president of student affairs is responsible for everything about students. [Thus,] if there’s an issue with the students, [even in the middle of the night,] that ultimately it’s your responsibility. . . . [So,] I’m on [call] 24 by seven.
Like Vice President McNair, many key-line administrators pointed out that the long work hours associated with their roles may, in large part, be attributed to how they serve in leadership positions in which they are “ultimately responsible” for a division of the university. As a result, all of the participants acknowledged the challenges of achieving and maintaining work-life balance with the increased level of responsibilities associated with being a key-line administrator or president. For instance, in speaking to her ability to achieve work-life balance in her current role in comparison to her previous career positions in higher education, Vice President Young explains,

I guess I didn’t experience the difficulty in managing the balance prior to this role. All of the other roles were easier in terms of [managing a work-life balance and it is] not necessarily that the [previous] jobs, themselves, were easier, but the responsibility is much greater once you’re at this level. So, it was easier to leave the office at five o’clock in prior roles. Now, again, ultimately, if there is a problem, I am ultimately responsible for . . . anything that occurs. It doesn’t matter which of my staff are involved. It doesn’t matter when it occurs, where it occurs, [or] how it occurs. It is my responsibility, ultimately. So when you are at this level, and you carry that amount of responsibility, then it is more difficult to manage the balance. [So] I think it’s more about the amount of responsibility, the overall amount of responsibility, that you have [in a key-line administrative role].

Similarly, in discussing her role and responsibilities in university fundraising and advancement, Vice President Owens states, “even when you’re not working, you’re working.” Like Vice President Young, Vice President Owens describes the difficulty in achieving work-life balance in her current role in relation to her previous career positions.
I didn’t realize, I don’t believe, when I started this position, how much time it takes. Now, I’m getting used to it and . . . it doesn’t seem like it’s as much. [However,] in the beginning, it was hard . . . just [in terms of becoming] . . . acclimated to the amount of time [involved with my role]. . . . [The reason] it’s been more difficult than I thought [is] because in this position you’re responsible for everything. [In my previous roles,] as a development director [and] as an assistant vice president [for advancement], there was always someone else who really held the [ultimate] responsibility. . . . [Therefore, the work] . . . follows you wherever you go. So, even when I go home, it just never leaves me [because] there’s always something on my mind or something I need do . . . . [Also, within] the community that you live in, you’re always promoting [the university] and so it’s even difficult to go out and just have an evening out because you’re always really working . . . .

In having a similar experience, Dean Gallagher, who is relatively new to her position, acknowledges the challenges of becoming acclimated to serving in a key-line administrative role:

I haven’t done a very good job [of maintaining a work-life balance] so far . . . [as] it’s been harder for me this first year. [However,] I hope that I’m able to . . . do a little bit better job of keeping my balance next year . . . because I really . . . don’t want to just eat, sleep, and breath my job.

Work-Family Conflicts

The sacrifice of missing out on time with family. In recognizing how their professional administrative roles often infringed on their personal life roles,
many participants, especially those who are mothers, have experienced work-life conflict concerning their lack of time to devote to their family relationships. As such, many participants spoke to the “choices, compromises, sacrifices, and tradeoffs” associated with striving to achieve a work-family balance. Vice President Young notes that, in fulfilling her professional responsibilities, she makes a “conscious effort” to achieve balance by reserving time in the evenings and on weekends to “take care of . . . my family.” However, she explains, “sometimes that’s extremely difficult and sometimes you can’t. Sometimes you have to work [and] you have to put those hours in and you have to be there on the weekends.” Although Vice President Owen’s main priority is her family, she acknowledges that in seeking to fulfill her professional obligations sometimes “I will fall off the side of not giving myself and my family enough attention . . .” Also, Vice President Landon, who is raising two elementary-age children, notes that she works approximately 60 hours per week. She points out,

It can seem very glamorous [to be a vice president with], the money, traveling, [etc., but] it’s not that easy to be a working woman. . . [as there are] a lot of sacrifices that go into it . . . . [I] do spend less time with my kids, or sometimes . . . I’m distracted. . . when [I am with them.]

Feeling a sense of guilt over missing out on spending time with children. In particular, some of the key-line administrators who were balancing the responsibilities of their administrative position with being the mother of small or school-aged children described feeling a sense of “guilt” concerning “missing out” on spending time with their children. Although her children are now grown, Vice President Owens notes that when she began her current administrative role her children were school-age. She offers her
perception of why women, in their role as mothers, often feel a sense of guilt concerning work-life balance issues. Vice President Owens states,

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\ldots \text{Because of \ldots women’s \ldots great need to nurture, I believe that they have a lot of guilt, and so \ldots when their job starts infringing on \ldots [their personal life] and they have to miss something of their child’s or whatever, I think it just brings on this great battle between your career, \ldots your family, and your guilt \ldots .}
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Dean Reed asserts that women, due to their traditional gender roles as nurturers and mothers, are more likely than men, who are working fathers, to experience a sense of guilt and conflict concerning work-life balance issues. She conjectures,

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\text{I think [achieving work-life balance] \ldots is a continuous struggle, \ldots especially for people who have children at home. When you have children at home, you have to make some compromises. [Also,] you have to make choices, and you have to trust yourself to make the right choices. You just have to decide what’s the most important. Women tend to feel a lot more guilty than men do about making choices [and] about working long hours. Men very seldom feel guilty about it, actually, because they feel that’s what they’re expected to do \ldots . [In comparison,] most women feel that’s not what we’re expected to do. It’s what we do in spite of other people’s expectations of us and we do tend to feel guilty about it.}
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In confirming Dean Reed’s perception, Provost Barlow spoke to the conflicts and sacrifices involved in trying to balance her work-life responsibilities as an administrator when her children were younger:

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\text{I was striving for harmony between the two \ldots and it’s hard \ldots . There is a sacrifice in it. There are women who feel a deep sense of satisfaction from a very}
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well run home, and I’m one of those. I have never been able to completely not care about not having warm cookies and milk with my kids. I’ve kept the ingredients for the ability to serve masses of friends in my pantry at all times . . . because I want to be able to take advantage of one of them calling and saying, “Can the youth group come over after church tonight?” I want to always be able to say “yes” to those kinds of questions, and it’s a sacrifice. I don’t like to miss any of it, and I’ve missed some things. So, I can understand totally women who feel like they don’t want to miss out . . . . I do not want to have any regrets. I do not want to look back and later in life realize that my son is dysfunctional because I didn’t do X.

Provost Barlow further describes how her spirituality, which represents a central priority in her life and an important dimension of her personhood, has helped her in coping with the conflict she feels, at times, over negotiating work-life balance:

God has been the strongest source of encouragement because I have certainly prayed, oh, so many times, “God, no regrets.” I’ve asked for his guidance all along the way to be able to do what I felt like he prepared me to do professionally . . . [and] what he had called me to do as a mother. I guess what I’m trying to say is when God opens doors, you trust him with the other things that are important in your life.

The perception of mothers bearing the ultimate responsibility for childrearing.

Several of the participants (Provost Ellis, Dean Atwood, Vice President Owens, Vice President Young, and Dean Reed) also spoke to their perceptions of how women key-line administrators and presidents often experience a greater sense of work-life conflict due to feeling “ultimately responsible” in both their leadership roles and in their family roles.
For example, both Provost Ellis, who is in her mid-60s, and Vice President Owens, who is her mid-to-late 50s, spoke to how the women of their generation viewed family responsibilities, especially childrearing responsibilities, to be the primary responsibility of women. Provost Ellis states, “. . . I think this may be changing with the younger generation, but I do think women . . . see family as their responsibility.” Based on her experiences and observations she notes,

I think that, in my experience at least, women tried to balance the family. I've seen men now, assistant professors, who are more tuned into that, but when I came to the university most of the men who were faculty . . . [were] married to women who had high school educations and they were expected to stay at home and take care of the children. I think I see less and less of that today. Most of their wives have college educations [and] many are faculty, attorneys, [or] physicians. So, I think it’s very different today.

Additionally, Vice President Owens, who has grown children, stated:

Now, I don’t know how much it’s changed now, but in my generation I felt responsible for my children. I felt . . . responsible for making sure they got picked up from school, making sure I was at games . . . . [In contrast,] my husband didn’t have that same feeling of responsibility. He would help out, but it was my responsibility to coordinate it. So, I think it’s more difficult because when your children are sick, the mother takes off; versus the dad in most instances . . . . So, I think it’s harder for women because they do have that . . . great need to nurture . . . and they are the number one person [to assume the childcare responsibilities] in most cases . . . [among the women] in my generation . . . . I think that as the mother, the caregiver that we are, we try to consider what we can do with a family
... [in] our career paths, ... whereas a man can do whatever ... [he] want[s] because it’s appropriate [and] acceptable for a man, as [the] leader of the home, to work [in whatever profession] he chooses to do, wherever [he wants to work and] then the family follows.

In comparison, Vice President Young, who is in her mid-40s, shares a similar view as Provost Ellis and Vice President Owens in stating, “I think that oftentimes women make decisions because they do feel that the ultimate responsibility [for family responsibilities] lies with them.”

The “superwoman syndrome.” Since many participants are managing the major responsibilities in their professional roles and family roles, a few participants spoke to their perception of the work-life conflict that can arise, as Vice President Owens articulates, from “women hav[ing] a tendency to [want] be everything for everybody.” Vice President Owens notes that when she assumed a key-line administrative role that she was “responsible for everything” in her division. However, despite her increased professional responsibilities, she points out that in her family roles as a wife and mother, “I still try to do everything, for everyone.” Similarly, Dean Atwood, conceptualizes this pattern among women as the “superwoman syndrome.” Dean Atwood explains,

Somehow when I assumed a leadership role, I assumed too much personal responsibility for everything and I think that’s a common trap for females. I really do . . . . I’ve observed that this [pattern] is much more prevalent in females than males . . . . There are some guys that are the same way, but it’s very prevalent among female leaders [in] that they feel personally that they have to do everything. It’s this superwoman syndrome and typically, if they’re married and have a family, they take that home as well, and it can become exhausting.
As a result of attempting to assume the ultimate responsibilities in both their professional and personal life roles, many participants spoke to how they have often experienced a lack of personal time to care for their own needs, health, and/or wellbeing.

*Sacrificing Personal Time for Self-care, Hobbies/Interests, and Friendships*

Indeed, several participants who sought to prioritize their family responsibilities while also successfully fulfilling their professional responsibilities reported that they often sacrificed personal time for self-care, hobbies/interests, and/or friendships. For instance, Vice President Owens, who views her family and faith as her top priorities, notes that in balancing her work-life responsibilities:

If anything, I think I’ve lost during the time [I have served as an administrator], it was taking care of myself. So, [self-care] . . . is the thing that I think is probably an area that is hard for women. It’s something I need to daily remind myself of because if you’re taking care of your family, . . .your faith, and . . . your career, there’s [only] you that has to run it all. So, that’s the one thing that you tend to have put on the [back] burner, and I think women do that to a greater degree than men.

As another example, Vice Presidents of Student Affairs McNair and Landon both conveyed, in the words of Vice President McNair, that “the thing that I sacrifice more than anything is sleep. I don’t get much sleep.” In addition, Vice President Landon, who balances being the mother of small children with her leadership role, notes that one of the sacrifices and tradeoffs to serving in a high-level administrative role is “the [limited] time I spend on the phone with girlfriends.” She also points out, “I don’t have time for new friendships.” In comparison, President Rice, who is relatively new to her position, indicates that she does not have time for self-care and personal hobbies/interests:
I think my ability [to achieve work-life balance] is pretty poor. I should do better, [but] I really haven’t had time since I’ve been here [at this university] to fall into a routine . . . [However,] that will come with time. So, [in order to have a greater work-life balance] . . . I [would like to] have some time to exercise everyday, to do the girl things like getting my nails done, and also to indulge in hobbies. [For example,] . . . I like crocheting [and] I like volunteer work, [but] I don't have time for it. So, I've got to figure out how I'm going to fit all that in, but I will.

Further, President Rice, Vice President Young, and Provost Ellis described the difficulty in finding the time outside of their work schedules for self care and renewal. Provost Ellis notes that in having a balanced life “you do need to try to have your friends, . . . you need to try to do other things on weekends, [and] you need to take vacations. [However,] it’s not always easy.” Similarly, Vice President Young describes,

[One challenging] . . . thing [about trying to achieve work-life balance as an administrator] is trying to find that time where you’re able to kind of take a day off or something where you can recharge and [re]energize. . . . When you push like that for so long, over time, it can have a very negative impact on you, your health, and your ability to think with a fresh pair of eyes and to see things clearly . . . I think [the] potential is there for you to begin having problems as a result of doing that. Burnout is another [negative effect], for sure. But . . . [working] many extra hours . . . [as a high-level administrator] is an expectation, and sometimes there’s just no way to avoid it.

Dean Atwood also points out that serving as an academic administrator, “will put as many demands on your time as you will allow it to . . . [because] the reality is [that] the job could soak up all of my time and drive me crazy.” However, Dean Atwood notes,
[Although] I could work 80 hours a week if I wanted to, I don’t choose to. When I became interim dean, I promised myself and my family that I would work roughly 40 hours a week and I do. When I work, I work [hard] and I’m very efficient. . . . I think a balanced, healthy person is a much better leader than an obsessed, crazed, exhausted, [and] stressed out person. . . [However,] I’ve not always been this way. This is new. This is just the last four or five years. When I was [a] division chair . . . I worked 65 [to] 70 hours a week and it wasn’t good. . . I think I had to kind of get to a point where I was really wearing myself out and recognize that [this] is not a healthy thing and then seek some professional support to be able to . . . [say], “oh, okay there's a better way to do this” . . . [So] I sought counseling. I actually hired what they call a life coach and specifically said, “here’s my issue—I want some strategies. I want to learn how to do this.” [As a result,] I actually think I’m a better administrator now than I was because I'm well rested, clear eyed, and I know I can walk away from it.

Like Dean Atwood, other participants have also learned strategies for achieving a greater work-life balance.

Work-Life Balance Strategies

Although Deed Reed represents many of participants’ experiences in stating, “I’m working very long hours now and I wouldn’t claim to have an ideal balance in my life,” many participants described the unique strategies that have provided them with the ability to achieve greater work-life balance. President Perkins has learned over time, in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, that “you have to be real sensitive to what’s . . . happening to your body, what’s happening to your family and find the time for them.” In describing one of her work-life balance strategies, she relays,
When I became a dean . . . the [university] president said, “you’ve got to find time for yourself.” He said, “about every six weeks you need a long weekend.” So, I do that . . . I build in downtime . . . I may not make it every six weeks, but I will start building in a long weekend maybe around the holiday [and] I’ll add another day to that . . .

Although a number of the participants like President Perkins spoke to the individualized strategies (e.g., empowering others with responsibility/delegation of tasks, planning a daily “to-do list,” arriving to work early each morning, etc.) that they have developed in creating a greater work life balance, the most commonly reported work-life balance strategies centered on (a) establishing boundaries, (b) learning to say “no,” and (c) integrating personal and professional lives.

*Establishing boundaries between their personal and professional lives.* One of the primary ways in which some participants achieved a greater work-life balance was through establishing boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Several participants (Dean Atwood, Provost Barlow, and Vice President McNair) described how they try to reserve time in the evenings and/or on weekends to devote to their family relationships. Both Dean Atwood and Provost Barlow who have raised school-age children while serving in key-line administrative roles, noted that they have sought to devote their weekends to their children. Although Dean Atwood acknowledges that in her early administrative career that she spent long hours at the office during the week, she states, “I've always been good about not working weekends and it was pretty much mom time on Saturdays and Sundays.” She describes how she balances the professional responsibilities that carry over into her personal/family time in stating:
I do have one rule that sort of helps me manage everything and that is I check e-mail once when at home at night . . . . Usually [I check my e-mail] at nine o'clock [p.m.] depending on what we're doing that night, but my family knows that I'm not going to be sitting at the computer working all night. There's that 30 minutes or so that I'm like, “okay I'm good to go check e-mail” and . . . I do it, and I turn it off. [Then, on the weekends,] I do not check e-mail on Saturday. So, [I am] unlike some folks I know who have . . . [e-mail] on their phone and are constantly [checking e-mails]. [For example,] . . . [the] President [of the university] does that. Every time you see her she's checking e-mails on her phone. [So] “When do you sleep?” I don't do that and setting up that boundary . . . was really, really important because . . . if somebody's foot was cut off and they're bleeding to death they're not [going] to send an e-mail. So, anything that's in an e-mail is not so critical that it can't wait seven hours.

Also, in negotiating a work-family balance, Provost Barlow communicates that her “weekends have been [spent] around the kids.” She discussed,

We’ve had a very busy life on the ball field. [Also,] our family sport has been . . . river . . . boating. I don’t know that I’ve ever passed up an opportunity to play on the water because of work, but it’s meant that if you play, then you have to work on either side of that play to get it all done.

President Perkins, on the other hand, describes how she has established a boundary on working late in order to spend more time with her spouse in the evenings. She explained,

Just recently, I realized [that] I stay late [at the office] because it’s quiet and then I realized that I have a husband at home that probably would like to see me. So, what I’ve started doing is I go ahead and go home around five [o’clock] and he
understands that I may have to pick the computer up and do some work, but that break makes a difference in my stamina.

Vice President McNair notes that, while she maintains a hectic schedule, that she sets aside time each week to spend with her spouse and aging parent. She articulates,

[Generally,] my professional life takes precedence, except that if anybody needs anything from me personally, then I put it down . . . . With my husband, . . . I make a one-night-a-week date night with him so that he can be sure I’m home one night a week, and paying attention to him . . . . Everybody else [in my family] gets my weekends. [For example,] I just know that I’m going to go and visit my mother on Sunday after I get out of church. That’s the most important thing . . . .

_Learning to say “no.”_ Some participants reported that another work-life balance strategy that they have learned over time is to say “no.” For example, President Howard notes that she may have as many as six external invitations to give speeches on a Saturday. However, in speaking to her ability to achieve work-life balance, she communicates,

Well, it took me a long time to do that. I just learned to say no and you just have to learn to say no to invitations . . . . [For example,] I’m just not going to get myself tied up in a whole bunch of speeches on a Saturday.

In maintaining her health and wellbeing, as well, President Perkins states,

There are times when I just send my apologies and I don’t go to everything. There maybe something going on on-campus, but I’m at home . . . with my feet [propped] up because if I wear out, I’m not going to do anybody any good . . . . And, of course, when you’re a new president it’s real important that you’re out there doing everything, but now [that I have been the president for several years] I
think people know that I love them and [they] will forgive me if I don’t show up for every little thing. So, I’m getting better and better at finding that balance and reading when it’s getting a little too much and making an adjustment [to my schedule].

Further, Vice President Owens describes how her president supports her decision to “say no” to trying to attend every event associated with her role in university advancement.

I just think . . . the responsibility of being everywhere is very difficult because . . . I could literally be . . . away from home . . . every night, . . . if I would choose to . . . I would imagine that there are some people in this position, that their president would demand that, as well. . . . [However,] I have to put my family first and myself first, so there are things that I just finally . . . say, “No. I’m not going to go to that.” I have a very understanding president at our university and we both acquired these positions close to the same time . . . So, he’s very understanding of [needing to] take care of yourself and take care of your family. So, we have never had any issues about my lack of attendance.

*Integrating personal and professional lives.* Vice President Carter, Provost Barlow, and President Whitley each described how she has achieved a greater work-life balance by seeking to “integrate” certain aspects of their personal and professional lives. President Whitley explains how her “social life is embedded in the university.”

I think, for me, the healthiest is to blend [the] things that I do at the university . . . [with the] things that are enjoyable to me. [So] I don’t go out of a sense of duty. I go because I enjoy it. [For example,] if I’m at a musical concert, a symphony the students are putting on, I see that as personal time, too. So they are university
things. It is on my calendar, but they are also personal when you get a lot of personal satisfaction and enjoyment out of those things too.

Additionally, Provost Barlow and Vice President Carter, who both raised their children while working on university campuses, discuss how they took an “integrative approach” to including their children into university life. In speaking to her ability to achieve work-life balance, Provost Barlow notes,

I probably don’t [achieve work-life balance]. I . . . remember one day thinking that balance might not be the best word because that sort of implies that when something’s up, something else is down, and when you’re raising a family, you don’t ever want to risk that being down . . . I think about how we chose to raise our children, really, quite involved in the university life. I mean, theater to them means . . . university theater . . . and [the] same with athletic events, as . . . most of our athletic experiences were here so that I could be involved in the life of this university. So, I raised my family in those same events . . . [and] I balanced work that way, by involving my children in those kinds of experiences . . .

[Therefore], I think, as opposed to the idea of trying to balance it all, it is a real integrated approach to raising our family and just sort of seeing our life as . . . [a part of the] university, and again, incorporating a lot of things.

Similarly, Vice President Carter, who began her career as a faculty member, discussed how she and her spouse, who was also a faculty member, sought to balance their early academic careers by integrating their family life into university life.

The best part of our life one time was when we lived on campus . . . [and] it was such a safe campus . . . [and] a child-friendly circumstance . . . We lived in housing on campus, and our kids could . . . walk anywhere. They got home from
school [and] we had somebody there with them, but they might walk to our office and say, “I need a dollar to go do so-and-so.” . . . [Also,] our children probably had more graduate students who helped raise them as anything . . . So we very much involved students in the lives of our children . . . I mean, it was just such a freedom for them, growing up . . . Then, [in] the summer, what do you do? Well, this university does a great job of summer programming, so our kids had computer camp and math camp . . .

*The Importance of Flexible Time and Support*

*Flexible time.* Many participants also spoke to the importance of having flexible time and support (e.g., family support, nannies to provide childcare, etc.) in achieving a greater work-life balance. In speaking to how having a flexible schedule can help women, especially those who are raising children, to achieve a greater work-life balance, a few of the participants (Provost Ellis, Dean Reed, and Vice President Carter) who began their careers as faculty members perceive that it is easier for women to balance their personal and professional lives as faculty members than administrators. For instance, Dean Reed explains,

Some women [choose to] have an academic [faculty] position [because it] is more flexible [with] timing . . . [in terms of] when you go to the office and when you come home, and if you work at home. So . . . [as a] research faculty member, . . . you can work around that if you have a lot of help, but it’d be harder to be an administrator because there are so many times that you’ve got to be somewhere at a specific time. So . . . your schedule is much less flexible when you’re an administrator.
Likewise, Provost Ellis describes the lack of flexible time associated with administrative positions at the level of dean or above.  

At the time that I started as a chair, I was able to balance more . . . when my children were home.  As I got into higher administration my children were at school or married and off.  [So] I think higher education, in general, is good for women because I do think you can have some flexible time.  [However,] I think as you move up, and . . . as you get into the roles of [academic] dean and above it's really a considerable amount of time.  In fact, I just appointed a new dean . . . [for the college of arts] and one of the things we talked about is that [this is the] kind of college where they have theater, music, and art.  They have so many exhibits each weekend you could be out almost every night of the week. . .  [So] if you have children, what age are they? And who is at home?  

Vice President Owens, who began her career in higher education working in a non-academic staff position, also describes the challenges of trying to meet the time demands of an administrative role while also serving as a primary caregiver to her children:  

Well, I think it’s acceptable that women have other responsibilities [outside of the home].  It’s just that jobs require certain activities, and if you’re out a lot because your child’s out sick . . . at school or whatever . . . that takes away from you fulfilling your [professional] responsibilities in many cases. . .  And so I don’t think it’s so much about women versus men, except . . . [for] the time thing.  

Women have other constraints that keep them sometimes from being able to fulfill the responsibilities of the position . . .  

In understanding the time commitments and lack of flexibility that is associated with a university administrator’s schedule, a number of the participants indicated that having
grown children has provided them with greater flexibility in fulfilling their professional role and responsibilities.

*The flexibility of having grown children.* In considering how the majority of the participants who were mothers prioritized their childrearing responsibilities at the beginning of their careers and/or waited until their children were older or grown to assume full-time leadership roles, many spoke to the advantages of being “free” or having greater “flexibility” at this stage of their careers to meet the time demands (e.g., travel, working weekends, etc.) associated with serving in a key-line administrative role or presidency. For example, in maintaining a schedule that can be “24/7,” Vice President McNair points out that “it is way easier . . . not having a child . . . [at home.]” Also, Dean Reed, who did not enter a full-time administrative role until her children were grown, notes that since raising her children she “typically works 70-75 hours per week.” However, she points out, “I didn’t work quite that much when my children were at home . . . [as] I tried to be a little more flexible in [my work schedule].” Therefore, some participants have avoided any conflicts or challenges associated with balancing their work-family responsibilities by waiting until their children were older to assume administrative roles:

Also, Vice President of Advancement Kennedy, who prioritized her children during the early stages of her career path and young adult life, described the advantages of being single and having grown children in fulfilling the demanding schedule of her administrative role:

Well, I think I’m very able to [balance my personal and professional life], but . . . I’m unmarried, which . . . makes my scheduling and all my considerations a little easier. I don’t have to be cognizant of someone else’s needs. My children are
grown, and so I can quickly change things. I don’t have that extra agenda of children in school and a young family at home, which I think would be very difficult. . . Those years for me [when my children were in] . . . primary school . . . are the years when I didn’t work [and I was a stay-at-home mother.] So I’ve been very happy about that, but I think it would be hard [to balance my career with raising school-age children]. I watch my development major gift officers that have small children, and it’s hard. It’s just hard. I think that would be much more of a challenge, but I . . . don’t have that right now, and I think it’s an advantage. I really do.

The flexibility of being single and childless. What is more, the two participants, President Howard and Provost Fields, who have never been married and are childless, indicated that their lack of family responsibilities provides greater flexibility in their schedules to fulfill their administrative responsibilities. Although she spends a great deal of her personal time working, Provost Fields notes that “I enjoy working, and so . . . [work-life balance issues] really has not hindered my career choices. I have been very willing to take on additional responsibilities because I don’t mind the long hours.” Further, she explains, “I don’t have children . . . so I don’t have to weigh that” in my career decisions or work schedule.

Having flexible time as an administrator. Although most participants did not indicate having a flexible work schedule, a few participants described having flexible work hours/schedules, which contribute to their ability to maintain a greater work-life balance. Vice President Owens described how her university has allowed her to have flexible time to balance her personal life responsibilities as a mother:
I’m fortunate that if I have to go with my children, I never have had anyone tell me, “No. You can’t do that.” But I can imagine that there are situations where the boss, the president, whatever, would not be understanding to the needs of the employee that has children that they have to care for. Now, what I do with my flexibility is, I do what I need to do and what I want to do with my children. . . In turn, I fill in that time [I miss at work] in other ways. But . . . not every person is that fortunate. And if I had [been in a] position [without any flexibility], it would have been terrible for me because I was coming off a divorce [and] had four children, two [of whom] were at home. If I had had the type of relationship with my employer where I was unable to have flexibility, it would have been awful. I don’t know how I would have survived, . . . but I’m fortunate that this university has allowed me to do that, as well. I mean, I would not be here [otherwise.]

In comparison, Dean Atwood shares how she has learned over time to “give yourself permission” to achieve a greater work-life balance by creating a more flexible schedule. She explains,

I work 40 hours a week, give or take. Sure, there are weeks where I work 50, [but] never more than that and that includes if I have to be at a fundraising [event] for three or four hours on [a] Friday night. I make it a point to kind of adjust. [For example,] I’ll take a longer lunch a couple of days that week so that at the end of the week, I’ve put in an appropriate amount of time and I’ve had an appropriate balance for myself.

