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Path to power: A narrative inquiry of the life journeys of ELCA college presidents at selected institutions

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**Path to power: A narrative inquiry of the life journeys of ELCA college presidents
at selected institutions**

by

Wesley H. Brooks

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Specialization – Educational Leadership)

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Ames, Iowa

2014

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DEDICATION

To

My wife, Kelly.

During this Ph.D. journey,

you've loved me every step of the way. You married me.

You brought our first son Wade into this world. Webber, our second, is on the way.

I can't imagine you envisioned our first 3 years together having the intensity and commitment this academic journey has required. The countless trips to Ames, the diapers I never got to, or the 18 hour Saturdays on the computer. But you never wavered. You believed in me accomplishing this more than I did at times. You pushed me when I needed it. You consoled me when times got tough. Your commitment to me and this degree have meant more than I can ever tell you. I love you.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on the life journeys of four ELCA college presidents. Specifically, it examined how life journeys informed their ascendancy to the presidency. In this study, life journeys are defined as “the professional and personal happenings the participants experienced during their professional years prior to earning an ELCA presidency.” Life journeys include career paths, impactful professional experiences, personal relationships, the formation of self-identity, and other meaningful transitions as identified by the participants.

Numerous studies exist about the career paths of higher education administrators (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Brown, 2000; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Jackson & Harris, 2005; Song & Hartley, 2012; Munoz, 2006; Green, 1983). College president transitions have also been examined (Krause, 2009; Turner, 2007; Toman, 2008; Moore, 1983). Many of these studies concentrated on the trajectories of females to the presidency as well as the community college environment.

Methodologically, narrative analysis was used, and the four participants were purposefully selected from upper Midwest Evangelical Lutheran Church of America colleges and universities (ELCA). The primary data collection method used was unstructured interviews that employed the narrative interview technique in partnership with Seidman’s interview technique. Participants participated in a series of three interviews, where they shared their lived experiences through uninterrupted stories. Using thematic analysis that involves coding and text reduction, themes were found and organized into three overarching categories: (1) work experiences prior to attaining the

presidency; (2) lives beyond the office; and (3) a sense of vocational calling and the alignment of personal gifts and passions to address institutional needs.

Addressing the overarching research question in this study, “How do life journeys impact career paths to ELCA college presidencies?”, both professional and personal factors were found to contribute to career ascendency. Being open to new opportunities, holding administrative and leadership roles, having supportive spouses and families, and having a deep sense of self all contributed to the attainment of additional leadership roles, culminating in an ELCA college presidency. Participants shared a common understanding of Lutheran traditions and Lutheran higher education and vocation, and a desire to help others. Additionally, commonalities existed about work-life balance and the challenges it presents, the importance of having hobbies, the demands of ELCA college presidencies, and in reflections of transitions the participants experienced during their life journeys.

Implications due to this study’s findings exist for a variety of audiences, including ELCA higher education administrators, aspiring higher education leaders across all institutional types, ELCA college presidents, individual ELCA institutions, ELCA colleges and universities as a whole, and individual ELCA college and university institutional governing boards.

This study created opportunities for future research. Recommended studies using the same methodological approach include examining the life journeys of female ELCA college presidents, the life journeys of ELCA presidents in other geographic locations, the life journeys of presidents from different institutional types, the life journeys of ELCA presidents from schools of different Lutheran depth, the life journeys of spouses

and children of current ELCA college presidents, and the life journeys of other higher education administrators beyond the presidency.

Additional research could also examine life journeys using Schlossberg's (1995) theory of transition or Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments as the entire conceptual framework of the study.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Over the last twenty years, leading an institution as a college president has changed drastically in large part because of socioeconomic, technological, and political factors (American Council on Education, 2007). Even with these challenges and changes, an overwhelming 83% of college presidents with membership in the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) reported being satisfied and happy with their work. They are most satisfied by fundraising, strategic planning, and academic issues (Song & Hartley, 2012).

In a special essay written by the American Council of Education (2007), participants who served as president at the same institution for a minimum of ten years shared their experienced perspectives. While satisfied with their role, time-consuming work surfaced as a theme in the data. These respondents identified 16 major job functions that took more time in 2007 than they did in 1997. The amount of time a president must devote to work is significant. Budget, enrollment management, fundraising, and strategic planning are the four most time-consuming responsibilities of independent college presidents—these key responsibilities directly impact an institution's ability to carry out its mission, goals, and strategic plan (Song & Hartley, 2012). Because of the importance of the presidential role at Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) colleges, having qualified people in those positions is critical.

The CIC published a report from data of the 2011 American Council on Education study of American college presidents, revealing the complexities of the position cause institutions to seek leaders with significant senior leadership experience in

higher education when presidential vacancies occur. John. C. Maxwell (2005) is an evangelical public speaker, pastor, and author who has a specialty in leadership.

According to Maxwell, “if you want to succeed, you need to learn as much as you can about leadership before you have a leadership position” (p. 9). Maxwell’s message sums up what institutions of higher education face in presidential succession. The importance placed on leadership qualities and vision-casting by the president of a college or university requires that the position be filled by someone with success in other leadership roles. The importance placed on hiring qualified, experienced leaders for open presidencies may limit opportunities for younger, aspiring leaders. This is a concern due to the anticipation of a large percentage of presidents retiring or moving on in the next five years (Song & Hartley, 2012).

The average age of independent college presidents has increased to 60.3 years (Song & Hartley, 2012). This rising age appears to have created a decrease in the length of tenure for CIC presidents. The average tenure has dropped from 8.7 years in 2006, to 7.1 years in 2011 (Song & Hartley, 2012). These statistics are reinforced by narrative data that suggests that nearly half of current CIC presidents will leave their presidential post within the next five years (Song & Hartley, 2012). With these departures come a need for successors and a growing concern of a lack of qualified replacements (Leubsdorf, 2006). Chapter 2 explains the role of the president on college campuses and the causes and concerns of the growing leadership gap.

Lutheran Higher Education

While the American Council on Education and the CIC have executed studies and published reports on independent colleges that include ELCA institutions, very little

research has been devoted to presidents of Lutheran institutions. Affirming the 2012 CIC study of presidents, and the emphasis the report placed on the need for a succession plan and successors that were qualified and prepared, four ELCA institutions had new presidents activated in 2012 (Nelson, 2012). This indicates that the retirement concern is also valid in Lutheran higher education.

There are twenty-six Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) colleges and universities in the United States (Lutheran Colleges Organization, 2013). The Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) describes Lutheran institutions as

Colleges and universities that center themselves around a set of core goals and values and believe that faith is important and deserving of respect. The experience includes a commitment to small class sizes, attention to individual students, delivery of financial aid and development of the whole person. In addition, they offer a challenging curriculum set at a rigorous academic pace. Professors are available, opportunities are abundant and the sense of community is warm and vibrant. (para. 2)

These institutions want their students to become contributing members of society while also living lives of worth and service. It is expected that faculty and staff at these institutions contribute to society through service, leadership, and engagement in the community, and ELCA college and university presidents should model these expectations. Lutheran higher education wants students to be prepared for a rapidly changing world, and it strives to help students “develop their faith through a thoughtful and challenging education” (Lutheran Colleges Organization, para. 4).

Problem

The problem this study aims to address is the leadership gap caused by a lack of qualified successors for college and university presidencies. The demographic makeup of higher education leaders has changed very slowly during the past 20 years (American Council for Education, 2008, p. 57). As stated in an article published in the Chronicle of Higher Education, "The remarkable thing about the profile of the typical college president -- a married, graying white man with a doctoral degree -- is how little it has changed" (June, 2007, para, 2). This slow change has created a leadership gap due to large numbers of retiring administrators and underprepared successors (Ashburn, 2007). According to Witt/Kieffer, 'predicts there will be at least a 50-percent turnover among senior administrators (higher education) in the next five to 10 years'" (p. A51).

In partnership with this significant turnover rate in senior administrators is the concern for underprepared successors: "Higher education needs to create a system that actively develops leadership skills much earlier in people's careers than we do today" (Davis, 2008, p. A64). Davis goes on to discuss that there is simply no structural focus on leadership. With very little formal leadership training, and a minimal focus on managerial ability, the problem in higher education administration today is underprepared successors advancing to leadership roles, including presidencies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to understand the influence that life journeys have on attaining ELCA college presidencies using Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments. Numerous studies on the career paths of higher education administrators have occurred

over time. However, ELCA colleges and the career paths of their administrators have not been examined much, if at all. It is important to understand the experiences of these participants because of the uniqueness of the ELCA college environment. Having a better understanding of the career paths, self-identities, and non-work lives of current ELCA college presidents can better prepare future, aspiring presidents. This study helps close the “leadership gap” (Ashburn, 2007) by informing future leaders of what they need to engage in to be better equipped to serve as an ELCA college president. The lack of qualified successors is a growing concern, so it is important to learn from the personal and professional journeys of college presidents to support future leaders.

Research Goals

Qualitative research typically uses “process theory” as an explanatory approach. Maxwell (2013) explains that “‘Process theory’ tends to see the world in terms of people, situations, events and the processes that connect these” (p. 29). Maxwell outlines five kinds of intellectual goals that suit qualitative studies. For this study, three of these intellectual goals are utilized: The first goal is to understand the meaning participants make of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engage in (p.30). This goal is applicable to this study to investigate the life journeys and transitions that participants experience. Another goal is to understand “the particular contexts within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions” (p. 30). This goal strengthens this study, and helps to understand how presidents shape the meanings of events and actions in their personal, unique experiences. The last goal suited for this study is “understanding the process by which events and actions take place” (p.30). This understanding supports this study by informing aspiring leaders of

what current presidents experienced during their life journeys. This third goal also serves as an implication for professional practice, and is discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.

In accordance with the goals described by Maxwell, the following are the research goals of this study:

1. To better understand the process of people preparing for and securing an ELCA college presidency.
2. To better understand the meaning participants make of the events and transitions in their lives that informed their ascendancy to college presidencies.
3. To inform aspiring leaders and institutions of higher education of the unique, personal and professional experiences current ELCA presidents faced that shaped their career paths.

These goals directly impact and correspond with the overarching and orienting research questions in this study.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study: How do life journeys impact career paths to ELCA college presidencies? This study used the following orienting questions to reinforce the overarching question:

1. What influences enabled the participants to advance to ELCA college presidencies?
2. What is the interplay between the participants' personal lives, self-identities, and careers?

3. How have different life events and priorities influenced the participants' career trajectory?

Significance of the Study

The career paths of higher education administrators have been studied (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Brown, 2000; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Jackson & Harris, 2005; Song & Hartley, 2012; Munoz, 2006; Green, 1983), and investigations of college president transitions have also occurred (Krause, 2009; Turner, 2007; Toman, 2008; Moore, 1983). Many of these studies concentrated on the trajectories of females to the presidency and the community college environment. This study focuses specifically on ELCA college presidents and the life journeys that informed their ascendancy to the presidency.

Although there are few studies linked to small, private institutions, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) conducts studies on its presidents that do not include ELCA schools. Previous reports were published by the CIC in 2006 and, most recently, 2012 (Song & Hartley, 2012). While these studies contribute large amounts of data associated with college presidents, they do not directly account for the journeys of ELCA college presidents. Another study investigated four career paths of college presidents (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). However, this study categorized its participants by degree offered; other options existed, but these were not addressed—such as public versus private, historically black colleges and universities, religiously affiliated institutions, or profit versus not-for-profit. Data from Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) is beneficial, but it does not directly target or identify the ELCA college president population. These studies

informed people about college presidencies and the career paths to those positions, but very little is informative about the deep, lived life journeys of ELCA college presidents.

The lack of research on ELCA college presidents and their life journeys contributes to the significance of this study. According to the 2012 *CIC Study of Presidents of Independent College and Universities* (Song & Hartley, 2012), the average age of CIC presidents is rising, and the tenure of these same presidents is shortening (pp. ii-iii). The most impactful statistic regarding this study may be that half of current CIC presidents intend to leave their presidential post in the next five years, and only one in four of those departing presidents intend to secure another presidency elsewhere (p. iv).

Due to these statistics, gaining an understanding of the life journeys and professional experiences of current ELCA college presidents is necessary in order to have prepared and qualified successors when many current presidents move on. This study informs aspiring leaders in higher education of the necessary steps, experiences, challenges, and pitfalls—both personally and professionally—of people who maneuvered their own paths to an ELCA presidency. It also informs ELCA colleges of what professional development opportunities they must offer future leaders in order to be prepared for the predicted presidential turn-over within five years. What is it about the life journeys of ELCA college presidents that informed their ascendancy to the position of president?

Audience(s) for the Study

This study is intended for numerous audiences, including (but not limited to) the following: aspiring ELCA college presidents, individual ELCA institutions, the ELCA Colleges and Universities as a whole, and individual ELCA College and University

institutional governing boards. Future ELCA college presidents will be informed by this study, because they will learn about the lived experiences of current ELCA college presidents. Through those stories, aspiring leaders will gain a better understanding of what they can do to put themselves in a position to be qualified for future presidency roles. While this study focuses solely on ELCA colleges, as member schools of the CIC, and the similarities between many different institutional types, this study contributes to aspiring presidents of many different institutional types. Due to the anticipated turn-over of CIC presidents, which includes ELCA colleges, this research informs and may be of interest to qualified presidents to consider ELCA colleges as a viable employment setting. In addition to informing aspiring presidents from many institutional types, people interested in upper-level administrative roles will gain a deeper understanding of the preparedness those roles as presidents served in many other high level positions within an institution.

ELCA institutions can benefit from this study in a variety of ways. The study informs them of the characteristics, experiences, and transitions to consider when searching for presidential successors. The data provides indicators of what is necessary for a person to have experienced to be prepared for an ELCA college presidency. It also highlights professional development opportunities that the institutions should make available to aspiring leaders, which better prepares them for future presidencies.

Similar to individual ELCA institutions, ELCA Colleges and Universities as a whole will benefit from this research. The information presented will aid them in supporting the presidential searches of individual institutions and of the professional development programs and initiatives of member schools. According to the CIC, “the

three most time-consuming duties of CIC presidents are fundraising, budget and financial management, and enrollment management. Newer presidents—those who have served four years or fewer—also cite strategic planning as an activity consuming considerable time” (Song & Hartley, 2012, p.iii). If ELCA institutions are comparable to the larger data set of CIC member schools, the financial roles and responsibilities of presidents makes succession planning and presidential preparedness critical for the long-term success of the organization’s member institutions.

Individual ELCA college and university governing boards will also benefit from this study; as Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1991) write, “The president can play a crucial role in encouraging, or undermining, effective board functioning” (p. 116). Boards and presidents must work together to maximize the potential of the institution and the president’s role. When a president devotes considerable care and attention to educating, nurturing, and communicating with board members, those boards have a deeper appreciation for the president’s role and circumstances (p. 117). This study provides board members with information on ELCA presidents that may spark conversations with the presidents with which they work that, in turn, can create a deeper relationship between the parties that positively impacts the functions of the board. This study also informs board members of the benefits of knowing the details of their president’s career path, which adds context to the ideas and decisions of their president. ELCA institutional governing boards, aspiring ELCA presidents, individual institutions, and the ELCA Universities and Colleges organization all have the potential to benefit from this research, which will directly impact the future success of ELCA colleges across the country.

Conceptual Framework

Existing literature and theories provide a system of concepts and beliefs that inform research, known as a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2013, p. 39). A conceptual framework is extremely important, because findings can be inaccurate or misrepresented if the researcher's initial assumptions are incorrect. To assure the significance of this study, a conceptual framework was established.

The conceptual framework is a tentative theory of the phenomena being studied that informs the rest of the research design (Maxwell, 2013). There are four main sources that can be used to construct a conceptual framework: (1) the researcher's experiential knowledge; (2) existing theory and research; (3) the researcher's pilot and exploratory research; and (4) thought experiments (Maxwell, 2013, p. 44). The conceptual framework of this study is comprised of the literature review and theoretical frameworks found in Chapter 2 that provide significance to the study, as they provide "a lens that shapes what is looked at and what is asked" (Creswell, 2009, p. 49).

The history of ELCA colleges, the shortage of qualified successors in higher education, career paths to college administration, and transitional experiences of college presidents are included in the literature review. Schlossberg's (1995) transition theory and Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments frame the phenomena being studied. These concepts provide an appropriate theoretical framework because the focus of the study investigates life journeys that include transitions and personal callings. These theories address both, and are explained in greater detail in Chapter 2.

With a conceptual framework guiding this study, justification of the research is strengthened. While the review of literature and supporting theoretical frameworks are critical to the research design, it is important to remember that conceptual frameworks are constructed, not found (Maxwell, 2013, p. 41). This conceptual framework guides this study, and aids in answering the research questions.

Overview of Related Literature

As a component of the conceptual framework, Chapter 2 provides a summary of the relevant literature in an effort to support the purpose and research questions of this study. Existing literature is often used to provide a framework for establishing the significance of a study (Creswell, 2009, p. 25). According to the United States Department of Education, there are over 6,900 accredited institutions in the United States. The Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) and the ELCA have an affiliation with 26 colleges and universities in the United States. This is drastically less than 1% of the post-secondary education offered in the United States. Due to the size of this branch of higher education, an overview of Lutheran higher education is necessary in order to inform readers of the uniqueness of this type of institution. This overview adds context to the stories the participants shared about their professional lives.

Literature specific to presidential roles, career paths, and transitions provide a foundational understanding of presidents in higher education and the findings of previous studies. The literature specific to roles and responsibilities presidents enjoy and challenges they face are examined.

Literature addressing the concern of the leadership gap in higher education is also included in Chapter 2. This literature is critical in shaping the significance of the

research, as this study aims to positively impact the leadership gap by educating qualified successors on how to prepare for future leadership roles.

Research on college presidencies is plentiful; however, a gap in the literature exists due to the lack of research devoted to ELCA college presidents. Much of the literature about college presidents, specifically their career paths or life journeys, focuses on the community college setting, or is focused specifically on women or minorities. By concentrating on what ELCA colleges are, the career paths and transitions of college and university presidents, and the higher education leadership gap, this research is situated within the literature, and aids in framing the study.

Theoretical Framework

A component of the conceptual framework for this study is the use of existing theory. According to Maxwell (2013), “Theory is a statement about what is going on with the phenomena that you want to understand” (p. 49). The theories used in this study broadened the researcher’s understanding of transitions and work choice, which provided well-informed insights on the occurrences of the life journeys of ELCA college presidents.

The phenomena studied here are informed by assumptions of the theoretical framework. Jones, Torres, and Arminio stated that “The theoretical framework links the unsettled question to ‘larger’ theoretical constructs” (pp. 24-25). As is the case with any unknown journey, a guide is helpful: The theoretical framework acts as a supporting guide for the researcher. To reinforce the importance of theoretical frameworks in qualitative research, Merriam (1998) stated “that we would not know what to do in conducting our research without some theoretical framework to guide us” (p.45). This

study incorporates Schlossberg's (1995) transition theory and Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments. Transition theory was used to better understand how the participants experienced changes in their professional and non-work lives and in their self-identities. The theory of vocational personalities and work environments contributed to this study by aiding in the examination of the personalities, self-perceptions, and work environments of participants.

These theories allowed the researcher to make sense of what was seen and heard, and to create connections among particular pieces of data that otherwise may have appeared unrelated. These theories assisted in addressing the purpose of this study, and answered the research question of how life journeys impact the career paths of ELCA college presidents.

Summary of Research Approach and Design

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) stated that "Qualitative research involves the scrutiny of social phenomena" (pp. 11-14, as cited in Esterberg, 2002); furthermore, qualitative research attempts to make sense of phenomena from the participant's perspective (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). A qualitative research design was used in this study to investigate the how life journeys of ELCA college presidents impacted their career paths, to the presidency. Numerous features comprise a qualitative research design that must work in harmony.

The epistemology for this study was constructivism, which Crotty (1998) defines as meanings constructed by people as they engage with and interpret the world. Because the researcher needed to interpret the lived experiences of the study's participants, a theoretical perspective of basic interpretivism was used (Merriam, 2002). Basic

interpretivism is concerned with how people make meaning of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). Narrative analysis was the methodological approach in this study. Narratives are invested in personal experiences and with the meanings associated with those experiences, which are conveyed through story-telling. This was an appropriate methodology for this research, as the purpose of the study aimed to gain insight into the life journeys of ELCA college presidents by capturing deeper understandings of transitions, career paths, personal lives, and self-identities. The key to narrative analysis is “the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first-person accounts of experience told in story form,” which met the goals and questions asked in this study (Merriam, 2002, p. 9).

A “purposefully selected” (Creswell, 2009, p. 179) group of ELCA college presidents participated in this study, and unstructured interviews were the main data collection method. Four ELCA college presidents were interviewed individually three times. As suggested by Schuetze (1977), data was collected using the narrative interviewing technique (Bauer, 1996). The concept of the technique is to have a self-generating story, one where a question-answer schema is non-existent (Bauer, 1996, p. 3). This technique allows the participants to shape the interview and share their “world view,” rather than the interviewer influencing the responses. The strategy for data analysis was analyzing the interview transcripts through varying degrees of coding, which was one component of the thematic analysis process employed. The data sources provided thick, rich description of the life journeys of the participants, assisting readers in understanding the career trajectories and life journeys of ELCA college presidents. A thorough description of the research design is detailed in Chapter 3.

Researcher Positionality

As an aspiring leader in higher education, I have a special interest in this topic. ELCA colleges, ELCA college presidents, and higher education are important to me. As a confirmed ELCA Lutheran with a strong faith, ELCA colleges and universities have deep meaning to me. My undergraduate experience was spent at an ELCA institution, and my entire professional career has been spent in student affairs at ELCA member schools. The positions I was privileged to obtain have been upper, mid-level administrative roles within the institutional hierarchies. At times, these positions have allowed me to be in close proximity, and to work directly with, the college president. Moreover, I have observed the inner workings of the president's office. My time spent at ELCA institutions has eclipsed nearly half of my life, and the academic teachings and professional experiences I have encountered in this environment have shaped who I am today.

My career experiences at ELCA institutions have included working in residential life, campus programming, orientation, student conduct, retention, teaching, and leadership initiatives. Some of the professional experiences coincide with experiences of the participants; however, I am uncertain if I will pursue an ELCA college presidency in the future.

In my opinion, life journeys are three-pronged, and include personal and professional life and self-identity. While the career paths and professional transitions of these participants are interesting to me, I find the personal lives and construction of "self-identity" as equally compelling. As a husband and father, work-life balance and learning about the sacrifices and choices current ELCA college presidents experienced is interesting. Due to my investment in ELCA higher education, I did my best to ensure a

trustworthy and ethical research process in order to contribute to the gap in the literature on life journeys and career paths of ELCA college presidents. I believe that this study positively impacts the future of ELCA institutions, which I care about deeply.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for use in this research:

Life Journeys. Refers to the professional and personal happenings the participants experienced during their professional years—prior to earning an ELCA presidency. Life journeys include career paths, impactful professional experiences, personal relationships, formation of self-identity, and other transitions identified as meaningful by the participants.

Lived Experience. Any experience that a participant shares as a first-hand account of something they personally encountered or were impacted by.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). A religious denomination that originated in 1988, and now has more than 4.8 million members (“ELCA Organization,” 2013). The ELCA was formed from three existing church bodies: The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America (ELCA 2013). The mission of the ELCA is “marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world” (para. 1). In addition to the mission, the ELCA’s signature phrase is “God’s work. Our hands.” (para. 1). This church was organized in three expressions that support its members in growing in faith and in putting faith into action. Those three expressions are congregations, synods, and the church-wide organization (2013). Over 10,000 congregations exist; all congregations are local communities that come together to worship and serve others in

various ways. Sixty-five synods support regional areas, connecting congregations for collaborative opportunities. The church-wide organization serves as the overarching administrative function of the ELCA.

Lutheran Higher Education. Twenty-six institutions of higher learning that are committed to developing young people into being the best they can be. These schools are dedicated to having students understand the importance of living a life of service (“Lutheran Colleges,” 2013). While faith and spiritual development are important at ELCA institutions, the development of faith does not occur through recitation, but through a challenging academic and co-curricular experience (“Lutheran Colleges,” 2013). Lutheran colleges are anchored in the liberal arts, residential communities, and spiritual growth—the goal is student success. Students who attend a Lutheran college experience small class sizes and dedicated professors (“Lutheran Colleges,” 2013). This explanation of the ELCA is elaborated in Chapter 2.

College President. The chief executive officer of a college or university. A college president is expected to lead a “complex organization in an environment of increasing pressures from a diverse group of constituencies” (American Council on Education, 2007, p. xi). College presidents are expected to provide leadership, embody the values of the institution, and be instrumental in fundraising efforts. Presidents spend time with students, faculty, staff, boards, and governing bodies. Presidential duties are vast, but some of the key responsibilities cited by many acting presidents in the 2007 American Council on Education article, “College President Study,” included fundraising, community relations, budget management, and strategic planning. In that same study,

findings revealed that presidents found the most satisfaction in working with students, faculty, and the external community.

Chief Academic Officer. Harlley and Godin (2010) define the Chief Academic Officer as follows:

The principal leaders and managers of the academic programs of the institutions they serve. The core functions of higher education—teaching students, conducting scholarly research, and service to the academic community—usually fall under their purview. In many cases, CAOs serve as the second executive leader of the institution, behind the president, often with oversight of institutional operations beyond the academic program. (p. 1)

Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA). As the oldest existing inter-Lutheran organization in the United States and Canada, LECNA formed in 1910 with a purpose of encouraging, assisting, and promoting cooperation among Lutheran Colleges and Universities in the United States and Canada (“Lutheran Colleges,” 2013). The mission of LECNA is “to be an informed voice of Lutheran higher education and an active and effective standard-bearer for North American church-related higher education” (para. 1). The organization is dedicated to supporting Lutheran higher education in a variety of ways, including: sponsoring ELCA presidential meetings; strengthening relationships between Lutheran colleges and Lutheran congregations; representing Lutheran higher education in Washington D.C.; and communicating with and assisting prospective students and families with learning about ELCA institutions in America (para. 2).

Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). An association of non-profit, independent colleges and universities founded in 1956 that now serves more than 630 member institutions (“Council of Independent Colleges,” 2013). These member institutions come from selective liberal arts colleges, medium-sized private universities, religious colleges, historically black colleges and universities, and single-sex institutions. The CIC aims to support college and university leadership, and to enhance the public understanding of private higher education and the contributions it makes to society (para. 1). Aiding independent colleges and universities in increasing visibility is a goal of the CIC. They also specialize in helping institutions improve their leadership expertise, educational programs, and administrative and financial performance (para. 2). This association is committed to making the case that value exists in attending independent colleges, and they do so by compiling data from reliable sources on a periodic basis.

Purposefully Selected. A strategy used to inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study by selecting particular individuals to participate due to their prior experience and knowledge.

Summary

This qualitative study focused on understanding the influence that life journeys have on attaining ELCA college presidencies, and uses Schlossberg’s transition theory (1995) and Holland’s theory of vocational personalities (1997) as a theoretical framework. As described by Leubsdorf (2006), the retirement of baby boomers between 2004 and 2014 may create a leadership squeeze, and some colleges are poorly prepared to replace departing administrators. Despite the growing concerns of the lack of qualified successors in higher education, little (if any) research has studied the life journeys or

career paths of ELCA college presidents in an effort to inform aspiring leaders of how to prepare to lead within this unique institutional setting.

This dissertation consists of five chapters: Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Literature Review; Chapter 3: Methodology; Chapter 4: Results; and Chapter 5: Discussion. The literature review frames the study and consists of an overview of the ELCA, career paths and transitions of college presidents, the leadership gap in higher education, and the theoretical frameworks that inform the research. The third chapter discusses the research design in its entirety by discussing the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, data collection, data analysis, criteria for goodness, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 illustrates lived experiences of ELCA college presidents by sharing narrative excerpts. Themes gleaned from the thematic data analysis process are shared in Chapter 4. The fifth and final chapter summarizes the findings from Chapter 4 to broaden the scope of the study. Chapter 5 also provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review highlights relevant literature about the life journeys of ELCA college presidents. ELCA colleges are discussed so readers can better understand the uniqueness of ELCA higher education. Since the participants for this study are employed as presidents at ELCA institutions, this history will help provide the audience with contexts for the shared experiences. To add context, a brief overview of Catholic higher education is also included.

A brief overview of the history of the presidency of American colleges and universities is included to emphasize the evolution of the role over time. Literature specific to demographics, roles and responsibilities, and career paths of independent college presidents today is included to illuminate the identities of independent college presidents. The demographics and responsibilities of Christian college presidents are shared, as well as the findings of previous studies of Christian college presidents.

Literature addressing the leadership gap is examined to provide a basis for understanding the problem this study aims to address. The literature discussed in this section is specific to the concern of higher education that there is a lack of qualified successors for leadership roles in the near future (Ashburn, 2007).

Finally, Schlossberg's (1995) theory of transition and Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments are described in this chapter. Through a review of the goals and research questions, it was determined that these theories serve as the framework for this study. Schlossberg's transition theory is used to understand how a person handles the beginning, throughout, and end of a particular transition in their life

(Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Holland's vocation theory (1997) addresses career development and how an environment and a person interact.

History of the ELCA

When studying the personal and career experiences of men and women who currently serve as presidents in Lutheran higher education, it is important to understand the history of the religious denomination affiliated with these leaders. To set the stage for understanding the life journeys of current ELCA college presidents, it is valuable to realize the history of the church these presidents partner with when leading their respective institutions.

In 1988, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America was formed (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). However, Lutheranism can be traced back much further than 25 years ago: The ELCA can trace its roots to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century in Europe (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). Martin Luther, a German monk, called for church reform after becoming aware of the differences between the Bible and daily church practices (KDG Wittenberg, 1997). Luther wrote, lectured, and delivered sermons that inspired others to protest the church. In an effort to reform, Luther and his followers proposed dogma to the church: "A dogma is merely a theological proposition addressed by the community to its members, rather than by members to the community" (Gritsch & Jenson, 1976, p. 4). The proposed dogma was not fully accepted by people of the Catholic Church; therefore, Lutheranism branched away from the Catholic Church. Had the proposed dogma been accepted, Lutheranism wouldn't exist today (Gritsch & Jenson, 1976 p. 5).

By the late 1500s, Lutheranism was widespread, especially in Germany and Scandinavian countries (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). As explorers from these countries migrated to America, the Lutheran faith followed and, by 1620, Lutherans had settled along the Hudson River in what are now the states of New Jersey and New York (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). In 1703, the first ordained pastor was organized in Pennsylvania (Marty, 2007).

In America, as migration increased, so did Lutheranism. By the late 1800s, two affiliations emerged: The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). By the early 1900s, additional cooperation was occurring between church bodies (Lagerquist, 1999). The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America formed in 1917, and the United Lutheran Church in America was founded a year later (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). In 1930, three German churches merged to form the American Lutheran Church. In the 1960s, the American Lutheran Church merged with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church to form a greater “American Lutheran Church” (Lutheran College Organization, 2013). Also during the 1960s, the United Lutheran Church in America joined with the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church to form the Lutheran Church in America. In 1977, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches formed and, by the early 1980s, the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the newly created Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches voted to merge and create a new Lutheran church (Lutheran College Organization, 2013).

Though it took nearly five years to coordinate, at a convention spanning April 30 through May 3, 1987, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America was born.

This historical overview is important because it adds context to the study of Lutheran higher education. Ultimately, the roles and responsibilities of ELCA college presidents are impacted by the foundations of Lutheranism; therefore, grasping this history scaffolds the understanding of the work and personal experiences of ELCA college presidents.

Lutheran Higher Education

When studying the lived experiences of ELCA college presidents, it is important to provide a context for the organization with which they are affiliated. To understand the lived experiences of the participants and their roles as ELCA college presidents, it is necessary to comprehend ELCA institutions and their unique characteristics. Much has been written about Lutheran colleges (Carlson, 1967; Jahsmann, 1960; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1990; Solberg, 1985; Simmons, 1998; The American Lutheran Church, 1977), but recent literature on Lutheran higher education is very sparse (Dovre, 2000; Christenson, 2004; Christenson, 2011).

Martin Luther was a strong advocate of being a life-long learner, and he understood the importance of being educated (Simmons, 1998). The initial focus of Lutheran higher education in America was enlarged from Luther's doctrines of Christian vocation and the priesthood (Solberg, 1985). The intent of Lutheran higher education is to emphasize "providing society with teachers, homemakers, lawyers, doctors, and a well-informed citizenry" (Solberg, 1985, p. 349). With its current focus in the liberal arts,

Lutheran higher education is grounded in that belief even today (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1989).

The mission of Lutheran higher education is “to prepare students for vocational service to society by maintaining a dialogical interaction between faith and learning. This mission entails helping students develop critical and informed reflection on the nature of the world and the Christian tradition” (Simmons, 1998, p. 2). The term, “Lutheran Difference” was coined by Christenson (2011) in recent years, and Lutheran beliefs, history and practices make up the “Lutheran difference.” None of the three facets stand alone to comprise Lutheran higher education. According to Christenson, there are six callings that shape Lutheran higher education; they are:

1. The Lutheran movement started in a university setting.
 - a. Without a group of faculty and students at the University of Wittenberg, there wouldn't even be any Lutherans (p. 15).
2. Luther embodied engaged and loving criticism.
 - a. Lutheranism was born from criticism of the church by Luther and other supporting faculty (p. 16).
 - b. “Loving criticism” is from Ephesians 4:15 which discusses speaking the truth in love (King James Study Bible, Ephesians, 4:15). It comes from a humble and caring heart that wishes the best for people.
3. Luther's conceptions of freedom and vocation.
 - a. “These ideas, as much as any, shape the Lutheran understanding of education. They are essentially connected to Luther's understanding of

God's grace, a redemption that we, as humans, do not deserve but that comes to us as a loving gift" (p. 16).

