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A Phenomenological Study of Female Faculty Transitional Experience into Administration within CCCU Member Institutions

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FEMALE FACULTY TRANSITIONAL
EXPERIENCE INTO ADMINISTRATION WITHIN
CCCU MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

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Presented to

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Meleca Consultado

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Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTERS THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

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entitled

A Phenomenological Study of Female Faculty Transitional Experience into
Administration within CCCU Member Institutions

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

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ABSTRACT

The number of women entering all levels of higher education is continuing to grow. However, there is a disparity between this fact and the number of women serving in senior leadership positions within higher education. This gap is even more evident within member institutions of the Christian Council of Colleges and Universities (CCCU). This study examined the experience of seven female CCCU administrators during their transitional period from faculty member to administrator. Five of the seven women transitioned into their current administrative position within the last five years, highlighting a rapid movement into leadership. This study also found that only one of the seven participants followed the traditional leadership pipeline within the academy: faculty member, department chair, dean, associate provost, provost, and president. Several of the women were the first female in their position, which presented both personal and institutional difficulties such as learning on the job, balancing home / work responsibilities and the pressure to prove oneself able of doing their job well. However, a commitment to the mission of Christian higher education, the multiple layers of leadership support, the acquisition of terminal degrees, and a deep sense of calling provided the foundations needed to persevere and succeed during their transition from faculty member to administrator.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

"Let us go beyond elucidating the problems. Instead [let us] reflect on women educators / administrators as change agents – acting upon institutions of higher education rather than always being acted upon."

(Niddifer and Bashaw, 2001, pg. 2)

INTRODUCTION

Interestingly, within the past two decades, there has been significant growth in the realm of research analyzing women in higher education (Cimperman, 1986; Haring-Hidore, Freeman, Phelps, Spann, & Wooten Jr., 1990; Ihle, 1991; Jule & Pedersen, 2006; Madsen, 2008; Sax, 2008; Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffmann, 2008). This growth can be largely attributed to the steady increase of women entering colleges and universities at multiple levels: students, staff, faculty, and administration (Touchton, Musil, & Campbell, 2008). Of particular interest is the parallelism between the growth of women in higher education and an increase in female administrators (Madsen, 2008; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Santee, 2006; Schwartz, 1997; Tinsely, Secor, & Kaplan, 1984). However, studies looking at the experience of female administrators tend to give a broad description of the journey of these successful women. This study desires to look specifically at the window of transition from faculty into administrative and leadership roles.

As higher education institutions engage in the topic of future leadership, it is important to recognize and acknowledge what factors aided the successful transition of female leaders (Anderson, 2010). When combining institutional types (associate degree-granting institutions, public institutions, and private four-year institutions) in American

higher education, forty-five percent of all senior campus administration are women (King & Gomez, 2008). The traditional means of advancement within the university structure is the professoriate, which follows the model of professor, department chair, dean, vice-president of academic affairs, chief academic officer (CAO) or provost, and then presidency (Andringa & Splete, 2005; Touchton et al., 2008).

However, though there continues to be measurable progress for women reaching high-level administration positions, a variety of barriers are still being encountered by women (Abramson, 1975; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Schwartz, 1997). Women who have successfully made the transition into administrative roles can provide insight toward a better understanding of what difficulties were present during their transition and what can be addressed for future generations of leaders. Some barriers noted in the literature include the lack of female role models within senior administrative positions (Touchton et al., 2008), which is crucial in light of the impact same-gendered mentorships can have on the success of women in higher education (Cullen & Luna, 1993). There may also be strong institutional cultural attitudes toward appropriate leadership roles of men and women which minimize the support women may receive if they were to enter into roles commonly seen more appropriate for men (Cook, Kopesky, & Fuerst, 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sterk, 2010).

The structural frameworks of an institution may prevent women from moving into a leadership role. These may include a lack of family-friendly policies embedded within the institution (Abramson, 1975; Eagly & Carli; Santee; Pederson & Jule, 2010; Tinsley, Secor, & Kaplan, 1984). In return, the development of structural support for women within the higher education profession may aid in the "books and babies" debate, which

addresses how parenting can present challenges to the academic careers of women who have to balance the role of mother and wife as well as a professional in the academy (Touchton et al., 2008, p. 18). Finally, other barriers women are facing are a move toward enlightened sexism on campuses that may indirectly mask prejudices toward women (Douglas, 2010) and a need for greater understanding of the impact tokenism has on women's views of self as they move into administrative positions (Kanter, 1977; Yoder, 1991).

These challenges are especially evident among the 111 member institutions within the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) (Longman, 2009). For example, five percent of presidents within the CCCU are women compared to twenty-three percent outside of the CCCU. In addition, statistics show seventeen percent of CCCU Chief Academic Officers (CAO) are women compared to thirty-eight percent of women CAO outside of the CCCU (Sterk, 2010). The CCCU's mission is "to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions form lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth" (http://www.cccu.org/about.asp). In light of a mission that communicates Judeo-Christian values, discussion regarding gender inequality within CCCU institutions is a conversation in full swing among its members (Jule & Pederson, 2006; Sterk, 2010). As Mock (2005) noted in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, "[A]t conservative religious institutions, women face a stained-glass ceiling, with the Bible and church tradition routinely used to justify gender discrimination" (p. B24). Mock highlights the tension present on some CCCU campuses when the conversation of women in leadership becomes entrenched within the context of denominational perspectives of leadership

within the church. Consequently, denominational perspectives that limit women's access to leadership translate into the view that it is also natural for men to hold leadership within the institution.

In light of the previously stated barriers within the context of Christian higher education, there are also developments toward deepening the conversation regarding women in leadership, providing support, empowering, and developing female leadership within the CCCU. A direct response toward developing female leaders was the creation of the Women's Leadership Development Institute (WLDI), which desires to provide (a) leadership training for rising female leaders, (b) a networking community of support, (c) practical tools to help develop as a leader (including assistance in developing a one-year Professional Development Plan), and (d) financial support toward a two- or three-day "shadowing" experience with a senior leader on another CCCU campus. A survey taken of WLDI summer 2006 and summer 2008 participants concluded that sixty percent of the seventy percent who responded to the survey "indicated they had moved into a new position that reflected increase leadership responsibilities since participating in the WLDI" (Lafreniere & Longman, 2009, p. 16).

Even with the gradual growth in the research regarding women in higher education, the breadth and depth of the research in no way captures the full picture of the journey and development of women since the doors of higher education were opened to them in the early 1830s (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Sexton, 1976; Thelin, 2004). This transition into senior administration is a journey that includes both rewards and hardships (Madsen, 2008; Walker, 1979). Focusing on this period of transition can serve as means of foreshadowing potential successes or failures of the individual (Manderscheid &

Ardichvili, 2008). Therefore, the ability to study and learn from successful transitions of female faculty members into administrative positions can offer fresh perspectives in regard to how institutions can directly aid women who are entering into administrative roles within the university. This study desires to add to the growing sphere of literature on women in higher education, looking at the specific perspective of the transitional experience of female faculty into administration.

Purpose Statement

This study intends to look specifically at the transitional experience of female faculty members within the CCCU as they move into administrative roles within their institutions. The study hopes to indentify factors that contributed to these successful transitions as well as to identify difficulties within the transitional experience. By gleaning from the experience of these women, the subsequent generations of women who will follow may be able to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that could arise. This study also hopes to provide insight toward how Christian higher education institutions can better develop systems of support to rising female administrative candidates, aid in their transitions to a new role, and contribute to their overall success within the higher education profession. The guiding research questions that will direct this study are as follows:

1. What factor(s) influenced their decision to transition from faculty member to administrator?

2. What factors aided in their transitional journey into senior administration?

3. What were obstacles or difficulties during their transitional journey into senior administration?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will outline four specific areas within higher education literature to build the foundation for this study. First, in order to set the context of the study, an overview of the historical context of women within higher education and the current state of women in higher education within the United States will be addressed. Second, the leadership journey of women will be highlighted, with a specific look at female leadership development within member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Third, the literature moves toward understanding the transitional experience of female faculty within the traditional progression of leadership development and its subsequent impact on future leadership success. Within this leadership journey, a focus on the traditional pipeline into higher education administration will be examined, through the professorship, department chair, dean and then into senior administration. Fourth, a look at the potential barriers will be addressed as well as what is currently being done to respond to such barriers.

