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## From Paper Dolls to the Presidency: A Collective Case Study of the Childhood Years and Life Experiences of Five Female College and University Presidents

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FROM PAPER DOLLS TO THE PRESIDENCY:  
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY  
OF THE CHILDHOOD YEARS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES  
OF FIVE FEMALE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

by

Regina M. Toman

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Educational Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Richard J. Torracco

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 2008

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A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY  
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University of Nebraska, 2008

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The purpose of this collective case study was to understand how five female presidents of small American colleges and universities perceived and described their childhood years and the life experiences that characterized their career paths. Data was collected through a series of semi-structured, open-ended, oral history interviews and the review of personal and professional documents such as vitae, speeches, and publications.

Personal narratives highlight the people, places, and experiences characteristic of each participant's childhood years. The study presents a chronology of the life course experiences characteristic of each participant's career path and in-depth analyses of turning point experiences and epiphanies. Themes, patterns, and meanings that emerged from the data are described.

Within-case analyses revealed individual lifespan themes reflective of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The cross-case analysis revealed that each of the five participants excelled academically; described the characteristics of the era during which

she grew up; explained her parents' expectations for her to attend college; demonstrated and/or acknowledged being confident and ambitious; and received encouragement for administrative positions that eventually led to the presidency. The participants grew up amidst changing notions about women, their roles and responsibilities, their abilities, and their rights. The study revealed how each participant persisted and succeeded in spite of personal and societal challenges.

A conceptual model is presented of the participants' lives from childhood to the presidency and the continual, interactive process through which their lifespan career development evolved. The model accommodates the individuality of each participant and her experiences within a particular historical context. The model supports the belief that women's developmental patterns and subsequent career development are unique.

Career development theories relevant to each case are discussed. Implications for career development professionals and researchers; institutions of higher education; and young girls and women aspiring to careers in higher education administration are presented.

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## Dedication

This study is dedicated to:

My father, William A. Toman,  
the inspiration for my research.

And my precious darlings, Sam and Pachelbel,  
who provided companionship, unconditional love,  
and joy every step of the way.

## Acknowledgements

“There is an appointed time for everything,  
and a time for every affair under the heavens.”  
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NAB)

### The Stone Cutter

Look at a stone cutter hammering away at his rock,  
perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it.  
Yet at the hundred-and-first blow, it will split in two –  
and I know it was not the last blow that did it,  
but all that had gone before.

I thank God for opening the doors to this research opportunity  
and for giving me the ability, persistence, and resources to complete this study.

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who shared their life stories with me.

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To all those who made an impact on my childhood and career path ...  
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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

In 1871, Frances Elizabeth Willard accepted the presidency of Evanston College in Evanston, Illinois and became the first female college president in the United States (Bordin, 1986). Although the number of female college and university presidents has steadily increased since that time over one hundred and thirty years ago, it remains considerably smaller than the number of male presidents. According to the American Council on Education (ACE), 23% of all American institutions of higher education are led by women (2007, p. 11). Additionally, although “the proportion of women presidents more than doubled, from 10 percent of all presidents to 23 percent” between 1986 and 2006, “the rate of change has slowed since the late 1990s” (ACE, p. 15).

The fact that less than one fourth of all American colleges and universities are led by female presidents, as well as the aforementioned slow-paced rate of change since the late 1990s, warrants close examination of the individuals who comprise this select group of women leaders. How did they arrive at the presidency? What challenges did they encounter along the way? What triumphs did they celebrate? What unique personal qualities and experiences characterized their lives? Who were the individuals that impacted them most? What were they like as little girls, teenagers, and young adults? What were their earliest career aspirations?

Indeed, as the number of female college and university presidents has increased over time, so has the amount of literature focused on these women and their paths to the presidency. The majority of research on the career paths of female presidents provides

demographic information and outlines sequences of jobs or positions held by female presidents. A growing body of research explores the life events and experiences of female presidents; particularly, those related to the adult career path and the presidency.

Within the literature, however, limited attention is given specifically to the childhood and adolescent years of female presidents who lead American colleges and universities. As a result, there is a lack of historical data on the formative and developmental years of this exclusive group of women. The “formation of ideas and perceptions about [one] self and the world” is central to childhood and adolescence (Magnuson & Starr, 2000, p. 101). Knowledge and understanding of childhood and adolescent experiences recalled by female college and university presidents may provide valuable insights into the origins of their career paths and ultimately, their ascension to the presidency.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this collective case study was to understand how five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceived and described their childhood years and the life experiences that characterized their career paths.

The term *paper dolls* was intentionally used in this study’s title for several reasons. Paper dolls represent the historical context of the participants’ childhoods, eras during which children played with actual paper dolls. One participant noted playing with paper dolls as a child, while others mentioned dolls in general. Additionally, the progression from playing with paper dolls to serving as a college or university president



embodies the lifelong career development of the participants and reflects the lifespan from childhood to adulthood.

### Grand Tour Questions and Sub-Questions

This qualitative study was guided by the following two grand tour questions or overarching research questions: How did five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe their childhood years? How did five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe the life experiences that characterized their career paths?

Each participant was asked the following sub-questions:

1. What was growing up like for you?
2. How would you describe any turning points or epiphanies that occurred during your childhood?
3. How would you describe your childhood aspirations for “what I want to be when I grow up”?
4. Through an analogy or a brief explanation, how would you describe your career path that led to the presidency?
5. How would you describe the life experiences that occurred during your career path?

Additionally, Stake (1995) suggested the use of a second set of sub-questions, or topical sub-questions, that “call for information needed for description of the case ... used by some researchers as the primary conceptual structure and by others as subordinate to the issue structure” (p. 25). Creswell (1998) explained that topical questions “can mirror the

procedures the researcher intends to use in their tradition of inquiry and foreshadow what the reader will find later in the study” (p. 101). Topical sub-questions specific to this study included:

1. What are the object experiences of the participant’s life?
2. What stories can be told from these experiences?
3. What are some narrative segments that illustrate the meanings of the participant’s life?
4. What career development theories relate to the participant’s life?  
(Creswell, pp. 101-02).
5. What are the implications of this research for career development theory?

#### Significance of the Study

Central to childhood and adolescence is the “formation of ideas and perceptions about [one] self and the world” (Magnuson & Starr, 2000, p. 101). According to Wahl and Blackhurst (2000, p. 368), “the earliest theories of career development largely ignored childhood and adolescence; [however], the importance of early developmental processes has gradually and increasingly been acknowledged in the career development literature.” Recognition of the potential impact of childhood and adolescence on career development suggests further exploration of these early years.

Researcher Susan Madsen (2007, p. 100) explained how “little exploratory research has been conducted exploring the childhood experiences, activities, personalities, and perceptions of successful leaders.” Further, “explorations focused on the early developmental influences of women leaders are particularly needed” (Madsen,

p. 100). Aligned with Madsen's observation, there is currently a lack of historical data on the formative and developmental years of one particular group of women leaders – female presidents who lead American colleges and universities. Results of studies of the lives of female college and university presidents revealed the impact and value of the early years of life (Cooper, 1992; Mockelstrom, 2000; Price, 2000; Vanhook-Morrissey, 2003); however, there is limited research intentionally focused on the childhood years of female presidents as retrospectively perceived and described by them. With the exception of Madsen's 2007 and 2008 publications, few studies purposefully explored the childhood and adolescent stages of this select group of female leaders.

The exploration of childhood and adolescent years is essential to fully understand the lifespan career development of female college and university presidents. Without knowledge of the women presidents' formative and developmental years, the literature lacks comprehensive representations of their lives. Knowledge and understanding of childhood experiences recalled by female college and university presidents may provide valuable insights into the origins of their career paths and ultimately, their ascension to the presidency.

“The importance of career-related decisions made during the elementary school age period has been supported both by studies of children and by retrospective studies of adults” (Auger, Blackhurst, & Wahl, 2005, p. 322). This retrospective study contributes to the body of research focused on childhood career development by describing participants' perceptions of their childhood years, as well as their perceptions of life experiences characteristic of their career paths.

### Definitions

The definitions below are specific to this study and its purpose:

1. Aspiration – “The single occupation named as one’s best alternative at any given time” (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 548).
2. Baccalaureate college or university – A U.S. college or university that offers “the degree of bachelor, conferred on [its] graduates” (Soukhanov & Ellis, 1984, p. 144); “Baccalaureate colleges enroll just over 1.3 million students, with an average head count enrollment of about 1,800 students” (ACE, 2007, p. 31).
3. Career – “The individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person’s life” (Hall, 2002, p. 16).
4. Case study – “An exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).
5. Childhood career development – “The formation of career-related concepts and attitudes” (Schultheiss, Palma, & Manzi, 2005, p. 247).
6. Childhood years – The time between birth and the age of fourteen (Super, 1990).
7. Collective case study – A study of more than one case “in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population, or general condition” (Stake, 1994, p. 237).

8. Describe – “To give a verbal account of; to transmit a mental image or impression of with words; to present a lifelike image of” (Soukhanov & Ellis, 1984, p. 366).
9. Epiphanies – “Interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives” (Denzin, 1989a, p. 15); the term *epiphany* is used synonymously with the term *turning point experience* in this study.
10. Female president of a college or university – The chief executive officer; the term *president* is often used synonymously with the term *chancellor*.
11. Interpretive biography – Qualitative methodology that “involves the studied use and collection of personal-life documents, stories, accounts, and narratives which describe turning-points in individuals’ lives” (Denzin, 1989, p. 13).
12. Oral history – “An approach in which the researcher gathers personal recollections of events, their causes, and their effects from an individual or several individuals” (Creswell, 1998, p. 49), usually through recorded interviews.
13. Perceive – To believe; “to achieve understanding of” (Soukhanov & Ellis, 1984, p. 872).
14. Life experiences – Personal or professional events that are memorable and/or significant to the individual who experiences them.
15. Life course stages – Childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, and old age (Denzin, 1989, p. 56).

16. Life course experiences – Education, marriage, death of a loved one, etc.

(Denzin, 1989, p. 56).

#### Delimitations

The focus of this collective case study was confined to five female college and university presidents who were asked to describe perceptions of their childhood years and the life experiences that characterized their career paths. Factors that narrowed the scope of the study included the professional position of president held by each participant, the institutional type (baccalaureate college or university), the number of participants, the focus of the research questions, and the combined methodologies of case study and interpretive biography.

#### Limitations

The purposive sampling procedures used in this study decreased the generalizability of findings, as the sample represented a small proportion of the total number of female college and university presidents in this country. In addition, although this study explored participants' childhood years and life experiences that characterized their career paths, it did not closely examine all factors that may have influenced the path to the presidency. Examples of such factors include the leadership development and leadership style of each participant, career path barriers and obstacles, and relationships or experiences not shared during the interview process. Further, the participants were not asked specifically about mistakes, missteps, regrets, or adverse situations and circumstances that influenced their career paths.

The use of recollections and memories was another limitation to this study.

During each interview, I attempted to put participants' minds at ease in the effort to assist the recollection process (Ritchie, 2003, p. 101); however, the potential for inaccurate recollections could not be ignored. "The earliest scientifically documented childhood memories recalled by adults happened to them when they were around 2 years of age" (Howe, 2003). Research also shows that around the age of 18 to 24 months, an independent, recognizable self begins to develop, therefore indicating the beginning of autobiographical memory (Howe).

The use of childhood memories and early recollections raises additional issues for some researchers. Bloom (2002) referenced the concerns expressed by Clandinin and Connelly (1994) and explained that "we use childhood memories with the understanding that what is at stake is not the truthfulness of a childhood memory, but the meaning the memory has for the adult narrating it" (Merriam, 2002, p. 306). Further, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) recommended the use of corroborating memories or texts from childhood to ensure a historical voice vs. a current voice (Merriam, p. 306). In a discussion of early recollections, Manaster and Mays (2004) acknowledged that "it is not merely what a person chooses to recall, but the meaning that they place on the memories" (p. 109).

All of our early recollections, although we are not aware of them at any moment, are always with us, and these represent the underlying story that is guiding us, that is clarifying for us, that is allowing us to see the world and, in some sense, making us see the world in our own particular ways (Manaster & Mays, p. 110).

To accommodate these concerns and to maximize understanding, the grand tour questions purposely incorporated the word *perceive*. As explained by Maxwell (2005), this realist perspective acknowledges that “perceptions and beliefs are real phenomena, and neither is something that can be inferred with certainty from interview data” (p. 74). Although this study sought to understand what actually happened during participants’ life experiences, that understanding was not the full extent of the study’s inquiry. Equally important to the study were phenomena such as how participants made sense of their childhood years, the meanings associated with childhood experiences, how experiences were organized, and how they were communicated during interviews (Maxwell, p. 74).

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs ... [the] research” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 33). It provides a theoretical perspective that serves as both a foundation and a guide for a study (Bryant, 2004, pp. 22-23). This study was informed by theories of career development that encompassed the lifespan and one specific segment of the lifespan – childhood.

Career development can be examined through a number of theories, each attempting to explain the process of career development from a particular perspective. Depending on vantage point and purpose, career development theories tend to fit into categories of “trait-oriented theories, social learning and cognitive theories, developmental theories, and person-in-environment theories” (Zunker, 2006, p. 24). Because this study explored participants’ lives from childhood to adulthood with a focus



on the career development that occurred during the lifespan, the conceptual framework was composed of theories with a developmental approach.

Developmental theories also support the definition of career used in this study: “The career is the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person’s life” (Hall, 2002, p. 12). In addition, a “major concept of developmental theories suggests that individuals make changes during developmental stages and adapt to changing life roles” (Zunker, 2006, p. 52). Like the participants of this study, women who seek to balance personal and professional responsibilities continually adapt to achieve satisfaction and success in their multiple life roles.

The conceptual framework was also composed of several theories that addressed the career development of children. The study’s focus on participants’ childhood years, childhood experiences, and childhood career aspirations warranted the inclusion of these theories in the theoretical perspective.

The gender of the participants, as well as the historically unique experiences and journeys of working women, justified the examination of theories specifically focused on the career development of females. Although not included in the conceptual framework, select theories of career development specific to women are reviewed in Chapter 2.

### *Lifespan Career Development*

“As early as the 1940s, Donald Super was promoting the idea that career development is a process that unfolds gradually over the life span” (Zunker, 2006, p. 53).

Describing Super as a “major thinker” in the area of career development, Hall (2002) noted that “Super present[ed] a sweeping set of constructs that explain[ed] a wide range of behaviors related to life and career decision making” (pp. 59-61). Specifically, Super suggested that career development occurs as self-concept and occupation interact and synthesize while moving through five particular life stages: growth (ages 4-13), exploration (ages 14-24), establishment (approximately ages 25-44), maintenance (ages 45-65), and disengagement (over age 65; Hall, pp. 56-57). Through Super’s lens, the career was a lifelong series of decisions and choices rather than an isolated event in one’s life (Hall, p. 55).

Years later in the early nineties, Super created two additional career development models that incorporated the multiple life roles held by an individual during the course of his or her lifespan. The *life-career rainbow model* consisted of two specific dimensions – the life span/life stages dimension and the life space dimension. The latter is defined as “the roles played by individuals as they progress through developmental stages, such as child, student ... citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner” (Zunker, 2006, p 58).

This conceptual model [the life-career rainbow] leads to some interesting observations. 1) Because people are involved in several roles simultaneously within several theaters, success in one role facilitates success in another; and, 2) all roles affect one another in the various theaters (Zunker, p. 58).

Super created *the archway model* to “delineate the changing diversity of life roles experienced by individuals over the life span .... The model is used to clarify how

biographical, psychological, and socioeconomical determinants influence career development” (Zunker, 2006, p. 58). Particular parts of the archway – two bases, two columns, the arch, and the keystone – represent the aforementioned determinants, how they support one another, and how they interact with one another (Zunker, p. 58).

Not long after his death in 1994, Super’s synthesizing approach to self-identity and life stage (Zunker, 2006, p. 58), the culmination of nearly sixty years of research – was “referred to as a life-span, life-space approach to career development” (Hall, 2002, p. 56).

Critics of Super’s career development theories frequently point out that his early studies were conducted with male subjects and subsequently, his theories were developed primarily for men, omitting important considerations of gender differences (Brooks, 1990, p. 364). According to Zunker (2006), the most recently updated version of Super’s *life-span, life-space model* addresses both gender and cultural differences through its broad approach (p. 59).

### *Childhood Career Development*

According to Wahl and Blackhurst (2000, p. 368), “the earliest theories of career development largely ignored childhood and adolescence; [however], the importance of early developmental processes has gradually and increasingly been acknowledged in the career development literature.” Further, “the importance of career-related decisions made during the elementary school age period has been supported both by studies of children and by retrospective studies of adults” (Auger et al., 2005, p. 322).

Three theories of children's career development that informed this study are described below. These theories are referenced often in the literature and include (a) Ginzberg's Theory of Occupational Choice, (b) Gottfredson's Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations, and (c) Havighurst's Theory.

*Ginzberg's Theory of Occupational Choice*

One of the first theories of occupational choice to incorporate childhood was Ginzberg's Theory of Occupational Choice (1952), "which included two relevant phases: fantasy choice (prior to age 11) and tentative choice (ages 11-14)" (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000, p. 368). During the fantasy stage, "the child imagines various things he would like to be when he becomes an adult – a fireman, doctor, policeman ... not really making a choice or even a preference ... only beginning to imagine what it will be like to be 'grown up'" (Hall, 2002, p. 68). "According to Ginzberg, the most important career development processes begin in the tentative choice phase, during which children's career aspirations are due almost solely to interests, with little attention to ability or other realistic constraints" (Wahl & Blackhurst, p. 368).

*Gottfredson's Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations*

Self-concept and cognitive development are central to Linda Gottfredson's Circumscription and Compromise: A Developmental Theory of Occupational Aspirations (1981). Her theory proposed a series of processes through which occupational aspirations evolve from as early as age three through adolescence. According to Gottfredson, "the self-concept is composed of different elements, ranging from appearance to major life roles" (p. 548).

The major vocationally relevant elements are gender, social class background, intelligence, and vocational interests, competencies, and values. These elements are incorporated into one's self-concept at different stages of cognitive development as one's self-concept and view of the world become more differentiated and complex (Gottfredson, p. 548).

Gottfredson's theory proposed four stages of cognitive development during which the child orients to elements of his or her environment. The first stage, "orientation to size and power" (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 549) occurs between the ages of 3 and 5. During this stage, "youngsters grasp the concept of being an adult" (Gottfredson, p. 549). "Orientation to sex roles, the second stage, occurs approximately between the ages of 6 and 8, and is characterized by the consolidation of gender self-concept" (Gottfredson, p. 549). During the third stage between the ages of 9 to 13, the "orientation to social valuation ... the more abstract self-concepts of social class and ability become important determinants of social behavior and expectations" (Gottfredson, p. 549). The fourth and final stage, "orientation to the internal, unique self" begins around age 14 as the adolescent identity evolves (Gottfredson, p. 549).

As the self-concept develops, the individual is better equipped with personal experience and knowledge necessary to discern occupational possibilities.

The young child has a fairly positive view of all occupations of which he or she is aware, but with age each of the developing self-concepts is used as additional criterion by which to make more critical assessments of job-self compatibility (i.e. more differentiated preferences). The result is a more differentiated and specific

view of one's social space and a successive circumscription of occupational alternatives that are considered acceptable (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 549).

Gottfredson proposed a sequence of occupation elimination that occurs during the process of assessing job-self compatibility. Specifically, occupations perceived inappropriate for one's gender are the first to be eliminated by the individual (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 549). Next, aligned with stages three and four of her theory, "youngsters rule out occupations of unacceptably low prestige because they are inconsistent with their social class self-concept. At the same time, they rule out occupations requiring extreme effort to obtain in view of their general ability level" (Gottfredson, p. 549).

According to the theory, personal interests, abilities, and values are considered criteria for assessing job-self compatibility during adolescence. Gottfredson (1981) suggested a relationship between the adolescent investigation of occupations and occupations previously considered in youth.

The exploration of vocational alternatives in adolescence is largely within the set of occupations that were deemed compatible at earlier ages according to one's more visible social attributes (sex, social class, and intelligence) and one's sense of what is available with reasonable effort (Gottfredson, p. 549).

### *Havighurst's Theory*

In 1964, Havighurst "theorized that two developmental tasks related to career development take place in childhood and adolescence: identifying with a worker (ages 5-

10) and developing habits of industry (ages 10-15)” (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000, p. 367-68).

## CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study was informed by literature on leadership in higher education; female college and university presidents, their career paths, career development, life experiences, and childhood years; theories of women's career development; the historical contexts of the participants' lives; and the history of childhood play and toys – including paper dolls.

### Leadership in Higher Education

During the summer of 2007, history was made at Harvard University. On July 1, Drew Gilpin Faust took office as the institution's 28<sup>th</sup> president and first female president in the University's 372 year history. Prior to accepting the presidency of Harvard, Faust spent six years as the founding dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. In addition to her administrative role, Faust is a historian of the Civil War and American South and serves as the Lincoln Professor of History in the University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences ([www.president.harvard.edu](http://www.president.harvard.edu)). Faust's appointment to the presidency was momentous for the University, for higher education, and for women who hold or aspire to leadership positions in college and university administration.

The appointment of Drew Gilpin Faust to the presidency of Harvard University is a highly significant and symbolic development in the history of higher education. Although women have already proven their competence to lead universities and colleges, Faust will have to endure especially unforgiving scrutiny. Given her reported administrative style, she will doubtless enact some version of what a recent report on the state of the presidency published by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) calls "integral leadership" – purposeful and



consultative, deliberative yet decisive, and capable of course corrections as new challenges emerge (Bornstein, 2007, p. 23).

As Bornstein recognized, women have already proven themselves capable of leading American colleges and universities. According to the latest study by the American Council of Education (ACE), 23% of colleges and universities in the U.S. are led by women (2007, p. 15), including half of the Ivy League institutions; however, when the oldest institution of higher learning in the country selected a female president, history took notice.

Harvard's historic appointment of a woman president ... reflects a sea change in the nature of higher education and leadership ... a new paradigm for leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education institutions. In the new competitive, fast-moving, global economy, institutions must be innovative, entrepreneurial, nimble, and flexible. These characteristics depend on collaborative and consultative leadership, qualities that women bring to the table ... [and that] the special leadership qualities of women are recognized and valued (Bornstein, p. 21).

What is the new paradigm for higher education leadership and what are the qualities women "bring to the table"? How are women's leadership qualities different than those men have to offer and why are they desired more now than ever before?

As the twenty-first century nears the end of its first decade, change remains a ubiquitous constant worldwide. Institutions of higher education are not immune to changes on national and international fronts; rather, they are held accountable by stakeholders to adapt to change while continuing their business of educating and

empowering students. For example, the infiltration of technology, the internet, globalization, and changing student demographics dramatically altered higher education. Given the complexity and impact of changes like these, some believe leadership skills considered more feminine than masculine are needed. “It is reasonable to think that stereotypically feminine qualities of cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration are important to leadership ... perhaps increasingly in contemporary organizations” (Eagly, 2007, p. 2).

Increasingly, women are demonstrating leadership that is more interactive, consultative, and relational. They build and encourage relationships of trust and reciprocity among faculty, students, and other constituents. They also exhibit emotional restraint, patience, and the ability to deal with frustration .... Women’s complex lives make them adaptable, creative, and responsive – just the skills needed in leadership today (Bornstein, 2007, p. 22).

“Numerous scholars, both male and female, seriously question whether the skills traditionally associated with leadership in higher education remain effective today or [if they] will be viable in the future” (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 110). The skills traditionally associated with leadership in higher education are the same skills traditionally associated with the male model of leadership prevalent in theory and application. “A problematic issue is that leadership traditionally has been studied using male norms as the standard for behaviors” (Chliwniak, 1997, p. 2). Tannen (1994) noted that “standards of behavior applied to women are based on roles that do not include being boss” (p. 40).

In a patriarchal society, leadership and power are the roles, responsibilities, and privileges assigned to men. Because men fill these roles, our cultural images, attitudes, and beliefs associate men with leadership. Skills and attributes valued in men become the qualities prized in leaders (Nidiffer, p. 102).

According to Chliwniak (1997), the predominance of male leadership and organizational structures in higher education result in a “chilly” climate for women and a gendered leadership gap.

Colleges and universities are dominated by male leadership, however, concerns regarding administrative procedures that exclude women and create chilly campus climates continue to plague academic institutions. Many believe that by closing the leadership gap, institutions would become more centered on process and persons (described as feminized concerns) rather than focused on tasks and outcomes (attributed to masculine styles of leadership; Chliwniak, p. 2).

Women – particularly, working women – have faced their share of challenges in the past seventy years. Although much progress has been made, inequities and obstacles still exist – including the traditional, male-oriented image of leadership rooted in traditionally masculine qualities. As a result, women who assume leadership positions are simultaneously evaluated with masculine standards and expectations associated with feminine styles of leading.

The gender stereotype of women as warm, nurturing, and caring and the corresponding stereotype of men as cold, competitive, and authoritarian may have contributed to a popular perception that women are less effective than men in

leadership positions, though in fact they are equally effective (Kawakami, White, & Langer, 2000, p. 50).

Feminine leadership qualities associated with collaboration, empowerment, and relationships are congruent with Carol Gilligan's research on the moral development of women. As a result of several studies, Gilligan identified women's unique orientations to care and justice, as well as the importance of relationships and attachments in women's lives (Cytrynbaum & Crites, 1989, p. 73). "The central focus of Gilligan's care orientation is attachment to others. She made it clear that relationships with others must carry equal weight with self-care when making moral decisions" (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 191). In her book, *In a Different Voice* (1982/1993), Gilligan proposed that "women's moral development proceeds through a sequence of three levels and two transition periods. Each level identified a more intricate relationship between self and others. Each transition represents the achievement of a more sophisticated understanding between selfishness and responsibility" (Evans et al., 1998, p. 191).

In her book, *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work* (1995), Deborah Tannen addressed "patterns of conversational style influenced by gender" (p. 12) and provided countless examples of how men and women communicate differently.

Based on the assumptions that we learn styles of interacting as children growing up, and that children tend to play in sex-separate groups in which very different styles are learned, practiced, and reinforced, the book proceeded from the metaphor of male-female conversation as cross-cultural communication (Tannen, p. 12).

Recognizing that factors besides gender can affect conversational style, Tannen acknowledged learned communication styles of boys and girls and how those styles continued into adulthood and specifically, the workplace.

Boys are expected to put themselves forward, emphasize the qualities that make them look good, and deemphasize those that would show them in a less favorable light. Too much of this is called arrogance [of men]. Girls are expected to be “humble” – not try to take the spotlight, emphasize the ways they are just like everyone else, and deemphasize ways they are special. A woman who does this really well comes off as lacking in confidence (Tannen, p. 42).

Aligned with the literature cited below, Tannen claimed “both women and men pay a price if they do not behave in ways expected of their gender” (p. 40).

The combination of sex-role socialization and organizational cultures and practices reinforces gendered leadership. “Women and men arrive in organizations with a differently constructed case of self as a result of their gendered upbringing, and find gendered identity patterns reinforced by organizational practices” (Vinnecombe & Singh, 2003, p. 298).

Women in leadership positions often modify their styles or behaviors to adapt to organizational cultures that endorse male domination. “The overwhelming power of the male-dominated culture of most organizations, and of leadership positions in particular, causes women in actual jobs to modify their sex-typical behavior (relationship-orientation) to more closely align with organizational norms” (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 114).

Bornstein (2007) explained how female college and university presidents modified their behaviors due to gender-related expectations.

When women first came into the presidency, they sometimes adopted the traditional male model of leadership based on a hierarchical, top-down, command and control paradigm. They and their constituents had gender-specific expectations for the presidency derived from the male-dominated institutions (Bornstein, pp. 21-22).

Because of gendered leadership, female leaders face a “conundrum” (Walker, 1999) with considerable consequences on both ends of the spectrum. “Female leaders are devalued if they act feminine, but also if they act masculine, leaving women unsure as to how they should behave” (Kawakami et al., 2000, p. 50).

Men ...”naturally” possess the critical leadership competencies because of their socialization. Women, on the other hand, do not. To acquire the requisite skills, women must violate cultural expectations of gender roles and choose to “act like a man” in order to secure a presidency. The result is a painful “double bind” – women are incompetent if too feminine or abnormal if too masculine (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 112).

Studies reinforce the “conundrum” (Walker, 1999) and “double bind” (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 112) women experience when they fail to demonstrate leadership qualities considered feminine and appropriate for female leadership. Eddy (2003) discovered “the double bind for the woman president to ‘do gender’ means they ultimately reinforce the very structures of the male norm that is limiting in the first place” (p. 19). A study of

women's leadership among community college women administrators (Tedrow & Rhoades, 1998) revealed that gender differences were challenging for most of the thirty participants.

When they were successful and employed competitive and independent leadership styles (styles most often associated with male ways of knowing), they were often rejected by female colleagues and staff for failing to embrace women's ways of knowing. At the same time, and no matter the level of their success, they were often unaccepted by the men simply because they are women (Tedrow & Rhoades, p. 21).

Consistent in the research is dissatisfaction with the leader when gender expectations are not fulfilled. Griffin's (1992) study of college students' perceptions of male and female managers revealed that "males were rated more positively when they were authoritative; females were rated more positively when they were participative ... [and] fewer students thought they would like or like to work for the woman rather than for the man" (p. 1).

More students said they would not want to work for the authoritative woman than any of the other managers. Results indicated leaders were viewed more positively when they used a leadership style that was typical of and consistent with their gender ... the study also indicated a lingering negative feeling about women managers (Griffin, p. 1).

Irby and Brown (1995) investigated male and female business, government, and education executives' perceptions of effective leadership skills. Both male and female

respondents identified distinct differences between male and female leaders and most indicated a preference to be supervised by males. Respondents of both genders also indicated “subtle negative views of feminine leadership traits” (Irby & Brown, p. 1).