4. Luther saw knowing as a kind of piety.
 - a. It would be unfair to turn our backs on the world, one of God's creations. Lutheran institutions should be a place for people to wonder openly and fervently (p. 18).
5. Lutherans have practiced paideutic education.
 - a. "Paideia" is the development of persons (p. 18). The co-curricular experience, which encompasses things that happen outside of the classroom, has "always been an essential part of the Lutheran college experience."
6. Lutherans have come to embrace the wider world, to welcome and value diversity.
 - a. This wasn't always the case, as Lutheran higher education used to be comprised of solely Lutheran people. However, over time, Lutheranism began to value other faiths and people rather than to simply tolerate them. (p. 20)

Education informed by the Lutheran tradition can be built around five general themes: the celebration of gifts, freedom, faithful criticism, service/vocation, and paidea (Christenson, 2004, p. 138). According to Christenson, the curriculum in Lutheran higher education includes the following:

- Every student learning a discipline.
- Every student having a broad and deep exposure to the human story.

- Every student learning to practice the critical arts.
- Every student having experience in the “melioristic arts.”
- All students practicing the arts of stewardship and sustainable living.
- Every student having ample curricular occasions for meaning-making.
- Every student practicing a self-expressive art.

The curriculum is “the what” being taught, but without “the how,” it is difficult to create an effective learning environment. The pedagogy, or “the how” associated with Lutheran higher education includes the following:

- Teaching that leaves room for wonder.
- Teaching that shows respect for language, for argument, for the tools of thinking and reasoning and investigating and creating.
- Teaching that is an induction into a community of discourse. (Christenson, 2004)

Knowing the mission, callings, curriculum, and pedagogy of Lutheran higher education presents a foundation for this institutional type moving forward. Simmons (1988) wrote that the “task is to bring into creative interaction relationships of faith and learning as those relationships encounter an increasingly global and multicultural society” (p. 8). Christenson (2004) adds “the task of maintaining the Lutheran identity of a college/university is the work of all those engaged in knowing and enabling mutual human becoming” (p.11).

To fully understand the life journeys of ELCA college presidents, it is critical to know the environment in which they work. Holland’s (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments explains that people work and are called to serve in

roles that align with their personalities. Therefore, gaining an understanding of Lutheran higher education also informs what the personalities of the participants in this study may be. Holland's (1997) theory is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

History of Catholic Higher Education

Priests accompanied French and Spanish settlers to the English colonies as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (O'Keefe, 1997). However, the early years of Catholic education was not without its struggles due to laws prohibiting people from joining the Catholic Church (Mahoney, 2003). Because of the difficulties in joining the Catholic Church, there were few Catholics in the New World, making it difficult to secure a critical mass. While Catholics faced many challenges in states such as Massachusetts, where they were asked to leave during the early 1700s, Georgetown College opened in Washington in 1789. Catholic colleges were initially created to prepare young men for the ministry and to promote faith (Mahoney, 2003; Dosen, 2009). While Georgetown College (as well as many other Catholic institutions) opened, they struggled to stay afloat during the 1800s. Only 20% of all colleges stayed open, which made the Catholic rate of 25% seem strong; but, this rate also indicates that three of every four institutions failed (Dosen, 2009).

Moving into the twentieth century, the year 1967 is often considered the most significant year of the century for Catholic higher education. In 1967, a call for participation of lay people in the church occurred from the Vatican II (Gleason, 1995). With this happening, the Land O'Lakes statement took place (Gleason, 1995). As was the case in the early to mid-1800s, Catholic schools struggled in the mid-1900s as well. Due

to necessity, reaching beyond the boundaries of religious affiliation provided some institutions better odds of success and continued existence (Gleason, 1995).

At the Land O'Lakes seminar, held in Wisconsin in 1967, attendees examined the Catholic identity, academic excellence, and academic freedom (Hellwig, 2003)—all integral parts of the Land O'Lakes statement. The statement was described as a “declaration of independence from the hierarchy and a symbolic turning point” (Gleason, 1995, p. 317). The Land O'Lakes statement was the foundation of Catholic higher education for decades. The statement was signed by all seminar participants, and had ten total sections. Using and building from the Land O'Lakes statement, John Paul II (1990) described a Catholic college in four succinct characteristics:

1. A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community.
2. A continuing reflection in the light of Christian faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research.
3. Fidelity to the Christian mission as it comes through the Church.
4. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal that gives meaning to life. (p.4)

Most literature on Catholic higher education suggests that a significant goal of Catholic institutions is attempting to maintain a Catholic identity (Hellwig, 2003). Knowing that Lutheranism is the direct offspring of Catholicism, it is important to have a sense of the

meaning and history of Catholic higher education when examining components of Lutheran higher education.

History of the College Presidency

Understanding the lives of college presidents in the twenty-first century requires a historical understanding of the role. In 1640, Henry Dunster was elected president of Harvard University (Wessel & Keim, 1994). This began the history of the American college president, and much has been written about presidential leadership in American higher education since.

The role of president has been complex from its beginning. During colonial college life, successful presidents “from the start had to be entrepreneurs in the broadest and best sense of the word” (Thelin, 2011, p. 34). During the American Revolution, college presidents wore many hats, including professor, chaplain, librarian, recruiter, fundraiser, registrar, businessman and even groundskeeper (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004). While the position required a broad set of skills, the most influential piece of any presidency during American colonial times was the president’s character, which was directly impacted by his role of clergyman. Nearly all college presidents before the American Revolution were members of the clergy (Brubacher & Rudy 2004). The role of the president has progressed throughout history (Rudolph, 1990).

By the mid-1800s, with the country continuing to expand, nearly 1,000 colleges existed in the United States (Bogue & Aper, 2000). With more colleges came the need for more leaders. Scholars began to be viewed favorably over others, with clerical competency and theological credentials (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958). This was a time when faculty members began advancing to presidency roles in higher education.

The increase in industrialization, which was a direct impact of the first World War, evolved the role of the president by the early 1900s (Rudolph, 1990). Colleges no longer aimed to develop future clergyman only, but were also charged with educating and training students on specific professions. Due to the wider purpose of attending college in order to gain skill training, a more diverse student body was present on college campuses after World War I (Rudolph, 1990). With changes in the curriculum and the purpose of American colleges, the role of the president would adapt and grow. In addition to clergymen serving in these chief executive roles, businessmen, politicians, educators, lawyers, and even military men were beginning to hold the position of president (Leslie, 1992).

By the time World War I ended, colleges had come to resemble business corporations with a hierarchical structure (Gruber, 1975). The president's role experienced the most drastic changes during the early 1900s because of this bureaucratization, which caused the stature of the president to grow enormously. A leading contributor to the changed responsibilities of presidents was standardization (Hawkins, 1992).

After World War II there were more than 1,900 colleges in the United States, and enrollments were booming (Bogue & Aper, 2000). While the role of the president continued to be critical, the organization as a whole had developed to a point where shared input—both internal and external—was necessary (Amey, 2002).

In today's America, the modern college president has become an administrator with very little academic responsibility (Rile, 2001). Many presidents see the institution they serve as a business, which drives them to worry about the bottom line, finances, and

fundraising (Wiseman, 1991). Today, more than 16 million students attend more than 4,000 institutions of higher education in America (Bogue & Aper, 2000). Because of the magnitude of the higher education system, presidents still play vital roles in their institutions; though, they do not have as much power and control as they once did (Rile, 2001). According to Song & Hartley (2012), this is primarily because of the lack of academic involvement presidents now have at their institutions, which is due to a focus on fundraising. Today, presidents are facing considerable pressure (Rubin, 2004) and preparation for these roles, which is necessary for success (Song & Hartley, 2012).

Literature related to the history of college presidencies is broad, and does not directly capture the roles and responsibilities of ELCA presidents throughout history. However, this section revealed the importance of the evolution of the American college president over time (Rudolph, 1990). More pertinent information regarding ELCA college presidents is discussed later in this chapter.

Independent College Presidents Today

While having a broad historical overview provides context to role of participants as college presidents, more can be learned from investigating literature more closely related to ELCA colleges and their chief executive officers. *The 2006 American College President Study*, conducted by the American Council on Education (2007), is a comprehensive report that provides information on demographics, career paths, and experiences of college and university presidents. A report was written by the CIC (2011) on the data from *The American College President Study* specific to its 640 members who participated in the larger study (Song & Hartley, 2012). This report anchors this section due the institutions of the participants in this study also being members of the CIC. This

section discusses demographics, roles and responsibilities, and career paths discovered in these two studies, which provides more current information on college presidents today.

Demographics

The typical CIC president is a sixty year old, married white male with an earned doctorate degree, who has been president for about seven years, and is very satisfied in his work (Song & Hartley, 2012). The age of college presidents at all institutional levels continues to climb. From 1986 to 2006, the average age of a college president increased more than eight years, from 52 to 60 years old (American Council on Education, 2007). CIC presidents are the youngest group among presidents of four-year colleges and universities. with an average age of 60.3 years (Song & Hartley, 2012).

Seventy-five percent of CIC presidents are male (Song & Hartley, 2012), while the percentage of women presidents at CIC institutions has remained consistent at 25 % since 2006 (Song & Hartley). Song & Hartley also identify that the minority presidents at CIC institutions has declined from 8 % to 6% over that same period, which is a level one-half to one-third of the levels at public institutions . In the larger data set of the *2006 American College President Study*, men held 77% of the presidencies and minority presidents were 13.6 % of the total population (American Council on Education, 2007).

The overwhelming majority (83%) of men and women serving as president at CIC institutions are married (Song & Hartley, 2012). That statistic is very similar to the larger data set of the *2006 American College President Study* of 85% of all presidents being married (American Council on Education, 2007). Both studies show that more than 75% of college presidents have earned doctoral degrees. The *2006 American College President Study* shows that 76% of all presidents have either a PhD or an EdD, and that

percentage climbs to 80% for CIC presidents. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of presidents by institutional type.

Table 1

Characteristics of Presidents by Institutional Type, 2011

| | Public Two-Year | Public BA/MA | Public Doctoral | Private Doctoral | CIC |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|------|
| Demographics | | | | | |
| Age (in years) | 60.0 | 62.7 | 63.3 | 62.6 | 60.3 |
| Women (%) | 32 | 24 | 24 | 20 | 25 |
| Minority (%) | 14 | 21 | 19 | 5 | 6 |
| Currently married (%) | 88 | 90 | 91 | 79 | 83 |
| Has children (%) | 85 | 85 | 87 | 85 | 83 |
| Education | | | | | |
| Has PhD or EdD (%) | 86 | 88 | 90 | 92 | 80 |
| Fields of highest degree earned | | | | | |
| Business (%) | 3 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Education or higher education (%) | 68 | 28 | 13 | 8 | 31 |
| Humanities/fine arts (%) | 7 | 21 | 9 | 13 | 20 |
| Law (%) | 2 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Religion/theology (%) | 1 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 11 |
| Social sciences (%) | 6 | 18 | 27 | 36 | 15 |
| STEM (%) | 12 | 15 | 27 | 26 | 10 |
| Other (%) | 1 | 4 | 12 | – | 2 |
| Immediate prior position | | | | | |
| President/CEO (%) | 25 | 21 | 19 | 23 | 19 |
| Chief academic officer (%) | 40 | 44 | 42 | 49 | 29 |
| Other academic officer (%) | 7 | 11 | 19 | 18 | 11 |
| Non-academic officer (%) | 14 | 11 | 5 | 0 | 13 |
| Faculty/Chair (%) | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Outside higher education (%) | 5 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 15 |
| Years in present job | 7.1 | 6.9 | 6.0 | 6.8 | 7.1 |
| Holds a tenured faculty position (%) | 5 | 61 | 88 | 70 | 28 |
| Years of experiences in: | | | | | |
| Primarily in the classroom/lab | 5.5 | 7.7 | 11.4 | 11.5 | 6.5 |
| Primarily a full-time administrator | 21.7 | 19.5 | 16.0 | 18.5 | 17.0 |
| Split between academic and administrative duties | 2.5 | 4.0 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 3.2 |
| Employed full-time outside of higher education | 3.8 | 4.1 | 3.4 | 4.0 | 6.0 |

Source: Song and Hartley (2012, p.4).

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the president is one that is very complex. A component of the 2006 edition of the *American College President Study* was a roundtable discussion with presidents who had served in that role for a minimum of ten years (American Council on Education, 2007). During this roundtable, the participants identified 16 major job functions that took more time in 2007 than they did in 1997, which shows how time-consuming and challenging the job can be. CIC presidents identified their three most time-consuming duties as fundraising, budget and financial management, and enrollment management (Song & Hartley, 2012). Participants in the *2006 American College President Study* stated that community relations, rather than enrollment, was one of their most time-consuming responsibilities (American Council on Education, 2007). The others remained the same.

Teaching courses, serving on governing boards, and being active in professional organizations were other areas of responsibility of CIC presidents (Song & Hartley, 2012). These responsibilities were also reflected in the *2006 American College President Study*, and presidents of both studies stated that they enjoyed working with students, faculty, staff, and donors. A challenge found in both studies included working with faculty and their resistance to change (American College on Education, 2007; Song & Hartley, 2012). CIC presidents also found insufficient funding and a lack of time to reflect as other challenges, and the larger pool of presidents had additional challenges with governing boards and legislators. Table 2 summarizes the time-consuming duties of presidents.

Table 2

Time Consuming Duties of College Presidents, 2011

| Time-Consuming Duties | Public Two-Year (%) | Public BA/MA (%) | Public Doctoral (%) | Private Doctoral (%) | CIC (%) |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Fundraising | 25 | 45 | 53 | 82 | 72 |
| Budget/financial management | 59 | 65 | 58 | 61 | 57 |
| Enrollment management | 11 | 20 | 14 | 12 | 31 |
| Strategic planning | 16 | 22 | 10 | 30 | 29 |
| Governing board relations | 21 | 10 | 27 | 27 | 25 |
| Community relations | 39 | 26 | 18 | 9 | 15 |
| Personnel issues (excluding faculty) | 34 | 15 | 10 | 9 | 14 |
| Academic issues | 8 | 9 | 6 | 18 | 12 |
| Faculty issues | 16 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Capital improvement projects | 20 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 11 |
| Entrepreneurial ventures | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Government relations | 22 | 24 | 23 | 3 | 3 |
| Athletics | 1 | 10 | 24 | 0 | 3 |
| Campus internationalization | 1 | 2 | 0 | 12 | 2 |
| Media/public relations | 4 | 7 | 13 | 0 | 2 |
| Accountability/assessment of student learning | 8 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Crisis management | 3 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 2 |
| Risk management/legal issues | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Student life/conduct issues | 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 2 |
| Technology planning | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Song and Hartley (2012, p.11)

Career Pathways

Independent college presidents have more diverse career backgrounds than presidents of other institutional types (Song & Hartley, 2012). Fifteen percent of presidents of independent colleges are hired from outside higher education. While the position of chief academic officer (CAO) is the most common route to the presidency in independent colleges, only 33% of their presidents take this path (Song & Hartley, 2012). In comparison, the *2006 American College President Study* illustrates that 55 % of public

institutions presidents served as CAO prior to their presidency (American Council on Education, 2007). Presidents serving independent institutions were hired for these positions from within the institution only 25 % of the time (Song & Hartley, 2012). In comparison, 33% of doctoral-granting, public institution presidents were promoted internally (American Council on Education, 2007).

Literature related to current college presidents was based largely on all institutional classifications that included public two-year, public bachelor's and master's institutions, public doctoral, private doctoral, and independent colleges. The data presented in the literature shows that the independent college president is quite similar to that of his or her counterparts at other institutional types (Song & Hartley, 2012, p. 3). Understanding who these leaders are helps to understand the participants in this study.

Christian College Presidents

While the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) includes Christian colleges, further literature specific to Christian institutions is beneficial to better understand who the presidents of ELCA schools are. It is important to provide information about Christian college presidents.

Previous Studies

The amount of research on Christian colleges and their presidents is much less than research about two-year and four-year public institutions and their chief executive officers. However, some research on Christian colleges has occurred. The *Danforth Commission on Church Colleges and Universities*, published in 1965, was the first study of Christian colleges. This study surveyed 817 church-sponsored institutions (Patillo & Mackenzie, 1965). The commission uncovered that academic preparation and

administrative skills were lacking, and that such skills were extremely important due to the multiple roles Christian college presidents are asked to fulfill. These roles included managing finances, academics, and the physical plant—which shows the diversity of their work (Patillo & Mackenzie, 1965).

The first profile of Christian college presidents surfaced in 1972 (Seaton, 1972). Due to the broad range of Christian colleges in the Danforth Commission, Seaton felt it necessary to dig deeper to determine the characteristics of a particular subset of Christian colleges. Seaton's study used one segment of data supplied by the Danforth Commission, which he refers to as "Evangelical Christian Colleges" (1972, p. 8). These "Evangelical Christian Colleges" are defined by Patillo and Mackenzie (1965) as "defenders of the faith colleges," indicating that the college assures itself that it is committed to specific religious beliefs, that student conduct is closely monitored, and that course requirements in religion are substantial. Seaton's research showed that the typical "Evangelical Christian College" president was 51.9 years old and had served as president for 7.9 years (p. 103). The comparative analysis conducted in Seaton's study showed that the national average for college presidents was only slightly higher at 52.9 years of age (p. 103) and that the national average for years of tenure in the presidency was 7.8 years (p. 105). Seaton's study also found that 72 % of "Evangelical Christian College" presidents earned doctoral degrees (p.74). The most time-consuming responsibilities of participants in Seaton's study included meetings with internal constituents, general administration, and fundraising (p. 90).

In 1978, additional data on the demographics, roles and responsibilities, and career paths of Christian College presidents were collected by Dyson. He studied 72

diverse denominational college presidents, and found that their average age was 52.7 years. One hundred percent of the participants were married, 66% had children, and 90% of the presidents had earned terminal degrees (Dyson, 1978).

Oosting (1985) conducted a study that he later presented at the Deans of Christian Coalition Conference. His study considered the administrative approach of ten Christian liberal arts college presidents, and found that in order to be an effective leader, presidents had to spend considerable amounts of time building relationships, delegating, and strategically planning. The two most recent studies were Guthrie and Noftzger (1992) who examined the future of church-affiliated colleges and the role of the president in making the future successful, and a study by Tunheim and McLean (2010) that was devoted to understanding the lived experiences of ELCA college presidents as they leave the role of president. Tunheim and McLean researched what the transition was like for current ELCA presidents who were either retiring or moving to a different position. Themes included pre-exit, exit, and post-exit stages. The pre-exit stage involved both personal and institutional reasons for departure, including board relations, accomplishing the vision, institutional milestones, losing the edge, age, exhaustion, and the need for something new. The “lived experience study” is the only research that is readily accessible and dedicated solely to ELCA college presidents.

Being aware of the findings of previous studies conducted on a similar group of people investigated in this study adds context. While the participant groups are different in each study, there is relevant information for the many groups that fall within the scope of Christian college presidencies.

Transitions for College Presidents

Previous studies examined the transitions faced by college presidents during the beginning and end of their presidency. Others have considered the transition for the institution that faces a new presidential hire. However, no literature that is readily accessible has intentionally addressed the life transitions, in addition to professional transitions, that college presidents encounter, especially as it relates to the specific cohort of ELCA college presidents. While literature on the transitions of college presidents concentrates primarily on work-related experiences, specifically when they enter the presidential position, understanding these transitions informs the current study of the life journeys of ELCA college presidents.

Succession Transitions

Sanaghan, Goldstein, and Gavel (2008) wrote, “Hundreds of presidential transitions take place every year in higher education,” and argued that presidential transitions are very complex for the institution and the incoming president (p. 7). In an article discussing the shared experience of a departing president and her successor, Tracy and Abernathy (2010) discussed three key factors that allowed the transition to be orchestrated; they are:

- Visibly showing appreciation and respect for each other.
- Phasing the leadership hand-off.
- Partnering the board throughout the transition.

New presidents face numerous challenges after having taken over as chief executive officer, including the power of the institutional culture, the “shadow” of the previous president, hidden problems, connecting on a personal level with diverse stakeholders,

managing the learning curve, and determining whom to trust (Sanaghan, et al., 2008, p.7). Institutional culture drives the behavior, strategic thinking, and decision-making of an institution; therefore, it is extremely important for new presidents to learn the history of the school, listen to the stories that are told, and to pay close attention to what people say within the institution (Sanaghan, et al., 2008, p. 15). This is a very important piece to the transition for a new president.

Establishing one's self as the leader of the institution early on can be difficult, but it is extremely important as a new president (Sanaghan, et al., 2008). While the previous president may have fulfilled his or her role well, carving a new path as a new president is necessary for long-term success. Developing relationships with people within the organization is critical for a smooth transition into a presidency. In Sanaghan et al.'s study, one president described the process of developing relationships with campus constituents as "walking the waterfront," meeting with faculty and staff and visiting multiple offices and dining on campus (p. 18).

Research suggests that the college presidency is a very lonely position (Song & Hartley, 2012); therefore, as a new president, it is necessary to have confidants (Sanaghan, et.al., 2008). However, choosing who to share information with and who to get support from is very important. Knowing and establishing who to trust is a key to sustained success as a college president. To develop these relationships, incoming college presidents must understand the culture and learn about its hidden problems. Research indicates that presidents should speak to students regularly and stay "at home" as much as possible during the first year in the position (Sanaghan, et. al., 2008).

Beyond the “Office”

The role of college president is much deeper than the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of the job itself. This deeper perspective is where the literature connects to the current study. According to a study by McLaughlin (1996) of college presidents that used formal interviews and informal conversations, the data concluded that the greatest surprise to an entering college president is the realization that the role is much more than a job itself (p. 8). The study goes on to suggest that the presidency is a role that defines how that person is perceived (p. 8). The study by Sanaghan et al. (2008) also utilized interviews as its methodology, and determined that “the personal journey was as important as the intellectual one” and that college presidents struggled to find balance in their lives and their families suffered (p. 8).

Work-Life Balance

With a college presidency being more than a job, research indicates the work has implications for all facets of a president’s life. Ciampa and Watkins (1999) wrote that “Transitions place extreme physical and emotional demands on new leaders. You will need to find ways to conserve your energy and preserve your emotional balance and perspective to stay on the rested edge” (p. 221). That statement sums up what many studies have shared with college presidents. For example, in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article by Basinger (2001) on work-life balance of female college presidents, it was evident that balance is a very difficult thing to achieve. Remarks captured suggested that women in particular have so many things to attend to that it is imperative that they find a way to achieve a balance. The participants in this study revealed that finding a work-life balance is a lengthy process that may never occur, and that the transition to the

presidency is extremely difficult and lonely. While most college presidents have held other administrative or leadership positions that are demanding, they are often shocked by the pace and schedule of the position of chief executive officer (McLaughlin, 1996). McLaughlin's (1996) research uncovered great concern for the demands of the presidency:

The extraordinarily long hours, filled with an unrelenting series of appointments and appearances and an overflowing in-basket, mean that the president must always be "on"; there is little time for reflection, much less for self-renewal. The problem of managing a schedule is exacerbated by the fact that during the first year in office, the new president is under pressure, both external and self-imposed, to be everywhere, to take advantage of every opportunity to learn more about the institution, to meet key constituents, to see and be seen. (p.7)

Presidents serve as the "living logo" at all times for the institution (p. 8). This demand does not lend itself well to achieving a work-life balance. Feelings of validation and legitimacy automatically arrive with the president's attendance at a particular event or activity. Even the opportunity to reflect and re-charge is negatively impacted by workload. Even the words that presidents speak are taken extremely seriously, which is challenging for presidents who are often extroverted (McLaughlin, 1996). This work-life balance, along with life transitions, responsibilities, and challenges a new presidency presents, can cause emotional dips for college presidents (Sanaghan, et.al, 2008).

Literature on the transitions of college presidents provides valuable information about succession transitions, challenges new presidents face, transitions outside the office, and work-life balance. Since the majority of previous literature has focused on

succession transitions, rather than on the transitions leading up to the succession and the transitions presidents face throughout their career ascendency, much is left to be uncovered.

The Leadership Gap

The 2011 CIC report on data from the *American College President Study* expressed a concern for the high turnover rate of CIC presidents over the next five years (Song & Hartley, 2012). The data suggests that nearly half of all presidents will be leaving their current roles by 2016. This turnover calls for successors who are prepared and capable of serving as a college president. In partnership with the turnover concern is, according to Leubsdorf (2006), the lack of qualified successors ready to fill the vacancies left by the projected departures and that higher education is a career field that does not do a great job of succession planning or preparing leaders for future positions.

Retiring Leaders

The 2006 *American College President Study* explains that, in 1986, 42% of all presidents were 50 years of age or younger, and that 14% were 61 or older (American Council on Education, 2007). Twenty years later, in the same study, only 8 % of current college presidents were 50 years old or younger, and those 61 or older ballooned to 49%. This data suggests that with older presidents, a greater number of them will be retiring in the near future. To add perspective to the concern of the impending presidential retirements, statistics from previous studies are discussed below.

In a 2007 *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, California community college presidency turnovers were discussed (Ashburn, 2007). Of the 109 community colleges in California at that time, 19 presidencies became vacant that year. Even before that, the

average number of yearly searches conducted in the California community college system was seventeen. In a 2006 review of three institutions, Leubsdorf (2006) documented that Clemson University anticipated 558 eligible retirees by 2011. Furthermore, Kansas University had 75 % of its vice provosts, provosts, and chancellors over the age of 55. At Montgomery College, 55 % of its total administration, and 65% of the full-time faculty, were over the age of 55.

Unqualified Successors

Accompanying data on the departure and age of presidents is literature on succession planning and leadership preparation in higher education. The late 1960s and early 1970s was a booming period for higher education, which resulted in the need for more leaders and administrators (Leubsdorf, 2006). As retirement data suggests, those employees have aged, and are now eligible to leave their posts. The creation of the leadership gap is due in large part to the flurry of hiring that occurred in the 60s and 70s (Shults, 2001). Due to the ability of the Baby Boomer generation to be employed in higher education and to advance to presidencies and other top-tier administrative roles, the pathway to presidency has been filled with aging Boomers. Therefore, people in positions preparing for presidencies are also older, and are preparing for retirement. Amey, VanDerLinden, and Brown (2001) researched the six prominent positions that lead to the presidency; they are:

- Chief academic officer
- Business/financial officer
- Chief student affairs officer
- Director of continuing education

- Business-and-industry liaison
- Occupational/vocational education leader

What Amey et al. found was that many of these positions were filled by aging Baby Boomers who would be retiring in the same time frame as many of the presidents leaving their roles within the next five years.

Because of the pipeline being jammed with other older administrators, qualified successors for departing presidents is very limited (Shults, 2001). The culture of academic administration is one that does not require people to prepare their successors and, due to this culture and the future vacancies, a talent war in higher education is going to occur (Leubsdorf, 2006). To avoid (or at least minimize) the recruitment battle, some institutions are beginning to understand the importance of preparing future leaders (Leubsdorf, 2006). Institutions are initiating mentoring programs, being intentional with work assignments, and increasing professional development expectations (Shults, 2001; Leubsdorf, 2006; Song & Hartley, 2012). In 2002, three main options for increasing leadership development were graduate programs, in-house programs, and institutes/workshops (Watts & Hammons, 2002). Partnering those options with solutions to address the leadership shortage includes assessing needs, strengthening all existing avenues to leadership exposure, opening new avenues, strengthening the selection process for leadership positions, expanding institutional programs, tapping existing expertise, assessing outcomes, and sharing information with aspiring leaders (Watts & Hammons, 2002).

Recommendations from the *2006 American College President Study* and the 2011 CIC report include preparing future leaders to assume the presidency, enhancing

preparation for future leaders currently employed outside of higher education, and paying special attention to preparing women and people of color for future presidencies (American Council on Education, 2007; Song & Hartley, 2012).

Information related to the leadership gap in higher education is important in addressing the problem this study aimed to address. Although the group of ELCA institutions is small, understanding what higher education is facing in general with retiring presidents and the lack of qualified successors reinforces the significance of this study and the problem being addressed.

Schlossberg's Theory of Transition

The literature suggests that the transitions college presidents experience are significant. Life journeys include numerous transitions in work and in non-work situations. To better understand the life journeys of ELCA college presidents, as this study aimed to do, understanding what transitions are and how to capture the meaning associated with them was useful.

Schlossberg's (1995) transition theory is an appropriate framework for this research. It helped to clarify the meaning-making of the transitions the participants experienced during their life journeys. One purpose of this study was to investigate the life journeys of ELCA college presidents, and Schlossberg's transition theory helped the researcher determine how the participants experienced and handled transitions throughout their lives. Transition theory aligns with the research design for this study, and reinforces its approach in carrying out this research because the reflective process associated with managing, coping, and accepting transitions is constructive and interpretative, and can be best captured through reflection (Evans, Forney, Guido-Brito, 1998).

Schlossberg et al. (1995) define transition as “any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (p. 27). Additionally, an event can only be considered a transition if the individual attaches significance to it (Evans, et. al. 1998). Schlossberg’s transition theory includes three different types of transitions: (1) anticipated transitions, which are predictable events; (2) unanticipated events, which are not planned; and (3) non-events, which are expected but do not occur. The theory also considers context and impact. It asks the questions: “What is the relationship between the person and the transition, and how did the transition change the person’s life?” During data analysis, the researcher considered the types of transitions, context, and impact that the participants experienced during events to which they attach significance and that help answer the research question for the study: “Do themes exist in the life journey of ELCA college presidents as they ascended to their current positions?”

Evans et al. (1998) described Schlossberg’s argument “that transitions consist of a series of phases they termed as ‘moving in, moving through, and moving out’” (p. 112). They also identified four major sets of factors that influence a person’s ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. These are known as the “4 S’s” (p. 49). These “4 S’s” informed data analysis and the findings, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments

As articulated in the literature, the lack of qualified successors is a concern in higher education (Leubsdorf, 2006). Personal experiences help shape who a person is as a human being. In part, a life journey is a compilation of those personality-forming experiences people have. It is through lived experiences that a person’s identity is shaped

and surfaces. Due to the unique culture of ELCA institutions, personality type and self-identity can be assumed to be factors that are linked to the pursuit of an ELCA college presidency (Lutheran Colleges Organization, 2013). To support that assumption, this study used Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments. This study aimed to better understand how the life journeys of ELCA college presidents informed his or her eventual attainment of the chief executive officer at ELCA institutions. In partnership with transition theory and knowing that lived experiences helps create a personal identity, better understanding who ELCA college presidents are and what makes them "come alive" served this study well.

Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments consists of four assumptions: (1) people resemble six personality types; (2) there are six environments that parallel each of the personality types; (3) people seek environments where they can use their talents; and (4) behavior results from the interaction of the person and the environment (Evans et al., 1998).

The six personality types are termed as realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. People categorized within each personality type see themselves as follows:

- Realistic: Practical, mechanical, and realistic.
- Investigative: Precise, scientific, and intellectual.
- Artistic: Expressive, original, and independent.
- Social: Helpful, friendly, and trustworthy.
- Enterprising: Energetic, ambitious, and sociable.

- Conventional: Orderly and good at following a set plan (Evans, et. al., 1998, p. 228).

The environment classifications in this theory use the same terminology as that of the personality types, and are directly associated with them. Through thematic analysis of the interviews conducted, the personality types and environmental classifications the participants shared about themselves and their employer were captured. Utilizing Holland's (1997) theory as a guide in this study aided the researcher in sharing how the participants saw themselves, what their personalities were, and how that impacted their career trajectories—which were all orienting questions within this study. By better understanding how the college presidents saw themselves, future leaders may be better equipped to determine if their personality, work approach, and preferred work environment aligns with the role of ELCA college president. This theory and the guiding principles for this study are further discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Narrative Analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) distinguished between two types of narrative research: analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives is the review of some form of narrative in hopes to find generalizations of the group being studied. Narrative analysis, which was used as the methodology in this study, is where a researcher studies a particular case and produces storied accounts of their findings (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p. 76). Narrative analysis focuses on the ways people use stories to interpret the world, and are a way of expressing experience—which is why this approach complements this study. Steffen (1997) explains that stories are fundamental to human understanding (p. 99). He goes on to say that “in many instances stories are told as a way to share experiences that

may even address common problems” (p. 99). Narratives allow people, both storytellers and their audience, to make meaning of things and, at times, find a common understanding in order to engage in acceptance. This common understanding enables aspiring leaders to engage in personal and professional development to prepare them for future leadership roles. DeVault (1994), in her review of Riesmann’s *Narrative Analysis* (1993) published, states that narrative is virtually everywhere in the world now (p. 315). Narrative is in interactions, interview data, writings, and the stories we share. If narratives are all around us, it only makes sense to consider an analysis of those stories as a valid research technique (DeVault, 1994). Moen (2006) discusses three claims about narrative research: The first is that people organize their experiences through stories. The second is that stories are told through the lens of past and present experiences, and third, due to context and experience, there are multiple voices being portrayed in most narratives, even if those voices are subtle or possibly unintentional (Moen, 2006). These claims also provide a sense of validity to narrative research.

According to Frank (2002), “Narratability means that events and lives are affirmed as being worth telling and thus worth living. Being narratable implies value and attributes reality” (p. 111). If a person is unable to narrate their experiences, it may be perceived, or the person may even feel a sense of worthlessness. Sharing and cataloging personal experiences through stories are essential in making sense of the world we live in (Frank, 2002).

The second claim clearly considers the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why” of a story. It is extremely important to understand the context from which a story is being told (Moen, 2006). The third claim directly relates to past experiences, and

means that because of the setting, the different characters of the story, and the personal experiences of the storyteller within that setting, multiple voices will be portrayed during the story (Moen, 2006).