Historical Context of Women in Higher Education

The number of women entering higher education has been on a constant ascent since the doors of the university were opened to women in the early 1830s (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). This remarkable growth was highlighted in Schwartz's (1997) piece underscoring the growth of women during an era when they and their contributions in higher education were often overlooked:

In 1870, women accounted for twenty-one percent of the total undergraduate

population in the United States; by 1890 the number climbed to thirty-five

percent; by 1920 women represented forty-two percent of all undergraduate

students enrolled in American colleges and Universities." (p. 503)

Between 1997-1998 and 2007- 2008, "the number of bachelor's degrees awarded

to males increased twenty-eight percent, while the number awarded to females increased

thirty-five percent" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, para. 25). Currently,

women are earning more degrees than men at every level except professional, where their

representation is almost equal to men's. When looking across all fields within higher

education in 2005-2006 women earned sixty-two percent of all associate, fifty-eight

percent of all baccalaureate, sixty percent of all masters, forty-eight percent of PhDs, and

fifty percent of first professional degrees (including dental, legal, and medical degree)

(Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman, 2008).

In addition to the increase in women earning academic degrees, during the 21st

century the number of women in the labor force has grown while the number of men in

the labor force has decreased (Davidson & Burke, 2004). Havens and Heinrichs (2010)

quoted a 2010 issue of *The Economist* addressing leadership responses in a time of

economic change, pointing out that women make up over half the American work force,

and this shift is one of the most significant social changes in the work force in recent

years. Since women have greatly advanced their educational pursuits, many more women

are now prepared to step into positions at the executive level (Laferniere & Longman,

2009). For every one hundred men in all levels of higher education, one hundred and

thiry-nine women are enrolled (Longman, 2009). Thus, women are no longer restricted in

their ability to obtain an education. Additionally, their increased educational attainment provided a means to gain knowledge required for workplace advancement. Yet, even when women are educated with advanced degrees and equipped to take leadership roles, they are currently less likely to be promoted to top leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

In higher education, while women continue to be underrepresented in upper-level leadership, several trends are encouraging. According to data from the American Council of Education (2007), the percentage of women serving as university presidents more than doubled from nine and a half percent in 1986 to twenty-three percent in 2006 (King & Gomez as cited by Laferniere & Longman, 2009). The increase is not only being seen at the community college level, where almost one third of all female presidents reside (Touchton, Musil, & Campbell, 2008), but also at prestigous universities, such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton University, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pennsylvania (Laferniere & Longman, 2009). However, while an increase in female leadership has occurred to a certain degree, there continues to be a gap between women in leadership within Christian higher education in comparision to its secular counterparts.

Women in the CCCU

When looking at the 111 member institutions of the Christian Council of Colleges and Universities (CCCU), 36% of the full-time faculty on these campuses are women compared to 41% of full-time female faculty at other U.S. institutions (Touchton, Musil, & Campbell, 2008). In the area of senior leadership, 5% of presidents within the CCCU are women compared to 23% outside of the CCCU. Seventeen percent of CCCU CAO

are women compared to 38% of female CAOs outside of the CCCU (Sterk, 2010). Out of

the 111 CCCU presidents, only 6 are women, and 2 of the 6 women entered into their

presidency in the 2009-2010 academic year (Lafreniere & Longman, 2009). The scarcity

of female senior administrators (women who hold a position of dean, vice-president,

chief academic officer, provost, or president) in CCCU institutions is a phenomenon that

is not adequately addressed in the literature and is evidenced by the lack of consistent

statistics to track the accurate number of women in leadership and their levels (Santee,

2006). When considering that 60% of the collective student body is female within CCCU

member institutions (http://www.cccu.org/about.asp), universities ought to be wrestling

with the implications of this. What does this disparity communicate to the larger

community?

Recognizing the comparatively small number of women represented in

administration within CCCU institutions as compared to secular institutions, it is

important to examine the experiences of women within the CCCU who have successfully

transitioned into administrative roles. This information can help foster further forms of

support for women on similar leadership trajectories, whether now or in the future.

Faculty to Administrator Transition

The road to senior administration within higher education is usually reached

through the faculty pipeline and can be both appealing and daunting (Andringa & Splete,

2005). An additional challenge is evidenced for leaders outside an organization versus

those who transition from prior internal positions (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008;

Nicholson, 1984; Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988). Since 1970, women have made stunning

progress entering into the faculty ranks (Touchton et al., 2008). The share of full-time

female faculty has grown from 19% to 41% (Snyder et al., 2008). However, there has

been a "dramatic reconstruction of the professoriate in the twenty-first century that has

created what might more accurately be described as reservoirs that hold new college

faculty, particularly women, in place" (Touchton et al., p 22). This reconstruction is

referring to a decline of tenured faculty appointments. Frankelstein (2003) noted that in

2001, one in four faculty appointments were tenured track. In addition, the overall

representation of women in full professoriate compared to that of men is significantly

less. This change in the professoriate does not allow for the development of a constant

flow of women entering and staying within faculty ranks. Therefore, in order to

counteract this trend and continue to expand upon the progress of women entering into

the faculty ranks (which in turn places them into the leadership pipeline), institutions

must continue to monitor more consistently the promotion of capable women into

leadership – starting at the professoriate (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007).

Examining the transitional experience of female faculty members, who have

entered into administrative positions, opens a window to understand the current landscape

into which the individual is entering. How a person moves through her transition can help

indicate whether the overall institutional mission is maintained and whether the

institution has support systems in place that lead to her success (Manderscheid &

Ardichivili, 2008). In addition, it is important to make a distinction regarding transitional

experiences of an individual over simply a change in position within the institution,

because change is *situational* whereas transition is *psychological* (Bridges, 2003,

emphasis added). The success of an individual who has transitioned from her role as a

faculty member into an administrator is not simply measured by the change of title but by

the individual's overall experience (emotionally and mentally). Nigel Nicholson's (1984)

theory of Work Role transitions, defined as a change in employment status argues that

"understanding the work role transition can have profound significance for the future

development of individuals and their organizations" (p. 172).

In Schlossberg's (1984) theory of transition, three components make up the

transitional process: approaching change, taking stock, and taking charge. The

components of "taking stock" are considered while one is amidst a transition and include

the 4 S's: situation, self, support, and strategies. *Situation* refers to what is causing the

transition to occur. The *self* component considers the characteristics and qualities

associated to the individual experiencing the transition. *Support* refers to what is

available to the individual going through a transition. Finally, *strategies* refer to how one

decides to cope with the transition (Schlossberg, 1984). Therefore, a move toward a more

specific examination of the transitional period from faculty to administrator may help

give more context to understanding the continued success of these women as we examine

how they perceive and enter a *situation,* their view of *self,* the *support* they need, and

strategies that have been implemented during their transition.

Response to Barriers

It must be understood that women who have successfully transitioned from being

a faculty member into an administrative role faced various barriers along their journey.

How these women perceived and responded to these difficulties will help prepare and

support the next generation of female leaders. The list of barriers seems daunting, but

there is much to be gained by addressing these obstacles for future generations. A few of

these barriers will be introduced to highlight how the CCCU has made proactive steps towards responding to these barriers.

The depth of the "multiple roles" between work and home that women must process has a huge impact on whether women continue to pursue professional advancement (Jones, 1993). Research indicates "family formation has different consequences for men and women in academe" (Touchton et al., p. 18). A study done by Mason and Goulden (2002) found that among doctoral recipients who work in academia, women who have early babies (those born up to 5 years after the parent finishes the doctorate) have much lower chances of working as tenured professors while men with early babies are actually more likely to become tenured professors. Within their study, Mason and Goulden also reported that 59% of married women with children are considering leaving academia. Women who desire to move into leadership roles must continually wrestle with the potential impact of their move into leadership on their current or future families. Not only do women have to think about balancing between family and profession, but as Laferniere and Longman (2009) note, "Related to gender imbalances on these campuses, many female faculty members tend to be overextended in roles as advisors and committee members" (p.11).

Another barrier is described by the concept of the *glass ceiling*. The term *glass ceiling* denotes "artificial barriers to the advancement of women…sometimes unseen, that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements" (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission as quoted by Cotter et al., 2001). This image of the *glass ceiling* has now evolved into the notion of a *labyrinth.* The current discussion regarding this barrier has moved to

acknowledge that women have now broken through the glass but are left to make their way through the leadership *labyrinth* within their institution (Eagly & Carli, 2007 emphasis added). Therefore, though women may make it into administrative positions, it can be a confusing place to maneuver and a lonely place to be.