Rosser (2001) explored faculty and administrative staff perceptions of their female and male academic deans’ leadership. The study revealed that faculty members and administrative staff perceived different patterns of leadership among male and female deans.

Female deans were perceived to be more likely than male deans to enhance the quality of education ... engage in research, community, and professional endeavors, promote and support institutional diversity within their units, and manage personnel and financial resources fairly and effectively (Rosser).

Jablonski’s study (1996) of seven female college presidents revealed discrepancies between the presidents’ perceptions of themselves and those held by their faculty. Seven female college presidents “believed they used participatory techniques, empowered others, and led their campuses by collaboration, participation, and open communication” (Jablonski, p. 2).

Faculty were ambiguous or negative about the link between gender and presidential leadership style ... [and] resisted equating stereotypical notions of “feminine” behavior with their presidents, instead describing them in traditional male terms: analytical, aggressive, tough, and strong-willed. These three presidents were found to be gender neutral or acting in a stereotypical male approach (Jablonski, p. 8).



Nidiffer's study of the espoused leadership styles of ten female college presidents revealed leadership philosophies with both traditional and emergent traits. A majority of the presidents "possessed an integrated mixture" (Nidiffer, 2001, p. 120). The study did not explore if espoused theories were operationalized by the presidents (Nidiffer, p. 120).

A balance or blending of gendered leadership traits is supported in the literature. Eddy's (2003) study of two college presidents, one male and one female, revealed that "while some of the language supported 'doing gender' for both presidents ... the actions and perceptions of [the presidents] by themselves and campus members were not strictly sex linked" (p. 19). In Eddy's study, "both presidents exhibited what historically would be essential characteristics of the opposite gender" (p. 19).

Thomas (1993) suggested a blending of masculine and feminine leadership traits among male and female community college presidents. His study revealed that although "presidential leadership styles did not fall into gender patterns ... women were more likely to have a participatory style. The most successful presidents blended male and female traits" (Thomas, p. 1). The study concluded that "although stereotyping of female leaders persists, it is the individual's personality and training that determines leadership style" (Thomas, p. 1).

Nidiffer (2001) suggested emergent leadership as most appropriate for higher education in the twenty-first century. "Emergent leadership theory is based on the belief that society is changing. Old-style leadership is anachronistic in today's complex, global, information-rich, interconnected culture in which higher education's leaders deal with multiple constituencies" (Nidiffer, p. 108). Nidiffer's review of leadership theories – trait

theories; social power theories; social influence theories, including transactional leadership and transformational leadership; behavioral theories; and contingency theories – led her to the conclusion that emergent leadership is appropriate and necessary for female college and university presidents (pp. 105-11). “Emergent leaders are collaborative, empowering, connective, communicative, authentic, and team-oriented ... [and] women’s socialization presupposes them to be connective leaders” (Nidiffer, p. 111).

### A Profile of the Female President

The 2007 edition of *The American College President* included a profile of women presidents in 2006, as well as comparisons with data about female presidents collected in a similar study conducted twenty years earlier. Published by the American Council on Education (ACE), the publication reported that the average age of female presidents who participated in the 2006 study was 59.3 (2007, p. 16). The study revealed that “the proportion of women presidents more than doubled, from 10 percent...to 23 percent” (ACE, p. 15) between 1986 and 2006; however, “the rate of change has slowed since the late 1990s” (ACE, p. 15).

The study also indicated the types of institutions female presidents were most likely to lead, as well as those with the largest surge in female presidencies.

Women are most likely to head associate’s colleges, followed by baccalaureate colleges and master’s colleges and universities .... Women continued to be least likely to be president of doctorate-granting institutions, although the proportion of

women presiding over such institutions increased from nearly 4 percent in 1986 to 13 percent in 1998, with little progress since then (ACE, 2007, p. 15).

Since the time of the last ACE study in 1986, public institutions experienced the largest increase in female presidents (ACE, p. 15).

In 2006, women held 34 percent of the presidencies at public baccalaureate colleges, compared to 8.6 percent in 1986; 30 percent of the presidencies at public special focus institutions, compared to 4.8 in 1986; and 29 percent of the presidencies at public associate's colleges, compared to 5.8 in 1986 (ACE, p. 15).

The participants in this study were presidents of baccalaureate institutions.

According to the ACE study (2007), 16% of women presidents were leading baccalaureate institutions in 1986 (p. 31). That proportion increased to 20% in 1998 and then decreased to 19% in 2001 (ACE, p. 31). As of 2006, 23% of women presidents were leading baccalaureate institutions (ACE, p. 31). Although approximately 80% of baccalaureate colleges are private, public baccalaureate colleges had a higher proportion of women presidents than private baccalaureate institutions, 34% and 21% respectively (ACE, p. 31).

Marital status was also addressed in the ACE (2007) profile of female college and university presidents. In 1986, 35% of women presidents were married (ACE, p. 17). By 2006, the percentage of married female presidents increased to 63% (ACE, p. 17). "The proportion of currently married women presidents has increased as the number of women presidents has increased, but it continues to lag behind the proportion of married male presidents" (ACE, p. 17). In 2006, 89% of male presidents were married (ACE, p. 17).

The proportion of women presidents who never married decreased from 19 percent in 1986 to 10 percent in 2006. However, more women are reporting that they were divorced, separated, or widowed – 19 percent in 2006 compared with 16 percent in 1986. In 2006, only 5 percent of male presidents were divorced, separated, or widowed (ACE, p. 17).

Results of the ACE study (2007) suggested an increase in the number of women who followed the traditional career path to the presidency. In 2006, “53 percent of women presidents were provosts/CAOs [chief academic officers] or other senior executives in academic affairs before becoming presidents, compared to 25 percent in 1986” (ACE, p. 16). In 2006, only 29% of female presidents had never been a faculty member (ACE, p. 16). Among the 71% who taught, the average number of years spent as full-time faculty members was 8 (ACE, p. 16). The study also revealed that “women presidents were more likely than their male counterparts to have earned a doctorate” (ACE, p. 16). In 2006, 81% of women presidents had earned a Ph.D. or Ed.D., while just 73% of male presidents had earned the terminal degree (ACE, p. 16).

Not surprisingly, family responsibilities impacted the career paths of a larger percentage of female presidents than male presidents.

Women presidents were more likely to have taken a break during their careers to raise children or care for their spouse. Fifteen percent of women presidents had either left the job market or worked part time due to family responsibilities, compared with only 5 percent of men presidents. Those women presidents who left the job market or worked part time to raise children spent an average of five

years out of the full-time job market, compared with three years for male presidents (ACE, 2007, p. 18).

Those scenarios existed despite the study's finding that "women presidents (68 percent) are less likely than their male counterparts (91 percent) to have children" (ACE, p. 18) and, as stated above, that female presidents were less likely than male presidents to marry.

### The Female President's Career Path

A considerable amount of dissertation research examined the career paths and experiences of female college and university presidents. The number of published studies on the topics was limited.

According to the literature, the traditional career path to the presidency includes college teaching and faculty status, serving as department head or division chair, and serving as chief academic officer. A number of studies revealed that female college presidents of four-year institutions were more likely to follow the traditional career path to the presidency (Brown-Klingelhofer, 2003; Gatteau, 2000; Kane, 1997; Mockelstrom, 2000; Rosynsky, 2003). Brown's 2000 study of female presidents of four-year selected independent colleges, however, revealed that less than 20% of the 91 participants followed the traditional career path.

Research on the most common career paths of female community college presidents – traditional or non-traditional – is also mixed. The female community college presidents in Smith's 2003 study chose career pathways "no different" from those chosen by men seeking executive positions in higher education, but Deitemeyer's findings

(2002) suggested career pathways to the female presidency of the community college were widening. Buddemeier's (1998) study on female presidents of community colleges revealed that while most did not follow the traditional career path, they held positions in academic affairs and had experience in the community college field.

One study revealed that "as more women become academic presidents, the [career] path is being redefined to include educational and career attainment more reflective of women's experiences" (Roubanis, 2000).

The literature reflects that most female presidents did not strategically plan to pursue the presidency early in their careers (Brown, 2005; Brown-Klingelhoef, 2003; Steinke, 2006). "The role emerged as a possibility later in their careers, while priorities – such as being with their families, remaining professionally challenged, and serving others – shaped their career directions" (Steinke, 2006). Similarly, four of the five participants in Vanhook-Morrissey's (2003) study "indicated that their ambition to become presidents developed gradually as they moved into increasingly complex work roles." The participants in Brown's (2000) study aspired to the presidency "only as they moved up the administrative career ladder or because it was the next step on the administrative ladder."

The value of mentor and mentee relationships among female presidents was prevalent in the literature. Mentorship was integral to administrative advancement and ascension to the presidency (Ballentine, 2000; Bowles, 1999; Brown, 2005; Brown-Klingelhoef, 2003; Buddemeier, 1998; Price, 2000; Rosynsky, 2003; Smith, 2004; Vanhook-Morrissey, 2003). Kampel (2006) found that role models and mentors

influenced participants' acquisition of leadership skills necessary for the presidency. Significant family members were identified as role models who contributed to participants' attainment of the presidency in Cipres' 1999 study.

Finding a balance between professional and personal responsibilities was reflected in the literature as a presidential challenge (Steinke, 2006). The participants in Rosynsky's (2003) study identified the process of finding balance between professional and personal responsibilities as a strategy that enabled the presidency.

The literature cited a variety of perceived barriers that hindered ascension to the female presidency. Barriers included marital and maternal responsibilities (Buddemeier, 1998), gender discrimination (Buddemeier, 1998; Smith, 2004), and gender stereotyping (Ballentine, 2000). Barriers such as lack of female colleagues, sexist remarks, and community/faculty negativity and skepticism were framed as "challenges" by the female presidents in Gatteau's (2000) study. "Exclusion from informal networks" and lack of preparation and career goals were additional barriers to the presidency (Jackson & Harris, 2007).

Variations on family relationships and family support were frequently noted in the literature as experiences that enabled the route to the female college presidency. Strong family backgrounds (Williams, 2007), family influence (Kampel, 2006), "parents' encouragement to pursue educational goals" (Smith, 2004), and family support (Ballentine, 2000; Cooper, 1992) were examples of this recurring theme among female presidents. A love of learning and a desire to achieve, both instilled by parents, were important to the presidential ascensions of the 4 participants in Price's study (2000).

Curry's (1996) study identified the father as most influential in the professional development of female community college presidents and chancellors. Parental support for a career as a college president (Bowen, 1988) was also present in the literature.

Results of studies of the lives of female college and university presidents showed the impact and value of the early years of life (Cooper, 1992; Price, 2000; Mockelstrom, 2000; Vanhook-Morrissey, 2003).

Susan R. Madsen's 2008 publication, *On Becoming a Woman Leader: Learning from the Experiences of University Presidents*, captured life experiences related to the leadership development of ten female university presidents. Madsen conducted her qualitative interviews in the spring and summer of 2005; I conducted my interviews during the summer and fall of the same year. Coincidentally, our studies share one participant in common. Similar to my study, a significant portion of Madsen's book focused on her participants' childhood, adolescent, and college years, as well as their career paths and adult experiences. Perhaps because Madsen and I interviewed female presidents from the same generation, there are many similarities in our findings. Those findings are noted in the latter portions of this study.

With the exception of Madsen's recent publication (2008), there is limited research intentionally focused on the childhood years of female college and university presidents as retrospectively perceived and described by them. This study contributes to the limited body of historical research focused on the early lives of those female leaders.



### Women's Career Development

Career development and choices related to vocation and occupation have been topics of interest and research for years. Theories attempting to explain particular aspects of career development are as numerous as they are varied, covering topics ranging from traits and factors to personality to decision-making (Brown, Brooks, & Associates, 1990).

Given the sometimes turbulent history of women and their accepted roles in American society, it is no surprise few models of women's career development exist. In the sixties, Ginzberg (1966) and Zytowski (1969) proposed theories of women's career development that were indicative of the era and the changing roles of women. Ginzberg proposed three lifestyle dimensions for women: (a) traditional (homemaker oriented), (b) transitional (more emphasis on home than on job), and (c) innovative (giving equal emphasis to job and home; Zunker, 2006, pp. 295-96). According to Ginzberg, some women forfeited the pursuit of a career to protect and maintain their feminine identity (Zunker, p. 296).

Zytowski (1969) proposed that "the modal life role for women in our society is that of homemaker" (Zunker, 2006, p. 296) – again, reflective of the decade's evolving mindset about women's roles. Zytowski identified "the vocational development patterns of women as 1) mild vocational; 2) moderate vocational; and, 3) unusual vocational ... [with] each category ... progressively more occupationally oriented" (Zunker, p. 296). Both Ginzberg and Zytowski acknowledged that women's lives were expanding to the world of work outside the home – a controversial shift in the fifties and sixties.

Diamond (1987) cited Brown's 1984 review of the literature on occupational choice. Brown's review revealed "not until 1975 did women's career development, in the currently accepted view as a lifelong process, begin to be studied extensively" (Diamond, p. 16). In the mid-seventies, the societal barriers affecting women's career development were no secret to Lenore Harmon (1977) and Helen Farmer (1976), both counseling psychologists and researchers. Together, they "began to delineate and study barriers to women's career development, and both differentiated internal or self-concept from external or environmental barriers to women" (Betz, 2001, p. 471). Harmon and Farmer's message to other counseling psychologists was the need to "change the sexist and stereotyped society, but ... also strengthen individual women" (Betz, p. 471).

Building on Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977), Nancy Betz and Gail Hackett conducted empirical studies that "clearly implicated self-efficacy, as well as interests, in the prediction of the careers of young men and women considered" (Betz, 2002, p. 474). Approximately a decade later, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994, 2000) established the social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Betz, p. 474). Like the research they previously conducted, the SCCT also "proposed self-efficacy and interests as joint predictors of career choices" (Betz, p. 474). According to Betz, "both research and interests require the existence of parallel measures of efficacy and interests; that is, measures addressing the same behavioral domain" (p. 474). As an example, "If you wish to study career choices in science, you need measures of both interests and confidence in science activities" (Betz, p. 474).

Sanguiliano (1978) and Spencer (1982) acknowledged the unique developmental patterns of women and how those patterns can affect career decision-making (Zunker, 2006, p. 297). Suggesting that the developmental patterns of men and women are different (Zunker, p. 297) and considering traditional roles for and expectations of women, they suggested the following:

1. Women experience intense role confusion early in their development;
2. Women are more inhibited in their self-expression;
3. Women tend to delay their career aspirations in lieu of family responsibilities; and,
4. Women's developmental patterns are more individualized (Zunker, pp. 297-98).

Helen Astin's model of career development (1984) took into consideration "socialization experiences ... structural opportunities ... and the way in which social forces shape and reshape occupational decisions" (Diamond, 1987, p. 20) for both women and men. Astin's sociopsychological model (Diamond, p. 20) is aligned with what Denzin described as the "central locus of stories" – the "cultural, ideological, and historical contexts" – a foundation of the interpretive biographical method used in this study (Denzin, 1989, p. 73).

No one particular theory of women's career development is considered premier. Researchers have recognized, however, that women's career development is different enough from men's to warrant a theory or theories developed specifically for women.

The general developmental patterns of women suggest that a woman's life cycle does not follow life-stage models developed from the study of men. Compared with men, self-identity is slower to develop, primarily as a result of gender-role stereotyping. Our society accords a secondary priority to career choice as well as to career development for women. Women's difficulty with career decision making is closely associated with role confusion and the lack of role models and support systems (Zunker, 2006, p. 298).

#### Historical Context

In order to fully understand the lives, experiences, and stories of the five participants, it is necessary to consider the historical context of their childhood, adolescent, and adult years. As suggested by Denzin (1989), it is impossible to separate an individual life from the context in which it was lived and to dismiss the potential impact of the historical backdrop.

No self or personal-experience story is ever an individual production. It derives from larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts ... To understand a life, the epiphanies and the personal-experience and self stories that represent and shape that life, one must penetrate and understand these larger structures. They provide the languages, emotions, ideologies, taken-for-granted understandings, and shared experiences from which the stories flow (Denzin, p. 73).

Three of the five participants were born in the 1950s; two were born in the 1940s. For the decades between 1940 and 2000, historical summaries with emphases on women, children, and the family are provided.

### *The 1940s*

World War II was the predominant event of the forties. In combination with other national and international events, the war made a significant impact on the mood of America during the decade. Historian William Graebner (1991) identified the sense of doubt present in the United States.

This doubt was rooted in the forebodings of an age that had witnessed a war that left sixty million persons dead; the murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust; the development and use of the atomic bomb; the Great Depression, which seemed always on the verge of reappearing; and the cold war, which ironically, matched the nation against the Soviet Union, its wartime ally. Against the backdrop of these events, Americans questioned the central assumptions of their culture: the essential goodness of man; the immutability of progress; the worthiness of democracy; the feasibility of freedom; the beneficence of science (Graebner, p. 18).

Doubt was not the only mood experienced by Americans in the 1940s. Several variations of contingency also affected the pulse of the country (Graebner, 1991). The contingency of capitalism translated into concerns about “the state of the economy, inflation, and the stability of the banks or the job market” (Graebner, p. 19). The

contingency of existence and a moral or ethical contingency also infiltrated American life (Graebner).

The contingency of existence ... flowed from being drafted and shot at, from witnessing the murder of the Jews, and from subjecting others ... [to] the possibility of sudden, undeserved death. The other, a moral and ethical contingency, was characterized by the growing sense that it was now more difficult than ever before to ground one's conduct in a stable set of values ... the seminal events of the forties seemed to confirm that humanity had, indeed, been set adrift from its ethical moorings. Like life itself, values seemed to come and go, without pattern or reason (Graebner, pp. 19-20).

As a result of soldiers leaving for World War II, employment opportunities outside the home were plentiful for women. Women emigrated to the work place and contributed to war efforts by filling the jobs left by servicemen. "During the war, about six million American women left their traditional roles as homemakers to tackle industrial tasks previously done by men" (Graebner, 1991, p. 106). Symbolic *Rosie the Riveter* was a constant reminder of the working woman and the independence associated with women's new roles. "By creating new roles and opportunities for women, the Second World War had encouraged women to reinvent their lives—that is, to reconsider and remake their identities" (Graebner, p. 108).

Women with children received mixed messages from the federal government about their wartime duties at home and as part of the labor force.

Of particular concern was the influx of women into the labor force and its deleterious effect on children .... On the one hand, women were repeatedly told by the federal government that victory could not be achieved without their entry into the labor force. On the other, the federal government declared: "Now, as in peacetime, a mother's primary duty is to her home and children." Despite official pronouncements discouraging women from working, economic necessity led nearly 1.5 million mothers of children under ten to enter the labor force during the war (Mintz, 2004, p. 260).

As soldiers returned from World War II, many women were forced to relinquish their jobs and return to their traditional roles – a shift that was endorsed and encouraged by several powerful entities.

In the immediate post-World War II years, women's societal roles, sense of autonomy, and economic opportunities were all reduced or diminished. Most obviously, in the postwar years, labor unions, employers, and the federal government all pressured women to put their well-paid war work behind them and clear the way for returning veterans. About 3.25 million women were let go or quit their wartime jobs between September 1945 and November 1946 (Farber, 1994, p. 241).

Even women experiencing the work force for the first time were adversely affected.

Other women, mostly the young and unmarried, entered the work force, but once the war was over they were hired for poorly paid "women's jobs." In the words of historian Cynthia Harrison, "Rosie the Riveter became a file clerk." Women were

told by countless voices in the mass media and from almost every pulpit and lectern to embrace their “natural” roles as family nurturers and housewives (Farber, p. 242).

For women who worked during the war and experienced the independence, freedom, and opportunities of the work place, the transition back to the home was not an easy one.

Although World War II offered to more women varied types of advanced training and professional opportunities, peacetime brought setbacks and changes ... women were still pioneering in men’s territory .... All the advances enacted in World War II were real; but predictably at war’s end both women’s opportunities and interests diminished .... Due to a general acceptance of male priority, the memory of the versatile employed woman soon faded as it had after World War I (Solomon, 1985, pp. 187-89).

The shift caused identity issues among women. Indeed, women were perceived by some as confused, anxious, and displaced.

[She was] a victim of role confusion, a “psychologically disordered” “bundle of anxieties” lacking the one guarantee of her happiness: secure status “as a woman, a female being” ... victimized by the “deep illness” of feminism, women had repudiated the home, children, and proper confines of gender and had become “truly displaced persons” (Graebner, 1991, p. 107).

Men also struggled with their identity upon return from the war. “While few of these women became overt feminists as a result of their new work experience, there is no



doubt that many men were disturbed by the challenge so their hegemony within the family” (Graebner, 1991, p. 106). Both men and women struggled with sex-role identity issues, prompting attention to role theory among social scientists and writers (Graebner, p. 106).

In spite of male and female identity issues, marriage and birth rates rose considerably during the second half of the forties. Americans soon realized the shortage of homes to accommodate the growing number of new families (Jackson, 1985). “In individual terms, this rise in family formation coupled with the decline in housing starts meant that there were virtually no homes for sale or apartments for rent at war’s end” (Jackson, 1985, p. 232).

The work of Abraham Levitt and his sons, William and Alfred, offered families a solution to the housing shortage – a solution that also jumpstarted suburbanization in the United States. The Levitts were responsible for one of the biggest private housing projects in American history, appropriately named Levittown. Beginning with 4,000 acres of potato farms on Long Island, New York, they “ultimately built more than 140,000 houses and turned a cottage industry into a major manufacturing process” (Jackson, 1985, p. 234). Designed to provide shelter at a reasonable price, the new Cape Cod style house was home to many families. “This early Levitt home was as basic to post World War II suburban development as the Model T had been to the automobile” (Jackson, p. 336). The one-level ranch house was another popular design of the decade.

The lifestyle offered in suburban America was precisely what some families needed.

The single-family tract house—post World War II style—whatever its aesthetic failings, offered growing families a private haven in a heartless world ... the creation of good, inexpensive suburban housing on an unprecedented scale was a unique achievement in the world (Jackson, 1985, pp. 244-45).

In the years after 1945, Americans moved to the suburbs by the millions, enrolled in thousands of newly created pension plans, and gave their support to massive federal expenditures for armaments. These activities ... were evidence of a deep desire for security – security from urban chaos, from the anxieties of old age, and from unemployment lines that had been part of life in the 1930s (Graebner, 1991, p. 19).

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, often referred to as the GI Bill of Rights, provided governmental support for WWII veterans to pursue higher education at American colleges and universities. The GI Bill changed the landscape of higher education by increasing accessibility to college for individuals who may not have otherwise been able to attend (Solomon, 1985, p. 190).

Nearly half of the veterans who returned to school were married, resulting in “new patterns of collegiate domesticity” (Solomon, 1985, p. 190). In the company of married couples and available servicemen, many single college women found marriage much more appealing than a degree. Typically, those women who married eventually left college (Solomon, p. 190). It was not uncommon for wives to work outside the home to support the family while their husbands attended college. This was “so common an arrangement ... that there was even a phrase for it: PHTS, Putting Hubbies Through

School” (Halberstam, 1993, p. 582). “If more young females seemed indifferent to higher aspirations then, their mood matched society’s eroding expectations of them quite well” (Solomon, 1985, p. 190).

In 1946, Dr. Benjamin Spock’s *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* was published ([www.drspock.com](http://www.drspock.com)). Dr. Spock’s ideas were grounded in personal experience as the eldest of six siblings, his medical education and pediatrics practice, years of studying psychoanalysis and the psychological and emotional aspects of childhood, and conversations with parents ([www.drspock.com](http://www.drspock.com)). Concluding that “the prevailing wisdom of the day was flawed,” Dr. Spock offered revolutionary advice that altered methods of parenting and childcare ([www.drspock.com](http://www.drspock.com)).

In post-war America, parents were in awe of doctors and other childcare professionals; Spock assured them that parents were the true experts on their own children .... Instead of adhering to strict, one-size-fits-all dictates on everything from discipline to toilet training, Spock urged parents to be flexible and see their children as individuals ... he suggested that parenting could be fun, that mothers and fathers could actually enjoy their children and steer a course in which their own needs and wishes were also met ([www.drspock.com](http://www.drspock.com)).

Readers were drawn to Dr. Spock’s approach – “a friendly, reassuring, and common-sense manner” that was much more appealing than “the cold authoritarianism favored by most other parenting books of the time” ([www.drspock.com](http://www.drspock.com)).

The term *teenager* originated in the 1940s. “Unlike the term *adolescence*, the word *teenager* implied a distinct culture rather than a state of hormonal transition ... a

product of specific demographic, economic, and institutional developments” (Mintz, 2004, p. 285). With most men at war, teenagers, like women and minorities, easily found employment in the work place. “In increasing numbers, teenage boys and girls joined the labor force and insisted on adult rights. Four times as many fourteen- and fifteen-year olds were working in 1945 as in 1941 (Mintz, pp. 258-259).

Coping with the impact of the war while it was fought and dealing with its aftermath had profound effects on the family unit and individual family members. Unfortunately, children and teenagers were not immune to the adversity imposed by WWII and “for many young people, WWII was the formative experience of their lives” (Mintz, 2004, 255).

Children shared adults’ anxiety about fathers and brothers overseas and experienced pain and grief when the family learned they would not be coming home. Prolonged separation from husbands, fathers, and brothers produced profound shifts in family roles. The widespread employment of teenagers during the war to fill in for our men on the fighting front drastically altered their perception of themselves and their place in the family (Mintz, p. 255).

As a result of the heavy toll taken on American lives during World War II, family became a central focus in homes across the country. “Wartime separations and losses led many Americans to place a heavy emphasis on family life in the post-war years .... At least 183,000 children lost fathers, and many more lost siblings, relatives, or neighbors” (Mintz, 2004, p. 274).

*The 1950s*

Although the fifties are often described as conservative years, the decade witnessed post-war growth and recovery and the rise of issues, movements, and institutes that continue to comprise the fabric of American life. Even though consumerism was alive and well in the fifties, a sense of uneasiness existed nationwide because of the Korean War, the USSR and its role in the Cold War, and Senator Joseph McCarthy's suspicions of a Communist presence in the American government (Zinn, 2003).

In the mid-fifties, America witnessed powerful incidents that dramatically changed the lives of African Americans in this country. In 1954, *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* challenged the concept of "separate, but equal" conditions for blacks and whites in public education. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that "segregated schools were inherently unequal," stressing that "the badge of inferiority stamped on minority children by segregation hindered their full development no matter how equal the facilities" (Mintz, 2004, p. 304). In 1955, Rosa Parks, a black seamstress in her early forties, refused to give up her seat on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama (Halberstam, 1993, p. 541). Martin Luther King, Jr. advocated for equal rights for blacks through unity and nonviolence beginning in the mid-fifties (Halberstam, p. 550). The civil rights movement was underway.

Although invented in 1948, television permeated American culture in the 1950s. Transcontinental television began in 1951 and just 3 years later, color televisions started to replace black and white ones. As more televisions were purchased and integrated into American life, TV replaced the radio as the dominant form of mass media and

entertainment. Television programs such as sitcoms, soap operas, variety shows, and news with eyewitness accounts were all introduced in the fifties.

([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)) Children enjoyed *Romper Room* and *Captain Kangaroo*, while families gathered around popular shows such as *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, and *Father Knows Best* (Mintz, 2004, p. 298). Popular afterschool television programs included *Howdy Doody* and *The Micky Mouse Club* (Mintz, p. 275).

Travel was impacted by developments that occurred in the fifties. The first domestic jet-airline passenger service between New York City and Miami was established in 1958 by National Airlines. Space travel became reality in 1958 when the first U.S. satellite, Explorer I, successfully orbited the earth

([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)).

During the fifties, societal expectations of girls and women endorsed the roles of housewife and homemaker.

Not only were women now reared in homes where their mothers had no careers, but male siblings were from the start put on a very different track: The boys in the family were to learn the skills critical to supporting a family, while daughters were to be educated to get married (Halberstam, 1993, p. 589).

Even suburbanization and consumerism, two forces generally considered positive movements, adversely affected women and their place in society.

Migration to the suburbs physically separated women from the workplace. The new culture of consumerism told women they should be homemakers and saw

them merely as potential buyers for all the new washers and dryers, freezers, floor waxers, pressure cookers, and blenders (Halberstam, p. 589).

Although some women did work outside the home, balancing a job with the responsibilities of being a wife and mother was frowned upon. Clearly, such a lifestyle was not aligned with the postwar definition of femininity.

A postwar definition of femininity evolved. To be feminine, the American woman first and foremost did not work. If she did, that made her competitive with men, which made her hard and aggressive and almost surely doomed to loneliness. Instead, she kept her house spotless and efficient, got dinner ready on time, and remained attractive and optimistic; each hair was in place. According to studies, she was prettier than her mother, she was slimmer, and she even smelled better than her mother (Halberstam, 1993, p. 590).

Congruent with the status women in the 1950s, a career was not the first choice of most women who earned a college degree during that decade.

During this decade, most female college graduates chose marriage over a career. The college graduate, even if she had no strong 'career ambitions,' assumed that she would get a job until marriage. But in the 1950s, if college women had to make a choice between marriage and career, the large majority chose marriage unquestionably (Solomon, 1985, p. 195).

Hand-in-hand with women's desires to marry was their desire to have children. As a result, the baby boom that started in the 1940s continued into the fifties.

In 1957 the average woman in the United States married at age twenty; the typical college woman, if she graduated, married somewhat later, at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. Like the women who had grown up in the Depression and lived through the war years, younger women were ready to have families – the larger the better (Solomon, 1985, p. 195).

“Between 1946 and 1964 American women bore more than seventy-five million infants, compared with barely fifty million in the preceding nineteen years. At its peak, the birthrate averaged 3.6 babies per woman, nearly double the rate in the 1930s” (Mintz, 2004, p. 276).

Having a family did not, however, prevent some college-educated women from working outside the home. At the same time women focused on traditional roles and domesticity, they also maintained a presence in the labor force.