Narrative research is a means to question common understanding, portray experience, and reconsider what may seem standard and necessary (Coulter & Smith, 2009). Holley and Colyar (2009) add to this by discussing the interconnected components of narrative and how they shape audience and participant interpretations of social reality, otherwise known as meaning-making. The interconnected pieces include the setting, characters, plot, and context. When considering all of these pieces, an audience can generate questions, concerns, and issues, all of which produces more conversation and, ultimately, a more constructed understanding of social reality.

Narrative inquiry has been used in an abundance of studies. A brief overview of three studies provides an explanation as to how narrative analysis informed this study. Smeyers and Verhesschen (2001) conducted research on bridging the gap between empirical and conceptual research, and determined that narrative analysis was the best way to do that. This research found that “narrative analysis holds the “central position of the human as an actor and the central focus on meaning” (p. 77), which is precisely what this study aims to provide readers. While Smeyers and Verhesschen’s study relied heavily on the research of others, Yiu, Englar-Carlson, and Minichiello (2011) conducted their own study, investigating the mid-life career transitions of men using narrative analysis. This study included fourteen open-ended interviews with seven participants that lasted 60 to 90 minutes each. Mirrored in this study, coding and thematic analysis were utilized in data analysis. The findings were presented in both narrative and interpretive

ways, and excerpts of the interviews supported the interpretations and were interwoven throughout the findings section. It was determined that this was the best way to capture the “lived experiences” of the participants (Yiu, Englar-Carlson, & Minichhiello, p. 275). This is the same way findings and narrative quotes are shared in this study. Another study that reinforces the decision to use narrative analysis as a methodology in this study was the Olson and Craig’s (2012) study of social justice in education. The approach used was autobiographical, as the researchers shared stories of their own teaching experiences in narrative form, and then analyzed what they narrated. What surfaced from the findings was what the researchers did well and also what was not as successful in the classroom and how lived experiences are best expressed through narrative.

These three studies provided the rationale for using narrative analysis in this study. Smeyers and Verhesschen (2001) address how narrative analysis provides a bridge between different forms of research, which allowed this study to resonate with a wide range of readers. Another study focused on transitions, utilized narrative analysis, and presented a clear vision of the methodological approach the study could take (Yiu et. al, 2011)—all of which are large parts this current study. Lastly, the autobiographical “narrative” study expressed the power of narrative and showed how rich and thick the findings could be, which creates a sense of credibility, plausibility, and transferability for readers (Olson & Craig, 2012; Merriam, 2002).

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature relevant to this study. The history of the ELCA and Lutheran higher education were discussed to allow readers to understand the unique characteristics and foundations of ELCA colleges and universities.

A historical overview of the college presidency is important to this study due to shifts in roles, responsibilities, and power over time. Significant literature specific to independent college presidents and Christian college presidents provides a basis for understanding ELCA college presidents. Previous studies were examined in this chapter to assist in framing an understanding of the participants in this study in terms of demographics, roles and responsibilities, and career paths of independent and Christian college presidents. To support the purpose of this study, literature regarding the transitions of college presidents was included to inform readers of how the participants may have experienced certain events during their presidencies. To illuminate the problem addressed by this study, the literature revealed the growing concerns of the leadership gap and the lack of qualified successors for college presidencies.

Theoretically, Schlossberg's (1995) theory of transition and Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments were described in this chapter, as they were used to frame the current study. Transition theory was used to understand how presidents dealt with and managed the many transitions that led them to the presidency. The theory of vocational personalities and work environments brought an understanding of the relationships between personalities, self-perceptions, and work environments of the participants. Finally, literature and studies that inform and detail narrative analysis were described in this chapter to support the methodology chosen for conducting this study.

The Qualitative Paradigm

The life journeys and transitional experiences of current ELCA college presidents was researched and analyzed during this study. The overarching research question is: “How do life journeys impact career paths to ELCA college presidencies?” Sub-questions include: “What influences enabled the participants to advance to ELCA college presidencies?” and “What is the interplay between the participants’ personal lives, self-identities, and careers, and how have different life events and priorities influenced the participant’s career trajectory?” Merriam (2002) defined the key to understanding qualitative research as the idea that “meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). To best understand the life journeys of the participants, their personal stories informed the researcher as to how they made meaning of their lived experiences. With the goals and purpose of this study aimed at better understanding the personal experiences and lives of the participants, socially constructed meaning-making was necessary, and “the product must be richly descriptive” (p. 5). Therefore, qualitative research was the appropriate approach for this study.

There are four qualitative process elements in a research design. They include epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. In well-designed qualitative studies, the different process elements complement one another. The epistemology “conveys philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 38). Lying behind the methodology, and also grounded in philosophy, the theoretical perspective “informs methodological choices” (p. 38). Furthermore, methodology “describes general strategies of inquiry and governs the

choice of methods” (p. 38). Methods, then, “are the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The process elements “need to be related to one another rather than merely set side by side as comparable, perhaps even competing, approaches or perspectives” (p. 3). The importance of the appropriate methodology cannot be understated.

Epistemology: Constructivism

An epistemology is a way of understanding that explains how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Constructivism is linked to interpretation (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 18), and this approach claims that “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Crotty elaborates, stating that constructivism and interpretation involve the individual because knowledge is within every person. Constructivism was the epistemological foundation in this research design. This study investigated the life journeys of ELCA college presidents in an effort to inform aspiring leaders of advantageous circumstances that positively impact the current higher education leadership gap. Because the participants make meaning through a constructed view of their own personal experience within the world in which they live, constructivism was the appropriate epistemology for this study.

Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism

The keystone of a methodology is its theoretical perspective. It is “the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology,” as the theoretical perspective is defined by Crotty (1998, p. 66). In this study, interpretivism served as the theoretical perspective.

Knowledge about the social world starts with human interpretation (Prasad, 2005, p. 13). In particular, German idealists believe that “reality” exists in human consciousness itself, rather than in some intangible, outside world (p. 13), and this belief is the general understanding of basic interpretivism. The goal of all interpretive traditions is to understand how people subjectively create their realities in all facets of the world (p. 14).

Interpretivism is often paired with constructionism (Creswell, 2007), and this partnership, as well as the personal meaning-making and interpretations of lived experiences of the participants, lend themselves well to having interpretivism as the theoretical perspective of this study.

Methodology: Narrative Analysis

Methodologically, this study was guided by narrative analysis. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the life journeys of ELCA college presidents informed their ascendancy to Chief Executive Officer. So that the researcher could fully understand this phenomenon, first-hand, in-depth accounts of personal experiences were necessary. Narrative analysis was the appropriate methodology for this study, as it allowed participants to reflect in a deep and engaging way, rather than the succinct, brief, and clear communication often required in their careers (Denzin, 1989). Through these unscripted, unfiltered narratives, the researcher gained insight into the life journeys of the participants. The opportunity for meaning-making to occur through personal stories resulted in thick, rich descriptions that produced answers to the research questions that also address the goals of this study.

The intent of narrative analysis is to capture the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life, or of the lives of a small number of individuals (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative analysis focuses on the ways people use stories to interpret the world, and are a way of expressing experience. Steffen (1997) explains that stories are fundamental to human understanding, and goes on to say that, in many instances, stories are told as a way to share experiences that may even address common problems (p. 99). The leadership gap and upper level administrative preparedness are concerns that are addressed through the findings of this study. Narratives allow people, both storytellers and their audiences, to make meaning of lived experiences and, at times, find common understanding and acceptance.

Considering the approach taken by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Creswell (2007) describes a five-step approach to conducting a narrative study, which the investigator utilized in this research. The steps include the following:

1. Determine if the research problem or question best fits narrative analysis.
2. Select individuals who have stories or life experiences to tell.
3. Collect information about the context of these stories.
4. Analyze the participants' stories and then "restory" them.
5. Collaborate with the participants (p.55).

While the approach being used as a procedural guide was very beneficial in conducting this narrative study, this methodology also has its challenges. According to Creswell (2007), "The researcher needs to have a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life" (p. 74) Clandinin and Connelly (2000) add that it is therefore important to "situate individual stories within participants' personal experiences (their

jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic) and their historical contexts (time and place)” (p.3). Narrative analysts are also charged with accurately reflecting the storyteller’s story, with sharing in the authorship of the narrative, and with considering narrator reliability and tone (Coulter, 2009, p. 608). Content accuracy, organization, story components, grammar, and point of view were taken into account by the researcher in this study.

By utilizing narrative analysis as the methodology in this study, participants’ meaning-making was on display, and their personal experiences were highlighted. This should inform aspiring higher education administrators what the life journeys of ELCA college presidents are like, and assist them in being prepared for future leadership opportunities.

Data Sources

This study focuses on how the personal and professional experiences of ELCA college presidents informed their ascendancy to their current administrative roles. The participants were “purposefully selected” (Creswell, 2009, p. 179), were serving as an ELCA college president, and must have had at least ten years of higher education work experience. Data saturation is desired in qualitative research, which means that additional information gathered does not add to the findings (Seidman, 2006). Four presidents were interviewed individually three different times, and after those interviews occurred, it was evident that saturation had occurred; therefore, no additional participants were needed.

Recruitment of Participants

Due to the purposeful selection that occurred in this study, determining participants posed no challenge. Rather, solidifying participation from a small group of

busy individuals proved to be the difficult part of securing participation. The criteria considered in selecting the participants in this study included: currently serving as an ELCA college president, having a career of ten years or more in higher education, and serving in their role in the Midwest.

Due to this study's focus on a specific profession, it was imperative that the participants were currently serving in that role. This study examined the life journeys of ELCA college presidents; therefore, it was necessary that the participants held this experience.

Having ten years of higher education experience best addressed a specific component of the problem being investigated; namely, succession planning as a possible remedy to the anticipated leadership gap (Leubsdorf, 2006). By using participants who had a minimum of ten years of higher education experience, their life journeys were more transferable to aspiring ELCA leaders who are working their way through the higher education hierarchy, rather than from outside occupations—something the literature suggests that institutions need to do more regularly because of the lack of prepared successors within higher education (Song & Hartley, 2012).

Narrative analysis strongly recommends face-to-face interactions between the interviewer and the participants (Riessman, 2000). Therefore, the participants selected had to be within reasonable driving distance of Cedar Falls, Iowa. Ten ELCA institutions are located within reasonable driving distance of Cedar Falls. Midwestern ELCA college presidents' life journeys may be significantly different than the life journeys of ELCA college presidents from other regions of the country; this possible disparity is discussed as a delimitation later in this chapter.

Data Collection

To conduct the research for this study, a brief review of the 26 ELCA college websites was necessary. This review provided geographic information of all the institutions. Particular attention was paid to the presidential pages within the site to determine who was serving in these positions. This was done to learn background information, and to know who to contact requesting their participation. There are ten ELCA colleges and universities in the Midwest region, and participants were chosen from those institutions based on the aforementioned criteria. I sought approval from the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After approval was granted, I contacted the presidents of six institutions by phone. Unfortunately, no contact was made during those initial phone calls. Thus, another contact was made through email, seeking their interest in participating in the study (see Appendix A: Recruitment Phone Script and Email). Four of the six presidents contacted agreed to participate.

My familiarity with ELCA institutions, the Midwest, liberal arts, and higher education were tools that allowed me to make quick connections with the participants. The development of relationships was extremely important, as the involvement in this study was time-consuming for the participants. Upon agreement of participation, I informed each participant via their administrative assistant of the opportunity to review the IRB approval of the study, including a cover letter and a copy of the approved IRB documents from Iowa State University. Data collection coordination began in March 2014, and interviews began in late April 2014.

Interviewing is at the heart of social research (Esterberg, 2002, p. 83), and many have argued that it is the most popular data collection method in qualitative research

(Denzin, 1989). Czarniawska (2004) mentioned three ways to collect data for stories: recording spontaneous incidents of storytelling, eliciting stories through interviews, and asking for stories through mediums such as the Internet. The main data source for this study was unstructured, in-depth interviews using the narrative interview technique (Bauer, 1996), described later in this chapter. Janesick (2011) defines an interview as “a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic” (p.100). Website documents were also analyzed to support the information shared by participants during the interviews. The analysis of interviews and documents generated a rich description of the life journeys of the participants in an attempt to answer the research questions.

Interviews

This study used unstructured, narrative interview techniques, and utilized a sequential interview style developed by Dolbeare and Schuman (1982, as cited in Seidman, 2006). This was recommended for the three-interview series of phenomenological interviews. Due to narrative analysis aligning with phenomenology, Seidman’s interview technique was appropriate for this study as well. The sequential interview style is as follows:

1. Interview one: Focused life history – The researcher seeks information regarding the participants’ life experiences related to the topic, up to the present time. Prompts were provided in relation to life journey and the participants’ career paths to their current presidencies.

2. Interview two: Details of experience – The purpose of this interview was to focus on the details of the participants’ lived experiences related to the topic. During the second interview, information related to the details of their life journey was sought, specifically the details of life beyond the office.
3. Interview three: Reflection on the meaning – In the final meeting, participants were asked to make meaning of their lived experiences. In an effort to align this interview process with Lutheran roots, reflection served as a way for these presidents to consider their “calling.” The third interview was a way to close data collection, and this was done by asking participants to discuss their vocational callings in relation to the work they have done to attain ELCA college presidencies.

Bauer (1996) described the narrative interview technique as a way to reconstruct social events from the perspective of the informants as directly as possible (p. 2). The components of this technique are described later in this chapter. The interviews were guided by a set of topical conversation starters and exploratory, follow-up questions (See Appendix B: Interview Protocol). Unstructured interviews aim to be free-flowing, and are the most like “real conversations” of any interview approach (Esterberg, 2002, p. 89). Considering that the goals of this research involved meaning-making of lived experiences, the unstructured interview approach was appropriate; it provided the participant with an opportunity to express themselves from their point of view. Unstructured interviews align well with the narrative interview technique because they challenge the structured interview approach, suggesting that a traditional, question-answer schema reveals more about the researcher’s relevance structures rather than the

issue being investigated (Bauer, 1996). This is due to the interviewer being able to select the topic, generate the questions, and word the questions in particular ways in order to prompt a certain train of thought and, ultimately, a response.

The narrative interview technique goes further than any other method to detach the interviewer from the responses of the participants (Bauer, 1996). A key component of both narrative and other unstructured interview approaches is the importance placed on attentive listening by the interviewer. While there is significant effort in minimizing interviewer influence, there is still a structure to narrative interviews. According to Bauer (1996), the structure is a self-generating schema that has three main characteristics, which are:

- Detailed texture: In describing transitions from one event to another, the participant will give deep detail in their story. Story-telling and events are very similar and have to have great detail to give the story credibility.
- Relevance fixation: The storyteller will share the story from a point of relevance within their own world.
- Closing of the Gestalt: The story being told has to be complete with a beginning, middle and an end. The end doesn't have to be completed yet, but it needs to be in the story to generate flow. A story has a beginning, middle and an end. (p. 4)

According to Schuetze (1977), there are four basic concepts of narrative interviewing, which include initialization, main narration, questioning, and small talk (as cited in Bauer, 1996, pp. 5 -8). Initialization involves formulating the topic being discussed. Main narration is an uninterrupted telling of the story from the participant. The questioning

phase allows the interviewer to ask questions to further the conversation, but they should not include opinion or attitude. Lastly, small talk involves the conversation after the recording device has been shut off. The narrative interview technique was applicable to this study because it allowed the participants to share their life journeys in the most real, uninterrupted way that, in turn, best portrayed their lived experiences through their own perspectives.

In this study, three interviews for each participant ranged anywhere from 60 minutes to two hours, and were held with each of four ELCA college presidents. The first interview focused on career journeys and the transitions they experienced during their professional career. The second interview covered non-work life. The third interview addressed vocation and their perceptions of their own self-identity. These topical areas significantly contributed to answering the research questions in this study, which examined the life journeys of ELCA college presidents and how those experiences propelled them to their current roles. Ten of twelve interviews took place face-to-face, at locations determined by the participants during April, May, and June 2014. Due to scheduling, third interviews of two participants were held over the phone. An explanation of the research design was provided in advance (see Appendix C: Informed Consent Document).

Some methodologies have specific interview protocols. As described in greater detail earlier in this chapter, Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) suggested that a three-interview approach should be employed. The first interview is a life history, the second covers the details of the experience, and the last is a reflection of the meaning of the experiences shared during the first two interviews (p. 147). The interviews should occur

anywhere from three days and one week of each other. As Denzin (1989) explained, in a narrative study, one interview with one participant is sufficient, because it captures individual meaning-making and cultural understanding. Psathas (1995) agrees with Denzin, suggesting that one interview in a qualitative study is enough because a singular event (such as an interview) has an organizational structure waiting to be examined (p. 50). The unstructured interview technique does not formalize the number of interviews needed or the time span between multiple interviews with the same participant (Bauer, 1996). Due to narrative analysis being related to phenomenology, it was appropriate to consider components of Dolbeare and Schuman (1982), Denzin (1989), and Psathas (1995) related to the guiding principles for the number of interviews to conduct and the time span between those interviews. The three interviews with each participant were conducted within a week of one another (at maximum), in an attempt to work within the participants' busy schedules and availability. In reviewing Dolbeare and Schuman's (1982) narrative interview model, Seidman (2006) states that Dolbeare and Schuman recognized that three to seven days in between interviews may not always be possible, which supported the decision to work in concert with the participants' schedules rather than rule participants out because of hectic schedules. Fortunately, all of the interviews did take place within seven days of one another.

Document Analysis

In addition to the interviews, website documents were reviewed as additional data for this study. Merriam (2002) stated that "Documents often contain insights and clues into the phenomenon, and most researchers find them well worth the effort to locate and examine" (p. 13). Documents such as strategic planning documents and webpages were

used to aid in preparing for the interviews. These documents helped frame the conversational topics used during the interviews, as they provided important background information about the participants' current roles and, at times, additional information about their career paths and work experiences. Following the interviews, additional institutional information through webpages was reviewed to complement the interview data. The documents used for data collection, in addition to the aforementioned, included organizational charts and institutional strategic planning documents. These documents contributed to the data by providing a clearer understanding of the expectations, challenges, and supervisory responsibilities that ELCA college presidents have. By framing the interview topics and supporting the interview data, using documents to generate data was a key component to this study.

Reflexive Journaling

The researcher kept a reflexive, audio journal during the entirety of the study. This journal allowed me to record my thoughts and insights, especially following interviews and during and after document analysis. Reflections, questions, decisions on problems, issues, and ideas the researcher encountered were included in the reflexive journal (Merriam, 2002, p. 27). The thoughts recorded in this journal were important during planning, preparation, and the collection and analysis of data.

These three methods were used as multiple methods of data collection to enhance the validity of the findings (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). Interviewing allowed the life journeys to be discussed, and document analysis provided deeper insight into the lives and work of the participants. Journaling allowed the researcher to keep an audit trail of the research. Using these methods in this manner directly impacted the ability to answer the research

questions of this study, due to the research concentrating on the life journeys, transitions, career paths, and meaning-making of the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research involves moving deeper into understanding and representing the data, and also interpreting the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). Analysis specific to narrative can occur in a variety of ways, including thematic, structural, textual, conversational, cultural, political, and performative approaches (Riessman, 2000).

Executing an analysis procedure specific to the methodology used is necessary in constructing a strong research design. Therefore, the thematic analysis approach was used in this study, as it was directly tied to what participants shared in their stories. Thematic analysis is concerned with “what” is said, rather than “how” it is said (Riessman, 2008). This approach is useful for “finding common thematic elements across research participants and the experiences they report” (p. 54). Thematic analysis served this study well, as one goal of the study is to inform aspiring leaders of what ELCA college presidents truly experienced on their way to their current professional roles.

Bauer (1996) detailed the thematic analysis process, and defined it as a coding process where text units are progressively reduced through paraphrasing. The first portion of the thematic analysis procedure is transcription. In this study, audio-tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were executed in an effort to be fully immersed in the data. Following completion of the initial transcriptions, audio tapes were listened to again while reading the transcriptions. This provided an even

more intimate relationship with the data, and allowed proofing of the transcriptions to occur (Esterberg, 2002).

Following transcription is text reduction. Bauer refers to Mayring's (1983) approach to reducing text. Texts were reduced through a step-wise procedure that created a categorical coding structure used throughout the transcriptions (Mayring, 1983). Passages were narrowed to paragraphs, then paraphrased to sentences, and culminated in key words (Bauer, 1996, p. 11). The working approach consisted of four columns moving left to right, with full transcription in the left column that were narrowed to paraphrased paragraphs, then sentences, and ultimately key words in the far right column.

These key words created the coding system for the study. During text reduction, the keyword phase of that process acted as open coding, which Esterberg (2002) describes as reading the data line-by-line without preexisting codes (p. 158). With the key words established, focused coding took place, which is constituted of further organizing the evident themes that emerged during the open coding process.

Representation of Data

A critical piece to data analysis is how the data is intended to be represented (Esterberg, 2002). This is true in narrative analysis (Riesmann, 2000). Impactful factors of data analysis in narrative studies include "restorying" the participants' accounts and the collaboration needed to negotiate the meanings of the stories (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) ask questions such as: Who owns the story?; Who can change it?; and What happens when narratives compete? The data in this study is representative of the presidents' accounts of their experiences. While some "restorying" occurred, the intent of this study was to capture first-person accounts of the life journeys

of ELCA college presidents, and the best way to do that was to represent the data in its original, first-person format whenever possible. To ensure that the presidents' stories were accurately portrayed, and their messages captured appropriately, I built rapport with the participants in order to strengthen the relationship between us. This rapport was developed by sharing the dissertation proposal, informed consent form, and interview protocol with the presidents. By establishing that rapport, a strong relationship was established, allowing for the necessary collaboration to occur during data analysis. Through thematic analysis and collaboration with the participants, the life journeys of ELCA college presidents were better understood. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from the analysis and coding that occurred.

Trustworthiness Criteria

Numerous “goodness” criteria accepted in qualitative research, and specifically in narrative analysis, were used in this study. Those criteria included, but were not limited to, the following: having an audit trail, conducting member checks, and ensuring reader confirmability. These criteria are described in detail later in this chapter. This study was conducted in a rigorous, systematic, and ethical manner, resulting in findings that can be interpreted by the reader (Merriam, 2002, p. 24).

Universal acceptance of the findings in a qualitative research study is very unlikely (Polkinhorne, 2007). To produce a valid study grounded in goodness, it was important to employ the aforementioned tactics. In an effort to minimize the scrutiny, the researcher prepared for potential criticism in an attempt to react promptly and accordingly when it arose. As an employee in the ELCA college system, it was important for me to be aware of my own thoughts and experiences in relation to the stories being

shared. At times, it was necessary for me to separate my thoughts and prior experience from the analysis process in order to present meaning as intended by the participants. However, there were also times when my knowledge of the phenomena being studied was advantageous. Components of Lutheran higher education, private colleges, and ELCA college campus culture are familiar to me. This knowledge allowed me to better understand the meaning behind certain comments made that would be unknown to someone unfamiliar with Lutheran higher education. As Polkinghorne (2007) explained, “one cannot transcend one’s own historical and situated embeddedness; thus textual interpretations are always perspectival” (p. 13), which addresses researcher membership (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Insider versus outsider membership is always present in qualitative research: Insider membership is described as sharing the characteristic, role, or experience under study, whereas outsider membership refers to having no direct relationship to the phenomena (Dwyaer & Buckle, 2009). “Eyes open” is a termed coined by Asselin (2003) that indicates the importance of keeping one’s eye open as an insider because, while an insider has a deeper understanding of the phenomena, there are things that will be overlooked or sub-cultures that he or she may not be familiar with. Polkinghorne (2007) adds,

Readers should be able to retrace the steps in the argument to the text and to judge the plausibility of the offered interpretation. The claim need not assert that the interpretation proposed is the only one possible; however, researchers’ need to cogently argue that theirs is a viable interpretation grounded in the assembled texts. (p.14)

Therefore, while it was important for me not to make assumptions based on my own knowledge base during the analysis and interpretation of this study, when it was unavoidable, the generation of plausible interpretation was critical.

Qualitative researchers have advocated for the use of the term “goodness” to indicate quality in a qualitative study, rather than using the terms “trustworthiness” and “validity” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). With qualitative and quantitative research having different goals and approaches, differentiating between trustworthiness and validity as more quantitative research measures and goodness as a qualitative aspiration provides clarity for readers as to what a particular study aims to accomplish.

While there are differences between quantitative and qualitative trustworthiness measures, Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) argue some criteria cross both approaches. They suggest a connection must exist between the research question, collection methods, and data analysis that align with the epistemology. Well-designed research has each component complement the others. Certain epistemologies, theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and methods fit better together than others (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, this study utilizes a constructivist epistemology that values the meanings people make of their experiences and interactions with the world around them (Crotty, 1998). The research questions examine the meaning-making of experiences, transitions, and career paths that equate to the life journeys of current ELCA college presidents. Interviews gave the participants an opportunity to share their lived experience, and the analysis was dedicated to how the participants made meaning of their experiences that contributed to their career trajectories.

A second criterion that Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) believed resonates with both quantitative and qualitative research is that “Collection and analysis must be correctly applied” (p. 119). The researcher fully adhered to the processes and procedures of the narrative interview technique and the thematic analysis process (Bauer, 1996). These collection and analysis processes also contain a clear set of guidelines that were followed.

All four phases of the narrative interview technique were used during the interviews, which included initialization, main narration, questioning, and small talk (Bauer, 1996). This was carried out by providing the participants with topical prompts that allowed them to do the following: generate a response to the topic without asking any questions or interjecting any thoughts during their narration, ask follow-up questions that did not carry any opinion or leverage to mold a response, and conclude with small talk related to the topic that was previously discussed (Bauer, 1996). This approach was “good,” as it fully allowed the participant to respond through his own lens, without any direction from the researcher.

As also previously discussed, thematic analysis was employed, which involved shrinking the data to only key words, allowing for a coding system to be developed (Riesman, 2000). This generated consistent analysis, and allowed for all of the data to be accounted for in the same manner.

A third topic discussed by Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) that crosses both qualitative and quantitative research criteria for trustworthiness is that “Researchers should be aware of the background knowledge on the topic” (p. 120). The researcher identified the gap in the literature that this study fills, and was aware of the leadership

gap in higher education (Leubsdorf, 2006). Therefore, this study examined the career paths of college presidents, learned more about ELCA colleges, and studied and incorporated Schlossberg's (1995) theory of transition and Holland's (1997) theory of vocational choices and work environments.

Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) consider a fourth similarity between qualitative and quantitative research, in regards to trustworthiness: "The researcher must differentiate why some conclusions were embraced while others were discounted" (p. 120). I explain this differentiation in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Lastly, Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) suggest that "Researchers must articulate the value of this study to a wide range of readers" (p.120). There are multiple audiences for this study in which the findings will resonate because of the leadership gap and the projected departures of college presidents in the next five years (Song & Hartley, 2012). Aspiring ELCA college presidents, individual ELCA institutions, the ELCA Colleges and Universities organization, and individual ELCA College and University institutional governing boards will all benefit from this study, as the data may inform them of ways to address the leadership gap.

In addition to these criteria, other criteria for goodness solely for qualitative research are expected. The methodology must align with the research question, and the method must complement the methodology (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). In this study, narrative analysis was the appropriate methodology for a study of life journeys that involve participants' perceptions of transitions. Conducting unstructured interviews utilizing the narrative interview technique is directly linked to narrative analysis as a methodology. This linkage is due to the relationship between narrative analysis,

interpretivism, and constructivism—all of which are concerned with meaning-making and lived experience. This is precisely what this study addressed. The unstructured interview approach allowed the participants to share their experience in their own words and with little interruption, which allowed for meaning-making to occur through narration and reflection (Bauer, 1996). Interpretation of the data must also be guided by the methodology and obtained through the appropriate method, which is the case in this study due to each component aligning with narrative analysis. Interpretation is what creates new insights (Arminio and Hultgren, 2002), and goodness is established when there is an obvious difference between reporting findings and interpreting them (Maynard, 2000). Through relationship development and continued collaboration with participants, I interpreted the findings, rather than reported them because of my intimate relationship with the data.

While many of the aforementioned criteria for goodness are implicit, there were also explicit approaches used in this study to conveying trustworthiness, including using thick, rich descriptions to convey findings (Creswell, 2009), reader confirmability (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002), doing member checks, and keeping an audit trail. These approaches strengthened the goodness of the study.

Thick, Rich Description of Data

Transferring findings to other situations and experiences is a challenging component of qualitative research. At times, transferability is not the goal of qualitative research. In this study, allowing readers to determine how closely their own lives mirror the experiences of the participants is desired and, to do that, rich, thick description was used, as it “involves providing an adequate database, that is, enough description and

information that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match” that of the participants (Merriam, 2002, p. 29). The narrative interview technique generated the thick, rich description necessary for this study to meet the criteria for goodness.

Reader Confirmability

Readers determine for themselves how they can apply the findings of a study to their own lives (Merriam, 2002). This is known as reader confirmability (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). It is a researcher’s responsibility to generate claims that are clear (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002), and the conclusions and interpretations in this study use great detail to describe context in order to ensure that comparisons can be made, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the study. The most plausible and credible interpretations are conveyed to readers. This detailed approach aligns well with the desire to communicate thick, rich descriptions of data. Based on the research goal of better preparing aspiring leaders for future presidential positions, it was imperative that the findings be “reasonable” and “more probable” than other interpretations so that individual readers can understand what a certain experience was like without actually experiencing it themselves (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002).

Member Checks

Member checks are a common strategy for ensuring goodness and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). This process attempts to accurately represent the participants by eliciting their review of collected data, findings, and researcher interpretations. Chapter 4 was shared with the ELCA presidents via email. Discrepancies between the participant’s meaning and my interpretation of their narrative were discussed in an attempt to convey why my interpretation was represented in the way it was, and

what the participant genuinely meant by his remarks. Following that conversation, necessary revisions occurred, and the edits were shared with the participants. This process continued until consensus on the meaning of the specifics of the narrative was ascertained. Fortunately, very few discrepancies existed, which resulted in a timely member check period of this study. In a narrative study, the questions of “whose story is it to tell,” or “who can change the story” are often present (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). It was my responsibility to accurately capture the life journeys of the participants and; to ensure that this occurred, the presidents had an opportunity to review Chapter 4 and to revisit findings to reflect their true meaning rather than my own.

Audit Trail

In addition to rich description, reader confirmability, and member checks, an audit trail was used to improve the validity of this study (Merriam, 2002). Throughout the entire study, I kept audio reflective memos that captured questions about research design as well as an audio journal to record my “reflections, questions, decisions on problems, issues and ideas I encountered in collecting data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 27).

Critical, interpretive research is invested in making meaning (Merriam, 2002). The research goals and questions of this study are devoted to making meaning of the life journeys of ELCA college presidents and how their stories inform aspiring leaders to become better prepared to be their successors. In achieving the goals and answering the questions of this study, criteria of goodness were met, because “narrative research issues claims about how people understand situations, others and themselves” (Polkinghorne, 200, p.6). Readers will be able to determine the plausibility of the findings of this study,

and there was a viable interpretation of the data collected and analyzed, both of which reinforced the goodness in this study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries of a study that are within the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). Delimitations include all of the decisions made in a study, including (but not limited to) the following: identifying the problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical perspectives, and participants (Simon, 2011). Many delimitations are explicit. Therefore, this section concentrates on more implicit decisions made in this study.

This study examined the life journeys of ELCA college presidents. Due to time and travel constraints, the four ELCA college presidents that were selected as participants in this study were located within reasonable driving distance of Cedar Falls, Iowa. Geographic location could impact the life journeys and career experiences of the participants, which is a delimitation of this study. Qualitative research is designed to examine individual lived experiences and to understand the uniqueness of a particular situation, rather than to predict the future or create generalizable outcomes (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Therefore, the findings of this study may not accurately reflect the life journeys of ELCA college presidents in other regions of the country that could, in turn, result in failing to serve as a positive reference point for aspiring ELCA college presidents. Also, the results should not be expanded to aspiring college presidents outside of the ELCA system, as presidents at other institutional classifications may have different life journeys to share.

The four ELCA college presidents that participated in this study had a minimum of ten years of professional experience in higher education. This delimitation may have

narrowed the results of this study, as the life journeys of ELCA college presidents with different career paths may articulate different life journeys than those that participated in this study.

As articulated in the literature, while Lutheran higher education has many similarities to other types of institutions, it does include some unique characteristics. Because of this, participants' perspectives of their career paths and their life journeys may have slanted towards certain aspects of Lutheran higher education, rather than a more general account of presidential attainment.

Two other delimitations included the theoretical frameworks guiding this study and the narrative analysis methodology that was used. With Schlossberg's (1995) theory of transition and Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments guiding this study, other plausible and credible theories that may have informed and presented different findings were not considered.

While prompting story creation, analyzing narratives, and using the narrative interview technique certainly provided credible results, a more traditional and structured interview approach may have generated different responses that more directly attended to the research goals and questions in this study.

Delimitations are important to recognize, and the most important component of delimitations is not what they are or how many a study has, but rather how they are justified and inform the reader of the narrow focus of the investigation (Simon, 2011).

Limitations

Limitations of a study include things that are outside of the researcher's control that may create weaknesses in the study (Simon, 2011). If appropriate attention is paid to

limitations that are identified, it is possible to not have them affect the outcome of the study.