 Hence, the women who make the transition into administration tend to be one of very few women in those roles. Therefore, many women may not know whom to consult when they encounter unanticipated complexities or difficulties as a result of their new role. Havens and Heinrichs (2010) also point out that women break through the *glass* ceiling to find themselves on a *glass cliff*, acknowledging the reality that many women get their "big breaks" during institutional crisis times. This indicates that more women are appointed to senior leadership in failing organizations or as the "ship is about to sink." Therefore, Havens and Heinrichs would argue that some institutions are only setting women up to fail.

How institutions perceive the success and ability of the newly transitioned female administrator can have a large impact on how that female administrator will view herself and her ability to succeed in her role. A study conducted by Wendi Santee (2006) examined female senior level administrators and their journey of professional advancement within CCCU institutions. One of the seven major themes common to all her participants was the impact of institutional climate on perception of self and their overall professional advancement. Through her study, Santee (2006) suggests that "a change in campus culture and climate is needed if women are to penetrate the known and / or unknown barriers they face and occupy senior-level leadership roles and develop an affirmed view of self" (p. 4).

A third barrier arises from women feeling like their role as an administrator is simply to be the "token female." Yoder (1991) highlights three common experiences of women who may be labeled as a "token female." Yoder defines a token group as a subgroup that composes less than 15% of the whole group (Kanter, 1983 as quoted by Yoder). Yoder's study also suggested that "tokens" within leadership roles (a) received heightened attention or visibility that exacerbated pressures for them to perform well, (b) felt isolated from informal social and professional networks, (c) felt that their difference from male peers was exaggerated, and (d) reported a variety of incidents indicating that they were encapsulated into gender-stereotyped roles.

In light of the previously stated list of barriers, groups within the CCCU are beginning to take proactive steps toward addressing these challenges. The formation of the CCCU's Womens Leadership Development Institute (WLDI) was one such step. In 1997, nominations for aspiring women in leadership within the CCCU were sent out with the first WLDI consisting of fifteen women. Other program models that were examined in the creation of the WLDI "include the Harvard Institutes, the DePree Center at Fuller Theological Seminary, the leadership programming of the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Bryn Mawr Institutes for women" (Lafreniere & Longman, 2009). The WLDI is a four-day institute held in June every other year at a retreat center in Washington state. The program includes:

1. The provision of a variety of leadership articles and books.

2. The design of a one-year profession development plan.

3. Networking with experienced administration on the Resource Team.

4. Financial support toward a two or three-day shadowing experience with a

senior leader on another CCCU campus (Lafreniere & Longman, p. 16).

Since the establishment of this program, the WLDI has served 106 women and has seen

60% of its participants move into new positions of increased leadership. This program

has also provided a place for women who are going through similar experiences to be

encouraged, supported, and challenged to continue to develop as female leaders within

their profession.

Summary

Through tracing the progression of women in higher education, it can be noted

that there have been significant strides toward the development of women in varying

areas of higher education. Despite this, there is much work to be done in establishing

receptive and welcoming environments toward women who are pursuing senior level

administrative careers within Christian higher education. The traditional pipeline into

senior administration is through the academic realm within an institution. Understanding

the transitional period female faculty face as they move into administration can help

prepare the next generation of leaders to move through the leadership pipeline more

effectively. It is important to acknowledge the strengths that both men and women bring

to our institutions, as well as the history of injustices that have occurred and may still be

present toward women. As institutions make strides toward understanding the ways in

which they can aid in the development of the next generation of women, then they can

take a proactive role in encouraging those leaders within the profession.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology

A phenomenological research approach is taken in this study in order to seek an understanding and "identify the essence" (Creswell, 2003, p. 15) of the experience of female faculty within the CCCU who have transitioned into administrative roles within their respective institutions. The foundational questions behind the phenomenological approach are (a) "What are the meaning, structures, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon or group of people?" (Patton, 2002, p. 104) and (b) "How can we then accurately tell their story?" German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1913) argues that "we can only know what we experience" (p. 105) and challenges people to be attentive to the perceptions and meanings that awaken our consciousness through such experiences. Therefore, through the phenomenological interview approach of open-ended questions and probes, the researcher is given the opportunity to grasp in-depth responses to the lived transitional experience, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge of each participant (Patton, 2002). Through the phenomenological approach, the researcher hopes to explore how each participant makes sense of the transitional experience into current administrative roles and transform these shared experiences into helpful observations that can be used to aid others on a similar journey.

Participants

Fifteen female administrators currently serving at CCCU member institution were contacted to be part of the study. Nine of the 15 agreed to be interviewed. Of the 9 interviews, only 7 interviews could be used. Two of the 9 initial participants interviewed,

did not transition to administration from faculty ranks and therefore did not fit the participant protocol. Although anonymity is not possible, full confidentiality was communicated to all participants and has been maintained throughout the study. No specific reference to any of the 7 participants or her institution is made within this study.

The final 7 female participants currently hold leadership positions including Academic Dean, Associate Vice President, Vice President, Provost and President. All participants have earned at least one Ph.D. from a diverse range of academic disciplines including but not limited to education, law, and nursing. Three of the 7 were married with 1 or more children, 2 were married with no children, and 2 of the 7 participants were single. Five of the 7 women have transitioned into their current role within the last 5 years, 1 having been in her position for less than 1 year. The participant pool represents CCCU member institutions located in four different geographical regions within the continental United States: West coast, Midwest, East coast, and the South. Six of the 7 participants serve at private 4-year liberal arts institutions with varying denominational and non-denominational affiliations. All 7 participants held some form of academic faculty rank prior to transitioning into their current administrative role.

Procedure

Prior to obtaining a list of potential participants for the study, a pilot study was conducted with a female administrator who also fit the participant protocol profile. The purpose of the pilot interview was to aid the researcher in refining the final interview protocol that would be used in the study. The pilot interview provided insight toward how the participant received and perceived a question and therefore provided the researcher a greater understanding of whether questions were appropriate, clear, or needed to be

refined. After the pilot interview was conducted and questions in the interview protocol were refined, an initial e-mail was sent to potential study participants.

An initial list of participants for this study was developed with assistance from several senior administrators from the researcher's graduate institution. Additional participants were added to the list as interviewees provided other female administrators who fit the participant protocol profile. Participants for this study were first contacted about the purpose of the study, potential involvement in the study, and the interview process through e-mail from the researcher. Interested participants were then sent the informed consent and the researcher coordinated and scheduled face-to-face or phone interviews with each participant's administrative assistant. Three of the 7 interviews were face-to-face interviews.

Once an interview time was set and in light of the busy nature of each participant's position, the participants were sent the interview protocol (Appendix A) within a week of the scheduled interview. The 7 interviews were recorded by the researcher and ranged from 35 minutes to 1 hour in length.

Data Analysis

After all 7 interviews were recorded, each was then transcribed. The researcher then read through each interview once before any process of coding or theming occurred in order to grasp the initial story line of all the interviews. After reading through all the transcriptions, the researcher went back and began the coding and theming process. Rossman and Rallis (1998) define coding as "the process used to organize materials into 'chunks' before bringing meaning to those 'chunks'" (p. 171). An 8-step systematic process to analyze the textual data was then used to help develop themes. The 8 steps as

recommended by Creswell (2003) include: (a) Get a sense of the whole, (b) choose one document and consider what it is about, (c) cluster similar topics together, (d) take the list back to data and begin the preliminary stage of organizing themes to see if new categories emerge, (e) create descriptive categories, (f) finalize abbreviation for each category, (g) assemble data belonging in each category, and (h) if necessary, recode existing data. This coding process was used to help develop themes from and establish a system of integrity for analyzing content found in the interviews.

Once all the interviews were transcribed, themed, and coded by the researcher, all participants then received a copy of their transcribed interview with an outline of emerging themes from the study. This was done in order to practice member checking and discuss clarity of questions, correctness of researcher's coding, and analysis of themes communicated through the interview (Creswell, 2003). Member checking provides a means for the researcher to learn about the "accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis…by having the people described in that analysis react to what is described and concluded" (Patton, 2002, p. 560).

After the member checking process, a final draft of the study was given to a peer outside of the study. This peer debriefing process is used to help identify biases within the study, establish credibility with a larger audience, and "by seriously soliciting other's reactions, the evaluator's perspective is joined to the perspective of the people who must use the findings" (Patton, 2002, p. 561). The peer debriefing process addresses several questions that include: (a) is the report believable, (b) is the presented data reasonable, and (c) do the results connect to how people understand the world (Creswell, 2003)?