Childbearing and childrearing, however, did not preclude the now well-established pattern of college women working before and after marriage. Indeed, what is striking ... was that ever-increasing numbers of educated women chose to work after marriage. The 1960 census showed, as Alice Rossi noted, that “women accounted for 65 percent of the increase in the labor force between 1950 and 1960.” College women formed an integral part of this trend (Solomon, 1985, p. 195).

Unfortunately, the types of job opportunities for women were limited. “Most were employed in those fields regarded as traditional for females: teaching, nursing, social work, and low-level management” (Solomon, 1985, p. 196). “Women were generally



paid less and given lesser titles than men; and “gender, not talent, was the most important qualification” for employment (Halberstam, 1993, p. 589). “It was the crisis of a generation of women who had left college with high idealism and who had come to feel increasingly frustrated and who had less and less a sense of self-esteem” (Halberstam, p. 598).

Upon completion of a college degree, some women continued their education in graduate school or professional programs. The women who forged this unorthodox path in the years after World War II blazed their own trails against all odds (Solomon, 1985).

These were very bright students, determined, persistent in study and work habits, undeterred by setbacks, and impervious to conventional expectations. Again a combination of factors explained the aspirations of some women competing for the highly valued places. Personal traits as well as familial and environmental influences shaped their ambitions. Often family support strengthened these nonconformists. A father or mother, or both, proved the most critical influence, although a grandparent or sibling might be important as well (Solomon, p. 196).

Parents of these aspiring women demonstrated their forward thinking and open-mindedness through the support and encouragement they provided.

Some fathers believed that all their children should be professionally educated, and others, who had no sons, could see their daughters in professional roles... mothers who held jobs, whether or not they were professionals, set impressive examples if they handled their responsibilities comfortably ... some mothers

(though not all) who did not choose expanded roles for themselves approved of achieving daughters (Solomon, p. 196).

Similarly, some parents without access to their own educational and professional opportunities welcomed such possibilities for their daughters. “The intelligent, hardworking parent whose lack of education limited her choices might well take pride in a daughter’s professional interests in training at college and beyond” (Solomon, p. 197).

Parents who instilled in their daughters “a sense of purpose and backing that made a difference in nurturing ambition” (Solomon, 1985, p. 197) equipped them with valuable confidence and self-determination.

She [the daughter] learned early in life to take herself seriously. For ambitious women in all walks of life, education from primary school to high school to college and post-college became a continuous process. Such women appeared less worried about marrying and thus, unlike most of their peers, foreshadowed later trends (Solomon, p. 198).

The 1950s was a decade focused on the child and the family (Mintz, 2004). “Parents who had had to mature quickly during the Depression and war didn’t want their children to be similarly deprived of childhood pleasures” (Mintz, p. 277). The family personified togetherness and parents fulfilled clearly defined roles.

A family was as one, its ambitions were intertwined. The husband was designated leader and hero, out there every day braving the treacherous corporate world to win a better life for his family; the wife was his mainstay on the domestic side,

duly appreciative of the immense sacrifices being made for her and her children ... a family was a single perfect universe (Halberstam, 1993, p. 591).

Family time was common. Parents and children kept busy as a cohesive group, whether they were working or playing. Family vacations at places such as the new Disneyland and national parks were popular because of their family-friendly focus. The Federal Highway Act, signed in 1956, marked the beginning of the creation of highways and interstates that simplified travel throughout the United States. Drive-in movies were popular for families and teenagers ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)).

During the fifties, “in an increasingly commercialized, child-centered environment, parents and grandparents spent more money on children than ever before” (Mintz, 2004, p. 277). Some toys such as dolls and toy soldiers reflected traditional gender roles; however, some fads of the era were not gender-specific. Popular among youth were faddish toys such as the hula-hoop, *Mr. Potato Head*, the *Slinky*, and *Silly Putty* ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)).

Two new games, *Candyland* and *Yahtzee*, were introduced. The overwhelming popularity of *Davy Crocket* among young boys led to the sale of millions of coonskin hats (Mintz, 2004, pp. 277-78). The country’s obsession with space travel spilled into youth and prompted children’s space interests in characters such as *Tom Corbett*, *Space Cadet* (Cross, 1997, p. 163). The *Barbie* doll was introduced by Mattel in 1959 ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)). *Dr. Seuss* books made their debut in the late fifties and teens were exposed to *MAD Magazine* (Mintz, p. 296).

The years following WWII were considered “the golden age of scouting” for both boys and girls (Mintz, 2004, p. 282). “Attendance at summer camps also rocketed upward, as a way both to promote social skills and to defuse the intensity of the highly privatized, inward-turning middle-class family” (Mintz, p. 282). Sunday school participation also rose as “a postwar religious revival brought a sharp increase in membership in mainstream religious denominations” (Mintz, p. 282).

In spite of the traditional maternal role, the new and multiple roles played by adult women in the forties and fifties did not go unnoticed by middle-class girls. “Many of the role models that middle-class girls embraced during the decade were assertive and self-confident, and one can see the roots of mid-1960s feminism planted in the increasingly autonomous and self-assured girl culture of the 1950s” (Mintz, 2004, p. 283). Mothers of these young girls were not automatically considered their daughters’ role models, especially if they were perceived as subordinate or dependent wives.

The postwar girl culture ... instilled a conviction in many girls that they were fully equal to, if not superior to, boys. Increasingly critical of male-chauvinist attitudes and conduct, many girls dreaded becoming like their own mothers, whose lives they associated with subordination to their husbands, drudgery, and isolation. As one wrote, “the emptiness of her life appalls me; helplessness and dependence on my father frightens me” (Mintz, pp. 284-85).

As additional roles for adult women continued to evolve, young girls also struggled with what was socially acceptable for them. “Many girls considered intellectualism and popularity mutually exclusive. As one girl recalled years later, ‘When

I was in eighth grade I lived in trepidation lest I be cited as a class bookworm”” (Mintz, 2004, p. 284). With time, American media and entertainment contributed to the changing views of young girls and their futures of expanding possibilities.

By the late 1950s magazines, movies, music, and television produced a female culture that cultivated a highly self-conscious sense of girls’ importance. Girls learned that they were members of a new, privileged generation whose destiny was more open and exciting than their mothers’ (Mintz, p. 287).

### *The 1960s*

The decade of the sixties was a time of change, unrest, and challenge to authority. During that time, “widely held presuppositions about authority, family life, gender, race relations, sexuality, and proper behavior were contested” (Mintz, 2004, p. 312). The majority of individuals instigating and/or participating in the decade’s various forms of social activism were baby boomers.

The baby boomers, the offspring of all those twenty-year-olds who married and multiplied in the immediate post-war years, eventually included some 76 million Americans. In 1964, the largest age group in the country was comprised of seventeen-year-old youth; in 1965, 41 percent of all Americans were under the age of twenty (Farber, 1994, p. 57).

Unlike any other generation before them, the baby boomers were greatly influenced by education, television, and advertising as children and adolescents.

And they did not at the age of twelve or fourteen, as had been typical for generations, leave youth behind them and begin working full-time in the adult

world. By the early 1960s, young people ... had years together to develop their own world (Farber, 1994, p. 57).

Conditions surrounding the Vietnam War and the Nixon administration contributed to the country's adversarial view of its government during the sixties.

Much of this national mood of hostility to government and business came out of the Vietnam War, its 55,000 casualties, its moral shame, its exposure to government lies and atrocities. On top of this came the political disgrace of the Nixon administration in the scandals that came to be known by the one-word label "Watergate," and which led to the historic resignation from the presidency – the first in American history – of Richard Nixon in 1974 (Zinn, 2003, p. 542).

College and university students of the sixties transformed their campuses into oases for unrest, protest, and activism. Students' trust in and respect for authority declined considerably as the United States participated in the Vietnam War and attempted to insure equal rights for particular populations. "Colleges were transformed by ... aspects of social awakening that escalated in the 1960s" (Farber, 1994, p. 201). Anti-war protests were common on college and university campuses and college women were leaders in the establishment of the women's movement. "Women college students and movement activists led the way in forming a mass women's movement ... they had the courage and the faith to build a mass movement because they had come of age when 'rights talk' was common" (Farber, pp. 249-50).

Movements that started in the fifties gained strength and momentum in the sixties. The seeds were planted for social unrest. Equal rights were sought by Blacks, women,

and other minority groups. Segregation in public schools was ruled unconstitutional in the fifties, but the process of integration was not an easy or smooth one. Prayer in public schools was ruled unconstitutional. American youth explored religions outside the mainstream and were particularly intrigued by eastern beliefs such as meditation and Zen Buddhism ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)).

Young people were at the cutting edge of social and cultural change, whether this involved racially integrating schools, protesting against the Vietnam War, or participating in the burgeoning youth culture. Their protests and actions transformed not only their sense of self, but the very character of American culture (Mintz, 2004, p. 311).

Crime rates in the 1960s increased nine times the rate of the 1950s ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)). During the sixties, marijuana use skyrocketed and LSD rose in popularity ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)). The “hippie movement” was characterized by baby boomers who “endorsed drugs, rock music, mystic religions, and sexual freedom ... [and] opposed violence” ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)). At the infamous Woodstock Festival, 400,000 young people gathered in the spirit of love, sharing, music, and drug use ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)).

The number of women who worked outside the home continued to increase during the 1960s.

Despite the decline of women working outside their homes immediately after World War II, the long-term trend of increasing labor market participation by women continued. Between 1940 and 1960 the proportion of married women who

had jobs doubled, from 15 percent to 30 percent. By 1960 about 38 percent of women were wage earners. Even about 25 percent of suburban housewives held full- or part-time jobs. Throughout the 1960s (and after) more and more women, especially married women with small children, worked outside the home (Farber, 1994, pp. 243-44).

Betty Friedan, a 1942 graduate of Smith College and wife of WWII veteran, Carl Friedan, spent five years researching and writing *The Feminine Mystique* (Halberstam, 1993). Published in 1963, the book was a bestseller and one of several catalysts for the feminist movement that was brewing in America at the time.

As a suburban wife and mother of two children, Friedan experienced first-hand the isolation and dissatisfaction felt by other women who were part of the “post-war migration to the suburbs” (Halberstam, 1993, p. 593). Dismayed at the absence of intellectual and social stimulation in her life, Friedan confirmed similar feelings of emptiness and despair among women she encountered while working as a writer. Women’s magazines refused to print Friedan’s stories of women’s experiences because they did not portray the happy and content housewife – a portrayal that could hinder sales of new household products to females (Halberstam, 1993). With the help of a fellow author and his publisher, Friedan shifted from the magazine to the book as a medium for sharing news of the feminine mystique and the “fallacy of universal contentment among young suburban wives” (Halberstam, p. 592).



“Friedan had broken ground, in the mid-twentieth-century United States, by arguing in a popular work that women’s unhappiness was not caused by individual shortcomings or neuroses but by social forces” (Farber, 1994, p. 247).

Friedan described the lives of well-educated women who had at age twenty or twenty-five voluntarily, happily, and singularly devoted themselves to home and family but who found themselves a decade or so later feeling depressed and unfulfilled. Friedan had called this middle-class housewife’s predicament “the problem with no name,” and she had concluded: “We can no longer ignore that voice in women that says: ‘I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.’” (Farber, p. 247)

Millions of dissatisfied women like the ones Friedan described in her book existed in America and sought understanding of their inner turmoil.

Many unhappy women looked for therapeutic answers .... Millions of women in the 1950s and 1960s flocked to therapists and family doctors in search of psychological help that would end their unhappiness and bring them personal satisfaction .... Many housewives were told by their doctors and therapists that their unhappiness was caused by their inability to embrace their natural feminine role of passivity, domesticity, and placidity (Farber, 1994, p. 249).

Freudian therapists attributed women’s unhappiness to “penis envy” and female yearnings for masculinity (Farber, 1994). Some psychiatrists referred to women’s discontent as “the housewife’s syndrome” or “the housewife’s blight” (Halberstam, 1993,

p. 598). Millions of women were prescribed tranquilizers, while others looked to the women's movement for involvement and action (Farber, 1994).

"Consciousness-raising groups" with women-only membership were integral to the advancement of the women's movement. Group sessions provided a safe forum for women's personal, candid conversations and ultimately, led women to question social structures rather than themselves (Farber, 1994).

Women talked to each other openly about intimate details of their lives, often for the first time. But instead of treating these things as psychological issues to be individually resolved, they considered the broader social implications of their personal feelings: why do I, and so many women, someone might ask, feel under constant sexual pressure from men; or why do I, and so many women, get so nervous about talking to large groups of people; or why am I, and so many women, unable to confront a man when wronged by him? Politically radical and astute women were ... asking not why am *I* unhappy, but what do my personal feelings and experiences say about how society is organized to make women politically, culturally, and economically subordinate to men? (Farber, p. 255).

The women's movement in its many forms, including consciousness-raising groups, exposed numerous forces that contributed to the suppression and traditional role-casting of women. "The incarnation of the women's movement, beginning in the 1960s but increasing dramatically in the 1970s, revealed that a complex system of legal, social, and cultural forces worked to restrict women's opportunities and to rigidly cast gender roles" (Farber, 1994, p. 241).

After this “Aha!” moment, participants in the women’s movement aggressively questioned the longstanding, traditional gender roles that prevailed in American culture.

The women’s movement challenged basic premises of mid-twentieth-century conventional wisdom: that men should control political and economic life and that women should participate in these public spheres, if at all, as men’s subordinates; that men had the right to head their households and that women should serve them as helpmates responsible for housekeeping and day-to-day child rearing; and finally, that women were best measured by their beauty, charm, and sexual restraint and men by their accomplishments, power, and sexual prowess (Farber, 1994, pp. 240-41).

The term *feminism* originated in France in the 1880s as *feminisme* (Freedman, 2002, p. 3). “The term combined the French word for woman, *femme*, and *-isme*, which referred to a social movement or political ideology” (Freedman, p. 3). In her book *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (2002), author Estelle B. Freedman defined feminism as the following:

A belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. Because most societies privilege men as a group, social movements are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies (Freedman, p. 7).

Although the sixties and seventies witnessed the rise of feminism, its origin dates back to the mid-1800s.

The first wave of modern feminism is usually declared to have begun in 1848, with 100 women and men at the Seneca Falls Convention. There, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott threw down the gauntlet for women's suffrage; afterward, feminist Susan B. Anthony joined Stanton to lead the movement. Neither woman ever voted and both were long dead when women won the right to vote in the United States in 1920 (Harlan, 1998, pp. 1-2).

“After U.S. women won the vote in 1920, the feminists’ single-minded campaign to pass an equal-rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution further cemented the association of feminism, extremism, and a rejection of the concept of female difference” (Freedman, 2002, p. 4).

For forty years “much was quiet on the feminist front” (Harlan, 1998, p. 2) “It wasn’t until the merging of a few new forces and ideas in the 1950s and early 1960s that the impetus for a second wave of feminism and a renewed feminist activism arrived” (Harlan, p. 2).

Things happened fast during this surge of the second wave of feminism. The President’s Commission on the Status of Women was established, the Equal Pay Act was passed, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Title VII amendment banning sex discrimination in the workplace was voted into law. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was established to enforce the law, and feminists mobilized forces even more strongly when it was discovered that the EEOC was not doing its job ... laws excluding women from jury duty were overturned (Harlan, pp. 4-5).

“In an era of low inflation, plentiful energy, federal subsidies, and expansive optimism, Americans showed the way to a more abundant and more perfect lifestyle” (Jackson, 1985, p. 243). “Almost every contractor-built, post-World War II home had central heating, indoor plumbing, telephones, automatic stoves, refrigerators, and washing machines” (Jackson, p. 243).

Although the development of new homes, neighborhoods, and communities across the country enhanced the American lifestyle, it also isolated young families from relatives and loved ones outside the nuclear family.

By making it possible for young couples to have separate households of their own, abundance further weakened the extended family in America and ordained that most children would grow up in intimate contact only with their parents and siblings (Jackson, 1985, p. 243).

During the sixties, Americans listened to music primarily through the radio and welcomed the shift from AM to FM. Popular musical artists of the decade included *The Beatles*, male and female groups that performed black rhythm and blues, and performers who played acid rock and integrated the sounds of modular synthesizers and other electronic devices.

The television grew in popularity and accessibility despite some critics' views.

In 1945 only 5,000 American households had televisions; in 1960 seven of every eight families had a TV set. Critics likened TV to a narcotic that induced lethargy in children and to a Pied Piper that led young people away from their parents (Mintz, 2004, p. 298).

Children with access to television could enjoy two prime time cartoons. *The Flintstones* made their debut in 1960 and *Rocky and Friends* began airing the year before. These cartoons were the first few of a trend that later included *Alvin and the Chipmunks*, *The Jetsons*, and *Mr. Magoo*. Popular television programs included *American Bandstand*, *Beverly Hillbillies*, *Bewitched*, *Star Trek*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Addams Family*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Laugh In* (<http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/>).

### *The 1970s*

The decade of the seventies witnessed considerable improvements in the lives of women. In spite of differing schools of thought among feminists, the women's movement gained strength and momentum that ultimately led to historical changes for the female gender.

Early in the decade, differing philosophies of women's liberation surfaced between liberal and radical feminists. Liberal feminists affiliated with the National Organization for Women (NOW) sought "equal partnership with men" (Schulman, 2001, p. 164). Radical feminists, typically younger than the liberals, viewed sexism as the source of "the patriarchal sex caste system" and the oppression and exploitation of women (Schulman, pp. 164-65). This "radical arm of feminism ... sought complete equality and the end of any hierarchy in their organizations" (Harlan, 1998, p. 5). Despite their ideological differences, however, both groups agreed that change was necessary to improve the status of American women (Schulman, p. 165).

During the seventies, the presence and participation of women in government and politics increased dramatically. In 1971, the National Women's Political Caucus

(NWPC) was founded *for* women, *by* women. The NWPC “sought to elect more women to public office, strengthen the influence of women in party affairs, and raise money for female candidates” (Schulman, 2001, p. 166). Indeed, more women than ever before were subsequently elected to leadership positions at the city, state, and federal levels. The first female governor was elected in Connecticut, a woman was elected as lieutenant governor of the State of New York, both Chicago and Houston elected female mayors, the number of female state legislators doubled, and a female leader launched a campaign for president of the United States (Schulman, p. 166). In combination with the women’s movement, the increased presence of females in government and politics propelled women’s issues into the forefront of American thought.

To improve conditions for working women, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed in 1972 (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 218). Two years later, the Women’s Educational Equity Act Program was enacted to provide “federal funds to public schools that actively counseled sex role stereotypes and promoted equality of women’s educational opportunities” (Schulman, 2001, p. 167). The efforts of activist women resulted in revisions to rape law and the creation of services and support systems for women affected by the crime. Although abortion was legalized in 1973 through *Roe v. Wade*, women’s reproductive rights remained a topic of debate (Schulman, pp. 167-68).

On June 23, 1972, Title IX was enacted as part of the Education Amendments (Valentin, 1997, p. 1). The preamble to Title IX stated: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or

be subject to discrimination under any educational programs or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Valentin, p. 1).

The legislation was considered a significant boost to the women’s movement. Because of the legal protection provided by Title IX, “the role of women and girls in education and the work force began to change significantly” (Valentin, 1997, p. 1). “Title IX ensures legal protection against discrimination for students and employees, which includes protection against sexual harassment ... it prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender” (Valentin, p. 1).

Women’s athletics was also positively impacted by the Title IX legislation. That impact was jumpstarted by Billie Jean King’s 1973 victory over tennis champion Bobby Riggs in the *Battle of the Sexes*, a much anticipated tennis match that attracted over 45 million television viewers. King’s powerful win was monumental for women’s sports and the overall women’s movement (Schulman, 2001, pp. 159-61).

In 1971, girls remained primarily on the sidelines. Limited to cheers and pompoms, they accounted for just 7 percent of high school athletes. By 1978, girls made up 32 percent of the athletes in high school locker rooms. College sports followed a similar trend (Schulman, p. 161).

“During the 1970s, women accounted for 60 percent of the total increase in the labor force” (Chafe, 1991, p. 221). More women in the work force did not, however, eliminate the income gap between genders. Advocates for women’s rights opposed the gap and believed it “reflected persistent occupational segregation and the undervaluing of women’s work” (Schulman, 2001, p. 168).



Women's health, including sexuality, was a predominant female theme of the seventies. The gay rights movement continued among both genders and lesbianism remained associated with radical feminists. "During the 1970s, lesbians identified much more often, and more prominently, with feminism than with the gay rights movement" (Schulman, 2001, p. 176). As men grappled with issues of identity, a men's movement evolved and embraced controversy over the meaning of masculinity, femininity, gender roles, and men's rights (Schulman, pp. 183-84).

Some factions of feminists considered the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) a partial solution to gender inequity and eagerly anticipated its passage. Antifeminists in opposition of the ERA feared it would compromise the family unit, jeopardize gender roles, and threaten the protection of married women with and without children (Schulman, 2001, pp. 168-70). Congress passed the amendment in March 1972 and by 1977, it was ratified by all but three necessary states (Schulman, pp. 168-70). To the dismay of its supporters, the needed ratification never occurred and the ERA "died" in 1982 (Schulman, pp. 168-70).

For supporters of the women's movement, dissolve of the ERA represented a failed quest for equality with men. It did not, however, stand in the way of an alternative approach – one that celebrated differences between the genders and endorsed women's parallel existence with men. "Cultural feminism accepted gender difference, but without a sense of the hierarchy or inferiority ... pointed not toward mere equality but toward a feminist reconstruction of American society based on gender differences" (Schulman, 2001, p. 172).

*The 1980s*

The decade of the eighties was characterized by continued change and confusion that originated with start of the women's movement in the sixties. Issues of gender, identity, equality, and family permeated American society.

Men—and women—were still divided profoundly over what it meant to be male or female, how families should be organized, and what the concept of equal opportunity meant for relations between the sexes. Few issues were more basic to a nation's direction and identity, and few were further from resolution in the 1980s (Chafe, 1991, p. 220).

At the beginning of the decade, perceptions of family life were mixed. "A 1980 Gallup poll reported that 45 percent of Americans felt that family life had gotten worse over the past decade; only 37 percent thought it had improved" (Schulman, 2001, p. 185). The divorce rate more than tripled between 1960 and 1984 with grim predictions for the future.

The divorce rate ... soared from 35 per 1,000 in 1960 to 121 in 1984. By the latter date, it was predicted that half of all recent marriages would end in divorce by early in the next century, the rate rising to 6 in 10 for women who were in their thirties in the mid-1980s (Chafe, 1991, pp. 220-21).

In addition, both the poverty rate and the infant mortality rate increased in the eighties.

The number of Americans living in poverty increased from under 10 percent in 1978 to over 14 percent—or 33 million people—by 1988. One of every four Americans living in poverty was a child—a total of 8.25 million people. The

nation's infant mortality rate grew until it was higher than that of seventeen other industrial nations .... By 1989 the government reported that half of all African-American children were living in poverty (Kallen, 1999, pp. 68-90).

The loss of blue collar jobs in manufacturing and industry contributed to the growing divide between wealthy and poor Americans. "Average family income for those in the poorest fifth of the population declined by 6.1 percent from 1979 to 1987, while family income for the highest paid Americans rose by 11.2 percent during this same period" (Kallen, p. 62).

Despite age and/or family commitments, women continued to permeate the work force in the eighties.

By the mid-1980s, nearly two-thirds of all women from twenty to sixty-four were employed—250 percent more (in proportionate terms) than had been employed at the beginning of World War II when only one-quarter of all women worked ... the greatest increases during the 1970s and 1980s occurred among women in their prime childbearing years, so that the average employment curve for women became almost identical to that for men ... more than half of all married women were in the labor force, in contrast to 15 percent in 1940; 70 percent of mothers with children between six and seventeen were employed, compared to 12 percent in 1950 (Chafe, 1991, pp. 221-22).

As the number of working women increased during the seventies and early eighties, so did the reasons why women enjoyed being part of the work force.

In 1970 some 43 percent of women said being a homemaker was one of the two or three most enjoyable things about being a woman; that figure had plummeted to 8 percent by 1983. Conversely, the number of women who said that their careers, jobs, and paychecks, were most enjoyable had climbed from 9 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 1983. Women seemed to enjoy their work, to value the social companionship it brought, and to appreciate the bargaining power it sometimes gave them in their family relationships (Chafe, 1991, p. 233).

Women's paychecks were necessary too, "as economics required two breadwinners in a household to pay for home mortgages, new cars, clothing, and other desired items" (Kallen, 1999, p. 67).

In the years following the sixties, many women seized the opportunity for educational preparation that led to careers in traditionally male-dominated fields. As a result, by the mid-eighties, women comprised more than 40 percent of all students entering traditional professional schools (Chafe, 1991, p. 222). The number of women pursuing careers in medicine, law, and business – as well as those pursuing Ph.D.s – rose considerably from just the decade before.

The number of women who were judges and lawyers had increased from 4 to 14 percent between 1971 and 1981, while the figure for women doctors jumped from 9 to 22 percent. Women Ph.D.'s rose from 10 percent of the total in 1971 to 30 percent by the 1980s. Three decades earlier, these women would probably have been channeled into careers as secondary school teachers, nurses, or social workers with a limit on both their salaries and promotions (Chafe, p. 222).

A historical victory for women occurred in 1981 when President Ronald Regan appointed Sandra Day O'Connor, an Arizona judge, as "the first woman justice in the 191 years of the Supreme Court" (Kallen, 1999, p. 69). Three years later in 1984, New York congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro was selected by presidential candidate Walter Mondale as his running mate and became "the first woman to be on a major party's ticket for national office" (Kallen, p. 69). On a much different stage, women entered the world of rock, punk, and pop music in full force during the eighties. As a result, names such as Tina Turner, Blondie, Cyndi Lauper, and Madonna – as well as lyrics to their music – became commonplace among most Americans (Kallen, pp. 84-86).

Attention to a variety of women's issues during the seventies laid the foundation for female-friendly additions to American culture in the eighties.

In 1970, there were no battered women's shelters in the United States, no rape crisis centers, no services for displaced homemakers. By the mid-1980s, literally thousands of institutions dedicated to women's needs dotted the landscape. In 1970, American universities offered fewer than twenty courses about women; two decades later, there were more than 30,000 on the undergraduate level alone (Schulman, 2001, pp. 171-72).

The issue of equal pay for men and women received considerable attention in the 1980s. *Comparable worth* became a popular topic of debate.

The idea that women deserved to be paid the same wages as men not only when they performed the same job but also when they engaged in work that required

comparable skill and responsibility came to be known as “comparable worth”

(Rosenberg, 1992, p. 237).

Comparable worth, like many women’s issues, was controversial. Although it positively impacted female government employees and female membership in labor unions, the concept never gained full acceptance and the wage gap persisted (Rosenberg, pp. 238-39).

Women’s pay increased slightly near the end of the decade, but the gain was not all good news. “From 1950 to 1980 the average women’s wage ... remained stuck at about 60 percent of the average man’s” (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 236). According to the Department of Labor, by 1987 women earned 70 cents for every dollar earned by a man; however, one economist noted that “the gain was relative because the average wage for men had actually gone down” (Kallen, 1999, p. 67).

The eighties were also characterized by educational reform; space travel; AIDS; increased drug use, crime, and violence; and homelessness. As the family farm started to disappear, “the U.S. farm population dropped from 9 million in 1975 to 5 million in 1987” (Kallen, 1999, p. 66). Silicon Valley, California experienced a surge in population and prospered in technology-related industries (Kallen, p. 72). With origins in the 1970s, technology software, hardware, and the Internet advanced considerably in the 1980s.

### *The 1990s and the Twenty-First Century*

The decade of the nineties had a somewhat dismal start due to a recession and the Gulf War. The United States “entered a deep recession around July 1990” (Kallen, 1999, p. 60). Between 1990 and 1992, “unemployment rose from 5.2 percent to 7.8 percent as

businesses turned to repaying the debts incurred during the eighties” (Kallen, p. 60).

Under the Clinton administration that began in 1992, the American economy showed significant signs of improvement. “By the mid-1990s, unemployment was at a record low and the economy was booming” (Woog, 2004, p. 18).

As the decade of the nineties began, the lives of women working in the armed forces were greatly impacted through the first surge in women soldiers fighting on behalf of the United States. January and February 1991 were marked by the Gulf War in the Middle East. During that war, “about 37,000 American soldiers in Iraq were women ... [and] fifteen of the U.S. casualties were women” (Woog, 2004, p. 12).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the historical conditions that promote feminism can be found in much of the world .... At present, economic globalization, along with international efforts to create stable democratic governments, suggests that new forms of feminism will continue to surface (Freedman, 2002, p. 3).

“Rather than making men’s experience the model for change, feminists began once again to look to women’s lives as a guide to a better social order” (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 244).

“Those lives are very different now, because of women’s increased employment, greater education, more accepting attitudes toward sexuality, and improved health” (Rosenberg, p. 244).

Despite the progress women have made in the past eighty years, the pay inequity between men and women still exists. According to a study by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) published in October 2003, the percent earnings difference

between men and women remained stable during the 17 years between 1983 and 2000.

As of 2000, women earned an average of 80% of what men earned – a mere .7% increase from 1983 (GAO, 2003, p. 18). In addition to factors such as industry, occupation, race, marital status, and job tenure, the study stressed the impact work patterns have on the pay gap between men and women. For example, because of their primary responsibilities for family and home, “women 1) have fewer years of work experience; 2) work fewer hours per year; 3) are less likely to work a full-time schedule; and 4) leave the labor force for longer periods of time” (GAO, p. 11). These patterns, according to the GAO study, account for some of the earnings difference between the genders. The study acknowledged two other possible reasons for the pay differential:

- 1) Some women trade off advancement or higher earnings for a job that offers flexibility to manage work and family responsibilities; and 2) discrimination resulting from societal views about acceptable roles for men and women or views about women in the workplace may affect women’s earnings (GAO, p. 16).