*Family support.* In addition to the importance of having flexible time and/or schedules, the majority of the participants (Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, President Perkins, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Vice President Carter, Vice President
Landon, Vice President McNair, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Young) described how receiving family support from spouses, parents, children, friends and/or extended family has facilitated their ability to balance their personal and professional lives. As Vice President Young contextualizes,

I think for women who are . . . administrators . . . they [have to] figure out how to balance work and family . . . . It might be [that they are able to balance both roles] because they have a very supportive spouse, or a supportive extended family, or exceptional resources locally that can assist when they’re maintaining that type of schedule.

Vice President Young also describes how her family’s support of her career has facilitated her movement to leadership and allowed her to balance her professional and personal life roles:

Well, personally, I have been very fortunate . . . [to] have a very, very supportive family. So there has never really been any discussion about whether I would take a position or not based on the impact necessarily on my family. I think you think about it, but it was never really a major consideration, again, because I have a very supportive family . . . I think I knew that they would all support me and they did. And, for the most part, everybody pitches in and does what it is that everybody needs to do so that mom and dad can do their jobs. . . . [So] it did not weigh heavily on my decisions about whether or not to accept the position or not.

In comparison, Provost Fields describes the benefits of having family support in contributing to her work-life balance:

My family has been very supportive of what I have done . . . [in my career and] . . . . I certainly think having the support of your family makes the job easier, and I
think it makes it more rewarding. So, the time that you have to be with family provides a fresh, new perspective so that when you return to the job, then you have the opportunity to give it your all [and] do your best.

Supportive spouse. Nine of the participants (Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, President Perkins, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, Vice President Landon, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Young) discussed how having a supportive spouse has facilitated their work-life balance. Provost Barlow, for instance, notes that throughout her career in higher education “I always had a very supportive husband . . . and he's very helpful . . . [so] that's one way to balance.”

Male spouses who are retired or have flexible careers. Four participants (Dean Reed, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, and Vice President Landon) shared their perceptions and observations of how having a spouse who has flexible time in his career or having a retired spouse can be an advantage in supporting a female administrator’s career in terms of assisting with personal life considerations (e.g., child care responsibilities, etc.). In particular, some participants have observed that the male spouses of high-level female administrators are often retired, have flexible jobs, or are stay-at-home fathers. For example, Dean Reed conveys,

I can tell you case[s]. . . of a number of . . . [female] deans [in my field] that I know . . . whose husbands are either retired or just not doing much with their careers, perhaps by choice or maybe by necessity. . . .

Additionally, Vice President Landon, who has elementary-age children, believes that it would be very difficult for a woman with young children to assume a presidential role “unless you have a spouse who stays at home [or] has a flexible job.” Dean Atwood also
shares her perception of the work-life challenges involved in two-career marriages in which both spouses have high-level jobs. She notes,

From what I've seen it's not impossible, but it's much harder. I think for women [administrators] whose spouses have very large managerial, professional responsibilities in their work it's much harder for those women to consider academic administration for themselves. I mean, it's too much. You know, that's almost like the two-lawyer family, the two-doctor family. [I am sure there are] many, many women who are successful at it, but I've just seen, from afar, [that women in high-profile administrative roles are] either . . . single [and never married,] . . . divorced, or they have a spouse whose job has a little bit of flexibility. . . That's how it looks from where I sit. There may be women who have a very different experience. Maybe there's a way to have a high profile executive spouse and be, yourself, a high-level academic administrator, but I can't imagine how you juggle that.

Dean Gallagher also provides her perception of how married couples negotiate a dual-career marriage when one spouse seeks a high-profile career such as a presidency:

By the time someone’s a university president, then the compromise has already been struck, and the spouse is either a trailing spouse, or maybe they have the kind of job or have chosen a career [that is] such that they can trail along. And I don’t have any data to back up that statement. I’m just . . . [speaking] from anecdotal information, that’s usually what happens by the time someone is a president. But, at lower levels there’s a lot of two-career families that are trying to figure [out how to have work-life balance when] both spouses want jobs . . . . It is also interesting [that] in recent years there’s been a lot more evidence of . . .
women in academics who have stay-at-home spouses, which I also find very interesting.

Two participants, Dean Atwood and Provost Barlow, reported that one factor that has contributed to their ability to serve in key-line administrative roles while raising school-age children is having a spouse who has flexible time in his career to help with childcare responsibilities. Dean Atwood, who had a preschool-age child and an elementary-age child when she first began to move to academic administration states,

My husband . . . works very hard, . . . but . . . [his job has a] natural, built in flexibility. And that's really, really, really important, particularly with family. So most of the time if . . . [one of our children] got sick in the middle of the day, he was the one who left work and went and got them because he could do that . . . . [Also,] I drove . . . both [of my children to] preschool and school every morning [on my way] to the office. My husband would go in the afternoon and pick them [up] and he would be with them until I got home . . . typically at 7 or 8 at night, although I taught some nights and . . . it was 9 or 10. So that's kind of how we managed it . . . [and] that made it possible for me to do what I do . . . [because] I had a spouse who could do a lot of the heavy lifting [with caring for the children.] Similarly, he's willing to move because he can do what he does anywhere. And so we've moved from the [branch campus] to the [main campus] and now we're moving to [. . . a university in another state] and he was fine with that because he knew that his work is very transferable.

Also, Provost Barlow describes how her husband chose to transition to a career with greater flexibility in order to support her advancement to a provostship. She explains,
Well, I have a husband who has been extremely supportive from the very beginning [of my career in terms of], pushing me, encouraging me, [and being] willing to change his own career for me to do these kinds of things. . . [So] when I took the provost position, . . . my husband actually backed off a bit from his career, and we went the direction of mine. He was part-time employed and pretty busy, . . [but] the intensity of his job and the travel that was required, . . . in my mind, . . was not possible for us to raise a family. One of us could do it, but not both of us. And he actually was the [Boy] Scout leader and took [the] kids to the dentist and all of that because he pursued a position that had more flexibility in it than mine, after I became provost.

A few of the participants (President Perkins, Dean Reed, and Vice President Carter) spoke to the ways in which having a retired spouse contributed to their ability to maintain a work-life balance. As an example, President Perkins notes, “I have a retired husband who is wonderful at reel[ing] me in, if I’m showing signs of wear.” Similarly, Dean Reed expresses, that her spouse “is retired now and . . . he understands how difficult some of the things that I’ve had to do have been, and he’s been just extremely supportive . . . [and] helpful to me.” Vice President Carter also described how her retired spouse assisted her with household responsibilities during several of the busiest years of her administrative career. She states,

[Since] my husband is retired he was doing anything I needed. I didn’t go to the grocery store, or Wal-Mart, or any store for two or three years. He did it all. I was 24/7 doing what I wanted, and it didn’t bother him. He . . . thought it was wonderful.
Supportive children. In addition to having supportive spouses, several of the participants (Provost Barlow, Dean Reed, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Young) spoke to how their children have been a source of support in balancing their personal lives and administrative careers. For instance, Dean Atwood speaks to the importance of receiving support from both her spouse and grown children:

I couldn’t have done what I’ve done without that support from my husband and without the support from my children . . . I think they admire me for what I’ve been able to accomplish . . . [and] I think we, [as mothers,] can’t help but be influenced by that.

Vice President Young also describes how her spouse and children have contributed to a greater/work life balance by providing assistance with household tasks.

By the time I was becoming a vice president . . . my children . . . were old enough that it really didn’t require the level of support that, say, would have been required when they were much younger. So my children, themselves, along with their father, they’re very supportive, and so they helped each other when I wasn’t home. He helped them . . . [in the] evenings . . . when I wasn’t home.

Although Vice President Owens is now remarried, she speaks to how, after her divorce, her grown children supported her ability to achieve work-life balance by helping her in caring for her younger children:

I just think . . . you have to have a lot of support . . . I was the sole breadwinner for my family for a long period of time, and . . . I was fortunate in . . . that it worked out that I had [family] support and that I didn’t have to be away from my children too much. . . [For example,] when I went back to work, [two of] my children were still young, . . . but my older daughters came home from college . . .
in the summer . . . and they would watch . . . and help out with my children . . .

So I managed to not have to have them in daycare or anything . . . [Also,] I never did feel like they were mistreated or they were suffering by me not being there. . .

As another example, Provost Barlow discusses how two of her adult children have offered to support her if she assumes a presidency by assisting with the care of their sibling who has special needs:

My oldest and my youngest . . . [children, who are now grown] are strong advocates for . . . [me pursuing a] college presidency. They would say that their . . . [sibling who has special needs] could be their responsibility, but I just think that’s a lot to ask of young, adult . . . [children] that aren’t yet married and don’t know what their situations [are] going to be to assume responsibility for their . . . [sibling].

Additional sources of support. In addition to the support that many participants have received from of their immediate family members, four participants (Provost Barlow, Vice President Owens, Vice President Landon, and Vice President Young) described how members of their extended family (e.g., parents, in-laws) or nannies have provided them with additional support in negotiating a greater work-life balance. As an example, in addition to having a supportive spouse, Vice President Young notes, “I also had . . . extended family, relatives, and in-laws that could assist . . . [with] my children [in the] evenings when I wasn’t home.” Also, Vice Provost Barlow, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Young each noted that their parents provided support in caring for their children while they were working in administrative positions. In balancing her work schedule with caring for young children, Vice President Owens recalled, when “I was away for the three weeks in the summer, my mom would come . . . to help out . . . with
my children.” Provost Barlow, who raised young children while serving as an administrator, also noted that “through a good number of those years we had grandparents around” to help with child care.

Moreover, both Provost Barlow and Vice President Landon reported that they have hired “nannies” to provide additional support in caring for their children. Provost Barlow, for example, notes that when she became a dean that her youngest two children were both under the age of six, and she “was a pregnant dean at one point” with her third child. She described the support she received from hiring a nanny to help with caring for her young children:

While I was dean, . . . [my husband] was pretty busy . . . [in] his career . . . [so] it was important for me to find stability in the home, and we had nannies instead of child care . . . [We] found a nanny that was flexible enough that if it was 5:00 and nobody was there, nobody was worried that the children were starving or out on a sidewalk in the cold by themselves or any of that sort of thing.

Summary of Family Relationships and Work-Life Balance Issues

Altogether, for the majority of participants in this study, personal factors relating to the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues served as powerful forces in shaping their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. Also, in considering the ways in which the concept of family relationships and work-life balance intersects with each of the other major concepts in this study, it is clear that many of the participants’ family statuses as daughter, wife, mother, and/or grandmother represented a central dimension of their personhood. Consequently, one of the most prominent findings among the participants in this study who, in many cases, occupied multiple family statuses, pertained to the ways in which they have sought to prioritize their family
relationships in the balancing of their personal and professional lives. As such, many participants spoke to the “choices, compromises, sacrifices, and tradeoffs” associated with striving to achieve work-family balance.

Although the majority of participants did not have intentional career paths to university leadership, many of the participants described making intentional choices throughout the trajectory of their career paths that served to reflect their family priorities. All in all, the most commonly reported family priorities pertained to (a) childrearing responsibilities, (b) managing dual-career marriages, and/or (c) caring for an aging parent. Clearly, the participants’ family priorities served to shape the unique contours of their career paths. For example, among the participants who were mothers, some participants chose to interrupt their early career paths to become stay-at-home mothers, and several participants discussed how in the mid-stages of their career paths they chose to postpone their advancement to administrative roles until their children were older or grown. Several participants also demonstrated their commitment to their family relationships by making their decision to advance to a key-line administrative role or university presidency a family decision that involved the input of their spouse and/or children.

Participants also described the time demands and responsibilities associated with serving as a university key-line administrator or president. Among the participants in this study, the presidents had the most wide-ranging set of responsibilities (e.g., day-to-day university operations, community relations, fiscal management, fundraising, alumni relations, etc.) and the most demanding schedules which often required “managing 24/7.” In comparison, the key-line administrators’ schedules ranged from a minimum of 40 to over 80 hours per week. Although the participants’ roles and responsibilities varied
according to their professional title, institutional type, and, in some cases, the decisions they made in putting limits on the time invested in work, a common set of responsibilities that encompassed many of the participants’ roles as key-line administrators or presidents pertained to (a) managing personnel and personnel issues, (b) providing a vision, (c) strategic planning and decision-making, (d) financial management/budgeting, and (e) fundraising. Many of the participants, especially those in key-line administrative role, described how a significant use of their time related to personnel management and providing a vision.

Although the key-line administrators distinguished that they did not have schedules and responsibilities as demanding as a university president, most described how serving in a key-line administrative role requires, in comparison to the previous positions they have held in their career path, a greater “commitment of one’s time” and a higher level of expectation in terms of being “ultimately responsible” for a unit or division of the university. As a result, most participants spoke to the work-life balance challenges and conflicts involved in assuming a role that requires many additional hours of work, including some work in the evenings and on the weekends. In particular, some participants discussed the work-family conflict that can arise from one’s professional life infringing upon one’s personal life roles (e.g., mother, wife, etc.). For example, some of the participants who were mothers of small or school-age children described the sacrifices and feelings of guilt involved with missing out on spending time with their children. Many participants attributed the sense of guilt that women can often feel over work-life balance issues to the perception that women, as mothers, bear the ultimate responsibility in their family roles, especially concerning childrearing responsibilities.
In feeling ultimately responsible in both their professional and personal lives, some participants described their desire to “be everything to everyone.” Dean Atwood, who has attempted to be “everything to everybody” in her personal and professional life conceptualized this pattern, which is has also observed among other women leaders, as the “superwoman syndrome.” The participants who attempted to assume the ultimate responsibilities in their personal and professional lives often chose to sacrifice personal time to devote to their own self-care, hobbies/interests, friendships, and/or well-being. However, over time many participants who had experienced some of the symptoms of an unhealthy work-life balance such as “fatigue,” “exhaustion,” or “burnout” had devised their own unique strategies for achieving a greater work-life balance such as (a) establishing boundaries between their personal and professional lives, (b) learning to say “no,” and (c) seeking to integrate their personal and professional lives.

In seeking to achieve a greater work-life balance, many participants spoke to the importance of having “flexible time” and support. For instance, in considering that the majority of participants who were mothers had grown children, many of these participants spoke to how having adult children provided them with more flexibility in meeting the time demands associated with serving as a key-line administrator or president. Participants also spoke to the importance of receiving support from others, especially family members, in managing a work-life balance. Several participants spoke to how their spouses who were retired and/or had jobs that provided them with flexible schedules assisted in their ability to negotiate a healthier work-life balance. Some participants also spoke to the benefits of receiving support from their children who were older or grown and extended family members. Further, two participants, who were the mothers of young children while serving in key-line administrative roles, described how
they negotiated a greater work-life balance by hiring nannies as additional sources of support to assist in caring for their children.

Perceptions of Gender and Leadership

The final section of this chapter addresses the findings pertaining to the concept of perceptions of gender and leadership. In keeping with the aims of feminist theory and praxis, this study sought to place the lives, voices, experiences, and perceptions of the university women administrators and presidents who participated in this study at the center of inquiry. Particularly, in applying a postmodern feminist conceptual framework, this study sought to explore how the participants’ gender, as a salient feature of their personhood, intersected with the other defining features (e.g., race, social class, etc.) of their personhood to influence how they made meaning of their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. Accordingly, the interview protocol in this study included a series of questions that focused on how participants’ gender influenced their leadership experiences, perceptions, and practices.

In exploring how the role of gender shaped the participants’ career paths and leadership experiences, participants were first asked to describe their personal leadership styles and detail the personal traits, characteristics, and/or qualities that characterized their leadership practices. Next, based on their leadership experiences, participants were asked if they had observed any differences between male and female leadership. Lastly, participants were asked to discuss how their own gender has shaped their individual leadership styles and practices.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in evaluating the overall findings of this study, there are several major outcomes related to the concept of gender and leadership. First, consistent with the presentation of the other major concepts in the
findings of this study, the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues intersected with the concept of gender and leadership in terms of how many participants were able to transfer certain skills (e.g., nurturing, caring, compassion, etc.) they had acquired in their family roles, especially as mothers, to their professional roles as university leaders. Additionally, many participants attributed the gender differences they had observed among female administrators’ leadership approaches (e.g., nurturing, caring, consensus-building, inclusive, etc.) to the spillover of their gender roles within the family to their professional roles as university leaders. Next, a key finding reveals how none of the participants in this study viewed their gender as a direct obstacle in their advancement to their current positions. For example, in speaking to how her gender has influenced career path, President Perkins represents many of the participants’ experiences in stating, “I have never felt like my gender hurt me.”

Another major outcome highlights how all of the participants identified with a multiplicity of leadership styles, traits, and/or characteristics which have traditionally been associated in the research literature with feminine models and conceptions of leadership such as collaboration, consensus-seeking, team-building, etc. Additionally, in regard to the main findings concerning gender differences in male and female leadership, all of the participants reported that they had observed gender differences between male and female leaders, such as male leaders demonstrating traditional male-based leadership traits including assertiveness or aggression and female leaders practicing female-associated leadership styles such as collaboration or consensus-building leadership. Nevertheless, several of the participants also distinguished that they have not observed “clear cut” gender differences between male and female leaders, as some participants have witnessed female leaders who demonstrate traditional male-based approaches to
leadership (e.g., authoritarian, etc.) and male leaders practicing female-based leadership traits (e.g., empathy, nurturing, etc.). With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter presents the four major sub-themes within the category of gender and leadership, which include participants’ perceptions of (a) their self-identified personal leadership styles, traits, and behaviors; (b) the influence of gender on their leadership styles and practices; (c) differences in the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors between male and female leaders; and (d) a different, higher, and/or double standard of behavior, appearance, and credentials for women leaders.

Participants’ Perceptions of their Personal Leadership Styles, Traits, and Characteristics

Practicing a pluralistic style of leadership. In describing their personal leadership, each of the participants described having a unique set of leadership attributes which ranged from a combination of six to 18 different descriptors of their leadership styles, traits, and/or characteristics. Thus, rather than adhering exclusively to one particular leadership style or model, the participants possess a more pluralistic leadership style that draws upon a multiplicity of different leadership styles, behaviors, traits, characteristics, and/or processes. Dean Atwood, who views herself as a both a “servant leader” and a “collaborative leader” is exemplary of the multifaceted ways in which the participants formed their leadership, as she reports that her leadership style is “collaborative, conversational, consensus-building . . . empowering, . . . empathetic, . . . understand[ing], . . . helpful, . . . sociable, . . . [and] relational.”

Participants’ self-identification with feminine models of leadership. Another prominent and consistent finding in this study reveals how, like Dean Atwood, all of the participants self-identified with multiple leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors that have been associated in the research literature with feminine models/styles of leadership.
Table 3 presents a list of the most commonly reported feminine-based leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors among the participants in this study. Collectively, the participants’ feminine-associated approaches to leadership focus on (a) the use of emotions (e.g., caring, compassion, etc.); (b) relationship-building (e.g., teamwork); (c) “clear,” “direct” and “open” communications (e.g., listening, conversational, transparent, etc.); (d) a focus on process (e.g., consensus-building); and (e) a non-leader centric and non-hierarchal approach to leadership (e.g., shared governance). Overall, the two most prominent leadership styles among the participants in this study included (a) collaborative and (b) team-building approaches to leadership. Respectively, the participants described how these two leadership styles have facilitated their abilities to build relationships, consensus, open communications, trust, and a shared system of governance.

**Collaboration.** All of the participants spoke, directly or indirectly, to practicing a collaborative style of leadership that focuses on including others in their processes of creating a vision, decision-making, strategic-planning, goal-attainment, and/or problem-solving. For example, in striving to be “inclusive” in her leadership, President Perkins communicates, “I think I spend a lot of time asking the question, do we have everybody around the table [and] do we have the right people around the table?” In particular, each of the academic deans (Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, and Dean Reed) who participated in this study practiced a collaborative and consensus-seeking style of leadership. Dean Atwood describes how she enjoys engaging in shared-decision making processes with others:

. . . I love the process of gathering information and getting input from everybody in considering and weighing all the options. So, it sort of comes naturally to me
and I very much enjoy it. I can’t really imagine leading in any way that wasn’t very collaborative. I can’t imagine trying to be a leader [who is] sort of the lone solitary decision maker. That would never work for me.

Table 3

*Participants’ Commonly Reported Feminine Leadership Approaches*

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<th>Self-Identified feminine leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors</th>
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Dean Gallagher also speaks to the benefits of practicing a collaborative and consensus-seeking style of leadership:

I’m very consensus-seeking and collaborative . . . so I’m very interested in input. I make sure that I have some people around me who will speak very candidly their opinions on different things . . . . We all can learn from each other. And I’m very good at that. I’m very open to collaboration. I’m not always worried about, “What are they getting from me?” I think there’s mutual benefits to collaboration,
and so I’ve been very active in looking for the appropriate opportunities between my college or my department, either whether it’s across the departments in my college or across departments in the university. That’s a valuable thing . . .

As another example, Dean Reed explains how she collaborates with others in her division to develop shared plans and goals. She states,

I think . . . [my leadership style] is very collaborative. I try to engage as many people as I can in the things that I believe we ought to be working toward . . . in developing the plans for the future. People need to be engaged in the development of those plans. Of course, I try to influence those plans, but it’s very important that all the people that I work with feel that it’s also their plan, not just my plan . . . . They have to be a part of developing those plans. So I try very hard to engage as many people as I can in developing the plans and talking about the plans and working to achieve the goals.

Team-building leadership. Additionally, 10 of the participants (President Perkins, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, Vice President Carter, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Landon) spoke to the importance of practicing a team-building approach to leadership. Provost Ellis exemplifies these participants’ sentiments in stating, “I . . . like to be part of a team [and] I think that's important . . . [that] you try to work with your team.” Also, in speaking to the value of a “team-building” leadership approach, Vice President Owens, notes “I think I really try to build a team so that we’re supporting each other’s efforts.”

Like a collaborative style of leadership, many of the participants spoke to the benefits of a team-oriented style of leadership in terms of how it allows leaders to (a)
build trust, (b) practice open communications, and (c) engage in shared decision-making processes. As one example, President Perkins discusses,

When I got the job, I said I’m going to build trust [and] build a team and . . . I believe I’ve . . . made some good progress . . . on . . . those fronts. I think people, while they may not agree with what I do, it has been out in the open and has been true to my word. [Also,] I have a heck of a team . . . . I believe smart people can solve problems and [that] none of us is smarter than all of us [together]. So I really believe in the team . . . . It took a little orchestrating [to put my team together,] but . . . when I [first] got here . . . we would have cabinet meeting and I would talk and they would sort of take notes. And . . . the difference is . . . now I go in . . . [and] they are just so engaged, they know what they’re doing, and I’m so confident that when we make a decision it has been well vetted. It doesn't mean we’re [always] right, [but] everyone has had a chance to look at it through their perspective, and so I'm very confident in the decisions we make that we just did the best that we could and that everyone had a say. And I cannot tell you how that lifts me. I started feeling that lift about a year and a half ago and it means the world to have that kind of a capable people around you who can do their jobs and who will tell me what I need to know, not what I want to hear. And they are not afraid to do that. I tell them every now and then when they come in with really bad news, I say you must feel very safe with me to have come and dumped that bad news on me, but they do and they should.

Similarly, Vice President of Advancement Kennedy, describes how she prefers a collegial and team-based approach to goal setting versus a dictatorial/autocratic leadership approach. She explains,
Well, I think I’m a collegial leader . . . [and] I feel like my success has been [based on] assembling the right team and the right people, and I fully acknowledge that. I think that’s one of the things that a leader should do . . . and I think that’s why, when I say collegial, I like to have the planning with my team. I don’t like to dictate . . . I don’t like to say, “Well, here’s what we’re going to do!” I like to say, “This is where we need to be. Let me have your thinking on the best way, your ideas [on how] to do that . . . [So] I rely on them a great deal [and] . . . I like to hear [their] feedback . . . I like to have my team engaged in planning with me . . . [and] arrive at goals as a group . . .

Provost Barlow also explains how her leadership style focuses on a relational, consensus-seeking, and team-building approach to decision-making:

Relational is the way I would describe my style. I’m a relational leader which means that I lead through relationships, through teams, [and] through consensus. I have to hear what everybody else thinks, and I have to weigh, “Well, I know if I make this decision, this is going impact the Department of Chemistry’s view about X.” I mean, I have to think about all those things and weigh it out and think about, “Yes, if I choose X, then Y is going to happen. If I choose Z, then we’re back to A.” But that’s the way women, more often, operate . . . [so] I do think in some ways it is gender related.

Self-awareness of feminine-associated styles of leadership. Like Provost Barlow, several of the participants were self-aware of possessing feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors. As Dean Reed, who describes herself as a “caring,” “collaborative,” “patient,” and “communicative” leader, points out, “I’m sure . . . [my gender] has shaped my leadership style because I think I probably demonstrate a lot of
the qualities that are typical of female leaders.” Both Dean Gallagher and Dean Atwood also associate their collaborative and consensus-building leadership styles with feminine-based approaches to leadership as Dean Gallagher states, “I think that, in general, women are . . . seemingly more collaborative and more looking for consensus . . .” Similarly, based on her observations and leadership experiences, Dean Atwood distinguishes,

I look at . . . myself and [the other women deans at my university and] I see more of a pattern of . . . collaborative, conversational, consensus-building [leadership]. I look at a number of male deans that I’ve worked, side by side, with over the years or have served under and their style tends to be more . . . hierarchical . . . I think women’s style of leadership, [in comparison] tends to flatten out and be more egalitarian.

Also, Vice President Owens, who considers herself to be a “team-building leader,” speaks to her perception of how relationship-building is associated with female leadership. She discusses:

I think that the reason you see so many more women [in leadership] is that . . . in the world we live in today everything is about relationships and I think that women are masters in building relationships. I think that people in the community see that. In these positions like president or vice president, they are all, like I said before, . . . about relationship building . . . And it takes time. It takes sincerity and trust. And those are just some qualities I think that women acquire through their nurturing traits . . . And who better than a woman can do that? So I think that . . . people . . . are pleasantly surprised by their relationship-building ability.
Combining feminine and masculine leadership approaches. Although the majority of participants in this study possessed a preponderance of feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and/or characteristics, several of the participants also spoke to possessing a few leadership traits that have traditionally been associated in the research literature with masculine conceptions of leadership, especially in terms of speaking to their ability, at certain times, to demonstrate toughness, strength, or authority. In describing her leadership, Vice President of Student Affairs Landon lists two leadership traits that have traditionally been associated with male-based conceptions of leadership as she states, “I am . . . assertive and aggressive.” Yet, on the other hand, she also possesses many female-based leadership traits such as being a team-leader, a strong communicator, “collaborative, . . . [and] non-combative.” President Perkins, who practices a team-building approach to leadership, also describes her ability to demonstrate strength and authority in exercising her leadership, as she recognizes that others may perceive her as “a force to be reckoned with.” She points out that in her role as a president, “every now and then I’m kicking somebody’s butt, but for the most part that’s not necessary.” Although she may be perceived as possessing some masculine-based leadership styles and practices, she also possesses feminine-based leadership attributes as she states, “I hope . . . [others] see me as nice, but just from the feedback I get, I think, they see me as a caring person who has a lot of energy and a lot of passion for the job she's doing.” Similarly, Vice President of Student Affairs McNair lists a combination of masculine and feminine leadership traits, as she believes that others perceive her as a “strong, forceful, peaceful, cooperative, and tenacious” leader.
In comparison, Provost Fields describes herself as a “steel magnolia” because of her ability to combine feminine and masculine leadership styles and traits into her leadership practices. She explains,

I am fairly mild-mannered. I can make the hard decision[s], and [I] am very willing to, but the way in which I approach it is to try to communicate and to help people understand the importance of doing things, then, in a different way. And in the final analysis, I will do what needs to be done in order to ensure that the university is moving in the right direction. But I guess other people would perhaps describe me as being somewhat of a steel magnolia [in] that it can be somewhat deceiving because I come across as being a very easygoing, easy-to-get-along-with person, [and] that’s certainly my preference. That’s the way I would rather do things. But when the going gets tough, I can handle it.