Summary

Using the phenomenological approach, the researcher hoped to identify the essence of the experience of each participant. The coding process then allowed for major and minor themes to surface from the information gathered. Coding and theming was followed by member checking and peer debriefing which helped assess the accuracy of the developed themes. This provided a foundation towards acknowledging the implications of the research on female leadership transition with Christian higher education.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The following themes have emerged from the seven female leaders interviewed for this study. The number of women and the time it takes them to transition into leadership positions within higher education is continuing to grow and quicken. Their journeys reveal that a deep sense of calling and a simple tap on the shoulder from someone in their lives played a crucial role in influencing their decision to transition from being a full-time faculty member to being an administrator. In addition, it is the support and challenge from family, friends, and colleagues who truly believed in them that help contradict some of their self-doubt and fears about accepting more leadership roles. However, participants also acknowledge that this job does require sacrifices and commitment. Some of these sacrifices include the impact on future family decisions, current personal sacrifices of time, and saying "no" to good things in order to say "yes" to greater things. For some women, proving their ability to themselves as well as to others manifests itself in the pursuit of terminal degrees or doing work that goes above and beyond what is required of them. Yet all participants communicated that their experience is worth it, because of their deep belief in the importance of Christian higher education and their responsibility for the generations of women and men who follow.

The research questions from this study will serve as the organizational guide for presenting the results that surfaced through the interviews from the study. Additional themes that emerged from the interviews will be addressed following the research questions and subsequent themes.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked "What factor(s) influenced the decision to transition from faculty member to administrator?" The following themes emerged from the first research question.

Calling and God's greater purpose.

All 7 participants communicated that a deep sense of calling played a crucial role in their process to accept the transition into an administrative role from their current teaching position. Lydia, who transitioned into a vice president position after only 2 years teaching in the school of business, commented

> I really believe the Lord led me to where I am…I think my journey within higher
> education has a lot to do with a sense of calling and mission and in everything I
> have done in higher education, it's a path that I feel called to, led to, pushed
> into…it's as if everything came together at the right time. (Personal
> communication, February 28, 2011)

Six of the 7 participants commented on the fact that they did not set out to pursue their current position but instead kept themselves open to be obedient to the strong calling they received for their life. Annette, who is currently serving as a university president, shared

> I did not set out to be a college president or provost – it's more that as I was
> seeking to do the job that I felt called to, the Lord kept providing opportunities,
> and so I ended up doing this [the presidency]." (Personal communication, March
> 15, 2011)

This deep sense of calling was a crucial component during times when transitioning into a leadership role did not always make sense or when a transition back into the classroom seemed like a more viable decision. Joan, who currently serves as an associate vice president, noted,

It was really a calling, God had opened the door because a couple of times I announced I would return to the classroom, but it never worked…it was that very unusual sense of God's call and to return to the class, and to not take the position, I think would have been disobedient because the call was that clear. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

Many of the participants also claimed that their calling presented moments of disequilibrium regarding which direction to move. Annette highlighted this by stating,

"For my first two or three years as vice provost, I spent a lot of time agonizing about the notion of calling because I hadn't intended to end up in administration. I felt like asking God, what is going on here?" (Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Yet, even amidst the tension of being called in one direction while desiring to move in another, it was God's call on their lives that influenced their decision more than their own desires. Deborah viewed her life and vocation as "a calling and a way to serve the kingdom" (personal communication, February 16, 2011). All 7 participants shared that it was not just simply sensing God's call but also having greater awareness that it is God who has brought them here – for His greater purposes. Pricilla, who currently serves as an academic dean, captured this theme by stating,

I recognized that it was God who got me here. I work really hard and I like to

think that I am good at my job, but I recognize that no matter how good I am at

my job I could not have orchestrated this. And I am sitting here doing this now

because God's provision in my life not my own. And it changes how I do my job

because I recognize that it is the goodness of God and the provision of God…I

can only respond faithfully to the things God has called me to do and that is all I

can do. So that is how I ended up as dean. (Personal communication, January 6,

2011)

The "tap on the shoulder."

Another major factor that influenced all 7 participant's decisions to make the

transition from faculty to administrator was the encouragement and challenge of

colleagues, mentors, and their community at large to step into the administrative role.

Deborah, who currently serves as a college president, shared, "It was more a matter of

people seeing giftings in me and then pushing me into positions that required

administrative management skills than my intentional thought of 'I want to be an

administrator'" (personal communication, February 16, 2011). All 7 participants alluded

to a certain individual or group of individuals that either helped push them to take the

next step into administration or presented them with an open door. Ruth, who currently

serves as provost and executive vice president noted that

I had no vision for leadership, but my mentor who was also my Dean encouraged

and suggested that leadership was in my future, so when the call from my former

provost came there was already a pretty significant seed planted in me for

leadership. (Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Pricilla, who currently serves as an academic dean, received encouragement, confidence, and support to step into an administrative role by one of her superiors. After only 2 years of being a faculty member, her provost told her that "department chair is fine, but that is not where you are headed, in ten years you can be provost and I want to be your mentor" (personal communication, January 6, 2011).

Since many of the participants shared that they were not looking to head into higher education leadership, the "tap on the shoulder" from someone they trusted, valued, and respected and who knew them caused them to consider a door they may not have otherwise recognized or ever believed could be opened. Joan, who currently serves as vice president and dean of a college, captured this theme by stating,

> There was no plan [in reference to how she came into her role] there was an open door…It was somebody tapping me on the shoulder and saying 'here's a position why don't you interview for it.' How it came about [her transition into higher education leadership], someone just tapped me on the shoulder and said 'you need to think about this, and apply for this'…I never thought of doing this or that I would want too. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

The combination of a deep sense of call and the encouragement and opportunities offered to participants by superiors and peers were fundamental factors influencing participants' decisions to make the transition into their current leadership position.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked "What factors aided them in their transition into senior administration?" The following themes emerged from the second research question.

Support: "It takes a village to raise up an administrator."

The strongest factor that aided participants' sense of success during their transition into administration was having a community throughout the transitional process and while in their current roles. This community of support consisted of men and women, family and friends, colleagues, superiors and peers, individuals associated with their institutions, and individuals outside the realm of higher education. One of the essential characteristics was having a strong belief in the participant's ability to do her job.

This notion of belief in the participant's ability to succeed in her role offered many participants the confidence to persevere through difficult periods of their transition and to help overcome personal doubts. Deborah, a college president, stated

> A significant way I was encouraged was having people call me up and say you can do this, you were made to do this…it was people who saw in me what I initially I did not see in myself, who pushed me and encouraged me. (Personal communication, February 16, 2011)

Another crucial characteristic of this community of support was safety. Participants commented that without a place to share honestly and openly about sensitive topics with people they knew they could trust, they would not have been able to survive and be healthy and thrive in their current positions. Pricilla, an academic dean, reflects on how the importance of safety, support, and trust aided her during her transition and in her current role:

> Know who your friends are, know who you can go to, when something happens because it will…have friends who you can go to…who you trust, who will listen and support you…you don't want to spend your time when you need support,

talking to someone who will say 'prove it to me'…be really strategic about your

support system…look for people who give you freedom to learn and make

mistakes but who do not stop believing in you. (Personal communication,

February 6, 2011)

These communities help face the very real challenge that President Annette noted,

That in these roles there are so many people you cannot talk with. So the ability

to process situations with people who knew me well and who knew higher

education well was important to my ability to thrive in my role. (Personal

communication, March 15, 2011)

All participants alluded to the reality that without a community of support and safety,

they could not be where they are.

A "just do it" mentality.

When considering the kind of mindset that has helped participants to be

successful in their transition into their administrative roles, the mentality of going in and

"just doing it" with a willingness to take risk, make mistakes, and learn "on the job" has

been a constant theme for many participants in the study. Even prior to making the initial

transition into leadership, several participants noted that in order to be given more

leadership responsibilities one must not only become more visible to the institution but

also gain a better understanding of the institution. Joan communicated this theme by

stating,

Volunteer to chair committees and get involved, even though it's not a big time

position in leadership. Be willing to get behind the scenes, roll up your sleeves,

serve others without getting credit and without getting any glory. Get involved in

ways that are appropriate and are affirmed by your colleagues. By doing so you

get to know your institutions and your institutions get to know you. (Personal

communication, February 28, 2011)

Esther, who currently serves in a vice president role, also shared, "I wouldn't just wait

around for somebody to come to me first, but I would try to get myself in positions where

I could be more visible – serve on committees or different task forces" (personal

communication, February 25, 2011).