Initial limitations considered in this study included the selection process of the participants, difficulty in gaining adequate access and time with the presidents, establishing rapport, the number of ELCA college presidents available to interview in the Midwest, and the production of narratives. After the study was conducted, the only limitation initially predicted that came to fruition was the selection process of the participants. The other predicted limitations were non-existent. Due to the “purposeful selection” (Creswell, 2009) being employed, there may be limits to the transferability of the results. While the selection process criteria are delimitations, the transferability of the results is outside the researcher’s control. Prolonged contact is a strong narrative research technique and, initially, a limited amount of time with the participants due to their hectic schedules was anticipated. However, this ended up being the exact opposite: Once the meetings were solidified, the participants provided significant amounts of time for the interviews.

Saturation of data is important, and I am confident that the research reached saturation after contact with four presidents (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Narratives are stories with specific components, including a beginning, middle, and end; a plot; characters; and something that draws listeners (Bauer, 1996). Not all spoken communication is in narrative form. A limitation of this study could have been the participants’ inability to generate narratives that address the topical area of focus. However, that wasn’t the case, as participants told richly descriptive narratives throughout the interviews. If narrative creation had been minimal, thematic analysis

would have been very difficult. Considering the delimitations and limitations of this study allowed for a stronger research design and the possible recreation of specific elements of the design to strengthen the study.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to the criteria for goodness already discussed, ethical considerations are important for determining the “goodness” of a study (Merriam, 2002). With the focal point of this research being “lived experiences,” it was critical to protect the participants involved in this study. To do so, research approval was obtained through the Iowa State Institutional Review Board (IRB). After IRB approval was received, I contacted the potential participants by phone (see Appendix A: Recruitment Phone Script and Email). Contact was difficult by phone, which resulted in an email also being sent to request participation. When the ELCA presidents agreed to participate, they received the informed consent document (See Appendix C: Informed Consent Document) and a copy of the dissertation proposal. The participants had very little risk by participating in this study. Regardless, the following measures were taken to ensure that the research was conducted in ethically:

- Participant involvement was voluntary, and he or she could remove themselves from the study at any time.
- Participants were able to decline answering questions during interviews.

Implications

As discussed in Chapter 1, numerous audiences could be impacted from this study, including aspiring ELCA college presidents, individual ELCA institutions, the ELCA Colleges and Universities organization, and individual ELCA college and

university institutional governing boards. When considering implications of a study, it is important to consider what the implications are for a larger circle, rather than just immediate players (Arminio, Jones, & Torres, 2006, p. 132).

In this study, it is evident that the immediate players that will benefit greatly from this research are aspiring ELCA college presidents. However, there are implications for other audiences that will also be impactful to their futures as well. The assumed implications in this study include:

- Aspiring ELCA college presidents will become informed of additional work experiences they may want to engage in to best prepare themselves for future presidencies. This awareness may lead to stress or anxiety of not having the appropriate experience, job changes, additional workloads, and negativity towards their current role due to the lack of future career ascendency they see themselves facing. Or, these same aspiring leaders may find themselves pleasantly surprised as to how well-positioned and prepared they are for future presidencies, based on the data represented in this study.
- Individual ELCA institutions will benefit from this study by learning how to better prepare successors for presidencies at their own or sister institutions. With this learning comes a responsibility to prepare those successors, something current colleges do not do well (Leubsdorf, 2006). Professional development plans will need to be increased to address the leadership gap that independent colleges, such as ELCA schools, face.
- As concerned partners in Lutheran higher education, LECNA and the ELCA will benefit from this study. These organizations will learn the career paths of

their college presidents, and be able to determine if their current hiring structure is appropriate and best for the state of Lutheran higher education at this time. However, in learning about the career paths of their presidents, if gaps or concerns are raised, significant resources may need to be dedicated to refining search processes, professional development, and the promotion of Lutheran higher education.

- The institutional governing boards of ELCA colleges and universities are also implicated by this research. By better understanding the life journeys of their presidents, they will learn about the unique pressures of the position and the sacrifices they must make to rise to the level of president. By knowing these things, governing boards may have a moral and ethical responsibility to address some of the concerns that may change the hierarchical structure at ELCA colleges. Or, it may benefit the presidents greatly, as their work will be more appreciated and the journeys they have taken to get to where they are today may provide more credibility with the governing boards.

This study seeks action related to the leadership gap and the preparation of future leaders in Lutheran higher education. Relevance and action are important components to consider when conducting qualitative research and attending to the implications of a study (Arminio, Jones, & Torres, 2006). This study is relevant to numerous audiences, and calls for action rather than simply an understanding of the lived experiences. The goal is to address the leadership gap (Leubsdorf, 2006).

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology, methods, data sources, and data analysis techniques employed in this study. Criteria for goodness, limitations, delimitations, and implications were also addressed. Qualitative research designs are like puzzles: As mentioned earlier, not all the options for epistemologies, theoretical perspectives, methodologies, methods, and analysis fit together well. This chapter explained how the different aspects of this design fit together to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study. Participant profiles and findings are discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in this chapter. Profiles of each participant provide a brief description of their career paths and lives beyond the job. Following the profiles, data from the narrative study are explained, including the portions of participant narratives that directly address the research questions. With thematic analysis, as described in Chapter 3, the objective was to generate themes throughout the data. In this chapter, these themes are organized into three larger categories, which are described below.

The first section, “Administrative Advancement,” describes the participants’ career paths that led them to the presidency of an ELCA institution. This section provides important information about the participants’ interests in higher education, their willingness to accept new challenges, and their administrative responsibilities prior to attaining the presidency. The participants also discussed the importance of mentoring relationships, and provided personal tips for success that attributed to their advancement. Much of this section addresses specific work experiences that aspiring leaders will find helpful in preparing for the future that, in turn, directly addresses the problem addressed in this study: the looming leadership gap.

The second section, “Life beyond the Office,” describes the participants’ transitions between jobs and the impacts those transitions had on themselves and their families. A portion of the theoretical framework for this study, Schlossberg’s (1995) Theory of Transition, served as a foundation for these findings. Present themes included the blending of personal and professional life, the challenges of the presidential journey, and family considerations.

The final section, “Being Called,” describes the presidents’ shared sense of vocation and calling. This section incorporates the other portion of the theoretical framework for this study, Holland’s (1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments. Themes present in this section are the participants’ shared view of Lutheran higher education, what it means to serve the institution as president, and how they felt they were called to their roles.

Presidential Profiles

Profiles of the four participants in this study are included to serve as a personal introduction, but to also bring context to the findings of this study. This study did not aim for confidentiality or anonymity, as the nature of the research was not threatening to the voluntary participants.

President Bahls, Augustana College

As stated on Augustana’s website:

Steven C. Bahls is the eighth president of Augustana College. He joined the college in the summer of 2003 and was installed as president in October of that year. Among the major developments on campus since then:

- Faculty, staff and students worked together on two strategic plans — first *Authentically Augustana: A Strategic Plan for a Premier Liberal Arts College* and now *Augustana 2020: Our Path Forward*.
- Major campus improvements have included the building of Duane R. Swanson Commons; the Dorothy Parkander Residence Center; the Center for Student Life, including renovations to the Thomas Tredway Library; Thorson-Lucken Field; and the Austin E. Knowlton Outdoor Athletic Complex, plus substantial renovations to Evald Hall and Old Main.
- Augie Choice, a unique grant providing all students up to \$2,000 to work with faculty mentors on research projects, pursue international study or engage in an internship, was introduced.
- For the first time in Augustana’s history, 55 percent of students now have a meaningful international experience by the time of their graduation.
- New programs have been added in Africana studies, creative writing, engineering physics, ethics, graphic design, international business, journalism, music composition and neuroscience; faculty leaders have

launched the Augustana Center for Polar Studies, the Augustana Center for the Study of Pluralism and the Civil Sphere, and the Upper Mississippi Studies Center.

- Women's lacrosse was added as the college's 22nd varsity sport, and the college maintained its ranking as a leading producer of Academic All-Americans.
- A conversation led by Campus Ministries resulted in the Five Faith Commitments of Augustana College, an expression of what it means to be a church-related college in the 21st century.
- The college has raised more than \$152 million as part of a comprehensive campaign, enabling Augustana to provide additional funds for scholarships, programming and enhancing buildings.
- Augustana's enrollment has grown by almost 10 percent, and the faculty has grown by more than 13 percent.

President Bahls has written extensively about a wide range of higher education topics, from shared governance to teaching financial literacy. His writings have been published in numerous journals such as *Trusteeship*, *Huffington Post*, *Inside Higher Education*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Intersections*, the journal of Lutheran higher education. He is the author of a soon-to-be published book, "Shared Governance in Times of Change: A Practical Guide for Universities and Colleges," published by the Association of Governing Boards.

He has served on the boards of national higher education organizations including the Council of Independent Colleges, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America. He also serves on the NCAA Division III Presidents' Advisory Council, and in January 2014 he was invited by President Obama to be part of the White House Summit on Higher Education.

A recognized scholar in the area of business law and agricultural law, President Bahls has also written hundreds of articles in both scholarly publications and magazines such as *Entrepreneur*, *Independent Banker* and *Nation's Business*. His writings about legal issues have been cited by 150 scholarly law journals, including the Harvard, Yale, Cornell and Columbia Law Reviews, and have been cited in reported court opinions in seven states.

President Bahls is a frequent speaker on campus, and he holds open office hours, often in Brew by the Slough, the coffee house in Augustana's Center for Student Life. Most evenings and weekends, you'll find him at Augustana's music, cultural and athletic events.

Prior to joining Augustana College, he was dean at Capital University Law School, the only law school in the nation affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Prior to joining Capital's law program, he served as associate dean and professor at the University of Montana School of Law. From 1979

through 1985, he practiced corporate law with the Milwaukee firm of Frisch, Dudek and Slattery. He is a CPA and a lawyer.

He is active as a leader in his community. Since coming to the Quad Cities, he has been chair of the executive board of the Illowa Council of Boy Scouts of America, and completed two terms as president of the board of the Illinois Quad City Chamber of Commerce, in which role he helped lead efforts to create the unified (Illinois and Iowa) Quad City Chamber. He also has served on the boards of directors of the Putnam Museum, the local United Way, the Quad City Symphony Orchestra Association and Genesis Health System.

Steven Bahls was born in Des Moines in 1954. He and his wife, Jane, were married in 1977. Jane Easter Bahls is a graduate of Cornell College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. She had a 22-year career as a freelance writer after eight years as a college religion and philosophy instructor. Jane is active in the life of Augustana and in the community, including Operation Read, Churches United, Ballet Quad Cities and Family Resources. Jane and Steve are members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Moline.

Steve and Jane have three children: Daniel, a Williams College and Boston University Law School graduate, is a lawyer in Massachusetts; Timothy, a graduate of Middlebury College and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School, is a computer scientist in Wisconsin; and Angela, an Augustana alumna, is a graduate student in communication sciences and disorders at the University of Arizona. Steve and Jane also are the proud grandparents of Kirana Wenxin Lynne Bahls, Asha He-ping Bahls and Jivan Ananda Wijaya.

President Colson, Wartburg College

As stated on Wartburg's website:

Dr. Darrel D. Colson became the 17th president of Wartburg College on July 1, 2009 after seven years as the chief academic officer — provost and dean of the college — at Centenary College of Louisiana in his hometown of Shreveport.

Colson was born in Venezuela in 1955. He is a 1977 graduate of Louisiana State University, with a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy, graduating summa cum laude with college and departmental honors.

Colson was a first-generation college student when he enrolled at LSU. He has described his undergraduate years as “a terrific experience — even a transformative one. Somewhat serendipitously I fell into some fine liberal-arts classes and grew close to some dedicated teachers in English, history, philosophy, and political science. Their classes opened up new worlds, developing within me not only a set of useful skills, but an almost unquenchable curiosity for all things under the sun.”

His experience at LSU laid the foundation for his career in higher education. Colson said he became a college professor “so that I could help young people have the same life-changing experiences I had had in school.”

While a senior at LSU, Colson married his high school sweetheart, Christy Skrivanos, who was a junior. Colson worked at the Louisiana Department of Revenue for a year, while Christy earned her degree in education. She has since taught in elementary schools and been a preschool administrator.

Colson earned both his master of arts degree in philosophy (1981) and his Ph.D. in philosophy with a minor in theology (1987) at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. He taught courses in philosophy, logic, ethics and world religion at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C., from 1982-87.

In 1987, Colson returned to Louisiana to become one of the founding faculty at the Louisiana Scholars’ College at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, an experimental honors college in the liberal arts and sciences established by the state board of regents. He taught there for nine years (fall 1987 to spring 1997), including courses on great books, philosophy, ethics and the Senior Colloquium: Liberty and the First Amendment. During that time, he also was coordinator of curriculum (1988-91), associate director of the college (1992-93) and president of the Northwestern State University Faculty Senate (1995-96).

Colson accepted a position in 1996 at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., near Los Angeles as the Fletcher Jones Chair of Great Books. In addition to the Great Books Colloquium, he taught courses on Ancient Philosophy and Aristotle. He also served as president-elect of the Seaver Faculty Association (2001-02).

He again returned to Louisiana in 2002 to become provost and dean of the college at Centenary. Colson’s administrative responsibilities included overseeing all academic programs, institutional research, information technology, admissions, financial aid, the registrar’s office, Intercultural/International study, service learning, the Christian Leadership Center and the Academic Support Center. Even as an administrator, he continued to teach a philosophy class every year.

After an extensive search, he was elected president of Wartburg College on May 4, 2009 by the board of regents.

The Colsons have two children. Rachel is a graduate of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., and earned her law degree at Syracuse University. She is a practicing attorney in Washington, D.C. Jacob is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He lives in Honolulu, where he runs an environmental consulting company, SRP Pacific Division, a branch of a Shreveport-based company.

The Colsons enjoy jogging, hiking and reading.

President Henning, Grand View University

As stated on Grand View's website:

Kent Henning is the thirteenth president of Grand View University. Since Henning's arrival at Grand View, the University has experienced growth in virtually every area, including full-time enrollment, residential student population, expansion of University facilities, and addition of academic programs.

Born March 31, 1958, Henning was raised near McGregor, Iowa. In 1980 he graduated from Wartburg College with a bachelor of arts degree in English and communication arts, and in 1989, graduated the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University with an MBA. Before coming to Grand View in 2000, he worked 20 years in college advancement.

Grand View has experienced many developments during President Henning's tenure. They include but are not limited to:

- The square-footage of building space on campus has more than doubled and the acreage of the campus footprint has doubled. Major building projects include:
 - Construction of the Johnson Wellness Center.
 - Construction of the Hull Apartments (111-bed apt. style housing).
 - Construction of the Langrock Suites (150-bed suite style housing).
 - Construction of the L Apartments (211-bed apt. style housing).
 - Construction of the Hull Suites (150-bed suite style housing).
 - Construction of the Rasmussen Center for Community Advancement Professions (classroom building).
 - Construction of renovated/new Student Center (construction currently in process).
 - Purchase of Jensen Hall (a former senior living facility).
 - Purchase of a former bowling alley (currently being renovated to house wrestling).
 - Doubling parking capacity on campus.
 - Creation of "Grand Central" walkway and outdoor plaza.
 - Upgrade to the football facility and construction of a new locker room through a partnership with Des Moines Public Schools.
- Academic program growth includes:
 - Accredited to offer first master's degree in 2008 (became Grand View University).
 - Currently offering four master's degrees.
 - Added numerous academic majors such as Kinesiology and Health Promotion, Sport Management, Biotechnology, and Biochemistry.
 - Launching a Bachelor's degree in Social Work.

- Faculty has grown from 65 to 95 members.

Some other notable developments during President Henning's tenure not directly related to academic growth or the physical plant include:

- The enrollment of full-time students has increased more than 75%.
- In 2000, GV had seven sports with fewer than 200 athletes; in 2014, the institution hosts 24 sports and over 700 athletes.
- Three comprehensive capital campaigns have been executed since 2000.
- The co-curricular components of the institution have greatly expanded primarily through Student Life programming.
- The first endowed chair was installed. (Jacobson Institute for Innovation in Education).
- The Ravenholt Visiting Scholars program, which now is the centerpiece of the Global Vision Week, was developed.
- Conceived of and created Grand View's Celebrate Vocations Week.

Henning and his wife, Carole, a journalism and English teacher retired from Southeast Polk High School, have two college-age daughters, Audrey and Julia.

Henning serves as Chair of the Board of Directors of UnityPoint-Des Moines and the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. He is a Board member of the UnityPoint Health, Iowa Power Fund, Bankers Trust, the Embassy Club, and the Greater Des Moines Partnership. He is a member of the Council of Presidents of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Council, the Iowa College Foundation, the Lutheran Education Conference of North America, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Council of College and University Presidents. Henning holds memberships in the Rotary Club of Des Moines, Hyperion Field Club, and St. James Lutheran Church in Johnston.

President Ohle, Gustavus-Adolphus College

As stated on Gustavus-Adolphus's website:

After serving 16 years as a president at two ELCA colleges, Ohle retires from Gustavus Adolphus College on June 30, 2014. In his six years at Gustavus, President Ohle has spearheaded several important initiatives, including the Commission Gustavus 150 strategic planning process, the construction of the newest academic building Beck Academic Hall, the creation of the Center for Servant Leadership, the celebration of the College's Sesquicentennial in 2011-2012, which culminated with the Royal Visit of Their Majesties King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden, and the dedication of the Sesquicentennial Plaza and sculpture attended by the King and Queen and a new West Mall on the campus, another Sesquicentennial project.

Campaign Gustavus was kicked off at the start of the College's Sesquicentennial with the goal of \$150 million. As of April 30, 2014, gifts and pledges to the Campaign reached \$125 million. The Campaign has brought funding to the campus for eight new endowed professorships, support for endowed scholarships, and funding for a new academic hall, and support for the College's operating budget. Campaign Gustavus is scheduled to end in October, 2015.

Also during President Ohle's tenure at Gustavus, the College embarked on a rebranding study and marketing initiative, including the Make Your Life Count brand line. The College has strengthened its relationship with the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden, developed an outreach office in the Twin Cities at the American Swedish Institute, started to publish an Annual Report, and the College's Board of Trustees has reorganized its operations and governance structure and restated the College's bylaws.

Prior to coming to Gustavus, Ohle served as President of Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa for ten years. At Wartburg, Ohle oversaw significant growth and innovation while strongly emphasizing the College's mission of service, leadership, faith, and learning as a College of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. His tenure brought the completion of \$104 million in capital improvements, including a state-of-the-art center for science and a new 125,000 sq. ft. wellness center. Fundraising grew significantly, with "Campaign Wartburg" achieving \$90 million against an \$88 million goal. Under Ohle, Wartburg added 21 full-time faculty positions, supporting more individual attention to students. The College expanded its campus ministry and began a vocational discernment program called "Discovering and Claiming Our Callings," made possible through a \$2.5 million grant from the Lilly Foundation. The College also opened a Center for Community Engagement. Throughout his decade in the presidency, relationships with alumni and parents were strengthened, and the student body grew 25 percent larger and more diverse.

Before accepting the presidency at Wartburg, Ohle served Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, for 12 years, first as vice president for institutional advancement and later as senior vice president for external affairs and secretary to the university. Prior to that, Ohle was vice president for institutional advancement at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Nebraska, for ten years.

Ohle, the longest serving president of a college or university related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), has chaired the executive committee of the Council of Presidents of the ELCA Colleges and Universities. He has also chaired both the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) Presidents' Council and the board of trustees of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). He has for ten years served in leadership roles on NCAA councils and committees and served as the Division III Presidents Council Vice Chair in 2012 and Chair in 2013. He served on the NCAA Executive and Budget Committees in 2012 and 2013, and continues to

serve, on local, state, and national not-for-profit boards during his professional career.

Ohle holds a B.A. in social work from Ohio Northern University and an M.A. in higher education administration from Bowling Green State University. He did graduate work toward a Master of Divinity degree at Hamma School of Theology in Springfield, Ohio, and holds honorary degrees from Wartburg Theological Seminary and his alma mater Ohio Northern.

Ohle is married to Kirsten (Kris) Lindquist Ohle. The couple has three adult sons: Robert (spouse, Amy), John, and Thomas (spouse, Michelle, and granddaughter, Eleanor Jane).

Administrative Advancement

A passion for learning and higher education, a desire to lead and administrate, and the willingness to accept new opportunities were resounding themes in the data. The data shows that while these presidents didn't directly aspire to the role of a college president early in their careers, they did desire to be in professional roles that were impactful, meaningful, and important to the success of their organization. For instance, President Henning used the following metaphor to talk about his career choices:

I grew up along the Mississippi River so I have this river mentality or metaphor I use. In each organization, there are functions that are in the "main channel." In a life insurance company, the main channel is sales or finance. It's what makes money. Public relations is one of the back waters. If you think about that metaphor, if you are in that back water, the water is calm. You sit there and can have a nice time. But, the main channel, you definitely know you are in the river. It can get rough and choppy at times. It can have a lot of traffic, currents. There are a lot of things going on, a lot more hazards. I've always wanted to be a part of the main channel where I feel I can make the most impact.

Why Higher Education?

With the participants working in education, particularly in higher education, for virtually their entire careers, it came with little surprise that education was of great importance to all four. A theme in the findings suggested that parents and other support people placed an emphasis on the importance of education from an early age with these

four ELCA college presidents. The educational journeys of these four individuals greatly influenced their desire to work in higher education.

While the educational journeys of the participants were different, each of them shared a story about how important they felt education was and the influence others had on their understanding the importance of learning. President Ohle mentioned:

Education was the big thing. My mother and father said “whatever you do, you need to have an education.” And so that was a big part of who we were... My dad said, well actually my mom and dad both said “education is the thing to do” so I grew up and played football during school. That was my big sport. As I got better, I realized that football may help fund my education because that was our family’s hurdle, as it was nearly everyone’s following the Great Depression.

President Ohle was offered an opportunity to play football at Ohio Northern, which he did all four years of his undergraduate education. Emphasizing the importance of education, President Ohle told a story about his academic journey after his first-year football season. President Ohle stated:

Toward where I am today, at the end of my freshman season in college the coach came up to me and said, “Jack, you’re going to play a lot of football here. I checked your first quarter grades and you didn’t do as well in the classroom as you did on the football team.” I didn’t fail, but didn’t do as well as he thought I could. And one of my teammates, which I have to believe he told to go talk to me, who was a senior that I really respected, came up to me and said, “Jack, what can I do to help? You gotta get your arms around the academic side in college” and again I wasn’t doing poorly, C’s and B’s, if I remember correctly. But the coach knew I could do better. Long story short, you know, I’m a college president. That changed my entire way of thinking. I can literally remember when I said to myself, this is my chance. I’ve got to do better. I’ve got to get my education because it’s being paid for. Mom and Dad don’t have to worry about it and I have to be a better student. So I started doing better. I started working harder. I started to work as hard in the classroom as I was working on the football field.

In part, President Bahls’s passion for education seems to stem from experiences in his youth that allowed him to see the fruits of education. President Bahls’s mother was a legal secretary in Des Moines, Iowa, which afforded him the opportunity to speak with

her boss, an attorney. President Bahls said “I admired her boss who really was a thoughtful guy, a guy with an analytical mind. He was up on the news, he could really talk about things. It was clear to me, he was educated.” President Bahls also mentioned his personal interest in debate, as it assisted in his educational pursuits:

I intended on being a pre-law major because I was a high school debater. We were a group of pretty good debaters. In fact, the dream of a lot of debaters was to be a lawyer, keep up the trade and using words to make an argument and persuade people.

President Bahls lived that dream, as he graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in accounting, and then from Northwestern Law School with good grades.

President Bahls was even given the opportunity to serve as a senior editor of the *Law Review*. However, there was a transition point from strictly law to a meld of higher education and law. President Bahls described this as follows:

So I had a couple experiences that I thought were interesting. I started doing some tax work in association with the corporations that I represented and I got to know a guy who was from the appeals division of the IRS. So when you do a tax audit, there is a tax auditor and you try to talk the auditor into your clients position and if you lose you have the right to have it reviewed within the IRS and the cases that I lost would just coincidentally go to the same guy. And there is a little bit more formality there and he, after one of these said “I teach a course at Marquette Law School part time and it’s tax procedure and I’m always giving the IRS position on all this stuff, would you come in for a class or two and talk about the tax payers position?” And he said “I like how you approach things, you are prepared.” So I went into his class and talked about how to prepare a case, how to win a case before the IRS. And I really enjoyed it. I thought to myself, I am helping this next generation and it really multiplied the impact of what I could do. Maybe help some of these law students think about practicing tax law.

Much like President Bahls, President Colson’s original college plan led him to believe that the practice of law was in his future. However, as a true academic, President Colson’s interest in learning as much as he could across multiple disciplines, while also

preserving academic flexibility, made philosophy an attractive option. President Colson stated:

I signed up for the courses LSU recommended on this piece of paper that was their form of academic advising and ended up liking all of the courses I had taken, but especially the philosophy class I took that first semester. Somewhere along the way I figured out: A) that I liked almost every course I was taking. I liked all the stuff I was studying. B) If I majored in philosophy I could preserve my options as much as possible. It was a fairly small major that had very few required courses. I had the opportunity to take other courses I was interested in. It was a good preparation for law school. Throughout my college career I was studying philosophy because I enjoyed it. I took political science, literature and histories and so on just because I liked school.

Through additional remarks, it is evident that President Colson's interest in working in higher education came during his undergraduate years at Louisiana State University, where he considered seminary in addition to the aforementioned law school. It seems clear that he fell in love with education and the true process of learning. He mentioned:

All along, I guess it was when I was a fourth year undergraduate, my hope was to study, read, learn as much as possible and I thought, that's what a college professor did. That was my goal then. Because I enjoyed this pure reading, pure research, I was really interested in that. So, after I graduated, I was fortunate enough to be hired to teach religion and philosophy right out of undergrad.

Like his counterparts, President Henning also conveyed his interest in working in higher education and the influences that reinforced the importance of education:

A position in the fundraising operation at Wartburg opened up. I was a fairly visible student because I'd had a few leadership positions on campus and I got contacted and I thought well, I need a job, this sounds interesting. I'd be working on the capital campaign and what would I be doing? I guess I'd be using some of my abilities to communicate. Mostly I was attracted to it because I felt good about Wartburg. I was going back to my alma mater.

Additionally, President Henning had family influences around education:

My experience is different than other people who have a lifelong dream. They've known they want to do something for their entire life. I'm married to one of those. I kid when I say that when my wife Carole went to her first day of kindergarten she came home knowing she wanted to be a teacher and that's what she did.

In speaking about his upbringing, President Henning shared:

Another concept in general psychology, how were you imprinted more as a child? Were you validated more by what you did or who you were? I probably had both. I had one parent who was a little bit better for validating Kent for who he was. But both of my parents really praised and rewarded academic performance. They didn't pay me money or any of that kind of stuff but they really wanted me to know how important education was, they offered me plenty of praise for accomplishing something that was noteworthy.

Career Paths

With passion and support for different facets of higher education, all four participants were primed for careers in higher education, but were not necessarily along the same path. As previously mentioned, a desire to learn and the respect each participant had for higher education played significant roles in their lives. Such themes were present in their work experiences and in their preparation for an ELCA college presidency.

Educational Backgrounds

Two of participants in this study do not have doctoral degrees, which does not align with the CIC report data that states nearly 80% of all CIC presidents have earned a PhD or EdD (Song & Hartley, 2012). However, the educational backgrounds of these presidents all include post-baccalaureate degrees.

President Henning earned his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in English and communication arts, whereas President Ohle earned his BA in social work. President Bahls earned his BA in accounting, and President Colson earned a BA in philosophy.

President Colson continued his education, earning a Master of Arts (MA) in philosophy and a PhD in philosophy, with a minor in theology from Vanderbilt University. President Bahls's post-baccalaureate education was from Northwestern University, where he earned a juris doctorate degree. President Henning earned a

Master's of Business Administration (MBA) from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. President Ohle's post-baccalaureate work started with his study in seminary at Hamma School of Theology working towards a Master in Divinity degree and ended by completing an MA in Higher Education Bowling Green State University. Each of the participants attended post-baccalaureate programs from institutions with high academic standards and strong academic reputations.

First Higher Ed Jobs

With the exception of President Bahls, the participants entered higher education immediately after earning college degrees. President Bahls's entrance into higher education was only six years after his time at Northwestern University.

President Ohle's first position in higher education was at Wittenburg during his time in seminary, where he served as an assistant football coach and an assistant dean.

President Ohle recalled his time as a football coach at Wittenburg:

Because of my football background, the coach there asked me to be a graduate assistant for him. And I loved it. It gave me the chance to get back on the field and so I did some assistant coaching there. Actually when the first ever stag bowl was played, we played in it and won the stag bowl. That was in 1969 and we won the national championship, won 10 games. In a small conference. Wow that was great.

President Henning's first position was in fundraising at Wartburg College, shortly after graduating from the same institution. President Henning discussed his entrance into higher education:

Leaving college in 1980 was kind of like it was for our 2009 graduates. It was just a bad time and our economy was in the tank. I was fairly certain I was going to need to do something other than print journalism. My first job out of college was an internship at Burlington Northern Railroad in public relations department. The head of the department was trying to build his staff but he only had so many positions, so he tried this trick of hiring interns. There were about three or four of us. We had all graduated and from my standpoint it looked like a foot in the door

for a permanent job but the economy was just kind of on this downward spiral. An entry-level fundraising position at Wartburg opened up. I was a fairly visible student because I'd had a few leadership positions on campus and I got contacted and I thought well, I need a job, this sounds interesting. I'd be working on the capital campaign and what would I be doing? I guess I'd be using some of my abilities to communicate. Mostly I was attracted to it because I felt good about Wartburg. I was going back to my alma mater. So I started out in an entry level fundraising job.

President Colson's entry point into higher education was as a faculty member. He talked about his first teaching experience:

When I took my first teaching job, I was really fortunate to get a job right after my 4 years of undergrad, even before I had my degree. I was an instructor of philosophy and religion and I was in a teeny tiny program. I think there were three or four of us in the department. I realized it was not all I imagined. I liked it, I liked the students, but it wasn't what I imagined. It was more pragmatic, more obligations, and less time to give your thoughts.

President Bahls's path into higher education was not as short as the other participants, but he also entered higher education early in his career. He still pursues a previous career that is a passion for him and that has informed his work throughout his time in higher education. Prior to President Bahls joining the faculty at the University of Montana, he was a lawyer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After the teaching experience previously mentioned, President Bahls was doing pro-bono work with Sister Read at Alverno College. That was when the reality of working in higher education took shape.

President Bahls described it this way:

My mentor said Alverno needed some legal work done. It was corporate work, a review of their bylaws and he asked if I would you do that? This is probono. Lawyers are expected to do probono work so I said ya, I'll do that and got to work with them on a number of matters. If it was a big matter we might charge but reviewing bylaws or employment matters that don't get to litigation. Sister Joel Read, who at the time was an innovator in education said to me, "Steve I really want to thank you for doing this legal work, you really enjoy discussing the philosophy of law so you are not just talking to us about firing an employee but you are talking about the larger issues, the policy implications and I think you'd be a better academic than lawyer," she said. And I was kind of insulted but then

she said “you know we are in this, we have a FIPSE grant, from the US Department of Education and Alverno got a grant,” their claim to fame was that they didn’t get grades, they still don’t instead they give individualized assessments and exit competencies that it would be like our student learning outcomes are now and then each course would pick between this menu of 20 competencies and you’d have to master 4 of them. You wouldn’t get a grade but an analysis of how you did on these competencies. So they got a grant to spread this, what we now call student learning outcomes. There were exit competencies in those days to spread that concept to profession schools. So the University of Montana was a law school, University of New Mexico was another one. They were mainly schools out west. She said “we know the people from the University of Montana, I could make a contact for you there.” So I said that would be great. I loved the practice of law but it would be interesting to be a full time law professor. I ended up getting that job. I got that job the same year I became partner in my law firm. And that’s what you aspire to do. And the timing was a little awkward because the University of Montana search went on and on and on and I didn’t think I was going to get the position so I signed the partnership papers and within days, I got the offer from University of Montana...I was assigned to teach corporate law and did that for 9 years. I enjoyed every minute of it.

Administrative and Leadership Roles

Each of the participants in this study shared their career paths; most positions required leadership and administrative skills to succeed. The specific positions en route to their ELCA presidencies were different, but underlying commonalities existed, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition to President Ohle’s first position as Assistant Dean of Students and Assistant Coach, he served in a variety of other roles throughout his career. Staying in education, President Ohle transitioned from his first position to become a high school teacher and football coach. Following his time in high school in Ohio, he moved on to Muskingum College, where he took positions of Associate Dean of Students and, again coaching football. At this point in his career path, President Ohle mentioned, “I loved student development and coaching. But I knew at some point that coaching and teaching and administrating in college was going to become too much. I was going to have to

make a decision.” The decision President Ohle made was to move beyond coaching and athletics. Because of this, he enrolled in graduate classes and earned his Master’s degree in higher education. Following his time at Muskingum, he received a call about an opportunity to work in advancement at his alma mater, Ohio Northern University.

President Ohle’s story went as follows:

My alma mater called and said “you know Jack,” the gentleman calling was the vice president there, “I need to have someone like you with a graduate degree and an alum of the college come to work here in what we call development, and be the alumni director and help raise some money.” And I said, “No way. I don’t want anything to do with that” and he convinced me to come see him anyway. I saw him and two weeks later we moved. So, I became the Director of Alumni and Assistant Director of Development for my alma mater. I was 28 years old and done coaching. This was the pivotal point. I left the Student Life side, went to the “dark side” in fundraising and went into administration and it was a great experience.

After his time as the Director of Alumni and Assistant Director of Development at Ohio Northern, President Ohle joined Nebraska Wesleyan University as the Vice President.