Other participants also described how they can incorporate masculine and feminine leadership styles into their decision-making processes. Although Dean Atwood, Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, Provost Barlow, and President Whitley each described using female-associated leadership concepts such as listening or collaboration, they also used masculine leadership traits to characterize their ability to make “data-driven,” “tough” and “reasoned” decisions. For instance, in describing her leadership style and decision-making process, President Whitley draws on feminine (e.g., listening) and masculine (e.g., data-driven) leadership concepts:

I would say that [my personal leadership style] is consultive, but that I am willing to make the decision and stand up for the decision. I think that . . . [my leadership] is very data-driven. I think that’s an important characteristic that I’m proud of. I think that I listen. I think that I do make decisions, and I think it’s
important to do that and not just let things keep going on, and I think I can make hard decisions, and I think that that’s important for a leader to do . . . . I have followed people [in leadership roles] who were very nice, but could not make a decision, and I don’t think they serve the institution well when they can’t do that. So I think, at some point, just standing up and making the hard decision is important to do. I also recognize that universities are very different kinds of organizations than businesses and that working and using the processes of the institution is important to get a successful conclusion, but it doesn’t mean we won’t bring things to conclusion.

Decisive women leaders. Like President Whitley, many of the participants emphasized their ability to demonstrate a “decisive” leadership style that serves to challenge the gender-stereotypic view that female leaders are less decisive than male leaders. Although Provost Barlow practices a feminine-associated, relational style of leadership, she points out,

I’m a very decisive person, so after I have heard what other members of my team . . . have to say about something, I can make the decisions that need to be made. It’s pretty bothersome, to me, for there to be indecisiveness.

Provost Barlow also speaks to how she balances her ability to make decisive and tough decisions with her relational and “person-centered” feminine-associated leadership style.

The H[uman] R[esource] director, who sits in with me, if I have to make a hard decision to terminate employment, he always says, “I don’t know how in the world you do it, but you make people feel good about the fact that you just fired them.” That’s not true, but I mean, I learned this . . .
[as a practitioner in my academic field], as well, [that] . . . there’s a best way to give bad news, and there’s always a redeeming quality in an individual. I look for those. I love the work of trying, even here, to get employees in the right seat on the bus, as Jim Collins says. We are just gifted, talented individuals one way or the other . . .

In addition to speaking to their self-perceptions of their leadership styles, traits, and/or characteristics, the participants also spoke to their perceptions of how their gender has influenced their personal leadership, particularly in relation to others’ views of them as women leaders.

Participants’ Perceptions of the Influence of Gender on their Leadership

One of the key findings of this study reveals that none of the participants reported that their gender has served as a direct obstacle or formal barrier in their career path advancement to their current positions as key-line administrators or presidents. In speaking to how her gender has influenced her leadership, Dean Reed represents the experiences of many of the participants in stating,

I don’t feel that I’ve been really subjected to abject discrimination at any point in my life. Yes, I’ve occasionally come across someone who maybe historically has had some difficulty with women in positions of authority, and maybe they haven’t been as warm toward me as I would have liked . . . [However,] those people really haven’t held me back. They haven’t presented obstacles to me.

Similarly, Dean Gallagher expresses,

I will say that even back when I was a grad[uate] student, and there weren’t as many women . . . [in my field,] a situation never arose . . . where I felt like I was being treated differently from men because I was female. So . . . if stuff was
going on—on the job market, I wasn’t perceptive enough to even realize it. I never felt like some less-qualified man was chosen [over me for a job position] or that sort of thing. And I may be wrong about that. So I feel like that kind of stuff never affected me personally.

Dean Atwood also describes how she has experienced a lack of gender-stereotypic responses to her leadership as she articulates,

I’ve never had my leadership questioned. Nobody has ever accused me of being weak . . . Nobody has ever called me hysterical—sort of those traditional things that you might worry about. So I’ve never had any of those kinds of reactions.

*An awareness of gender bias against women leaders.* Although the participants did not report that their gender had hindered their advancement to their current position, several of the participants, especially the participants who were in their mid-50s or older, recognized that some individuals may feel a sense of gender bias toward women leaders. For instance, President Whitley, who is in her 60s, recalls,

When I first was in administration, people talked about women getting the lousy presidency and they would be the third or the fifth of the five candidates . . . [In these cases,] the men would turn it down, and they would take it. But they had a lot of institutions that weren’t healthy, or budget-wise weren’t good . . . . Of course, we’ve got the high-profile, female presidents now . . .

In comparison, Provost Ellis, who is also in her 60s, describes,

I think that there’s probably some people who still look . . . and say, “well, I’m not sure this person can really do this because she’s a woman,” but I think most people are more and more used to women [leaders]. I know that women and women’s organizations are always excited about women having leadership roles,
but I would think . . . there are probably some people who would prefer to have a male as a leader, but I think things are changing.

Dean Gallagher, who is in her mid-50s, also expresses her sense of awareness concerning how gender bias toward women leaders may occur on a more subtle level. She states, “I think that there’s probably a couple of the older guys in my college who might think I’m a lightweight. I think that’s not impossible. They don’t say it to me, [but] I think it’s at least possible.” In comparison, President Perkins, who has encountered gender bias from certain constituents, discusses,

I think that there are still today people that are not as comfortable with a female leader and . . . how it’s shaped my leadership, is that if someone’s not comfortable with the female leader I send a man and you have to sort of be okay with that.

You've got to be alright with saying, ‘I’m not going to be the most effective person to deal with this donor, or alum, or board member, . . . [etc.]. So I'm going to send a guy and just tell him what to do.’ So you sort of have to realize, it's not about you and don't take it personally.

An awareness and positive view of gender difference. Many of the participants, especially those who have had the experience of being the first woman to hold a position, spoke to their sense of awareness of how their made them appear to be “different” and/or “unique.” President Whitley, who has had the experience of being a woman first many times in her career path described,

. . . At this [national research] institute, a man had been the founding director of it, so I was the first female . . . director . . . . When I was dean, I was their first female dean . . . I was . . . the first female provost at that university. I’m not the first female president at this university . . . . But yes, definitely, as a woman in . .
. [my academic field], you often were either the only woman at a conference presenting or certainly not 50/50 in any distribution. [Being the first woman to hold a position or one of the only women in certain contexts] . . . has its negatives and its positives, and I always try to look much more at the positives. In fact, everybody knew me because you were different. I knew tons and tons of people very early in my career where I think someone who just looked like everybody else wouldn’t. So I tried to take advantage of that uniqueness.

Like President Whitley, many of the participants held a positive view of how their gender had influenced their leadership. President Howard, for example, who has experienced being a woman first in most of her administrative roles in higher education, spoke to how her gender has shaped her leadership in stating, “it’s probably given me a better sense of humor and a lighter touch because I’ve been in all-male situations for so many years.” Vice President Landon, who is not the first woman to hold her position, also views her gender as an advantage as she surmises, “I think it’s easier to be a female in student services because it is a nurturing profession.” She further explains that among the president’s executive staff, “I’m conscious of being a female, . . . [but I] feel really included [so] I’ve never seen it as a negative.” Similarly, in speaking to how her gender has influenced her career path, President Perkins notes, “I’ve never felt like my gender held [me] back.” In fact, she provides an example of how her gender serves as an advantage in certain situations:

You sort of have to play it as it works and sometimes . . . [your gender] works for you because that same person who might not give consideration to a female also won't be as harsh with a female. And so you can charm your way into lots of places. I had a meeting just last week with an unhappy donor and . . . he was just
working us over. And finally the meeting needed to end . . . [because] we hadn’t moved very much and so I just got up and walked over there and gave him just the biggest ole hug and I said, ‘I'm so glad you came to see me’ and . . . a man couldn’t have done that. So sometimes . . . [your gender] works for you.

*Transferring skills from their family roles to their leadership roles.* Six participants (President Rice, Dean Gallagher, Vice President Owens, Vice President Kennedy, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Owens) also had a positive view of how their gender has shaped their leadership in terms of their ability to transfer the skills they have acquired from their personal lives, particularly as mothers, to their professional roles as university leaders. President Rice exemplifies the experiences of many of these participants in stating, “[my] gender role as a mom shaped me more than anything else.” Specifically, she describes several of the skills that she has been able to transfer from her gender role as a mother to her leadership role:

My gender roles have shaped my leadership in that I was a primary caregiver for the children [and] . . . I always say they raised me and taught me a lot [such as] there’s more than one way to look at a situation . . . I think every parent has, if you will, a vision for their child and every president has a vision for the institution. And so that’s one thing, at least, that I think you can learn from a parenting role. You learn how to interact with different personalities because each child is different on a smaller scale and a more intimate scale, but you learn how to do that . . . [Also,] through associations with your children’s teachers, their friends, [or] other parents you learn the emotional intelligence that you need.

Vice President Young also described how being a mother has helped her to incorporate the use of emotions in her leadership practices:
I think that there are certain aspects of my being a mother . . . that have carried over into my professional career . . . . For example, . . . many times I find that I am very protective. I find that I . . . get concerned about things much like a mother would about her children. And so I think that some of those types of experiences that I’ve had [as a mother] have carried over as a result of that. So [I question,] had I been a female, for example, that had never had children, had I not had those experiences, what type of administrator would I be? Would I look at things differently? Would I approach things differently? Would I be less compassionate? I don’t know.

As another example, Provost Barlow describes how her sense of “mother’s intuition” has been transferable to her leadership role.

There’s been many times, especially after . . . [a natural disaster] devastated our campus when the president just said to me, “Patricia, . . . intuitively, what do you think is the right answer to this?” We do have a mother’s intuition, woman’s intuition, whatever it is. There is an intuitive spirit in women. I think too often women don’t feel empowered to speak up [and say] what they know is right in their gut . . .

Moreover, in asking Vice President Kennedy if her gender has influenced her leadership she describes how her family roles as a wife and mother have helped her in cultivating relations with donors as a head of university advancement:

Oh, clearly, yes, . . . I do think my gender has impacted . . . [my leadership role]. Sometimes, [in my supervisory role,] I still think I’m trying to raise kids . . . [Also,] in a social setting and milieu, having been the wife of a professional person in a small town, you’re just used to a different kind of social interaction, if
you will. And I think that just can’t help but define how you do other things, and so I would say definitely yes, . . . especially in advancement . . . because . . . this kind of work . . . is really . . . a relationship kind of thing. So, it’s just got some added elements, but the tenets are kind of the same in many ways.

Dean Gallagher also discusses how she has incorporated some of the skills she has acquired from motherhood such as learning to value others’ successes and contributions into her leadership style:

There’s a couple of things that I have learned from being a mother that are really quite helpful in administration, and one of those things is the ability to say no. Then, the other thing is I really know how to celebrate the accomplishments of the people that matter to me. So that means when one of my faculty gets a grant or gets a good publication, or things that one celebrates, accomplishments, I really talk it up. I think about it a lot. I mention it to people . . . and that’s in addition to the more formal ways that we might announce some good event, and I think that that matters. My colleagues know that their accomplishments are not going unnoticed. So I think that’s a really good leadership style.

*Receiving positive responses from others.* In addition, many of the participants believed that, in general, others held a positive view of their leadership. In particular, several participants have received positive feedback in response to their demonstration of female-associated leadership styles, traits, and/or qualities (e.g., relational, communicative, etc.). In discussing how others view her leadership as a female administrator, Dean Gallagher, who is the first woman to hold her position and considers herself to be a collaborative and communicative leader, states,
I think that most people are really positive about it, and to be completely candid, part of that is because the person who held my position immediately before me was difficult to communicate with, and I think, then, following up, someone who’s always willing to communicate is viewed positively.

Dean Reed and Dean Atwood also perceive that others hold a positive view of their relational and collaborative style of leadership. Dean Reed stated,

I believe I’m perceived very well. I don’t think I’m perceived to be perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but I think I’m perceived by my faculty and staff to be a caring leader, a leader who has vision, a leader who has brought this program a long way, a leader who’s always tried to be fair, . . . a leader who works very, very hard, but doesn’t expect everyone else to work those hours, someone who’s honest and has integrity.

Likewise, Dean Atwood notes, “I’m very relational and interested in the individuals that I’m dealing with and I think they perceive me as genuine and really caring about them. And so I get a lot of positive feedback.” Interestingly, President Whitley describes the positive response that she has received from various campus constituencies who view her, as a female president, as representing other groups who have also been traditionally under-represented within the demographic profile of the American university presidency.

I think one thing that I’ve seen here is that it isn’t just women that respond to you as being president. It’s very important to members of minority groups and people who don’t think of themselves as mainstream [such as] the disabled, ethnically diverse people . . . faculty in wheelchairs, people of different sexual orientations, [or] anyone who didn’t see themselves as kind of mainstream, I think has embraced this . . . . They also champion your presidency and I think that was a
surprise to me, that they see a female president as representing them, too . . .

And it may be . . . who you follow. I followed someone who was very mainstream, so maybe they see this as a change.

In contrast to participants like President Whitley who have a clear sense of how their gender has influenced their leadership, 10 of the 16 participants (President Perkins, President Rice, Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Dean Atwood, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, Vice President Owens, and Vice President Young) expressed a sense of ambiguity, at least in their initial responses, concerning how their gender has influenced their leadership and/or others’ perceptions of their leadership.

Participants’ sense of ambiguity concerning how their gender has influenced their leadership. In fact, in asking the aforementioned participants to speak to how their gender has shaped their leadership, their sense of ambiguity in answering this question is illustrated in the following types of responses such as: “I don’t know,” “that’s a good question,” “I’m not sure,” and “I don’t really have a good answer for that.” These participants attributed their sense of uncertainty concerning how their gender has affected their leadership to a variety of factors. For instance, President Rice, wittily notes, “I guess I don’t know because I don’t know what it’s like to be another gender, for one thing.” Provost Fields also represents some of the participants’ sense of ambiguity in pointing out, “I don’t know that I have ever really thought about that.” In comparison, Dean Gallagher, Dean Reed, and President Perkins seemed to attribute their difficulty in answering this question, at least initially, to the lack of direct gender obstacles and bias they have experienced in their career paths.

Distinguishing the influence of one’s gender from the influence of other dimensions of one’s personhood and life experiences. Moreover, a number of
participants like Vice President Kennedy, Vice President Owens, and Dean Atwood pointed to the difficulty of distinguishing the influence of their gender on their leadership from the influence of other dimensions of their personhood and other life experiences, as Vice President Kennedy illustrates by stating, “I don’t know how much of that is gender or not?” Additionally, in speaking to how her gender has influenced her leadership, Vice President Owens discusses:

The only thing . . . I can talk about with that is that I think that people were waiting to see how I would perform . . . . I think when a woman steps in, there’s that questionable period of time . . . –like a waiting period— . . . from the community, from internal individuals . . . , which I don’t think that’s necessarily true with men. So it’s hard for me to say if it’s because my background [e.g., educational attainment] or if it’s because [of] the gender situation.

Similarly, Dean Atwood described,

That’s a very hard question to answer because I don’t know to what extent it’s my gender that shaped the way I lead and to what extent it’s just all the experiences that I’ve had and I’m not sure how much those are really tied up in being female versus being where I was at the time . . . . I’m not sure that I can come up with an answer for that one. I’m sure it has to some extent, but I can’t even come up with a real example to say that it’s been a big influence or that it’s had no influence at all. I don’t know.

*A sense of ambiguity concerning how gender influences others’ perceptions of women leaders.* Some participants also expressed a sense of uncertainty concerning how their gender has affected others’ perceptions of them as women leaders. For example, Vice President Kennedy conjectures,
Well, that’s always a hard one for a person to gauge. I don’t know that I could really offer an opinion on that except I would just expect that being a woman, there’s just some perceptions that enter into it. How much? I’m sure it’s just very individual. I don’t know.

Dean Atwood, who practices a feminine-associated style of leadership, points out that others may not view her leadership as gender-based. She explains,

I don’t know if the people I’m working with perceive . . . [my] collaborative, empowering, . . . conversational, consensus-building . . . [and] relational [style of leadership] . . . as a gender difference or whether they just think that’s a . . . [Vanessa] thing. And that may be because there have been so few women leaders at this level that they haven’t had a chance yet to differentiate, oh this is men and this is women in these roles. Maybe that’s why I’m tripping over these questions [related to the influence of gender be]cause there’s so few experiences to compare it to.

Participants’ non-gender based perceptions of how others view them as women leaders. In asking seven of the participants (President Howard, President Perkins, President Rice, Dean Reed, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Young) how they believed they are seen as a female administrator or president, their responses did not directly include the mention of gender. For example, Vice President Young’s response did not take into account the influence of gender, as she noted, “I would like to think that it’s positive . . . [and] that I’m perceived as being an effective leader . . . .” Also, two participants, Vice President Landon and Provost Barlow, who work at religious-affiliated universities that have traditionally prohibited women from serving in top leadership, spoke to their preference of being evaluated on
the basis of their performance as a leader and not on their gender. In speaking to how the members of the president’s executive cabinet view her, Vice President Landon stated, “I’d like to think that they see me as a leader, not based on gender. . .” Additionally, Provost Barlow discusses her preference to be selected for leadership roles based on her merit and not her gender:

I do not want to be the token woman on anything . . . I bet . . . I can list for you 10 institutions where some search firm has called and said they want a woman candidate for this position. That is a turnoff to me. If they want me to be a [presidential] candidate it’s because I’m worthy of the position, not because I’m a woman. So . . . if I’m honest, it was good for [the president of this university] to appoint a woman provost . . . in this highly conservative . . . [religious-affiliated denomination of higher education] that we’re in . . . and he knew that. He came from a very conservative seminary, and people were afraid that he was going to be very, very conservative. And one of his first appointments, that of naming a woman provost, sent a signal. So I guess I could say that maybe I have my job because I’m a woman. I don’t like that fact, but maybe that’s the truth. [So] I don’t know . . . . I don’t really have a good answer.

Although some of the participants conveyed a sense of ambiguity concerning how their own gender has influenced their personal leadership and/or others’ perceptions of their leadership, the majority of participants believed that there are, in general, gender differences between the leadership styles, traits, and characteristics of male and female administrators.
Perceptions of Gender-Related Differences in the Leadership Styles, Traits, and Behaviors of Male and Female Leaders

As previously noted, based on their experiences serving as university leaders, the majority of participants indicated that they have observed gender-related differences between the ways in which males and females practice leadership. Table 4 provides a comparison of the participants’ perceptions of the most frequently reported differences between the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors of male and female leaders. Overall, as shown in Table 4, most of the participants spoke to how they had observed male and female leaders demonstrating gender-stereotypic leadership styles, traits, and behaviors. For instance, most participants had observed male administrators demonstrating masculine behaviors such as aggression or dominance and female administrators exhibiting feminine behaviors such as nurturing or caring. Notably, seven of the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors (i.e., caring, collaborative, consensus-building, conversational, egalitarian, inclusive, and relationship building) listed under the category of female leaders in Table 4 parallel the participants’ commonly reported, self-identified feminine-associated leadership styles, traits and behaviors illustrated in Table 3.

Few women leaders to observe. Also of noteworthy importance, in considering that the majority of the participants are the first woman to hold their current position, several (Dean Atwood, President Perkins, Vice President Landon, and Vice President Young) participants pointed out, in the words of President Perkins, “I haven’t worked with that many female leaders.” Thus, in speaking to their perceptions of the gender differences between male and female leaders, these participants reported that they have only had the opportunity to work with and/or observe a few women administrators and/or
presidents. In describing her observations of gender differences in leadership, Vice President Landon states, “I only have one other woman to base that on.” Also, in regard to her perceptions of the gender differences in presidential leadership, Dean Atwood notes, “I’ve only known three women who were president—even a little bit.” With this in mind, Table 4 presents some of the major differences that participants have observed between male and female leaders in higher education.

Table 4

*Participants’ Perceptions of Gender-Related Differences in the Leadership Styles, Traits, and Behaviors of Male and Female Administrators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male leaders are more</th>
<th>Female leaders are more</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>Consensus-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Conversational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confrontational</td>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-driven</td>
<td>Diplomatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined to have their way</td>
<td>Negotiating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictatorial</td>
<td>Nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchal</td>
<td>People-oriented managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader-centric</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Relationship-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompromising</td>
<td>Slow to make a decision</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Observations of differences in men’s and women’s leadership styles, traits, and behaviors.* Provost Barlow perceives that there are “significant” differences between male and female leaders as she communicates, “I think men and women lead very differently.” She expresses,
I think women are very good at negotiation, conflict resolution, the give-and-take that’s necessary to come out with a decision, a positive decision for the greatest number of people. I think women are effective leaders in creating context . . . [or] in giving meaning . . . to something [in terms of] getting everybody on the same page, explaining why we have this ad hoc committee, why we’re going after this particular issue. Men, [on the other hand, are] highly analytical and strategic. [However.] I would not want to do my job without the men on my team that can give me the facts, that can project based on facts, [and make] data-driven kinds of decisions. I want our decisions to be data-driven, and I want people to give me data. Men are typically going to bring that without you even asking them. I’ve worked around mostly men. I’m not uncomfortable in recognizing the very strong traits that men bring to decision-making.

President Rice also describes several of the “major differences” she has observed between male and female leaders:

I think men tend to be more dictatorial and authoritative [which is] probably associated with testosterone. I think they don’t negotiate and collaborate as much as women nor do they back up when they’re wrong. A woman is more likely to say, “hey, I was wrong. I made a mistake. Let’s go on.” A man becomes wedded to his position and turns to stone.

While President Rice attributes some of the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors that she has observed in male administrators to the biological distinctions between males and females, many of the participants attribute the distinctions they have observed in female leadership to the spillover of women’s gender roles within the family (e.g., mothers) as nurturers and caregivers to their professional roles as university administrators.
The spillover of women leaders’ gender roles within the family to their professional roles. President Perkins discusses how women’s multi-dimensional roles within the family have contributed to their abilities, as leaders, to engage in a connectional way of processing information, whereas men tend to compartmentalize information. She explains,

For men, [in] their world, everything’s always in a cubical and this goes into this cubical and this goes into this and with women it’s like a spider web. Everything’s connected and women are better at seeing how—you snip a spider web up here and the whole web shifts. Women know that intuitively and maybe that comes from being cave women and . . . multitasking—to watch the kids, tend the fire, you know, keep the fire going. But I have found male leaders are going to be more, “ok I’m thinking about athletics and I’m thinking about this” and with women it’s much more [thinking about] the connectivity—[and] they work that better [than men].

Like President Perkins, Provost Ellis exemplifies the observations of many participants in speaking to how she perceives women leaders to be more “relationship-oriented,” “inclusive,” and “consensus-seeking” as she states,

I do think females are more tuned in to other people in that, as a female in the family, I think females think they need to solve problems and they're always sort of in the middle trying to make everyone happy. And, I think females are more like that, more tuned into trying to figure out whose around the table and how can I bring them together.

Also, Vice President McNair, represents the views of many participants in discussing her perception of how women’s traditional gender roles, as “nurturers” and “caregivers,”
affects their roles as leaders, especially in terms of their interpersonal communications with others:

I . . . think women aren’t . . . as aggressively confrontational as men . . . . I think women still end up caring more about whether or not they hurt somebody’s feelings. Seem[s] like, to me, men feel comfortable cussing each other out, and then walking out the room friends . . . I believe women are more relationship focused than men are. Men use relationships, it seems to me, to be a little bit more manipulative than women, to get their way . . . [However,] I think we’re more caretakers, even in our roles as leaders. I think we tend to take care of people more . . .

In agreement with Vice President McNair, Vice President Owens notes,

I do think that women are more nurturing as a quality, and I believe that as a leader, having that characteristic helps you be gentler and more willing to work with opposition. And I found that, that I think that women are more diplomatic . . . . Men just say it like it is. Women put touchy-feely things on it.

Likewise, Vice President Landon expresses, “men are more bold in their words than women. I have found that women want to couch things . . . [and] take on more of a peace-making role than men.” Although all of the participants spoke to their perceptions of the differences between male and female leaders, several of the participants also clarified that there are not always pronounced gender-related differences among all leaders.

A lack of clear cut gender-related differences between men and women’s leadership. Indeed, six participants (Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, Provost Ellis, Provost Fields, Vice President Carter, and Vice President Young) discussed how male and female
leaders do not always exhibit gender-stereotypic leadership styles, traits, and/or behaviors as each have observed male leaders who demonstrated feminine-associated leadership approaches (e.g., collaboration, empathy, etc.) and female leaders who demonstrated masculine leadership approaches (e.g., assertiveness, aggression, etc.). Although Dean Atwood has observed clear differences between male and female leaders, she points out that the distinctions “are never completely black and white, never across the board . . . .” These participants spoke to how there are always exceptions to the gender-stereotypic leadership patterns that they have typically observed between male and female leaders.

For example, Dean Reed expresses,

I think there are some differences [between male and female leaders, but] of course there’s a lot of overlap. There are some female leaders who may look a little bit more like most male leaders. There are some male leaders that may have many of the qualities that may be more characteristic of female leaders.

Vice President Young represents these participants’ perceptions as she explains the lack of clear cut gender differences that she has encountered in her interactions with male and female leaders.

With some individuals I’ve encountered, both male and female, I see very similar levels of compassion, very similar approaches to management. In other cases, I see vast differences between the management approaches, compassion . . . [of] male and female [leaders]. And it’s kind of interesting because it’s not just that women are always compassionate. Sometimes I encounter women who are not compassionate at all, and I find men that are much more compassionate . . . . It’s not so clear cut anymore. I think in the past it was typically thought of that women were all of these types of things because of the fact that they were women,
and now, I’m encountering very different types of personalities and styles between both men and women . . . . So there’s some dynamics within that that are changing. Even in talking and sharing things, working out problems and issues, there are male administrators that I could have that conversation with and work through issues as easily as I could a female administrator, . . . but . . . I have a limited range of experiences, maybe, compared to others . . .

Vice President Carter and Dean Atwood also provide examples of leaders who they have worked with who represent exceptions to traditional gender-stereotypic patterns of male and female leadership. Vice President Carter describes how she has observed male administrators demonstrating female-associated leadership characteristics:

Yes, I’ve seen a distinct differences [between male and female leaders] . . . because I think effective administrators are very good people-managers, [and] I think sometimes women are better people managers. They’re more nurturing by nature, but I’ve worked with some very fine male administrators who are nurturers and who are good listeners.

In comparison, Dean Atwood describes her experience of working with a female vice president who demonstrates a masculine leadership style. In speaking to the differences between male and female leadership, she articulates,

I’ve also noticed that the female leaders, again certainly not across the board, but in general tend to be more interested in developing and advancing the careers of everyone else around them. The men tend to be a little bit more competitive.