Once in transition, an openness to learn "on the job," try new things, take risks,

and make mistakes is vital in understanding the institution you serve and being a

successful administrator and leader. Annette shared this view by stating,

 If you think you're gifted in administration then follow those opportunities that

come to you and do each of the opportunities with all your heart and try to learn

as much as you can about yourself, your leadership, and your institution in each of

those opportunities. (Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Participants also noted that once they were in their positions it was crucial for them to

recognize when their involvement was no longer healthy and when to say no to things in

order to have longevity and effectiveness in their role. A comment from Pricilla, an

academic dean who is in her second year in this specific role, touched upon this theme:

I just stepped down from a couple things I was doing because I realized I was

dying, I'm suffocating, I am working too hard and all this is happening and I *must*

thrive because I *have* to show women that you can do what I do and be healthy

and happy and respected. (Personal communication, January 6th, 2011)

Many of the participants agreed that having the attitude of a learner and recognizing experiences that would help them develop the skills they needed for their role was important to their overall success as a leader. Participants continue to wrestle with the need to say "yes" to opportunities that provide leadership development, as well as saying "no" to some opportunities when their health as an effective leader would be jeopardized.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked "What were obstacles or difficulties during their transitional journey into senior administration?" The following themes emerged from the third research question.

Self-doubt.

When asked about obstacles and difficulties that presented themselves as they made the transition into leadership roles, 6 of the 7 participants communicated that one of their greatest obstacles was believing that they were the right choice for their specific position. Pricilla shared that "sometimes I thought to myself, nobody is going to take me seriously, or why would anybody think I could do this? And then I realized that how other people see me is not always how I see myself" (personal communication, February 6, 2011). This reluctance to believe that they were qualified and wanted for a leadership role both eased the pressure for several participants to perform during the hiring process, yet also fueled their personal self-doubt regarding whether or not people really meant to choose them for the leadership position. This dissonance was highlighted in Deborah's leadership journey:

I was absolutely convinced that they were only giving me an interview to be polite to my major professor because he sat on their policy council…and the truth is because I couldn't believe they were really serious, I was probably more relaxed than if I were really pursuing the job. And I was kind of stunned when the next week they called me and said how soon can you start?...I kept thinking you know someone is going to come to my office one day and say 'we have no idea why we thought you could do this but you need to pack it up and get out of here. (Personal communication, February 16, 2011)

This inconsistency in their personal thoughts about their abilities and their role and place within their respective institutions sometimes made the first few years of transition difficult. It was during these times that the community of support and the sense of call that influenced their transition into their current roles played a significant part in their ability to persevere through those "difficult seasons" of self-doubt. As Pricilla reflected on where she is currently compared to where she was when she first made the transition into the deanship, she commented,

I'm now in a new season of admitting to myself, like really actually admitting to myself and to people who are really close to me that this *is* what I want out of my career and out of my life. Because I wouldn't even admit it out loud to my husband for a long time…I find myself speaking against the lies that I sometimes think in my head of 'nobody is going to take me seriously' or 'no one thinks I can do this' and realize that how other people see me is not always how I see myself. (Personal communication, January 6, 2011)

It was through the times of questioning themselves that many participants began to develop a deeper sense of self-awareness of who they were and what they were "wired" to do and be.

"You must prove yourself."

Once participants began the transition into their roles, many of them felt the need to demonstrate to institutional constituents that they were the best candidate for their position – and not only because they were women. Several participants were the first woman to transition into their current role at their institution, and therefore they felt a sense of responsibility to do their job above and beyond what was expected of them. Lydia, who became the first regional dean in her area after only 2 years as a faculty member, commented on this sense of needing to prove herself in her role because of being the first female in the position:

> I think the perception is women have to do more and be more in order to gain the same level of respect as men and just because we are at Christian institutions should we assume that equality and respect are things that can be taken for granted – there has to be some level where we prove ourselves. (Personal communication, February 24, 2011)

This sense of having to "prove one's self" also came to fruition through the manner in which some participants dressed and acted. Some participants shared that they not only felt like they had to do more and do it well but also had to "look the part." Pricilla, who entered into her deanship early in her academic career, shared some of the choices she felt she had to make or things she needed to keep in mind in order to successfully transition into her new administrative role:

Sometimes people think I am younger than I actually am. So I will do things like mention I have been married for over twenty years…I cut my hair, because I didn't want to be seen as a girl…I bought more suits, I stopped wearing jeans to work, I almost always wear heels because it makes me look taller, I try to lower my voice an octave sometimes, because I don't want to sound too young. I thought about things like…do I laugh too much? Because I know that one of the things that women will do in their speech is that they will say something and then they will laugh at the end and what that communicates is, 'I do not take myself seriously and you don't have to take me seriously either. So I have had to think about such things, it may seem silly, but I have. (Personal communication, January 6, 2011)

Participants shared an understanding that any new role or job may involve some changes for an individual and that there are always expectations placed upon a new individual, regardless of gender. What several participants did express in light of the natural expectations placed on a new employee in a new role is that when one is the first woman, there tends to be a greater need to prove one's abilities and fit. Participants had to live within the tension of not allowing the position to control, dictate, or place value on who they were as women but instead allow the position to be a place in which they could showcase their strengths, passions, and gifting. Annette, who is currently serving as a college president, communicates this tension of wanting to "deliver the goods" while also not wanting to be used in the process:

I still think women are socialized in ways that they will deliver the goods. I think there's a lot of women that want to be valued – they want to be approved of and

so I just know there's a lot of women that will pour out their souls and hearts for

someone who gives them an opportunity…so yes give women the opportunity,

but do not use them. (Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The need to prove one's self while in their new role coupled with the personal reluctance

that some of the participants had about transitioning into an administrative position

provided some difficult seasons within their leadership journey.

Leaving the classroom.

An interesting aspect that made transitioning into an administrative position

difficult for many of the participants was having to leave their first love – teaching.

Priscilla shared that "it was hard for me to give up teaching full time" (personal

communication, January 6, 2011), and Deborah reflected that, "I never really intended to

go into administration because I love teaching and I love being with students" (personal

communication, February 16, 2011). Some participants, like Joan, even joked about

declaring that she would be returning to the classroom after her first year as an

administrator but always seemed to find herself being promoted to higher administrative

positions. Lydia plainly stated the underlying question that other participants had: "Do

women actually want to transition into administrative positions?" She concluded that

"most of the time they [women] fight it [the move into administration] because they don't

want to give up being a faculty member…and in some way I was giving up a lot in order

to transition into administration" (personal communication, February 28, 2011). For

several participants what led to a longer time of waiting before making the initial step

toward a more administrative position was a strong desire to hold on to their role in the

classroom and their daily interactions with students.

The Work Home synthesis: Choosing to make sacrifices.

A final major theme that emerged as a challenge accompanying a move to an administrative role was reconciling home and work responsibilities. Participants clearly communicated an understanding that their new positions would present different obstacles, and they knew that decisions would have to be made that meant sacrificing some things that would impact their personal lives. All participants communicated the understanding that, as Esther said, "This becomes more than just an eight-to-five job" (personal communication, February 25, 2011). Deborah, who is single, points out that the time required for these jobs and the inevitable impact on one's family is a sacrifice one must consider before transitioning into an administrative position. Deborah describes this reality by sharing,

> You know all of this comes with some sacrifice. I mean these are not 30, 40 hours a week jobs. These are like 24 / 7. So, there is a price that one has to be willing to pay and consider… I think a lot about how will I fulfill the responsibilities of my office and also care well for my family (referring to her parents)? This is a constant challenge. (Personal communication, February 16, 2011)

The impact of relocating their families and making decisions regarding children were constantly at the forefront of many participants' minds as they considered transitioning into more administrative roles. For Pricilla and her husband, the decision to transition into administration within higher education meant deciding not to have children of their own. Pricilla shared, "So to me it's a sacrifice…for both of us to have careers, I didn't know it would actually be possible to have children and both have careers" (personal communications, January 6, 2011). Deborah, who is a college president,

expressed that "if you are really serious about looking at a senior administrative position, you need to think hard about how willing you are to relocate yourself and your family" (personal communication, February 16, 2011).