Although the jobs and careers available to women are more numerous now than ever before, the most common occupations for women continue to be elementary-school teaching, nursing, retail sales, and service and clerical jobs (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 254). Dialogues about balancing the responsibilities of family and home – for both women and men – have prompted some employers to integrate alternative work arrangements. Examples include part-time work, job sharing, flextime, and on-site childcare. Advances in technology provide opportunities to for employees to teleconference and work from alternate sites, including home (GAO, 2003, p. 58).



In spite of considerable progress in the twentieth century, women are still guaranteed a future of challenges while seeking equality with men.

Gender roles have altered significantly during the twentieth century, and new opportunities now exist for women whose aspirations in the past would have been circumscribed by the ideology of hearth and home. For those changes, both historical events and feminist movements deserve credit. It would be wrong, however, to underestimate how persistent and powerful have been the structural forces that have divided – and continue to divide – women and keep them in their “place”... the dream of equality persists – so too, do the obstacles to its realization (Chafe, 1991, p. 238).

### *Childhood Play*

The childhood experience has not been immune to societal shifts and changes that affect the fabric of American life. For example, “the decline of ... toys [such as electric trains and baby dolls] has more to do with changes in our society than with manipulation by toymakers” (Cross, 1997, p. 8). The purpose, location, and nature of childhood play have been altered by processes such as industrialization, urbanization, social movements, and consumerism. Developments in childrearing and parenting have also affected the childhood experience.

### *Time*

Recent history reflects a dramatic shift in the ways American children spend their free time. For instance, daily blocks of unstructured, unscheduled free time in children’s lives have been replaced with recurring sequences of scheduled lessons, practices, events,

and programs. Participation in these scheduled activities is usually encouraged and supported by parents.

Unlike the parents of baby boomers, who had wanted their children to be “average,” ambitious late twentieth-century parents sought to provide their children with every possible opportunity. The impulse to give children a leg up contributed to the rapid growth of educationally oriented preschools ... many middle-class parents filled up older children’s afterschool time with lessons, enrichment activities, and organized sports ... parents overscheduled and over programmed their children’s free time, placing excessive pressure on their offspring and depriving them of the opportunity for free play and hanging out (Mintz, 2004, p. 343).

Chudacoff (2007) also noted the widespread parental influence on how children spend their time.

Parents, supported by all types of public and private interests, have imposed formal activities on children’s formerly unstructured and “free” playtime. For underprivileged children, this ... has meant after-school recreational and sports programs in boys’ and girls’ clubs, neighborhood clubs, YMCAs and YWCAs, and other such agencies. Among middle-class youngsters, karate and gymnastics lessons, computer and foreign-language instruction, soccer and basketball leagues, and school homework have replaced the informal “scrub” baseball ... and the “side-yard” shows (Chudacoff, p. 218).

From a different perspective, Mintz (2004) attributed the decline of unstructured play to the increased number of working mothers.

Meanwhile unstructured, unsupervised free play outside the home drastically declined for middle-class children. As more mothers joined the labor force, parents arranged more structured, supervised activities for their children.

Unstructured play and outdoor activities for children three to eleven declined nearly 40 percent between the early 1980s and late 1990 (Mintz, p. 347).

In his book, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (2004), author Steven Mintz noted a significant difference between Huck Finn's childhood and contemporary childhood. "Yet he (Huck Finn) enjoyed something too many children are denied and which adults can provide; opportunities to undertake odysseys of self-discovery outside the goal-driven, overstructured realities of contemporary childhood" (Mintz, p. 384).

### *Play Groups*

As the nature of childhood play has evolved, so have play groups. "From about the 1950s to the early 1970s ... the makeup of play groups consisted of neighborhood friends and schoolmates who frequently and intimately associated with each other" (Chudacoff, 2007, p. 198). A shift in play group size occurred in the 1980s.

Play groups and activities for the subsequent kid generations of the 1980s onward have revealed quite different characteristics ... while informal group play does occur, it more likely involves assemblages of twos and threes rather than the choosing up of sides for large group games .... Further, the neighborhood has declined as a source for playmates, as well as an environment for play, leaving the

school as the main site of continuous peer association but mostly in a controlled setting (Chudacoff, p. 199).

### *Play Environment*

Where children play has been impacted by a number of variables throughout American history; however, the growth and development of this country – specifically, through urban- and suburbanization – have made perhaps the biggest impact on the play environment.

From the colonial era to the present, natural play sites have diminished while constructed settings have multiplied ... as the United States became more urban (and suburban), more families lived remote from the natural landscape, and fewer children had access to forests and fields where they could indulge in “roving” and “roaming” and where they could integrate waterways and wildlife into their play (Chudacoff, 2007, p. 215).

Open spaces in both rural and urban locations have been affected. “The geography of young people’s lives has been reshaped. Much of the ‘free space’ available to youth in the past, from empty lots to nearby woods, has disappeared as a result of development and legal liability concerns” (Mintz, 2004, p. 348). For “city kids” (Chudacoff, p. 129), the disappearance of prior play spaces bred creativity and the identification of new locations for play.

As urbanization made uninhabited environments increasingly inaccessible, the cityscape took on more important role in children’s play cultures. Instead of forests and fields used by rural kids, city kids appropriated, incorporated, and

transformed streets, sidewalks, backyards, alleys, vacant lots, dumps, sewers, fences, rooftops, and buildings for their amusement (Chudacoff, p. 129).

Parents' concern for their children's safety has also influenced the location of the play environment.

The hazards and temptations lurking in modern urban society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intensified efforts by adults to divert children from unsafe environments into protected spaces. The playground movement and rise of Little League, clubs, scouting, and other organized activities provided settings that adults could supervise (Chudacoff, 2007, pp. 215-216).

### *Toys*

Prior to 1900, toys for girls and boys represented traditional work roles and accompanying tools (Cross, 1997, p. 25). "Playthings were largely miniatures of adult tools that allowed children to anticipate conventional adult roles" (Cross, p. 25). Similarly, childhood was defined through the lens of the adult vs. the child. It was a time to rehearse adult responsibilities – not a time to imagine, explore, and fantasize.

Play things have always been subject to evolving and conflicting attitudes toward, and styles of, childrearing. Until the end of the nineteenth century, parents gave children few toys and those they did give reflected the convenience and taste of adults more than the desires and imagination of children. About 1900 a more child-centered approach arose that allowed youth their own material culture of play (Cross, p. 8).

“Toys became more ‘playful’ and more celebratory of childhood as the nineteenth century wore on” (Cross, 1997, p. 35). Advertising directly to children through television transformed the toy and the toy industry. Through this medium, companies appealed directly to children’s desires and revenue skyrocketed ([www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu](http://www.kclibrary.nhmccd.edu)).

The infiltration of technology that began near the end of the twentieth century, as well as the introduction of modern pastimes, greatly changed the toys and play time of American youth.

Whereas a few decades ago, eight- and nine-year old girls found gratifying amusement by playing with Barbie, G.I. Joe, tea sets, and dump trucks, many preteens now reject these toys as “babyish” and instead favor action-oriented computer games, high-intensity sports such as skiing and skateboarding, “real” fashion obtainable at the mall (as opposed to “dressing up” in parents’ clothing), and other pastimes that also amuse older age groups (Chudacoff, 2007, p. 217).

### *Paper Dolls*

Because of the significance of the words *paper dolls* in this dissertation’s title, a short history of fashion and paper dolls follows. The origin of fashion dolls dates back to the Middle Ages when miniature female mannequins were exchanged among aristocratic women. Dressed in the latest styles, the dolls modeled the latest fashions on a very small scale (Cross, 1997). An innovative option to fashion dolls, paper dolls, were created some four hundred years later. “Paralleling the rise of a rationalized toy industry was the introduction of new, cheaper materials .... Paper dolls appeared in England about 1791

offering an inexpensive version of the three-dimensional fashion doll” (Cross, 1997, p. 18).

Only after the Civil War, when Americans directed their energies to rebuilding their families, did manufacturers begin producing toys in large numbers.

Americans started applying techniques developed in other industries to mass-produce play things .... The McLoughlin Brothers used their experience as book printers to stamp out paper dolls and games (Cross, p. 21).

### CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

The tradition of inquiry employed in this study combined the collective case study and interpretive biography. Combining case study with another tradition of inquiry is acceptable practice. Creswell explained “I turn to the biographical approach or the life history approach in studying a single individual. However, the study of multiple individuals, each defined as a case and considered a collective case study, seems acceptable practice” (1998, p. 114). Merriam (2002) also supported combining the case study with other traditions. “Defining a case study in terms of the unit of analysis, the bounded system, allows for any number of qualitative strategies to be combined with the case ... people’s stories could be presented as narrative case studies” (Merriam, 2002, p. 179). Stake (1995) noted “The case is sometimes a person and, in many other case studies as well, persons are described in depth. The researcher therefore is something of a biographer” (Stake, p. 96).

#### Case Study

The case study is “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community” (Merriam, 2002, p. 8).

The process of conducting a case study begins with the selection of the “case.”

The selection is done purposefully, not randomly; that is, a particular person, site, program, process, community, or other bounded system is selected because it exhibits characteristics of interest to the researcher (Merriam, p. 179).

The collective case study gives researchers the opportunity to “study a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon, population, or general condition” (Stake,



1994, p. 227). For this study, each president was purposefully selected because she represented a case that was instrumental to learning about the perceived childhood years and life experiences of female college and university presidents. “Important coordinations” (Stake, 1995, p. 4) were made between the five individual cases through within-case and cross-case analyses (Creswell, 1998, p. 63).

### Interpretive Biography

According to Dr. Norman K. Denzin, professor of communications and sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the interpretive biographical method “involves the studied use and collection of personal-life documents, stories, accounts, and narratives which describe turning-points in individuals’ lives” (Denzin, 1989, p. 13). Denzin referred to such turning points as epiphanies or “interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives” (1989a, p. 15). “The notions that lives are turned around by significant events, what I call epiphanies, is deeply entrenched in Western thought. At least since Augustine, the idea of transformation has been a central part of the autobiographical and biographical form” (Denzin, 1989, p. 22).

In them [epiphanies] personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person’s life. Their effects may be positive or negative .... The meanings of these experiences are always given retrospectively, as they are relived and re-experienced in the stories persons tell about what has happened to them (Denzin, 1989, pp. 70-71).

Denzin (1989, p. 71) defined four forms of the epiphany:

1. The major event, which touches every fabric of a person's life (the major epiphany);
2. The cumulative or representative event, which signifies eruptions or reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time (the cumulative epiphany);
3. The minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life (the illuminative or minor epiphany); and
4. Those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience (the re-lived epiphany).

The biographical oral history methods used in the study “offer[ed] the opportunity to uncover layers of meaning embedded in the stories and insights into how people understand and interpret the past and their place in it” (Sommer & Quinlan, 2002, p. 1). This was done through the collection of “memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 19).

Narrative inquiry provided opportunities to retell individual experiences and stories, as well as their meanings, shared by the participant during a series of interviews. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), “Like retellings in any aspect of the narratives of our lives, [the purpose of retelling] is to offer possibilities for reliving, for new directions and new ways of doing things” (p. 189). The vantage point for narrative inquiry is experience as expressed in lived and told stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi) – stories that are complete with a beginning, middle, and end.

According to Denzin, “the central locus” (1989, p. 73) of a story is essential to fully understand a life and stories that represent that life.

No self or personal-experience story is ever an individual production. It derives from larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts .... To understand a life, the epiphanies and the personal-experience and self stories that represent and shape that life, one must penetrate and understand these larger structures. They provide the languages, emotions, ideologies, taken-for-granted understandings, and shared experiences from which the stories flow (Denzin, p. 73).

“The task for the narrative researcher, therefore, is to be dually conscious of the individual and the societal-cultural contents in which the individual experiences and interprets her life” (Bloom, 2002, p. 311).

Near the end of his 1989 publication, *Interpretive Biography*, Norman Denzin described the value of honoring and respecting the subjects of biographical studies.

Our primary obligation is always to the people we study ... the lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared with us. And, in return, this sharing will allow us to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the people we study. These documents will become testimonies to the ability of the human being to endure, to prevail, and to triumph over the structural forces that threaten at any moment to annihilate any of us (Denzin, p. 83).

### Sampling

From the onset of this study, my goal was to interview between four to six female college or university presidents. My rationale for this goal was twofold. First, interviewing four to six participants would likely insure a plentitude of life stories and epiphanies – the essence of interpretive biography. In addition, gathering answers to the research questions from four, five, or six participants would enrich the cross-case analysis and contribute significantly to the understanding of individual female presidents’ lives. Secondly, I sought four to six participants in the effort to insure a rigorous and comprehensive study that would serve as a valuable addition to the existing research on female college and university presidents. For these reasons, I sought to interview as many female presidents as possible (four to six) without compromising the manageability and quality of my study.

Several types of purposeful sampling were used to select the 5 women who ultimately participated in this study. Through their roles as college and university presidents, the participants were “politically important cases” (Creswell, 1998, p. 119) who were qualified to respond to the research questions. Intensity sampling also applied since the participants were “information-rich” (Creswell, p. 119) with data by virtue of the professional positions they held. “Criterion sampling” (Creswell, p. 119) was used to identify two different pools of potential participants based on institutional classifications (explained below).

As a first step of the selection process, I referred to the 2000 *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* to identify official categories of

colleges and universities. I suspected particular types of institutions attracted particular types of presidents, as later suggested by the American Council on Education.

The portrait of the average president masks important differences among the leaders of higher education by the type of institution they serve .... College presidents are often selected because they embody the values of, and are prepared to meet the particular challenges associated with, one of these groups of institutions (ACE, 2007, p. 25).

Using the original Carnegie Classification framework (prior to the 2005 revision), I selected “Doctoral/Research Universities – Extensive” as the category to pursue for potential participants ([www.carnegiefoundation.org](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org)). Initially, six letters of invitation were sent to female presidents of large, doctorate-granting universities. With the exception of one Midwest institution, all of the universities were private. Two of the six presidents were employed in the Midwest, while the remaining four were employed in the eastern United States. Each potential participant was sent a letter in which she was invited to participate in the study (Appendix A). The letter was followed by a personal phone call to the president approximately two weeks after the letter was sent (Appendix B). Because of time constraints and/or recent participation in similar studies, all six presidents kindly declined participation.

Given the futile outcome of my invitations to female presidents of large, doctorate-granting universities, I decided to pursue female presidents of a different type of institution. I returned to the 2000 Carnegie Classification framework and selected the institutional categories of “Baccalaureate Colleges – Liberal Arts” and “Baccalaureate

Colleges – General” ([www.carnegiefoundation.org](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org)). I intentionally shifted my attention from large, research universities to institutions focused on teaching (vs. research) and undergraduate education. Because of the nature of institutions focused on students and teaching, I suspected presidents of baccalaureate colleges might have greater flexibility in their schedules and therefore, the availability to accept my interview invitation.

According to the American Council on Education, “baccalaureate colleges enroll just over 1.3 million students, with an average head count enrollment of about 1,800 students” (2007, p. 31).

Because of the concentration of female presidents who led baccalaureate institutions located in the eastern United States at that time, as well as my familiarity with the region, I invited five female presidents employed in the East to be part of my study. I also invited three female presidents of baccalaureate institutions located in the Midwest to participate. I deliberately limited the number of extended invitations to eight in case the majority or all were accepted. As was done with the first group of invitees, each potential participant was sent a letter in which she was invited to participate in the study (Appendix A). The letter was followed by a personal phone call to the president approximately two weeks after the letter was sent (Appendix B).

As a result of the second stage of the selection process outlined above, five female presidents agreed to participate in my study. Two presidents were employed at baccalaureate institutions located in New England. Three presidents were employed at baccalaureate institutions located in the Midwest. With the exception of one institution located in New England, all were private colleges and universities.

Three of the five female presidents employed in the East did not participate in the study for various reasons. One president was traveling to Europe during my trip to the East coast. To my surprise, one president never responded to my subsequent communications after a pleasant phone conversation with her about the study. The third president and I were unable to determine an interview time that accommodated her schedule and my time in New England. As was the case with the female presidents of large, doctorate-granting universities who declined participation in my study, the interview availability of two of the three presidents of baccalaureate institutions located on the East coast was prevented by time constraints.

#### Data Collection

The primary method of data collection for this study was oral history, “an approach in which the researcher gathers personal recollections of events, their causes, and their effects from an individual or several individuals” (Creswell, 1998, p. 49), usually through recorded interviews. Brundage (2002) describes history as:

A dynamic process ... a rich, varied, evolving intellectually system that allows us to achieve a deeper and better understanding of our world, indeed of ourselves.

In this vein history still deals with the past, but it conceptualizes a past in constant dialogue with an ever-changing present, one that responds to new questions and reveals fresh insights into the human condition (Brundage, p. 2)

Oral history gives a voice to the past and provides a glimpse into a void no other data or information can fill. Oral history is done “to ask the questions that have not been asked, and to collect the reminiscences that otherwise would be lost” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 46).

Data was collected through audio-taped, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with each participant, during which each was encouraged to tell her stories with as much detail as possible (Sommer & Quinlan, 2002, p. 11). Face-to-face interviews were conducted during the span of 6 months in locations chosen by the participants. Four of the five interviews were held in the presidents' offices. One interview was held in a small, multi-purpose meeting room. Interviews lasted approximately 60 to 120 minutes. In addition to the interview protocol (Appendix C), I used an interview outline (Appendix D) I created especially for the interviews (Sommer & Quinlan, p. 11). The outline or "road map" provided a comprehensive guide for time spent with each participant, listing all topic areas addressed (if appropriate) during the interview (Sommer & Quinlan, p. 11).

As part of the interpretive biography methodology, data was also collected through a review of personal and professional documents and records that participants voluntarily chose to share (e.g. vitae, speeches, photographs, publications). After solidifying plans (date, time, location) for each interview, I mailed each participant an informed consent form and a *pre-interview, participant copy* of a shortened interview protocol (Appendix E). The pre-interview protocol previewed the content of the scheduled interview by listing the two grand tour research questions and five sub-questions. The protocol also included the following statement that invited participants to provide artifacts:

Each participant is encouraged to provide copies of any artifacts that represent interview responses and the life stories within. Artifacts help tell participants'



stories and include (but are not limited to) items such as photographs, speeches, journals, credentials, drawings, or vitae.

The participants were free to choose which artifacts they would share with me.

Each participant provided access to her vita, either by giving me a paper copy or by directing me to her institution's website. One participant gave me copies of two one-page articles she wrote for a university publication. Shortly after her interview, another participant mailed me a portion of one of her published books. Two participants directed me to their institutions' websites for presidential speeches, accomplishments, and presentations.

The vita of each participant was especially helpful when describing and/or reviewing individual career paths. Information on each vita confirmed interview data about the career path and closed gaps that existed in a few career path descriptions. The publications and speeches of participants who provided them supported the themes that emerged from the data; however, participants' vitae were the most useful documents.

Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms instead of participants' names. Pseudonyms were also used to represent the names of people, places, and other information that could reveal the identities of the participants.

### The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Throughout this study, I sought a balance between reflexivity (Creswell, 1998, p. 9) and objectivity. For example, my role during the data collection process was that of a neutral listener. Open-ended questions were asked and probing follow-up

questions were used when needed. Although neutral, I also viewed myself as a partner in the oral history process, “helping interviewees become as forthcoming and accurate as possible” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 84). Between interviews, I reflected on the purpose and ethics of oral history to re-establish professional grounding.

As the researcher and the individual retelling the participant’s stories, I too, was part of the narrative experience. As a college administrator interested in the formative years and life experiences of female leaders, I recalled the words of Clandinin and Connelly (2000): “We are in the parade we presume to study” (p. 81). Although there were some similarities between my life and the lives of the participants, the “parade” was different enough to allow for exploration and discovery. Throughout the entire research process, I sought to maintain – as Clandinin and Connelly suggested – a balance between objectivity and full involvement or “cool observation” (p. 81).

The pilot study titled “The Life Events that Characterize the Career Path of a Female President of a Midwestern University: A Narrative Analysis of One Woman’s Story” was approved by the University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board (IRB) on November 16, 2004 (IRB#: 2004-11-083 EX; Appendix F). The approved research protocol was changed several times to reflect the multiple case study and was renewed again in the fall of 2005, 2006, and 2007. None one of the differences between the pilot study and the multiple case study affected the exempt status of the research project and no revisions to the Informed Consent Form were needed. A final report of the dissertation research project was submitted to the University of Nebraska IRB on October 27, 2008.

### Researcher Bias

Personal bias stemmed from my role as a female college administrator and my interest in what propels other women to lead and succeed in the field of higher education administration. Of particular interest to me are childhood experiences that were instrumental or significant in women's career paths, especially paths leading to the college or university presidency. In fact, my interest in those very experiences originated over twelve years ago and eventually led to this study.

While enrolled in a research methods course at the University of Maine in Orono in the mid-nineties, I first identified personal interests that led to the topic of this dissertation research. My initial curiosity focused on the motivations of female leaders at all levels of higher education administration. With time, that curiosity evolved into the research questions that guided this study among a *specific* group of female leaders – college and university presidents. This qualitative dissertation research provided a formal opportunity for me to personally explore the lives of five phenomenal women – who they were as little girls, what growing up was like for them, the life experiences that characterized their career paths, and the developmental journeys that led to their presidencies.

“Memos” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 12) were useful tools for recording personal thoughts, comments, or inquiries throughout all stages of the research project – particularly those related to or originating from researcher bias. Maxwell defined memos as “any writing that a researcher does in relationship to the research other than actual field notes, transcription, or coding ... they are ways of getting ideas down on paper ... a

way to facilitate reflection and analytic insight” (Maxwell, p. 12). To maximize memos, the researcher must “engage in serious reflection, analysis, and self-critique, rather than just mechanically recording events and thoughts” (Maxwell, p. 12).

### Data Organization

The audio tapes of the interviews were erased and destroyed after the external audit was completed. Transcripts from the study remain stored in a locked file cabinet at my home and will be destroyed three years after the external audit is completed.

After transcribing all five interviews, I read each transcript several times to gain familiarity with the data. As I read and re-read the transcripts, I highlighted sections of the text and made notations in the margins “regarding anything ... striking” as advised by Mayan (2001, p. 23). After consulting a number of qualitative research texts, I developed a comprehensive, multi-level data organization system using Microsoft Word. The goal of the system was to condense the data into smaller units in order to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). In addition, the coding process itself was “about conceptualizing the data, raising questions, providing provisional answers about the relationships among and within the data, and discovering the data” (Coffey & Atkinson, p. 31).

Step one of my coding process involved organizing transcript text according to interview question topics and other broad, overarching ideas that were apparent in the data.

Clearly, coding the data according to those themes [interview question topics and other broad, overarching ideas] adds nothing initially to our understanding of the

data. It is essentially a data reduction task. Segmenting and coding the data in that particular way would at least allow us to characterize what each stretch of the interview was about in terms of general thematic content, in this instance relating directly to the topics of the interview elicitations and responses. Such wide, generic categories would facilitate the retrieval of different segments of data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 35).

Organizing the data during step one provided additional opportunities for me to gain familiarity with the contents of each transcript. After the completion of step one, I documented my reflections of each transcript and participant stories, comments, and experiences within. The reflection process aided my comprehension of the data and later served as a valuable check and balance tool during the writing process.

During step two, I further reduced the data by collapsing interview question topics and other broad, overarching ideas (identified in step one) into more specific categories of information reflected in the data. “The addition of simple, broad analytic categories ... can thus be used to reduce the data to manageable proportions” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 28). In addition, the categories were heuristic tools that provided “ways of interacting with and thinking about the data” (Coffey & Atkinson, p. 30). I then re-organized the transcript text according to the categories. Some segments of text were placed in more than one category due to relevance (Coffey & Atkinson, p. 30) and multiple representations.

During step three, I placed all categories and text in a multi-level table I created with Microsoft Word. Utilizing the table permitted me to further organize and visualize

the data and my researcher notes. I created a legend (below) to identify the origin of each piece of information and assigned a number and letter to each for reference and organizational purposes. During this step, text headings within each category were identified as codes, most of which were in vivo codes. “In vivo codes ... refer to codes that derive from the terms and the language used by social actors in the ... course of the interviews” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 32). Also during step three, I began using pseudonyms for participants’ names and other information that could compromise the confidentiality of their identities.

Legend:

C#	Category number
DQ	Direct quote of participant
RC	Researcher’s conclusion
WP	Word(s) used by participant but presented with omissions (...) or additional such words
O	Observation during interview
[ ]	Word(s) not part of original transcript
( )	Information relevant to text segment
<i>Italicized</i>	Questions asked by the researcher

Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data were identified in step four. Obviously this study was not longitudinal – the participants were not studied from birth to adulthood; however, themes present throughout the lifespan did emerge from the data. Therefore, the themes identified for each participant were lifespan themes – aspects of the participants’ lives that impacted them as children, adolescents, and adults.

Similar to step three, the themes and sub-themes were placed in multi-level tables. The legend used in step three was also used in step four. The themes, sub-themes, and codes were used as guides for writing each participant’s narrative.

The narrative is the culminating step that provides the bridge between the researchers' concerns and the participants' subjective experience. It tells the story of the participants' subjective experience, using their own words as much as possible (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 40).

### Data Analysis

In a collective case study, there are two stages of data analysis – the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998, p. 194). Through within-case analysis, each case is “treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, p. 194). In this study, within-case analysis consisted of the sequence of data collection and analysis steps unique to the interpretive biographical tradition. These steps are outlined in Denzin's *Interpretive Biography* (1989, p. 56) and include the following:

1. Researcher focuses on an objective set of experiences in participant's life (e.g. childhood experiences).
2. Concrete, contextual biographical materials gathered through the interview.
3. Participant is prompted to expand on life stories.
4. Participant is asked to theorize about his/her life.
5. Researcher seeks patterns and meanings within participant narratives.
6. Researcher reconstructs participant's biography and structural-objective factors that shaped life are identified.
7. Researcher writes an analytic abstraction of the case; the abstraction focuses on a) the structural processes in participant's life, b) the theories that relate to his/her life experiences, and c) the unique and general features of the life.

8. Comparisons between cases are completed and theoretical generalizations are developed.

In this retrospective study, the patterns and meanings that emerged from the data contributed to the process of identifying themes. Although the study was not longitudinal, the themes represented the lifespan and reflected aspects of the participants' lives that impacted them as children, adolescents, and adults. During the interview process, several participants demonstrated knowledge of their personal lifespan themes and discussed them openly.

Denzin outlined three interpretive formats used to present the finished biography: (a) from the subject's point of view, (b) subject-produced autobiographies, and (c) making sense of an individual's life (1989, pp. 58-59). This study employs the third interpretive format, a strategy that "weaves the subject's life into and through the researcher's interpretations of that life" (Denzin, p. 58). Because of the life stories, experiences, and perceptions shared by the participants, I was equipped to reconstruct each one's biography, including individual chronologies of life course stages and life course experiences (Denzin, p. 56).

The analytic abstraction or within-case analysis of each case is presented after each participant's biography. The themes identified for each participant were lifespan themes – aspects of the participants' lives that impacted them as children, adolescents, and adults. In addition to themes, epiphanies or turning point experiences, and life course experiences, the within-case analysis addressed the structural processes in the life,



theories that related to life experiences, and the unique and general features of the life (Denzin, 1989, p. 56).

The second stage of analysis in this collective case study was the cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis is presented in Chapter 5.

A qualitative, inductive, multicase study seeks to build abstractions across cases ... [and] can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases (Merriam, 1998, p. 195).

### Verification

Although the importance of credible qualitative research is not debated, the specific terms and processes used to describe this credibility – or validity – are numerous among qualitative researchers. Creswell (1998) suggests using the term “verification” instead of validity, “because verification underscores qualitative research as a distinct approach” (p. 201). The following verification strategies outlined below were used in this study.

The researcher’s bias was clarified by providing “comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Researcher reflexivity, or self-awareness (Creswell, p. 9), and an acknowledged presence in the study were addressed through the role of the researcher.

Through member checks, participants were given opportunities to judge the accuracy and credibility of the data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions prior to the

study's completion (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). After reviewing drafts of the study, some participants identified inaccuracies or misrepresentations in the text. In accordance with member checking technique, the inaccuracies and misrepresentations were corrected to participant satisfaction.

Triangulation, a procedure through which researchers look for “convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 3), were employed in the research process. Supplemental information such as demographic data forms and biographical inventories (Kitano & Perkins, 2000) were examined for context and triangulation. Corroborating evidence was identified through participant interviews and both personal and professional documents (e.g. vitae, speeches, and publications) provided by participants.

Thick, rich description was used throughout this study to describe the participants, their childhood years, and their life experiences. By providing as much detail as possible, the researcher attempted to create “verisimilitude” or “statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 6).

A formal, external audit of this study was completed “to examine both the process and product of the inquiry, and [to] determine the trustworthiness of the findings” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 5). It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide a clear and comprehensive audit trail that documents all research decisions and activities. The external auditor, an individual with no connection to the study, carefully assessed the extensive documentation representative of the study with the ultimate goal of a written

analysis of the research. Viewed as a rigorous verification process, the external audit involves planning, time, and costs to the researcher (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). “Through this process of documenting a study and a review of the documentation by an external auditor, the narrative account becomes credible” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 5). The completed External Audit Attestation is included as Appendix G.

### Pilot Study

A pilot study entitled “The Life Events that Characterize the Career Path of a Female President of a Midwestern University: A Narrative Analysis of One Woman’s Story” was conducted in fall 2004. Due to time constraints of the fall semester, the study included just one participant. Narrative analysis was the tradition of inquiry used to understand the life events that occurred during the lifelong career path of the participant, whose pseudonym was Audrey.