Now, I can point to some clear outliers from that pattern. One of them is . . . [a female vice president at the branch campus] who is not collaborative and wanting to develop everybody, but has exhibited a very strong, competitive style since I
met her a few months back . . . [What I mean by competitive is] that somebody has to win which means that somebody ends up losing . . . In general, most of the female chairs and deans that I’ve worked with here have been more about building up everybody, collaboration and sort of egalitarian sharing. Women tend to look for “win, win” in my experience. And part of “win, win” means that nobody gets everything that they want. Everybody agrees to take part of what they want . . . But . . . there’s always exceptions to every rule. There have been some specific examples with . . . [this female] leader because in the past everything [between the branch and main campus] . . . has sort of been a negotiation. Nobody ever got everything that they wanted. All of a sudden, I am losing when I go to create a new thing or move something from one place to another and there’s sort of been this hard line drawn. [The female Vice President says,] “No! That’s just not going to happen! We’re going to get what we need [at the branch campus] and you don’t get anything!” [Her stance is,] we’re not going to negotiate or collaborate on this . . . . It’s going to be my way or the highway.

And that’s been very surprising to me coming from a female leader.

Dean Atwood also discusses how she has observed female presidents demonstrating male leadership styles and male presidents practicing feminine leadership approaches:

All three of the . . . [women] president[s that I know], from my perception, exhibited very male leadership styles . . . . You would think that [the] externally-focused [president’s] role would be a natural for the collaborative sort of flat management leader. You would think that would be perfect, but I have not personally seen one yet in a female president. I’ve known a few male presidents who were that way—who were collaborative . . . about reaching out to people at
all levels of the organization—not just always going through the chain [of command].

*Holding Women Leaders to a Different, Higher, and/or Double Standard of Behavior, Appearance, and Credentials compared to Male Leaders*

In addition to addressing their perceptions of the gender-related differences between male and female leaders, eight of the participants (Dean Atwood, Dean Reed, President Howard, President Rice, President Whitley, Vice President Owens, Vice President McNair, and Vice President Landon) discussed their perceptions concerning the ways in which women leaders are often held to a different, higher, and/or double standard of behavior, appearance, and/or credentials in comparison to their male counterparts. In particular, some of the participants believed that there was a heightened sense of visibility and public scrutiny surrounding women leaders, especially those who are the first to hold a leadership position at an institution. President Howard, who has been the first woman to serve in many career positions throughout her long-standing career in higher education, speaks to the challenges that women continue to face as they enter top leadership roles:

I think the new group of [women] presidents that are coming up really have, in many ways, just as difficult of a time when they get their first presidency, but because there have been women presidents who have been successful it’s not as unusual as when I was coming up. So I think that makes it slightly easier, but [it is still] not so easy.

*A different, higher, and/or double standard of behavior.* One of the main areas in which the participants perceived that women administrators and presidents can face challenges pertains to the ways in which women may be held to a different, higher,
and/or double standard in their behavior as leaders. In fact, several of the participants described how female leaders who exhibit similar behaviors to male leaders may be viewed differently and more negatively based on gender-stereotypic expectations for masculine and feminine behaviors. President Rice, who believes that women are held to a higher standard than male leaders within the public eye, describes the ways in which public perceptions can differ between male and female leaders who demonstrate the same behaviors:

A man is termed decisive when he makes an unpopular, quick decision [while] a woman will be termed impulsive or impetuous. A man is strong when he sticks to his guns and a woman is stubborn. A man will be considered provoked when he looses his cool a little bit and a woman is flighty and hysterical. So I think, really, those still hold.

Similarly, based on her observations of male and female political leaders, Vice President McNair discusses the differences between public perceptions of male and female leaders who display strong emotions in public:

I think women—and this may be my stereotype—still have a need to seem powerful and to not display a lot of traits that might be viewed as weaknesses. So for example, I think the woman who was governor of Louisiana when the flood came . . . [in New Orleans]—I think when she got on TV and cried, that she lost the election . . . . She was so moved by all of those people and what happened [during the natural disaster] that she cried. I said, “That woman just sunk herself. This is not the time to cry. I’m sorry. She will never be elected governor again [for showing emotion].” . . . If it had been a man who did that, he may have been all right, . . . but she needed to show power before she showed emotion. And I
think it’s just being a woman . . . . But on the other hand, it’s just funny that
[United States Congressman] John Boehner cried [on TV]. If [Speaker of the
United States House of Representatives] Nancy Pelosi cried, like John Boehner
cried, there’s no way she could still be speaker of the house, I think.

Vice President McNair’s words also contextualize the double bind that many women
leaders face in attempting to demonstrate leadership behaviors that are not considered
overfeminized or underfeminized. In describing the behaviors of the female president of
her university, Vice President McNair also discusses how women leaders often have to
carefully balance feminine and masculine leadership behaviors:

I think our president is an effective president, in part, because she’s very
feminine. But there are things that she will not [do]. She’s not much of a hugger.
She’s a hand-shaker . . . . So she couples . . . being kind of soft and feminine
with behaviors that don’t come across [as too emotional], as I’ve never seen her
cry and . . . she doesn’t gush. I hug and gush and carry on, but not her. I think
that if I were president, I could still be effective doing it the way that I do it, but I
think that’s also because I can come across sometimes as kind of rough. And so it
probably offsets that gushing and carrying on.

President Whitley also discusses her observation of how women leaders seem to adhere
to a higher standard of professional and ethical conduct in comparison to some male
leaders:

I have yet to experience a female who has any taint of scandal about her. I have
known or been at places where many, many male administrators end up losing
their positions because of bad judgment . . . . I’ve known men who have misused
funds. I’ve known men who have gambled. I’ve known men who have had
alcoholism problems. I’ve known men with problems with inappropriate relationships, and I have never known a woman with that . . . . So, . . . I don’t know why that is . . . . I certainly don’t know whether it’s [that] women value the position more or aren’t tempted by the same things that seem to sideline men.

*A different, higher, and/or double standard of appearance.* Another area that may present women leaders with challenges to establishing their legitimacy as leaders concerns participants’ perceptions of how women may be held to a different, higher, and/or double standard in their physical appearance. For instance, based on her experiences and observations, President Rice perceives that there is a higher standard regarding women leaders’ appearance, particularly concerning their choice of apparel. She states,

> I think there’s a lot more scrutiny from the public regarding the way a woman looks, how she dresses, how she carries herself; whereas with a man, well he’s clean and he’s here. And it’s ok [because] that’s just him. But for a woman, they expect you to be more presidential—whatever that is. [There is an expectation for women leaders to be] more formally dressed all the time. A man can put on a sport coat with jeans and be fine and go anywhere. If I showed up in jeans they would be really upset, even on casual Friday.

Dean Atwood also speaks to how women leaders may experience a double bind between trying not to give the impression of being overfeminized or underfeminized in their appearance:

> There is a desire to appear not overly feminine, but you don't want to go too far and be overly masculine either. Androgyny is good, but that could be mistaken as well and be perceived in a way that you don't intend. Yet, . . . [my appearance] is
something that [I] actually think about every single day and particularly when I'm making a speech, go[ing] to a fundraising dinner, meeting with a potential donor, or applying for a job. All of a sudden, it becomes really important that you are both female and not too feminine, if that makes sense? I bet you would never, in . . . 1,000 years, hear a man say, “it's important that I'm male, but not too masculine.” Right? I mean, that would never even cross their mind for a second.

Dean Atwood provides an example of how an overly feminine appearance can negatively influence some individuals’ perceptions of women’s competency. She relays,

I have long believed that the first job that I ever applied for in higher ed[ucation], . . . [that] one of the primary reasons [that] they didn't hire me is because I walked in with a red plaid skirt, . . . matching red lipstick, and red fingernails. [The university] was in [the Northern region of the country] and I think that the combination of being female, coming from the South, [and] dressing, what they may have considered to be, stylishly or frivolously. I think it was all too much for them. The entire hiring committee was male and they were all sort of frumpy, professor types . . . . [Now,] looking back on it, with the little bit of feedback that [I] got, it was kind of like they didn't take me seriously. So, yes, there is some of that.

Further, Dean Atwood provides personal examples of the different standards for men and women leaders’ appearance in dressing for formal, university-sponsored events:

[As one example, for the new job I am taking as a provost,] I'm being flown over . . . [to another state] for the Board of Trustees meeting later this week, and there are three different events. So I wrote the President, and I said, “what's the dress code?” He wrote back and he said, “well, we're supposed to wear a coat and tie.
Does that help?” and I thought, not really . . . [A black tie event] is so easy for a man and so hard for a woman . . . . [In fact], one of the hardest things I've ever had to dress for are the [university’s] foundation black tie receptions . . . . Well, you can't wear the same dress that you wore last year. It has to be black tie; it can't be cocktail. You certainly can't wear a suit. It can't be sexy. It can't be frumpy. Holy crap, what is left? And who has time to shop? . . . [So] it would be easy to agonize over things like, what dress do I wear for the . . . [college] gala? Do I wear closed-toe sandals or open-toed sandals? Do I need to have on hose? Oddly enough, those things matter.

Additionally, Vice President Landon, who is one of the two women who serve on the executive cabinet at her university, perceives that women are held to a different and higher standard of appearance than male leaders. She points out that in a leadership context, “I am mostly aware that I am female . . . but maybe men are not [aware of their gender].” In being conscious of her gender, she explains that she is also “conscious of [her] hair, nails, and make-up.” Based on her observations and experiences, she maintains that there is “less tolerance for women being unkempt or overweight as they continue in leadership.” Vice President Landon further explains,

This [perception] is not based on any real statistics, [but I] believe it is more acceptable for men to be overweight and unkempt than for women. I have known female presidents and leaders who are a little masculine, [but] I like doing my hair and makeup. [Also,] people in the room like that we, [as women leaders,] are put together.

* A different, higher, and/or double standard concerning women’s leadership credentials. * Two of the participants, Dean Reed and Vice President McNair, spoke to
their perceptions of how women can be held to a different, higher, and double standard of comparison to their male counterparts concerning their leadership credentials. These participants expressed the view that women, in comparison to men, may have to work twice as hard and “jump through all the hoops” in order to “prove” and “demonstrate” that they are competent to assume an administrative role. For instance, Dean Reed, shares:

> Women have to prove themselves. They have to be successful. Men can have a failure . . . in their background or a real area of weakness, but if they can look really strong in other areas, I think they’re more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt.

Thus, women have to meet with a double standard of competence in demonstrating, in many cases, that they are more competent than their male counterparts for a leadership position. Dean Reed describes her perception of the ways in which men and women differ concerning their approaches to career advancement:

> I think men have always understood—even going back to the [19]70s—the importance of mentoring, the importance of establishing relationships with people in high places; whereas women tend to think that the most important thing you can do is [to] do your job well and to learn new skills and to network. And all those things are important, but men have also understood that you needed to be playing golf with the provost. And I think that’s enabled men to skip a lot of steps over the years; whereas women don’t get to skip many steps.

Moreover, Dean Reed discusses her perception of how a scholar-model path to the presidency allows women to demonstrate their leadership competency through establishing a record of achievements in teaching and research. She states:
In all honesty, I think [the scholar path is] . . . almost the only pathway for women . . . because, like I said before, we very often see men skipping steps. [However,] women have to prove themselves every inch of the way, and I’m not saying there’s not exceptions to that, but I don’t think I would have been considered for a deanship had I . . . not been a successful chair, . . . if I hadn’t had the record of research that I’ve had, [and] the record of leadership with a national association . . . But I can tell you when I have sat on and chaired search committees for vice presidents, for instance, in many cases it’s shocking to me how thin and watery their C[urricula] V[itaes] can be, and I’m actually not talking about this institution. I’m talking about hiring at prior institutions that I’ve been at. I don’t believe for a minute in those institutions that a woman with those kinds of backgrounds would have been selected for those positions. That may sound like sour grapes, but women are expected to prove themselves and to be successful in every position they have, and they’re expected to have been good teachers and to have been good researchers, to have published and jumped through all the hoops. I mean, you see men selected as deans all the time, not in a school . . . like this, but in some schools . . ., without hardly any background at all in research and nothing to really distinguish themselves in teaching. They’ve done some teaching, but no teaching awards or anything innovative that they’ve done or published. And I think for the same position, very often, women need to have that clear evidence of success in their background because they’re less likely to be given the benefit of the doubt. Now, I know that’s probably distasteful, and I know a lot of men wouldn’t agree with that . . .
Additionally, as an African American woman, Vice President McNair believes that women of color must meet with a higher standard of achievement and demonstrated competency in order to be considered for leadership roles. She explains,

I really don’t know if all people have to do the work, but I do believe for women of color and probably for women, [in general,] that you have to deliver . . . [in] doing the job . . . I do think people have to know you . . . can deliver . . . in order to feel comfortable . . . [that you can] do the job.

Although only two participants directly spoke to their perception of how women are held to a different, higher, and/or double standard than men in producing leadership credentials, this minor finding may be particularly significant in considering that all of the participants in this study indicated that they advanced to their current positions primarily through assuming additional responsibilities, demonstrating competency, and career achievement. Most of the participants described how their own efforts such as their credentials and achievements played a greater role in their career advancement than other factors such as mentors, role models, and professional networks. Therefore, the participants in this study may have a more implicit understanding of how building credentials, assuming responsibility, demonstrating leadership competency, and achieving career success is important to women’s advancement as university leaders. This minor finding may also be important to understanding why several of the participants, like Dean Reed, shared the belief that the scholar-model career path represented the best path for women presidential aspirants to “prove” their credibility through establishing a record of success in teaching, research, and service.
Summary of Perceptions of Gender and Leadership

All in all, the findings pertaining to the concept of perceptions of gender and leadership demonstrate the unique ways in which the participants’ gender, in combination with the other salient features of their personhood (e.g., family roles, education, race, etc.) has served to influence their personal leadership practices, experiences, and perceptions of university leadership. Like the presentation of each of the previous concepts, the concept of family relationships and work-life balance intersects with the concept of perceptions of gender and leadership to shed greater light on how women’s roles within the family, particularly as mothers, caregivers, and nurturers, colors how they experience, perceive, and make meaning of their career path and leadership experiences. For instance, six of the participants described how their family roles had influenced their leadership by equipping them with skills (e.g., compassion, caring, consensus-building, etc.) that were transferable to their leadership roles. Also, several participants perceived that some of the gender-related differences they had observed between male and female leaders, such as women leaders being more inclusive than male leaders, may be attributed to the spillover of women’s family roles into their leadership roles.

Another major finding in this section pertained to how all of the women in this study drew upon multiple feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and behaviors (e.g., empathy, empowering others, listening, communication, etc.) in forming their leadership practices. In particular, the two most commonly-reported leadership styles practiced among the participants in this study centered on collaborative and team-building leadership approaches. Although the participants possessed a preponderance of feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and behaviors, several of the participants
also spoke to the ways in which they are able to combine both masculine (e.g., toughness, decisiveness, etc.) and feminine approaches (e.g., relationship-building, compassionate, etc.) into their leadership practices.

One of the key findings in this section reveals how none of the participants in this study viewed their gender as a direct obstacle to their advancement to their current positions. Although several of the participants spoke to their sense of awareness of how some individuals held a gender-bias toward women leaders, most of the participants did not feel that gender bias and/or discrimination had personally affected them or directly blocked their career path progress. In fact, several of the participants, especially those who had the experience of being the first woman to hold a leadership role, discussed how they had learned to view their gender as a positive factor and, in some cases, a few participants viewed their gender as an advantage in certain leadership contexts.

Although some of the participants in this study had a clear view of how their gender had influenced their leadership, many of the participants expressed a sense of ambiguity concerning how their gender had affected their leadership. While some of these participants acknowledged that they had not previously given consideration to how their gender had influenced their leadership practices, other participants’ sense of ambiguity stemmed from their inability to distinguish the influence of their gender from the influence of the other salient features of their personhood (e.g., educational background, etc.) on their leadership.

The findings for this concept also indicated how the majority of the participants perceived that there were gender-related differences between the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors of male and female leaders. Most participants reported that they had observed male and female leaders demonstrating gender-stereotypic leadership practices.
Nevertheless, six of the participants also distinguished that gender differences between the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors among male and female leaders are not always so clear-cut as they have observed female leaders exhibiting masculine traits (e.g., competitiveness, aggression, etc.) and male leaders adopting feminine leadership approaches (e.g., consensus-building, collaboration, etc.).

A key finding for this concept also reveals how some of the participants perceived that women, in comparison to their male counterparts, were often held to a different, higher, and/or double standard regarding their behavior, appearance, and credentials. Based on their personal experiences and observations, participants discussed how women leaders often generate greater public/media attention and scrutiny concerning their leadership behavior and physical appearance. Some participants shared their perceptions of how women leaders may face a different, higher, and/or double standard concerning their demonstration of the same behaviors as male leaders. For example, President Rice pointed out that in engaging in a quick decision-making process, a male leader may be viewed positively as being “decisive” while a woman leader may be viewed negatively as being “impulsive.” Additionally, some participants described how women may face a double bind if they are perceived to be overfeminized or underfeminized in their appearance and/or behavior.

A minor finding in this section suggests that women face a different, higher, and/or double standard concerning their credentials as two participants spoke to their perception of how women must work twice as hard as their male counterparts to “prove” their leadership competence. Vice President McNair, who is an African American woman, also suggested that women of color, in particular, must “deliver” in their work productivity and achievements to demonstrate that they possess the competence and
credentials to assume a top leadership role. Although the two participants’ perceptions of women’s leadership credentials being held to a different, higher, and/or double standard is a minor finding, it is made more significant in considering its relationship to three of the previous findings addressed in this chapter. In regard to the concept of career paths and educational credentials, all of the participants in this study reported that they emerged as leaders through career achievements, demonstrating competency, and assuming additional responsibilities. This minor finding may also present an important linkage to understanding a previous finding relating to several of the participants’ perceptions that the scholar path to the presidency represented the best pathway, or in the words of Dean Reed, the “only pathway,” for women presidential aspirants to “prove” their leadership competency and credibility. Finally, this minor finding may have important implications for understanding the previous finding which indicated that most participants believed that factors related to their own efforts such as “doing good work,” or “building a professional reputation” had contributed more to their advancement than the role of mentors, role models, and/or professional networks.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter Overview

The final chapter begins with a brief overview of this study to review the (a) purpose of the study, (b) research questions, (c) theoretical framework, (d) research methodology, and (e) major findings. Next, this chapter provides a discussion of how the major findings of this study corroborate, contradict, and expand the extant research literature and/or theoretical discourse pertaining to the topic of women leaders in higher education. This chapter also outlines the limitations of this study. The chapter concludes by addressing the major implications of this study for a) future research, b) the application of postmodern feminist theory to future studies on women leaders, c) informing university women to act with personal agency, and d) practice and policy.

Research Summary

Purpose of the Study

In response to the dearth of empirical data on the career paths of university women leaders, the purpose this study, grounded in a postmodern feminist conceptual framework was to qualitatively explore and describe how university women in key-line administrative positions to the presidency (e.g., academic deans, vice presidents, chief academic officers/provosts) and university women presidents experience and make meaning of their career paths and leadership aspirations. This study also sought to contribute new and deeper insights into how personal factors (e.g., family relationships, work-life balance issues, etc.) influenced women’s career paths and presidential aspirations.
**Research questions.** With this in mind, the five broad research questions that framed this study were:

1. What experiences characterize women’s pathways to university leadership?

2. What experiences characterize women’s pathways to university leadership?

2. How do the various dimensions of women leaders’ personhood (e.g., race, gender, class) intersect to influence their career path experiences and leadership aspirations?

3. What life issues or personal factors (e.g., work-life balance, family relationships, etc.) have influenced women’s career paths and aspirations?

4. What motivates women to aspire and advance toward the university presidency?

5. Are women hindered from seeking a university presidency? If so, what hinders women’s career path advancement?

**Theoretical framework.** This study used a postmodern feminist theoretical framework to give voice to university women administrators and presidents’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations. In particular, the application of a postmodern feminist conceptual framework, provided a useful lens for critically evaluating how the participants’ gender intersected with the other salient dimensions (e.g., race, education, marital status, etc.) of their personhood to inform their unique identities, perceptions, and experiences as university women leaders (DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006).

**Research methodology.** Using a basic interpretive qualitative design, the primary technique for data collection involved 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a
purposive sample of university women in key-line administrative positions to the presidency and university women presidents employed at various types of public and private universities (i.e., research/doctoral granting universities, religious-affiliated universities, historically black universities, master’s level universities) located across the Southeastern region of the United States. The research sample was comprised of four university presidents and 12 key-line administrators. The key-line administrators included: three academic deans, three provosts/chief academic officers, and six were vice presidents representing the major areas of advancement, communications, economic development, research, student affairs, and technology. The majority of participants, including all four of the university presidents and nine of the key-line administrators, were employed at doctoral-granting universities which are designated as research universities under the Carnegie Classification System. In seeking to supplement the interview data, a document review, as a secondary source of data collection, was conducted of personal (e.g., curricula vitae, résumés) and official (e.g., published speeches) documents which provided first-hand accounts of the participants’ career path experiences. Lastly, in an attempt to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, a peer examination was conducted of the research findings.

Major findings. Based on the analysis of data, five major thematic categories and multiple corresponding sub-categories (see Table 1) emerged relating to the participants’:
(a) career paths and educational credentials; (b) leadership aspirations; (c) experiences with mentors, role models, and/or professional networks; (d) family relationships and work-life balance issues; and (e) perceptions of gender and leadership. The category of family relationships and work-life balance issues represented the most salient concept to emerge from the data analysis as multiple themes related to this concept transcended each
of the other major categories in the findings of this study. For the majority of participants in this study, personal factors relating to the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues served as powerful forces in shaping their career path experiences and leadership aspirations. Additionally, many of the participants’ multiple family statuses as daughter, wife, mother, and/or grandmother represented a central dimension of their personhood.

Discussion of the Findings

Prior to engaging in a discussion of the research findings in this study, it was first important to reemphasize that there is a lack of empirical data pertaining to the career paths and presidential aspirations of university presidents and key-line administrators, in general, and women university presidents and key-line administrators, in particular. Thus, the discussion of the research findings in this section underscores the scant number of descriptive empirical studies which have addressed the career path experiences and aspirations of university women leaders. For example, Madsen (2008) points out that her book, *On Becoming a Woman Leader*, which qualitatively explores the biographical accounts of 10 university women presidents, is the first of its kind to focus exclusively on the topic of university women presidents. Although Madsen’s book is the first and only known study that has focused exclusively on university women presidents, other descriptive qualitative studies (e.g., Carter, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) have represented the demographic of university women presidents in their samples of women presidents from differing institutional types.

While there does exist a small body of research on topics related to women college and university presidents, there is very little descriptive empirical data on women in key-line administrative positions to the college and university presidency. In fact,
Cox’s (2008) published dissertation serves as the only known qualitative study that focuses on the career paths and leadership motivations of upper-level university women administrators (e.g., vice-provost, provost, vice president). Further, outside of the present study, there is no other known published qualitative study with a comparable sample of both university key-line administrators and women presidents. As such, it is useful to compare the results of this study to survey data from the American Council on Education (ACE) (American Council on Education, 2012; King & Gomez, 2008) which provides the most up-to-date and extensive statistical data on college and university senior administrators and presidents as well as the findings from other empirically-based studies (e.g., Eddy, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008) on women leaders employed at varying institutional types such as community colleges. With this in mind, the following section provides a discussion of the meaning of the major findings of this study in relation to the existing body of scholarship and/or theoretical discourse on this topic.

**Career Paths and Educational Credentials**

*The dynamics of female university presidents’ pathways.* There are several ways in which the key findings concerning the concept of participants’ career paths and educational credentials serve to corroborate previous research findings. In keeping with previous studies which have examined women’s presidential pathways (American Council on Education, 2012; Birnbaum & Umbach; 2001; Carter, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Touchton et al., 1991), each of the four participants in this study who achieved presidencies at doctorate-granting universities described their pathways to the presidency as “traditional,” scholar-model career paths, although one did step away from her academic career to assume a position outside of higher education prior to ascending to her first presidency. Based on Birnbaum and Umbach’s (2002) scholar-president
model, each of the presidents’ pathways represented the normative scholar model pathway in terms of holding full-time, tenure-track faculty appointments in their early career paths. In considering that recent statistical survey data on presidential pathways indicate that the most prominent pathway to the presidency, among all institutional types, is based on the scholar/academic pathway, it is not surprising that all of the presidents in this study began their careers as tenure-track faculty members. More particularly, in considering that each of the presidents in this study headed doctorate-granting universities, the finding concerning their career paths corroborates Birnbaum and Umbach (2002) finding that demonstrates the prominence of the scholar-model career path (76.6%), among both male and female presidents, at doctorate-granting institutions compared to other institutional types (p. 208). Additionally, the university presidents’ career backgrounds as tenure-track faculty members supports trend data which reveals that compared to presidents of all other institutional types, presidents at doctoral granting universities (82%) were more likely to have had several years of classroom teaching experience (American Council on Education, 2012).

*Presidents’ career history and immediate-prior positions.* Although each of the presidents reported following a traditional academic career path, none of the presidents progressed through all of the rungs on the academic career ladder to the presidency which typically involves moving sequentially from department chair to academic dean to provost prior to the presidency (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2002). This finding is similar to what Madsen (2008) found in her study concerning how only one of the six university women presidents who followed academic paths to the presidency held each position in the normative academic career ladder to the presidency. In keeping with the patterns concerning presidential pathways, three of the four presidents in this study held the most
common immediate-prior position of a chief academic officer (CAO)/provost prior to advancing to their first presidency (American Council on Education, 2012; Carter, 2009; King & Gomez, 2008; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008). This finding also reinforces the results of current trend data which shows that women are more likely than men to serve in a CAO position prior to assuming their first presidency (American Council on Education, 2012; King & Gomez, 2008). However, the finding relating to how three of the four presidents in this study ascended to their current post from the immediate-prior position of a presidency differs from trend data which indicates women are “less likely than men to have been a president in their prior position” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 1). Also, with three presidents advancing to their current posts from a previous presidency and one advancing from a CAO post, the immediate prior positions of the presidents reinforces the trend data findings relating to how few doctoral granting universities hire presidents (9%) from immediate-prior positions outside of higher education (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 21).

The presidents’ career paths in this study which closely resembled traditional academic pathways to the presidency differ somewhat from the career paths of the presidents in Madsen’s (2008) and Steinke’s (2006) studies as both scholars found some variation among women’s pathways to the presidency (e.g., academic, student affairs, advancement, etc.). Nevertheless, the participants who followed non-traditional career paths in Madsen’s (2008) and Steinke’s (2006) studies acquired experiences along their career trajectories that provided them with faculty and/or scholarly experiences and credentials which resemble the career experiences and credentials of the presidents’ traditional academic pathways in this study.
Educational credentials. The findings regarding the presidents’ educational attainment of earned doctorates is also consistent with previous research which indicates that “women presidents were more likely than their male counterparts to have earned a doctorate” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 12; Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Also, the findings concerning the timing patterns of how some participants in this study did not progress in direct succession to earn their terminal degree supports the findings in previous studies on university women leaders (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008), which have also found variations among the timing patterns of women’s attainment of terminal degrees. Also, like most of the women key-line administrators in this study, Cox (2008) reported that the majority of the upper-level university women administrators in her study had earned doctorates, with five women waiting 10 or more years between earning their master’s degree and doctorate. What is more, like the women in this study who delayed their educational attainment to prioritize childrearing responsibilities, Madsen (2008) reported that some of the presidents in her study opted to delay their degree completion in order to bear and raise children. Regardless of the timing of their degree completion, many of the participants in this study, like the presidents’ in Steinke’s (2006) study, recognized, often in retrospect, that their highest degree attainment was, as Vice President Carter in this study explained, an important “stepping stone” in qualifying for top-level positions of leadership during the mid-to-later stages of their career paths.