All participants shared that prior to transitioning into their current roles, conversations that informed and invited their families into the decision-making process were crucial. Ruth highlighted how these early conversations with her family had a long-lasting impact of bridging together her two worlds:

> But the decision to become a provost from the deanship was a family decision not just my own…we took our older son to dinner and told him about what it would look like if I were to take the provost position. I got real detailed with him, more travel, the whole idea of evening responsibilities, how school events would become our family outings…but his investment in the decision has been priceless, because he never threw it back in my face…he knew he was part of the decision and so he couldn't complain. So he owned it and invested in it as much as I have. (Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

These conversations helped many of the participants be more at peace about making decisions that they knew would require some form of sacrifice from themselves and their families. Several participants shared that though some people may be able to compartmentalize their home and work lives into different spheres, it was both a joy and a challenge to find ways to blend two worlds that were very important parts of their lives. Participants had to develop an awareness of when the blending of home and work may be causing unnecessary strain on themselves and their families. Joan shared that

I have to be careful when I go home, that I am not managing my husband or my

family in the same way that I manage a committee meeting. You are at work 12-

14 hours a day so it's easy to slip into that mode and forget that you're not

supposed to manage your home. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

For some participants the transition from being single to being married while being in an

administrative role introduced different types of challenges to consider. Annette, who

was single when she entered into her current administrative role and has now married,

reflected on this new challenge:

I think that the life of the administrator really does get very complicated and there

are challenges that come with combining the life of an administrator with

family…I had to learn last year for the first time in my life how you balance work

and career and I will say I am very grateful that my husband really understands

the kind of work that I do. (Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Though balancing a career and a personal home life presented challenges for

participants, many of the participants would say that overall they are thankful for the

lessons they continue to learn in the process. Ruth, who has been provost for over ten

years, captured this sentiment well:

You sacrifice; there is no doubt that you sacrifice. But it is more personal kinds of

sacrifice…you sacrifice some personal time for sure because your life becomes

your work and your family, but I knew what sacrifice and choices I would make.

But I have a positive outlook on women who chose to be leaders in terms of their

family life and career path, with or without children. It's not easy, but I have

learned so much through this journey into leadership. (Personal communication,

March 15, 2011)

Additional Themes

Throughout the study two additional themes emerged that were outside the scope

of the research questions being asked. The first theme highlights the non-traditional

career trajectory of many of the participants. The second theme provides an interesting

look into how many of the participants have an internal desire to walk away from their

current position and return to the classroom yet do not because of the deep sense of call

and responsibility they have for their institutions.

What "traditional" pipeline?

Of the 7 women interviewed only one participant followed the "traditional"

timeline into her current leadership role. Annette, who now serves in a presidential role,

was the only participant whose path into the presidency followed the traditional path of

faculty member, department chair, dean, vice provost, provost, and finally the presidency.

All other participants either transitioned from industry fields such as law, business, or the

K-12 educational system. They either went straight into a mid- or senior-level

administrative position at an institution or have transitioned into their current position in

a very short period of time without serving in traditional entry-level administrator

positions. Pricilla, who early in her career desired to pursue senior administration,

commented on the speed of her transitions into administration as being much faster than

she had foreseen:

I am doing exactly what I imagined I would do, I just did not know how the

timing would work out…and because of some circumstances outside of my

control, I did it [transitioned into administration] much sooner than I had

expected. I did not think I would get here so quickly [Moving into a deanship

after only 3 years of being a faculty member at her current institution]. (Personal

communication, January 6, 2011)

Participants who have transitioned into their roles earlier than they anticipated

also mentioned that one of the difficulties of transitioning so quickly is that the necessity

to learn on the job heightens and the opportunity for mistakes increases. A vice president

for less than a year, Lydia transitioned into higher education from business and was a

faculty member in the school of business for only two years before being promoted to a

regional dean position. Since Lydia is still in a state of transition into her current role as

vice president for strategic initiatives, she pointed out a theme that was heard in several

of the other participants' leadership journey:

This division is in a state of constant change. And I have transitioned quickly into

this role. We move pretty fast, so some obstacles I face are trying to grasp an

understanding of what changes we are going through and developing capacity to

manage the change. I have to learn a lot as I go and not be afraid to ask questions

when I don't understand. (Personal communication, February 24, 2011)

Several of the participants recognized that there has been a "traditional" route into senior

leadership within higher education, but also observed that this is not the only route

individuals must take in order to reach positions of leadership and senior administration

within higher education institutions. Deborah, whose own presidential journey did not

follow the traditional path, reflected upon this notion of moving outside the "traditional"

pipeline as the only way of entering into leadership:

You know it doesn't mean that the only way to do it [move into leadership] is you have to be a department chair and then you have to be a dean and then you maybe an associate provost and you kind of have this gradual progression. There are lots of ways to gain and move into leadership roles and we must be open and aware to those opportunities set before us. (Personal communication, February 16, 2011)

With 5 of the 7 participants transitioning into their current role within the last 5 years, it is important to acknowledge that the current pace of leadership transition for some women is moving rather quickly. The women who participated in the study do not foresee this trend slowing down.

I am more than just my title – there's a deeper love of education.

Finally, a surprising theme that emerged out of the interviews was the notion that walking away from their current position would not be a very difficult decision. Several participants, such as Ruth, shared the same sentiment, "I have always felt the liberty to walk away from this position [provost and executive vice president] and be content" (personal communication, March 15, 2011). As some participants began to reflect upon their leadership journey and their current positions, they would have no problem returning to the classroom or simply starting another career. Joan strongly described this underlying theme that several other participants shared:

I think and I know, and this may be very dangerous to say, but I think I know that I can walk away from it [her current job] and be content. I could start another career or go back to the classroom. I don't think I need to have *this* job because I realized that I could easily have lost my identity in the job, and that is a danger.

There is always a real temptation to worship the job and that the job itself can

become an idol. (Personal communication, February 28, 2011)

Annette echoed similar sentiments:

There has been a marvelous freedom I've been given in any of these

[administrative] jobs because I really didn't want them to start with. I mean it's a

wonderful liberty because my feeling is, if I do what I think is the best thing to do

and it turns out to be something other people don't like, well then fine, I'll just go

back to teaching – that's what I wanted to do all along. This is a great freedom.

(Personal communication, March 15, 2011)

This notion of having the freedom to walk away from their current position is

closely connected to their understanding that they know they could always return to the

classroom and be content. Overall, each of the women interviewed communicated a

deeper commitment to education and aiding the pursuits of higher education than a

pursuit of a specific title or role. Annette shared that her institution's need more than her

desire caused her to accept the role as president. She committed to the presidency

because that was what her institution needed from her. Esther clearly captures this theme

of not being defined simply by her position or role but rather embracing her role in

supporting the greater cause of Christian higher education:

You know it's not drudgery, it's not horrible – yes there are ups and downs in

anybody's career. But for the most part being part of Christian higher education is

a wonderful place to be – whether you're are an administrator, a president, a

faculty member, a staff member, or a student – you believe in this so you are

willing to do all you can and do the roles we have been given well in order to

make this enterprise [higher education] successful. (Personal communications,

February 25, 2011)

All participants shared a common view of believing in the work of higher education and especially the impact Christian higher education can have in the lives of students and society as a whole. Therefore, it is this greater love to aid in the work of higher education and not the pursuit of a role or title that has greatly influenced their leadership journey within higher education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

A quick study of the literature looking at the leadership experiences of women in

higher education can depict a rather discouraging picture for the next generation of

female administrators because of what can seem to be a growing list of barriers that

women will continue to face (Abramson, 1975; Chimperman, 1986; Cullivan, 1990;

Douglas, 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Haven & Heinrichs, 2010; Ihle, 1991; Kaplin &

Tinsley, 1989; Jones, 1993; Mason and Goulden, 2002; Mock, 2005; Nidiffer & Bashaw;

North, 1991; Pederson & Jule, 2010; Uler, 1989; Yoder, 1991). Yet the participants in

this study dared to paint a different picture – a picture that recognizes the difficulties but

set its focus on the importance of being obedient to God's call in their lives and aiding in

the larger mission of Christian higher education. Not only is one's faith important in

being successful in the workplace (Ashmos and Duchan, 2000) but the importance of

providing layers of support for leaders is highlighted. Participants also continue to

exemplify that the work / home conflict must continue to be examined, as the transition

into leadership is "a family affair." Finally, the importance of leader development for

women early in their career within the academy is highlighted, as it could aid in

developing a steady flow of women who are prepared to enter the leadership pipeline

with higher education.

Kingdom work: "It's not about me, it's about us."