Although the study revealed much about the participant’s lifespan, the childhood experiences described were most significant. Childhood experiences were the foundation of the participant’s life and the foundation of the final narrative. The factors that shaped her life included: (a) her parents, particularly her mother, and childhood activities with “mother and daddy”; (b) her lifestyle as a child and young girl; (c) her disposition and drive; (d) her abilities and accomplishments; (e) her mentors; and (f) “right opportunities at the right times.”

Themes and patterns that emerged from the interview data were (a) relationships, family, and socializing; (b) flexibility and mobility; (c) a structured schedule, perfection and order, and future planning; (d) hurrying, energy, being actively busy, and the fast

track; (e) learning, accomplishments, career-oriented, and “the right moment.” The chronology of Audrey’s life included the following life course stages: childhood, college and graduate education, marriage, birth of her son, employment (faculty, pre-presidency administrative, and presidency), and birth of her grandson.

Audrey identified several life theories that reflected her experiences as a child and as an adult. Her professional life theories were “I have moved up the normal administrative ranks ... the fairly typical vertical progression” and “a fast track.” Her personal life theories were “I can always remember growing up in an adult world” and “I’ve always been in a hurry.” Audrey also acknowledged her partnership marriage and a mobile family that was willing to relocate, adapt, and adjust for her career moves.

Conducting the pilot study provided the opportunity for me to evaluate the interview protocol and practice interview techniques. Upon completion of the pilot study, I identified the following field issues:

1. Participant’s availability for the interview.
2. Participant’s level of engagement during the interview.
3. Participant’s understanding of the study’s purpose.
4. Interview interruptions.

As a result of the pilot study field issues, I implemented the following changes to the processes used for the collective case study:

1. I increased the amount of interview time spent with participants.
2. At the beginning of each interview, I clarified and reviewed the study’s purpose and explained my role as researcher.

3. I expanded the interview protocol to include more open-ended, probing questions.
4. At the conclusion of each interview, I requested personal and professional documents from participants.

I was unable to control participants' interview availability and interview interruptions.

## CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Information about the lives and experiences of the participants is individually presented in the five sections that follow. The first portion of each participant section begins with a childhood vignette specific to the individual, followed by the participant's chronology of life events from childhood through the presidency. The next portion begins with a vignette describing my experience as I prepared to meet the participant for the interview. The vignette is followed by information the participant shared about the presidency, reflections of her past, descriptions of current life situations, and her future plans.

### Interpretive Biographies: The Participants' Lives and Stories

The chronology of each individual's life is a reconstruction of the stories shared with me during the interview process. Direct quotes (Creswell, 1998, pp. 170-71) were used to capture participants' voices and to maintain the integrity of the interviews. Opening and closing vignettes, characteristic of case study methodology, were included to illustrate an aspect or issue of the case (Stake, 1995, p. 128); to create verisimilitude (Creswell, p. 21); and to demonstrate my reflexivity as the researcher (Creswell, p. 248). The participants are presented in the following order:

#### *Claire – Dr. Claire Evans – President, Mayfield University*

Founded in the late 1880s, Mayfield University was a private, liberal arts institution located in the central Midwest with a student population of 1,500. The University offered bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and pre-professional programs within the context of its liberal arts tradition.

*Olivia – Dr. Olivia Scott – President, Kellison College*

Located in the Northeast, Kellison College was a private, selective, bachelor's degree-granting, liberal arts college with a total student population of 1,700. Majors of three different types were available to students – departmental, interdisciplinary, and student-designed.

*Sydney – Dr. Sydney Cohen – President, State University at Carlisle*

With a history of over one hundred and forty years, State University at Carlisle was a selective, public liberal arts college located in New England. The state-supported institution offered bachelor's degrees to a student population of 2,000.

*Theresa – Dr. Theresa Martin – President, Serenity College*

Located in the Midwest, Serenity was an all women's Catholic college with a student body of approximately 1,000. Serenity offered associate, bachelors, and master's degrees that encompassed professional preparation and the liberal arts.

*Rachel – Dr. Rachel Roberts – President, Meadows College*

Meadows College was one of the oldest women's colleges in the country with a total student population of nearly 900. Located in the Midwest, Meadows was a private, liberal arts institution that offered bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and continuing education opportunities.

Claire

*Claire's Unforgettable Lunch Hour*

In high school, everyone called him Charles; but in Claire's mind, he would always be Charlie Livingston – the boy who made her day one autumn afternoon during their senior year.

After history class, Claire and Charlie sat outside at one of the school's picnic tables where they enjoyed their bagged lunches. It was a cool fall day, the sun was streaming between yellow and orange leaves clinging to the trees, and Claire thought about how nice it was to have a friend like Charlie. Their relationship was platonic, but between studying and walking to and from classes together, they saw each other frequently throughout each school day.

As they started to eat their lunches, Charlie began talking about the topics their teacher discussed in history class that morning. When he finished, he turned to Claire and asked her opinion. As soon as Claire realized what Charlie was asking, she stopped chewing her peanut butter and jelly sandwich and smiled to herself. For the first time in her life, she was invited to be part of an intellectual conversation. As they continued to talk, Charlie interacted with her like she actually had a brain, an opinion, an intellect – like she could think.

Lunch hour flew by. Claire enjoyed the challenge of the conversation and had fun engaging in the discussion. When the bell for class rang, she realized she had eaten only a few bites of her sandwich; but she was so happy, hunger didn't enter her mind. Charlie Livingston made an impact on Claire that day – one she would never forget.

*Claire's Childhood: "Family, church, and school"*

Claire Evans grew up in Windsor Hills, Texas, "a typical Texas town of that sort," with a population of approximately 100,000. As a little girl, Claire was "very good ... a bookworm ... and very shy." Although she was also ambitious, she didn't describe herself as such because "it wasn't nice ... to be that way [ambitious] as a girl." Claire had a strong inner drive and she knew herself well. Her parents provided stability during her childhood and the main influences in her life as a young girl were family, church, and school.

Claire was three years older than her only sibling, Emily. The two girls were close, but they also fought a lot. Their relationship was "a fairly standard ... big



sister/little sister ... kind of thing.” Claire’s father worked two jobs most of the time she was growing up and his primary job was at the post office. Her mother stayed at home until Claire went to high school. Claire didn’t relate better to one parent in particular; rather, she had “a really good relationship with both of them.” She grew up southern Baptist and the family “went to church a lot.”

Life at home was simple and humble. Claire was raised in a lower, middle class neighborhood where she always felt safe. “We never moved. We lived in the same, same place, same house ... same people ... there weren’t any traumatic ... events or ... anything like that.” There was no air-conditioning in their home, so Claire “tried to stay cool in the summer.” She was eight or nine years old before her family purchased a television. Limited financial resources meant leisure time was as simple as “supper together” or time with her sister and the neighborhood kids.

There wasn’t much money in fact, at all, so whatever we did that was leisure time, it was more just you know ... supper together ... there really wasn’t any money, so it wasn’t like, we never went out to eat – ‘cause we couldn’t afford it ... we did some family vacations in the summer, mostly going to see relatives ... in New Mexico ... but I think ... leisure time would be ... it was my sister and me, and neighborhood kids, and that kind of thing.

Claire spent a lot of time reading, one of her favorite things to do as a child. Her family “did not talk ideas,” so she “got most of that really from reading.” She excelled in school, which was “always relatively easy” for her, but she “always worked at it.” Reading was a favorite subject at school, but she “never liked science.” Claire took ballet lessons for one year and piano lessons for three. When she was growing up, “girls weren’t supposed to sweat or play sports or any of those kinds of things,” so she didn’t

participate in athletics. To her advantage, she “wasn’t all that interested” in those activities anyway.

Childhood activities she enjoyed with others were unstructured and included “just sort of typical girl things” like playing house, as well as baseball with the neighborhood kids, playing fort, and “a lot of outside stuff.” Although she enjoyed going to the movies, it wasn’t a common occurrence. The more common forms of entertainment she enjoyed were free. “Whatever fun ... you had ... just in the neighborhood ... with your friends ... [we] played jacks a lot ... and just whatever we did ... [was] just the kind of hanging out ... kinds of things.” As a young girl, Claire “tended to have fewer close friends and not so many ... superficial friends.”

When Claire was growing up, there were few jobs or careers that were acceptable for women. “Women ... could either be an elementary school teacher or ... a nurse or ... a librarian.” Only one of these options appealed to her.

I was gonna be a librarian ‘til I discovered that librarians didn’t get to read all the time ... and I knew I never wanted to be a nurse, so that left ... teaching. So that’s kind of really what I intended to do .... It wasn’t like I thought “Oh, I want to be a medical doctor, but I can’t” or ... it wasn’t formulated in that kind of way. It was just ... I expected that I would ... teach ... but I ... wasn’t particularly excited about it or anything.

Claire’s mother told her to “marry a man with ambition,” but it never occurred to Claire that she would not be employed. In fact, she planned to “do the whole thing.”

It never occurred to me that I would not work, which was really unusual given ... the families that I knew, and ... there really weren’t any role models for that ... so I don’t know where that came from ... I just always assumed that I would work ... and assumed that I would have children and you know, do the whole thing ... again a kind of classic.

Even though Claire expected to be a mother some day, she chose not to emulate one particular aspect of her mother's life – her financial dependency. "Somewhere along the line, I decided I did not want to be dependent as I saw my mother being dependent, financially."

Claire's father made it financially possible for several of his thirteen siblings to earn a college degree; however, he never attended college himself. Despite this, and the fact that her mother went to college for just one year, Claire considered her parents "smart people." The value they placed on education was prevalent in the home. "It was always the matter of education being important .... The assumption was always that my sister and I would go to college ... even though my parents had not ... education was just always an important thing." Because Claire excelled in school, she met her parent's expectations related to education with ease. "I was good at school. So, if you decide you're good at school, you might as well keep going to school, which is what I did."

*The College Years: A Season of Turning Points*

Claire attended college at Dillon University, a private, Baptist, liberal arts institution located approximately three and a half hours from her home in Windsor Hills. Her college years were full of turning points related primarily to her career and possibilities for her future. For instance, in the midst of her college education, she realized she "didn't want to be an elementary school teacher," despite progression toward a degree in elementary education. She "despised" her education classes because they were "incredibly boring." She found her English classes "much more interesting" and they helped her "stay sane from the education classes." Although she lost interest in

elementary education while at Dillon, she “finished it [her education] out anyway” and earned her degree.

As a result of listening to a guest speaker on the Dillon campus, Claire realized there were career options for women other than teaching elementary school.

Mary Buntings, who was then president of Radcliffe, came. I guess it was the year I was a senior, for a women’s day program and it just had never occurred to me before that there was a woman who was president of a school ... and ... basically that ... it was possible to do that kind of thing.

I didn’t think about doing it myself at that point ... that ... you could do something other than teach elementary school ... so that was really important.

While in college, she also realized that she “actually could go to graduate school.” Prior to this realization, graduate school didn’t seem like a possibility, as few women pursued this level of higher education.

Claire’s southern Baptist beliefs were challenged during her college years when she started going to “a very liberal church ... that made a difference.” Because church was such a big part of her childhood, it was “pretty major” to give up her religious upbringing. “When you quit being able to talk to your parents about religion and politics, things are happening!”

“The beginning of the women’s movement” was a positive influence while Claire was in college. That movement “gave ... a kind of language for, in some ways, how I’d always tended, but it gave language for it and ... was really ... very, very influential and has been all my life.”

As a college student, Claire discovered her independence and freedom – neither of which was characteristic of her pre-college life.

I think it was a matter of moving from a very sheltered world in which there were ... lots of rules and ... how you were supposed to be ... to beginning to think for myself and to ... not do as many rules, and do more my own my own sense of what my rules were, rather than somebody else's.

A number of influences contributed to Claire's growth and development during her college turning points. These influences included her classes, reading, people and friends, and ideas.

It started my freshman year with taking a sociology class and just being really upset at ... some of the things ... the professor was saying and say[ing], "No, that's not right," you know, 'cause it didn't fit with her particular religious beliefs ... some of it really was classes and just beginning to read ... more widely ... and ... as I did that, then just a set of friends ... people who were in literature and history and philosophy and just all those kinds of conversations that you have ... it was just kind of everything all together ... people I was with ... reading, things, ideas I was exposed to.

*Claire's Career Path: "One challenge after another"*

Claire's career path was "a matter of doing one challenge after another," despite what others said, where she was living, and why she was living there.

It's just been a matter of doing one challenge after another ... so things people ... you'd say "Well, you can't do that," and so I'd say "Well, yeah, I can!" So ... in a way, it's just been a step at a time ... and each thing that I would do, I'd say "Well, okay, then I can do the next one you know, or the next one." And you know, whatever it was that I was gonna do or not do with mine, [career] it was ... because either I could do it or I couldn't ... and not because of ... where I had to be because of somebody else.

In addition to her college and graduate educations, the life course experiences that characterized Claire's career path were her marriage, the birth of her children, and getting divorced.

Claire got married one year after finishing college. She and her husband, John, went to graduate school in the Midwest at the same university, where they both received teaching assistantships. When Claire began her graduate studies, her plan was to eventually earn a doctorate. "I was thinking ... Ph.D. ... once I decided I was going to graduate school, I knew I was gonna to do the whole thing. At least I knew enough to know that you can't do anything with a master's degree."

When Claire started graduate school, it was not a common pursuit for women. "It seemed like a huge step to even go to graduate school ... 'cause ... women did not go to graduate school in large numbers." In addition, there were few mentors for young women at the time. Claire and her sister-in-law provided support for each other in somewhat of a mentor capacity.

When I started graduate school ... there were no mentors, there ... nothing like that in ... no one said "Well it really makes a difference where you go to graduate school," in terms of where you'll end up with ... where you can get a job or anything of that sort ... my former sister ... in law and I, used to joke that ... we were each other mentor because there wasn't anybody else there to be one .... And she was basically doing the same thing.

Her graduate education experience "got cut up" because of John's career choices and the need for one of them to be employed. "Somebody needed to work and that would be me and so ... it [graduate program] got ... interrupted by working for four years."

Eventually, Claire finished the degree long-distance because of additional moves made for her husband's career.

The birth of two children was another life course experience that occurred during Claire's career path. Her children were born during the span of time when she worked on and completed her Ph.D. "My children are the best things that could have happened to me."

Claire's career path included "a lot of moves" that took her all over the country for several reasons. During most of her marriage, her career path was a consequence of "following your husband." As she traveled with her husband, Claire earned her graduate degrees, gave birth to two children, and held a number of college teaching positions. Despite these accomplishments, the ultimate direction of Claire's career path was not always apparent and she considered other options in the midst of her doctoral work. When her children were both still young, she was accepted to law school; however, she chose not to pursue that route because she "would have had to commute seventy-five miles each way with two little kids." Because of limited job opportunities, she explored a master's degree in educational administration. After learning about the content of the academic program, she decided against that route. "The books ... looked too much like what I couldn't stand from education before."

Getting divorced, another life course experience, was "the most significant thing" for Claire. The year she and John got divorced, their children were ages five and nine. Not long after their split, Claire spent a year in New York as a visiting scholar at a prestigious university and the children lived with John. The year was very traumatic for

the children and it was just the beginning of moves and transitions they endured for years because of the divorce.

It was just ... horrible and we had joint custody and so ... they would live with me for a year, then they'd live with him and then they, and then him and I was moving at the same time, and he was moving at the same time, and just that, the guilt of not giving ... your own children the kind of stability ... that I'd had as a child and that everybody wants ... for their children ... so, I think that probably everything entailed with that would be ... the most traumatic and some, a lot of years of course, moving and they would be moving back with me at the same time I was starting a new job and then they were starting a new school and it just ... a lot of pressure.

After having children, and particularly after her divorce, some of her moves were “with children” and some were “without children.” Moving was also a result of “moving up” on the career ladder. “I’ve mostly been at smaller places, so moving up meant moving you know, to another town ... so it’s just kind of keeping, you know, keeping on doing that.”

The “first half” of Claire’s moves occurred because she was “following a spouse.” As a result, her career was a consequence of “what was available because of a move.” After her divorce, the “second halves were to recover professionally from having followed a spouse.” Some of her post-divorce moves were also intended to benefit her children.

My ex-husband was teaching at Elm University and there was an ... associate dean’s job at Taylor University ... and so one of the reasons I moved there, was to try to get things a little bit closer together for all of us ... and my daughter was in tenth grade that year and ... my son was in sixth and they started school ... and ... I think it was my daughter’s seventh school in ten years.



Claire was cognizant of how moving affected her children and she struggled with the effects moving had on them. She tried to do all she could to provide stability to her children. “So, you do everything you can to do that [stability].”

As a young girl, Claire didn’t look toward a career in teaching with enthusiasm; however, teaching was her profession for approximately twenty-two years before shifting to a job in administration. She was an accomplished teacher and she “published quite a bit;” however, she reached a point when she was ready for a career change.

I’d had a career in teaching and I had published quite a bit and I just decided ... I’ll do something else. I always enjoyed teaching, I was good at it ... but ... after you do it, particularly in English, and you teach enough freshmen comp classes, there comes a time when you just say “You know, I really don’t need to do that anymore.” So ... it’s [administration] interesting in a very different kind of way.

Claire was teaching English full-time at Miller University when the dean of York College encouraged her to apply for the department chair position in York’s English department. She got the job, “was good at it, and enjoyed it.” When the opportunity to work in administration full-time came her way three years later, she tried it and became the associate dean at Taylor University. “I liked it [the work], it paid more than teaching, and...I was really tired of budgeting my kids’ tennis shoes.” Her aspirations to be a college or university president surfaced while working as a university dean.

By then I had seen enough people do it well to think “It might be interesting,” and I’d seen enough people do it badly to think “I know I can do as good a job as that.” Those who did the job well gave credit to others and those who didn’t were not so great at giving credit where it was due. Those who did the job well seemed genuine.

After working as associate dean at Taylor University, Claire held two more university dean positions, each for four years, before she became president of Mayfield University.

### *Meeting Dr. Claire Evans*

Old Stoddard looked stately and proud. The oldest building on campus, it was once the entire campus of Mayfield University. Vines decorated the red brick exterior and climbed well beyond the third floor of the aging structure. As I got closer to the main entrance, Old Stoddard's character and charm drew me in and I strolled through the main floor on the way to the administration building. There was evidence of original woodwork on doors and walls, but most of the hardwood floors were carpeted in warm earth tones with subtle, tasteful designs. As I walked through the long, wide hallway, I thought of the hundreds of students who had done the same in the past one hundred plus years. If only the walls could talk! Leaving Old Stoddard and walking to the modern administration building seemed to propel me fast-forward in time – a reminder of the institution's age, rich history, prominence, and progress.

As I entered the president's suite on the second floor, I was greeted by Lily, the president's assistant, who graciously welcomed me and expressed interest in my study. After a short wait, President Evans entered the room and greeted me with a handshake and introduction. Her dark hair was pulled back and she wore a black dress and sweater, black sandals, and a long necklace made up of several strands of small black beads. She smiled as she guided me into her office. President Evans took her place behind her desk and gestured for me to sit in the chair across from her. I did as she suggested and our conversation began.

### *The Presidency*

At the time of the interview, Dr. Claire Evans had been president of Mayfield University for nearly nine years. "Some days it feels like ninety years, some days it feels like ... nine months ... it just depends on, you know, what kind of day you're having." Founded in the late 1880s, Mayfield University was a private, liberal arts institution located in the central Midwest with a student population of 1500. The University offered bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and pre-professional programs within the context of its liberal arts tradition.

Dr. Evans' presidential responsibilities were "kinda from A to Z."

It's a lot of meetings ... whether it's with ... people who report to me directly or ... with committees ... correspondence ... it's more a matter of ... where things come together in the University sort of ... the responsibility is to try as much as possible to see the institution whole ... it's judgment calls you know, all the time ... it's lot of personnel ... kinds of issues ... I'm not sure how to, you know, it was a lot easier when I taught English, people you know, you say "What do you do?" Well ... you teach ... these three or four classes and you do research and ... you write and you publish and ... give papers and that kind of thing and this is a different kind of job.

Reading was still a favorite activity and hobby for Claire. "Working on new things" and "a sense of creativity" inspired her both personally and professionally. Working at least fifty hours each week made it difficult to maintain a sense of balance in her life, but the birth of a grandchild gave her reason to reprioritize. Upon retirement, she planned to move closer to her children to "make up for the missed time." From her feminist perspective, she acknowledged the need for social improvements related to childcare. "I am a feminist and any woman who isn't – should be! We need to get to the place where men are caretakers for children. We've made changes, but when it comes down to it, things are not too different."

Claire learned several life lessons from her childhood. "It probably sounds hokey, but things like hard work, honesty, treating others as you want to be treated, and rich or poor, to respect others – we're all equal." The most vivid individuals in her memory were family; one of her friends with whom she stayed in touch; and the person who was the pastor of her church when she was a young girl. The most vivid places in her memory were "home and church." One of Claire's earliest childhood memories was a time when she was "around 2 ½ or something."

I was out with my father – I guess he must have been raking leaves or something – and I got down in one of the window wells, and it wasn't really all that deep, but somehow I got down in there and I couldn't get out again, and ... that was scary, I guess. But ... that was one of my earliest memories, actually.

### *Within-Case Analysis*

#### *A Summary of Answers to the Research Questions*

The text below is a summary of responses to the grand tour questions and sub-questions.

When asked what she was like as a little girl, President Evans described a very shy, well-behaved, ambitious young girl who excelled in school and loved to read. She was “a bookworm.” She and her younger sister grew up in a safe, lower to middle-class neighborhood in a small Texas town. “Family, church, and school” were the main influences on her life as a young girl. Education was a value and priority in the family and both Claire and her sister were expected to attend college.

Claire's parents provided stability to her childhood. Her father worked two jobs and her mother stayed home until she went to high school. Because of limited financial resources, the family's leisure time together consisted of meals and summer vacations to a nearby state to visit family. Claire's leisure time included unstructured activities with her sister and the neighborhood kids. In addition to playing house, fort, and jacks, they enjoyed “a lot of outside stuff” such as baseball and “hanging out.” Claire took ballet lessons for one year and piano lessons for three. She enjoyed going to the movies, but rarely had the opportunity to do so because of limited funds.

Claire's love of reading directly impacted her childhood career aspirations. She planned to be a librarian until she discovered that librarians "didn't get to read all the time." As an adult, Claire described her career path as "one challenge after another." Her career path reflected "a lot of moves" as she followed her husband for his career opportunities and relocated to advance in her own career. She taught college English for twenty-two years before transitioning into administrative work. In addition to serving as president of Mayfield University, Dr. Evans was an accomplished author, poet, and editor.

The life course experiences that characterized Claire's career path included her college education, marriage, graduate education, birth of two children, and divorce.

### *Lifespan Themes*

Claire's life was characterized by the following three themes: (a) reading was a lifelong interest and activity, (b) she was ambitious and driven, and (c) she was impacted by social norms for girls and women. These themes were reflected throughout her life course stages and life course experiences.

#### *Reading was a lifelong interest and activity.*

Reading was a constant throughout the entirety of Claire's life. During the interview, when asked to explain what she was like as a little girl, she described herself as "a bookworm" who read all the time. As a child, reading was her favorite activity and a source of ideas. Reading was one of several catalysts for change that impacted Claire's development in college. In addition to the people she met and the exposure to new ideas, reading contributed to the transformation she experienced as a college student. As was

the case during her childhood, reading was Claire's favorite activity and main interest as an adult. During the interview, she identified reading as her hobby.

During the course of Claire's life, reading affected her professional interests and career choices. After discovering that librarians didn't spend all their time reading, she dismissed her desire to be a librarian. Her interest in English classes led to her undergraduate and graduate degrees in that discipline. She taught English at the college level for twenty-two years and at one point in her career, served as chairperson of the English department at Miller University. As an accomplished author, poet, and editor, her publications were extensive.

*Ambitious and driven.*

Claire was an ambitious little girl, but she did not describe herself as such when she was growing up. Although she could not identify the origin of her ambition, she knew it was a personal characteristic she always had. Similarly, she always had a strong inner drive and described herself as "driven." As a young girl, Claire's exposure to women who worked and raised a family at the same time was limited. Despite the lack of role models, Claire still planned to work and raise a family – to "do the whole thing."

Claire's mother advised her to marry an ambitious man, but Claire believed she was the ambitious one in her marriage. In the midst of moving for her husband's career and simultaneously raising a family, she completed her graduate education at the Ph.D. level. During this phase of her life, she was responsible for the roles of wife, mother, and graduate student. When Claire attended graduate school, there were few women pursuing

an education at that level; as a result, there were very few mentors for women in higher education.

Claire's ambition and drive were apparent in her career path and how she described that journey as "one challenge after another." When others told Claire she couldn't do something, she disagreed and embraced the challenge. As a result, her journey was comprised of a series of challenges she accepted one step at a time. She took responsibility for her career path and believed it was a consequence of her abilities or lack thereof – and not a consequence of location determined by a partner's job.

*Impacted by societal norms for girls and women.*

Claire was aware of and compliant with social norms for girls and women during her life and she was successful in spite of them. Claire was very aware of how little girls should and should not be while growing up. Girls typically didn't participate in sports or athletics and it "wasn't nice" for girls to be ambitious. Women didn't go to graduate school in large numbers and the numbers of women who simultaneously worked and took care of a family were limited. The types of jobs available to women were few and included a nurse, a librarian, a teacher, and a housewife.

Despite these social norms, Claire persisted and achieved. She was ambitious, but careful not to describe herself as such as a young girl. It never occurred to her that she would not be employed; instead, she envisioned herself having both a career and a family, which she did. She started graduate school with the intention of earning a doctorate, a goal she eventually achieved. The women's movement was not yet fully underway during Claire's childhood, but it later gave a language and voice to her

thoughts and feelings as a young woman. During the interview, she identified herself as a feminist. Claire's ambition and drive, as well as her intellect and abilities, contributed to her successful career path during several decades of transition for women.

### *Epiphanies or Turning Point Experiences*

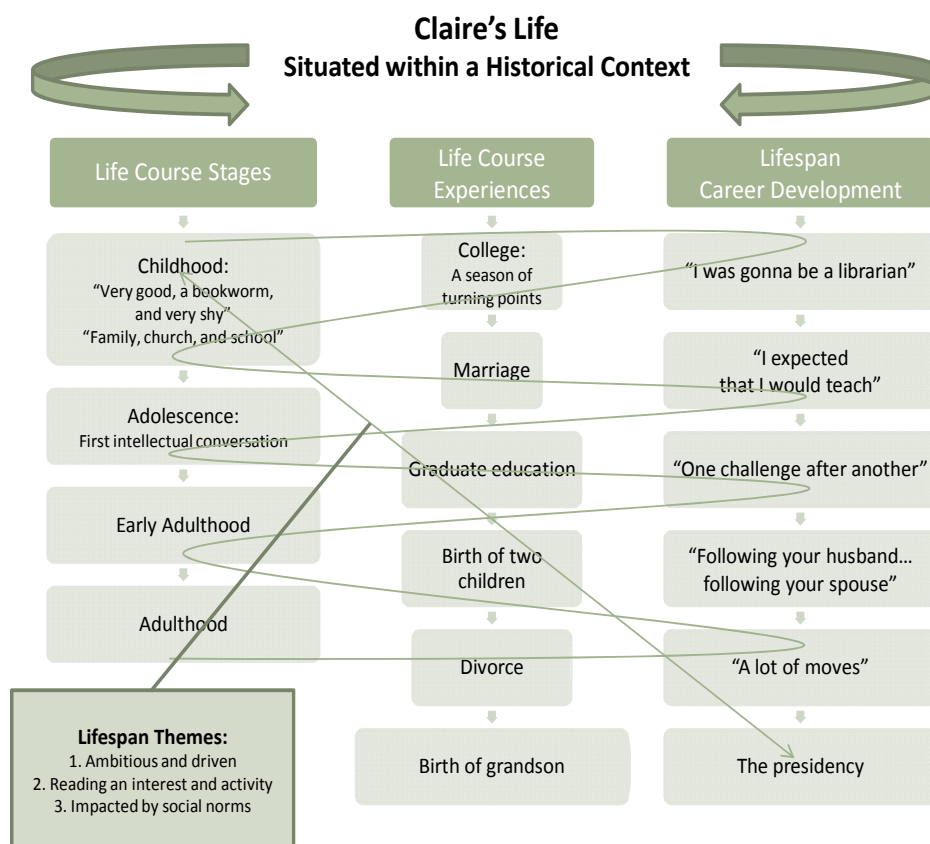
Claire did not have any epiphanies or turning points during her childhood. Her lunch time conversation with Charles Livingston during her senior year of high school, however, was a turning point in her adolescence. Their conversation validated Claire's intellect and for this reason, Charlie was a pivotal person in her life. In college, Claire was drawn to people who engaged in intellectual conversations like the one she and Charlie shared that autumn afternoon. Claire's vivid recollection of her conversation with Charlie, as well as its significance to her as a young girl and as an adult, was apparent during the interview. According to Denzin, the experience qualified as a "relived, retrospectively meaningful epiphany" (1989a, p. 130).

Some of the turning points Claire experienced as a young woman in college changed the course of her life. Her career was directly impacted by her decision to pursue English rather than elementary education; the realization that graduate school was a realistic possibility for her; and, as a result of Mary Buntings' presentation, that career options other than teaching elementary school existed for women. Because of the significant impact on her career and life, those experiences were "major turning point experiences" that qualified as major epiphanies (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129).

Claire also experienced several minor epiphanies as a college student. Denzin defined the "illuminative, minor epiphany" (1989a, p. 129) as an experience that



“symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person’s life” (Denzin, 1989, p. 70). The minor epiphany “brings to the surface and illuminates what has been, in the past, a break, or rupture, in the relationship” (Denzin, 1989a, p. 130) or life. Claire’s exploration of religious beliefs outside her Baptist upbringing and her eventual participation in more a liberal religion illuminated her decision to replace religious convictions that originated in her childhood. Discovering her independence and freedom while in college was a minor epiphany that shed light on the limits of her pre-college home life, which she described as a “sheltered world” defined by others’ rules and ideas. Claire was first empowered by the women’s movement as a college student. The personal strength and confirmation she gained from the movement illuminated her struggle with societal norms and expectations for girls and women.