Women firsts. Consistent with several previous studies on women administrators and presidents, 13 out of 16 participants in this study were the first woman to hold their position as a key-line administrator or president in their respective institution’s history (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Particularly, three of the four presidents in
this study, like nine of the 10 women presidents in Madsen’s (2008) study and all of the presidents in Steinke’s (2006) study, were the first women presidents at their universities. While the fourth president in this study was not the first woman at her university to serve as a president, she was a woman first in all of her previous administrative roles.

Women’s unique pathways to leadership. Although there were a number of common themes found among the participants’ career paths, consistent with prior studies (Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) each participant’s pathway in this study was distinguished by unique and individualized features. In particular, the ways in which the women administrators’ and presidents’ journeys to leadership were often uniquely shaped and influenced by their family responsibilities and priorities verifies the findings of previous research on women leaders in higher education (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). For instance, some of the participants’ experiences in this study parallel the experiences of the female presidents in Eddy’s (2009) study who described having circuitous routes to their first career positions in higher education due to interrupting their early careers to prioritize childrearing responsibilities. The findings concerning the unique timing patterns that characterized many of the participants’ career paths in this study also corroborates the findings in Steinke’s (2006) study of female presidents and Eddy’s (2009) comparative study of male and female community college presidents. Similar to the timing of some of the participants’ movement to administrative roles, Steinke and Eddy also found a delayed timing pattern among many of the women’s advancement to administrative roles due to their choices to prioritize family relationships (e.g., childrearing responsibilities, dual career marriages). Like the female community college presidents in Eddy’s study, some
of the participants in this study chose to delay their career advancement to certain administrative roles until their children were grown or their spouses were retired. The findings concerning the importance and priority of family relationships at varying stages in the participants’ career paths in this study also supports the central role that family played in shaping the career paths of women leaders in other studies (Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006).

*Women’s indirect and circuitous routes to career in higher education and leadership roles.* In contrast to the participants in this study and previous studies (Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006) who experienced indirect paths, circuitous routes, or as President Perkins in this study articulated, an early career path that was “a little backwards,” the findings of this study also highlight how half of the participants followed direct and early paths to their first career positions in higher education. Seven of the eight participants with direct and early career paths in higher education were childless at the time they entered their first career positions although four had children after beginning their careers. Thus, this finding, in comparison to the women who often took circuitous routes to their first career positions in order to fulfill family responsibilities, suggests that women’s family obligations influence the time path dynamics of career paths and advancement to leadership.

*Family influences at differing ages and career stages.* In addition to confirming previous research findings concerning the influences of women’s family obligations on their early career paths, the findings of this study add to the research base by providing an in-depth examination of the influence of women’s family relationships on their mid-to-late stage career path progress. Although Kuk and Donovan’s (2004) interviews with university women administrators from three different generations addressed how
women’s family roles influence different generations of women, there is little information on how family roles influence women leaders in higher education in their mid-to-late career stages. In comparison to the findings of Kuk and Donovan’s study which takes a cursory look at the family responsibilities among women administrators of different generations, the findings of this study provide a more in-depth examination of how family relationships and priorities influenced participants’ careers at various ages and career stages. While many of the women in this study described how bearing and raising children influenced the unique contours and timing patterns of their early career paths, the findings of this study also portray how women’s multiple family relationships continue to influence the dynamics of the mid-to-late stages of their career as some described delaying their career advancement in favor of prioritizing childrearing responsibilities, dual career marriages, and/or serving as caregivers for an aging parent. Thus, these findings expand the knowledge base concerning how, as Vice President Kennedy contextualized, family “issues at the other end of the [career] spectrum are just as pressing at times.”

Unintentional and emergent career paths. One of the most consistent findings in this study pertains to the participants’ unintentional and emergent career paths to university leadership. This finding serves to validate several previous studies which have documented that women presidents often describe their pathways to leadership as unintentional, emergent, and/or informal (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Walton & McDade, 2001). Also, similar to the findings in several previous qualitative studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen; 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), none of the key-line administrators or presidents in this study began their career paths with leadership aspirations or career
plans to achieve positions of university leadership. As well, the findings of this study regarding the participants’ emergent career paths to leadership, in terms of how the majority described being “asked,” “invited,” “offered,” “encouraged,” etc. to apply for administrative positions or appointed to leadership roles, is consistent with the findings of several previous studies that have examined women’s promotion paths to leadership (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Walton & McDade, 2001). The participants’ progression into a key-line administrative role or presidency in the mid-to-later stages of their career paths also reflects the promotion patterns of many women leaders in other studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Walton & McDade, 2001).

Emergent leaders. In contrast to women intentionally seeking out leadership roles, the finding concerning how the participants in this study emerged as leaders through demonstrating competency, assuming responsibility, and achieving career success in previous positions resembles the findings of other studies on women’s pathways to leadership (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Walton & McDade, 2001). For example, this aspect of the findings in this study closely aligns with Madsen’s (2008) finding concerning how the university women presidents in her study “emerged by working hard, performing to the best of their abilities, . . . and accepting offers of increased responsibilities and promotions” (p. 143). Also, the finding in this study pertaining to how the majority participants progressed to their current positions of leadership after holding several prior administrative positions of increasing responsibility supports the findings in a few previous studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006).
Leadership Aspirations

The findings relating to the concept of participants’ leadership aspirations reveals a number of important insights into the participants’ motivations for serving in positions of university leadership as well as contributes new insights into the personal and professional factors which served to hinder the participants in key-line administrative positions from having presidential aspirations. Also, the findings concerning the factors which motivate or hinder women’s leadership aspirations served to shed greater light on women’s unintentional and emergent career paths to leadership. Notably, with the exception of Cox’s (2008) published dissertation, “Motivational Factors Influencing Women’s Decisions to Pursue Upper-Level Administrative Positions in Higher Education,” few studies have explored deeply the factors which motivate or hinder women’s leadership or presidential aspirations. However, there are a few previous studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Walton & McDade, 2001) that have taken a cursory look at women’s motivations for leadership in higher education.

The role of gaining administrative experience in motivating women’s leadership aspirations. The finding relating to the significant role of gaining administrative experience in motivating and preparing the women leaders in this study to advance in their careers to key-line administrative positions or university presidencies supports the limited empirical data on university women’s motivations for leadership (Cox 2008; Madsen, 2008). Consistent with the participants’ pattern of unintentional and emergent career paths to leadership, the majority of participants in this study did not have a vision for leadership when they began their careers in higher education. Despite a few of the participants who viewed themselves as natural-born leaders, all of the participants’ accounts of their advancement to leadership revealed how their initial administrative
experiences marked, as President Whitley expressed, a “transformative step” in helping them to realize their leadership competencies and inspiring their interest in administrative work.

The role of gaining administrative experience in building women’s confidence.

The participants in this study, including those who viewed themselves as natural leaders, described how gaining administrative experience not only served to build their leadership skills and competencies, but also served to further enhance their sense of confidence in their leadership abilities. This finding is consistent with how many of the university women leaders in Cox’s (2008) and Madsen’s (2008) studies gained an interest in leadership and greater confidence in their leadership abilities by assuming additional responsibilities, gaining new knowledge and skills, and accepting new positions. Taken together, the findings in this study compared with the findings in Madsen’s (2008) and Cox’s (2008) respective studies on university women leaders seem to suggest that obtaining administrative experience may be a particularly important to women in developing a vision for leadership and in gaining greater confidence in their leadership abilities and competencies.

In fact, theoretical models on women’s achievement, development, and/or knowledge also confirm the important role that gaining experience serves in building women’s self-efficacy and self-confidence. For example, in studying the psychology of women and achievement, Mednick and Thomas (2008) note that the “concept of self-efficacy, introduced by Bandura (1986) refers to the belief or confidence that one can do the behaviors necessary to achieve a designed goal” (p. 636). The authors further explain, that “Bussey and Bandura (1999) argued that . . . [one of the key ways that] self-efficacy develops . . . [is] through graded mastery experiences ” (Mednick & Thomas,
Mott (1998) establishes that, “experiential forms of learning—observation and modeling, internships and apprenticeships, and team work projects—are perhaps among the most advantageous means to women’s career development” (p. 30). Thus, it is not surprising that in this study the participants’ initial opportunities to gain administrative experience served the threefold purpose of helping them to realize they “enjoyed” administrative work, increasing their confidence in their leadership abilities, and exposing them to other motivating factors (e.g., engaging in meaningful work, etc.) associated with administrative work.

**Additional factors influencing women’s leadership motivations.** The most prominent factors that influenced women’s motivations to assume positions of university leadership centered on (a) receiving encouragement and positive feedback, (b) engaging in meaningful/purposeful work, (c) achievement and goal attainment, (d) feeling a professional calling to leadership, and (e) the influence of spirituality and/or religion. The women in this study, similar to the experiences of the university women leaders in Cox’s (2008) and Madsen’s (2008) studies, described how a combination of factors, as Vice President Kennedy articulates, “conjoined” in motivating their interest in university leadership. Also, the participants’ primary motivations for leadership in this study correspond with several of the university presidents’ top motivations for leadership in Madsen’s (2008) study in terms of their desires to: (a) achieve career success, (b) “make a difference,” and (c) engage in meaningful work (p. 242).

**The influential role of encouragement and positive feedback.** Among the participants’ varied motivations for leadership, one of the most consistent and well-documented findings concerning women’s leadership motivations relates to the
influential role of receiving encouragement and positive feedback represents from others in inspiring women’s advancement to leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). The finding concerning how the participants in this study were often motivated to advance to leadership roles by receiving encouragement and positive feedback from others (e.g., supervisors, mentors, colleagues, etc.), who recognized their leadership capabilities, verifies the results of several previous qualitative studies on women college and/or university presidents (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Particularly, supervisors’ influential role in recognizing and encouraging the development of many of the participants’ leadership potential is also consistent with the findings in Switzer’s (2006) and Madsen’s (2008) research on women presidents. Although in many cases supervisors played a more important role than mentors for the participants in this study, Steinke’s (2006) research shows that mentors were motivating forces for all of the presidents in recognizing and developing their leadership abilities. Similar to the way that gaining administrative experience played a strong role in building women’s administrative competencies and confidence in their leadership abilities, the findings in this study and several previous studies (Brown, 2005; Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) indicate that receiving encouragement and positive feedback serves to increase women’s confidence in their leadership abilities and helps them to begin to envision themselves as leaders. For instance, many of the participants in this study were inspired to advance to leadership positions as influential individuals (e.g., supervisors) voiced their confidence in the women’s leadership potential and competencies (Madsen, 2008).
Lack of motivation for money or status. Strikingly, in comparing the findings of this study to the findings of several other studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) that have addressed women’s motivations for leadership, there is a noticeable absence of the mention of money/salary as a motivating factor for participants’ career path choices and/or leadership aspirations. For example, in this study, the participants’ internal motivations such as the desire to achieve career success by “doing a good job” are largely consistent with the factors that motivated the women in Steinke’s (2006) and Madsen’s (2008) studies to advance to leadership roles. Although none of the participants in this study cited increased salary, occupational status, prestige, or power as motivating factors for advancing to their current leadership roles, Walton and McDade’s (2001) survey of women chief academic officers indicated that 43% of female (CAOs) were motivated by their salary to remain in their positions and 52.5% were motivated by increased occupational status and prestige (52.5%)” (p. 93). In comparison, among the few participants in this study who mentioned money during their interviews, it was often to clarify their personal belief and/or perception that women are more motivated to assume career positions by the opportunity to engage in satisfying and meaningful work, rather than to earn a large salary. For instance, Vice President Young made clear that she did not take positions for the “sake of advancement,” but rather because she was interested in the work and in creating successful programs.

Women’s motivation to engage in meaningful/purposeful work. Indeed, Steinberg, True, and Russo (2008) note that in comparison to men, women place more emphasis on “interesting work” than on financial compensation (p. 670). In keeping with the findings in Cox’s (2008) and Madsen’s (2008) studies, the key-line administrators and presidents in this study were motivated to assume leadership roles based on their
interest in engaging in purposeful/meaningful work. In fact, the majority of participants in this study as well as the university women leaders in Cox’s (2008) and Madsen’s (2008) previous studies were motivated by the opportunity to “make a difference” for students, staff, and/or the institution. Thus, taken together, the implications of the findings seem to suggest that many women leaders are more motivated to assume leadership positions by internal than external rewards (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Walton & McDade, 2001).

Motivated by achievement and goal attainment. The findings also confirm previous research in regard to how the participants in this study were motivated by achievements and goal attainment, particularly in regard to contributing to the successes of others and the institution (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). At the same time, for many of the participants in this study, being an “achiever” or “achievement-oriented” was a defining feature of their personhood. This finding corresponds with Madsen’s (2008) finding concerning how all of the university presidents in her study described having a strong desire for achievement since childhood. Further, women’s motivation to achieve career success and attain goals that contribute to the betterment of their institutions clearly represents one of the factors that has contributed to their emergent paths to leadership (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006).

Feeling a call to leadership and the influence of spirituality and/or religion on women’s career paths. In addition to the ways in which some of the participants’ motivations for leadership in this study confirm previous findings, two of the findings regarding the motivations of “feeling a calling to leadership” and the influence of spirituality and/or religion on women’s career paths represent emergent themes that serve to expand the knowledge base in higher education leadership, in general, and women’s
leadership, in particular. Four of the 16 participants (Vice Presidents McNair, Vice President Carter, Provost Barlow, and Vice President Landon) in this study described how “feeling a calling” to leadership has served to influence their leadership aspirations and career advancement to their current positions. This finding supports Steinke’s (2006) finding concerning how some of the women in her study felt called to become a president. In speaking to the research literature relating to the psychology of women, Betz (2008) explains that women’s sense of professional calling is related to feeling a “passion” for one’s work (p. 738). She further distinguishes that for some women a passion for their work is related to “loving what they do” and for other women it is a concept related to engaging in work that makes a difference (p. 738). Betz also notes that a passion for one’s work is a factor that has been found to promote women’s career satisfaction and development. Correspondingly, for most of these participants in this study, their sense of professional calling was related to their motivation to engage in meaningful and purposeful work that “makes a difference.”

Each of these participants also explained how their professional calling was directly related to their spirituality and/or religion. Notably, these participants’ spirituality and/or religion represented one of the most salient aspects of their identity and one of the top priorities in their life. In their review of the of the higher education leadership literature, Kezar et al. (2006) establish that spirituality represents one of the “revolutionary concepts” that has emerged in contemporary leadership studies in response to the changes in the organizational context of higher education (e.g., globalization, accountability, etc.) and the application of new paradigms (e.g., critical theory, postmodernism, etc.) to the study of leadership (p. 74). Kezar et al. (2006) state that “critical theorists and postmodernists have exposed how supposedly value-free
assumptions of early leadership theories [e.g., trait, behavior, etc.] have resulted in
disguising unequal power relations and reinforcing the status quo of organizations” (p. 72). Consequently, contemporary scholars have begun to examine how “leadership as a
social process is value laden” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 72). Kezar et al. (2006) point out
that “spirituality is related to the concept of ethics” (p. 74). Further Kezar et al. (2006)
explain

Ethics might be developed from professional standards, codes of conduct, and
other guidelines developed by people. Some people believe, however, that an
ethical code should be derived from a higher being or be based on transcendent
principles that have held over time. These more metaphysically based notions of
ethical conduct are referred to as spirituality. People often refer to spirituality
rather than religion or morals to separate it from formal institutions such as the
Roman Catholic Church. (p. 74)

Although as Kezar et al. contextualize, religion and spirituality are, in fact,
distinct concepts, the majority of participants in this study who discussed their spirituality
and/or religion did not distinguish between the two concepts. In keeping with Kezar et
al.’s (2006) conceptualization of spirituality, three of the four participants described the
involvement and influence of a higher being, which most referred to as “God,” on their
career paths. For example, Vice President Owens expressed the belief that her career
path has been “orchestrated by God.” Also, another participant, Provost Barlow,
described that her spirituality had influenced her professional calling as she stated that
“leadership had always been a pull on her spirit.” Thus, for these four participants, the
significant role of feeling a sense of calling coupled with the influence of these
participants’ spirituality and religion represented a powerful, or in the words of Vice
President McNair a “huge” influence on their career decisions and leadership. In fact, despite their lack of presidential aspirations, each of these participants indicated that they would pursue a presidency if they felt that it was a professional calling and/or a goal that was inspired by their religion and/or spirituality. Kezar et al. (2006) establish that the influence of spirituality on leadership represents an understudied topic within the research base in higher education leadership. Although previous studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008) on university women leaders have documented that women are motivated by meaningful work and the opportunity to make a difference, these studies fail to address the role of religion and/or spirituality on women’s career paths.

**Hindrances to women’s consideration of achieving a university presidency.** A significant finding in this study relates to the collective lack of presidential aspirations among the women leaders in key-line administrative positions to the presidency. Consequently, the only participants in this study who described having presidential aspirations, which emerged in the mid-to-later stages of their career paths, were three of the four participants who achieved presidencies. This finding mirrors the finding in Cox’s (2008) study on upper-level university women administrators who also lack presidential aspirations. However, in focusing her study on women’s motivations for leadership, her study provides few details on the factors which have contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations.

**The presidential aspirations of female CAOs.** Although the chief academic officer (CAO)/provost position represents the most common immediate-prior position to the presidency, especially among women, among the three female CAOs who participated in this study, two planned to retire as their next career move and one remained undecided. This finding is consistent with the minimal existing data which
largely reflects a lack of presidential aspirations among female CAOs (American Council on Education, 2012; King & Gomez, 2008; Phillips, 2009). For example, in speaking to national trends, Phillips (2009) reports that among female CAOs, who comprise 38% of the total percentage of CAOs, only 25.3% intend to seek a presidency, 47% do not intend to seek a presidency, and 28% remain undecided. Also, Walton and McDade (2001) survey of 179 female CAOs that was administered in the 1990s reveals that “62.1% aspired to a presidency” within the next three to five years (p. 93). Yet, among the female CAOs with presidential aspirations, “only 22.3% thought a presidency was a likely next move” (Walton & McDade, 2001, p. 93).

In comparison to the female CAOs in Walton and McDade’s (2001) study who cited that their future career aspirations were influenced by personal (e.g., family considerations, etc.) and institutional factors (e.g., institutional size, etc.), the majority of key-line administrators in this study were hindered from seeking a presidency by a unique and individualized combination of personal and professional factors. Significantly, the findings concerning the factors which hindered the women administrators in this study from having presidential aspirations largely affirm scholars’ (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 98; see also Astin & Leland, 1991; Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Curtis, 2005; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Phillips, 2010; West & Curtis, 2006; Williams, 2005) suppositions that women’s career paths are no longer inhibited or blocked by “legal, formal, and visible” institutional barriers, but rather are influenced by a combination of subtle pipeline issues and informal/personal barriers. The more subtle and internal/personal barriers which hindered the women key-line administrators in this study from having presidential aspirations seem to suggest that the “social, political, and cultural factors that mediate the gender role” (e.g., family
responsibilities, work-life balance, etc.) continue to influence women’s career choices and aspirations (Schipani et al., 2009, p. 98).

*New insights into the personal factors which hinder women from having presidential aspirations.* As such, this study contributes new and deeper insights to the extant literature on women leaders by revealing how a combination of personal factors contributed to many of the participants’ lack of presidential aspirations in regard to (a) age and stage of life, (b) work-life balance issues, (c) the influence of family relationships and priorities (childrearing, marital relationships), and (d) geographical mobility. One of the ways this study expands the extant literature on the topic of female leaderships in higher education is by providing new information on how university women leaders’ age, stage of life, and career stage influences their presidential aspirations. In considering the timing patterns (e.g., circuitous routes to careers in higher education, late entry to administrative roles, career interruptions for family responsibilities, etc.) that characterized many of the participants’ career paths in this study, many of the key-line administrators who are now positioned to assume a presidency as their next career move are nearing or have reached retirement age. Therefore, this finding suggests that the timing patterns of women’s career paths coupled with their age and stage of life may have a significant influence on their career choices and aspirations. This study also contributes to the literature by exploring how personal factors related to the participants’ mid-to-later career stage progress influenced their consideration of a presidency in relation to (a) age and physical stamina, (b) ageism, (c) a desire for greater work-life balance, and/or (d) more flexible time to spend with grown children and/or grandchildren.

Although there is only a meager amount of empirical research pertaining to the factors which hinder women’s presidential aspirations, several of the personal factors
which hampered the women’s consideration of achieving a presidency in this study serve to reflect some of the most consistent and well-documented themes in the research literature on women leaders in higher education concerning (a) work-life balance issues, (b) family relationships (e.g., childrearing responsibilities, dual-career marriages, etc.), and (c) geographic mobility. Similar to the way in which these issues are often portrayed in the literature, many of the women in this study also described how family relationships were intertwined with other personal factors such as work-life balance issues and geographic mobility (Marshall, 2009; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; Williams, 2005).

The influence of work-life balance issues on women’s presidential aspirations. The influence of work-life balance issues on women leaders’ careers in higher education has been widely addressed in the research literature (Adams, 1979; Astin & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Jones & Komives, 2001; June, 2007; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; LeBlanc, 1993, Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Walton, 1996; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; West & Curtis, 2006; Williams, 2005). The findings in this study revealed how work-life balance issues influenced women’s consideration of achieving a presidency at differing ages and stages of life from the perspectives of mothers with school-age children to the participants nearing the latter stages of their careers who had grown children and grandchildren. Altogether, the participants’ concerns over their ability to balance the professional demands of the presidency with their family relationships underscores the saliency of the influence of women’s family priorities on their career decisions. From a researcher’s perspective, it seemed like many of the participants, who had observed the “24/7” nature of the university president’s schedule and role, were deterred from seeking a presidential
role in favor of having, as Vice President Carter noted, “quality family time” and/or a position with a work schedule that provided greater work-life balance.

*The influence of family relationships on women’s presidential aspirations.*

Another consistent theme which has been addressed in recent studies (Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) relates to the role of family relationships on women leaders’ career paths. Since few contemporary scholars have examined the influence of having young and/or school-age children and the role of male spouses on women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths, the findings of this study contribute deeper insights into how women’s roles as mothers and/or wives affect their presidential aspirations. Although the majority of women who were mothers in this study had grown children, many of the participants, including those who had achieved presidencies, shared similar views to the presidents in Steinke’s (2006), Madsen’s (2008), Switzer’s (2006) respective studies in describing the perceived incompatibility of balancing the schedule of the presidency with raising young or school-age children. Like the two presidents in this study who were mothers, recent studies indicate that most women presidents, who are mothers, have grown children (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Also, like some of the key-line administrators in this study who discussed how certain family relationships with spouses and/or children had contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations, Kuk and Donovan (2004) reported that the senior-level women in their study do not aspire to higher level positions due to the perceived “personal costs” to their personal lives (p. 6).

Although Marshall’s (2009) study of senior-level college and university women administrators with school-age children does not specifically address women’s presidential aspirations, she notes that the women in her study made career choices that
“met the needs of their families” (p. 198). The way in which some participants in this study prioritized their family responsibilities by waiting until their children were older or grown to advance to leadership roles resembles how the senior-level women administrators with school-age children in Marshall’s (2009) study made deliberate decision to limit their career advancement until they raised their children.

The findings of this study also suggest that some women’s aspirations to pursue a presidency are affected by whether their spouse is comfortable with assuming the role of the male spouse of a female president. A few participants indicated that their marital relationship represented a hindrance to their consideration of a presidency in regard to their husbands’ discomfort in becoming the male spouse of a woman president. Although the influence of women’s family relationships has been understudied, even fewer studies have (Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) addressed the influence of women’s spouses on their career choices. Although none of the participants in this study who have experienced a divorce attributed their separations to their career decisions or advancement to leadership roles, other studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006) have documented how some women presidents have experienced a divorce due to factors relating to their career decisions and aspirations, such as a male spouse’s discomfort serving in a secondary role to a woman president.

While some participants spoke to how their marital relationship served as a hindrance to their consideration of a presidency, one of the four participants who was unmarried addressed how her singlehood represented a factor that contributed to her lack of presidential aspirations. Much of the research that has addressed the influence of singlehood on women leaders’ career paths is outdated and limited in its scope (Adams, 1979; Astin & Leland, 1991; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). In being unmarried, Vice
President Kennedy believed that having a husband to fulfill the role of the president’s spouse would be a “help” to one in fulfilling the president’s social obligations, particularly for females who aspire to presidencies at more traditional institutions. Similarly, Astin and Leland (1991) described how one of the unmarried women leaders in their study experienced negative effects of being single in a public leadership role such as lacking a support, having increased demands on her time, and lacking a “father figure” for the student body (p. 133).

The influence of geographic mobility and relocation. Geographic mobility and relocation represented another factor that hindered some of the key-line administrators in this study, especially those who were raising children and/or involved in dual-career marriages, from having presidential aspirations. Four of the key-line administrators and three of the presidents described how being “place bound,” due to their family relationships with children and/or spouses, influenced their career choices, timing of their career advancement, and presidential aspirations. This finding supports the existing body of research literature on women leaders which suggests that geographic mobility and relocation may be a particularly important influence on women’s career advancement, especially women who are mothers of young or school-age children and/or are in dual-career marriages (Cox, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; Williams, 2005).

Within the context of higher education, career advancement into top leadership positions, especially the presidency, typically necessitates geographic mobility and relocation (Williams, 2005). The finding in this study concerning how some women’s made “intentional choices” to remain place bound due to their family priorities substantiate Marshall’s (2009) and Cox’s (2008) findings pertaining to how some of the
women administrators in their studies who were raising school-age children made deliberate decisions not to advance to career positions that would require relocation. Also, like many of the presidents in Switzer’s study (2006) who were involved in dual-career marriages, two of the presidents in this study reported how they chose not to relocate in order to externally advance in their careers to key-line administrative positions and/or presidencies until their spouses were at a point in their careers where they could move or retire.

*New insights into the professional factors which hinder women from having presidential aspirations.* One of the most important ways this study adds to the extant literature is by providing new insights into the professional factors which served as hindrances to the key-line administrators’ consideration of achieving a presidency. The most prominent professional factors which served to hinder the participants in this study from having presidential aspirations pertained to (a) career satisfaction in their current roles; (b) the nature of the president’s role, especially the external nature of the president’s work (e.g., fundraising, etc.); and (c) a perceived lack of presidential credentials (e.g., educational credentials, scholarly/faculty credentials, etc.)

*The hindrance of career satisfaction in their current roles.* Prior to advancing to their first administrative positions, a professional factor that hindered the participants in this study from considering career advancement was the career satisfaction they experienced in each of their prior positions (Cox, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Switzer, 2006). Many of the participants in this study, like the presidents in Switzer’s study (2006), attributed their lack of leadership aspirations at earlier stages of their careers to experiencing career satisfaction and enjoyment at each stage of their career paths. Nine of the 12 key-line administrators in this study cited experiencing career satisfaction in
their current roles as a hindrance to pursuing a presidency. Also, this finding is similar to Cox’s (2008) finding regarding how the upper-level university women in her study did not have presidential aspirations because they found their working “satisfying” and were “content” and “happy” in their current roles (p. 128). Many of the participants in this study shared the perception that women may not pursue administrative roles because they find fulfillment in roles (e.g., faculty, student affairs, etc.) that allow them the opportunity to use their “nurturing” qualities (Cox, 2008). Collectively, these findings seem to reinforce Steinberg et al.’s (2008) argument that women are motivated or hindered to pursue career positions based on their desire to engage in interesting and satisfying work.