Each participant in the study had her stories of frustration, confusion, and

hardship as she transitioned within the ranks of higher education. However, a greater

voice of hope and commitment to their work emerged through their adversity. This is a result of participants' belief that what they are doing is connected to a deeper call on their lives. Participants trusted that each difficulty or hardship they experienced had a purpose. When reflecting upon difficult situations several participants mentioned God's call into higher levels of leadership as influencing their decision to accept an administrative role more than their personal desire. However, once the Lord had orchestrated events and opportunities to step into leadership roles, participants began to recognize and acknowledge that they, too, had a personal desire to lead. This deep connection between God's call and developing a profound sense of purpose regarding their work is also reflected in the growing literature looking at spirituality in the workplace (Ashmos & Duchan, 2000; Looby & Sandu, 2002).

Coyle (2001) states, "The spiritual concepts of meaning and purpose are attitudes and behaviors motivating an individual into action" (p. 591). Not only did their faith influence participants' actions and decision to accept their current administrative roles, but it also instilled in them an understanding that they are part of something "bigger than themselves" or, as Deborah explained it, "I had a realization that there are layers to God's purposes. His purposes are not just about shaping my character and molding me…but that actually, all of this is for a larger purpose" (personal communication, February 16, 2011). Bloch and Richmond (1998) also touched upon this notion that spirituality in the workplace cultivated in employees a greater awareness of "being connected to something larger than themselves…which enables them to learn their purpose, to discover wisdom, to define and redefine themselves, connect and reconnect to their environment, and make

an impact for the future" (p. 7). The impact of the "spirituality workplace connection" could not be more evident than in the experiences of the women in this study.

This realization of being part of God's bigger purposes enabled participants to do their work with a visionary perspective. They recognized both the difficulties that came with their new roles and the potential impact their current experience would have on continuing to make a way for the next generation of leaders. Their faith and trust in the Lord's plans for their lives also allowed participants to admit that they could walk away from their titles and be content as long as they knew that it was for God's greater purposes. One of the deepest motivators expressed by participants was the desire to further the work of Christian higher education, "the work of changing people's lives to be more Christ centered" (Esther, personal communication, February 25, 2011). Ruth, who has been a provost for over 10 years exemplified this truth by stating that "this job is not about me, it's about being part of God's kingdom work, so I must be faithful and do this job to his glory because it impacts all of us – our generation and the generations after us" (personal communication, March 15, 2011).

Role of support: "A strand of three cords is not easily broken."

The significant role community plays on participants' decisions to enter and stay within leadership has its connection to Josselson's assertion (as quoted by Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006) that "women's development is tied to relationship connections" (p. 33). Therefore, Goodman, Schlossberg and Anderson concluded that whether in work, family, or social areas, the central aspect of identity for women appears to be the self-in-relation rather than the self standing alone. This assertion is evident in the influence communities and certain individuals have on participant's decisions to

transition into their administrative roles, as well as aiding to the overall success and well-being of the participants. These communities of support played a crucial role in speaking against participants' self-doubt of their abilities to do their job well.

Support is especially crucial during times of change and transition (Schlossberg, 1984). During times of transition individuals are

> required to let go of aspects of the self, let go of former roles, and learn new roles…[and] moving through transitions inevitably requires people to take stock as they renegotiate these roles…and cope with what is perceived to be a crisis situation. (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 23)

Times of transition can often produce high levels of stress within an individual, therefore the presence of social support is crucial as it is often said to be "the key to handling stress" (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 75).

Participants in the study noted that it was important to have different levels and spheres of support. A study by Gibson (2008) looked at the impact of multiple developmental relationships, relationships that play a role in helping a leader develop their capacity to succeed in their given roles. Gibson highlights the work of McCauley and Douglas (2004) that considered three types of developmental relationship roles that were foundational to one's leader development: assessment, challenge, and support. Using the developmental roles outlined by McCauley and Douglas, Gibson goes on to explain the role and impact of each developmental relationship on an individual's leader development.

The relationships that play the *assessment* role in a leader's life are those individuals who can provide feedback, act as a sounding board, provide comparison

points, and help the developing leader interpret feedback they may receive. The individuals that represent the *challenge* roles help push the developing leader to gain capacity in a certain area and can include a dialogue partner, an expert in a field in which the leader is trying to gain knowledge, or a role model. Finally, the *support* relationships are those individuals that simply act as "cheerleaders, counselors, reinforcers, and companions" to the emerging leader (Gibson, 2008, p. 654). As leaders experience career transitions, their ability to recognize their need for developmental relationships that aid in assessing, challenging, and supporting them through their journey is essential to their overall success and longevity. When these three relationship cords are present during an individual's career transitions, an individual is more able to cope, learn, and grow from the changes (external and internal) that they are experiencing.

This is a family affair.

The "books and babies" debate (Touchton et al., 2008, p. 18) addresses the reality that professional women must continually consider both the impact of their professional decisions on their present and future families and the impact of family decisions on their academic and professional careers. A 2005-06 study done by Hofffer et al. (2007) found that while women earned forty-five percent of doctoral degrees, only twenty-six percent of full professors were women. Though the reasoning for this gap is not completely attributed to family decisions women are making, it does ask the question: "Do babies matter?" (Mason & Goulden, 2004, as quoted by Touchton et al., 2008, p. 18). This question was asked because most women earn their doctorates around the age of thirty-three which also coincides with women's reproductive years (Hofffer et al., 2007).

Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) conclude, "The issues of career choice, identity, and transition experienced by women are strongly affected by family influence along with social gender role expectations of being a good mother and wife" (p. 7). This discussion can also be seen in the lives of the participants from this study. One of the 3 women who were married with children transitioned into her administrative role after she was an empty nester. Of the 2 married participants, one chose not to have children in order to pursue an academic career, while the other participant was only recently married. However, whether married or single, with children or not, all participants allude to the importance of having their families be part of their decision-making process and journey into leadership. The question for the participants in this study was not *if* their families were involved or impacted but *how*.

Several participants acknowledge that it is not easy to "balance" their home and work roles and responsibilities, but it is also not impossible to find a system that will work for their specific circumstance and need. With a growing number of women receiving terminal degrees and making the decision to chose neither home or work, but both, how will institutions respond to the possible influx of women who make the decision to transition into leadership roles within higher education into a public / family affair?

Leadership "pipeline": Steady flow or heavy rain?

The entry of women into higher education has seen consistent and steady growth within the last twenty years (Toughton et al., 2008). The results of this study affirm this continued trend. What is not as highly addressed in women's leadership research is the rapid movement amongst the ranks that 6 of the 7 participants have experienced as part of

their leadership journey with higher education. Five of the 7 participants have transitioned into their current leadership role within the last 5 years. Lydia mentioned that when she first came to her institution she was the only female faculty within her school. Within the last 3 years she has seen a rapid movement of women entering into all levels within her institution, reflecting that

> When I first started at the university I initially had a strong sense that there was a "good ol' boys" club. Definitely a "good ol' boys" club where women were excluded and not just in senior level leadership but also at the mid-level and entry level. *However*, my perception of that has changed tremendously over the last 3 years. This is reflected of upper level leadership and all the way down. I was the first female faculty in my department, and then I was the first regional dean, and my current boss is the first female vice president for this college. All of this has happened within the last 3 years and does not appear to be slowing down. (Personal communication, February 24, 2011)

Within the literature, one of the barriers of getting women into the leadership pipeline is that women often do not take paths that prepare them to be considered for an administrative post (Flynn, 1993). This study highlights that even when some women are not on the "right path" toward being considered for an administrative post, they find themselves "stepping into it [an administrative role]" (Deborah, February 16, 2011). This is in part due to the proactive pursuit by either male or female superiors, mentors, or colleagues to consider, apply, and / or accept an administrative appointment. Though this news is encouraging in light of the research that highlights a low representation of women in high-level administration and especially with CCCU member institutions

(Lafreniere & Longman, 2009), are there potential unseen threats within this emerging trend of rapid movement of women within the ranks of Christian higher education? The lack of females needs to be addressed, but it cannot be solved overnight. Part of the solution is focusing on developing women for leadership from earlier in their careers. Therefore, institutions should take steps toward developing a steady flow of women into all levels of the leadership pipeline.

Leader development: "Let's start at the very beginning."

As a generation of higher education leaders are retiring (Eddy & Cox, 2008), institutions are seeking to be proactive in providing a diverse candidate pool that better reflects their institution's mission and vision. In this pursuit, women may be transitioning into leadership positions at a faster pace than generations before them. It is important for institutions to be aware of some of the difficulties women may encounter through their leadership transitions in order to provide the appropriate aid and leader development tools women will need for their leadership journey.