*Figure 1.* The conceptual model that represents Claire's life from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which her lifespan career development evolved.

## Olivia

*Determined to Change*

We fought endlessly over what I was going to wear ... I would change my clothes at the bus stop. I would take in my bag what I wanted to wear. We fought over what color socks I would wear when I was really little. She liked colored socks, because they were easier to wash. So she would provide me with the color that matched the little dress I was wearing and I liked white socks for whatever reason and I would take white socks to school and put them on at school. Once she came to pick me up early and discovered me in the wrong socks ... she made most of my clothes and I hated them.

*Olivia's Childhood: Not "particularly fond memories of growing up"*

Olivia Lyons was the younger of two children, born to parents who were "children of the Depression." She and her older sister, Maggie, grew up in Murray, Massachusetts, a small, isolated, New England town with a population of approximately 2000. The Murray school system was limited and didn't offer daycare, pre-school, or kindergarten. Consequently, Olivia stayed at home with her mother for five and a half years. No other children lived in the neighborhood, so she didn't have playmates until she went to school.

As a first grader, Olivia did not like school and at times, it was "pretty traumatic" for her. She was a "very smart ... and kind of precocious" little girl who already knew how to read when she started first grade, and as a result, she found the classroom quite boring. In addition to being bored, Olivia was "very, very shy" and afraid of the other kids. Her shyness greatly affected her ability to interact with other children and ultimately, it affected her attendance at school. She missed forty-five days of first grade because of stomach aches and her dislike of school. She "didn't know how to socialize

with the other kids,” who “all seemed to know how to get along.” That, in particular, was very painful for Olivia. On her worst days, she called her mother who in turn, picked her up from school and took her home.

Olivia “really loved” her second grade teacher, Miss Currie, who made her feel more comfortable and challenged at school. Miss Currie understood Olivia’s need for additional stimulation in the classroom and allowed her to progress at a faster rate. Olivia learned to “speed” through “incredibly boring” second grade assignments so she could read special books she brought from home. If Miss Currie wasn’t at school, Olivia called her mother and told her she needed to go home.

Olivia had a lot of free time growing up and had “very few scheduled events, very, very little of that.” She didn’t participate in any sports because sports programs for girls didn’t exist at the time. She played the piano and the violin, but spent much of her time doing what she loved most – reading. Olivia “was known in the family as somebody that was always disappearing to read a book ... [and] was really, nose in the book all the time.”

Olivia also spent time with her “really good friend,” Sally, who was younger than her. Olivia and Sally didn’t do much “outdoorsy kind of stuff [because] girls just didn’t.” They “just did mostly dolls and ... girl kind of games and things.” Olivia and Sally were very fond of paper dolls in particular.

Maggie was seven years older than Olivia. The sisters were not close and Maggie was in fact, “pretty mean” to Olivia. Because Maggie was older, Olivia felt her big sister

“was not a presence ever in the home.” Maggie “had her own world ... and was very different.” At times, Olivia didn’t even feel like she had a sister.

The only game Maggie ever played with Olivia was school; unfortunately, this was often when Maggie’s meanness was most obvious and hurtful. For instance, when Olivia disappointed her big sister or did something she didn’t like, Maggie would say, “Well, I *was* going to play school with you, but now I won’t.” Regardless of whether Maggie had the intention of playing school with her little sister or not, Olivia would “dissolve into tears” because she really wanted to play school. Olivia’s rebellion to Maggie’s behavior included the vow to never be a teacher.

Part of my rebellion ... to that ... once I got old enough to be  
pissed off at her for not wanting to play school with me [was] so,  
“I’m never going to be a teacher.” That was the one thing I swore  
I wouldn’t be.

Within their family, Maggie was perceived as the “good girl” and Olivia was perceived the “bad girl” who was disobedient, rebellious, “and all of those things ... [about] place in family.” The girls attended the same school for a few years. Obedient Maggie “was always the principal’s ... messenger,” and it was not uncommon for her to deliver messages from the principal’s office to Olivia’s classroom – without speaking to or even acknowledging her younger sister.

Maggie “always wanted to be a teacher” and pursued that dream by attending a teachers college as an undergraduate. When Maggie started her doctoral program at a university in western Massachusetts, Olivia was an undergraduate at a nearby college, also located in western Massachusetts. This close proximity and their shared professional interests led to a turning point in the sisters’ relationship. They “discovered each other

outside of the family dynamics in a professional arena and became instant friends,” as if they had never known each other. Finally, the sisters experienced what they never experienced as siblings at home. For Olivia, part of the appeal of reuniting with her older sister was also the fact that she had a car!

While growing up, Olivia and her mother “had a pretty stormy, tempestuous relationship.” Her mother was very controlling and Olivia didn’t like being controlled. “It was just very clear that she needed to ... tell me every move to make, basically, and I was pretty clear that I didn’t want anybody to tell me every move to make.”

She insisted on the way I wore my [hair] ... I didn’t get my hair cut until I was twelve. And she liked long hair and she gave me home permanents. ‘Cause my hair was very straight, but she wanted me to have curly hair!

Because of her mother’s controlling nature, the two of them “fought over absolutely everything.” Olivia eventually came to the conclusion “it didn’t pay” to argue with her mother and “found ways to just avoid fighting with her.” Olivia also attributed the stormy relationship with her mother to the five and a half years spent together before Olivia went to first grade. “My mother and I didn’t get along well at all, probably because we spent so much time together.” Olivia realized her mother did “the real work of raising [the] children;” yet Olivia did not like her and “didn’t even want to be around her.”

The “biggest continuity” in Olivia’s childhood memories surrounded her father and the role he played in her life. Olivia was very fond of her father and simply “adored” him. Her father “was just a very lovable person” who was “very supportive” of his

daughters. He wanted to make it possible for Olivia and Maggie to do anything they wanted to do.

After finishing high school at the age of sixteen, her father went to a one-year business school. When he was seventeen years old, he started “working as a teller at a bank and stayed in that bank until he was seventy.” When he retired, he held a leadership role of “vice-president or whatever rank he reached in that little bank.” Her father “worked a lot” and “worked really long hours.”

Olivia worked in her father’s bank during the summer starting at age fifteen or sixteen. Working at the bank provided opportunities for Olivia and her father to get to know one another. They “talked a lot about the bank and about his work and ... he liked to talk about ideas sometimes.” The two of them talked quite a bit, but “always about ... very neutral things from an emotional point of view.”

She remembered the time spent with her father” for months and months and months,” especially their visit to Fenway Park. Olivia had no interest in baseball games, but listened “to baseball games with him [her father] at night ‘cause when he’d come home late, that’s what he liked to do [and] that was a fun thing to do with him.” The two of them also shared the Sunday New York Times each week.

He would bring the Sunday New York Times home every Sunday. Sunday he didn’t go to work, he’d bring the Sunday Times home and that was sort of the first time I realized there was a world outside our little world. So from a very young age, I would read the Sunday New York Times and ... owed it all to him that you know, I knew there was more to life than the little town I was growing up in.

One of things Olivia liked best about her father was that he didn't try to control her as her mother did.

[He] didn't try to control me particularly. I think it's a classic relationship of ... him ensuing she would take care of all the, any discipline problems or anything like that ... I think he deferred to her and he was very quiet.

He was deaf in one ear and it depended on which ear she was sitting – never knew if it was his right or his left! It seemed to move around! And I think that's how he dealt with conflict. There wasn't much explicit conflict ever.

As a result of her father's support and generosity, Olivia had the opportunity to attend a prestigious, private women's college.

My father was well-paid, but it was so much more money than had been spent on my sister's [college] education and as a proportion of his salary ... but as a percentage of his salary, it was very comparable to what ... somebody working, a bank executive would be making and ... anywhere between a third and a quarter of their, their gross income and that's what it was for him, but ... he wanted me to go where I wanted to go and was very ... generous and insistent on not letting the money hold me back.

Olivia viewed her father as a role model and mentor, even though her career path and choice of work didn't resemble his at all. "He had certain values ... he was a very generous person ... he really is a role model for me, although I don't do anything like what he did or anything like that."

Olivia's parents talked openly about their expectations for their daughters.

They were also very clear on ... they were good about this – they didn't expect that we would necessarily marry and have children if that was what would make us happy, but ... I remember my father sort of really being quite clear about the expectation that, and he was ... kind of the opposite of controlling and I don't quite know how this fits in with my mother's controlling nature, but ... you need to do what makes you happy, not what everybody else is



doing ... that was always wonderful ... There's never any pressure to be different than I was – really .... You see how... much I would have had to struggle had there been some expectation of marriage or staying at home or whatever.

Academics came easily to both girls, but they knew they were still expected to do their best in school. Their mother didn't finish high school because her family was poor, yet she maintained clear academic expectations for Olivia and Maggie.

My mother would always say ... and I think she meant it ... “I don't care ... if you get B's and C's if you're doing your best; but if you ... can get an A, you have to get an A!” You know, that was pretty clear – that you had to do your best.

Olivia's childhood was not a very fearful one. Social situations made her “most unhappy, if not fearful,” and she was “probably was more afraid of social situations than anything.” She was very self-aware and conscious of her shyness and fear of socializing. Her self-image was affected by her appearance and demeanor and her self-esteem “was all academic and intellectual.” For example, in the fourth grade, she started wearing glasses because she was myopic. After this change, she viewed herself as the “the shy, smart girl who wore glasses.” Two years later, in sixth grade, Olivia grew to five feet, eight inches in height. She continued to grow and was five feet, ten inches by the time she started high school. She then considered herself “the shy, tall, smart girl with glasses.”

By the time she got to high school, she perceived herself as a “nerd.” Dating was very common during that time and it was common at her high school in particular; however, it wasn't part of her high school experience and being “a foot taller than most

of the boys” did not work in her favor. Olivia’s lack of dating contributed to her feeling “socially retarded or isolated.”

Through personal experience, Olivia learned a valuable life lesson during her adolescence. “If you could find something to do that you’re passionate about ... that you love doing, you’re very, very lucky ... You’re so lucky if you can find the thing that ... engages you.” For Olivia, “it was really kind of the life of the mind, and reading, and then writing, that was such a captivating activity.”

[I] felt so lucky to discover something where I was not thinking about myself anymore. But I was thinking about an idea ... a value or other people or something like that. So something that ... you’re so lucky if you can find the thing that ... engages you. Something that just absorbs you and takes you out of yourself ... so that you’re not—and ... I think self-consciousness is a horrible thing for children and ... something we all suffer from ... feeling that everybody’s looking at you and nothing you’re doing is right.

Writing was always the thing that ... you start and five hours later, it’s what, isn’t there a word called “flow experiences,” when you ... don’t notice the passage of time, you’re totally absorbed in what you’re doing, and ... you aren’t aware of your body and you aren’t aware of ... all the things around you. Those are wonderful things ... to have happen. And I think I learned early on how wonderful they were ... and clung to the hope that I would always be able to find them.

A turning point in Olivia’s life was when she got her contact lenses at age sixteen. She “hated being the tall girl with glasses,” so the shift to contact lenses was a significant and meaningful change. Olivia’s glasses were symbolic of two realms of her life.

Those glasses were a symbol of ... everything that I kind of valued in myself on one hand, but that made me stick out – And made me not be able to realize other aspects of my development.

Her parents knew she hated being the tall girl with glasses and “were wonderful about that.” “They were really worried about these radical new things they heard called contact

lenses and they couldn't quite understand them." They took her to Boston for what they believed was the best eye care possible and purchased the lenses, which "cost a fortune." Olivia thought it was "really pioneering" for parents to get her contacts, especially because they were from a little town in Massachusetts.

Olivia's earliest and most vivid childhood memory was "waiting for the school bus the first day of school." Many of her other memories were "around school ... teaching and learning." Olivia was "a good kid" who, with the exception of a detention for talking in high school chemistry, did not get in trouble at school. Academically, school was a comfortable place for her and she was drawn to some people in that environment. For example, teachers were important to Olivia. "They ... were very important in my life because school was very important in my life and I can remember each one of them."

She loved her second grade teacher, Miss Currie, but didn't love "another one [teacher] until high school." In high school, Olivia had "fantastic English teachers" with whom she experienced "classic moments of having a mentor and really ... learning." She was rigorously trained in writing by one high school teacher in particular – "one of those really dedicated teachers who really taught [her] to write, really taught [her] to think." Her relationships with the rest of her teachers were distant and "even with the ones [she] liked, she didn't have those "special relationships that some people form." She looked up to some of her teachers "a great deal" and held a few in high regard, but Olivia didn't consider them heroes in her life.

I don't think I have a lot of heroes in my life. I certainly have people I've been very grateful to ... for mentoring me. But ... not to the extent that I've heard other people talk about teachers and professors and mentors.

Olivia had female friends in high school, but none were "really ... close" and she didn't have a "best friend or anything like that." With time, she began to feel a bit more comfortable socially in high school.

I'd been to school with these kids forever, and then we had a regional school in high school so the class, the classes got a little bigger and I certainly ... had fun, and shared interests in clothes with my friends who were female.

### *Confidence and Ambition*

Olivia always felt some degree of confidence. Although she didn't know for sure where it all came from, she acknowledged having it. "It would never occur to me that I couldn't do something." Although she needed others' approval at various times in her life, she also recognized the approval she felt within herself.

[It] felt realistic, but again, something I wouldn't have thought of without ... I think I need, like many people ... I'm not sure I need it so much anymore, but I needed to feel people's approval ... that this was sanctioned ... although it was coming from inside in some driven way.

Olivia never considered herself incapable of doing what she aspired to do. "I don't think I ever thought there was anything I couldn't do."

Olivia's identity in her hometown contributed to her confidence, drive, and ambition.

[I] felt pretty driven, pretty ambitious ... from being in a little town where ... somebody sort of with high IQ stood out and was always ... singled out as the smart person, not always for the good, in

terms of the community approval, but ... that was my identity ... that probably gave me a lot of confidence.

I was very ambitious ... first I only wanted to go to Radcliffe. And then I discovered that if you went to Radcliffe, you were kind of a second class citizen to people at Harvard. So I said, "Okay, then I want to go to a women's college where there isn't a men's college." So I only applied to Benton and Smith and the University of Massachusetts as my safety school. I, like many people growing up in Massachusetts, I didn't think you could get a good education outside of New England.

She was the first young person from her home town of Murray to attend a Seven Sister or Ivy League college, a route she intentionally forged for herself in spite of some resentment in the community.

Olivia attributed the origin of her ambition to her two grandmothers, both of whom represented the notion, "a life of the mind," to her. "I had ... two grandmothers ... that I admired very much ... who were both extraordinary women and extraordinarily intellectual women, I would say, for their times ... it [ambition] has to have come from knowing them."

Olivia "adored" and was closest to her maternal grandmother, who was "a delightful, witty, funny, uneducated, but self-educated person." Olivia spent a lot of time with her. Her grandmother "had a kind of harrowing life;" yet "throughout it all, read the dictionary when she didn't have anything else to read [and] ... she just loved words and language." She was not a typical woman of the era.

There was a confidential chat in the Boston Globe, which is where housewives wrote in and gave each other advice. It went on for years and years and she was a constant participant in that, her pen name, they had pseudonyms, was Higher Ground and ... we have all her letters. She was just ... that generation of philosopher ... in the home, kind of thing.

She was an inspiration to Olivia and supported Olivia's self-perception of having "a life of the mind."

Olivia's father's mother wasn't a typical woman of the era either, but for different reasons. Olivia also admired her paternal grandmother, although "she wasn't close to her the way she was close to [her] maternal grandmother." Her father's mother also represented to Olivia "that sort of notion that a woman would have a life of the mind."

Her paternal grandmother attended a four-year college, earned a degree, [and] graduated from Salem State in the late 1890s, which was very unusual." She taught math and Latin for a few years before getting married and giving birth to a family of four boys. By the time Olivia got to "really know" her grandmother, she was "a very old woman, very deaf and ... not very ... active." What Olivia did witness in her grandmother, though, was inspiring. "She didn't see very well, so she couldn't hear TV, she couldn't ... read ... she had memorized Longfellow's entire oeuvre, so she would sit and recite Evangeline and ... Hiawatha ... just little snippets of seeing that."

### *College*

Olivia majored in English at Benton College. During her college experience, she began to feel even more comfortable with and less afraid of social situations.

I think my early childhood was much more abnormal in those ways, but then I went to college and that was great ... because ... suddenly, everybody was like me ... that's ... pretty transparent and ... classic of ... not having a close relationship to a woman *ever* really ... until I got to college. Didn't even really have close female friends in high school. I had friends – But ... no best friend or anything like that. No sister, didn't like my mother, adored my father.

Spending her junior year of college abroad made a significant impact on Olivia's social growth and development. She went "to a large coeducational ... university in Scotland and had a wonderful time ... had a social life for the first time ... [and] had a steady boyfriend." Spending the year abroad was a "wonderful opportunity" to rewrite her social side.

People thought I was interesting because I was American and I really ... I think I recreated my personality that year ... no one knew who I was, where I was from, that I was the tall, shy, gawky girl. I was the tall, striking American who ... had nicer clothes than a lot of people did. I had more money, because this is the day when the dollar was strong, so I could do things with people ... my friends were the cool people at the University of St. Andrews ... so I really reinvented myself and shed all of that baggage and of course, some of it sticks with you, but it's – It was wonderful opportunity to ... rewrite ... the social side of myself.

While Olivia was at the University of St. Andrews, she "didn't do anything academically that year." "It was a very bad year, but you can't do both at once ... you can, but I couldn't. I needed that break ... so then I could bring the two together. I needed to develop that side."

Despite the path Olivia paved for herself to an Ivy League institution and her strong desire to attend Benton College, the institution was not a very empowering place for her after all.

I had a lot of doubts about my academic ability after I graduated from Benton ... it wasn't a very empowering place for me because ... it was a kind of boot camp mentality and so we were told, I remember the dean of students saying the first night we were on campus, "Fifty percent of you will be in the bottom of the class." 'Course you know, I, "Oh, okay! I'll be in the bottom of the class!"

When I chose to go abroad, the English department sort of washed their hands of me ... if you weren't there for the junior year, you were never gonna get high honors and so on and so forth. And so, I got very good grades. I did honors, but I only got honors. I didn't get highest honors ... but I, I graduated with greatest distinction, which was a GPA thing, and I had never gotten that many As ... it was really tough to get an A.

I went into the ... registrar's office to get a transcript when I was trying to decide whether I was going to graduate school or going to go abroad for a year and discovered that I was seventh in the class. And I hadn't known that and no one had been pushing me, saying, "Go to graduate school." You know, I'd had some good teachers who'd given me some good grades in English, but I hadn't gotten that message that I was very good, which I needed. I think I needed that...sanction. So that was very helpful to know that I was seventh in my class. It made me think ... "Maybe I could do something," but I was still in sort of ... a more drift-like mode.

Returning to England for a year after graduating from college helped her solidify her plans to attend graduate school.

And I in fact ... went back and worked in England for a year when I graduated from college, thinking that that had been such a happy time and that that's really where I wanted to be and I wanted to be with that boyfriend, and ... it didn't really work out. It wasn't me – completely. I needed to go back to school and continue to develop myself, but I needed to find out that that was important. I needed to go away from school for a while too. It just took a year to figure out where I wanted to go. But it was a very important year.

After graduating from college, Olivia experienced a turning point on a flight back to England. While on the plane, a young man who had just graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology asked her what her plans were. The conversation contrasted their philosophies and preferences.

And I said, "Well, I think I'm going to take the year off. I'm not sure it's the right thing to do, but you know, how bad can it be? I'll go to London, I'll try to get a job, it'll be okay. I'll make the most



of it.” And he was just shocked. His philosophy was, you asked, “What is *the* thing I can do next year to *maximize* my opportunities” – not “How do I make the most of whatever just happens to come my way.”

And *my* attitude has always been the, “Let’s make the most of what comes my way,” rather than, “Let me strategize.” I’m not a good chess player. “Let me not think through the next move and decide right now what’s the best way to get where I’m going.”

Olivia received a fellowship to pursue her master’s degree in Old English at a large public university in the Midwest. It was there where she first faced the challenge of conversing with a group of people that included both women and men.

I didn’t really actually learn to be comfortable having an argument ... certainly not having an argument, maybe not even having a conversation in ... a mixed group with males, because I went to a women’s college. That came much more slowly and it really wasn’t until I went to graduate school and I saw attractive women in my classes who nonetheless spoke their mind. And so, “Oh! I could do that!” You know, and it wouldn’t make me less attractive. It would be okay and the kind of male I might be interested in would be alright with that.

But really took a long time, again, women’s college kind of held me back ... in developing that side, because it’s one thing ... they’ll say women’s colleges are valuable, because ... you’ll have more air time in the classroom, you don’t have to compete with men. But I never did learn how to compete with men therefore, until I got into those ... graduate school circumstances.

Although Olivia grew more comfortable communicating with and among men in graduate school, she always felt a slight degree of discomfort in such situations.

It didn’t completely change ever. I don’t think it ever changes completely for anybody. I guess I was always afraid, I think women of my generation, I hope less so now ... I always felt I was being judged as, “Was I feminine enough? Was I attractive enough?” I was afraid, in part ... that being too articulate or ... just speaking, arguing ... would make me less attractive ... in some ways ... I wanted everybody’s approval, I think it goes back

to we're very human ... so it felt really good to feel, to figure out that there were some people who'd like me if I had a mind and again, a point of view and ... ideas. So it felt good.

To her surprise, Olivia was elected by her fellow graduate students to represent them on a faculty/student committee.

[A] turning point was when I was elected in graduate school, there was a committee ... of ... faculty and graduate students, it was like the faculty-graduate student relations committee or something like this. I was elected to it by the other graduate students and I was shocked. I mean it wasn't anything you ran for or I didn't even know about it. I thought, "Oh! They think I would be good at this, so I'll have to get interested and be good at it." And I was. I loved going to those meetings and talking about things that I didn't even think about before.

Olivia met her husband, Evan Scott, when she was working on her master's degree. After marrying, they moved to the west coast, where Olivia earned her Ph.D. at a large, public, research university.

*Olivia's Career Path: "Open to all kinds of possibilities"*

When Olivia was a child, she wanted to be a ballet dancer. At one point, she wanted to be a biochemist because she "did a project in tenth grade biology on biochemistry and that sounded interesting." While she did well in math and chemistry during high school, she was not fond of these subject areas in college.

When Olivia was growing up, women were encouraged and expected to become teachers because teaching was one of the few professions available to them at the time. Olivia recognized the intelligence and potential of her female, high school English teachers and the career limitations they faced. [They] "were so bright," [but] teaching

was “one of the only careers open to them.” In spite of the limited careers available to women, Olivia “wanted to be something different” and swore she wouldn’t be a teacher.

That was the one thing I swore I wouldn’t be ... so, I finally succumbed and ... what did I want to be when I grew up? Oh, you know, the usual ... never a teacher though. The one thing I became.

Olivia described her career path as “The liking to continually challenge myself to learn new things ... not liking to say no to opportunity, and ... just being very lucky at having good opportunities put themselves in my path. And that’s not something I’ve done ... like anybody can control.”

It kind of goes back to what’s the metaphor for my career path ... I think ... the people who said the right thing to me at the right time fit my mentality and my style because I was ready to take opportunities, but I wasn’t eager to ... lay out a road map for my life and then kind of ... as I saw it, ruthlessly pursue it ... at the expense of other opportunities ... I wanted to stay open to all kinds of possibilities, because I didn’t really know where I wanted to be and end point to be.

Her desire to be constantly challenged to learn something new was prevalent throughout her career journey.

I wanted to try one more thing and one more thing, so I think that what I’m trying to describe in part as a career path, has to do with this ... need to be constantly challenged to, to learn something new. I think that’s an on-going ... characteristic.

There’s also an element of ... enthusiasm, excitement, and ... I think some people are really good at developing expertise in an area. They like to just ... continue to know more and more about whatever it is they know something about and kind of hone and perfect and continually update that expertise. And that doesn’t really appeal to me.

Throughout her career, Olivia was “very bad at saying no to opportunities.”

I use to say that I was a drifter ... I'm not sure that's exactly true, but I do think what it gets at, is the fact that I think I have been very bad at saying no to opportunities. Just a personality trait that I don't like to, if somebody says, "How would you like to do this?" it's very hard for me to say no ... it just seems like it might be an opportunity that I should see.

And I think other people are more cautious about that sort of thing and know their limits a little better. I think sometimes I get in over my head quite easily because I like to take things on ... and so when opportunities come along, I've always leapt at them rather than being cautious and saying, "Well, maybe, maybe not."

Olivia also attributed her career path to luck. "[I was] very lucky at having good opportunities put themselves in my path."

Olivia experienced several turning points during her career. Within the context of each incident, the words or actions of others were pivotal to Olivia's experience. For instance, one turning point early in her career involved the process of transforming her dissertation into a book and how she described that project before and after considering a colleague's suggestion.

I entered the job market in the mid-70s, I finished my Ph.D. in '75, there were no teaching jobs, I got a post-doc for three years. It was a great opportunity, but it wasn't a lot of fun .... My first teaching job, I still was trying to figure out how to kind of publish my way out of that institution, which wasn't quite as strong as where I wanted to be.

And a colleague said to me, "Well stop calling the damn thing your manuscript and call it your book!" And that was just what I needed somebody to say! And I stopped calling it ... I used to say very apologetically, "Well, I have this dissertation that I'm trying to turn into a book" ... And he said, "Stop saying that! Just say I'm writing a book!" I did that and that worked! It was so simple!

During and after graduate school, Olivia "conceded" to teaching; however, she didn't commit herself to being a professor. She was very content teaching and decided to

continue doing so. “And I thought, ‘Okay, I love what I’m doing. We’ll see where it goes.’” As a result, Olivia was a faculty member “for many, many years.” In her “academic life,” she liked to “work on a project, write a book, and then move on to another project ... and it would all be in the same domain.”

I’m trained as a medievalist, for instance. And my first book was basically my dissertation topic on the Anglo-Saxon poetry. My second book was on Chaucer because I had landed jobs where I was teaching Chaucer, not Anglo-Saxon poetry and my ... research interests always follow my teaching. My third book was on contemporary women writers and the ... feminist analysis of motherhood and that grew out of my teaching and my own personal experience.

Approximately every five years, she found herself wanting a new project. “When I decided to move into administration, it was really because I didn’t know what the next project, from a scholarly point of view, really was, and I wanted to let the field lie fallow until I felt ... really motivated.”

Olivia experienced both blatant and subtle gender politics during her first two teaching positions. In retrospect, she didn’t know which was worse. Her first job at a small college in the eastern United States proved to have “a lot of gender politics very explicitly.”

The first place was great in that my consciousness was raised and I got together with other women and we started the faculty for women’s concerns ... and ... were just very politically active and that was a very important developmental stage for me, because I’d gone to a women’s college and just before the second wave of feminism kind of really sprang forth ... I was in a field that was very open to women – English literature. What could be more friendly to women? And so I had never really appreciated or experienced discrimination, certainly not harassment, until I went out ... into the ... male-dominated academic environment. And

there ... I wasn't harassed, although I came close a couple of times.

But it certainly felt, there were four young women on non-tenure track positions at the institution where I first taught, and ... no one could remember our names. And they would write us notes. We were all Carol. They could never figure out ... it was just very, very clear. But that was a good thing in some ways. We knew what other women were up against.

Olivia's second teaching job was at Hillside College, a private, liberal arts college located on the east coast. She held her tenure-track position there for twenty-two years. Although Hillside was formerly a men's college, the gender politics there were "much more subtle" than what Olivia experienced at her prior institution. The environment was not supportive of women and the faculty was dominated by men. "Faculty meetings were never comfortable for women ... for ... speaking up ... they were dominated by male faculty."

It had been a former men's college and ... it had very few of the trappings, because it didn't have fraternities and all of that, but some of the remnants ... were the ... dominant ... eloquent male voices who would hold forth and it was very hard.

My heart took, for years, my heart would beat fast. I would ... very, very timidly say what I had to say. I don't think anybody recognized it. I think I was perceived as somebody who was kind of judgmental and sitting there watching and waiting, and then saying something, but I was actually sitting there quivering.

I heard that from somebody ... that I managed to, to kind of cover up the fear ... by appearing to be quite ... disdainful of ... what was going on, but I was actually wishing I could jump in and ... trying to figure out how. It was ... gendered, very highly gendered and in subtle ways.

Despite the male dominance among the faculty, Olivia spoke out and actively participated in discussions and meetings.

Prior to becoming president of Kellison College, Olivia was dean of the faculty or provost at Hillside College. Unfortunately, her mother's reaction to the news suggested a lack of faith in her daughter.

But I would never occur to me – I remember being shocked, my mother, when I told my mother that I was going to be provost at Hillside College, which was equivalent to dean of the faculty, and she know, “What’s that?” and I explained to her what it was and she said, “Well that sounds like an interesting job, honey, but why would they ever think you could do that?”

Another turning point occurred during her first tenure-track position, when she received several compliments from the Hillside College president.

I ... got a tenure-track position and ... I still ... don't know ... why he did this, but the president of the college, which was Hillside at that time ... I was pregnant with my first child, so I had been there ... two years. He asked me to come to lunch one day, and he kinda sat me down and he looked at me and he said, “Well not now, but someday you'll be a good administrator.” And I, you know, again, classic turning point! “Why do you think that?” He said, “You're clear, you're well-organized, you're articulate.” He named all these virtues ... and from that time on I thought, “Oh! Well.”

The first time Olivia considered the presidency was another turning point in her career.