The hindrance of the nature of the president’s work. Another key factor that contributed to many of the key-line administrators’ lack of presidential aspirations pertained to their perceptions of the unappealing aspects (e.g., fundraising, etc.) associated with the “nature” of the university president’s work. At present, there are no known published studies which have addressed how the nature of the college and/or university president’s work affects women’s presidential aspirations. Thus, this study provides new insight into how many of the key-line administrators, especially those who serve in positions of academic leadership as academic deans or provosts, were hindered from having presidential aspirations due to their aversion to some of duties and responsibilities associated with the university president’s role and duties in regard to fundraising, interactions with local and/or state governing boards, working with the legislature, and/or serving as a public figure in representing the “face” of the university. For some of these participants, especially those in academic administrative roles, this finding seems to support Bornstein’s (2008) observation that “some women do not aspire to a presidency because they prefer to remain close to the academic heart of the
institution” (p. 166). As well, a few key-line administrators cited a lack of privacy and the intrusion into one’s personal life as hindrances to considering a presidency.

In serving in key-line administrative roles to the presidency, these women had gained first-hand insights into the most important duties and responsibilities that characterize the university president’s role. The presidents’ descriptions of their primary duties and uses of time in this study generally reflect current trend data concerning the duties which require the greatest use of American presidents’ time including: budget and financial management (58%), fundraising (47%), community relations (23%), and strategic planning (22%) (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 35). In general, budgeting and finance represented the top use of presidents’ time at public institutions while fundraising represented the top use of presidents’ time at private institutions (American Council on Education, 2012). Bornstein (2008) establishes that “technical competence in the higher-education presidency involves four areas related to finances: managing the budget; raising philanthropic dollars; lobbying legislators for government support; and when feasible, developing commercial ventures” (p. 169). Steinke (2006) points out that the areas associated with the financial management of university operations “have traditionally been reserved for men (i.e., working with budgets, lobbying with legislators, courting donors)” (p. 166). As such, it stands to reason that some of the participants’ aversion to the president’s external duties may, in part, center on gender-stereotypic conceptualizations of differences between men’s and women’s work or as Vice President Landon perceived, “a maleness to raising money."

The hindrance of perceived lack of presidential credentials. Additionally, this study highlights how some of the participants’ lack of perceived presidential credentials and/or qualifications hindered their consideration of a university presidency in regard to:
(a) the educational credential of a doctoral degree, (b) scholarly and/or faculty credentials (e.g., tenure, teaching experience, etc.), and (c) diverse experiences in various areas (e.g., finance, student affairs, facilities, etc.) of university operations. Although the sample of women administrators and presidents in this study were highly educated with 14 of the 16 participants holding doctoral degrees, the two participants who had attained master’s degrees perceived that their lack of an earned doctorate would make them less “viable candidates” for a presidency. Indeed, trend data from the American Council on Education’s (2012) study, titled The American College President, indicates that the “typical president in 2011” held a doctorate as the highest degree of educational attainment (p. 5). Like the high level of educational attainment among each of the presidents in this study, the findings of previous studies also reinforce that most women who achieve a presidency hold a Ph.D. (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Eddy, 2009; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006).

The importance of scholarly and/or faculty credentials. The participants in this study also spoke to their perceptions of the importance of possessing scholarly (a record of peer-reviewed publications and research presentations) and/or faculty credentials (e.g., tenure-track faculty status, teaching experience) in achieving a university presidency. Key-line administrators who did not follow scholar-model career paths to their current positions and lack scholarly and/or faculty credentials believed they would face special challenges in gaining the respect of the faculty and “faculty acceptance.” In one sense, this finding is not surprising in considering that most women who achieve presidencies follow a scholar-model pathway to the presidency (American Council on Education, 2012; Birnbaum & Umbach; 2001; Carter, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Touchton et al., 1991). Also, this finding may be related to the
reality that the majority of participants in this study are employed at doctorate-granting universities, an institutional type which tends to favor the selection of presidents with academic backgrounds (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). This finding also supports the findings in two previous studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006) which addressed the importance of women presidential aspirants gaining scholarly and/or faculty credentials in terms of being able to understand, as President Howard articulates, how to “lead the academy.” In particular, some of the participants in this study, like the presidents in Madsen’s (2008) and Steinke’s (2006) studies, believed that it was important for women who have advanced through non-academic pathways to gain faculty and scholarly credentials.

Gaining diverse experiences. As well, in keeping with previous research (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006), a number of the participants in this study perceived that gaining “diverse experiences” was an important way for women to prepare to achieve a presidency. This finding reinforces the survey results outlined in American Council on Education’s (2012) The American College President report which reveals “how complex and challenging the academic presidency has become in the last 20 years” (p. 49). The report highlights the diversity of experience and knowledge required of today’s college and university presidents in stating

Presidents manage [a] myriad [of] tasks while leading and answering to a diverse set of both internal and, increasingly, external constituencies. Presidents consistently cite relations with faculty, legislators, and policy makers as their greatest challenges. In addition, fund raising and budgeting continue to occupy a significant portion of presidential time. (pp. 49-50)
With this in mind, some of the participants in this study and other studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006) advocate for women presidential aspirants to evaluate the diverse array of technical competencies that encompass the president’s role and look for ways to gain experiences and knowledge in these areas.

In addition to the personal and professional factors which served as hindrances to many of the key-line administrators’ considerations of achieving a presidency, three key-line administrators spoke to how factors related to their institution and/or institutional type have contributed to their lack of presidential aspirations in regard to (a) feeling a sense of institutional loyalty to the university where they are currently employed, and/or (b) the long-standing tradition of male presidential leadership within the denominations of certain religious-affiliated institutional types.

The hindrance of institutional loyalty. Two of the participants in this study, who have respectively followed internal promotion paths within a single institution, expressed that they were hindered from seeking a presidency at a different institution because of their sense of loyalty and passion for their current institutions. This finding is similar to how some of the university women administrators in Cox’s (2008) study made the choice to remain at their current positions because of their passion for the institution. Although the influence of environmental factors on women’s leadership motivations has been understudied, Cox (2008) found that the participants in her study believed it was important for the values of the institution to be consistent with their personal values (p. 190).

The stained-glass ceiling. Also, two key-line administrators, who were employed at religious-affiliated universities with strong denominational traditions of male leadership, noted that their gender represented a hindrance to their advancement to the
presidency within these institutional types. In general, within the “religious sector,”
Bornstein (2008) establishes that women continue to face obstacles to their advancement
in the form of what has been conceptualized as a “‘stained-glass ceiling’” (p. 164).
Although largely understudied, the finding in this study relating to the two participants’
awareness of a stained-glass ceiling barring women’s advancement to the presidency
within these institutional types confirms the findings in Wood’s (2009) study on women
leaders employed at conservative religious-affiliated colleges and universities. In
particular, Wood’s (2009) study documents how aspiring women leaders face gender
barriers at institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
(CCCU). For example, as of 2005, among the 105 colleges and universities affiliated
with CCCU, there were only three women presidents and women constituted only 19% of
chief academic officers. Wood (2009) notes that “barriers to women’s advancement in
faith-based institutions emanate from theological foundations and denominational belief
systems concerning women’s roles in church and society” (p. 78). Although the two
women employed at institutions in this study that lack a tradition of female presidential
leadership realized the improbability of achieving a presidency within the religious
denominations associated with these institutional types, they each expressed their
awareness that their gender would not hinder their ability to achieve a presidency at other
institutional types of higher education.

Mentors, Role Models, and/or Professional Networks

The findings concerning the influence of mentors, role models, and/or
professional networks on participants’ career paths serve to support, contradict, and
expand the extant literature on this topic. A surprising outcome of this study pertains to
the minimal or secondary role that mentors, role models, and/or professional networks
played in contributing to the participants’ actual career path advancement to leadership roles. This finding directly contradicts a well-documented and persistent theme in the extant literature concerning the crucial role that mentoring relationships, role models, and professional networks can play in contributing to women’s professional development and career advancement to top positions of leadership in higher education as well as other organizational contexts (Ausejo, 1993; Astin & Leland, 1991; Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Clarke, 2003; Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Gibson, 2006; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006; LeBlanc, 1993; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Lindsay, 1999; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Scanlon, 1997; Schipani et al., 2009; Schroeder & Mynatt, 1993; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993).

*Mentoring experiences.* More specifically, in contrast to the findings of other empirical studies on women leaders (Brown, 2005; Cox, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993), the majority of the participants in this study did not view mentors as playing an instrumental role in directly assisting with the advancement to their current positions. Also, the finding pertaining to how the majority of participants in this study did not have a “primary mentor” in a more senior-level position of university leadership who served to guide their careers into university leadership differs from the results of Brown’s (2005) research which shows that the majority of female presidents had a primary mentor in a more senior position of leadership (e.g., president). Although Steinke (2006) and Switzer (2008) did not identify in their respective studies on women presidents if all or most participants had a primary mentor, both provided examples of participants who had a key mentor who supported, sponsored, and guided their career paths to the achievement of a presidency. In comparison, only two participants in this
study, a vice president and president, described having primary mentors who they credited with guiding, supporting, and assisting them in the attainment of their current positions.

*A series of multiple mentoring relationships across women’s career paths.* Although most of the participants in this study did not have a primary mentor, the finding relating to how the majority of participants experienced multiple mentoring relationships across the span of their career paths confirms the findings of two previous studies on women presidents (Brown, 2005; Madsen, 2008). This finding closely resembles how the university women presidents in Madsen’s (2008) study had a variety of people who served as “influential individuals” across their careers in higher education (p. 163). Also, while most of the women presidents in Brown’s (2005) study had primary mentors, she also found that over half of female presidents had multiple mentoring relationships.

*A lack of mentoring experiences, especially by female mentors and role models.* Moreover, like a few of the participants in this study who “missed out” on mentoring experiences, other studies (Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Marshall, 2009) have documented how women often lack mentoring experiences, especially by female mentors. The finding confirms previous studies which have also documented how women often lack mentoring experiences by female mentors and role models in high-level leadership roles (Astin & Leland, 1991; Brown, 2005; Cox, 2008; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009). Altogether, the participants’ lack of available female leaders to serve as mentors and/or role models may, in part, be attributed to the reality that most of the participants in this study were the first women to occupy their leadership roles. Additionally, the lack of available female role models and
mentors may be explained by the continued under-representation of women at the highest levels of leadership in higher education (American Council on Education, 2012).

More role models than mentors. Another key finding in this study points to how the participants described having more career role models than mentors, most of which were male, who served in a higher-level position of university leadership. However, like many of the women presidents in Madsen’s (2008) study, as the participants in this study advanced to official leadership roles, they gained more leadership role models. As well, the presidents in this study noted that prior to attaining presidential appointments, that the president of their university represented an important role model and source of support.

Learning leadership through observation. In having more role models than mentors, many of the participants in this study spoke to how they learned leadership skills through observing other leaders (e.g., supervisors) who they viewed as role models. For many of the participants’ in this study who lacked formal career mentors, their description of how they learned skills from their role models resembles Madsen’s (2008) description of “indirect mentors” (p. 123). In her study of the life-long journeys of university women presidents, Madsen (2008) discussed how participants who were not “able to get direct mentoring” during their college years, sought out role models who they “watched and respected from afar” to serve as their “indirect mentors” (p. 123).

Nontraditional and informal relationships with mentors and/or role models. The findings of this study confirm the findings in two previous studies on university women leaders (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008) and expand the extant literature by detailing how many of the participants in this study, who in many cases lacked traditional career mentors, gained valuable mentoring experiences from informal and non-traditional mentors and role models, including family members (e.g., mother, sibling, etc.), peers,
and/or friends. The finding supports the findings in Madsen’s (2008) and Cox’s studies. Taken together, these limited findings suggest that women’s relationships with informal and non-traditional mentors and role models may play an important role in influencing their career development and leadership aspirations, especially when women lack formal and traditional career mentors and role models.

**Benefits of mentoring relationships and role models.** The participants in this study described experiencing similar benefits from their relationships with both traditional and non-traditional mentors and role models pertaining to receiving (a) encouragement and support, (b) career advice and information, and (c) skills and/or training. This finding substantiates the findings of several previous empirical studies (Astin & Leland, 1991; Brown, 2005; Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) which have examined the influence of women’s relationships with mentors and role models on their career advancement. In considering the powerful influence of encouragement in motivating women’s emergent career paths to leadership, it is not surprising that receiving encouragement has been consistently documented as one of the single greatest benefits of women’s relationships with both formal and informal mentors and role models (Astin & Leland, 1991; Brown, 2005; Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Like many of the participants in this study who gained a vision for leadership after being encouraged by a mentor or role model, previous studies have documented how women have developed presidential aspirations after receiving encouragement from mentors and role models to pursue a presidency (Madsen, 2008; Switzer, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Receiving encouragement and support also represents a key theme in studies that have addressed the benefits of women’s informal and non-traditional mentoring relationships (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008).
Further, the findings in this study support the results of Collins’ (1983) survey of over 400 professional women in various career fields who rated receiving encouragement and support as one of the greatest benefits of their relationships with mentors. In contrast, Collins’ (1983) notes that most men view “developing leadership, developing the ability to take risks, giving direction, and providing information . . .” as the most important benefits of mentoring relationships (p. 99). With this in mind, in comparing the findings of this study with the findings of previous studies (Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), one may conjecture that receiving encouragement and support from mentors to advance into leadership, is critically important for women, who often have unplanned paths to leadership, in gaining a vision for leadership and the confidence in their ability to achieve top leadership roles. As such, one may also surmise, on the other hand, that one important factor which may have hindered the key-line administrators in this study from having presidential aspirations is their lack of primary career mentors in higher-level leadership roles to encourage, support, and guide their pathways to the presidency. The participants’ lack of primary mentoring relationships may also help explain why most women in this study reported that other factors related to their own efforts (e.g., educational attainment, etc.) had played a greater role in their actual advancement to leadership roles than mentors, role models and/or professional networks.

Professional networks. The findings of this study revealed that very few participants were involved in professional networks related to higher education leadership/administration. Marshall (2009) also found that the women administrators in her study reported a lack of involvement in professional associations due to the time demands of their careers and family obligations. Also, only a few studies (Madsen, 2008;
Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) have addressed women leaders’ involvement in formal leadership training programs (e.g., Harvard’s Institute for Educational Management). Like the four participants in this study who attended Ivy League leadership training programs, the presidents in Madsen’s study who attended formal leadership training programs also did not cite networking as a benefit.

Similar to the two participants’ (Vice President Carter and Vice President McNair) experiences in this study who spoke to having informal networks of female friends that provided them with role models and mentoring experiences, the findings from previous research (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006) suggest that women’s involvement in informal networks (e.g., friendship groups) can serve the function of providing women leaders with encouragement and support. Although most participants in this study shared how they received a number of benefits (e.g., building a professional reputation, gaining information, etc.) from involvement in formal organizations/networks related to their academic and/or professional fields, especially at earlier points in their career paths prior to entering leadership roles, most did not perceive that their involvement in these types of organizations had provided them with “networking” opportunities that had directly contributed to their advancement to key-line administrative roles or presidencies. This finding differs from the university women presidents’ experiences in Madsen’s (2008) study who were involved in “discipline-related organizations” and received “important networking opportunities” from their involvement in professional organizations, many of the participants in this study did not view networking as a major benefit of their memberships in professional organizations (p. 202). As well, Carter (2009) reported that professional networks were beneficial to helping the women in her study attain presidential appointments. Thus, this finding is
surprising in light of previous studies (Ausejo, 1993; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Gibson, 2006; LeBlanc, 1993; Schipani et al., 2009; Warner & DeFleur, 1993) that have consistently documented the ways (e.g., support, sponsorship, gaining visibility, identifying mentors, etc.) in which both formal and informal networks can contribute to women’s career advancement.

*Family Relationships and Work-Life Balance Issues*

Unquestionably, one of the most important findings of this study highlights how, for most of the participants, family relationships and work-life balance issues intersected with nearly all other aspects of their career paths as well as influenced their considerations of achieving a presidency. The findings concerning the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues serves to both confirm and expand the extant literature on women leaders in higher education. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the findings regarding how the participants’ family priorities and relationships uniquely influenced the contours and timing patterns of their career paths to leadership supports the findings of several previous studies on women presidents and administrators (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2009; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006).

*Women’s multiple family statuses.* The use of a postmodern feminist theoretical framework was particularly helpful in providing a deeper understanding of how women’s multiple family statuses as daughter, wife, mother, and/or grandmother often serve to shape their career paths and influence their leadership aspirations. In particular, the application of a postmodern feminist perspective revealed how many of the participants in this study viewed their family statuses as the most salient dimensions of their personhood. The centrality of the participants’ family relationships in forming their
identities in this study verifies Madsen’s (2008) finding concerning the primary role of family relationships in shaping the identities of the university women presidents in her study.

*The influence of women’s family priorities on their career paths and aspirations.* Although the influence of women’s multiple family relationships on their career paths and leadership aspirations remains understudied in contemporary leadership studies, the finding in this study relating to how women prioritized their family relationships at various stages in their career paths substantiates previous studies which have also highlighted how women’s family roles, primarily as wives and/or mothers, has influenced their career paths (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). For instance, the women in this study who voiced, like Provost Ellis, that “family comes first” resembles the ways in which other studies have demonstrated that some women leaders have made their careers secondary to the needs of family such as working part-time while their children were young (Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). As previously noted, while other studies have examined how women’s family relationships with children and/or spouses have influenced their career choices, very few studies have provided an in-depth examination of how women’s relationships with aging parents can affect the dynamics of the mid-to-later stages of their career paths. Thus, this study expands the research base by describing how some of the participants’ family roles in caring for aging parents affected their career choices and aspirations.

*Intentional choices that prioritize family relationships.* This study also contributes to the extant literature by highlighting how women, who had unintentional
career paths to leadership, often made “intentional” choices at various stages of their career paths that prioritized their family relationships in regard to childrearing responsibilities, maintaining dual-career marriages, and/or caring for aging parents. Several participants noted that their decisions to advance to administrative roles were “family decisions” that involved the input of their family members (e.g., spouses, children, etc.). Other studies (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) also suggest that women make intentional choices that prioritize their family relationships over their career advancement. For example, Marshall (2009) reports that the college and university women administrators in her study with school-age children made a number of “conscious decisions” that prioritized their relationships with children and/or spouses over their career advancement in regard to (a) delaying their advanced educational pursuits, (b) earning less money, (c) choosing not to “uproot” their families to relocate for career advancement, and (d) limiting their participation in professional organizations (pp. 198-199). Similarly, several of the women in this study who were mothers described how they delayed their movement to administrative roles until their children were older or grown.

Work-life balance issues. The findings of this study also serve to verify one of the most consistent and well-documented themes in the extant literature pertaining to the challenges that women administrators and presidents face in negotiating work-life balance issues (Adams, 1979; Astin & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Drago, 2007; Jones & Komives, 2001; June, 2007; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; LeBlanc, 1993, Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; Walton, 1996; West & Curtis, 2006; Williams, 2005). Indeed, the findings of this study
corroborates recent studies which have addressed how women leaders experience work-life conflict in juggling their family roles with the enormous demands of serving in positions of top-level leadership (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). In keeping with previous research, the participants in this study made “choices, compromises, sacrifices, and tradeoffs” concerning their personal and professional lives in order to achieve a greater work-life balance (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Particularly, the finding concerning how some of the women who were raising children experienced a sense of guilt over “missing out” on spending time with their children in fulfilling their professional roles has been documented in previous research as a negative tradeoff for women in negotiating the responsibilities and time commitments of a high profile administrative position with one’s personal life roles (Cox, 2008; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009).

As well, this study provides deeper insights into the work-life conflict that women experience from what Dean Atwood conceptualizes as “the superwoman syndrome” in which women try “to be everything to everybody” in fulfilling the major responsibilities associated with both their family and leadership roles. In attempting to assume the ultimate responsibilities in their personal and professional lives, many of the participants in this study described how they often chose to sacrifice personal time for self-care, hobbies/interests, and/or friendships. This finding agrees with the findings of previous studies which have documented the lack of personal time that women administrators and presidents often experience in fulfilling the time demands and responsibilities associated with their personal and professional roles (Kuk & Donovan,
2004; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006). Although most participants indicated that they continue to struggle with negotiating a healthy work-life balance, consistent with previous research, many of the women in this study had devised their own unique strategies for achieving a greater work-life balance, such as a) establishing boundaries between their personal and professional lives, b) learning to say “no,” and c) seeking to integrate their personal and professional lives (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006).

**Receiving support.** In addition, many of the participants in this study, like the women leaders in previous studies, were able to negotiate a greater work-life balance through the support they received from having grown children, supportive spouses, and additional sources of support (e.g., nannies to provide childcare) (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Many participants spoke to how their current family statuses contributed to their ability to achieve a greater work-life balance. Similar to previous studies on women presidents (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), the majority of participants in this study who were mothers had grown children, including the two presidents who were mothers. Although 11 of the 12 key-line administrators in this study were mothers, Cox (2008) reported that 15 out of 18 university women administrators in her study chose not to have children due to their perceptions of the incompatibility of balancing work-family roles (p. 144). In contrast to Cox’s finding, none of the participants in this study who were childless indicated that they intentionally chose not to have children due to work-life balance concerns.

**The flexibility of having grown children.** The majority of participants described how having older or adult children provided them with more flexibility in meeting the time demands associated with serving as a key-line administrator or president. In fact,
the participants’ perception of the challenges of raising small or young children while serving as a key-line administrator or president mirrors the perceptions of women leaders in other studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Many of the participants in this study were able to negotiate a greater/work life balance by raising their children prior to entering top-level leadership positions, especially the presidency (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006).

**Supportive spouses.** The findings of this study concerning the role and influence of the male spouse on women leaders’ career paths makes a contribution to the limited empirical data regarding this aspect of women leaders’ lives (Astin & Leland, 1991; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009, Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Similar to the findings in several previous studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), the majority of participants in this study were married, although two were divorced and two have never been married. This finding differs from current trend data concerning the disparities between the marital status among male (90%) and female (72%) presidents and male (91%) and female (69%) chief academic officers which shows that more women than men are unmarried in these positions (American Council on Education, 2009; American Council on Education, 2012).

Consistent with the findings of previous research, many of the participants who were married spoke to the ways in which their spouses supported their careers and assisted in their ability to negotiate a healthier work-life balance (Astin & Leland, 1991; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009, Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). In particular, some participants spoke to how they were able to achieve a greater work-life balance by having a retired spouse or a spouse who had a job that provided them with a flexible schedule who could share in the responsibilities associated with the home sphere (e.g., grocery
shopping, sharing childrearing responsibilities, etc.). Similarly, Switzer (2006) notes that “of the 11 married [female] presidents, . . . five husbands retired when their spouses took these jobs . . .” (p. 11). As well, the finding in this study relating to how a few of the participants’ spouses supported their careers by assuming additional family/household responsibilities has been documented in previous research (Astin & Leland, 1991; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006).

The flexibility of being unmarried. In comparison, the four single participants in this study, two who were divorced with grown children and two who have never been married and are childless, did not have to be cognizant of needs of a spouse and/or small or school-age children in negotiating their work-life balance. Although most of the single participants did not claim to have an “ideal” work-life balance, Vice President Kennedy noted that being single and having grown children made her “very able” to negotiate a balance between her personal and professional life. Although there are very few contemporary studies that address the influence of singlehood on women’s career paths and aspirations, the finding concerning the greater flexibility in managing work-life issues among the single participants in this study corroborates Switzer’s (2006) finding among the four unmarried presidents in her study who also noted how living alone and not having family responsibilities made it easier to negotiate work-life balance issues.

In sum, the findings relating to the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues highlight how women’s multiple family roles and family priorities can serve to shape their career paths and leadership aspirations. Importantly, the findings suggest that women leaders today continue to face challenges in balancing the time commitments and responsibilities of their professional and personal roles. The findings for this concept also shed greater light on why many of the key-line administrators in this
study, who described feeling “ultimately responsible” in both their family roles and in their professional roles as university leaders, view work-life balance issues related to fulfilling a presidential role as a hindrance to their consideration of a presidency. Although each key-line administrator described an individualized combination of factors which contributed to her lack of presidential aspirations, it seemed like factors related to family relationships and work-life balance carried a particularly significant influence on their consideration of a presidency. Further, the findings also suggest ways that women in demanding positions of university leadership can achieve a greater work-life balance through developing work-life balance strategies and receiving support from grown children, spouses, and/or additional sources of support (e.g., extended family).

*Perceptions of Gender and Leadership*

The findings related to the participants’ perceptions of gender and leadership serve to reinforce some of the central themes in the research literature on female leadership as well as contribute new information to the contemporary research base in the field of higher education leadership. Notably, the findings related to this concept contribute to the research base in higher education leadership by adding to the limited empirical data on the leadership styles, perceptions, and experiences of university women administrators and presidents (Madsen, 2008). Also, as with the discussion of previous themes, the findings also highlight the unique ways in which women’s gender roles within the family, especially as mothers, influence their leadership styles and practices (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006).

*Women’s leadership.* In exploring the participants’ leadership styles, a finding that adds to current research in higher education leadership pertains to the way in which the participants in this study identified with multiple leadership styles, traits, and
behaviors (Kezar et al. 2006). In their literature review of contemporary studies in higher education leadership, Kezar et al. (2006) describe how emerging research (Kezar, 2000, 2002; Longino, 1993), which examines the intersection of the various dimensions of a leader’s identity (e.g., race, gender), indicates that women leaders and leaders of color have a “pluralistic leadership style” which involves “(1) awareness of identity, positionality, and power conditions; (2) acknowledgment of multiple views of leadership; and (3) negotiation among the multiple views of leadership” (p. 129). The finding relating to women’s multiple leadership styles is similar to Madsen’s (2008) finding concerning how the university women presidents’ leadership styles “fit into a number of models of leadership style” (e.g., emergent, relational, androgyny, empowering, etc.) (p. 246). The finding that university women leaders are able to draw from multiple leadership styles, traits, behaviors, and practices in forming a pluralistic leadership style seems to reinforce the usefulness of applying a postmodern feminist framework, which examines the intersection of the salient dimensions that form women’s personhood, to the study of women leaders.

*Feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, and behaviors.* In confirming one of the most prominent themes in research literature, all of the participants in this study identified with multiple feminine-associated leadership styles, traits, processes, and behaviors (e.g., ethic of care, empowerment, compassion, empathy, consensus-building, reflection, communicative, democratic, relationship-oriented) (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Eddy, 2009; 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonski, 1996; Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Also, in keeping with previous empirical studies on female leadership, the two most commonly-reported feminine-associated leadership styles among the participants in this study centered on a) collaborative and b)
team-building approaches to leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Helgesen, 1990; Eddy, 2009; Jablonski, 1996; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Switzer, 2006).

The ways in which the participants’ leadership styles in this study placed an emphasis on (a) process, (b) relationships, and (c) open communications are similar to the leadership styles of the university women presidents in Madsen’s (2008) study. Also, many of the participants’ integration of emotion into their leadership practices verifies Cox’s (2008) research.