Following his time at Nebraska Wesleyan, President Ohle served as Senior Vice President and University Secretary at Drake University. After twelve years in those roles, President Ohle became the president of Wartburg College. The transition from Drake to Wartburg, according to President Ohle was as follows:

I received a telephone call from the chairman of the board at Wartburg. Fred Hagemann was a Drake graduate from the business school. I knew his name because Fred was on our list of donors to solicit. He said, “Jack, it’s down to the wire. We’ve identified a few presidential candidates and everybody that I’ve talked to asked me if I talked to Jack Ohle about the presidency at Wartburg and I haven’t so I’m calling” and I said, “no I’m not interested, I’m at Drake.” I just had worked with the president there and we had received a 50 million dollar gift from an alum. We had just added on to our house, the kids had all graduated from high school, you know, it was just a perfect time in our lives and I thought I had the greatest job. I was well paid at that time, in the 90s, for my position. Living the life, our kids were doing well, I was involved in the church, you know just a lot of activities and Fred said I want to come down and talk to you. So he came down. He came to my house and he and Kris and I met for about an hour in our home

and then I had arranged to take him out to lunch. Fred has told this story publicly. We went to the country club and we run into a big Drake donor. And he knows Fred and knows Fred is from Wartburg and he said, “wow Fred, what are you doing here?” “I’m talking to Jack.” “Jack is trying to get some money.” “Ya, that’s why I’m here. I went to graduate school at Drake.” Fred tells the story that he went home and talked to his wife and said that Jack was going to be the next president at Wartburg. I hadn’t said I was even interested. I went home and said to Kris, something is happening. There is something that is here and really I never considered a presidency. It wasn’t really something I wanted to do. I had not completed a PhD. You know, I’d done my studies in seminary and had a graduate degree and did some other work academically, but Kris and I decided that was not going to be the end. I didn’t have to have that degree to do what I was doing in higher education. So I said it’s probably never going to be in the cards. I was a member of CASE and was on the board at CASE, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. And then I became the Chairman of CASE, the largest educational association in the world. So, I was really having fun doing what I was doing. Earlier on, I was really involved in NASPA and many other things related to student life so it was fun. So, Fred, calls me back and says “Jack, I really want you to visit with some people here. We are going to visit with candidates ‘off-site’” and I said “well, I’ll do that but I am not a candidate.” And after that, he talked me into coming to interview, and long story short, I became president of Wartburg College.

Following his time at Wartburg, he came to his final career stop: the presidency at Gustavus-Adolphus College.

After years of working as a professor of law at the University of Montana, President Bahls began serving as Associate Dean of the law school at Montana.

Regarding the move from faculty into administration, President Bahls said:

My best friend on the faculty became Dean of the Law School, Martin Burke. He taught individual income tax so he and I were friends. He became Dean and asked me to become Associate Dean of the law school. This was not something I aspired to, this was a tough job. In a small law school the Associate Dean was responsible for academics, student life, career services and admissions so there were two of us, the Dean and the Associate Dean and he was responsible for the overall direction of the law school and responsible for university relations and fundraising and I had the other piece of it. I really enjoyed it. I was solving problems, helping people. Students would stop by, sometimes when you help direct them, it’s more than assessing a penalty because they screwed up but having this conversation, Why? What have you learned? This is not the end of the world. It is the end of the world if you keep repeating it. And I thought this is,

well, I really enjoy this. So it was more accidental to move into college administration because my friend asked me to do it as a favor.

After nine years at the University of Montana as a faculty member and administrator, President Bahls moved on to become the Dean of the law school at Capital University, where he served for nine years. Following his time at Capital, President Bahls was contacted about the prospect of serving as president of Augustana College. His remarks about that transition were as follows:

Then this Augustana opportunity came up. I have a good record as a Law School Dean but there is no way I am going to get Augustana because I didn't think I was qualified, but yet you know the search consultant said "You should consider this" so I said "fine." It was a very difficult search. I was a very controversial candidate because I had not attended a liberal arts college. I had attended a state school. I did not have a PhD. I was a lawyer. I had never worked for a liberal arts college so the faculty were quite concerned about my candidacy and I knew that would happen. I thought this probably wouldn't get beyond the faculty or search committee but it will be a great experience so why not? And there is a chance it can happen. I came in and I'm the only candidate left in the pool. As I understood it, there were three candidates in the pool as finalists; two were gone. So I was the last guy standing. So when I was here interviewing for two days, it's kinds of interesting, the tone seemed to suggest questions of why do we only have one guy? Why didn't we reopen it? From what I understand there was a tussle about my candidacy. But the candidacy was not rejected but approved by the Board and that's why I'm here. That happened in 2003, eleven years ago. I felt so fortunate to be here.

Since 2003, President Bahls has been serving as president of Augustana College. President Colson's career path began in the faculty, and continued to progress throughout academia, following his time as an instructor of philosophy and religion at Western Carolina University. While at Western Carolina, President Colson worked on his dissertation to complete his PhD. While President Colson was very satisfied with his work at WCU, and saw himself serving on that faculty forever, an opportunity presented itself that he chose to pursue. President Colson described it as follows:

I just assumed that I would be on the faculty at WCU forever and that I would eventually get my degree and become an Assistant Professor and Associate Professor and then Full Professor. And I'd be there forever. I wasn't thinking about a path. But what happened and this is a pattern in my whole life, I actually got a call from a friend who was teaching at a secondary school in Louisiana. Several southern states have high schools that are called the North Carolina School for the Arts or Alabama school for Science, or Louisiana School for the Arts. They were specialized and intended to bring gifted and talented students to a location where they can finish high school. I had a friend at the Louisiana School and said, "Look there is an experimental program starting at the university where the school is based and you ought to take a look at that. You might find it interesting." That phone call led to a few other calls from people associated with this developing college on the campus of Northwestern State University. It was going to be called the Louisiana Scholar College. I went for an interview and got hired as one of the founding faculty members there. I was just minding my own business at Western Carolina, I wouldn't have thought about doing this until someone called and encouraged me to think about it.

President Colson served on the faculty at the Louisiana Scholar College for nine years, the longest he has ever stayed anywhere during his career. Following his time in that role, President Colson transitioned to Pepperdine College in an endowed chair faculty position, the Fletcher Jones professorship. During President Colson's time at Pepperdine, he took on additional responsibilities. He described it as follows:

Because there were so few on the faculty I had done quite a bit of work. I was called the curriculum coordinator, which meant I managed courses and class assignments. I had been the Associate Director for about a year to help a man who was hired to oversee us. At Pepperdine I was running this small program on a small budget but I was kind of running the program.

After working as a member of the faculty at Pepperdine, President Colson advanced to the positions of dean and provost at Centenary College in Louisiana. While at both Pepperdine and Centenary, President Colson's interest in Lutheran higher education grew. After seven years in his dean and provost roles at Centenary, President Colson began serving as president of Wartburg College. President Colson described the transition from Centenary to Wartburg, stating:

So I'm plugging away as a Dean at Centenary. Then, the president decides to retire. It's a little bit of a surprise. He fell into some hard times and we were dealing with some issues. The question for me was, "What do I do? Do I try to stay here or do I revert to faculty status or look at a different role?" That was the first time I was energetically looking for a new role. What I decided was that I liked deaning, but I wanted to do it in a Lutheran school because of what I'd learned. So I threw my name in the hat for deanships. I applied for a couple years. Again this kind of thing where friends and connections reached out to me about considering different opportunities happened again. I was involved in a search for a dean of a Lutheran school. The search was going well, I felt good about it. We had a consultant that had been working for us for a number of years. He himself is an alum of Wartburg. He learned from people he knew that I had been on a campus interviewing for a position and so he took me out to lunch one day and we talked about the interview I'd had. He said, "My alma mater is looking for a president and you should consider applying for it." I said "That doesn't make sense. I'm not a Lutheran, there's no way I can be a president of a Lutheran school." He said, "No, you should look at the job description because you don't have to be a Lutheran." So I did. In the meantime he had visited a bit with the search committee to see where they were with the search. He gave me a little bit of information. But he said, "Because I am the consultant here at the college, I can't encourage you to take another job, but if you are searching for a job and asked me for help, I could help you, but you'd have to ask." So I did some studying and I said, "Yes, I would like some help." So that was odd and very quick. I was involved in this search for a dean position and ultimately got the offer but at the time...everything was so compressed. I threw my name in the hat here at Wartburg, the search committee invited me to come visit. I met the search committee in Des Moines at a hotel, we had this great conversation about Wartburg and about what they were looking for, what I was looking for. That was the moment that I realized I could be the president of a Lutheran school. I was really looking to be a dean but after that conversation, we talked for a couple hours. I liked the people, I liked what they were saying about Wartburg. They invited me to come to campus. I took a visit of the campus in 2009 and spent a couple days here. I loved the place. I enjoyed the conversations. That was when it switched for me from being a possibility to "Wow, this is something I'd really like to do."

That same year, 2009, President Colson started his work as the president of Wartburg College.

The final participant, President Henning's career started in fundraising and remained there for quite some time. After two years in entry-level fundraising at Wartburg College, President Henning was offered and accepted the position of Campaign

Director at Wartburg. At the conclusion of the capital campaign President Henning was directing at Wartburg, he felt that six years at his alma mater had been long enough. He decided graduate school was an important next step. Through a Wartburg connection he didn't know well, he ended up attending Duke University in the Fuqua School of Business, and was part of the executive MBA program there. When he arrived at Duke, he started working as the Director of Annual Giving for the business school. President Henning's recollection was as follows:

When I first went to the school of Business at Duke, I was the director of annual giving. The Business school at Duke is all graduate level. There isn't an undergraduate business degree. I was doing what you would consider an entry level fundraising position within the business school. I saw opportunities at Duke, including the opportunity to get my Master's degree. When I got there I knew I was going to work for Gordon. I didn't know Gordon well, but I knew I was going to work for someone who was going to look out for me and help me with my professional growth, both as a mentor and it gave me the opportunity to get in. As far as my fundraising career goes, at this point I had been in my first six years, I had been promoted. I ran a pretty significant operation within the fundraising department. This was an opportunity to see if I could do this job at a different institution. I was somewhat intimidated as I thought I was this Iowa farm kid going off to a major university in the graduate business school. Was I going to be able to cut it? Could I fit? I was feeling like I was a decent fundraiser, but all of a sudden it was like, am I? Can I do this? I started there and found out that I knew what I was doing. I had Gordon to keep me on track. I got into the MBA program then, which was an executive program offered in the evening. I was working full time and in the executive MBA program. Not all MBA programs are created equally and executive MBA programs are designed to focus on a certain type of student. I had to have seven years minimum of work experience to be considered. Everything I was taught in my business school courses was taught to prepare me for being a CEO. That was the intention of the EMBA, it assumed that the 66 of us in that cohort were all going to be senior executives and CEOs.

President Henning earned his degree from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University and, while he felt that he had other career opportunities, he was entrenched in the fundraising world of higher education. He would remain in the field. His next stop was at George Mason University as Assistant Vice President for Advancement and

Campaign Director. President Henning's stay at George Mason was short-lived, and he quickly transitioned to Carthage College as the Vice President for Advancement. He described it as follows:

This was a great experience [George Mason] for me to get in while at the beginning of something and see it all the way through. It was probably the one ill-timed move of my career. Because the day that Carole, seven months pregnant, and I met with the realtor to start our house search; we drove up there, got a hotel room, woke up that morning to meet a realtor to look at housing, turned on the TV only to find out that Hussein had just invaded Kuwait and the whole world was in shambles. The stock market was plunging, gas prices were going all to hell and economists were saying "Oh my God, this is what we've been fearing." I sat down on the bed and I thought, why the hell am I changing jobs? Why are we moving right now? To make a long story short, everything I went to do at George Mason kind of evaporated in about two months' time because of the economy. They put the campaign on the shelf. The leadership opportunity I had been looking for had evaporated. I didn't lose my job. Other people around me did. I was told I had an opportunity to bide my time, rebuild, and be a part of whatever they rebuilt. At the time, I was ready to do that but the consulting firm that had a hand in getting me to George Mason knew what had happened to me and they had been hired by Carthage College to help Greg Campbell find a Vice President for Advancement. So their search arm was aware of my situation. We had a baby. We were on the east coast. Our families were in the Midwest, in Iowa. All of a sudden getting back to the Midwest, back to a smaller Lutheran college environment that I was familiar with was nice. The big thing was this was an opportunity and Greg Campbell took a chance on me at 32 years old to come be Vice President of Advancement, run the whole fundraising side, and oversee the marketing and communications support area. And they too were just gearing up for a capital campaign. I knew that's what I needed to do in my career, to have that leadership opportunity.

President Henning's last transition was from Carthage College as the Vice President for Advancement, to Grand View as the president. He told his story as follows:

About that time, I was noticing there were presidencies being filled, particularly in small colleges, with candidates from non-traditional backgrounds. In fact, several with fundraising backgrounds. I watched Wartburg hire Jack Ohle. And I knew Jack a little bit. There were other presidencies that were coming out of different backgrounds. There were people coming from outside of higher education. At about that time, my predecessor here was Tom Thompson. He had worked at Wartburg. When I was promoted from assistant director to director at Wartburg, when I had to hire another assistant director, I hired Tom Thompson out of parish ministry into his first higher ed job. I trained him to do the

campaign. When I left, he stayed on and moved to financial aid. We drifted apart. The next thing I know, all of a sudden, Tom Thompson was named president of Grand View College in Des Moines. I knew this guy so I drove over to his inauguration at Grand View and, like I said, this was about the same time I was seeing other people come out of non-traditional backgrounds into presidencies, and I think, by that point, my name might have surfaced in one of the first searches for which I had been nominated. The first search that came along in which my name was nominated, I laughed. I said, “Me? you’ve got to be kidding. How could I be president? I don’t have a PhD.” It was a combination of those experiences. The most poignant one was sitting in the audience watching Tom Thompson be inaugurated as president of one of these Lutheran schools. That was one of those moments. And there were those people who thought I could do this. I had this education where they were preparing me for a presidency or CEO of something. I’ve had that itch. I’ve been around people who lead businesses, other people think I can do this. Maybe I really shouldn’t laugh at these opportunities. And that’s about the time in my career when I was really starting to think about being a president. I did throw my hat in the ring for two other searches. Did not make the finalist round. Grand View came around and knocked at my door. Tom had moved on to Concordia and at about that time I had felt that it was all coming together. I had the education and the direction my professors were pointing me too. You know, a CEO position. I had models of mentors, I had vice presidential experience where I was learning all the time. I was watching. I wasn’t responsible for finance but if there is one thing I do understand, I think I understand finances of places like this even though I wasn’t the chief business officer. Sometimes those opportunities have to come like that. I gradually realized I was ready, so I went for it. That’s how I ended up here.

Moving On and Up through Unanticipated Events

A theme throughout the narratives pertaining to career paths was the willingness to advance because of referrals and recommendations. None of the participants in this study set out to be a college president. In the first 30 seconds of the first narrative shared in this study, President Ohle commented “Jack Ohle never thought he’d be a president of a college.” In fact, they did not even know it would be an option that would ever present itself. For many years, these four men didn’t feel they were qualified. At one point during his story, while talking about career advancement, President Henning mentioned, “To be quite honest with you, I didn’t think I was qualified to be a college/university president.” The participants did not see presidency as a realistic goal early in their careers. Over

time, things changed. Experience was gained, reputations were developed, and they started hearing people suggest that they should consider dean positions, vice presidencies, and even presidencies—particularly at ELCA schools.

All four participants shared stories about different times throughout their careers where they received calls about new opportunities, prior to any interest being shown by the participants. For example, President Colson said,

This friend of mine encouraged me to apply for a job there [Louisiana Scholars College]. I went for an interview and got hired as one of the founding faculty members there. I was just minding my own business at Western Carolina, I wouldn't have thought about doing this until someone called and encouraged me to think about it.

This happened to President Colson more than once during his career. The same is true for President Ohle, who had this to say about references, recommendations, and unexpected opportunities:

I don't say this braggadociously at all, but through this position, which now I am retiring from, I have never applied for a job – ever. I have never sent in a resume. When I was hired at Riverview High School from Wittenberg, Bob Wagner went to be the high school head coach, he took me with him. Muskingum, Bob and I went there, he as an assistant coach and me as the Associate Dean of Students and assistant coach, when I went to Ohio Northern I was called out of the blue by a Vice President whom I had not met, he said come back to your alma mater and I did two weeks later. When John White called me from Nebraska Wesleyan, I didn't even know who he was, and that was in January. I wound up moving there the first of April. John had talked to another good friend, Roy Schilling, who was a long time president. Roy was president at Hendricks College in Arkansas, and then became president of Southwestern College in Texas. Roy and I became friends and he was looking for a vice president, and had called me at Ohio Northern just at the time our second son had died. And I said, "Dr. Schilling, I am not interested in moving. I can't." "Well," he said, "I'm not ready to hire but I would like to meet with you." We talked, but we never visited face to face. He is the guy who gave my name to John White and said to him, "You need to call Jack Ohle." John used him as his mentor. So, Roy told John he needed to talk to this kid who was going to be a vice president someday. So, I'm at Ohio Northern. Then John and I are working at Nebraska Wesleyan for ten years together. A consultant, Bob Nelson and I had worked at Ohio Northern and all ten years at Nebraska Wesleyan. He said he had heard about a position at Drake University

from the new President of Drake, Dr. Mick Ferrari. We talked about John and I consulting with Mick about building a fundraising program. He'd come from a state school and had never been in fundraising, and so we were talking about what we were doing at Nebraska Wesleyan. Then, all of a sudden John, Mick, and I started talking about how this could be a great opportunity for me at Drake. And Mick says to me "Maybe you are the person to do this and be my new Vice President." I said, "No I'm not." In the end, I made the move. It was kind of strange but I felt a calling.

When contacted by a search firm for the Augustana presidency, President Bahls remembers thinking: "There is no way I am going to get Augustana because I didn't think I was qualified, but yet, you know the search consultant said, I think you may be surprised. In the end, he was right." In conversation with a consultant, President Colson had a similar experience to President Bahls. President Colson mentioned the following:

He [the consultant] said, "My alma mater is looking for a president and you should consider applying for it." I said "That doesn't make sense. I'm not a Lutheran, there's no way I can be a president of a Lutheran school." He said, "No, you should look at the job description because you don't have to be a Lutheran."

President Ohle also talked about people caring about him, stating

The thread I hope you're hearing is people cared about me. They evidently saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. They felt I had some abilities that I probably wasn't using, whether it's football, academics, fundraising, coaching.

Along with his experiences, that same belief that others had in President Henning started to change his outlook on the prospect of serving as a president. President Henning shared the following:

And there were those people that thought I could do this. I had this education where they were preparing me for a presidency or CEO of something. I've had that itch. I've been around people who lead businesses, other people think I can do this. Maybe I really shouldn't laugh at these opportunities.

Additional stories and lived experiences about these unanticipated events, often due to references, referrals, and cold calls about positions can be found in the Mentors section, which follows.

Mentors

Throughout the stories about career paths, a recurring theme was the importance of mentors in the lives of the participants. The presidents shared stories about their mentors being confidants, educators, role models, leaders, and friends. They also shared how these mentors played integral roles in their ongoing success by often being the person with connections and by providing recommendations and referrals for new positions. The importance of mentors cannot be overstated in the minds of the participants, as they all had two or three people that they considered mentors throughout their careers.

While also talking about career paths, much of President Ohle's first interview was a celebration of his mentors. President Ohle visibly lit up when he began talking about his mentors. He described Dr. Samuel Meyer as a mentor, as well as Dr. John White and Bob Nelson. Dr. Samuel Meyer was the president at Ohio Northern while President Ohle served as the Director of Alumni and Assistant Director of Development. President Ohle mentioned this about his relationship with Dr. Meyer:

Dr. Samuel Meyer. Dr. Meyer was just a wonderful human being and I became very close to him as a young guy, and he, at that time was probably, well, he would have been, 68 – my age now, well a year older. We traveled a lot together and, you know, I did all the alumni work, and we are doing the fundraising programming and I am just having a ball at my alma mater. I'm back in the environment I loved; you know exactly what I am talking about. And Dr. Meyer and I were on a road trip for the University's centennial, and I will never forget this conversation. I drove, he road. And we were talking and nothing was out of bounds. I could ask him any question I wanted so all those times we traveled, I asked him about academics, I talked about Student Life, fundraising, faculty, tenure. You know, all those things and I can still remember his voice and him talking through these different aspects of the institution with me. And, one day he said to me, he said, "Jack, I'm really excited for you. You are doing a great job here but some day you are going to be a college president." I was 28 years old. And I said, "Dr. Meyer" (and I would have never called him anything other than Dr. Meyer until the day he died) "I really appreciate that coming from you, that's

very special but I'm not going to work as hard as you do." And then we laughed. When I was elected president of Wartburg, he was 92 and died later that year at 93. I called him and we literally cried on the phone together.

President Ohle mentioned John White as another mentor. John White was the president of Nebraska Wesleyan while President Ohle served as vice president. President Ohle described he and John White's relationship and mentioned Bob Nelson, a fundraising consultant during President Ohle's time at Drake University as a third mentor. Of these relationships, President Ohle said:

John became my confidant and mentor. He became my coach, my friend and we had a relationship that was very special. Starting in 1974, at Ohio Northern through 2012 when John White died, I had three individuals through that period of time that were my mentors. A fellow by the name of Bob Nelson who was a fundraising consultant, worked with me at Ohio Northern when I was young. Dr. Meyer and I go back to my time at Ohio Northern, first as a student and then a staff member. John White was a big part of my life, and then Bob Nelson worked with John and me and then was with me during the time I was at Drake, I asked Bob Nelson to join me as a consultant during my time at Drake. When I became the president of Wartburg, John White became that person. So, I've had three mentors in my career from 1974 until 2012, during those years I met with one of those individuals every single month. We never had an agenda and we never finished the agenda. They became individuals that I could talk with and hear their opinions as I got into the vice presidencies, and when I was senior vice president at Drake University and secretary of the University and we raised substantial gifts and we were doing a lot of things, and I needed somebody to bounce things off of, an outside opinion which you cannot get with your staff, and certainly when you become a president. Mentors are really important. Likewise, I am hopeful others have considered me a mentor to them over the years.

Much like President Ohle, President Colson's mentors were work colleagues that he spent time with during his years as a faculty member. President Colson said the following:

I had really good mentors over my lifetime. The first director that I worked for at Northwestern University in 1987, Stan. He taught me lessons about hard work. About getting a job done. Stan was always an example of a person who was willing to work to get the job done. He was so student-centered. He became very impatient when his faculty would say things like, "I have to maintain academic standards, that's why people have to fail my class". He found that...it really

angered him. He believed the obligation of a faculty member is to teach students what they need to know, not to create barriers or create a system that kept people out. He thought our job as teachers was to teach. Another guy, he was the director after Stan. We had been friends since 1987. He finished his career. He's teaching now. He was a dean for many years, and when he turned 65, he's now a faculty. He drove home the point that no job is beneath anybody's dignity. Any job that needs done is a job all should do. I still have this vivid picture in my mind of him, how he was always trying to fix our photocopier machine in the office. That's the kind of spirit he brought to the office. If it's a job that needs done, we just need to do it. There's none of this "I'm too good for it or I'm too good to get my hands dirty. I'm too good to teach freshmen courses. I'm too good to have office hours." At Pepperdine, the guy that was my division chair was a mentor of mine. He taught me a couple valuable lessons. He was a terrific influence. Again, a hard worker. He just believed in the necessity and dignity of hard work. He had grown up in a hard scrapped area of Oklahoma. And he had this rural, blue collar sense to him. He had great patience. We would often complain about working conditions. You could be working 18 hours a day outside in a hay field or in the cotton field, he'd say. He said, "You're really going to tell me the working conditions are bad?" He just had this perspective, down to earth working man that was always helpful to me. A lot of people had it worse than me. Again, drove home those lessons about hard work, humility, always being humble, always realizing that it's not about you, it's about the work. It's about the students and getting the job done.

President Henning not only addressed mentors in his story, but he also incorporated models of leadership that he distinguished as important to his career. President Henning talked about his mentor and models of leadership at Wartburg College during his early years in higher education, and described them this way:

My first boss was the Director of the Capital Campaign. I had been there a couple years and lo and behold, I leap frogged over an older gentleman and became the Director of the Campaign. There was another Assistant Director, there were two of us. He had been there longer and I was named the successor to the Director of the Campaign. So at that point my boss, Al, he was a great mentor. He was very easy going. He was a newcomer to fundraising in higher education. He was supportive of my professional growth. He was focused on planned giving so he stayed out of my hair when it came to the capital campaign. He let me, for a 24 year old, he gave me the opportunity to take on a lot of responsibility that I wouldn't have enjoyed anywhere else. I threw myself into that. I was the director for Design for Tomorrow campaign. My first day on the job at Wartburg was the same day Bob Vogel started as the president so I was working under his presidency at the time. As campaign director, I was the one setting up the campaign events and accompanying him as opposed to the VP. Al was not always

the one on there. There were campaign events in places like California, as well as in Iowa. I and the assistant directors were the staff setting that up. It gave me a lot of exposure to Bob in those first years of my career. I appreciated the closeness, the direct contact with Bob. I could see some of his leadership styles and abilities. I watched him function as a president. For someone at my age in my position in the organization, I probably had a lot more access to him and saw him in a lot of those roles, the external roles more so than the internal, than other staff at my level. I was involved in the internal meetings as they related to fundraising so I could see how he operated and observed. Was Bob a mentor? I don't know if I would consider him a mentor, but more of a model of a leader. My position gave me that access to see him.

The other mentor President Henning discussed was a man named Gordon Soenksen, whom he worked with at Duke University's school of business. President Henning said:

Gordon Soenksen had been the first Director of Wartburg's capital campaign. He left to go to the University of Chicago. When he left, Steve West, my first boss, became the director. The second director of that campaign effort. When Steve left, I became the third. I never worked for Gordon but he knew of my work, he observed it from afar. I knew of him because I knew I had succeeded him. He was the one that reached out and took me to Duke University. I would say Gordon was truly a mentor. He really was a teacher. He was educated to be a teacher, started his career as a teacher. He took that educator role into his work in fundraising, particularly into his managing. I look to Gordon as one who really enjoyed the teaching and mentoring of his staff. I was the recipient of that. We had many wonderful conversations and he provided me with a great deal of guidance and support.

Like the other Presidents, President Bahls spoke of three people who he saw as mentors. They included: John Frisch from the law firm in Milwaukee early in President Bahls's career; Martin Burke, dean of the law school at Montana; and Josiah Blackmore, president of Capital University. Speaking of these mentoring relationships, President Bahls mentioned the following:

So I went to this firm that had about 15 attorneys, so a mid-sized firm, and I fell in love with the place. I developed a mentor, John Frisch, who he and I would have coffee every Saturday morning becoming this informal mentor and helped me understand that life in these large firms where you are working seven in the morning to nine at night is not the best thing and maybe the mid-size firm as a

transactional lawyer isn't a bad life because you are working with people and creating jobs, mergers and acquisitions. You're not only a technical advisor as a lawyer to a smaller client base but you are a business advisor too.

He later spoke of Martin Burke, saying:

So he stepped down from his Dean's position and he said "You really ought to go for my position." So I went for his position, I applied, because I admired him. He let me help with some fund raising and strategic planning, visioning. He gave me experiences I wouldn't have gotten at that time without him. A good mentor. He and I remained in contact.

Lastly, President Bahls spoke of Josiah Blackmore, saying:

Joe was a visionary guy, a humble guy, a Presbyterian. But the head of a Lutheran institution. The church relation was important. We hit it off so I went out there for the opportunity to work for Joe...My mentor, Josiah Blackmore from Capital University, the president of Capital, told me that when he retired that about half of the people that he thought were his friends were really his business friends and when he was no longer the president of Capital University, that friendship ended or morphed into something that wasn't very meaningful and that was a surprise to him and very hard for him. These are the sorts of things he shared with me often. He was my mentor and I valued our conversations.

Tips for Success

Embedded throughout the narratives, and addressed through a specific follow-up question during the third interview, tips for success were discussed by all four participants. These tips are valuable nuggets of wisdom for aspiring leaders to consider. They included hard work, being open to new opportunities, setting vision and having foresight, thoughtful decision-making, facilitating group thought and drive, being passionate, and being a good listener. Of all the stories shared, these 15 or 20 minutes of narrative over hours of research may contribute the most in addressing the leadership gap.

The participants in this study have decades of combined leadership experience, and each had their own tips to share with aspiring leaders. President Colson shared his tips, saying:

I have a little bit of an iconoclastic view about leadership. I don't know if it is a good thing or bad thing. I sometimes worry about the term "leader." I don't like to throw that word around a lot because, I'll give you an example. I traveled a lot with the development officers when I first got here to meet some of their donors. One of the gift officers, Al, he is moving into semi-retirement. Al, when he was taking me around he said, I want President Colson to tell you his vision for the college. That just sounds so odd to me as though this college was a blank slate. Just a piece of clay and needed me to come in and shape it into some thing or write on this blank slate. Otherwise, there is just this blank stuff there. In my mind, leadership is, good leadership is two things, for me. First, discerning what is the potential of the institution or community and second trying to encourage or facilitate the members of the community or employees of the organization or institution to work together to achieve that potential. I think of that as leadership. I don't think of a good leaders as one who comes in and recreates or imposes a vision or picture or changes a direction. That's not how I think of it. I think of a leader as someone who is intuitive, sensitive, and aware; who is perceptive and who can then be encouraging, supportive and influential.

Presidents Ohle, Henning, and Bahls all connected calling to success. President Ohle said the following:

I think there are some points to consider. The first would be to be open. To examine every aspect of education that you can. Don't get hung up on being a dean of students or get hung up on being a CFO or counselor. Get to know the academy and really be a sponge. Learn everything you can and know that people can help you in ways in which you don't know unless you open yourself to that. That's helped me. I'm leaving here Monday to drive to Wisconsin. I've mentioned to you the Thrivent fellows program and I'm giving three presentations. The first on things like advancement and strategic planning and so forth. I am going to talk about my vocational journey at lunch. I've been working on that recently and I've used some things in the past that I think have been helpful for me. The bible verse that means more to me than anything I can put into words is Matthew 7:7-11. And this is my advice for understanding calling. Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will open to you. For those who ask, receive. Those who seek, find. And those who knock, the door will be opened. I can't say it any clearer. If I had been closed in any part of my life, I would not be where I am. Interestingly, that bible verse, when I was just starting in seminary, was a bible verse that I used as the summer theme when I was program director of our church camp in Ohio. I wrote the script. That whole script was centered on that bible verse. I didn't even know why I picked it. Now I do. Because it has impacted everything I've done. If you are not open, if you're not asking, you're not going to fulfill. You will do wonderful things. What I'm saying is that it gives a sense that you can go beyond anything you think is possible. That's where I am at this point in my career, in my life, really.

Some of President Henning's tips were also about passion and calling. He also talked about staying grounded, saying:

Well, we just got done talking about vocation and it's hard to call that just a small tip but, I really do think someone who is going into this type of position really needs to be genuine in that calling to lead. I think there are some presidents serving institutions, I don't see it so much in Lutheran or private education, but there are some presidents who get caught up in their role, their position, being president. That's not what drives me. As a matter of fact, I realize it is a fact of life that there are people that react to the second line of my business card. I'm the first line of the business card. I'm Kent Henning. The second line of my business card, president, doesn't change the first line. A lot of people react to that second line of my business card. I don't encourage students to call me Kent, but certainly faculty and staff. I'm on a first name basis. There are presidents who get a little caught up in being president rather than really deriving joy out of what I just described of vocation. The joy I derive is not being in this position, it's from seeing people like you succeed, going on and being on a life journey that's much different than if you had not come to Grand View. That's the joy. It takes courage. Sometimes when I talk about leadership, I talk about decision making and doing that very carefully, very thoughtfully. I think what I bring to this is that I can be visionary. So ok, if that's one of my gifts and that's what this place needs, then that's "vocation." I think you have to have the ability to look outside the institution and look as far in to the future as possible, look broadly across the environment and really recognize opportunities, threats, identify trends. I think those are skills that have been important in my presidency, so obviously I'd pass that on to anybody working toward a presidency. For someone in your stage of your career, I think the key I would point to is understanding accountability and responsibility. There are people who want to be responsible but don't want to be held accountable. That's not a leader. In my opinion, that's not someone who is cut out for leadership. So if you want to be responsible for something, then you have to welcome the accountability that comes with it. Those are a few nuggets.

Again, reinforcing the importance of passion and vocation, President Bahls had a few tips to share:

The best thing that you can do to position yourself is to just establish a record of excellence in whatever you do. Fully invest yourself in what you are doing. Establish a record of excellence there and let opportunities find you. In a sense, if your peers or others recognize that there is a record of excellence, things will happen for you. Secondly, I would suggest being deliberate in thinking about vocational calling and being deliberate in asking what your passions are. I think passions change over time. The common passions I've had are certainly the love of justice and wanting to apply justice to a better society. That passion was

originally through the legal profession. Then I had this set of experiences where I questioned if the legal profession had the corner on the market on social justice. Or whether social justice might be found at liberal arts colleges. And what happens at liberal arts colleges? So, be reflective on your passions. I would also say that in whatever you do, understand shared governance and participate in shared governance. If you think it's about you or your institution, or your moment in the sunshine, you are going to fail as a president. You need to learn to share governance, share credit, share the limelight, because when you get the blame, people will share the blame with you if you are used to sharing. Other nuggets would be to try to learn how in your management style, to develop a marketplace of ideas. I'm taken by the book about Lincoln, Doris Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*, and that's what I have tried to do where ever I've been, hire really smart people. Smarter than I am to report to me and have a market place of ideas. Our cabinet meetings are a lot of give and take and lot of people saying, "That's a crazy idea." In this marketplace of ideas, people bring you bad news, they bring innovation. The truth comes out of marketplace ideas. Be a good listener. Don't write people off just because they disagree because you will need them as allies. I've also tried to hold myself to the highest standard of integrity as well. I think that's very important. You can stumble there and it can be in a sense, "Game Over." In terms of professional development into a presidency, you need to hold yourself to high levels of integrity. They hold you under a microscope when you apply for these positions. You want to, you don't need to be perfect, but you do need to demonstrate high commitment to integrity.