Institutions should be mindful of the potential effects of "tokenism" on women who maybe the first female in a particular role. Some effects of "tokenism" include: (a) heightened attention or visibility that exacerbated pressure for them to perform well or (b) feeling isolated from informal social and professional networks (Yoder, 1991). Participants in the study who were either the first or one of few women in their role, did express a heightened sense of needing to prove themselves when they first transitioned into their role. Therefore, with the pressure to perform well, participants soon found themselves over-committing and overextending themselves in their first year. This pressure to perform coupled with some participants' experience of "having to learn on the

job" brought about high levels of stress. Institutions can help by providing support from the beginning of an individual's leadership journey.

The current leadership institutes available for women within Christian higher education are primarily geared toward women who are in senior-level administration (Lafreniere & Longman, 2009). These institutes have provided much needed support, leadership education, and encouragement to female leaders within the CCCU. What if the training of female leaders within the CCCU began right from the start of their higher education careers? There have been some developments of women's leadership programs within the CCCU for women who are at the mid-level and entry-level positions within their institution. The Leadership Development Program for Women at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana, is an example of a mid-level program. The Leadership Explorations Program for Women at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, is an example of a program for entry-level women that just began this year. As these two programs continue to develop, they can play a crucial role in preparing the next generation of leaders in higher education.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the snowballing approach, also known as chain referral sampling, of gaining participants for the study. This method allows researchers to ask current participants in the study to identify and refer other potential participants for the study in studies where subjects are hard to find (Castillo, 2009). The disadvantage to this approach is the creation of a sampling bias, since initial subjects tend to nominate individuals they know well and therefore can create a participant pool that may have similar traits and characteristics. In connection to this method of attaining participants for

the study, the overall sample-size of participants for this study is fairly small, with only 7 of the 9 initial participant interviews being used in the study. Having a small sample size may keep this study from conveying broad generalizations upon the larger community.

Another limitation of this study is potential researcher bias. Since the researcher is also a woman and is interested in higher education leadership, the ability to remove all bias regarding this topic is difficult. Some of the limitations that are present in this study were addressed through measures of member-checking and peer-debriefing to minimize researcher bias. Current theories and research that supported the themes that emerged from the study are used to provide reliability of results that have come from the study's small participant pool.

Implications for Practitioners

Be a person "who taps on the shoulder."

The fundamental factors of calling and receiving encouragement or a "tap on the shoulder" from a superior, colleague, or peer were influential in how participants determined if they would accept and transition into an administrative role. Therefore, higher education practitioners should continue to ask the questions, "*Who* are the women that we can / should be tapping on the shoulder to consider this position?" and "*How* can we help prepare them now to step into these leadership roles in the future?" As the number of women entering higher education from students, to the professoriate, and into administration continues to grow, the questions may soon become *who* are potential female leaders and not *where* are the female leaders. Practitioner can continue to look for potential leaders at all levels and work to provide opportunities for those individuals to develop their gifting and capacity to lead when the opportunity presents itself. When

asked what advice she would give to other higher education administrators, Deborah, who serves as a president shared

> The reason you don't have a pipeline of women ready to step into a provost position is because they have not been given opportunities to develop their administrative giftings. I think we need to be intentional about seeking junior faculty and staff and then nurturing and providing opportunities. (Personal communication, February 16, 2011)

Institutions can also help aid the future academic pursuits of emerging female leaders. All participants commented that having a terminal degree opened doors that may not have been opened without one.

Responding to the work / home reality.

As more women seem to be entering into careers in higher education, family-friendly policies for maternity leave should be reexamined, as multiple women within an institution may need time off. As similar rights are being given to men, institutions have to be ready and aware of what impact this may have on their current policies in this area. In light of the work-home conflict discussion, Jones (1993) notes:

> It takes far more effort for colleges and universities to develop the type of environment conducive to the development of women in leadership roles…and for a campus environment to be conducive to faculty and staff fulfilling multiple roles, there needs to be a campus aura of support for work and family that permeates all departments at all levels. (p. 63)

Institutions can consider providing childcare services for employees, considering that current and future employees may not be asking *if* they should have children but what

resources are available and what strategies should they employ *when* they do have children.

Women's leadership programs for entry and mid-level employees.

Institutions can seek to develop more leadership programs for women who are currently holding entry-level positions in response to the seemingly rapid movement of women into mid and senior-level positions. This could provide for some much-needed professional and intra- and inter-personal development of women.

Implications for Future Research

One of the themes that emerged from this study is the surprisingly rapid movement of 6 of the 7 participants through the leadership ranks within the past 5 years. In order to provide a fuller picture of the changing leadership landscape within higher education, a study that compares and contrast the current leadership journey of men to that of women within the past 5, 10, and 15 years could add a helpful voice in this discussion. Are men also experiencing such rapid movements through the leadership ranks or do they seem to continue to follow the "traditional" leadership pipeline within higher education? Is the pipeline into leadership still through the professoriate? If there are differences in the current movement of men and women into leadership, what are they and what are the potential impacts on the next generation of women?

The CCCU offers a formal women's leadership institute (WLDI) for women who currently serve in a senior leadership role or are perceived as an emerging leader. In 2008 a study was done to examine the impact of the institute upon the participants and found that "more than half of the women surveyed for the study moved into broader leadership responsibilities within one year of participating in the WLDI" (Lafreniere and Longman,

2008, p. 388). Future research can be done to look at the impact of women's leadership development programs such as the Leadership Development Program for Women at Indiana Wesleyan University and the Leadership Explorations for Women at Taylor University for women who serve at the mid-level and entry-level position.

A study on "family friendly" institutions and current policies connected to maternity leave and leave of absence can aid institutions that seek to provide an institutional environment that better meets the needs of female leaders. A look at the structure of these "family friendly" institutions might also prepare institutions to respond and support the growing number of women entering the higher education profession who desire to have a family and a career.

Summary

This study desired to examine the experiences of Christian women who have made the transition from faculty member to administrator within CCCU member institutions. A specific focus upon what influenced their decision to transition, what aided them during their transition, and what difficulties presented themselves along their journey guided the questions for this study. This study affirms that not only are the number of women entering into positions of leadership within the CCCU increasing but that the pace in which women are moving through the leadership ranks is a factor that should also be considered in future research. Additionally, institutions should move toward intentional steps of creating institutional environments that are "family friendly" and conducive to women who do not see a separation of home and work, but instead see the blending of these two worlds as inevitable. This study affirms the power of a simple word of encouragement, challenge, and support to influence the career trajectory of an

individual. It also exemplifies that it will take layers of support to raise up the next generation of female administrators. Finally, this study is about women whose greatest pursuit is not a title, role, or position, but rather a passion to serve and to be obedient to the call that has been placed upon their lives, with a hope that their faithfulness will aid in the greater mission of their faith and Christian higher education.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions:

1. Introductions
   a. Pseudonym selection:
   b. Institution type and size:
   c. Level of education: particular degree and discipline

2. What brought you to pursue a career within the higher education profession?

3. How many years were you a faculty member before deciding to make the transition into an administrative position?

4. What administrative position do you currently hold? How long have you been in this position?

5. Describe what your professional journey has been within the realm of higher education? 4b: Did you see yourself pursuing the journey you have gone on when you first started working within this profession?

6. What impacted your decision to accept an administrative level position?

7. Where there any key people who were influential in your decision to transition into an administrative role? 7b: Any key events that influenced you decision to transition?

8. Looking back, do you recollect any obstacles that may have prevented you from transitioning sooner into your current role?

9. While in transition, what were obstacles you faced as you entered into your current position and what were some areas of encouragement and success?

10. What advice would you give to other women who are hoping to transition into administrative level positions within higher education? B) What advice would

you give administrators who desire to aid in the successful transition of women

into administrative leadership?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Phenomenological Study of the Female Faculty Transitional Experience into Administration within CCCU Member Institutions

Purpose: The purpose of this study is examine the transitional experience of female faculty into administrative roles within their respective institutions in order to better understand how institutions can better come alongside their female leaders during seasons of transition.

Procedure: The information will be collected through either a face-to-face or phone interview session, which will be tape-recorded. The interview session will last approximately 60-90 minutes. This form provides consent for the interview.

Confidentiality and Consent: You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential through the use of a pseudonym that you will select at the interview session. If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, you may contact Taylor University's Institutional Review Board (need to find number and direct contact person).

Contact: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please ask Meleca Consultado, the researcher conducting the study.

Consent: I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without cost. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant name (print)_____

Participant signature_____ Date_____

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