**Combining masculine and feminine leadership approaches.** In addition, a few participants in this study described possessing leadership traits, abilities, or behaviors associated with male-based conceptions of leadership, such as being “tough,” “data-driven,” or “decisive” (Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Switzer, 2006). In particular, other studies have also found that women leaders emphasize the importance of decisive leadership and being able to make “tough decisions” (as cited in Steinke, 2006, p. 81; see also Madsen, 2008; Switzer, 2006). This finding challenges a gender-stereotypic expectation that women leaders are less decisive than male leaders in making difficult decisions (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bornstein, 2008; Switzer, 2006). Although most participants in this study possessed a preponderance of feminine-associated leadership styles and approaches, Madsen (2008) found that the leadership styles of the university presidents in her study corresponded with the “androgyny theory of leadership” (p. 246). Based on an androgynous model of leadership, an individual can draw on both traditional feminine leadership qualities, such as being “expressive” and masculine attributes, such as being “instrumental” or “task-oriented” (Madsen, 2008, pp. 246-247). In comparison to integrating masculine and feminine leadership approaches, Steinke (2006) found that the women presidents in her study either possessed a more feminine-associated style of
leadership such as being more “relationship-oriented” or a more masculine-associated approach which she described as “business-like or task-oriented” (p. 86). The modification of feminine-associated leadership behaviors and/or the adoption of masculine-associated leadership traits, behaviors, and or styles represents one way that women can attempt to obtain leadership authority among various higher education constituencies (e.g., students, faculty, boards, etc.) who are accustomed to dealing with male leaders and in gaining leadership credibility within the traditionally male-normed organizational culture of higher education (Bornstein, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001). What is more, Nidiffer (2001) maintains that women’s ability to demonstrate a wide array of leadership attributes and competencies in drawing from both masculine-associated and feminine-associated leadership approaches may be viewed positively as “a more desirable model” in terms of giving women “a competitive advantage in leading institutions” (p. 112).

The influence of gender on leadership. One of the major outcomes of this study pertains to how none of the participants perceived that their gender has served as a direct obstacle or formal barrier in their career path advancement to their current positions as key-line administrators or presidents (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Many of the women in this study spoke to their sense of awareness concerning the persistence of gender bias by some individuals against women leaders (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Yet, the participants in this study did not believe as President Perkins expresses, that their “gender had ever hurt” them in their career advancement (Madsen, 2008). In fact, similar to previous empirical studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), the participants viewed their gender in a positive light and spoke to how their gender presented them with a few advantages in certain leadership contexts.
Scholars maintain that the stereotypically feminine leadership traits, styles, and behaviors that women bring to leadership provide them with certain advantages (e.g., relationship-building, etc.) over male-based approaches to leadership in demonstrating effective and successful leadership practices (Bornstein, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Helgesen, 1995; Nidiffer, 2001).

*Transferring skills from motherhood to leadership.* Indeed, many of the participants in this study believed that their gender roles as mothers had positively influenced their leadership. In confirming previous studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), the participants noted how they were able to transfer the skills (e.g., negotiation, caring, etc.) they had acquired as mothers to their leadership roles. The participants’ ability to transfer skills and behaviors associated with their gender roles as mothers to their professional roles may be attributed to what Eagly and Johnson (1990) conceptualize as a “gender-role spillover” (p. 4). Eagly and Johnson note that the gender-spillover phenomenon may, in part, help explain perceptions of gender-related differences between male and female leaders, particularly in relation to how women leaders are often associated with strong interpersonal skills (e.g., expressive, friendly, etc.).

*A sense of ambiguity concerning the influence of gender on women’s leadership.* While some participants were self-aware of how their gender had influenced their leadership, ten out of 16 participants, at least initially, expressed a sense of ambiguity concerning how their gender has affected their leadership. Perhaps some of the participants’ sense of uncertainty concerning the role of gender on their leadership may stem, in part, from the lack of direct and formal gender barriers they have encountered in their career paths (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). In applying a postmodern feminist
framework, the findings of this study also suggest that some of the participants were unable to distinguish the influence of their gender on their leadership from the influence of the other salient aspects (e.g., academic background, etc.) of their identity. Although no other known studies have applied a postmodern feminist lens to the study of women leaders, other scholars (Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) have described the ambiguity that some women leaders have experienced in describing the difficulty of being self-consciously aware of how their gender influences their leadership. For example, Steinke (2006) compared the role of gender to a “shadow” as most of her presidents in her study “did not acknowledge the influence of gender, but occasionally, it did appear and was recognized at times by them” (p. 161).

Perceptions of gender-related differences in the leadership styles, traits, and behaviors of male and female leaders. Although many studies have examined female leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Bensimon, 1989; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy, 2009; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonski, 1996; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006), few studies have focused on the perceptions of women leaders, themselves, concerning their observations of gender-related differences between male and female leaders. Thus, the findings of this study go beyond women’s self-perceptions of their personal leadership styles to explore the participants’ perceptions and observations of the differences between male and female leaders. The majority of participants in this study had observed gender-related differences in male and female leadership. Prominently, the participants described their observations of how male and female leaders often demonstrate gender-stereotypic leadership styles, traits, and behaviors such as women being more nurturing or inclusive and men being more dominant or insensitive. Similarly, Steinke (2006) noted that the
women presidential firsts in her study recognized that their leadership style was more “feminine and relationship-oriented” in comparison to their male predecessors (pp. 85-86). Many of the women in this study attributed gender-related differences between male and female leaders to the “spillover” of women’s gender roles within the family to their leadership roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990, p. 4; Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Switzer, 2006).

*A lack of clear-cut gender differences.* At the same time, six of the 16 participants also clarified that gender differences between male and female leaders are not always so “clear cut” as they have observed men demonstrating feminine-associated leadership traits (e.g., compassion, collaboration, etc.) and women practicing masculine-associated leadership styles (e.g., authoritarian, etc.). In comparison, Switzer (2006) found that while some women in her study had observed differences between men and women leaders, some described that “leadership differs more among men and women than between them” (Leadership, para.5). Thus, taken together, these findings suggest that some women leaders have observed gender-stereotypic differences between male and female leadership, but have also seen leaders who demonstrate a blend of masculine and feminine leadership styles, traits, and behaviors.

*Holding women leaders to a different, higher, and/or double standard of behavior, appearance, and credentials compared to male leaders.* Another way that the findings of this study corroborate and expand the research base on women leaders pertain to how half of the participants perceived that women leaders are often held to a different, higher, and/or double standard of behavior, appearance, and/or credentials in comparison to their male counterparts (Blackmore, 1999, p. 60; see also Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Eagly, 2007; Eddy, 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Moore, 1984; Scott & Scott, 2006;
Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Although the findings of this study and other recent qualitative studies on women leaders (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) reveal that most women do not believe that their gender is a factor which has hindered their career advancement, their experiences do suggest that women continue to face gender-based social and cultural biases in establishing their legitimacy and competency as leaders in higher education (Bornstein, 2008, 2009). Bornstein (2009) contends that while both men and women face challenges in obtaining leadership legitimacy that “the legitimacy bar is higher” for women (p. 208).

A different, higher, and/or double standard in their behavior. Several of the participants perceived that women administrators and presidents often face challenges in being held to a different, higher, and/or double standard in their behavior as leaders (Blackmore, 1999, p. 60; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eddy, 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Similar to Eddy’s (2009) findings, some of the participants in this study described how they had experienced being viewed more negatively for demonstrating the same types of behaviors as male leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). In fact, a well-documented theme in the research literature pertains to how women often face a “double bind” in meeting the challenge of not appearing “‘overfeminized’” in exhibiting stereotypically feminine leadership behaviors or “‘underfeminized’” in exhibiting masculine leadership behaviors (Blackmore, 1999, p. 60; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eddy, 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Moore, 1984; Nidiffer, 2001; Scott & Scott, 2006; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). As Nidiffer (2001) explains, if women leaders “act in a way that is too feminine, they risk losing their authority; too masculine and they are also judged harshly” (p.114).
A different, higher, and/or double standard of appearance. The finding regarding the participants’ perceptions of how women are often held to a different, higher, and/or double standard in their physical appearance has also been well-documented in the research literature as another subtle form of cultural bias (Bornstein 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Niddifer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). On the one hand, scholars have observed how women who rise to leadership in roles that have been traditionally dominated by men tend to face a heightened sense of visibility and scrutiny concerning their appearance (Bornstein 2009; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Niddifer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). For example, like the participants’ in Steinke’s study, some of the participants in this study believed that their appearance was more highly visible and scrutinized as women leaders. On the other hand, scholars (Bornstein, 2009; Niddifer, 2001; Warner & DeFleur, 1993) have also noted how women can face a double bind concerning their physical appearance and image. Correspondingly, the participants in this study described the challenge of trying to select attire that does not appear overly feminine or masculine.

A different, higher, and/or double standard concerning women’s leadership credentials. A minor finding in this study relates to how two participants perceived that women, in comparison to their male counterparts, can be held to a different, higher, and/or double standard concerning their leadership credentials and competencies. This finding is consistent with previous literature (Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Robertson, et al., 2011; Williams, 2005) which has addressed how women often experience greater challenges in establishing their leadership credentials, competency, and legitimacy. William’s (2005) maintains that part of the glass ceiling entails that women have to work “twice as hard to achieve half as much [as men]” (p. 93). This
sentiment was expressed by Dean Reed who expressed the view that women have to “prove themselves every inch of the way” while she has observed males “skipping steps” in their paths to top leadership. Also, Vice President McNair, as an African America woman, believed that women of color, in particular, have to “deliver” in demonstrating their leadership credentials and competency (Bornstein, 2008).

Although largely unexplored in the research literature, this minor finding pertaining to the need for women to “prove” their leadership competency supports minor findings in both Madsen’s (2008) and Steinke’s (2006) studies. For instance, a president in Madsen’s (2008) study captures the perspectives of some of the participants in this study in articulating, “We are judged differently than men. We have to prove ourselves in a different way. I do think gender does matter” (p. 144). Also, Steinke (2006) notes that some of the women presidents in her study felt that “they needed to prove that they were strong and tough enough to handle duties related to the position” (p. 158).

Although the perception of women being held to a higher, different, and/or double standard is a minor finding, it may have important implications for understanding why the women in this study and other studies (Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2009; Madsen; 2008; Warner & McDade, 2001) attribute their career advancement to assuming additional responsibilities, demonstrating competency, and career achievement. In addition, in seeking to prove their leadership legitimacy and authority, this finding may have important implications for explaining why some women exhibit a combination masculine and feminine leadership traits, styles, and behaviors. This finding may also be related to why many of the participants in this study, who lacked primary mentoring relationships, attributed their career advancement more to their own efforts and achievements (e.g., earning credentials, educational attainment, etc.) than to the role of mentors, role models,
and/or networking. Further, as Dean Reed observed, this finding may provide insights into why many women who achieve presidencies follow a scholar-path to the presidency which provides clear evidence of their successful record of teaching, scholarship, and service (American Council on Education, 2012; Birnbaum & Umbach; 2001; Carter, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Touchton et al., 1991).

In sum, although the women leaders in this study did not perceive that their gender had served as a formal and/or external barrier to their advancement to their current leadership roles, the findings do suggest that women continue to experience and perceive the presence of social and cultural barriers related to gender-based conceptions of leadership that can influence women’s leadership in a variety of ways from how their appearance is more highly scrutinized in the public eye to how their behavior is held to a different, higher, and/or double standard in comparison to their male counterparts (Addy, 1995; Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Brown, 2005; Chliwniak, 1997; Eagly, 2007; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Hoyt; 2007; Jablonksi, 1996; June, 2007; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; 2010; Nidiffer, 2001; Phillips, 2010; Schipani et al., 2009; Smith, 2004; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Turner, 2008; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). In this sense, the gender-stereotypic perceptions and expectations that some women continue to face seem to represent formidable challenges to their ability to achieve top-level leadership positions and/or maintain their credibility as leaders (Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Schipani, et al. 2009; Williams, 2005).

Limitations

There are several limitations that exist in this study regarding the research sample. First, in taking a qualitative approach to studying university women leaders’ career path experiences and aspirations, the most appropriate sampling strategy for this study, like
most qualitative studies, was a purposive/purposeful sampling method which involved selecting a relatively small, non-probability sample that is capable of providing the researcher with “information-rich cases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). As such, the research findings in this study, which were obtained from a purposive sample of 16 university women leaders, are not generalizable, “in the statistical sense,” to the larger population of university women administrators and presidents (Merriam, 2009, p. 224). As a result, the perspectives and experiences of the participants in this study may not necessarily be representative of other university women in similarly-situated leadership positions. Nevertheless, the qualitative design of this study does present the reader with the possibility of transferring, applying, and/or extrapolating the findings of this study “to similar situations subsequently encountered” (Merriam, 2009, p. 225). Thus, in the future, the descriptive information obtained from the findings of this study may be instructive to researchers who are interested in developing large-scale quantitative studies on the topic of university women leaders’ career paths and presidential aspirations.

Geographical differences. Second, this study is limited to the experiences of university women administrators and presidents employed within the Southeastern region of the United States (U. S.). Accordingly, since women employed within other geographic regions of the U. S. were not included in this sample, it is not possible to determine how geographical differences may have influenced the participants’ career path experiences and aspirations. Therefore, future research could examine how geographical differences may affect women leaders’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations in higher education. Indeed, although other studies on women administrators and presidents in higher education have included samples of participants from diverse geographic regions within U. S., no known studies have sought to
specifically focus on geographic differences among university women leaders’ career path experiences and leadership aspirations in the U. S. What is more, higher education leadership scholars Kezar et al. (2006) maintain that it is important for leadership scholars to “examine and apply cross-cultural studies of leadership” in an era of higher education that is increasingly characterized by global connections/partnerships (p. 172). As one example, the authors point out that “more institutions [in the U.S. are] starting[ing] to build satellite campuses in other countries” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 172).

Racial diversity. Third, although all possible efforts were made to obtain a racially diverse sample, the findings of this study are limited to the experiences, insights, and perceptions of 14 White female participants and two Black participants. Similarly, Madsen’s (2008) published study which serves as the only other known empirical research which focuses exclusively on the experiences of university women presidents, was also limited in the diversity of its sample which included eight White female university presidents and only two Black university women presidents. The lack of racial diversity among the participants in both samples of university women leaders, however, may be reflective of the most recent demographic data profiling of the larger population of female university senior-level leaders and university presidents which indicates that the majority of female senior administrators and presidents are Caucasian/White (American Council on Education, 2012; Bornstein, 2008; King 2008; Turner, 2008). For example, as of 2008, among all institutional types, only 7% of senior leaders are women of color (King & Gomez, 2008). Also, as previously noted, based on statistical trend data from 2011, in examining the percentage distribution of presidents by race/ethnicity and gender, 7.7% of women presidents are Black, 1.2% are Asian American, 5.6% are Hispanic, .9% are American Indian, 1.2% are Asian American, 1.6% are listed as Other,
and 83% are White (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 9). Consequently, more research involving racially/ethnically diverse (e.g., Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian American, etc.) samples of key-line administrators and/or presidents of color is needed to understand why women of color and people of color, in general, continue to be represented in very low percentages at the highest levels of college and university leadership.

*Female chief financial officers (CFO)/vice presidents of finance.* Finally, this study is limited in accounting for the experiences and perceptions of female key-line administrators who hold the professional title of chief financial officer (CFO)/vice president of finance. Within the targeted geographical region, the researcher was only able to identify two female CFOs who were employed at institutions which met the criteria of this study. Although both of these potential participants were invited to participate in this study one did not respond and the other was unable to participate due to a natural disaster that affected the location of her university during the time frame of the data collection. Thus, the CFO key-line administrative role is not represented within the sample of key-line administrators who participated in this study.

However, the lack of available female CFOs to participate in this study may be attributed to the demographic composition of the population of female university key-line and senior administrators. As Bornstein (2008) contextualizes, “the financial arena has traditionally been the purview of men, and even today there are few women chief financial officers” (p. 169). Indeed, based on 2008 trend data, women represent only 39.2% of CFOs among various institutional types of higher education in the U. S. (King & Gomez, 2008, p. 16). With this in mind, since there are no known studies which focus on the career path experiences and aspirations of college and university female
CFOs/vice presidents of finance, future researchers could seek to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on this understudied demographic population.

Implications

Implications for Future Research

Future research on university leaders. In addition to the ways in which the limitations of this study inform future research, the findings of this study point to several possible areas for future research. The discussion of the research findings reinforces the limited empirical information available on the career paths and leadership aspirations of female university key-line administrators and presidents (Madsen, 2009; Cox, 2008). Accordingly, there is a need for both qualitative and quantitative research in providing a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of why women continue to be disproportionately under-represented in university presidencies, particularly at doctoral universities (American Council on Education, 2012; Madsen, 2008). In particular, based on the findings of this study, future researchers could seek to delve deeper into the personal (e.g., family responsibilities, work-life balance issues, etc.); professional (e.g., the external role of the president, etc.); and institutional factors (e.g., institutional loyalty, etc.) which may hinder key-line women administrators from seeking a university presidency.

There is also a lack of current empirical data pertaining to the career paths and presidential aspirations of university men in key-line positions to the presidency and male university presidents (Bornstein, 2008; King & Gomez, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Walton & McDade, 2001). As such, the findings of this study raises fundamental questions concerning how do the participants’ experiences in this study compare to the career paths and leadership aspirations of males in similarly situated positions of university leadership
(Bornstein, 2009; Madsen, 2008). For example, are males’ career paths to top university leadership carefully planned and calculated? What factors may hinder male key-line administrators from having presidential aspirations? In particular, in gaining deeper insights into the pathway to the university presidency, it would be helpful to obtain quantitative and qualitative information on male and female chief academic officers/provosts, the most common immediate-prior position to the presidency (Bornstein, 2008; King & Gomez, 2008; Walton & McDade, 2001).

Future research on family relationships and work-life balance issues. The saliency of the concept of family relationships and work-life balance issues points to the need for further studies which explore how various personal factors influence women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths and presidential aspirations at various ages and stages of life. In particular, since only one participant in this study had small, elementary-age children, future researchers could study how raising small and school-age children influences women administrators’ and presidents’ career paths and presidential aspirations (Marshall, 2009). This study also points to the need for research that focuses on how women administrators’ family roles in caring for elderly parents affect the mid-to-later stages of their career paths and goals. Case studies involving women who are serving as top university administrators while raising children or caring for an elderly parent could be useful in providing deeper insights into how women can successfully negotiate work-life balance issues. Equally important, there is a need for empirical research that deeply explores the influence and role of spouses and partners’ on women leaders’ career paths and aspirations (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Qualitative interviews with the male spouses of women administrators and presidents may also provide new insights into the personal factors which influence women’s leadership
experiences and aspirations. What is more, in examining women’s family status, no known studies have involved a sample of unmarried top-level leaders to examine how singleness affects their career paths, aspirations, and leadership experiences in higher education.

*Generational differences.* A more understated sub-theme that cut across many of the concepts in this study pertains to how generational differences influenced women’s career path experiences and aspirations. Although a few studies (Astin & Leland, 1991; Kuk & Donovan, 2004) have documented generational differences among women leaders, it would be interesting to explore how the experiences and perceptions of university women leaders in their sixties and seventies compare with women leaders of younger generations, particularly those who are now the inheritors of positions where women have already broken through the metaphorical academic glass ceiling.

*Women’s perceptions of gender differences in leadership.* The findings relating to gender and leadership reveals the need for more empirical data that examines how women leaders, themselves, experience and perceive gender differences among male and female leaders. Research on this topic would be useful in further exploring the influence of social and cultural barriers on women’s leadership experiences and aspirations. In particular, future research could examine if current women leaders experience and perceive the existence of social and cultural barriers in terms of being held to a different, higher, and/or double standard in their appearance, behavior, and leadership competencies/credentials in comparison to their male counterparts (Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Williams, 2005; Schipani, et al. 2009). Also, in regard to examining barriers to women’s leadership advancement, future scholars could seek to qualitatively explore the career paths and leadership aspirations of university women employed at religious-
affiliated universities with strong denominational traditions of male leadership (Wood, 2009).

*Exploring the influence of spirituality and/or religion.* In considering the ways in which some participants’ spirituality and/or religion strongly influenced their career paths and presidential aspirations, future research could focus on how religion and/or spirituality influences women’s leadership experiences (Kezar et al., 2006). Although largely understudied, Kezar et al. (2006) point out in their literature review of contemporary higher education leadership studies that a few cross-cultural studies have found that women and “certain [racial and/or ethnic] groups strongly affiliate leadership with spirituality—for example African Americans, Native Americans, and East Asian Americans” (Kezar et al., 2006, p. 75). In particular, Kezar et al. (2006) note, newer books such as Garner’s *Contesting the Terrain of the Ivory Tower* (2004) describe how . . . women leaders use their spiritual experiences and background to enhance their leadership by providing an ethic of care, focusing on service and social justice, and recognizing interdependence by expanding leadership beyond the organization to the community and world (p. 75).

Thus, future research which focuses on the role of spirituality among women and racial/ethnic minorities may be fruitful in providing deeper insights into their career paths, aspirations, and leadership experiences.

*Research Implications for the Application of Postmodern Feminist Theory to Future Studies of Women Leaders*

Although the benefits of a feminist approach to the study of women’s leadership has been clearly established in the research literature (Bensimon, 1989; Blackmore, 1999; Chliwniak, 1997; Glazer, 1993; Perreault, 1993), the use of a postmodern strain of
feminist thought represents a new direction for future studies on women leaders in higher education in terms of highlighting the how the “positional differences” (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) between women serves to shape and inform the unique and individualized ways in which they experience, perceive, and understand the phenomenon of leadership (DeValut & Gross, 2007, p. 193; see also DiPalma & Ferguson, 2006; Smooth, 2010).

As the first known study to apply a postmodern feminist lens to the study of university women leaders’ career paths and aspirations, this conceptual framework was useful in illuminating (a) how the salient features (e.g., race, spirituality, etc.) of the participants’ personhood shaped their personal and professional choices and priorities; (b) the uniqueness of the participants’ career path experiences; (c) how the participants made meaning of their leadership aspirations; (d) how the participants formed their leadership styles; (e) the participants’ leadership experiences and perceptions; and (f) how many participants’ multiple family (e.g., daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, sibling) roles served as salient aspects in shaping their identity and career paths. Therefore, the implications of this study suggest that the use of postmodern feminist framework may provide future scholars with the opportunity to develop new and deeper epistemological insights into how university women leaders’ experience and make meaning of their career paths and presidential aspirations. More specifically, future scholars could seek to develop postmodern feminist theories related to several understudied areas of female leaderships including (a) how women leaders’ positionality influences their leadership styles; (b) career path differences between female leaders’ of color; (c) the influence of spirituality on women’s career paths, aspirations and/or leadership experiences; (d) women leaders’ multiple family relationships and work-life balance issues, and (e) gendered perceptions of women leaders. Also of importance, Weber (2007) contends that
future research which seeks to inform public policy concerning structural gender inequalities “must derive from what feminist scholarship has come to understand about race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and other intersection systems of inequality” (p. 669). Thus, postmodern feminist thought may have significant implications for informing future directions of policy-based research on social inequalities concerning women leaders.

**Research Implications for Rethinking the Metaphor of the Glass Ceiling**

The findings of this study compared with the findings of similar studies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006) seem to suggest the need to rethink the use of the glass ceiling metaphor in addressing the persistent problem of women’s under-representation at the upper echelons of higher education leadership. As some scholars (Cotter et al., 2001; Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009; Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999) have noted, there exists very little scholarly consensus in the theoretical and empirical research literature relating to the criteria that define the glass ceiling phenomenon. Although originally conceptualized as a popular culture term in *The Wall Street Journal* to explain the lack of top-level women leaders in the corporate world, the clearest understanding of the glass ceiling was established in 1995 with the drafting of the U.S. Labor Department’s Glass Ceiling Commission Report, “Good for Business: Making Full Use of the Nation’s Human Capital,” which outlined three types of glass ceiling barriers affecting the career advancement of women and racial/ethnic minorities to the highest levels of corporate management, including societal (e.g., prejudice, lack of education, etc.), internal structural (e.g., lack of management training, etc.), and governmental barriers (e.g., failure to enforce the law). Then, in 2002, U.S. House of Representatives members John D. Dingell (D-MI) and Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) spearheaded a
follow-up study titled, “A New Look through the Glass Ceiling: Where are Women Now?” that was conducted by the General Accounting Office. This report indicated that “while there is some indication that women managers are doing better than they were in the past, the glass ceiling seems to be firmly in place” within various American industries, including the educational services industry (Dingell & Maloney, 2002, p. 13).

Despite the continued use of the glass ceiling metaphor in addressing differentials between male and female managers in regard to such issues as labor force representation, salary, and demographic features (e.g., family status, etc.), the presence of women in top positions of leadership within many sectors of American society diminishes the power and relevancy of the glass ceiling metaphor which, at the crux of its conceptualization, implies the existence of an “invisible, but virtually impenetrable” artificial barrier between women and their advancement to the top leadership positions (Dingell & Maloney, 2002, p. 5; Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Although women have yet to reach parity with men in attaining executive-level positions within most American industries, as Rhode and Kellerman (2007) point out, “the presence of a few highly regarded women at the top creates the illusion that the glass ceiling has been shattered for everyone else” (p.10). Clearly, today, the glass ceiling barriers associated with the more deliberate and blatant forms of gender discrimination have been eliminated with women’s high rate of educational attainment, progress to pipeline (i.e., key-line) positions leading to top leadership, and legal protections from gender discrimination in the educational and employment contexts (e.g., Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, affirmative action policies, etc.). Yet, the findings of this study coupled with previous research (Cox, 2008; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006)
suggest that while some women have breached the boundaries of the glass ceiling in attaining top-level positions of higher education leadership, women, on the whole, continue to encounter structural barriers to their advancement to the presidency, primarily in the form of subtle societal (e.g., gendered perceptions and expectations of women leaders, etc.) and organizational barriers (e.g., institutional norms and policies that are not conducive to work-family balance).

Although some scholars (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999) have addressed the limitations of the glass ceiling in explaining and representing the continued inequality that women and minorities face at the highest levels of organizational leadership, there exists the need for further scholarly discourse, based on empirical research, that more precisely symbolizes the subtle barriers to women’s advancement toward executive-level leadership. In considering that women, themselves, are aware that absolute barriers no longer exist at the highest levels of most organizational leadership roles in American society, Eagly and Carli (2007) argue that the “labyrinth” is a metaphor that more adequately “symbolizes the complexity of the causes of women’s current situation as leaders” (p. 8). In comparison, Meyerson and Fletcher (1999) view the subtle forms of social and organizational bias against women as the “problem with no name” (Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999, p. 128).

In rethinking the traditional glass ceiling metaphor, the implications of this research underscore the need for more empirical research which examines whether women in key-line positions to the presidency are hindered from attaining presidential appointments. Or, do many women, like the key-line administrators in this study, lack the aspiration to achieve a presidency? The three participants (President Perkins, President Rice, and President Whitley) in this study who described developing
presidential aspirations in the mid-to-later stages of their careers and the fourth president (President Howard), who lacked presidential aspirations, were able to break through the supposedly impenetrable glass ceiling to achieve university presidencies. In fact, three of the four presidents in this study had attained more than one presidential appointment.

In contrast, the key-line administrators in this study who have navigated their pathway through the labyrinth to obtain key-line positions described how they have gazed up through the glass ceiling to the utmost position of the university presidency and decided that achieving a presidency is not an aspiration or career goal, based on a unique and individualized set of personal, professional, and/or institutional hindrances. Four of the key-line administrators (Provost Barlow, Provost Ellis, Vice President Carter, and Vice President McNair) in this study described how they had been solicited to serve as presidential candidates, but for multiple, individualized reasons (e.g., relocation, the external nature of the president’s work, etc.), they did not have the desire to pursue a presidential role. However, if these key-line administrators did possess presidential aspirations, this finding seems to suggest that they would not be barred from achieving a presidency in light of how their leadership qualifications and experiences have attracted the attention of presidential search firms and/or committees. As such, this aspect of the findings represent another way that the glass ceiling metaphor, which entails that qualified women who are motivated to achieve top leadership roles are excluded from reaching the utmost positions, no longer accurately characterizes many of the participants’ experiences in this study or other previous studies (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006).