Life Beyond the Office

An important part of this study was the emphasis placed on life journeys rather than simply on the career paths of ELCA college presidents. An integral part of the life journeys of participants, especially when trying to inform aspiring leaders of what to anticipate when considering a future presidency, included life beyond the office. Sub-themes emerged within this section of the results, including the blending of personal and professional life, the challenges of the presidential journey, and family considerations.

When considering the blending of personal and professional life, family considerations was significant enough that it warranted its own attention. In addition to family considerations, the stories paid particular attention to work-life balance and hobbies as important pieces to the presidential journey. Both of these concepts connect to

Schlossberg's Theory of Transition, particularly when considering situations, support, and strategies. These connections are made in Chapter 5.

Work-Life Balance

The concept of work-life balance was one that was quite informative about ELCA college presidencies when visiting with each of the participants. The data supported President Henning's feeling about work-life balance. He said that "work-life balance is a highly personal thing," and all participants had their own perspective. Snippets of work-life balance were strewn throughout the data. For example, one comment during President Bahls's story about his career path was telling: "As an administrator, it is much more difficult to have summers off, so I lost my summers off that we used to travel when I was teaching. That was a change."

Presidents Colson, Henning, and Bahls spoke at length about work-life balance. President Ohle was brief, but shared a message very similar to what Presidents Henning and Colson had to say. When thinking of balance, a teeter-totter comes to mind or the image of a gymnast on a balance beam. In my mind, the goal of balance is pure symmetry between two opposing sides. When thinking of it in that sense, it was clear that the work-life teeter-totter in these participants' lives was slanted strongly to the side of work. Of the four participants, President Bahls shared his approach, which, at times, included more clear lines between work and life beyond the office:

I'll talk about the work hours and the stress and how you balance it all. This is a six or seven day a week job and it usually starts at 7:30 in the morning and ends with a dinner or event someplace. It is non-stop. Summers are a little slower, but during the school year it is non-stop. It is a great privilege to be a college president, but there is a lot of stress associated with it. First of all, you are a magnet for criticism. Whenever anything goes wrong, it's you and, interestingly, when things go well, you usually get credit for that as well, even though you didn't have much to do with it. With the stress and time, how do you keep balance? I

think it's critical that I keep balance. I've talked about these projects that are related to my professional life that take place out of the law school or take place outside of Augustana College. That really helps you maintain balance where you are working with people where you are not the boss, but rather you are one of their peers. And to me, that is very satisfying. You can let your hair down a little bit there. Secondly, I work hard but I take a lot of time off too. That has been critical to my success. And when I take time off, I do not call back to the office because that is my time and I have a great team. To do that, we take time off in places where there is no cell phone reception, it will actually be four weeks this year. Can you believe that, there are still places without cell phone reception? So, we are great believers in getting away to let your hair down. It is tremendously satisfying to have multiple pieces of our lives. Likewise, we try to make family a priority still.

While President Bahls shared stories about his non-work projects, travel, and efforts to get away, the other presidents had a harder time articulating their ability to strike that balance, even as little of a balance as shared by President Bahls. President Colson remarked about the topic by saying, at one point, "It all blends together, it really does. Work, my time with Christy. It's one in the same." President Ohle's comments almost mirror that of President Colson's. President Ohle said, "Work-Life Balance, for me, I guess it's all the same. For Kris and me, it's all the same." President Colson went on to discuss work-life balance in depth:

Balance is a tough one because you have to be a good time manager, which I am not. I never have been. So, I let my work consume my time. That was one of the nice things with having kids at home and being engaged in their lives because my inclination was not to manage my time and let work take over my time. But if I had to be at baseball practice at three o'clock, there was this external governor on my time, my time commitment. It's a little bit more difficult once the kids are out of the house. Just more difficult. It's easier to say that I have to be at baseball practice at three than it is to say, "Well, I've blocked out personal time at three, so I'm going to do that now." It's hard to get away with that. It's hard to say that. The fact of the matter is, this role really doesn't have personal time in it. I don't think that's part of the bargain. I've been to these conferences where I hear experts say, every president, or every college administrator, that the rule should be you have one hour every day to yourself; every week, one day to yourself; and every month, an entire weekend to yourself. And that is an interesting model, but I don't know how you do it, really. There are times during the school year, it'd be the same for you Wes, that we work 14 straight days. We have an obligation for

14 consecutive days, even 20 days at a time. And mine might be a scholarship day on Sunday, which was preceded by an alumni event on campus Saturday, followed by a legislative meeting in Des Moines on Monday, but then I have to be back on campus on Tuesday for a banquet. It doesn't seem realistic that I can block out every Monday for me. That doesn't seem realistic. I don't know what balance one can reasonably aspire to. I've come to the conclusion a long time ago that I can't decide arbitrarily that I am going to take a weekend in October for myself. I can't do that. There's family weekend, homecoming, the Board is on campus. And if I wasn't on campus, there would be a World Food Prize event, or something else. You just can't do that. This work-life balance is definitely one of the most difficult things for me to work through personally.

Adding another layer to President Colson's comments, President Henning addressed work-life balance from both perspectives: life in relation to work, and work in relation to life:

How do you define balance? Here is an example, it would have been 2009, I thought gosh, we had just opened the Rassumssen Center, we launched football, we launched wrestling, enrollment was increasing and Carole and I combined work and last-minute summer vacation. In August we were out in Northern California. We spent some personal time in the wine country. We had been there for a gathering of Grand View alumni. I had been exercising, I felt healthy. I felt all that sort of stuff. Things were going well. I thought "I think this is the time when work-life balance is here." We were making our way to the Sacramento airport to fly home and my mom called me. She was already a year into her battle with terminal cancer and she broke the news to me that my dad had been diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Work-life balance, pfff. So I get back here and of course from that point my dad passed away two months later. Was there any work life balance in that two months, when I was trying to spend as much time as I could being supportive of my folks? The academic year was starting out here, I was getting ready for it. Yeah right, it's just tough. Life is something you can't control. You can't control life enough to have work-life balance. Those sorts of things pop up in everybody's life and there's never going to be enough time for this or that or whatever. So, I don't spend a lot of my time trying to calculate work-life balance. I think it would be a source of stress if I tried to do it. You know what, the job is demanding more. The family is demanding more. I just don't spend a lot of my time thinking about that. And maybe that is unique to me, but it's a philosophy I have about life whether I am in this job or in previous ones. But, it's something that I really understand in this role.

President Henning went on to discuss the importance of finding a way to refresh and, much like Presidents Colson and Bahls, discussed the demands of the job. Part of his narrative was as follows:

It's important to know what it takes to recharge your batteries. I can actually recharge if I can get out on my bike for three hours out on a bike trail all by myself. I'll probably get as much refreshment, renewal, or recharge from that experience as taking a Saturday or Sunday without opening up my briefcase or looking at my email. Some people define work-life balance as just that. Some people would say, "Gee Kent, that's not work-life balance and that's being really selfish by not being with Carole when you are on your bike." You know what, what you need for yourself is highly personal and it varies from individual to individual. So I think a lot about self-knowledge. People talk a lot about self-care. Well, nobody else can define for me what self-care is. I need to be able to do that and I need to know myself. So often, somebody else tries to define work-life balance for me. They are going to tell me I need to clock how many hours I work, how much time I spend with Carole. I don't know what to tell you. The job is very demanding. It is beyond full-time. It would be easier to determine the hours I wasn't working because they are much rarer. If you are going to define work-life balance by hours worked, I'd have a hard time telling you how many hours I work. I get questionnaires with the health-care screenings and they ask me how many hours a week do I work. Well, last evening Carole and I had dinner with Chuck and Jaina Johnson. It had been quite a while since we had done something just social with them. And of course, Chuck was my first board chair here. Well, that dinner was "kind of" work. It's a nice part of my work. Very enjoyable. Carole was with me. We had a lovely evening in a nice restaurant, nice conversation. Yes, there was a lot of talk about Grand View in there so yes, I was working. I was with Carole. In that moment, it seems there was work-life balance. But, if I were to fill out one of those questionnaires, "Yeah, I was working." From 8 AM yesterday morning until 9 PM last night. And I'm here this morning and Monday night I was at this summit on poverty in Des Moines until after 8 o'clock. Tonight, I will be after work with a gathering of folks for the wrestling event. At times, it can get exhausting. It definitely can at times. There are times that I think, "Wow, am I going to be able to keep this up. Keep up this pace." When it gets most exhausting though is not necessarily the amount of time but rather the intensity of what fills that time. To me, that's why this work-life balance topic, the way most people talk about it, does not compute for me. Because, I could spend an entire week with a schedule that goes morning to night and if I am working on things that I believe are really at the heart of what we need to be doing and I'm seeing results, and it's exciting and I've got the ability to affect change and see positive outcomes from that change, that's invigorating. That will keep me going and then to go out into the community and do the social thing, at times, it is really fun doing that and very rewarding.

As President Henning did, President Colson also discussed the concept of restoring in relation to the work demands:

Sometimes I ask myself the question “What ought I be doing about the personal time?” I think I know what people will say. Intellectually, what I believe people will say is that you need to have time for yourself to restore, rejuvenate and refresh. Intellectually, I believe that is true. Nonetheless, when I sit down at home to read a novel, I am thinking...[pauses to check his computer]... I got 3,426 items in my inbox. So, I’m sitting there reading a novel and I’m thinking I have all these items in my inbox and I have to get this letter out to the board. I have to respond to letters I’ve received. It’s hard for me to justify to myself that I am entitled to sit down and read a novel. That’s a struggle for me. Not saying I don’t goof off. I do goof off. Yesterday, I taped one of the soccer games and last night, I watched a half of it. The other night, Christy and I took a nice walk around the river. I am not trying to give the impression that I am working 24 hours a day. You have to find ways to rejuvenate and restore because the job requires a lot of hours.

President Ohle’s perspective on rejuvenation was a matter of daily reflection, a moment to review the day. In his narrative, he stated the following:

If I can go home at night and put it away, knowing things are in order and tomorrow will be another day, and lay down and go to sleep...job well done. I am content. Never satisfied, but content. And I do. I’ll stir at night sometimes if there is something really big. I’m human. But I never let it eat me up. Some presidents do and it can be disastrous. You cripple yourself that way. You can’t navigate. So, you have to keep that balance. You have to find a way to be fresh moving forward. So, at night, and Kris and I do talk about a lot of things, but I try not to bring the office home. Big issues, big things that have to be done for the college, Kris is part of that discussion. Kris is my only confidant here. But I don’t throw everything at her. Being able to go home at night and briefly process the day, I’m excited to go back to the office tomorrow. Heck, I might even go back that same night. There’s always something that needs the president’s attention.

Like the other participants, President Ohle also discussed the demands of the presidency and the intensity of his schedule:

When you think about it, were working seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There is not off time. You don’t press an off button. I was just talking with a staff member this morning that served as the interim vice president. He did a great job, but he was commenting that he knows the schedule I kept because he’d call me on Sunday morning if something was up or text me or write a note. At whatever hour, he had to call me about a case, he knew he could and he knew I’d be switched on, ready to work. He was the Student Life director. He had to

make the decision to call. He would do that. You are never off. If you take vacation, you still aren't off. Kris and I have been to Europe. I'll never forget, I was in Jerusalem and I wound up spending about two hours of my morning talking to folks back here. A lot of things were happening on campus. I can remember at Wartburg, at the time of 9/11, I was at Wartburg West visiting. I went out at least once a year, sometimes twice, because we had alumni there too. I did a lot with alums. I loved to meet with students. 9/11 hit and I was on the 27th floor visiting one of the students at a brokerage firm and we had to evacuate the building. I didn't have a car so he picked me up and I thought, what am I going to do? I can't get home because I couldn't fly. My son drove me down to Colorado Springs where I got a car, and thank goodness they didn't ask if I was leaving the state. I would not have lied but they did not ask me. So I got in the car and headed to Iowa. I had my cell phone and most of the trip I was on the phone with the cabinet at Warburg talking about the chapel service we were going to have and all the things we needed to make certain students were aware of to keep the students safe. I'm driving to get back and found out the next morning that things were moving along, but I had to find a way to stay connected.

Ways to Unwind

While it was very clear that the presidents struggled with work-life balance, and the concept of it was very personal and unique to each, it was a resounding theme that the demands of the presidency were extreme. However, even with the demands of their work, they all had hobbies and ways to unwind. Traveling had value for all four presidents but, in general, the hobbies of each participant were unique to them and carried personal value. The overarching finding was the importance of having hobbies in general and how they, at times, blended into work.

Travel

President Ohle discussed how some of his down time actually came on work trips or through different obligations with the college, but that he and Kris enjoyed it. They found a way to make it blend together. President Ohle said the following:

When we are traveling we like to have a dinner and have a chance to be with people we like? Yes, we do that, but you are still on. We will take a side trip or go with the Wartburg choir and go to Tanzania...we did some fun things. We climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with Wartburg students. We went to Cape Hope in

Africa. It's almost surreal. You're doing things you like to do and would want to do when you weren't president but you get to do it as president and that's kind of neat. Am I working or am I living? I don't know, but it feels like it's one in the same. But you are still president and you still have to stay at a different level. A level in a sense of not pushing away from people, but remind yourself that you are responsible for some things. You have to think about that all the time.

President Bahls talked about his family's interest in traveling for work and leisure:

We love to travel. We have been traveling for many years. We got to do a lot of travel associated with my wife's career as a freelance writer. Her career was in a couple of areas. It was in writing about the law in business and travel writing. I would support the travel writing with my photography during the summer because I had summers off. Did I mention last time about my short photography career? So, anyway, I think I mentioned last time that I was looking at the *National Law Journal* and they had the salary issue and they had the lowest paid law professor and that was me, which was interesting. We were watching the bank account going the wrong direction because I had taken roughly a 50 percent cut in pay to start this adventure in academia and it was easier said than done to take a pay cut of that magnitude. So, I decided that I was going to be a photographer in the summer and sell my photographs and that was going to be my supplemental income during the summer. So I took a course at the University of Montana on how to be a freelance photographer and then supported her travel writing. On occasions, my photos would be accepted and not her story and more often, her story was accepted and not my photos. But, that was a great thing to travel around the American West with our young boys, particularly during the summer months, although we would do it to during the breaks too. So she would write for *Cross-Country Ski* magazine, *American West*, *Montana Magazine*. She was a freelancer for the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Portland Oregonian* as well as the *Christian Science Monitor* so we got to do a lot of travel and it was a way of unwinding. Another example, we actually are leaving the day after tomorrow to camp along the Arctic Ocean in Alaska. We have an outfitter to take us there, come back for two weeks and then we will go to Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. We have fallen in love with the Arctic. I was given a sabbatical, so we took an Arctic sabbatical. Three months, a summer sabbatical. We started in Newfoundland and drove as far north as we could in Canada, across Canada from the Atlantic Ocean, to the Hudson Bay, to the Pacific Ocean, to the Arctic Ocean. So, we are great believers in getting away to let your hair down. And then we speak at the Sierra club and other travel groups here to talk about our Arctic explorations.

President Henning also discussed an interest in traveling. As his narrative mentioned earlier, he travels for work, to visit alums, and for fundraising. When possible,

Carole joins him on these trips. In speaking about vacationing, President Henning said the following:

Carole and I like to travel and some presidents have a “get away.” Some presidents, in fact a lot of people, have a lake home. A second place where they can get away. Carole and I have never done that. We have never valued that. In part, because we are interested in seeing different parts of the country. So, we don’t set goals for ourselves that every so often we are going to take a trip. But, this summer we are headed off to Belgium and Spain in July. We had a foreign exchange daughter or foreign exchange student live with us for a year back in 2009, and she was from Belgium. She is finishing at the university there, getting a Master’s degree. So, we are going to fly into Brussels. She is going to show us around. We will catch a train up to Amsterdam. Her father spends part of the year living in Spain, and she likes going to Spain, so we will head to Spain. A number of years ago, I know the World Cup was going on, so it must have been eight years ago, we took our girls on a Mediterranean cruise. We’ve been with our girls to Hawaii. Carole and Audrey went on a mother daughter school-sponsored trip to France a number of years ago so a few years later, Julia and I took a trip, actually one of ours. Adit Hazaan took a group of adults, faculty, staff, and friends of the College to Israel, so Julia and I got our reciprocal trip by heading off to Israel. So, we do enjoy traveling and it’s one of the reasons why we haven’t invested in a home. If you have a home somewhere, it’s the place you go. You put a lot of time and money into the upkeep. But, that’s it. We don’t necessarily make a trip like that every single year. Sometimes on spring break, we end up sticking around here and I take a couple of days off but I end up catching up on work that way. Other times, we will take a spring break. We will go to a nice beach resort or something like that so we do travel, we do get away. We try to travel both within the United States and internationally, we do enjoy that.

Similar to the other participants, President Colson also emphasized he and Christy’s interest in traveling, and how school functions may also blend into personal travel time:

We try to carve out time to travel and sometimes we can just add it onto work trips. Last week, when we were in North Carolina, Christy joined me and we could have come home after our work business was concluded on Friday, but instead, we came back to Iowa on Saturday, on our expense of course. But, we stayed and enjoyed Nashville for the day. I remember we enjoyed some coffee. It was nice. So we will do that from time to time when we are out on the road.

Other Hobbies

The participants all shared their own personal interests. Presidents Colson and Ohle both talked about their love for reading. Presidents Bahls and Henning discussed hobbies such as playing board games, engaging in community projects, and exercising. One fascinating narrative was provided by President Colson. He discussed one way he unwinds is literally “going home.” He talked about the president’s home and how many presidents find it important to have another place to call home. He stated:

This is going to sound terrible, and I don’t want it to at all, but I’m sharing it with you because I want to be as honest as possible for your research project. Living in the president’s house is a great blessing but it is also tough because you really are always...it’s like you are sleeping in the office. Take this morning, for example. We wake up, we are in our room getting dressed and three Gators show up in the yard. It’s all these students working on the summer grounds crew and it’s great. How many people in the world wouldn’t want kids to show up in their yard to pick up the garbage? It’s a blessing. Or when it snows, Jim Aubrey is out there plowing out our driveways. It’s a blessing when our plumbing gets clogged up, someone from maintenance comes out and works on our toilet. All of it’s a blessing. But at the same time, you are living in the school. You are the president when you are living in that house. John Wuertz might call at noon to let me know someone is coming to the house at 2:00 to check out the roof. Or again, Jim Anderson might call and say “I have to come change those light bulbs.” Who wouldn’t want their light bulbs changed? But at the same time, you aren’t in your own place. You can’t really control the time when you are living in the president’s home. And this is a common thing presidents talk about and think about. It’s a blessing. All expenses paid, people tending to your needs. But, you’re also on display, you’re living in a public space. So, there is this common theme among president about having your own place. Bob Vogel, I remember him telling me, “You got to have your own place.” The Vogels, when they lived in Wartburg, they had a little place in Guttenberg, Iowa on the Mississippi River. And Bob had a rule. When you sneak away to “your place”, you have to spend at least two nights there. So, when he could, he and Sally, Sally would probably drive her own car, but when he could, Bob would kind of sneak away from campus on Saturday afternoon after an event, stay Sunday there, Sunday night there, and come back to campus early Monday morning. President Ohle and Kris have a condominium in Des Moines. Rick Torkelson from Luther, has/had a condominium in Minneapolis. One of the tricks of the trade is to try to slip away to your personal space from time to time. It’s just nice because it’s your space. If the faucet breaks, it’s your responsibility to fix it. So, one of the things we do, we accidentally hung onto our house in Louisiana. That wasn’t our plan, but Christy

stayed down there for a year finishing up some work, it wasn't a great time to sell a house in 09. And then our son moved back from Hawaii and was using the house. He was in and out. And about two years into this job, we realized "that's our space." It's too far away, but that's our space. So, one way we recharge is we go to our house. We aren't able to do it that often but there's something very refreshing about being in our space.

President Bahls discussed friendship and community projects, mentioning:

As president, you are focusing on outcomes, but you aren't doing a lot of the detail. So, I like to do. I like to dive deeply, take on projects and do the details. So, one of the things that gave me great satisfaction here at Augustana, using my skills as a president, was to merge the two chambers of commerce. We had an Iowa Chamber of Commerce and an Illinois Chamber of Commerce, and the two chambers were at war with each other. This is one economic region so I worked with one of my friends from the Iowa side and we merged the chambers. We are one economic unit now and we are working together, building cohesive strategies to attract and retain business instead of Iowa trying to steal our businesses and Illinois trying to steal Iowa businesses. I think I mentioned that I was asked to be involved in re-drafting accreditation standards for law schools, and I just love that. I come in on Sundays, Sunday evenings, and I work on these projects. I shouldn't be drafting everything at Augustana. Policies are drafted by our attorneys or by the deans, but I can sit down on my computer and draft these policies, draft things, solve problems. That is a hobby. And you make your friendships through these groups. Frankly, the other source of friendships for college presidents are fellow college presidents. Jack Ohle and I have become great friends. Likewise, I am friends with a community college president over there in Iowa. He and his wife, and my wife and I just enjoy getting together to play board games, German board games that are a lot of fun to play. So, that's a personal side of things. Hobbies, let me talk about hobbies. I love to work on these projects. I consider them a hobby. So the project of merging the chambers. That took about two years. There were some false starts there but I've really enjoyed that project. I've been heading up, while I hope to hand it off soon, the Quad Cities Diversity Initiative, which is an initiative based on something I saw in Columbus, to increase the number of minority managers by 25% minority management people in the largest businesses in five years. That has been a very challenging project because people like to talk about diversity but the commitment to diversity sometimes is a mile wide and an inch deep. Diversity is fraught with politics. This American Bar Association, redrafting the accreditation standards, has been a five-year project. To develop all the consensus necessary to take everyone's opinion into account sometimes gets derailed by politics and to get it back on the road is challenging but I enjoy that. I just completed a project and have been working on a project for the Association of Governing Boards to write a book on shared governance and I very much enjoyed that. I think it was every Sunday afternoon that I was in town for a year that I worked on that book and I found that very fulfilling. I do a blog for *Inside Higher Education* so I find

writing very fulfilling. These Sunday afternoons where I can come in here and work on these projects is very fulfilling to me.

President Henning discussed his interest in exercising as an important part of his balance, stating:

Well gosh, there's probably not enough of it. I don't have a lot of time available for hobbies and activities outside of here. I do try to exercise. That's more or less for health and wellness. I do not golf. For me, exercise is "me time." I don't have any desire to go to exercise class and be expected to be with a group of people. You've seen me work out. I will work out when other people are present but that's my time. That's time for Kent and I think that's why I enjoy biking. I spend as much time as I can on my bike, in the summer months in particular. But I have no interest in riding in RAGBRAI because it's a social event and people are out there. For me, I treasure the solitude and sometimes just pushing myself. It often gets my mind off things. So, outside of work and family, it's what little time I have available to exercise and I am doing that primarily for health reasons. I've watched enough of my family history to know that if I don't do that the alternative is not pretty, so I am motivated a bit by health.

Considerations and Challenges

While the participants overwhelmingly spoke positively about their career paths and family lives, there were some things that aspiring leaders should consider as these participants did throughout their careers. Those things include family implications to their work and career paths, proximity to extended family, and the importance of church and community involvement.

Spouse

An important aspect of this study was the rare window into the personal lives of ELCA college presidents. A sub-theme of considerations and challenges was the impact that career transitions had on the spouses of the participants. Throughout the narratives, especially when talking about transitions, spouses surfaced. President Bahls spoke to this concept specifically, stating:

One of the challenges of careers like this is that you tend to move some and that is very taxing, particularly on spouses. So, my wife was teaching at Alverno College, as I'd mentioned last time, was actually starting her PhD. So, she was teaching with a Master's there as an adjunct and on and off she was part-time, full-time at Alverno depending on the needs of the college. How many courses needed to be taught and so on. So, she started her PhD at Marquette with the idea to move into the tenure track at Alverno College. They liked her very much. And that was interrupted when we moved to the University of Montana. She had hoped to get on at the University of Montana but there was a "no go" there. The University of Montana required certainly a PhD, and for adjunct positions where a Master's degree may be acceptable, her Master's was not being from a lesser known school. So, that was a challenge. She then took up a new career as a result of that as a free-lance writer. And she actually took a course at the University of Montana in free-lance writing and had a very successful career as a free-lance writer. About a 20 year career. The beauty of a free-lance writing career is that you can do it from any place so we were able to move around and she was able to keep her career. In terms of the move to Montana, the challenging part was my wife had to give up her teaching career. I'd say, spousal support, is important in career paths and that goes both ways.

President Bahls addressed support needing to go both ways between spouses, by stating the following:

The move here [to Augustana] was very hard on my wife. It uprooted her social network. Her roots were pretty deep in Ohio, and it was a rough couple of years for her trying to figure out what her call and identity was. In these jobs as college president, the spouse often has their identity wrapped up in the college even though they aren't employed by the college. We live in a house on campus. We entertain at least two times per week during the school year. Less during the summer. Summers are kind of our time. And that is a tremendous burden on a spouse. Likewise, she is very involved in the development side of things. Every weekend we are doing something associated with Augustana, and she is a recognized personality on campus, beloved by the alums and by the students. That's where we are now. But you walk in and you aren't sure what your role is. It was very worrisome to me about how she was dealing with the transition and I know she knew that. We supported each other a lot during the first few years here.

President Henning also discussed the transitions as being difficult on his wife Carole, in particular. He said the following:

Probably one of the most difficult moves was the move from North Carolina to George Mason. It was probably a little more difficult for Carole because, when we moved, she was seven months pregnant. The whole changing doctors and health care, and then Audrey was born and we were in Washington DC. We were

only there for a couple months. But, we didn't have family around. We didn't have friends. We didn't have a support system. That was tough on her. Even knowing of the understanding we had and how I would work and she would stay at home, since we both valued that opportunity. But, it was more difficult than either of us had anticipated.

Just as President Bahls's narrative shared, President Henning also talked about the fact that his wife's career was rather "mobile." He spoke about the clear understanding they both shared about how their shared life journey would unfold, saying:

I'm going to go back to our marriage and an understanding that Carole and I had. Before we got married, we had an understanding, and we were of like mind, that we both wanted Carole to be a stay at home mom. She felt very strongly about it. I had grown up with a stay at home mom, you know, a farm mom. I valued that and so what it really meant was in our marriage is that we needed to live, as a family, within the means of my income. Even when she worked, our necessities, our basics were still covered by my job. What that meant for Carole was that in our marriage, she would be the trailing spouse and her career would follow mine. My career would move us around. I should probably tell you, I kiddingly say that in my family, and with my daughters, and at home, I have two jobs: I drive and I pay. My daughters said, "Gee, dad, you carry things too." The more I thought about it, the more I realized it's a metaphor for what we do. I mean it was my career that took us to North Carolina, Fairfax, Virginia, Wisconsin and now here. And I pay. It was my income. Mine has been the primary income for the family. Carole's income was what gave us the ability to do other things, take nicer vacations. Things that we can live without if she didn't have that. Carole felt very strongly about that. People who knew Carole at the time we got married, didn't know that about her. Frankly, they didn't understand that about the two of us. It was very clear to us though. She was a teacher and everywhere you go, someone needs to hire a teacher. She had a career that was movable. That was never a real difficult part of our conversation. For me, it put a little more pressure on me. I knew we needed to be stable and I provided that stability and income for us and the family.

President Henning continued addressing him and Carole's shared understanding of how their lives would be ordered. He went on to say the following:

We understood in our marriage that we didn't want to start a family right away. We had things we wanted to do. We both wanted to get graduate degrees before we had children. We were married eight years before we had kids. Carole was pregnant when she was in her graduate program but it was a conscious decision to do things in order. We were to get our education and then get married. We were going to get started on our career and then buy a home. We were going to be

settled in that career before we started a family. So we could be there for the family and Carole could be a stay-at-home mom. We were pretty disciplined about keeping them in that order. Our decisions were never a point of contention. We just always had the same philosophy about those things.

President Colson discussed his spouse when considering his career path. He stated the following:

Christy was always so flexible. As I think I mentioned last time we talked, we were married during my senior year so she has been with me for every stop, every move. Christy always thought her primary job was the kids. But, she is also a professional in early childhood education. She was always in the role of trailing spouse. I'm not sure that term existed back then, but she was always in that role of trailing spouse. When we lived in Nashville and I was in grad school, she was the bread winner. She had a wonderful job, high paying job with the Metropolitan Davidson County Nashville Social Services. Metro DSS. Department of Social Services. She had a great job with them working in a preschool that served underprivileged children. That was a wonderful working experience for her. But once I finished graduate school, our roles kind of shifted. Rachel was born my last year of graduate school and, once I finished, we moved on as I took my first full-time job at Western Carolina. Christy, really kind of, our roles reversed. I became the bread winner and she became the trailing spouse because she saw her role as the children. She always wanted to keep her hand in her profession. And what was interesting about her, while she saw her primary role as child rearing, she was constantly being presented with interesting opportunities professionally. Christy was tapped as the founding director of a children's preschool at a tiny church in North Carolina. When we moved to Louisiana, she was tapped to direct the preschool at the church we were attending and that happened within a year of our arrival. She did that for a number of years. Then when we moved to California, she said "Well, I'm going to retire now" but she got involved with the kids' extra-curriculars and through them, got connected with the school. She started substitute teaching at the elementary, and then she was offered a full-time teaching job. When we moved back to Louisiana, she said "Well, I'm going to retire. I'm retiring." But, as you might be able to imagine now, that didn't happen. She slowly got drawn into a school in Shreveport. A long-standing private school with a great reputation in town, founded in 1948. Before she knew it, she was the director of the lower school. Early childhood, elementary and then middle school were pieces of the school and she became the director of the early childhood program. Her story is more interesting than mine really. In what became a trailing spouse role, she voluntarily took this role of primary care giver to the children, to the family. But because she is so skilled at what she does, she gets drawn into these very interesting opportunities. And it's been fun for me to watch her. To watch others realize how skilled she is, how good she is at what she does.

President Ohle discussed the transitions and how each of them had been great. The reason for that, President Ohle said, was “Kris, well, she’s an engager” and “Kris believed the journey was a set of individual calls. That we were being used by a higher power to serve.” President Ohle went on to say the following:

There isn’t one job, one move, or one institution that I’ve enjoyed more than the others but Kris and I seem to have a knack for engaging in the moment and the time. I think she’d say the same. So, when we were at Wittenberg, newly married, it was great. Muskingum, associate dean, living in the residence halls, new child...what a way to raise a child. It was a great thing. Then we go back to my alma mater and Kris’s younger brother is a student there at the time so she felt a connection that way. We couldn’t beat it. Kris was always and will continue to be involved in some really wonderful things. She is very engaged with helping. She is a constant volunteer. She loves that.

Children

In addition to considering the spouse in the career journey and some of the challenges that transitions create for them, children seemed to be even more of a consideration during the life journeys of these participants. President Henning mentioned “when we moved here [Grand View University], we thought very carefully about where our girls were in their educational experience.” President Colson discussed the importance of being family centered and creating a schedule in order to be involved in the lives of his children. He said, “I always tried to manipulate the schedule in a way that I could participate in my kids’ activities. It was really important to me. It was something I really wanted to do.” President Ohle talked about timing and how important it was for the children to be in an environment in which they were comfortable. He said “For our kids, I’d say their best time was while we were in Des Moines. They loved Des Moines. They were old enough to appreciate things. They had good experiences there.” Comments from

President Bahls mirrored others, as he discussed the importance of timing for the kids during transitions.

President Ohle talked little about his children when discussing his career path or how the transitions went. He did attend to the topic of children when talking about work-life balance:

Some presidents, I'm sure, have more balance than I, but one of the reasons Kris and I have done that is because we didn't have to worry about our children. They were grown. It's a whole different story if you still have kids under your roof. That would be very challenging. Doable, but difficult. I know presidents who still have kids living with them in the president's home. I'm sure, when that's the case, parents have to have candid discussions about roles and responsibilities. I'd imagine it is very taxing. When Kris and I got immersed in this we said to ourselves, very consciously, "ok, this is our calling." This is what we are asked to do. We are going to give it all we have, every ounce. And we had nothing else that was taking our attention away from this call. Kids have to do that, as they should.

President Henning has been in one location nearly fifteen years while his girls grew up. However, his narrative suggests that was intentional. He stated:

When we moved here, we thought very carefully about where our girls were in their educational experience. They were in third grade and kindergarten. They had started private school. We made the transition, again we thought it was important to keep the girls together. I started here in January and moved the girls in the latter part of January. We didn't wait. Carole helped get the house settled and get the girls settled in their school. She got the teaching job and started right away the next fall. She had about six months to make the transition. The girls were quite young. But then we were pretty committed to not have our girls move. There were some opportunities that came along for me. I haven't been eager to leave Grand View, but when those opportunities came along, one of the reasons we didn't take a serious look at them was because we didn't want to move our girls. It was freshman, sophomore, junior year in high school. We didn't have a need to do that. We understood, had we done that, we would need to do that for a real call as opposed to it being just an advancement.

Presidents Colson and Bahls discussed their transitions with respect to their children, as they made moves when their children were beyond elementary school.