I remember walking to work ... on the Hillside campus ... someone had just suggested to me that I might want to be the dean of the faculty and I remember walking across the campus thinking, “Well, if I did that, where would it be headed?” ... I don't like to think too far in advance, but I couldn't help thinking, “What would that mean in terms of a career path? What am I aspiring to?” And ... I remember thinking, “Well, I guess the one thing I would see as a kind of goal ... it doesn't have to happen, but ... a way to kind of take it to the next level, would be to be a small college president.”

It was the first time the thought had ever entered my head, I think, consciously and it then fast receded ... I wasn't sure. I thought maybe I'd rather go be a provost at a big university ... [or] different options. I could have gone back to the faculty. I almost

did that. But I ... do remember, what was it about that moment – Thinking, “Oh, well that’s where this would go.”

Most turning points Olivia experienced during her career involved suggestions or encouragement from others. Olivia referred to these contributions as “some very lucky breaks” when others directed “very empowering” comments toward her.

I had some very lucky breaks when other people told me things that I didn’t see for myself. And they were very empowering things to be told ... I think people can’t tell you things that are way out of your reach, but if they tell you something that’s just the next level, that’s just the obvious thing to aspire to ... if somebody had said to me, “You should be a college president,” that would have been stupid. That wouldn’t have meant anything.

To say, “You know, you should think about being chair of the English department someday. You’ve got good administrative skills and you could play a leadership role at this college”... that was the right thing to say. And so ... I ... think that’s the hardest thing to talk to somebody and know what to say to them that will be that breakthrough for them that they need and get it at the right level.

Olivia was open to the suggestions others offered. “I was very receptive. I was kind of waiting ... to find the right way to make the next move.”

I also needed ... “Tell me I can do it and I’ll do it, but I won’t push myself forward to do it if you don’t tap me on the shoulder.” So that’s probably a limitation as well. There may have been other things I could have done that nobody told me about. Felt realistic, but again, something I wouldn’t have thought of without ... I think I need, like many people .... I’m not sure I need it so much anymore, but I needed to feel people’s approval ... that this was sanctioned. As well, although it was coming from inside in some driven way.

### *Meeting Dr. Olivia Scott*

Dr. Olivia Scott, president of Kellison College, was a fascinating woman. As she spoke about her role as president, she exuded confidence, enthusiasm, and passion for her work. When the interview focus shifted to her childhood and her life as a young girl, she



openly shared stories about her development, behaviors, relationships, and trials and tribulations of youth.

The more stories I heard, the more I was amazed at the transformation Olivia Scott experienced throughout her life. Her journey took her from an extremely shy little girl to president of a selective liberal arts college in New England, where she led with brilliance, vision, and style. Her “life of the mind,” sense of humor, and self-understanding were apparent during our time together. As she reflected on and articulated the details of her childhood, shy little Olivia seemed worlds away from the impressive professional sitting across from me.

### *The Presidency*

At the time of the interview, Dr. Olivia Scott was beginning her fourth year as president of Kellison College. Located in the Northeast, Kellison was a private, bachelor’s degree-granting, liberal arts college with a total student population of 1,700. No two days in the presidency were the same – an aspect of the job Dr. Scott appreciated. “There is no typical day ... they’re all different, which is one of the nice things about the job ... there’s a lot of variety in the day.” Most days included numerous meetings that generated “a lot of things to think about and a lot of things to do,” as well as opportunities to connect with her senior staff. Her busy schedule was not always conducive to circulating around campus as much as she desired.

I don’t spend much time getting out of the office in a typical day and it’s something I really don’t like, that I’m sort of stuck here and not circulating around the campus as much as I’d like to be.

Because Kellison College was in the midst of a comprehensive campaign, a typical week for President Scott included anywhere from one to four days of travel depending on her destination.

The aspects of the presidency Dr. Scott enjoyed most included college advancement, fund-raising, and friend-raising – tasks that provided opportunities for her to publically celebrate the institution and its mission.

I like very much that the opportunities to talk about what's positive about what we're doing, about the future, about things I have done and ... where they will lead the college ... to solve problems we have or to just do a better job of what we do.

I find that if I'm off campus ... I'm often having a really good time, because the people I'm visiting really want to hear from me. They're very ... gratified that the president has come to visit them and that they're gonna have some ... direct contact with either their alma mater or in the case of parents ... direct contact with somebody who's running the institution where their children are.

There's a kind of appreciation ... for what I'm doing, for my role, and for the institution ... that I really enjoy because it ... enables me to ... think through the ideas and present them in the ways that ... pull it all together ... going out and just ... celebrating the institution and the mission and ... I'm surprised at how much I enjoy that part.

An unpleasant aspect of the job was “the natural negativity of a campus ... reacting to the things a president wants to do.”

I say it's natural 'cause I think it's healthy, that people are always feeling that they have some ownership of what's going on and aren't just ... waiting for the president to tell them what to do. But that's more challenging than going out and ... celebrating the institution and the mission.

One of the biggest challenges President Scott faced in her position was the magnification and distortion of her spoken word.

They tell you ... think of yourself when you speak, as having a megaphone to your lips, and that's really helpful advice. But what they don't go on to say is ... understand that no one will hear what you're saying – they'll hear what they wanted you to say or they didn't want you to say, one or the other. So you have the

megaphone there. Everything you say is magnified, but it's also distorted. And I don't think megaphones distort, so I think we need another metaphor. I find people hear what ... they thought I was gonna' say or they ... wanted me to say ... or again, didn't want me to say.

She also recognized “that your silence is just as loud as the things you say” – a reality that conflicted with her preferred style of communication.

So, if I try to back off of having a decision or making a pronouncement because I think it's not time, the right time or I'm afraid it's gonna be misunderstood, then that silence is ... read as well as having a meaning, so there's no way to ... be more guarded and more reserved and take more time to make your mind up.

And it's my style, and it's maybe a feminine style ... to ... not immediately think I know all the answers, but to try to gather the information and listen and then come back with ... what I see. There isn't a lot of time and patience for that. There isn't a lot of tolerance for that ... this might be institution-specific. It might be that each president follows a ... president who's established one style of communication and ... has to establish her own style when she comes, but I do find that very challenging – Not having the time to ... listen and then formulate my opinion – but being on the spot all the time ... to give ... the answer – right away ... it's a source of frustration, 'cause I often want time to think something through.

Similarly, President Scott found it “very draining” to present or discuss an issue multiple times, especially when she was ready to “cross that off ... [her] list.”

What takes energy – the thing I find very draining – is ... just thinking I'm finished talking about something and having somebody come at it from another angle and complain from another angle ... That takes a lot of energy when ... you think [you can say] “I can cross that off my list.” – “No, I *can't* cross that off my list.” Where am I gonna find the energy for that, 'cause I thought I was through with that and could move on to the next thing. So it's the going back, re-saying it, re-convincing somebody ... I've only done one thing in three years that raised no objections at all, so I think that's says I've been doing the right things.

Dr. Scott led with “a pretty accessible, down-to-earth style.” Consensus, delegation, and empowering others were at the core of her leadership style. “I believe in consensus deeply ... [and] want to get consensus whenever possible. It’s about finding ... an alternative that’s better for everybody and nobody feels like they’ve given up – they feel like they’ve learned something and made a different decision.” Olivia was not a micromanager and her rationale for delegation was aligned with her philosophy of empowering others. “I believe in delegation because when things were delegated to me, I knew I could rise to the occasion and I want to make everybody ... rise to their potential who works for me and with me.” In addition to empowering others, Dr. Scott listened to what they had to say. She acknowledged how others’ work at the College impacted her own.

The role of president at a small college is ... particularly complex in ways that it probably wouldn’t appear to be ... this is such a crazy job – had I known it was such a crazy job, I don’t know if I’d be sitting here ... I knew it in principle, but I didn’t know it in practice ... that you can’t please anybody ... but if I... do it [job] well at all, it’s because other people do their jobs well.

Olivia’s decision-making process was reflected in her leadership style. During the process of gathering all the facts of a situation, she was “easily swayed by the opinions of others;” however, when she had all the facts and was ready to decide, she didn’t change her mind easily. Taking the time to gather information and consider options was a critical step in President Scott’s decision-making process.

I think it’s a theme in the way I manage and the way I lead ... I think it’s hard for other people to get it right away and interestingly enough, just recently I made a presentation about a facilities master plan and ... what I think we need to do this year, and I got feedback from ... one of my vice-presidents, that she said, “I hope

this won't insult you. But people said, 'Wow, Olivia did a great job. You know, she's finally coming into her own.'"

Well I'm not doing anything different. It's just that I now have a vision that's more informed and specific, because I've taken the three years to ... I think it goes back to needing time to think it through and not wanting to speak before I knew what I was talking about.

I was mildly insulted. It's the same way when people say, "My goodness, your hair looks nice today!" And you think, "Well, what did it look like yesterday?!" So I think that is a theme ... that plays out in the way I lead and ... manage now.

I still believe that in the long run, for me there's no other way. That's just the way I do it. I can't change. I can't have a personality change or a gender change or whatever it would be and so people are just gonna have to be patient and if I lose them along the way, so be it, because I will get to where I need to go – My way ... or no way ... I've kind of become much more hardened into that.

President Scott experienced "a very lucky balance" between her personal life and her professional life. Meeting her life partner early in her career contributed to that balance.

Lucky, partly because it was very important to me to ... have, not necessarily a marriage, but ... a sexual relationship ... a life partner, so that I didn't have to worry about that. And was very lucky to meet somebody in graduate school ... who ... was perfectly supportive of my vision of what I wanted to do with my life.

The mobility of her husband's career proved beneficial.

We ended up staying in the same place for twenty-two years. But he was then able to pick up and come here, so his career has really been second to mine, but that was his choosing ... it fit well for him and [was] what he wanted to do and [he] has lots of interests and ... I have very few.

She and her husband agreed to start their family after ten years of marriage, when they were both “ready and interested.” They experienced “a wonderful balance” because her husband’s career permitted him to do at *least* half the work of child rearing.

Integrating her scholarly life with her personal life was more of a challenge. Dr. Scott’s work in feminist scholarship made it “easier to bring the personal and the scholarly together.”

I write in the introduction to my book about how hard it was and how wonderful it was in some ways, to actually finally be dealing with a scholarly project that touched so close to every parent’s fear ... [The] scholarly and the personal are a lot harder to integrate and balance in some ways, but then I was finally able to do that and it felt good.

A career in academics provided Olivia with the freedom not necessarily available to women in professions such as law or medicine. Although her desire to have a family did not dictate her career choice, the flexibility of a teaching position in higher education proved family-friendly.

I was a faculty member who ... could arrange my schedule pretty much to suit myself, so I was at the school bus and was with my kids from 4 in the afternoon ‘til they went to bed and then I stayed up and graded papers and got ready for the next day’s classes, whereas, you know and most people have to work 8 to 5 or 9 to 6 or whatever and ... don’t have that flexibility so, I’ve been ... really lucky now.

Did my personal desire to have family and have private relationships and personal relationships, did that drive my choice of profession? I don’t think so ... I don’t think I realized how lucky I would be if I were an academic in terms ... I didn’t really think about having kids. That was not in the cards until I was in my early 30s. I didn’t have my first child until I was ... 34 when she was born. And my second one, I was 39, so ... that all got postponed, but I was again, very lucky that it worked out. It’s been a great balance for me.

Having children was the “best thing that ever happened, the most frantic thing that ever happened” to Olivia. “It changed my life ... in one important way, which is that ... I came to really make better use of my time.”

I was the kind of person ... like everybody, that it was easy to procrastinate ... hard to motivate myself to buckle down and do the work – I did, you know, but it was always ... let’s sharpen some more pencils! But once I had kids, boy, my time was so precious ... and I will never forget my first sabbatical. I was so ... engaged the few hours I had, because I didn’t want my daughter to be in day care for ten hours a day and my husband was able to do some hours a day, but ... he was also in doing practicum, so his time was ... there, but not completely flexible. So I maybe had five or six hours a day to work, really work, without her around and ... I could get more done in those five or six hours than I did when I had nothing to do ... So that, that focusing was a really valuable part.

Then of course, there’s just that there are these people in life that you’ll know in the way you’ll never know anybody else. There’s all that personal joy to it. But I ... think it had this wonderful effect on my professional life, that I became very disciplined.

Olivia didn’t remember much of her children’s childhoods because she “was so busy ... so disciplined, so ... intent on just getting through the day.”

### *Looking Back*

President Scott was not a “past-oriented person” and as such, she didn’t look back much. Although her childhood “wasn’t a particularly ... lonely, deprived childhood,” she didn’t have “particularly fond memories of growing up.” She didn’t have any nostalgia from the past because she has “gotten happier and happier.”

If you aren’t the kind of person who ... looks back and sort of takes stock, and [considers] how did that go, I think that that something’s just not built into my personality and so ... I don’t think much about my childhood. You know, for me, it’s kind of like ... I just sealed that off in some way and not really thought

about it. I don't really want to really think about that time, but my happiest time, I loved graduate school, I loved my job, I still love my job. I've love being an adult. I like my kids grown up better than I liked them as babies ... I've just not had, I don't have any nostalgia, because I've gotten happier and happier.

Olivia didn't learn many life lessons from her childhood; however, she realized what lessons to unlearn.

Sometimes I don't think I learned any of life's lessons! I think a lot of them were negative lessons that I had to unlearn in some ways ... about ... needing people's approval. I wish I'd needed people's approval less, even to this day, although I think it's a good thing, you know, it balance .... But I worry a lot when I make unpopular decisions and I wonder if men worry so much when they make unpopular decisions.

As adults, Olivia and her sister Maggie were "pretty close." Although the two women didn't spend a lot of time together, they did have "that kind of sisterly relationship." Maggie didn't remember being mean to Olivia and they both looked back at their childhoods with chagrin.

She's my only sister and I feel ... deeply close to her, we talk about everything ... I admire her, although we've taken very different paths ... I think she admires me, although we've taken different paths ... So, it's a funny story of ... discovering each other in, for me, late adolescence, for her, young adulthood – And finally having what we never had at home.

President Scott was motivated by "a lot of that just metabolism." She considered herself an optimist and believed she was "very cheerful."

In medieval thinking, there were the four humors and some people had more melancholy, and some people had more this and the other, and ... I think I've had a very easy life, I think things have gone well for me, and I kind of trust, I think have a lot of trust that things will work out well and I think that's kind of ... is it a source of energy? I think it is, because it makes you think, "If I do what I, a good job here ... things will improve," you know ... we will



advance in the ways we should advance, there will be progress ...  
and I think that that makes it easy to feel ... inspired to go to work  
every day, you know, that you're ... getting somewhere, you're  
doing something ... you've got a, a purpose.

### *Within-Case Analysis*

#### *A Summary of Answers to the Research Questions*

The text below is a summary of responses to the grand tour questions and sub-questions.

Dr. Olivia Scott did not have “particularly fond memories of growing up.” As a child, she was “very, very shy ... very smart ... and kind of precocious.” She found first grade boring and socially intimidating, but she found solace in reading – an activity she loved. Olivia’s childhood was filled with unscheduled activities such as “girl kind[s] of games and things,” playing school with her sister, and reading. She and a younger childhood friend enjoyed playing dolls and paper dolls.

Olivia and her older sister of seven years were raised in a small Massachusetts town. Because of the age difference between the two girls, it often seemed to Olivia that she had no sister. Her father attended one year of business school and worked in a local bank his entire life. Her mother did not finish high school and stayed at home to raise her daughters. Olivia and her mother shared a “tempestuous” relationship, but Olivia was very fond of her father and considered him a role model because of his demeanor and temperament.

A confident and ambitious girl, Olivia aspired to be a ballet dancer or a biochemist. She dreamed of being “anything but a teacher;” ironically, she spent a significant portion of her career as a college professor. Throughout her career path, Dr.

Scott was “open to all kinds of possibilities.” She acknowledged her difficulty in saying no to opportunities and her need to be constantly challenged. She attributed some of her success to luck – “I’ve been very lucky.” A mother of two, Olivia met her husband, her “life partner,” during graduate school. In addition to working as a faculty member and teaching English, Dr. Scott was an accomplished author.

The life course experiences that characterized Olivia’s career path included her college and graduate educations, her marriage, and the birth of her two children.

### *Lifespan themes*

Olivia’s life was characterized by the following four themes: (a) she was ambitious, (b) she had “a life of the mind”, (c) she was determined and confident, and (d) she was open to possibilities and opportunities. These themes were reflected throughout her life course stages and life course experiences.

#### *Ambitious.*

Olivia’s ambition as a young girl led her to be the first person from her home town to attend an Ivy League institution. She attributed much of her ambition to her two grandmothers who were “extraordinary women and extraordinarily intellectual women.” An “element of ambitiousness” was present throughout Olivia’s career path and it never occurred to her that she could not accomplish whatever she aspired to do.

Particularly during graduate school, Olivia was concerned about others’ perceptions of her intelligence and abilities.

I guess I was always afraid, I think women of my generation, I hope less so now ... I always felt I was being judged as, “Was I feminine enough? Was I attractive enough?” I was afraid, in part ... that being too articulate or ... just speaking, arguing ... would

make me less attractive ... in some ways ... I wanted everybody's approval, I think it goes back to we're very human ... so it felt really good to feel, to figure out that there were some people who'd like me if I had a mind and again, a point of view and...ideas.

*“A life of the mind.”*

Olivia was an academically gifted young girl who excelled in school. She was inspired and influenced by her two grandmothers, both of whom represented to her the notion that women could have “a life of the mind.” During her adolescence, Olivia was captivated by “the life of the mind,” reading, and writing. Those captivating activities continued in college and graduate school and eventually led to numerous career opportunities. Olivia’s “life of the mind” was still part of her identity as president of Kellison College.

*Determined and confident.*

Although Olivia was not certain of the origins of her confidence, she was certain of her capabilities. As a young girl, she demonstrated determination in the relationship she shared with her mother. In spite of her shyness, she was confident in her ability to excel academically. When her mother showed little support for a professional accomplishment, Olivia did not waiver. Even though she benefitted from the suggestions, feedback, and support of others, she never questioned her own abilities.

*Open to possibilities and opportunities.*

Rather than determining a “road map” for her life, Olivia preferred to stay open to possibilities and opportunities. That preference was prevalent in her career path and

demonstrated through her leadership, communication, and decision-making. Olivia was also receptive to the opinions, suggestions, and feedback of others.

*Epiphanies or Turning Point Experiences*

Every Sunday, Olivia's father brought home the Sunday New York Times. From a very young age, Olivia read that newspaper and as a result, realized for the first time there was a world outside the small Massachusetts town she called home. "That was ... the first time I realized there was a world outside our little world ... I would read the Sunday New York Times and ... I knew there was more to life than the little town I was growing up in." Through this minor or illuminative epiphany, Olivia discovered there was more to life than Murray, Massachusetts. The experience symbolically represented a world of possibilities and opportunities Olivia did not previously realize existed (Denzin, 1989, p 71).

Shifting from glasses to contact lenses at the age of sixteen was a major turning point experience in Olivia's life. Her glasses symbolized all she valued in herself, including her academic and intellectual capabilities. At the same time, she was self-conscious of her glasses and the impact they had on her self-image. "Those glasses were a symbol of ... everything that I kind of valued in myself on one hand, but that made me stick out – And made me not be able to realize other aspects of my development."

Switching from glasses to contact lenses was a major event that touched "every fabric" of Olivia's life (Denzin, 1989, p. 71).

Spending her junior year of college abroad was a life-changing experience for Olivia. A major turning point experience in her life, traveling to Scotland provided her

with the opportunity to rewrite her “social side,” a side she “needed to develop.” While abroad, Olivia recreated her personality and appreciated an identity other than “the tall, shy, gawky girl.” As was the case when she switched from glasses to contact lenses, her junior year abroad was another experience that touched every fabric of Olivia’s life (Denzin, 1989, p. 71).

After graduating from college, Olivia experienced a retrospectively meaningful turning point or epiphany (Denzin, 1989a, p. 130) on a flight back to England. While on the plane, a young man who had just graduated from college asked what her plans were. Olivia’s reflection on their conversation confirmed her desire “to stay open to possibilities” rather than create a “road map” for her life.

His philosophy was ... “What is *the* thing I can do next year to *maximize* my opportunities” – not “How do I make the most of whatever just happens to come my way.”

And *my* attitude has always been the, “Let’s make the most of what comes my way,” rather than, “Let me strategize.” I’m not a good chess player. “Let me not think through the next move and decide right now what’s the best way to get where I’m going.”

Olivia was reminded of the meaning of this epiphany – her desire to stay open to possibilities and opportunities – every time she relived the experience of that particular flight.

Olivia experienced a minor or illuminative epiphany (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129) during graduate school. To her surprise, she was elected by her peers to serve on a faculty/student relations committee – an experience she greatly enjoyed.

Another turning point was when I was elected in graduate school, there was a committee ... of ... faculty and graduate students, it was like the faculty-graduate student relations committee ... I was

elected to it by the other graduate students and I was shocked. I mean it wasn't anything you ran for or I didn't even know about it. I thought, "Oh! They think I would be good at this, so I'll have to get interested and be good at it." And I was. I loved going to those meetings and talking about things that I didn't even think about before.

It's likely that Olivia's peers held her in high regard as a result of her behavior and performance during graduate school. Consequently, their respect for and confidence in Olivia led to her election. Her minor epiphany illuminated the earned admiration of her peers she didn't realize she had.

Olivia experienced another minor epiphany in the midst of her first teaching job when she altered her description of her attempt to publish.

My first teaching job, I still was trying to figure out how to kind of publish my way out of that institution, which wasn't quite as strong as where I wanted to be. And a colleague said to me, "Well stop calling the damn thing your manuscript and call it your book!" And that was just what I needed somebody to say!

I used to say very apologetically, "Well, I have this dissertation that I'm trying to turn into a book and ... he said, "Stop saying that! Just say I'm writing a book!" I did that and that worked! It was so simple!

Altering her perception and description of the publishing process was a minor epiphany that represented a positive change in Olivia's behavior. Before that turning point, her behavior was problematic and unproductive.

When the president of Hillside College gave Olivia some positive feedback about her strengths and where they could lead her professionally, she called it a "classic turning point" in her career. Indeed, it was a major turning point experience that contributed to

the direction of Olivia's career path – particularly because she was receptive to other's suggestions and ideas.

The president of the college, which was Hillside at that time ... asked me to come to lunch one day, and he kinda sat me down and he looked at me and he said, "Well not now, but someday you'll be a good administrator"... classic turning point! "Why do you think that?" He said, "You're clear, you're well-organized, you're articulate" ... he named all these virtues ... and from that time on I thought, "Oh! Well."

Hillside College was the location for another turning point in Olivia's career. It was there, for the first time ever, that the idea of becoming a small college president entered her mind.

I remember walking to work from ... on the Hillside campus ... someone had just suggested to me that I might want to be the dean of the faculty and I remember walking across the campus thinking, "Well, if I did that, where would it be headed?" I don't like to think too far in advance, but I couldn't help thinking, "What would that mean in terms of a career path? What am I aspiring to?"

I remember thinking, "Well, I guess the one thing I would see as a kind of goal ... it doesn't have to happen ... but ... a way to kind of take it to the next level, would be to be a small college president." It was the first time the thought had ever entered my head ... consciously and it then fast receded, I mean it wasn't a driving ... I thought maybe I'd rather go be a provost at a big university ... [or] different options. I could have gone back to the faculty. I almost did that. But ... I do remember, what was it about that moment – thinking, "Oh, well that's where this would go."

Through that cumulative epiphany, Olivia explored where her professional experiences could lead her. In a memorable moment, she realized the combination of her work experience could easily lead to a small college presidency.

Several of the turning points Olivia experienced in her life involved others offering her suggestions or feedback she would not have considered on her own. She referred to those incidents as “lucky breaks” during which she was told “empowering things.” Olivia’s state of receptivity was also instrumental in her hearing and considering others’ ideas.

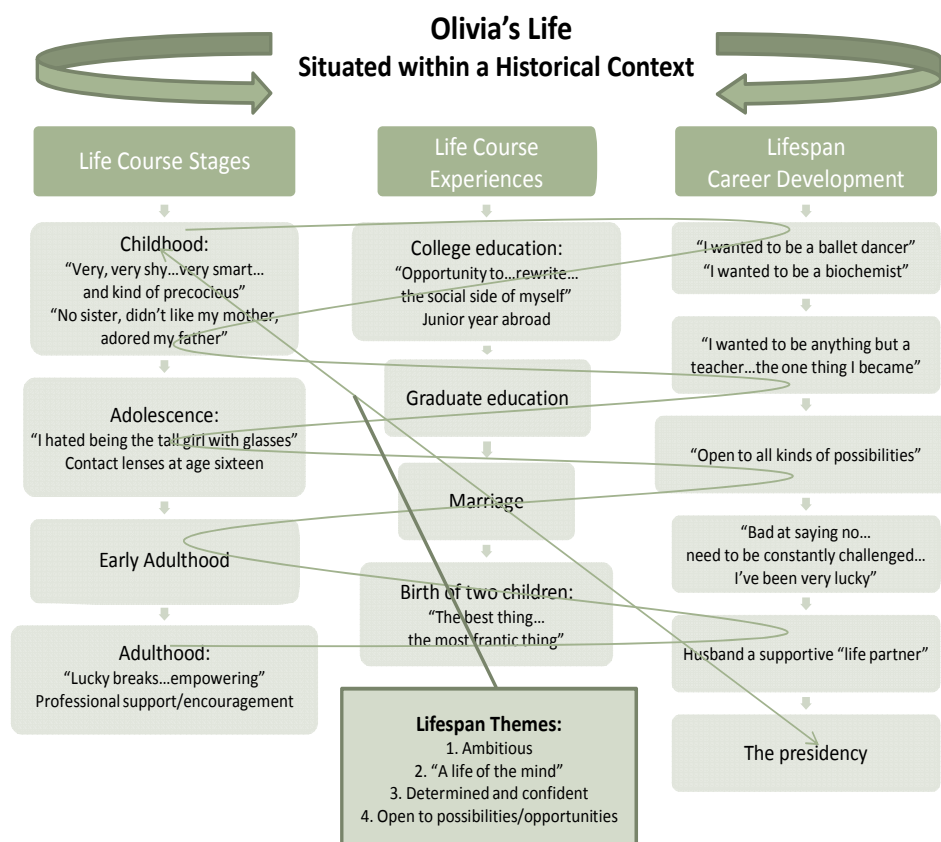
I had some very lucky breaks when other people told me things that I didn’t see for myself. And they were very empowering things to be told ... I think ... the people who said the right thing to me at the right time fit my mentality and my style because I was ready to take opportunities.

Perhaps ... I was just sitting, I was very receptive. I was kind of waiting to ... find the right way to make the next move. I also needed [to hear] ... “Tell me I can do it and I’ll do it, but I won’t push myself forward to do it if you don’t tap me on the shoulder.” So that’s probably a limitation as well. There may have been other things I could have done that nobody told me about.

Olivia described having children as “the best thing ... most frantic thing that ever happened.” In addition to bringing joy to her life, having children positively affected her time management.

It [having children] ... changed my life ... in one important way, which is that ... I came to really make better use of my time ... and then of course ... there are these people in life that you’ll know in the way you’ll never know anybody else. There’s all that personal joy to it. But ... it had this wonderful effect on my professional life, that I became very disciplined.





*Figure 2.* The conceptual model that represents Olivia's life from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which her lifespan career development evolved.

Sydney

*A Risky Venture to the Playground*

I was probably [not] more than four or five ... and ... there was a playground across a major road from where we lived and we were, 'course, not supposed to go there. But I decided I was old enough to cross the street now and I was gonna go to that playground and I took my brother.

So we went and we carefully crossed the street. You know it's a numbered road, but it's ... only a two lane road. But even so ... when you're five years old, it's – so anyway, we're there swinging on the swings and sliding down the slide and my mother comes in a police car. Hysterical – which is not that hard for her to be – and took us home and I think I spent the next week in the back yard tied on a very long rope to the apple tree. Not allowed – to go out of the yard, because I'd been very bad.

I still thought I was perfectly competent and I was fine and we didn't get run over and what was the big fuss. And she was crazed! But I didn't do that anymore ... I sorta learned ... that wasn't a good thing to do ... so ... I was slightly better behaved.

*Sydney's Childhood: "I was very eager to grow up"*

Sydney Cohen was a happy little girl who wanted to be an adult. At age five, she “was very eager to grow up.” At age six, she believed she was “all grown up” and knew she was ready to leave home. Although she believed this desire was innate, she realized other factors also contributed to her yearning.

I was the older of two and I was sort of in charge of my brother and ... I used to boss him around and take him with me on escapades and ... both of us get into trouble from time to time, but mostly 'cause I was leading ... I think I wanted to know everything and I thought grownups knew everything. What did I know?

I think I wanted a sense of control ... and ... there were too many things that happen when you're a kid that you're not in control of and I didn't like that. But anyway ... why did I want to grow up? 'Cause I wanted to grow up!

Sydney was “a good little kid” and “a smart little bunny” who had “a very nice childhood.” Born in 1941, she was the older of two children in the Cohen family and was the big sister to brother Ben, who was a year and nine months younger. Her grandparents were “immigrants [who] brought ... the ways of the old country with them,” so her parents were the first generation Americans. As such, Mr. and Mrs. Cohen experienced the Depression as “youngsters” and as adults, they tried “to be Americans and ... move to the suburbs and do it right.” Sydney believed her parents tried to be good parents and that indeed, they were good parents. She also recognized that they “didn’t want to be like their parents.”

Sydney grew up in the suburbs during “another time that doesn’t exist anymore.” She and her brother were raised in “a little town in Massachusetts on the north shore” when it was “just turning into a suburb.” Their home was in a safe, “sort of middle-class to maybe lower-middle class, aspiring to be upper-middle class neighborhood” with “a lot of single-family houses along streets with trees on them.” A variety of religious beliefs were represented in the neighborhood, including the Jewish faith, practiced by the Cohen family.