For all of the aforementioned reasons, it may be time for scholars to begin moving away from the use of an artificial, physical barrier as a metaphor for understanding the
phenomenon of women’s under-representation in top higher education leadership roles. Future scholars could consider moving in a new direction toward the conceptualization of a more organic analogy or metaphor that focuses on the persistent ways that subtle social and cultural barriers (e.g., women’s roles within the nuclear family, gendered perceptions of leadership) which are structured into the major social institutions in American society (i.e., the family, education, politics, religion, the media, etc.) affect the ways in which contemporary women leaders experience, perceive, and make meaning of their career paths and aspirations. Also, in moving away from a metaphor which implies that women have shattered the glass ceiling in higher education through their statistical representation within the American college and university presidency, it may be useful to work toward the conceptualization of a metaphor or analogy that can symbolize how some women are able to advance through social and cultural barriers to attain top leadership positions while many other women, located at various levels on the pathway to the presidency, never reach the highest levels of leadership (American Council on Education, 2012). Further, with the possibility of greater scholarly attention given in the future to the study of women’s presidential aspirations, it may be useful to consider how women, themselves, who have reached the upper levels of senior administration may decide, based on their understanding of the nature and role of the presidency, to establish a self-imposed barrier to their advancement to a presidency, based on the salient dimensions of their positionality (e.g., gender, race, social class, family status, spirituality and/or religion, etc.) and personal life priorities.

Research Implications for Informing University Women to Act with Personal Agency

In keeping with the aims of feminist research and praxis, one of the goals of this study was to provide women, themselves, with information that would be instructive for
navigating their pathways to top university leadership, especially the presidency (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lather, 1991; Niddifer & Bashaw, 2001). As previously noted, although the qualitative design of this study does not allow for generalization of the research findings to the larger population of interest in this study, the richness of the data presented in the findings does allow for the possibility of women applying, transferring, and extrapolating the findings of this study “to other situations under similar, but not identical conditions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 225). Accordingly, the findings of this study provide a number of implications that may be relevant to university women in navigating their paths to key-line administrative positions and presidencies.

**Navigating career paths to university leadership.** A key finding of this study highlights the importance of how gaining initial administrative experiences represents a “transformative step” for women in (a) building their leadership competencies; (b) discovering motivations for leadership (e.g., “making a difference, etc.”), and (c) gaining self-confidence and self-efficacy in their leadership abilities. As such, women may want to seek out formal and informal opportunities to gain administrative experiences (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Mednick & Thomas, 2008; Mott, 1998; Steinke, 2006). Also, although research indicates that women are less likely to have planned paths to leadership, it would be advantageous for women with leadership aspirations to intentionally plan career paths that allow them to obtain the types of professional experiences, credentials, and competencies that are associated with the achievement of a university key-line administrative positions and/or presidencies (Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Of particular importance, this study reinforces that the most prominent path to the university presidency is through the academic ranks beginning with a tenure-track faculty appointment (Birnbaum & Umbach; 2001; Carter, 2009; American Council on Education,
2012; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Touchton et al., 1991). However, for women who take non-academic routes (e.g., advancement/fundraising, student affairs, business/finance, etc.) to the university presidency, the findings point to the importance of university presidential aspirants gaining credentials and experiences that are similar to a traditional scholar-model career track (i.e., an earned doctoral degree, a record of scholarly publishing, university-level teaching experience, etc.) in order to understand better faculty culture and in gaining faculty acceptance (American Council on Education, 2012; Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006).

*Gaining diverse knowledge and experiences in various areas of higher education administration.* This study also confirms the importance of women gaining “diverse experiences” and knowledge concerning various areas related to the university president’s primary duties, especially in regard to the president’s external role (e.g., fundraising, etc.; Bornstein, 2008; 2009; American Council on Education, 2012; Steinke, 2006; Madsen, 2008). In considering the findings from this study coupled with the recent trends that characterize the increasing complexity of the university presidency, women presidential aspirants could prepare for the presidency by gaining knowledge and experience in such areas as (a) budget/financial management, (b) fundraising, (c) community relations, (d) strategic planning, (e) personnel management issues, (f) relations with governing boards of trustees and/or the state legislature, (g) capital improvement projects, and (h) academic/faculty issues (Bornstein, 2008; 2009; American Council on Education, 2012; Steinke, 2006).

*Obtaining mentoring experiences, role models, and networking opportunities.* Since most of the women in this study lacked a primary mentor and involvement with professional associations related to higher education leadership/administration women
could proactively seek to identify leadership mentors and professional networking opportunities (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ausejo, 1993; Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Clarke, 2003; Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Gibson, 2006; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; LeBlanc, 1993; Lindsay, 1999; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Scanlon, 1997; Schipani et al., 2009; Schroeder & Mynatt, 1993; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Although women can benefit from having both male and female mentors, it may be particularly helpful for women to obtain female mentors, perhaps even retired female administrators, who can provide advice and support concerning work-life balance issues (Brown, 2005; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Marshall, 2009). For women who are unable to obtain a primary mentor serving in a higher level of university leadership, they could benefit from multiple traditional and non-traditional mentoring relationships across the span of their career paths (Cox, 2008; Madsen, 2008).

Strategies for prioritizing family relationships and negotiating work-life balance. The findings of this study suggest that women can prioritize their family relationships while navigating their paths to leadership. For example, like some of the participants in this study, women could make their career advancement decisions “family decisions” that involve input from various family members in negotiating such issues as relocation, timing of career advancement, etc. The findings also suggest the importance of women who aspire to key-line administrative roles or presidencies developing work-life balance strategies and receiving support, especially from family (Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006).

Gendered perceptions of women leaders. In regard to gendered perceptions of women leaders, the findings of this study and previous studies suggest that women who
enter top-level positions of higher education leadership will need to be prepared for the possibility of encountering various constituencies and/or individuals who possess gender bias toward women leaders (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ayman, 1993; Bensimon, 1989; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy, 2009; 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Jablonski, 1996; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Williams, 2005). Also, women who aspire to a university presidency, especially women who are the first to hold a position, will need to prepare for life in the public eye and the increased level of visibility that may surround their behavior, appearance, and/or leadership competencies (Bornstein 2008; 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer, 2001; Robertson, et al., 2011; Steinke, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993; Williams, 2005). Bornstein (2009) recommends that “women presidents who understand the embedded biases and impediments to legitimacy that they face can work with their constituents to overcome or manage these obstacles” (p. 210).

Implications for Practice and Policy

Another goal of this study that is in keeping with feminist research and praxis was to provide information that may be useful to practitioners and policy makers in the development of practical applications or institutional policies aimed at supporting and advancing women to key-line positions to the university presidency and university presidencies. As such, there are three primary ways the research findings of this study may have implications for the development of practical applications and/or institutional policies related to the advancement of university women leaders.

In understanding the critical role that mentoring and networking can play in women’s advancement to leadership, the implications of this study point to the need for more practical applications aimed at providing women with mentoring and networking
opportunities (Astin & Leland, 1991; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Clarke, 2003; Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Schipani et al., 2009; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006). Since most women in this study lacked a primary mentor and networking opportunities, practitioners could seek to develop formal mentoring programs that pair aspiring women leaders or junior administrators with male or female mentors who hold a more senior-level position of university leadership (Brown, 2005; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Steinke, 2006). Also, practitioners could seek to develop practical applications aimed at providing women with opportunities for cultivating informal mentoring relationships and networking contacts (Bornstein, 2008; Kuk & Donovan, 2004). Based on the findings of this study and previous studies, these types of practical applications would have the potential to contribute to women’s advancement to leadership by providing a number of potential benefits such as receiving (a) encouragement, (b) information and career advice, and (c) new skills and training (Astin & Leland, 1991; Ausejo, 1993; Betz, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2005; Carter, 2009; Chliwniak, 1997; Clarke, 2003; Collins, 1983; Cox, 2008; Gibson, 2006; Kuk & Donovan, 2004; Kurtz-Costes et al., 2006; LeBlanc, 1993; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Lindsay, 1999; Madsen, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Scanlon, 1997; Schipani et al., 2009; Schroeder & Mynatt, 1993; Steinke, 2006; Switzer, 2006; Warner & DeFleur, 1993).

Additionally, in considering the importance of gaining diverse knowledge and experiences in various areas of higher education leadership in preparing to achieve a position of top-level leadership, practitioners and institutional policy makers could seek to develop practical applications at the institutional level that are designed to provide both male and female faculty, staff, and/or junior administrators with administrative
training and experiences (Bornstein, 2008). In fact, Provost Ellis, pointed to the lack of opportunities for faculty, who primarily work in discipline-specific fields, to learn about university leadership. Thus, her institution plans to offer a leadership program to provide faculty with academic leadership training and “introduce them to other parts of the university” (e.g., finances, facilities management, etc.).

Since many women leaders in this study balanced multiple family responsibilities with time demands and enormous responsibilities of their leadership roles, the findings of this study also reinforce the need for greater attention to work-family issues and policies on college and university campuses (Bornstein, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Steinke, 2006). In agreement with Marshall (2009), a critical first step to creating a more supportive work-family culture for university women at various stages in their career paths is “to increase the awareness (e.g., campus dialogues) of the realities associated with managing a career and children” (p. 213). In particular, the findings suggest that female administrators with children could benefit from flexible work schedules (Bornstein, 2008; Marshall, 2009). Further, the findings also support Bornstein’s (2008) recommendations concerning “unclogging the pipeline” for academic female presidential aspirants in terms of instituting other work-family policies that would help women faculty balance academic and family responsibilities such as providing a “flexible tenure clock” and “childcare facilities” (p. 178).

Conclusion

At the time I began writing my dissertation in the fall of 2010, statistical data indicated that since 2006 women had constituted 23% of all college and university presidents (American Council on Education, 2007; 2012). Also, over the past 20 years the statistical portrait of women’s advancement showed a leveling off trend in their
attainment of college and university presidencies (King, 2008). However, while writing the findings chapter of my dissertation, The American Council on Education (ACE) (2012) released the latest edition of The American College President Study which revealed that the overall percentage of college and university women presidents had increased slightly by three percentage points to 26% in 2011. The small increase in the overall percentage of women presidents is a positive trend for women’s advancement to the presidential ranks in higher education. Although women did increase their overall representation in presidencies at public and private doctoral granting institutions (22.3%), the current trend data indicates that women remain the least likely to head doctoral granting institutions (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 11). Thus, despite women’s gains, the trend data continues to beg the question, why are more women not achieving presidencies, especially within doctorate granting institutions, the most highly prestigious institutional type? One participant in this study, President Whitley, contextualized the problem that this study has sought to explore in stating,

I continue to be shocked that the numbers of women presidents are not increasing because I think many women have the talents to be president. So, I don’t know what the block-point is . . . I don’t know where female careers are getting derailed [so] that they’re not getting these jobs. Academia . . . [is a] career [field] that’s always had a lot of women in [it], [so] why is it that more [women] are not achieving the presidency or seeking it? And I don’t know the answer to that. But I think it’s clear that there is something that’s happening because the cumulative statistics say that they’re not achieving the presidency, or applying for it, or I don’t know what.
Although more quantitative and qualitative research is needed to answer these questions, the participants’ accounts of their career path experiences and leadership aspirations provide new and deeper insights into understanding university women’s pathways to the presidency and the factors which served to motivate or hinder their leadership aspirations. As such, the overall evaluation of the research findings, points to several overarching conclusions.

In looking through the lens of a postmodern feminist framework, it is clear that there were individual differences (e.g., career timing patterns, direct or circuitous routes, etc.) that characterized each woman’s pathway to a key-line administrative position or presidency. From a postmodern feminist researcher’s vantage point, the intersection of the most salient dimensions (e.g., gender, race, spirituality, etc.) of the participants’ personhood influenced uniquely how they made meaning of their career paths and aspirations. Although each participant had an individualized and unique career path to leadership, their paths were marked by several common themes, including unintentional and emergent paths to leadership, achieving success in their careers, a willingness to assume new challenges and responsibilities, and recognition from others (e.g., supervisor, etc.) of their leadership competencies. In addition to the importance of women having opportunities to gain administrative experience in gaining a vision for university leadership, many participants described the critical role that others (e.g., supervisors, etc.) played in helping them to envision themselves as leaders and gain confidence in their leadership abilities.

From the researcher’s perspective, it was surprising to learn that none of the participants in key-line administrative positions in this study had presidential aspirations. However, their rich descriptions of the factors which contributed to their lack of
aspirations provide new and important insights into the personal, professional, and institutional factors which hinder women’s consideration of a presidency. In keeping with a postmodern feminist framework, each participant described a unique and individualized combination of factors that served as leadership motivations or hindrances. The participants’ emphasis on personal and professional hindrances to their consideration of a presidency underscores the importance of women’s family and work-life balance considerations, experiencing career satisfaction, and enjoying the “nature of their work.” Indeed, a key finding of this study indicates that many of the participants were hindered from pursuing a presidency due to the “nature,” especially the external nature, of the university president’s role, responsibilities, and schedule.

A major conclusion that may be drawn from the findings pertains to the salient role that family relationships and work-life balance issues played in shaping many of the participants’ career paths and leadership aspirations. In fact, the overall evaluation of the findings reveals the high value that all of the participants placed on their various personal and professional relationships from the influential role that supervisors or peer colleagues played in recognizing and encouraging the participants’ leadership potential to their relationship-focused approaches to leadership such as collaboration and team building. Also of significance, inasmuch as many of the participants were motivated by relational aspects of leadership such as making a positive difference for others, it was also, in some cases, relational factors that hindered some women from pursuing a presidency such as a desire to spend more time with grown children or grandchildren or remain in leadership roles that involved a primary focus on working with faculty or students.

The findings of this study shed greater light on how many of the participants in this study, who often occupied multiple family roles (e.g., daughters, wives, mothers,
and/or grandmothers) balanced the demands of their leadership roles with their family priorities (e.g., childrearing, caring for aging parents, managing dual-career marriages, etc.). In making intentional choices to prioritize their family relationships, many participants also experienced personal and professional tradeoffs and sacrifices (e.g., burn out, lack of time for friendships, etc.). Nevertheless, all of the women seemed satisfied with their professional and personal choices. Further, many had learned over time how to achieve a greater balance between their professional and personal lives through implementing work-life balance strategies and receiving family support.

A major outcome of this research sheds light on how the participants in this study did not view their gender as a direct obstacle or formal barrier to their advancement to their current posts. However, collectively, their perceptions of gender and leadership indicates that gender does matter in women’s leadership in regard to their (a) leadership styles; (b) observations of gender differences between male and female leadership; (c) views concerning the influence of their gender on their leadership; and (d) perceptions and experiences relating to how women leaders may be held to a different, higher, and/or double standard of comparison to male leaders in their behavior, appearance, and credentials. This finding implies that while women may no longer perceive the existence of formal barriers to achieving top-level positions of leadership that some women may continue to face gender-based social and cultural barriers that impede their career path progress toward the presidency.

The participants’ perceptions of the incompatibility of raising children and/or maintaining a work-life balance while fulfilling the university president’s schedule and responsibilities may represent another social and cultural barrier to women’s advancement to the university presidency. As such, while women have broken through
the metaphorical glass ceiling in higher education by attaining top-level positions of college and university leadership, the findings of this study point to the persistence of subtle social and cultural barriers to women’s advancement (e.g., male-based conceptions of leadership, women lacking primary mentorship and sponsorship by individuals in high-level positions of leadership, and/ or women continuing to assume the preponderance of responsibilities in the home sphere, etc.) which present challenges to women’s advancement to the presidency (Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Schipani et al., 2009; Williams, 2009).

In the final analysis, although women continue to face challenges in reaching parity with men at the highest levels of college and university leadership, there are a number of ways that female presidential aspirants, current higher education leaders, and higher education’s stakeholders can contribute to women’s advancement. As previously stated, women, themselves, can proactively seek out mentors and seek learning experiences that develop their leadership competencies in critical areas of university leadership (e.g., fundraising, financial management, etc.) (Bornstein, 2008; 2009; Madsen, 2008; Steinke, 2006). Additionally, Bornstein (2008) maintains that current presidential leaders have a role to play in the advancement of women and racial/ethnic minorities. Bornstein (2008) recommends,

Both male and female presidents must take responsibility in this effort to remedy the inherent institutional bias against the advancement of women and [racial and ethnic] minorities by identifying promising leaders, encouraging their interest, augmenting their experience, and giving them visibility. Women presidents have a particular responsibility to mentor aspiring and new women presidents . . .
Presidents also need to hold their administrators accountable for identifying talent and providing opportunities at every level of the organization. (p. 178)

Higher education’s stakeholders can contribute to the advancement of women and racial/ethnic minorities by advocating for the inclusion of women and people of color on public and private governing boards and presidential search and selection committees (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 2008b). Altogether, as a feminist researcher, it is my hope that perhaps in the near future, through the concerted efforts of scholars, practitioners, higher education’s stakeholders, and female presidential aspirants, that American higher education will realize a point in time in which the phenomenon of women holding top positions of leadership, as President Perkins articulates, “stops being remarkable” as talented and qualified women continue to chart their pathways toward equality with men at the highest levels of leadership, especially the presidency.
APPENDIX A

FORMAL LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

April 1, 2011

Potential Participant
University
Department/Division
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear ________:

I am writing to invite you to participate in an interview for a research project titled, “Women’s Pathways to the University Presidency.” This project seeks to qualitatively explore the career path experiences and presidential aspirations of current and former university women administrators and presidents. Additionally, this study seeks to contribute new insights into how personal factors such as child-rearing or relationships with spouses/partners may motivate or hinder women from seeking a university presidency. This study will form the basis of my dissertation research for my doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM).

In order to be respectful of your time, the interview for this study will take approximately one hour and will be scheduled at the time and location of your choice, or by telephone. Interviews for this project will be conducted from April to July of 2011.

This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. I have attached the informed consent form for this study which will provide you with a more detailed description of this study and information pertaining to the measures that will be used to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

As a follow up to this letter, I will contact you via e-mail to inquire of your willingness to participate in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 601-543-6446 (cell), 601-544-0856 (home), or Celeste.Wheat@usm.edu. Additionally, you may contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Lilian Hill, at 601-266-4622, or Lilian.Hill@usm.edu.

Sincerely,

Celeste A. Wheat, Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Lilian H. Hill, Associate Professor

Encl. Informed Consent Form
APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP E-MAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Dear______:

My name is Celeste Wheat and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am writing this e-mail as a follow-up to a recent letter (attached) that I sent to invite you to participate in an interview for my dissertation study titled, “Women’s Pathways to the University Presidency.” This study seeks to qualitatively explore the career path experiences and presidential aspirations of university women administrators and university women presidents.

The interviews for this project will be conducted from April to July of 2011. In order to be respectful of your time, the interview for this study will take approximately 1 hour and will be scheduled at the time and location of your choice, or by telephone.

If you would be willing to participate in an interview for this study, will you please provide me with the name and e-mail address/phone number for the person who I should contact to schedule an interview appointment with you? Also, please let me know if you prefer an in-person interview or telephone interview.

For your convenience, in the attached letter you will also find the informed consent form for this project, which will provide you with a more detailed description of this study and the measures that will be taken to ensure participants’ confidentiality and anonymity. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 601-543-6446 (cell), 601-544-0086 (home), or Celeste.Wheat@usm.edu. Additionally, you may contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Lilian Hill, at 601-266-4622, or Lilian.Hill@usm.edu.

Sincerely,

Celeste A. Wheat

Celeste A. Wheat, Doctoral Candidate
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Mailing Address:
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Petal, MS 39465
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Career Path

1) I would like to begin the interview by asking you to tell me a little bit about yourself and your academic background?

2) Could you briefly describe for me the career path that you took to becoming an administrator/president?

3) What was the immediate prior position that you held before being selected to serve in your current leadership role?

4) At what point in your career did you begin to have a vision for leadership?

5) What are your future career goals after your tenure in your current leadership role?

Mentors, Role Models, and Professional Networks

6) What kind of a role has mentors or role models played in helping you to advance into leadership positions?

Follow up: How did your mentoring relationship first develop?

7) What kind of a role has professional networks or organizations played in helping you to advance into leadership positions?

Balancing Work-Life Issues

8) Could you briefly describe what are the most important roles and responsibilities that accompany your leadership position?

9) What kinds of demands does this position make on your time?

10) As an administrator or president, how would you describe your ability to achieve balance between your professional life and your personal life?
11) How have issues related to work-life balance influenced your career decisions and career goals?

*Family Impacts on Women’s Career Paths and Aspirations*

12) In general, how do you think the relationships that women administrators/presidents have in their personal lives (e.g., with children or spouses/partners, etc.) influence their career paths and leadership aspirations?

13) What influence have the significant relationships in your personal life (e.g., with children or spouses/partners, etc.) had on your career path and leadership aspirations?

*Gendered Perceptions of Leadership*

14) How would you describe your personal leadership style?

15) What particular personal traits, characteristics, or qualities that you would use to describe your leadership style?

16) From your experiences serving an administrator or president, have you seen any differences in male and female leadership?

17) In your own life, how has your gender shaped your leadership?

18) As a female administrator or president, how do you believe your leadership is seen or perceived by others?

*Concluding Question*

19) Given that my research focus is on women’s career paths and leadership aspirations, is there anything that I did not ask today that you think is important for me to know?
APPENDIX D
DEMOGRAPHIC PROTOCOL

1) **Gender:**
   a) Male  
   b) Female

2.) **Race and/or ethnicity:** __________________

3.) **Age:** _____________

4.) **Highest degree:** ________________

5.) **Academic field of highest degree:** ________________

6) **Religious affiliation** (if any):__________________

7) **Marital status** (Please circle all that apply):
   a) Single, never married
   b) Single, but living with a partner
   c) Married
   d) Divorced
   e) Divorced, Remarried
   f) Separated
   g) Widowed

8) **Do you have children?**
   a) Yes  
   b) No

   *If yes, number of children:__________

   *If yes, please list the ages of your children:

       ________       ________       ________

       ________       ________       ________

       ________       ________       ________
9) Please list all employment positions you have held in higher education (e.g., Adjunct Instructor, Assistant Professor, Residence Life Coordinator, Registrar, etc.):

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

10) Total years of full-time career experience working in higher education:

a) 1-5   b) 6-11   c) 12-15   d) 16-20   e) 21-25   f) 26-29   g) 30-35   h) 36-40   i) 41 or more

11) Are you the first woman to serve in your current leadership role?

a) Yes   b) No   c) Don’t know

12) What was the immediate prior position that you held before assuming your current position?

________________________________________________________________

13) Please list any professional career positions you have held, as an adult, outside of higher education:

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11040402
PROJECT TITLE: Women's Pathways to the University Presidency: A Qualitative Inquiry into University Women Leaders' Career Paths and Presidential Aspirations
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 02/18/2011 to 02/18/2012
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Celeste A. Wheat
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Studies & Research
FUNDING AGENCY: USM's Committee on Services and Resources for Women (CSRw)
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 04/11/2011 to 04/10/2012

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

Date
APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
CONSENT FORM
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study titled: Women’s Pathways to the University Presidency: A Qualitative Inquiry Into University Women Leaders’ Career Paths and Presidential Aspirations.

1. **Purpose:** In response to the dearth of empirical research on university women’s career paths and leadership aspirations, I am seeking to conduct a study which will qualitatively explore the career path experiences and presidential aspirations of university women in key-line administrative positions (e.g., dean, vice-president, chief academic officer/provost, etc.) to the presidency and women university presidents. Further, this study will address the gap in the literature by seeking to explore how the personal factors (e.g., child-rearing, spousal relationships) involved with being a female administrator may motivate or hinder women from seeking a university presidency. Conducted under the direction of my dissertation advisor, Dr. Lilian Hill, this study will form the basis of my dissertation research for my doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). Accordingly, this research may be published by USM. Additionally, this research may result in conference presentations and scholarly publications.

2. **Description of Study:** This project will be a qualitative study which will involve two methods of data collection: interviews and document review. The primary technique for data collection will involve tape recorded, face-to-face or telephone interviews with participants at the time and location of their choice. The total number of subjects participating in this study will be 12-15 people who are 18 years of age or older. Interviews should last for approximately 1 hour each. The interview protocol includes a series of semi-structured questions on themes relating to the participants’: a) career paths; b) mentors, role models, and professional networks; c) ability to balance work/life issues; d) family impacts on career path and leadership aspirations; and e) perceptions of gender and leadership. In seeking to supplement the interview data, a review of documents (e.g., curriculum vitae, published speeches, biographies) that contain first-hand accounts of the participants’ career path experiences will be employed as a secondary source of data collection. Participants may elect to submit documents that provide supporting evidence of their career path experiences, but will not be required to submit documents. All other documents used in this study will be publicly
available documents which are published on the participants’ official university website.

3. **Benefits:** By participating in the interviews, the interviewees will have the personal opportunity to discuss experiences and perceptions about their career paths, leadership experiences, and leadership aspirations. There will be no payment for participation. This research also presents the possible benefit of providing greater insights into the career path experiences and leadership aspirations of university women administrators and presidents. Further, this research presents the possibility of contributing new insights into the factors which may motivate or hinder women from seeking a university presidency.

4. **Risks:** There are no foreseeable or anticipated risks for subjects participating in this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from participating in this study at any time without penalty. Participants may also choose not to answer certain questions. If participants choose to withdraw from this study, any information collected by the researcher will be returned to the participant. The researcher will also seek to minimize the inconvenience to participants, by conducting the interviews at the time and location of the participant’s choice.

5. **Confidentiality:** The researcher will seek to take every necessary precaution to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in this study. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms and all written transcripts of interviews and documents will contain only the pseudonyms and no other identifying markers (e.g., university affiliation). Additionally, participants will be referred to as university women administrators in key-line positions to the presidency and university women presidents. Further, the location of the participants’ university affiliations will be described as located in the Southern region of the United States. Likewise, in orally presenting any research that results from this study, only pseudonyms and no other identifying markers will be used to refer to participants. Any information inadvertently obtained during the course of this study will remain completely confidential. Measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data collected in this study. All tapes of interviews and documents will be kept in a locked file at the researcher’s home. Only the principal investigator, Celeste Wheat, will have access to the data. Following data analysis, all interview tape recordings and documents will be destroyed within a time frame of one year. To facilitate data analysis, the interview transcripts and documents will be kept for a time frame of two years and then destroyed by shredding.

6. **Alternative Procedures:** N/A
7. **Subject’s Assurance:** Whereas no assurance can be made concerning the results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted) the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and subjects may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice or loss of benefits. Questions concerning the research should be directed to the principle investigator, Celeste Wheat at P.O. Box 728 Petal, MS 39464, (601) 544-0086, Celeste.Wheat@usm.edu. This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

8. **Signatures:** Federal guidelines require that the signature of the subject (or parent or guardian) must appear on all written consent forms and documents. Also, the University requires that the date and the signature of the person explaining the study to the participant appear on the consent form.

Signature of the Research Participant

Date

Signature of the Person Explaining the Study

Date
REFERENCES


Phillips, D. B. (2010, February). Over the river and through the woods: Women’s advancement in higher education administration. Presentation conducted at the meeting of the Women in Higher Education Mississippi Network, Gulfport, MS.