Similar to President Henning, President Bahls was aware of where his kids were at in school:

In terms of the move to Capital University, it was a tougher move than even leaving Milwaukee and Jane leaving Alverno, because there were kids involved. It was timed as such that our sons were not yet in high school, so my oldest son could have his high school years intact. And our daughter had not yet started school yet. Daniel was in middle school and Timothy was just finishing up grade school so the timing was good there.

President Bahls continued speaking about transitions in relation to his children when he made the move to Augustana, stating:

When I came to Augustana, my two sons were gone. They were off to college themselves so that wasn't too much of a challenge. My daughter was 12 at the time, so that was a bit of a challenge. But, on the other hand, 12 is not too bad of a time to move as it is in the pre-high school years. She was a very good sport about moving and that was great.

President Colson's portion of his narrative that focused on his children and the considerations he and his wife made when thinking about moving went as follows:

We always thought about the transition for the kids. Christy and I were very sensitive and very family centered. And one of the drawbacks of making moves, like the move to California, was that we were taking the kids away from their grandparents. We were very conscious of that. So, we tried to travel back to Louisiana frequently. That was very intentional and something we always considered. Early on, our kids were young when we moved from North Carolina to central Louisiana, so that was quite easy, we thought. No reservations. Our daughter had just started kindergarten. Our son wasn't in school yet. But when we headed to California. That seemed like a challenge to uproot our kids from Louisiana and replant them in Southern California. It worked out well, though there were some tough times. Our son did have some tough times. The middle school was sixth through eighth grade, so all the kids had known each other for two years. They were a pretty cohesive group so it was hard for him to break in socially. Rachel had an easier time in high school. I'm not sure why it was easier for her but it seemed as though the high school was a little bit more, well it was still a very small community where we moved to, but California is set up a little bit like Iowa where you have these independent school districts that are both small and large depending on the town but this one was pretty small. A pretty small school district with three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The high school was pretty small. I want to say 1,200 students. Rachel had an easier time. I'm not sure if the high school was more open or a

little less cliquish. I'm not sure what the right term is there but she transitioned a bit quicker and easier than Jacob did. Now, over time, by the time Jacob was entering high school, he was having the time of his life. He had a great high school experience. Rachel had a solid high school experience. Unfortunately, we advised her to take more AP courses than we should have so she was under a lot of stress, her junior year especially. She was constantly doing homework and she was a pretty good athlete so doing all the sports and taking these hard courses, I think she was under a little bit of stress during high school. We learned from that experience and didn't recommend so many AP courses for Jacob. Rachel played tennis and then softball in the spring. She could have done more but she really committed herself to those two. Jacob did three sports in high school. He played football, soccer, and baseball throughout the year. Soccer is a winter sport. They were both really busy, really engaged. He was engaged in Student Government at the high school. But, again, thinking through these transitions, especially with Christy focusing on the kids, family was important.

Extended Family

As another component of family considerations, the participants all talked about extended family in one way or another. Whether it was being close to grandparents for the sake of their children and for grandparents being close to the grandkids, or being close enough to family that they served as a support system, all participants were mindful and attentive to family beyond their own households. As an example, President Henning mentioned, "Leaving DC, the timing of the move was good. Audrey was only about nine months old, and I think it was important that we were a little closer to family." When thinking about nine-month-old babies, Presidents Ohle and Bahls discussed this matter through the present timeframe. President Ohle stated, "We want to see the kids more. They probably think we see them enough but we have a grandchild, we want to see our kids and grandchild more." He later added, "The ability to stay connected with family, that should always be important when considering new jobs." President Bahls's comments were aligned with that of President Ohle's. President Bahls mentioned:

We try to make family a priority still. That is one of the great things of having adult children. They are in three different places. One is outside of Boston,

Springfield, Massachusetts. Usually I can tie that into a business trip. My daughter is in Tucson and we visit Phoenix annually. And my other son and three grandchildren are in Madison. We met, for example, last Saturday in Dubuque for a long day at the museum and to go out to eat. So, I think that helps keep balance in my life.

Speaking about the transition to central Louisiana President Colson said, “One of the attractors there for that transition was that we could be closer to the grandparents.”

Church and Community

“Life beyond the Office” captured family considerations and work-life balance, but stories of church and/or community surfaced as well. Church and community were important components of the lives of these ELCA college presidents, providing others ways for the participant to unwind and have balance. President Ohle discussed his interest in getting reconnected with the church upon retirement, commenting:

Early in my adult life, as we’ve talked about, I was involved in the church, in seminary. As my work responsibilities have increased over the years, my free time to serve the church hasn’t been nearly what I would have liked. I’d stay connected with the church through my work with LECNA or the Lutheran Fellows program, but being a part of the mission of a community congregation, I’ve missed that a great deal. But now, I am going to have time. I am quite excited to see if there’s something that I can do that will help the church. I don’t know what that is. I’m not going to preach every Sunday, that’s for sure. But if someone wanted me to do some stewardship programs or something like that, I would. Certainly in my local church, I’ve never been able to go out on a Saturday clean-up day in any church I’ve belonged to because I’ve always had someone going on at the college I served. I’m betting when the first Saturday clean-up comes at the church, I’ll be there with my rake, my gloves, and bucket and I’ll help out. Because that’s what I want to do.

President Bahls also talked about the role the church had in his family’s transitions. President Bahls said:

We’ve gotten involved in the community in all areas through involvement in the church, primarily with our kids so that is kind of the first thing to do. That’s what we always did. First thing. Get involved in a church. It opens up many doors to the community and it can be a place where you can find friends.

Similarly to President Bahls, President Colson shared in the message of finding a church in his new community, saying the following:

For us, an important part of the transition has always been finding a church home. And that is amazingly difficult. Now, looking back in the past, Christy and I look back and see that as one of the toughest things. Maybe it's just us but there's something about visiting churches for the first time when you have just moved to a town. They just seem, despite their best effort, they always give their best effort in being welcoming, they still seem like small communities and people who know one another. It feels awkward to try to break into that. Awkward or difficult. That isn't the intent. But people know each other and they are talking to one another and you are just standing there, trying to figure out how you can break into the conversation. Do I interrupt these people? How do we get involved? How do we get engaged? But that has always been important to us. Church has always been an important part of our family life. We always wanted to get engaged as quickly as we could in church.

In addition to church, Presidents Henning and Bahls had insights into engaging in the community. President Henning talked about his connection to the community being strongly linked to his work roles in advancing to the vice presidency or presidency. His remarks were as follows:

There are very few relationships or connections in the community that are completely separate from my role at Grand View. I had that experience, it was not new to me when I became president because I was in advancement, in a fundraising role. Throughout my career, not as much at Wartburg, more so when I got to Kenosha, I was in a role where I was connecting to the community, but that was an expectation of my job. I had to know people. I was connected to the community. I got to know people through that but there was some element of that relationship that was related to work. In Kenosha, I was in a role as vice president. The president was a member of the Rotary Club, so he encouraged me to get connected to the community through Kiwanis. And I had a lot of fun, but what was the motivation? It started with building relationships in the community. We had organized a group of Kenosha business folk and smaller business people to come together and be supportive of Carthage. I built relationships and friendships. Some resulted in fun things, but again the origin was work related. There was another community organization I got involved with in Kenosha. It was a small group promoting Kenosha night at the Brewers. We'd sell tickets at face value but be able to acquire them at a lower price. The difference was the money we gave away to youth sports organizations. It was a fun group of people to work with. We went to a lot of Brewers games as a group. I was involved with the community. I'm not sure I would have gotten involved in that had it not been that I was vice

president at Carthage. It wasn't a direct tie back to Carthage, but it was. There was that connection. There was a great school in Kenosha, where our daughters started their education. I was recruited to be on the board there. My position on the board, it didn't go without notice that I was an officer of Carthage College, but I was also there as a parent. I got to know other parents. I felt pretty connected through the community in Kenosha and here in Des Moines but it's all related to the roles I am in.

President Bahls commented similarly on the factor that a professional role has in getting connected in the community, but he also saw the community involvement as a refreshing, rejuvenating piece of his life journey. He stated:

These positions, be it law school dean, law professor, college president do open doors for you to serve and work with other non-profits for a number of reasons. First of all, you are perceived as a leader in the community. Secondly, you are perceived as having expertise and being fairly bright. And thirdly, you are perceived as being neutral also. That you don't have a dog in the fight because you are an academic from a non-profit organization so you can look at things objectively as opposed to looking at things representing your client for this interest or that interest.

Being Called

A sense of vocation and calling were evident in all four narratives of this study.

“Vocation” is a word that has been examined much like leadership. The word “leadership” can mean different things to many different people (Waldstein, 2014). As President Henning mentioned during his narrative, “If you were to ask people what does vocation mean? You would get as many different answers as people. Because it is a complex concept.” While complex and individualized, themes about vocation and Lutheran higher education emerged in this study.

Shared View of Lutheran Higher Education

One prominent theme within “Being Called” is the understanding of Lutheran higher education, as all participants aligned in sharing their perspectives of Lutheran higher education. Virtually all the presidents spoke about identifying and then aligning a

person's passions, gifts, skills, and abilities to the needs of others. This sense of service and community impact resounded among all narratives.

During President Bahls's time at Capital University, he had a conversation with Dr. Dovre about Lutheran higher education and how the law school connected to the Lutheran mission. This was an integral conversation that connected President Bahls to Lutheran higher education. President Bahls shared the following story:

I remember my first meeting with the Dr. Paul Dovre, interim president at Capital University. I was on his cabinet. Paul asked, "Why should a Lutheran university have a law school? And how was the law school connected to our Lutheran mission?" I said, "Well, I'm not sure about the answer to that. A good college should have a law school in central Ohio, but I don't know how the law school is distinctly Lutheran." He said, "Well, that's not really the answer I was looking for. We are all tied to our Lutheran mission." We engaged in a study with the faculty of what it meant to be a Lutheran law school. I published an article on it in the *Toledo Law Review*. That was a time period of remarkable growth and admiration for the mission of Lutheran higher education for me. Frankly, I hadn't thought much about it. It wasn't part of the law school's top of mind. The faculty was a little offended that the president asked that question, but we engaged in a study and found that the Lutheran commitment to higher education was very much helping our students find their vocational calling where a society's needs might intersect with their passions, skills and abilities. That's what this former YMCA law school had done. There was this deep growth for me with Lutheran education at that time. I contrasted that with the Methodist expression of higher education, which is much more decentralized. I became familiar with that expression based on some accreditation work I had done in Methodist institutions. We then started thinking about Lutheran higher education, a special niche that it had.

President Colson said "I think about this kind of stuff a lot, the concept of vocation, and especially its role in this Lutheran tradition. With that, the Catholic tradition. And I always feel I don't have sufficient command of it." President Colson went on to discuss different basic theories of ethics, which included consequentialism, formalism, and virtue. He spent a great deal of time talking about virtue ethics and the parallels he sees between it and the Lutheran tradition. President Colson said:

A paradigmatic example is Aristotle, but lots of people get their tradition from fourth century BC, up through the middle ages. Virtuists. Virtuists approach the rightness or wrongness of actions by really entering into conceptual framework. One principle is that the purpose of life, the end of life is happiness, but happiness in a fairly defined way. It's human flourishing, fulfilling the potential that a human has, and living as a human being ought to live. So the arguments examine the question, how do human beings flourish? Is it flourishing by being active politically? By being a theoretician? In the Christian period, there were these questions about...what is human flourishing? Is it living a blessed life which is completely in concert with a set of principles that we may get from the Sermon on the Mount? What makes a human flourish? In a way it is a theory of self-actualization. Almost all virtuists will talk about the virtues as those practices that ensure that a human will flourish. Why it is that courage is a virtue? Courage is a virtue because those people who exercise courage will in fact flourish. They'll be better off than humans who are not courageous. As you push the theory further and further, you try to understand well, what is it? How does one exercise courage? What it gets to is a life embedded in community. A life that has a network of obligations and responsibilities as well as rights and prerogatives. It comes down to virtuists look at the community as a whole. They are asking the question, how do I fit into this community? How do others fit into this community? The assumption in virtue ethics is that each of us has a role to play in society. Martin Luther was trying to fight against this Catholic tradition in the late middle ages that said basically there were only a few vocations to which had value. One is the clerical life, the other is a king. Kings are called by other kings and clergy are called by God to be clergy. That was contrary to what the ancients thought. They thought that everyone had a role. Martin Luther seems to go back to that. When he stands up and says, "Wait a minute, we shouldn't be prioritizing certain people over certain occupations." What we have to understand is that every person can view himself or herself in a vocation ordained by God. Every person can view himself or herself to a role they play that is equally valuable. He has a passage where he talks about the importance of being a good cobbler. There is nothing wrong with being a cobbler. The question is, is are you making good shoes or bad shoes? He talks about doing it for the glory of God. Are you making your shoes for the glory of God? To make good shoes that your neighbors will be satisfied. They will be happy. They will be clothed. I see this parallel today in the missions of our Lutheran schools.

President Colson also mentioned a personal experience through his daughter's enrollment at St. Olaf College, an ELCA institution that reinforced his views on Lutheran higher education. President Colson said the following:

I found myself really liking more and more the Lutheran schools because they seemed to have an approach that was distinctive and powerful. Clearly thought out and very influential and impactful on the students. Interestingly, while I was

at Pepperdine, my daughter went to St. Olaf College. I watched from her perspective how the education she was receiving was having an effect on her and shaping her character. It was very mindful and committed to service to the community. I was learning more and more about Lutheran education and this deep commitment to both identification of the world as fractured and broken and in need of help and in need of mending and our responsibilities and students responsibilities to do what they can to help repair those injuries in the world.

In a seamless connection, President Ohle also discussed Lutheran traditions, Lutheran higher education, and his time at seminary. As did President Colson, President Ohle discussed Luther in his understanding of the Lutheran tradition. However, rather than using through a philosophical lens, President Ohle discussed Lutheran traditions through student development theory. President Ohle stated:

I believe the student today, in these types of institutions, of the church, need to have some rootedness in the whole understanding of Lutheran teachings. My theology meshed so well with the principals of Chickering and others who I had read and the approach of helping the whole student - mind, body, and spirit - with the intention to uncover their gifts and align them with the needs of the greater whole. It comes from Luther. It is Luther's teachings of vocation.

Similar to other participants, President Henning discussed the concept of vocation and the importance of aligning passions and purpose with the benefits of the greater good. Again, this aligns directly with Lutheran traditions. Based on his comments, President Henning's perspective of vocation seems more personal than the other shared comments. In his narrative, President Henning said the following:

Our campus is searching for desires and wishes to have single definition of vocation. My contention is, it's like giving a single definition of physics. If you are going to study physics, there is physics of motion and force and what goes on inside atoms. It's just too complex. Let me give you an overview of how I see it. It does start with that matching your gifts and abilities, passion, experience, with a purpose, with somebody else's need for those skills or talents. Often times we talk about a calling or someone's vocation like seeking treasure. "Oh my gosh, once I find my vocation, I'll live happily ever after." That's a little too elementary. The key to have a vocation mindset or to be called is in my opinion, is to really understand "the other." How does someone else benefit from what I do? And so when we talk about helping our students, we do want them to do a lot of self-

reflection and knowledge. What are you good at? What are your talents, special gifts? But that's only part of the job. The real challenge is to understand how someone else is going to benefit. How are those gifts of yours going to make the world a better place? How will those make life better for someone else? That's vocation from my understanding. That's what we aim to do here at Grand View. The other way of talking about it is purpose. What is the purpose of my actions, my work?

Regardless of the institution, it is evident all four participants grasped Lutheran traditions, Lutheran higher education, and how their school meets those Lutheran expectations. The narratives suggest that the ELCA higher education environment is about helping students connect their passions, gifts, abilities, and skills to the needs of others.

Personal Sense of Vocation

In addition to a shared understanding of the mission of Lutheran higher education, all four participants agreed that they were called to their roles as presidents, but also in other positions along their journeys. In many ways, what the participants shared about Lutheran traditions and their institutions assisting students in claiming their callings was mirrored in their own remarks about being called throughout their lives. Each president talked about purpose, impacting others, and service.

As the longest tenured ELCA president, President Ohle had the most experience of the four participants in the role and also in higher education. President Ohle remarked "I would think the best way to explain it, I truly love what I do. I have really liked every aspect of what I've done and I think that's because I felt I had a purpose, that Kris and I both did." President Colson added, "Never have I ever felt that I was called more to a role than when I was involved in the search for the presidency here [at Wartburg]."

In the third interview, the prompt was “Claiming your Calling,” which aligned very well with Seidman’s (2006) interview technique of the third interview addressing a reflection of meaning. Having the participants consider their calling allowed them to reflect on what their careers have meant to them, the institutions they have served, and their colleagues. The findings were rich and descriptive.

The participants all shared their sense of vocation, and did so through a variety of stories. As previously discussed, President Colson’s story about being called focused on the pursuit of happiness, virtue ethics, shared community investment in the presidency, the desire to fill roles and take on responsibilities where he could be of service, and the intensity of the position of president at Wartburg College. Considering purpose, as President Colson described it, “One principle is that the purpose of life, the end of life is happiness, but happiness in a fairly defined way. It’s human flourishing, fulfilling the potential that a human has, and living as a human being ought to live.” With this comment and others addressing virtue ethics, purpose, and happiness as precursors, President Colson discussed his outlook on filling roles:

I look at community as an interlocking set of relationships where people perform certain roles. Into each of those roles are responsibilities, obligations. We can do those roles either well or badly, and that’s where virtues come into play. If you’re exercising the virtues, you’ll do a good job. If you’re not, you’re going to do a bad job in the role you fill. I am really comfortable with that. I prefer that vision of a community...us thinking about us called into, us falling into, summoned into roles, duties, offices. I find that congenial. When I think about Martin Luther’s dramatic break with the late middle ages, he specifically addresses the fact that it was important to take a new look at society. We have to value all of the occupations of society, not denigrate some at the benefit of others. I see that very much consistent with what Aristotle was saying. So I’ve been comfortable thinking of myself as filling offices, filling roles, playing parts. I didn’t necessarily, completely choose. Clearly there’s choice involved. There is decision making involved on my part, but I’m comfortable in thinking that these roles presented themselves. As I’m thinking to myself about these roles, raising the question, is that something that I can be of service?

President Colson went on to speak about the Wartburg presidency as a calling, remarking:

Never have I ever felt that I was called to a role more than was I when I was involved in the search for the presidency. The whole process was shaped because so many constituents were involved. It was so different than other jobs that I've had. Even when I was interviewing, I interviewed with several different people but it wasn't manifest to me as the stake they had. When I interviewed for the presidency, a lot of people had a real stake in this. It is a pretty important event. When I was on campus for the two day period, I was meeting with all of the different constituencies...retired faculty, students, townspeople, current faculty, staff members, a lot of different meetings, but it was clear how much of a stake they felt in this decision. How important it seemed to them. How much, in particular, the retirees and townspeople and alums, how much they loved the institution and cared about the institution and wanted to make sure that whoever was a steward of the presidency revered the institution as much as they do. It wasn't palpable in my other jobs. It wasn't palpable to me how big the stakes were. And how many stakeholders there were. There are 220,000 stakeholders here, and that becomes clear with the process. I never felt that before in another job search. I never felt that intensity. It was a sense of how high the stakes were and how much the stakeholders cared about the outcome of this process. How much they counted on the presidency. You and I both know that with 350 workers on this campus, the college only succeeds if the vast majority of those people do really good work, plugging away at their work and doing the best for their students. I'm just one person. You and I both know that who sits in this office is not nearly as important as some people think. I felt that, how important it was. It was vitally important. It really did feel like, during that two day period that I was here, that it was a slow developing call. In fact, Kristy felt that too. She came to the second half of the visit, she felt it too. I was in front of people during these meetings and she would sit in the audience. She could feel this anticipation, expectation. She said "this is a calling. There was just a difference about it. I don't know how other campuses dealt with similar situations, but I definitely felt it here. I was getting phone calls from different people to interview for this or that. But I didn't feel the depth or texture or intensity I felt in this process.

Presidents Bahls and Henning both talked about their personal sense of calling in relation to need and purpose. President Bahls's entire story about calling centered on the ability to positively impact others in order to make a difference in society, whether it be through law, administration, or the liberal arts. President Henning shared how his gifts aligned with the needs of the institution and how important student growth and

development are to him. He also shared a personal story about purpose. President Bahls's story about calling was as follows:

Both my wife and I have been called to our positions in higher education. I would draw a distinction between the practice of law, after I graduated from law school. I did not feel called to that. That was just something to do for a nice living. A couple of my friends were lawyers, and I had a couple of people that I admired that were lawyers. Lawyers have a comfortable living and lifestyle, so that is why I became a lawyer. Less of a sense of calling there and more of a sense of pragmatics, what would make a good living, what would be a good path. Each of the positions in higher education have been through a sense of calling. By that I mean, the first position in higher education was as a law professor at the University of Montana. It was a calling. I felt there was a need for lawyers to hit the ground running. A need for lawyers that were philosophical about what they did, were ethical, were asked how the practice of law could contribute, not only to their clients' interests, but a larger sense of societal well-being and social justice. I got a taste of that through my teaching, guest lecturing at Marquette University. Rubbing shoulders with the nuns at Alverno College also, and seeing what a purposeful lives they lived. I understood their sense of calling. They gave up everything, in a sense of material possessions, to become teachers. I admired that. I admired their commitment to education, to justice. Alverno College was a very special place on the south side of Milwaukee, catering primarily to first generation students. I admired the difference they were making. When I had the opportunity to make a difference like that at the U of Montana, my wife and I viewed it as a calling. In fact, I mentioned I cut my salary in half to have that opportunity. It was not pragmatic or something that would lead to a more comfortable lifestyle. In a sense, it was an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young people, improve the legal profession by preparing the type of lawyer that was introspective, philosophical, in addition to being a zealous advocate. With respect to the administrative position at Capital University, again, we thought that was a calling. I remember sitting in our hot tub in the mountains under the stars talking with my wife about this. We were quite satisfied and comfortable here in Montana. We live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. Why move to Ohio? It was an opportunity to receive that calling to be a law school administrator that might be able to have an impact in a different way, perhaps a larger way on the lives of 700 law students each year. It was a good law school. I could use my fundraising skills to improve the school, to improve its programs and to address the critical issue of not having an adequate physical facility. We did think that was a calling into administration. Using the skills I had picked up as the associate dean at the University of Montana. I found that I was good at organizing people, good at building consensus within education and thought that I could use those skills to advance that law school. I was so impressed with Capital because there were these social justice programs- mediation, working with the poor and underprivileged. There was a street law program where students took the law to the streets and educated homeless people

about their rights. I liked that. I wanted to be a part of that. With the respect to the decision to come to Augustana College, that was very much a calling. I remember sitting in the hot tub after I received the offer, with my wife. I am successful as a law school dean, one of the senior law school deans. Had great relationships with the faculty, the president, why would we give this up? We came to love central Ohio and the institutions, why would we give it up? But we felt it was a higher calling. Felt that with respect to my passion for helping young people understand justice, particularly social justice that perhaps I could have more of an impact at a liberal arts college where a multiplicity of disciplines are there. I thought the skills that I had learned as a law school dean, fundraising, consensus building, visioning, leading a strategic plan would enable me to move to Augustana.

While President Henning did not elaborate on being called beyond his current role, much of his comments mirrored and reinforced what President Bahls shared about meeting needs. President Henning relates vocation to purpose in many ways. This is the vocation story that President Henning shared:

I definitely feel that I am called to the presidency here [Grand View University]. There are certain talents and abilities that this institution needs. This institution needs a whole bunch of other people to fulfil their vocations, their calling, and in the end what drives me is our students. Who is benefiting from me serving in this role? Our students. I have to have just enough contact with students so I can see, first hand, the change in their life, the impact Grand View is having on their life. And that is what motivates me. That's what gets me back in the mood to deal with the legislative agenda or fundraising when I see how students' lives are being changed. So I need to have just enough meaningful contact with students that I see their lives being changed and that's what keeps me going. My gifts and talent? I don't think I'd be particularly great as a professor in the classroom. I would be a lousy coach. But I do think I bring some gifts and abilities to this position that this organization needs. That is looking out into the environment and understanding trends, anticipating the forces that are impacting the institution, thinking strategically about how to respond or position ourselves. This institution needs that. That's the leadership that I bring to this place. But I know the purpose of it is to benefit our students. Sometimes I simplify it this way...I have gone home from commencement. I enjoy commencement. Sometimes I've gone home thinking "Well, I've kept the doors open and lights on long enough for this group of graduates to get through here, get their education and be impacted by their professors and coaches and have their lives changed." My job was to keep the doors open and I did that. Sometimes it's that simple. The reason I say I enjoy commencement is because I get to see students up close and hand them their diplomas. I get to see all those graduates in that moment. I see pride. I see joy. I see fear. I see nervousness. When I get to know enough students and when they come across the stage, I have those little flashes of "wow, this kid overcame a lot

of challenges. Isn't it amazing that this young man or woman was able to accomplish this." And what a wonderful thing to celebrate. That 30-45 minutes of commencement [handing out the diplomas] is probably the longest part of the ceremony for everybody else in the hall, but it goes by in a flash for me. I really enjoy it because that's where I get that face-to-face affirmation that "yep students' lives were changed by this place, and I had a role to play in that." Even if it was simply to keep the doors open and lights on. So yes, I definitely feel called to this. I also know that there will come a time in which it is somebody else's job to fill this office and do all those things. That somebody else's views of the world or background will be better suited for what Grand View needs at that point in history. I also feel that vocation, having a sense of purpose, is empowering. So let me move over to other parts of our lives...you are called to be a son, a dad, you're called into those roles. You have a vocation in those roles, as well. You have a purpose in those relationships. Yesterday I kidded you about it being my job in our family to drive and pay. Yesterday, I talked about receiving the phone call from my mom about my dad's diagnosis. We flew back here from California knowing my dad had been given a death sentence. The next day (after receiving that news) I drove up to northeast Iowa to be with my folks. I decided that I would make that trip by myself; it wasn't really a time when Carole and the girls would go along. There I was driving 3.5 hours from Des Moines to my home farm in northeast Iowa, by myself thinking, "How is this going to go?" It was absolutely excruciating to anticipate seeing my dad and mom the first time after receiving the news about my dad's terminal diagnosis. I started to think, I started agonizing, "What do I do? How do I handle this?" I was thinking about me. About half way up there I thought, "What is it going to be like moving forward? Well, we have a lot of decisions to make as a family. I make a lot of decisions in my day-to-day life here. It was one of my favorite classes in school: decision making theory. I pride myself on framing the decision making process before making a decision. Maybe that's something I can bring to this situation. I serve on the health system board here locally, so I've come to know a little bit about health care delivery. Not about cancer or oncology, but I know how the system works. So, there may be some role I can play as my folks meander through the maze." I continued to think, "With cancer treatment, it is a wild and crazy odyssey. I can accompany them on this journey and with a bit of confidence coming from my knowledge of how healthcare systems work." All of a sudden I had a purpose. The second part of my trip, because I had a sense of purpose for that trip, was a lot easier, not easier, but settling. At that point in my trip, I had a sense that I was headed into that moment with a purpose, with some gifts, talents, experiences that could be helpful to my whole family. That's vocation. That's as much vocation as me being in this position as president of Grand View. Our calling is to serve others. To me that's the real shift in thinking that defines "vocation." Instead of thinking of ourselves, we need to shift our thinking to the needs of others. In that story, the shift was me stopping focusing on me and how I was feeling and how uncomfortable I might feel and the pain I might encounter and instead focusing on how I could contribute something and maybe make this difficult situation a little bit better and more tolerable for my folks and for my family. I now had a purpose

in that situation. You could say I was called into that moment to serve my parents. That's the power of vocation....drawing strength from a sense of purpose or by being called into a situation, into a role in an organization, into a position in order to serve the needs of others.

President Ohle described his entire career as one with multiple callings, and he did so with great excitement. His reflection included the necessity of letting one's self go, and being able to pursue and be open to opportunities where a person's skill sets align with the needs of the position. He said:

When I used the word calling, I use it very purposefully. In one my reflections I wrote for the *Gustavus Quarterly*, I wrote that Kris and I felt called to Gustavus. For me, that's been the front and center of all I've done. When I was in student personnel living in the residence halls at Wittenberg University, Kris and I were a young married couple and I just loved working with the kids and coaching football was great. Then, moving into teaching at high school and coaching there. I felt that I was being lead into something but I didn't know what it would be. I had to give myself up to it. I felt that the Lord would show me someday what all this meant. When I went to Drake as the senior vice president of the university and secretary of the university, I thought I was going to be a development officer the rest of my life. I could have done that and enjoyed every minute. But I had this opportunity to come to Wartburg and it was definitely the right thing to do. Fred Hageman shared a vision with me that I felt my background and life had been bringing me toward. I didn't know what that was 20 years ago or even two years before that, but I had the opportunity to serve Wartburg. It's hard to put into words. It's not a vision, I don't mean it in that sense. In other words, a flash of light doesn't come across the sky and tell me what to do. It's just permitting yourself to be open to opportunity, I guess. That's what I believe a calling is. When you are open and not fixated on one aspect of your life, you don't prevent yourself from thinking about other opportunities. And that's what happened along the way. Going from seminary to teaching and coaching in high school to student development, student personnel, to fundraising and alumni work to presidential work. You just kind of let yourself go.

Presidents Ohle and Henning both placed time elements on their personal understanding of calling and vocation. President Henning said:

It does start with matching my gifts and experience with a purpose, often times considering what need I can fill for someone else...understanding how somebody else might need my skills or talents. We live that out in the moment. Our calling or vocations have a time element to it. Sometimes we're called into a moment or a role. A calling can be brief or last for an extended period of time. The key to

having a vocation mindset or to be called, in my opinion, is to really understand the other. How does someone else benefit from what I do?

President Ohle stated something very similar:

I won't say that my thinking has changed significantly, but it certainly has matured over a long period of time. I didn't know... you kind of grow in your understanding of that whole concept of call, and what that means, and how it is fulfilling in your life. I feel very strongly that I've been called to do this at this time and I feel I was called to serve Wartburg when I did. I have filled roles and taken responsibilities on at different times in my life because that was what I felt the Lord was leading me into. As I said, I had to give myself up to it. I firmly believe he has shown me my different calls culminated in these presidential roles I have fulfilled. Every step along the way was a call that put me in position to one day become a president. It was never a goal, but it was what I was called to. No question.

As evidenced by the stories shared, each participant felt called to their role of the president, and most elaborated on their calls to all the positions they have had throughout their careers.

Service to the Institution

In addition to having a common understanding of the values of Lutheran education and their own sense of vocation, all four participants emphasized the role of president as being one of service to the institution. President Colson talked about the significance of looking after the institution, saying: "Everyone wants to make sure that whoever is a steward of the presidency will revere the institution as much as they do. Will serve the institution and all of its constituents, leaving it better than when you started."

This concept of service is embedded in the participants' comments about the Lutheran traditions. Each of the institutional missions of these participants includes service as a pillar or area of focus. The participants shared that sense of service to their

institution similar to how institutions emphasize service to society with their students.

President Ohle summed it up best:

The things that have touched me, at Wartburg, from the standpoint of the things that I did to push and encourage people to understand Wartburg's dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as an expression of their faith and learning. I mean that's embedded in me. It will never go away. I'll never forgot it. I came to Gustavus and it is basically the same principles. It gives you that sense of direction and purpose. These principles guide me in knowing the importance of service to these institutions and the importance this role has in the lives of so many and the institution's on-going success.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study. Profiles of each participant were provided to give context to the results. With the narratives and the meaning-making of lived experiences being such a personal process, it was important for readers to have some background of the story tellers, which was provided by the profiles. Following the profiles, the themes discovered through thematic analysis were presented. While numerous themes and sub-themes emerged, thematic analysis uncovered three main categories of findings.

The first section, "Administrative Advancement," described the career paths of the participants and what led them to the presidency of ELCA institutions. This main theme contained useful information addressing work experiences to consider engaging in. This section provided important information about the participants' interest in higher education, willingness to accept new challenges, and administrative responsibilities prior to attaining the presidency. The participants also discussed the importance of mentoring relationships, and provided personal tips for success that attributed to their advancement.

In the second section, "Life beyond the Office," the participants described the transitions between jobs and the impacts those transitions had on themselves and their

families. Schlossberg's (1995) Theory of Transition served as a foundation for the findings of this theme, and will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Themes of "Life beyond the Office" included the blending of personal and professional life, the challenges of the presidential journey, and family considerations.

The final section, "Being Called," described the shared sense of vocation and calling of these presidents. Holland's (1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments assisted in organizing this section, and provided a theoretical framework to ground the findings in. Themes present in this section were the shared views of Lutheran higher education, what it means to serve the institution as president, and how the presidents felt called to their roles.

In Chapter 5, a discussion of the results from the study is provided by summarizing findings in relation to each of the three orienting research questions that guided this study. The theoretical frameworks are directly connected to the second and third research questions. Implications for the study and recommendations for future research are provided.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the influence that life journeys have on attaining ELCA college presidencies. There have been minimal changes in the demographics of college presidents over the last 20 years (American Council for Education, 2008, p. 57). This slow change has created a leadership gap due to large numbers of retiring administrators and underprepared successors (Ashburn, 2007). Little, if any, research has been conducted on the life journeys of ELCA college presidents. While some studies have focused on ELCA college presidents during their tenure as president, little research has examined paths to the presidency.

Lutheran higher education is a small, distinct sector of higher education. It was determined that this study would be beneficial to aspiring ELCA college presidents, individual ELCA institutions, ELCA colleges and universities as a whole, and individual ELCA college and university institutional governing boards. Additionally, aspiring leaders across all institutional types can glean valuable information for their own specific situations.

The literature review provided an overview of Lutheran higher education, presidential roles, career paths, and career transitions, which provided a context for this study. In an effort to explain the problem this study aimed to address, literature addressing concerns over the leadership gap in higher education was also included.

By concentrating on what ELCA colleges are, the career paths and transitions of college and university presidents, and the higher education leadership gap, this research framed the study. Additionally, Schlossberg's (1995) Theory of Transition and Holland's

(1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments served as the theoretical framework for this study. Transition theory was used to examine how the presidents made the transitions they faced during their career paths, and vocation theory applied to Lutheran higher education, as a pillar of the educational system is vocation and claiming personal callings.

Methodologically, this study was qualitative, with an epistemology of constructivism, and used a basic interpretive theoretical perspective. To compliment constructivism and basic interpretivism, narrative analysis was used as a methodology. This was an appropriate methodology for this research because the study was aimed to gain insight into the life journeys of ELCA college presidents by capturing deeper understandings of transitions, career paths, personal lives, and self-identities of the participants.

Four ELCA college presidents from the Midwest participated in this study. The participants were purposefully selected (Creswell, 2009) to participate based on their current roles as ELCA college presidents. The criteria for purposeful selection included the following: currently serving as an ELCA college president, having a career of ten years or more in higher education, and serving in their role in the Midwest. Participants took part in a series of three unstructured interviews that aligned with the narrative interview technique and used Seidman's (2006) interview structure of three interviews, typically within a week of one another. Ten of the twelve interviews occurred face-to-face. Due to difficulty in scheduling, two "third" interviews were conducted over the phone, but all twelve interviews met the recommended seven- to ten-day time frame

recommended by Seidman. Institutional webpage reviews and a reflexive, oral journal kept during the study provided supplemental data.

Data analysis was done through text reduction following the transcription of all twelve interviews. The researcher completed the transcription and listened to the audio files while proofing the written transcripts. The researcher then performed the text reduction. These steps created an important intimacy between the researcher and the data. Following the transcription, texts were reduced through a stepwise procedure (Mayring, 1983) that created a categorical coding structure that was used throughout the transcriptions. Passages were narrowed to paragraphs, then paraphrased to sentences, and culminated in key words (Bauer, 1996, p. 11).

The text reduction produced the themes presented in Chapter 4. The three major thematic categories included “Administrative Advancement,” “Life Beyond the Office,” and “Being Called.” “Administrative Advancement” discussed the participants’ interest in higher education, willingness to accept new challenges, and administrative responsibilities prior to attaining the presidency. “Life Beyond the Office” addressed the blending of personal and professional life, support networks, necessary considerations, and challenges the higher education presidential journey creates. The final theme, “Being Called” focused on the participants’ shared view of Lutheran higher education, what it means to serve an institution as president, and vocation.

The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation connects the research questions of this study to the findings using the theoretical frameworks, Schlossberg’s (1995) Theory of Transition and Holland’s (1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments, as well as relevant literature. Implications for future research and the researcher’s final thoughts are included.

Findings

This study had three research goals that generated one overarching research question and three additional orienting questions. The goals of this study included having a better understanding of how to prepare for an ELCA college presidency and knowing what events and transitions informed current presidents in their career ascendency that, in turn, informs aspiring leaders of the personal and professional experiences current ELCA college presidents faced throughout their life journeys. The research question that guided the study was: “How do life journeys impact career paths to ELCA college presidencies?” The orienting questions discussed described below were used to reinforce the overarching question.

Research Question 1: What influences enabled the participants to advance to ELCA college presidencies?

This question examined influential work experiences, positions, people, and opportunities the participants experienced during their professional journeys. Literature supported this question, and two specific reports were essential in reinforcing the findings. They included the *American College President Study* (2011) and the CIC report (Song & Hartley, 2012), which utilized data from *The American College President Study* specific to its 640 members who participated in the larger study.

The career paths of college presidents have been studied (Song & Hartley, 2012; Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001) and more generally, the career paths of higher education administrators have been examined (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Brown, 2000; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Jackson & Harris, 2005; Song & Hartley, 2012; Munoz, 2006; Green, 1983). Furthermore, investigations of

the transitions of college presidents have also occurred (Krause, 2009; Turner, 2007; Toman, 2008; Moore, 1983). Many of these studies concentrated on the trajectories of females to the presidency as well as the community college environment. Contributions have also been made about lessons learned during time spent as an ELCA college president (Tunheim & McLean, 2010). However, no literature was found that directly contributed to the question of influences that impacted the journeys of ELCA presidents.

Commonalities existed between the participants when considering the first orienting research question. When considering influences on presidential attainment, career path needs to be considered. The career paths of the participants were similar in many ways, but they were not identical. The participants all entered careers in higher education immediately following or shortly after college graduation. Once the participants entered careers in higher education, they never left the field of education on their journey to the presidency. Additionally, all participants earned post-baccalaureate degrees from strong post-graduate programs in their particular fields of study. However, only President Colson earned a PhD, which suggests that a doctorate may not be as important to securing a presidency at ELCA schools as suggested in literature for CIC institutions (Song & Hartley, 2012). All participants held administrative roles with increased responsibility at each transition point, and none took lateral moves during their careers. Positions may have had the same title, such as “professor” or “campaign director,” but the scope of the position was greater at each advancement. Whether they started as an assistant coach, faculty member, or fundraiser, each new position held additional responsibility and required more leadership. Positions included, but were not limited to, assistant dean, associate dean, faculty in a larger or new department,

department chair, dean, provost, campaign director, or vice president. The paths of Presidents Ohle and Henning were carved primarily outside of academia, with significant experiences in athletics, fundraising, and student life. Presidents Colson and Bahls, on the other hand, were academics who advanced into administrative work through faculty channels. While these ascendency patterns are different, they all align with traditional paths according to the *American College President Study* (2011). The key point in the career paths of the participants is that they consistently transitioned to roles of greater responsibility throughout their professional journeys.

Schlossberg's (1995) Theory of Transition was valuable in providing the theoretical framework and scaffolding for interpreting many results in this study. Schlossberg et al. (1995) define a transition as "any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 27). Additionally, an event can only be considered a transition if the individual attaches significance to it (Evans et al., 1998).

Commonalities with transition theory (Schlossberg, 1995) existed in many components of the findings. Transition theory identifies anticipated, unanticipated, and non-events (Evans et al, 1998). It was evident that the path to the presidency, for all participants, centered on unanticipated events. In their view, each participant did not set out to be a college president. However events they did not see coming (in this case, mentors and job opportunities), especially early in their careers, put them on a path to the presidency before they even realized it. These unanticipated events included nominations for positions they did not know were open, taking positions they had not anticipated, having others inform them of their preparedness and qualifications to serve as college

presidents, and having working and personal relationships with strong mentors. An interesting pattern was the frequency with which the participants acted on these opportunities or took comments and conversations to heart. More often than not, these four ELCA college presidents looked into positions that they were made aware of, accepted them if offered, and had others confirm or even initiate the idea that they were ready for more leadership and administration, specifically the position of president. At some point in the narrative for each participant, they made a remark similar to, “I wasn’t aiming to be a college president. I didn’t think I could be. I didn’t think I was qualified. But then this consultant told me I should consider applying, and I said, I’m not qualified and then, the consultant reiterated, you should consider applying.” Mentors might say similar things. Once the participant heard this, they started became observant of what was going on around them and they started considering presidency as a realistic option.

Additionally, transition theory discusses the four S’s that Schlossberg determined as categories of importance when moving in, through, and out of transitions (Schlossberg et al, 1995). One of those four S’s is Support. Another S is Self. In thinking about advancement to ELCA college presidencies, support and self were vitally important.

In transition theory, support can include family members or friends, and can also include being part of a community. The narratives shared and the themes identified suggest that wives who are willing to be trailing spouses, children who accept the need to move, and long-standing mentoring relationships provided participants with the support needed to thrive through these transitions. The support systems for each participant were unique and very personal to each participant, but each recognized the importance of that

support. That is the overarching finding in accordance with support. It is critical to have support, regardless of where it is found.

Beyond support, personal values, commitment, conviction, and views on life are all components of another S in transition theory: Self. The rich, thick descriptions of the Lutheran traditions, strong personal views on calling and vocation, and the participants' ability to identify their own skills, gifts, and abilities, were all associated with a sense of self. Throughout the life journeys of these participants, this deep self-awareness contributed significantly to career ascendancy.

Summarizing the findings to the first research question, advancement to leadership roles, having mentors, and a sense of self and calling that aligned with the mission of their workplaces allowed them to advance to their current roles of ELCA college presidents.

Research Question 2: What is the interplay between the participants' personal lives, self-identities and careers?

This research question aimed at examining whether there was a direct relationship between the participants' perception of self, vocation, personal lives, and career choices. Undoubtedly, that relationship was direct and was anchored by each participant's skills, abilities, and passion for their work as well as the connection they saw between the purpose of their careers—which is to fulfill needs to ultimately benefit others—and the mission of their institution. Additionally, the feeling that higher education was the catalyst for that gift/purpose partnership resounded throughout the study. Finally, each participant had the support of their spouse in their continued transitions.

All participants were married and had families during their career journeys; additionally, a key piece to their continued ascendancy was the willingness of their spouse/family to move. The participants shared much of their story as a journey of “we,” meaning themselves and their wives or families. Some participants acknowledged concrete conversations with their spouses about how their career moves would unfold, and a career hierarchy among the couples was established. In the stories the participants shared, it appeared that the careers of all participants took priority over their spouse’s. The spouses had positions that were less location-specific, which allowed them to be more mobile. While all mentioned that transitions were at times difficult on the family, the transitions continued to occur, and they had the ongoing support of their spouses.

Participants discussed their gifts and passions in many ways, but to summarize them succinctly, most discussed communication, vision casting, forecasting needs, organization, fundraising, relationship development, and being aware of and having intuition as some of the strengths they attributed to their advancement. The interplay between these gifts and their work environments can best be described using Holland’s (1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments.

Holland’s (1997) theory attributes career choice to people seeking out work environments where they can use their skills and abilities and express their attitudes and values. It was evident throughout the narratives that the presidents in this study could have worked in a variety of occupations beyond higher education. In fact, two did. President Bahls worked as a lawyer, and President Ohle worked in the high school environment teaching and coaching football. President Henning considered working for the railroad after undergrad and after graduate school; he felt he could have taken a

variety of different career paths within business. President Colson considered law school and even seminary before determining that higher education was his desired work environment. Regardless of what could have been, all four participants felt called to higher education, especially the presidency. They all talked about how they valued Lutheran traditions and education and how those traditions aligned with their own gifts, passions, and experiences. They felt that higher education gave them an opportunity to impact others.

In examining Holland's (1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments, the data supports the participants as falling within both the "Enterprising" and "Social" categories within the theory. Both the social and enterprising environments best captured the comments of the presidents. People with social personalities strive to help people and are goal-oriented (Holland, 1997). The men in this study all discussed how important it was to match their gifts in ways that could meet the needs of others. The social environment is closely related to the enterprising environment, so it makes sense that these men described Lutheran higher education and higher education in general as they did. The social environment is often one that has social personalities in place to direct the initiatives of the group in order to concentrate on solving social problems (Holland, 1997). The enterprising environment has high energy, energetic, and ambitious people, which drives the environment to concentrate on leading people, sell ideas, and move forward (Holland, 1997). The participants in this study definitely gravitated to higher education and the Lutheran traditions largely because the values they hold align well with the missions of higher education and these ELCA institutions. Holland's theory is supported by the data in this study.

In short, the interplay between the personal lives, self-identities, and careers of the participants was that they had spousal support to pursue advancement; each felt called to their roles and that their gifts and passions allowed them to be successful and impactful in higher education.

Research Question 3: How have different life events and priorities influenced the participants' career trajectory?

This question considered life beyond the office and how personal lives impacted the participants' paths. This component of the study was of great importance, as this was a facet of the study that had not had been attended to in prior research. Commonalities existed between the participants that answered this question. They included family considerations, proximity to extended family, work-life balance, and hobbies. Similar to the first research question, Schlossberg's (1995) Theory of Transition was applicable in helping frame the findings.

The second research question also attended to how the participants in this study moved from job to job and location to location in order to continue to advance. As mentioned previously, spouses and families needed to be willing to relocate. This family commitment to the advancement process was a priority in the participants' career plans, and it directly connects to the support component of Schlossberg's Theory of Transition.

The narratives firmly support that the participants in this study placed significant emphasis on family throughout their life journeys. The data supported that the priorities of family included the participants being the lead spouse, that child ages and ideal timing in school for children to relocate should be considered, and that being close to extended family (including grandparents or grandchildren) were important and influenced choices.

In addition to family, another priority that was important to their careers was a personal and individualized understanding of work-life balance. There was not necessarily agreement of what work-life balance meant or how it was achieved, but there was consensus that work-life balance, especially as an administrator and an ELCA president, was challenging. Work-life balance was not only challenging to achieve, but was hard to comprehend. While each participant had their own approach to achieving a work-life balance (or a desire to not even worry about it), the takeaway is that there is a variety of ways to strike a work-life balance that is very personal. It is as important, if not more important, to take time to consider what work-life balance means rather than to know exactly how to achieve it. The phenomena of work-life balance and the individuality of it speak directly to Schlossberg's Theory of Transition, specifically the Situation "S." The Situation S considers triggers of the transition, levels of stress, timing, control, and role change. If an aspiring leader considers different work situations and events as transitions, which Transition Theory suggests they are, the situation may very well dictate the approach needed at that time for work-life balance. Many of the narratives speak to this finding.

A piece of the work-life balance theme included the importance of having hobbies. A difference between hobbies and work-life balance was that while there was some individualization to them, a consensus existed of traveling being a great way to decompress. All participants spoke at length about enjoying travel, even for work. Similar to the concept of work-life balance, it does not seem realistic for every aspiring leader to "hit the gym" or enjoy German board games, as these participants do. Yet, the takeaway is that it is important to have hobbies that assist in rejuvenation, regardless of

what those hobbies are. As mentioned during the discussion of the first research question, work-life balance and establishing hobbies is directly linked to the Self “S” of Schlossberg’s (1995) Theory of Transition.

To summarize, the influential priorities that shaped the participants’ career trajectories were the willingness to be open to new opportunities, being close to extended family, personally understanding work-life balance, having hobbies, and the willingness of spouses and family to move around with the participants.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for the primary audience of aspiring ELCA higher education administrators and for secondary audiences of aspiring higher education leaders across all institutional types, ELCA college presidents, individual ELCA institutions, ELCA colleges and universities as a whole, and individual ELCA college and university institutional governing boards. Through examining the life journeys of ELCA college presidents, and considering the leadership gap higher education faces, the findings in this study are beneficial.

Aspiring ELCA higher education administrators, specifically aspiring ELCA college presidents, can benefit greatly from the findings of this study. The data can be used to make informed decisions about career choices and the impact those choices may have on other parts of their life. This study suggests that many years in higher education allows for continued advancement due to valuable experiences gained throughout. Additionally, there is evidence that working in higher education outside of the ELCA is not a detriment in attaining an ELCA presidency, as all participants were employed at other institutional types throughout their careers. Aspiring ELCA leaders may find the

career paths of the participants instrumental in navigating their own professional journeys. They may also find the importance behind a willingness to transition to new positions and the stresses and challenges such transitions create for spouses and family. Without the transitions made by the participants, some work experiences would not have been gained. Without those experiences, the participants' preparedness for the presidency may not have existed. Passion for service and a belief in Lutheran traditions is also conveyed strongly throughout this study. When considering an ELCA presidency, aspiring presidents will want to examine their own belief systems to determine alignment. This study also reveals the importance of post-baccalaureate education, as the participants all had graduate degrees. However, the data suggests that a PhD may not be necessary when considering ELCA institutions. Also, aspiring leaders should better understand how much value and worth mentoring relationships have. Thus, aspiring leaders should seek out these relationships and be willing to absorb the knowledge and wisdom their mentors share.

Leadership development and positional preparedness are concepts that transcend institutional type. Aspiring administrators of all institutional types can benefit from this study. In addition to what is stated above (which may not be unique to ELCA institutions), the history of ELCA and Catholic higher education included in this study may influence leaders to consider working at schools that they otherwise may not. This study has the potential to broaden the employment prospects of aspiring leaders.

This study provides implications for ELCA schools, their presidents, and governing boards. Faculty, staff, governing boards, and even students now have a fuller glimpse of similar demands of the life journey and preparedness of their own institution's

chief officer. ELCA college and university faculty and staff will better understand the personal challenges and professional successes ELCA college presidents experience prior to attaining the role of president. This understanding may strengthen the respect of faculty and staff members for, and relationships with, the president of their institution. While most ELCA institutions consider mentoring a key part of a liberal arts education, the significance mentoring played in the roles of the participants reinforces the need for mentoring to remain a pillar of all ELCA institutions. ELCA institutions may utilize this study to become better prepared for the impending turnover in their administrations due to the leadership gap. This study may cause some institutions to re-examine professional development, hiring practices, and succession planning. Both ELCA institutions and their governing boards may utilize the information shared by the participants regarding workload, work/life balance, and the loneliness of the presidency in an effort to best support their own president. The data may generate conversation starters for governing boards to have with their president. Additionally, ELCA presidents may benefit from this study by taking a few minutes to reflect on their own life journeys and their current role as an ELCA college presidents. The data may also uncover new hobbies and sources of relaxation for current ELCA college Presidents. Based on the narratives shared in this study, it can be stated that ELCA college presidents are very busy and work extended hours. This study could be used by current ELCA college presidents as a prompt to take a few moments to reflect on their life journeys, which could be very advantageous for their outlook during the long and sometimes lonely hours in the role of president.

Recommendations for Future Research

With this study as a foundation, there are many opportunities to grow and expand the knowledge base on the life journeys of higher education administrators through future research. Future research needs to occur to continue addressing the leadership gap that higher education is experiencing, and will continue to experience, for years to come.

While many studies examine presidential career paths and the role of the president, this study was the first to examine the life journeys of ELCA presidents with an emphasis on the participants' lives beyond the profession. A great deal of information was gleaned in this study pertaining to career path, work/life balance, personal and familial implications due to job transitions, and vocational discernment, but there is more to be learned.

The participants of this study were all male. It would be valuable to conduct the same study with ELCA college presidents who are female. There could be different findings due to personal and professional roles and responsibilities that are gender-specific. Additionally, this study was conducted in the upper Midwest. With 22 other ELCA colleges and universities across the country, it would be interesting to know if differences exist in life journeys of ELCA college presidents in different regions of the United States.

Another factor that could lead to new findings is to examine the Lutheran culture of the 26 ELCA institutions, and to determine what institutions are most similar in relation to the ethos of Lutheran higher education. Some institutions will be more religiously affiliated than others. Once the schools are categorized as something to the effect of "very Lutheran," "moderately Lutheran," and "minimally Lutheran," it would be

interesting to determine if the life journeys of presidents from each category of institution are similar or different using the same narrative approach used in this study.

Similarly, as previously suggested, rather than changing the participant group by gender and using the same study design, one could examine the life journeys of presidents from different institutional types. Catholic institutions, Research-I institutions, community colleges, and historically black colleges and universities are examples of other institutional types to be studied. While concentrating on one institutional type for an entire study is appropriate, it would also be interesting to see the similarities and differences of life journeys of presidents across different institutional types. By doing so, the audience the research would impact would be much greater.

Moving beyond the same study design, an underdeveloped commonality in this study was the sense that there is no guidebook to the presidency. All participants spoke about the breadth of the position and that it was virtually impossible to be fully equipped and prepared for everything they faced in their presidential role. This was not an area of emphasis for this particular study, but it could be quite impactful to aspiring leaders. It would be valuable to conduct a study (possibly quantitative) that provided data on the sense of preparedness college presidents feel for the wide array of responsibilities they have in their role as president.

With the theoretical frameworks used in this study, both Schlossberg's (1995) Theory of Transition and Holland's (1997) Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments were very applicable to this research—so much so that it seems that either theory could be the focus of a study of life journeys. It would be interesting if the four S's of Transition Theory, or the personality types and environments of Holland's theory were

the entire focus of a study of presidential life journeys. The results, thoroughly grounded in one of these theories, would be highly regarded.

With a main component of this study aimed at examining life beyond the office, spouses and children were a big part of that life. Based on the familial buy-in of the career paths of which the participants spoke, it would be advantageous for a study to more deeply examine the impact the presidential career paths have on spouses, children, and families as a whole. The journey to the presidency is one that impacts the entire family, not only the person on that career path.

Lastly, the leadership gap is not only affecting presidencies in higher education, but it is problematic throughout leadership in higher education. It would be interesting to learn more about the life journeys of other administrators using the same design as this study. By doing so, aspiring leaders—from vice presidents to provosts to chief business officers—may learn more about preparedness and what to expect both professionally and personally.

Final Thoughts

This study has been the most demanding process of my life. At times, it has been enjoyable; at other times, taxing. More often than not, it was something that lingered with me, regardless of where I was, what I was doing, or who I was with. In conducting a study of this scale and writing a dissertation to earn a PhD, the study, the data, and the entire process all became part of who I am. This entire PhD journey has lasted over three years, and the last fourteen months have been entirely dedicated to this study. I will always remember President Henning's metaphor of the Mississippi River, President Colson's remarks about virtue ethics and true happiness, President Bahls's sincerity about

wanting to make a difference and seeing it in his face as he spoke about why he went into higher education, and the relationship that President Ohle built with me in a matter of five or six hours during our time together: he was a master. These are things I will carry with me for the rest of my life, and I am proud to have had the opportunity to conduct this research. This entire experience, engaging these four Presidents, was amazing.

This process allowed me to learn more about the ELCA, Lutheran higher education, and the leaders of four amazing institutions. As a graduate of an ELCA school, and having worked at multiple ELCA institutions, my passion for this area of study helped fuel my interest and drive to complete this work. There are thousands of students attending the 26 ELCA institutions across the country, and every one of them—directly or indirectly—is impacted by the work of the president at their respective institution.

It was refreshing to see the shared view of the Lutheran traditions among the participants and how passionate they are about helping others be successful. I felt empowered in my own journey by listening to how these presidents felt they lived out their call to serve at their respective institutions, and how they see themselves assisting to carry out their institutional missions. I am hopeful that readers will feel the same and take time to think about their passions and where those passions can meet the needs of others. I can only assume that the presidents at the other 22 ELCA institutions are similar in their Lutheran understanding and their desire to serve as the participants in this study; if that is the case, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the colleges should be proud to be associated with these fine leaders and these unique and distinct ELCA institutions.

I am hopeful that this research contributes to addressing the leadership gap and will bring both a Lutheran and personal side of the presidential life journeys to light. The

narratives the participants shared were rich and descriptive, and I am very thankful to these four men for allowing me the first-hand experience of hearing them. It was fascinating; it is something I will never be able to repay them for.

I am confident that through collaboration with the presidents, an immense amount of time transcribing and immersing myself in the data, and the use of my reflexive journal, I have accurately shared the stories of the participants. I certainly aimed to provide a richly descriptive and accurate account of their stories. I am pleased with the outcome, which has resulted in this dissertation, specifically Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. I hope others see value in this study and that aspiring leaders can utilize this research to put themselves in the best position possible to attain their career goals.

APPENDIX A. RECRUITMENT PHONE SCRIPT AND EMAIL

Phone Script for Initial Contact with Participants

Hello, this is Wes Brooks from Wartburg College. How are you doing, President NAME? Are things going well at CAMPUS NAME? Great. The reason for my call is to see if you would be interested in participating in my Dissertation Research as I pursue my PhD in Higher Education from Iowa State University? Let me explain what my research is aimed at. The contribution I am trying to make is to provide aspiring ELCA College Presidents some guidance and useful information when attempting to advance to leadership roles within Lutheran Higher Education, specifically presidencies. Research suggests that all classifications of higher education are facing leadership gaps and there is a fear of a lack of qualified successors. I am trying to answer the research question: How do life journeys impact career paths to ELCA college presidencies? Your commitment would be to allow me to interview you three times for approximately 90-120 minutes each. Depending on what unfolds during the narratives, I may be asking you to share documents that will help clarify some of your story, if necessary. Those documents may include your curriculum vita or resume, job description, organizational chart and strategic planning documents. To assure validity in my findings, I will be asking you to review the preliminary findings to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and meaning behind your comments. Does this sound like something you would be willing to participate in? Again, I am trying to determine if there are specific things that people can do to put themselves in the best position to be prepared, qualified and to attain an ELCA College presidency in the future and to inform them of things to expect on their leadership journey such as what the professional and personal transitions during career ascendency may be. Are you interested? If so, I will send a consent form to you via email that will reiterate what you are agreeing to participate in and an overview of the project. Do you have a particular email address you would like me to use other than your work email? I'll coordinate a couple interview times with your executive assistant. Well, I don't want to keep you too long. I know your schedule must be quite busy. I will be in touch. Take care.

Email Script for Contact with Participants following Phone Call without Contact

Hello President NAME,

I hope the 2013-14 academic year has been a good one for you. I'm currently serving as the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life at Wartburg College.

As a Ph.D. student at Iowa State University, I have successfully completed all of my coursework and preliminary oral, am considered ABD (All but Dissertation) and am needing to conduct the research portion of my study which has been approved through the Iowa State Institutional Review Board. My reason for contacting you today is to seek your participation in my dissertation research which intends to explore the *Life Journeys of ELCA College Presidents*. The schools I hope to have involved include Grand View,

Gustavus Adolphus, St. Olaf and Wartburg. My dissertation proposal is attached for your review.

An appendix is included in the proposal that I would like to direct your attention to which is the Informed Consent Participation document. It can be found on pages 82-85 and will add context to what this study is. If you agree to participate, I will bring this document to our first interview and we will review it again before we begin.

Additionally, a short bio and my resume are included in case you are interested in knowing a little more about me since I hope we will be spending a few hours together in the coming weeks and months.

With my research, writing and graduation timeline, it would be advantageous for me to complete the interviews prior to June 1st. In using Seidman's interview technique for my study, a series of three interviews will need to occur. These can be conducted face-to-face within 7 days of one another. However, knowing the complexities of your schedule and the latitude Seidman's technique allows, this timeline is certainly adjustable. Completing the interviews within one week's time of one another would be ideal. I will travel to you unless you direct me otherwise or think it would be helpful with your schedule to do the final interview or even interviews over the phone or through Skype rather than you finding time to meet with me in person.

If you are willing to participate, I am hoping you can share some dates (specific days, weeks, even times) that would work for you so we can get together or if I should coordinate our appointments with your administrative staff, I'd be happy to do so.

I hope you will find my study interesting and worthwhile and that you are willing and able to provide me a few hours over the next couple of months. If you would like to discuss more details prior to committing, I would be happy to visit with you. My office phone number is 319-352-8260 or my cell phone number is 515-991-0728.

Sincerely,

Wes

Wes Brooks
Associate Dean of Students
Director of Residential Life
Wartburg College
Phone - (319)352-8260
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APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

These interviews are intended to be unstructured and last between 90 and 120 minutes. They will follow the narrative interview technique (Riessman, 2001; Bauer, 1996) which is intended to eliminate the question-and-answer schema and allow for a self-generated schema to unfold. The narrative interview technique has four phases which are initialization (presentation of a topical area), main narration (participant story-telling related to the topic), questioning (follow-up questions presented without opinion or bias), and small talk (conversation following the formal narration process when the tape recorder is turned off).

In the simplest of terms, the goal of a narrative interview is to have the participant share stories of their lived experiences related to the topic. As the interviewer, my role is to present a topic and to allow you, the participant, to share your thoughts without any interruption. There won't be a chain of questions or an interview script whatsoever.

Interview I

Your professional journey

Follow-Up Questions may include:

- Can you tell me about some high and low moments during your professional journey?
- Can you share some stories about important people (and their positions) that assisted you in your career trajectory?
- What were the most impactful experiences in your professional journey to the presidency?

Interview II

Personal life during your professional journey

Follow-Up questions may include:

- Can you tell me about the best and worst times in your personal life as you continued to advance?
- Family and Friendships?
- Relocating?
- Hobbies/Activities?

Interview III

Claiming your Calling during your life journey.

Follow-up questions may include:

- What generated the biggest changes in “you” during your life journey?
- Were you called to higher education, administration, and your current role?

For the purposes of this study, “life journeys” and “lived experiences” are defined as follows:

Life Journeys: The professional and personal happenings the participants experienced during their professional years prior to earning an ELCA presidency. Life journeys will include career paths, impactful professional experiences, personal

relationships, formation of self-identity, and other transitions identified as meaningful by the participants.

Lived Experience: Any experience that a participant shares as a first-hand account of something they personally encountered or were impacted by.

APPENDIX C. INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Informed Consent Form for ELCA College Presidents

This informed consent form is for ELCA College Presidents and I am inviting them to participate in a research project titled “Path to Power: A Narrative Inquiry of the Life Journeys of ELCA College Presidents at selected institutions.”

Principal Investigator – Wesley H. Brooks, Doctoral Student at Iowa State University
Organization – Iowa State University

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)**

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Wes Brooks, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life at Wartburg College and I am currently enrolled at Iowa State University as a doctoral student in education. I am conducting research on life journeys of ELCA college presidents for my dissertation for the doctoral program. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this study. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research.

This consent form may contain words or concepts that you do not understand. Do not hesitate to contact me immediately if you are unclear about anything included in this consent form. I will happily take time to explain and clarify what is meant by the stated information in the form.

Purpose of the research

According to numerous sources, significant turnover in leadership positions on college campuses in the near future will occur due to pending retirements and there may be a shortage of qualified leaders to fill these vacancies. This study is aimed at assisting current aspiring leaders in being prepared and qualified for attaining ELCA college presidencies. I believe you can help by telling me about your professional journey to the presidency. I want to learn about previous positions and the professional and non-work life transitions you experienced prior to serving as an ELCA college president, the perception you have of yourself and what qualities you believe have enabled you to get to the position you are in now.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in three 90-120 minute interviews conducted by me as well as the submission of a curriculum vita or resume, job

descriptions, strategic planning documents, and/or organizational charts. You will also be asked to review the preliminary findings of the study to assure your voice and intent of the comments you made are accurately captured.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because your experience as an ELCA college president can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of life experiences that eventually led to attaining that role.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. The choice that you make will have no bearing on any future work-related collaborations or bearing on our professional relationship. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

I am asking you to help us learn more about the life journeys of ELCA college presidents. I am inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in three 90-120 minute interviews as well as submit a curriculum vita or resume, strategic planning documents, your job description and an organizational chart. You will also be asked to review the preliminary findings to assure your voice and intent of the comments has been accurately captured.

During the interview, you and I will sit down in a comfortable place of your choosing. If it is better for you, the interview can take place off-campus. If you do not wish to respond to any of the topical conversation starters during the interview, you may say so and I will move on to the next question. No one other than you and I will be present during the interview unless you would like someone else to be there. Based on the nature of this research, confidentiality is not the aim. Your name and your institution's name will be associated with this project but the foreseeable risks associated with it are very minimal. While confidentiality won't be kept, privacy will be of the utmost importance. The entire interview will be tape-recorded. The tape will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. No one else will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after one year has passed from the time you receive a copy of my findings. Topical conversation starters for our time together will be like the following:

- 1.) How has your professional journey unfolded? And,
- 2.) What has your personal life journey been since you entered the working world? Or,
- 3.) Do you believe you have been "called" to your work?

Duration

This research study should be concluded by June 30, 2014. The research you are directly involved with takes place during three business days where the individual interviews will occur. In addition, you will be contacted to review the preliminary findings. The review should take no longer than one hour.

Risks

I am asking you to share with me some personal and confidential information and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to engage in any topic or take part in any of the three interviews if you don't wish to do so, and that is fine. You do not have to give me any reason for not responding to any question or for refusing to take part in the interview. The interview that will be conducted is about your life journey to the presidency. I am interested in knowing about your personal life, professional life and self-identity. I am particularly interested in transitions you have experienced throughout your post-graduate life. The methodological approach is for you to create a personal narrative around your professional transitions and experiences that impacted your career and prepared you for your current role. Because of the nature of the content and the narrative being created, you could share information about your career path that may not align with your professional resume or may indicate that you transitioned positions because of personnel issues with colleagues, supervisors, or employees. The likelihood of any major risks or discomforts occurring seems minimal but there is always some risk regarding research.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about how aspiring leaders can be better prepared for and successful in ELCA college presidencies.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research. You will be donating your time and energy if you agree to participate in this study.

Confidentiality

The research being done will not be in complete confidence. The risks associated with participation are so minimal and the challenges associated with deductive disclosure due to the small network of ELCA institutions makes the case for allowing readers to know who participated. Knowing who participated and how they prepared themselves for ELCA presidencies should generate a greater connection between the reader and the findings. The information collected from this research project will be kept private in a locked file cabinet in my home to ensure privacy of the information you share.

Sharing the Results

The preliminary findings of this study will be shared with you and the other participants before it is made widely available to the public. Each participant will receive a final summary of the results after preliminary findings have been shared. Following your receipt of the results, this research will be published through ProQuest.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will have no bearing on any future work-related collaborations or bearing on our professional relationship. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without future professional collaborations being affected. I will

give you an opportunity after the interviews have been transcribed to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes of if I did not understand you correctly.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you may contact me, Wes Brooks, at 100 Wartburg Blvd. Waverly IA 50677, by email at wbrooks@iastate.edu or by phone at 319-352-8260. This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Iowa State University Institutional Review Board, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, visit the Iowa State website at <http://www.compliance.iastate.edu/>. To report a concern to the IRB, the director may be contacted at 515-294-3115 or by email at jzamzow@iastate.edu.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about the life journeys of ELCA college presidents.

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

This document accurately reflects the intent of the research and the role of the participant. To the best of my ability, I have made sure that the participant understands what s/he is agreeing to participate in.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher taking the consent _____

Signature of Researcher taking the consent _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

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