We walked to school. We walked to Hebrew School. The neighborhood was mixed in terms of religion as well ... so we’d all walk to school and then some of the kids would peel off and go to the parochial school and we’d go to the public school and ... it was a nice place to grow up.

“A lot of kids pretty much the same age” lived in the neighborhood and comprised a “kind of ... neighborhood gang.” Everyone had their best friends, but the group as a whole stayed busy with a variety of outdoor activities.

Everybody would do things like ... ride their bikes around like maniacs and stuff like that. It was ... good.

We used to go play in the woods ... what we thought was the woods. It was ... the stuff alongside the golf course, but it, to us, it was the woods .... We'd come home after school and if we didn't have to go to Hebrew school, we'd go play in the woods ... at dinnertime we'd come home and that's what we did.

Two or three doors down from us, the house had a particularly steep driveway down and around into the yard. And we got a red wagon at one point. And everybody in the neighborhood came and they rode the red wagon down these people's driveway until they finally called my parents and said, "Would you get those kids out of the driveway?" You know, I'm sure we made a hell of a lot of noise, but ... we just thought it was all our territory. It was a shock to realize that these people didn't want us in their yard!

I'm amazed we grew up – you know, all the things that we did that we shouldn't have been doing and that were scary to do and that they wouldn't let you do nowadays days – we did. You know ... climb trees, and go skiing, and go swimming and dive off things into shallow waters and ride your bike where you shouldn't and you know, we did all that stuff ... and here we still are. It's amazing.

Sydney's most enjoyable childhood activities, in order of preference, were reading, playing in the woods, "doing things in the basement," and summer sports.

Reading, first, playing in the woods ... doing things in the basement, and it could be ... anything. I ... tried many different things, making model airplanes, doing copper enameling, doing anything that had a kit that you could figure out how to make whatever it was work .... In the summer, doing all kinds of sports ... I would say probably the first and most important thing was reading though.

Sydney's childhood was free of fears with the exception of imagined "wolves under the bed ... [and] demons in the closet."

*Family*

Sydney had an affinity for her little brother, Ben. “My brother was so nearsighted and they [her parents] didn’t even know it, that he discovered binoculars. He wanted to take his binoculars to school so he could see the blackboard and they realized they better get him glasses.” Sydney helped take care of Ben and as a result, they spent a lot of time together playing, completing household chores, helping their mother in the kitchen, and working on projects in their father’s basement workshop. They shared “a good relationship.” They had friends in common and each of them had their own set of friends.

Sydney’s parents were supportive of their children’s interests. “Anything we showed the slightest interest in doing ... they would encourage to see if it took.” For instance, her parents supported her desire to learn to play the bugle and made it possible for her to take bugle lessons.

I decided when I was very small ... eight or nine, that I wanted to play the bugle. Why the hell I picked the bugle? Well you know, I know why. It was ‘cause my dad was also a boy scout master and the boy scout handbook was one of my favorite books! And in it ... ha, ha ha ... bake things on a rock ... how to play taps, and ... how to find your way in the woods and all this stuff and in it was about bugling, so I decided I needed a bugle.

I think I had to save up my quarters every week ‘til I had enough money to buy a bugle. And, which I did, and it took a while and then my mother decided since I was very intent on this, that I better have bugle lessons. So every week I’d be dragged downtown to Lynn, Massachusetts, go up this stinky set of staircases to ... the guy that taught the bugle. So, I learned how to play the bugle.

Sydney also tried dancing school and then shared her ballroom dancing skills with Ben.

Then there were other things like dancing school, which did not take, you know, ballet – bad. But ballroom dancing was good and I came home and taught my brother – So they [parents] didn't need to pay for lessons for him.

Because their parents clearly articulated the expectations they had for their children, Sydney and Ben were never in doubt of their responsibilities. The two of them “were supposed to be the most brilliant, gorgeous, talented, well-behaved children you could ever imagine” and both of them “tried to do that.” Sydney successfully met her parents' expectations for school.

School came along and we were supposed to be very smart, so we were very smart. And you know, sit in the front row and know all the answers and be a perfect pain in the ass to all the other kids in class, no doubt ... I was the good little kid. I was a pain to everybody else in the class – ‘Cause I always knew all the answers.

I was a good kid, I sat in the front row, partly ‘cause I couldn't see a Goddamn thing. I was really nearsighted ... I was sittin' in the front row, behaving, and ... all my teachers thought I was wonderful ‘cause I was paying attention and I was learning and I was making eye contact and I was doin' all the right things and that was cool. So, I was a good little kid and school ... was school. That's what you did.

Sydney's father was an engineer and “he treated everything like an engineering problem.” He was also a “home movie nut,” so Sydney and Ben were expected to “perform” on occasion. “He took movies and we had to be in the movies and act like grownups or at least like well-behaved children, so ... there was never any doubt of what we were supposed to be doing.” Sydney “felt loved ... even though the expectations were there ... you perform, you get the reward ... [and] that was good.”

Mr. and Mrs. Cohen encouraged their children and praised them for anything they did “as long as it was a good thing.” One of the “gifts” Sydney's parents gave to her was

“a lot of self confidence.” Because of this, she “was always convinced” she could do anything she wanted and that she “was gonna be good at it.”

Sydney’s parents were proud of their children and boasted to others about their children’s accomplishments.

They were very clear ... we were to be the best and then ... at dinner, every night, we would have to tell what we did. And bring the report card home and then, of course ... when the report card was good – which it better be – they boasted, boasted to everybody in the family ... And they gave a lot of credit, and they boasted and ... they were proud. And ... that was good, even though it was tedious and I wished they’d shut up, you know, it was still good.

And you know, when I think of what the alternative was – I mean, suppose they didn’t say anything? Suppose they weren’t proud? Suppose they didn’t boast? You know, would that have been good? No!

Sydney’s mother “was an artist and a homemaker and ... [a] cook.” By helping in the kitchen and doing their respective household chores, Sydney and Ben learned how to cook and how to take care of a house from their mother. Sydney gained additional life skills and lessons from her mother.

The thing I ever made was gingerbread, when I was about eight years old. We had a book and she taught me how to cook it, and we cooked it, and it came out great. And then my brother and one of his little friends came in and so the obvious thing to do, she says, is feed them the gingerbread. Give them glasses of milk. You know, little piggy brat that I was, I would have wanted to eat the whole thing myself! No, not allowed. You make food, you share it. And here were people to share it with .... And so there were a lot of lessons like that.

Sydney’s mother “worried all the time” and she “was good at being emotionally close” to both of her children.

She was also crazier than a fruit ... bat a lot of times ... so ... she was a little scary to be close to sometimes, but she was okay ... she was always ... somebody you just sorta had to watch, and that was ... a good lesson ... in how to be ... aware of people.

Being aware of people is not my strong suit, but let me tell you ... I learned anyway ... and that was a good ... thing to know. So ... she was ... always ... somebody teaching us, whether she knew she was teaching us or not or whether she even wanted to teach what she was teaching.

With time and experience, Sydney learned how to deal with her mother's emotional mood swings. "Cause and effect – it didn't take too many causes to figure out what the effects were." Her "poor little stupid brother," on the other hand, "wasn't so good at that." He "wasn't ... so quick on the uptake and he would get her mad all the time and he didn't get it. Poor little bunny."

Even though Sydney learned how to be "aware of" and interact with her mother, shopping for clothes was usually a source of frustration for both of them.

My mother would take me clothes shopping and I didn't like anything she would ever want to make me wear and ... that was one of the only times we ever had any fights until we finally both said, "This is stupid. Why are we doing this?" You know, "Give me the money and I'll go shopping." 'Course I would go shopping, I would hate everything, I'd come home with a book! She said "Oh God, here she goes again." And I wear the same old Goddamn clothes.

So ... that didn't work either, but ... I would have been happy my whole life ... wearing, you know, overalls and a T-shirt. So ... you just sorta behave. It didn't always work because I ... especially when we tried to go clothes shopping ... I would have tantrums and she would have tantrums and ... they wouldn't probably let us back in some stores! But ... otherwise ... I figured it out pretty well.



Sydney later learned that her mother had a difficult youth, to which Sydney attributed her mother's emotional instability.

She grew up in a big family with ... an autocratic and not very responsible dad and a mother who sort of took care of the whole family and then an elder brother who kinda tried to control the whole family and make them do what he wanted them to do and so, whatever she wanted was ... she was pretty much low kid on the totem pole and ... that wasn't good for her ... I think ... she had a tough life.

Her mother attended Massachusetts College of Art for about a year, but was unable to complete her education because she had to work for the family business during the Depression.

Life at Sydney's house provided countless opportunities to learn about maintaining a household and being a family. "The routine of the house" was to "be in the kitchen doing stuff together" if not "downstairs with dad doin' other stuff." Between what both parents taught their children, "It was a very good other education ... for how to be and ... how to have a household and ... how to be a family."

In the basement of the Cohen house, Sydney's father "had a workshop with all his tools – which, God help you if you touched – you would put them back in the right place clean or you would die." Sydney and her brother had their "little workshops" too, with their "little tools and ... little projects." After dinner, "everybody would go down to the basement" and work on their projects. Because their father was such a good teacher, Sydney and Ben learned through "the classic apprentice method of ... teaching." He endlessly worked on projects around the house and the children were usually there holding or carrying while their father talked through the steps of the project.

One family member in particular who made an impact on Sydney was her Aunt Eileen, her mother's sister. Eileen was Sydney's "major role model" because "she was independent and ... in control ... of a summer camp," which Sydney thought "was a good way to be." Sydney enjoyed the opportunity to see her aunt in action as "the boss" at the summer camp Eileen owned. Her aunt often joined the Cohen family for Friday dinner, she babysat for them, and she accompanied them on their vacations.

We went on trips ... when I was older yet ... early teens, we went to Florida. We drove to Florida before there were interstates. And she sat in the back between me and my brother so we wouldn't kill each other. And she would ... read us books ... the "Riders of the Purple Sage," by Zane Grey, she read us ... she was a good egg. I don't know how in the hell she put up with it, but she did.

Sydney often visited her aunt after failed shopping trips.

When I would be sent off shopping and I wouldn't buy anything, I'd usually stop at her house ... and ... spend time with her and then walk home ... this is several miles, but ... I didn't know any better. I thought that was okay to do ... and I would spend time with her.

The Cohen family took local excursions in addition to out-of-state vacations.

Before there were Chinese restaurants in Sydney's hometown or anywhere outside Chinatown, the big family adventure was to drive to Roxbury to visit her great aunt and eat Chinese food.

In the olden days when I was growing up ... there were no Chinese restaurants outside of Chinatown and so, [the] big expedition was to get in the car and go to east Boston, get on the ferry, ride the ferry across the street to Boston, drive to Chinatown, have Chinese food and it was a great event in our lives when there actually became to be a Chinese restaurant ... not too far from where we lived. I think it was the first one outside of Chinatown – on the north shore of Boston. Man, that was good. That was ethnic food. That was the big adventure. Less of a drive and good stuff and

every Jew in Swampscott and Marblehead was at that restaurant all the time.

### *Elementary and Middle School*

When Sydney was “a little teeny kid,” around the age of five, she went to a private school.

There was a little school right down the block my mother sent my brother and me to. He was in kindergarten and I was in first grade. We were both too young to be anywhere, but, it was probably to ... get us out of the house, give her a little respite.

Following her time at the private school, Sydney went right into the second grade, where she was always “a little young” for her age group. She attended the same public school from second grade through eighth grade. Her favorite topic was science and she was especially fond of the “fabulous” science classes offered in seventh and eighth grade. Sydney also enjoyed reading.

At Sydney’s school, the first day of seventh grade marked the official beginning of junior high – a time when the school typically welcomed a number of new students. It was on this day that Sydney took it upon herself to introduce herself and befriend the “this kid whose name was Diane.”

And there was this kid ... in my grade, sittin’ looking lonesome ... on the front stairs and I just went up to her and I said, “Hi, who are you?” And she said who she was ... and I said ... “Where do you live?” And it turned out she lived about two blocks away from me. We walked home together and we were friends ... right through high school. And we were best friends and we would spend lots of time together playing in the woods and sittin’ in her bedroom or sitting in my bedroom and you know, eating everything in sight, being crazy.

As best friends, the girls spent a lot of time together in and out of school. During junior high, Sydney was glad Diane was “the other girl kid” in their math and science classes, which were full of “all these boys.”

The day Sydney reached out to Diane was “a milestone of sorts for her” and it was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Both girls attended college in New England, kept in touch during their college years, and remained in touch as adults.

I’m sure it was about the first time I’d ever really done anything like that [reached out]. You know, at least consciously ... at summer camp, you just sorta played with everybody and they were there and you played with them ... but this was, I think probably the first time I’d ever done that and clearly, I still remember it – So it was ... a milestone of sorts ... it was just probably feeling ... like here was a new person and I should ... sorta take care of them.

### *High School*

Sydney experienced several “firsts” while in high school. High school was the first time she had to change schools. Starting ninth grade meant attending “the big high school” with a student population of 400. In addition, high school was the first time Sydney “ever had trouble with any subject ... and it was math.”

I had to be more systematic about learning it than I had ever had to be before and I didn’t really learn that trick. In fact, I didn’t really learn that trick until ... in and after college. I never liked anything where I had to ... I just didn’t have the skills, ‘cause it had always been perfectly obvious and all of a sudden there were a few things that weren’t perfectly obvious – I didn’t know what the hell to do.

Finally mastering math was “a big learning experience” for her and eventually, the experience helped improve her teaching skills. “I was able to tell people how to ... sort of break things down into little pieces and how to apply themselves to figure it out.”

It took a hell, I mean it took me years to figure it [math] out ... now, looking back on it, I think it might have also been a question of adolescent brain development that wasn't all there, and you know ... considering I thought I was perfectly rational when I was six ... I had no idea ... that I might have been having to sorta grow into anything. But anyway ... not being perfect ... was probably a good life lesson too.

One day in physics class during her senior year, something happened that Sydney never forgot. The incident involved her friend Diane and the “Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow Test.”

One day we were in physics class, this is senior year. And we get called out of physics class, Diane and I. We have to go down to the ... assembly room to take ... a test. Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow Test.

Well, it's a multiple choice test ... give me a multiple choice test and I don't need to know anything about the subject ... to ace it. 'Cause I know how these people's minds work, and I don't know how I know that, but I do ... but this was about ... taking care of houses and cooking and I know all about this stuff 'cause my mother trained me. So we take the test and we grumble like mad that we have to miss physics for this idiot test.

And a while later, comes the notice that I won the prize for the high school Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow. And so they give me this stupid little pin with ... a sheaf of wheat and a heart on it at assembly. I'm mortified. Well, my mother thinks it's the best prize I ever got. You know, and I'm sure she kept it her whole life.

But Diane and I were just ... beside ourselves ... laughing at the test, laughing at the questions, and then I win the prize and they, and we think that's even funnier. And the home ec teacher in high school was really pissed 'cause, 'course neither of us would ever take a home ec course. We were busy taking physics and we win, or I win. Oh my God. I was very surprised, and I was really mortified.

And, and I can still remember one of the questions even, which was if ... you're feeding the baby and it's being given peas and it

throws the peas on the ground, what do you do? Do you stop feeding the child peas, do you hit the child, do you mash the peas? What do you do? So, mash the peas was the right answer.

As a young girl, Sydney had a strong sense of self. With time, she learned to be aware of people and things – a skill she attributed to watching her mother. Sydney considered her heightened awareness a gift from her mother, as it eventually became an internal guide for her decision-making.

I always thought of myself as sort of understanding where I was at ... I think, in ... retrospect, this was all ridiculous, but I thought it anyway.

I was always kind of aware of things ... and I ... think that probably comes from ... a lot of different reasons ... first of all, being ... a smart little monkey, second of all, having a mother who was a little weird ... after flying off the handle, somebody had to watch really closely to make sure you didn't get her crazy ... having other strong role models like my aunt and my dad ... so I kinda thought I knew where I was at.

Looking back, I realize I didn't know what the hell was going on half the time and you know, I still don't. But I thought I did ... I thought I was just sort of going along being ... grown up. Oh geez – what an idiot!

Sexuality was an area of Sydney's life that was unsettled and unclear while she was a teenager.

Probably one of the biggest areas of ... unclarity was about sexuality ... and that certainly didn't get resolved in high school, so I can't tell you about any epiphanies. I sort of did everything that everybody else did ... to see what it was like ... and ... it was okay ... I wouldn't say I had any big epiphanies about ... that [sexuality].

As a young girl, Sydney was fairly certain, however, that she would be “a leader in something” in the future. Her leadership experiences at summer camp and in high school

reinforced her hunch.

There were more about where I thought my place was gonna be in the world ... which was not clear actually, in retrospect, but I thought ... I was destined to be somebody who was gonna be a leader in something.

I didn't exactly know what, but it ... seemed to me, looking back, even when I was in high school that ... I was capable and I could do things and if I said I would do something, I did it, and so people kind of responded to that.

When I was a camp counselor ... I had a lot of positive reinforcement ... 'cause everybody liked to be in my classes and do whatever I was doing and ... I didn't sort of, ever question that, that was just the way it was.

Sometimes I felt like you know, one of those cartoon characters where – there was a Miss Peach cartoon, where Miss Peach comes and all the little children are hanging off her ... biting her arms and legs and hangin' off, and that's what I felt like a lot of times.

I guess ... I sort of knew I had ... the gift of having people want to be there and do things that I was doing and you know, lead and everything like that, so that was ... good ... but I wouldn't exactly call that an epiphany, it was just the way it was.

### *College*

Earning a college degree was an expectation in Sydney's family. "We were always going to college. College was it. It was a given and you were going and you were gonna go to the best college you could and God help you if you didn't. You learned that and ... obeyed."

At a time before the interstate system was in place, the Cohen family ventured to several colleges Sydney considered attending. Cornell University in New York state and

Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania were two institutions the family visited.

I don't know why the hell I decided to pick Cornell, but I did ... and my mother complained the whole blasted way to Cornell and all the way back – So there was no way I was goin' there .... Too much complaining and you know, I would have thought it was great because she would have never come to visit me. Never, never, never!

And then we went to Bryn Mawr ... and this is ... the Freudian behavior here. I reached in the back seat to get something or other before my interview, and my mother slammed my ... head in the car door ... so ... I don't remember anything about Bryn Mawr. I remember nothing, I think I was concussed ... literally. So I didn't go there either, even though I got in, but, since I didn't remember it, but she really didn't want me to go that far.

Ultimately, Sydney chose Baymont College, a private, all women's institution located just seventeen miles from her home. Baymont was “definitely a good fit” and “about the best place” Sydney “could have managed to go.” Despite the close proximity to home, college was still “sort of a time of ... a lot of intellectual exploration, a lot of emotional conflicts and...trying to grow up and figure out about things.”

I was just happy to be in college and ready to do the next thing. You know, I was gonna learn everything and do everything and ... figure it all out.

I sorta recognized that college was the point where you could actually start having a life and ... I conceived of it mostly as gettin' away from my parents and, and being an intellectual – whatever that meant ... I was ready to go ... discuss all the big issues in life and learn all the things and do everything ... there was no college in the world that could live up to all those expectations.

Sydney's desire to grow up, which had been part of her since age six, continued as she prepared for college. “I ... it just kept going ... I always felt like that ... I was



perfectly okay as part of the family, although ... if you're a teenager, you don't like anybody except yourself." Although she "liked fine" her friend Diana, "everybody else ... just send the food, send the money, leave me alone." In fact, Sydney told her parents not to be in touch with her while at college.

Honest to God, I was ready to go to college and I was ready to never come home again because I was ready to go on ... be this fantasy grown up that I'd been planning to be forever and ... college was the next way to get there and I was going.

I was ready to be anywhere. They could have put me in a Goddamn tree and I would have been happy ... I'm sure my mother cried all the way home. I didn't think about them for one second ... after I got dropped off.

There special times when they [parents] were allowed to come ... parents' weekend or whatever. And they came and once in a while they'd come and take me out to dinner and everything and that was okay.

That was also in the days before telephones were in everybody's pocket and ... there were two phones in the dorm and ... it was kind of unheard of to have your own phone, although by the time you got to be seniors, everybody had a phone, or at least, two or three people would share a phone, but ... they didn't even call hardly .... That was great.

During college, Sydney discovered her interests in philosophy and history of science. She decided she liked philosophy better than chemistry, but she liked the history of science "best." Understanding science came easily to her and she was fascinated at how various disciplines of science "changed and grew and had revolutions over time." Her father was not pleased with her change of career plans.

So I told my dad at one point, that I was gonna' major in ... philosophy, and not chemistry, and he hit the roof ... he was not gonna' have this .... I was gonna major in chemistry and actually, he had a good reason, which was ... "You're gonna have to earn

your living.” At least he didn’t say, “You’re gonna get married – and it doesn’t matter a fuck what you major in.” You know, he said, “You’re gonna have to earn your living and you know, there’s no way to earn your living as a philosopher and so you can’t major in philosophy.”

You know, typical parent of that era. So, you know, huge fights and everything and so I majored in chemistry and I majored in philosophy too. So I just did everything ... I majored in chemistry, I majored in philosophy, I did what the hell I wanted anyway.

Years later, Sydney’s father had a greater understanding for her interests in the humanities.

I’d left a lot of my college books at home and my father was ... going through stuff, looking for something to read and he came across ... some novels or stuff like that, and he started reading them and he said, “Wow ... now I can understand what you were so interested in.” So ... that was nice.

*Exploring sexuality at college.*

One area of her life Sydney wanted to “figure out” as a young woman was her sexuality. She welcomed the opportunity to explore this issue at college; however, her first experience of “talk[ing] about everything” didn’t have the outcome she expected or desired.

First week ... I’m in college, we can talk about everything. I’m confused about sexuality anyway, so I, we’re sittin’ in one of those bull sessions ... we talk about everything and somebody said, “Well, you know, maybe being a lesbian should be something to, to consider.” You know, this is, you know, I hadn’t hardly done anything with anybody of any gender *ever*, but you know, I’m talkin’ because it’s, it’s now okay to talk about things – ‘Cause you’re in college.

Next thing you know, I get a, a little note to go see the class dean. I go see the class dean ... and ... she said, “You’re upsetting your roommate. You’re talking about ... being a lesbian. She’s worried about things. Maybe you’ll attack her.”

I was horrified, mortified, beside myself ... felt I had been accused of doin' something that I hadn't even gotten around to doing yet ... and certainly not with *her*! And so I was, I was very, very, very upset ... and I certainly hated my roommate for the whole rest of the year.

Consequently, it was a "long year for roommate business." Although Sydney talked with her roommate about what happened, it didn't ease the discomfort of the situation or lessen Sydney's feelings of betrayal and anger.

She was from a little town in Pennsylvania. She didn't know from nothing either ... and ... here's this ... wild person. Of course ... at that age I certainly didn't have that point of view – I was just pissed at her ... and I really felt betrayed and everything like that and ... it was sort of our truce for the rest of the year ... she kept on her side of the room and I kept on my side of the room and it was not a good fit.

During Sydney's second year of college, she continued to explore the issue of sexuality.

So, second year I came back and I said, "Well, if they all think I'm a lesbian, I better go find out where the lesbians are on this Goddamn campus," you know, 'cause I certainly hadn't done anything like that first semester ... first year. I was busily concentrating on my studies and ... so I decided, "Well, where are they?" Well, what do I know, campus folklore – they're all in the theatre program.

Sydney headed to the theatre program and became a volunteer, where all she learned from her father in his basement workshop proved beneficial. The theatre crew welcomed Sydney's construction skills, which were particularly difficult to find in a women's college.

I go and volunteer in the theatre program ... I say, "Well I know how to use the hammer and saw and everything 'cause my dad taught me, if you need anybody to help with sets, you know, and

lighting and stuff like that.” ‘Course they fell on me like ... a gift from the gods, ‘cause you don’t ... there’re not too many of those people around that can, in a women’s college, that know anything about ... construction. That want to do that and ... volunteer to help, so ... I volunteered and it was very interesting.

Being involved with the theatre was “a big learning experience” for Sydney. She “learned a hell of a lot of things” she didn’t anticipate learning.

I learned a hell of a lot about things that I ... hadn’t planned on learning ... about how to do things, how to work with a lot of strange people .... It was very involving work too, because it would culminate in a performance and it had to be that it wouldn’t fall down ‘til afterwards.

And there were a lot of people working together to make it happen and I really liked that ... having a part and knowing what I had to do, and ... making sure it happened and being ... responsible. I like being responsible. I liked that and besides, they were weird people there and I liked that part too.

Sydney admired her supervisor, the technical director of the theatre, and considered her a role model.

I thought she was grown up ... she couldn’t have been much older than I was but, I didn’t know and she was ... a lesbian and she had a partner, and they had a Siamese cat and ... that was a good role model [and] she was very talented and ... she was a good mentor.

While Sydney was a volunteer in the theatre, her curiosity and lack of clarity about sexuality persisted. She was “totally confused in the mind.”

I saw a lot of plays and I met a lot of really strange people ... some of whom, in fact, were lesbians, and so I got to know a little bit about that aspect of life ... and had crushes on many people, and ... girlfriends and boyfriends and ... I was totally confused in the mind ... but it was okay ...so what? So naturally ... I kept sorta doing it, because it was interesting. Nothing was clear, you know. It [having girlfriends and boyfriends] was confusing!

Some of Sydney's confusion about boys and girls diminished as a result of the "really good boyfriend" she had during high school. He was still her boyfriend when she went to college, "but he was a boy." Although he was a nice boy, Sydney later realized he was a "sexist pig" – a term that didn't exist when she was a young adult. She didn't want to be "stuck" in any relationship "where he thought he was the boss. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Bad, bad, bad." She came to the conclusion that "girl persons were better than boy persons ... 'cause they had a sort of an assumption that we would be ... equal partners ... so that was okay."

Contributing further to her confusion was the fact that homosexuality was not acceptable at Baymont College.

It was still very confusing and it was certainly not anything like it is today on college campuses where ... girls are walkin' around holding hands and ... this is okay. Then it was *not* okay, and it was bad, in fact, and if they caught you bein' ... a lesbian, they would take harsh measures.

Maybe they would throw you out, although when ... my then current friend and I were discovered, they didn't throw us out. They made me move to another residence hall, we were not allowed to see each other again and we had to go and have counseling.

And I was happy to go and have counseling 'cause I had plenty to talk about! Even though I was mad to be made to do it. And I'm sure they made my parents pay for it too ... anyway, the girl that ratted us out got killed by a bus ... it was actually very sad for her, but ... I always figured she sorta got what she had coming.

*Sydney's Career Path: "It only makes sense looking backwards"*

When Sydney was a little girl, she had several answers to the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" She was going to be "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet! Or Super Woman ... or ... the cowboy in the white hat." From Sydney's perspective, these were "just the normal things" she considered for her future.

Her career aspirations became more realistic with time. Sydney envisioned herself becoming a college professor and in fact, she eventually was one for about fifteen years. When she began her college education, her intent was to be a chemist. Her plan was to major in chemistry, continue studying chemistry in graduate school, earn a Ph.D. by age twenty-five, and then be a researcher doing "some kind of research." A number of things impeded her plans, so she didn't "make [her] timetable or ... [her] subject area."

One season of theatrical summer stock led Sydney to the conclusion that a career in theatre was not a good choice because she "didn't have any talent for designing ... and didn't like staying up late." She realized "if you're gonna be in the theatre, if you don't like to stay up late, you're ... really in deep shit." In addition, she believed "the people [in theatre] were a little too insane .... They were crazy ... and I wasn't that crazy. You know, I was sort of adventurous and interested and curious, but I wasn't crazy."

After graduating from college, Sydney "ran off to New York with ... a girlfriend and got a job in a hospital lab," where she worked as a chemist for a few years. The job was "just as boring and horrible and stupid" as she anticipated it to be. She then pursued graduate school at Massachusetts College of Science (MCS), her father's alma mater. Because Mr. Cohen wanted both of his children to attend MCS, Sydney's choice for

graduate school made him “so happy.” Unfortunately, the academic program and fellow students contributed to the disappointment she experienced at MCS, so she earned a master’s degree in philosophy of science there “after much grief.”

I always thought they were crazy. You know, that was not what I thought philosophy was ... at MCS there were a lot of people from a lot of different places with very different expectations of how to be in a class ... and I got – how shall I say – I got a, a little lesson in ... all the various – hmm, how shall I say – another, another variation on the theme of human weirdness.

And it took me a long time to realize that they hadn’t read a Goddamn thing probably more than I did, and they didn’t know anything, but they knew enough to quote all these references and ... there’s sort of an academic kind of gamesmanship that I wasn’t familiar with and that when I figured it out, I didn’t like it.

Sydney “found a couple of [MCS] professors who were compatible and ... studied with them and ... learned a lot from them ... some of them were really ... leaders in their fields, and that was good.” She followed one professor to Brighton University (BU) in Boston, where she later earned her Ph.D. Brighton was a much better fit for her academically and proved to be a pleasant, acceptable educational experience.

It was a better place. It was, it was a much more compatible place in terms of ... graduate students sort of getting together and helping each other, rather than just being insanely competitive ... for what? Who gives a hoot? You know? It’s ridiculous. And anyway, by that time, and, and when I was at BU, I also had a full-time job teaching already and I didn’t have time for any of that rubbish.

Sydney realized teaching was a logical career step for someone who studied philosophy. “Well, teaching is sorta what you do. You know, you’re a philosopher, what the hell you gonna’ do? Go and work for 3M?”

Sydney's teaching career began when she was a graduate student at MCS. With the intent of getting "a little part-time job," she pursued a teaching position at Chamberlain Junior College and to her surprise, ended up teaching psychology instead of philosophy.

There are a lot of colleges in Boston ... so I walked into one place, Chamberlain Junior College, which doesn't even exist anymore, thank God, which was only there because of the Vietnam War and people needing deferments.

So I walked in, I said ... "Here I am, I'm a graduate student at MCS ... do you have any teaching jobs?" And the guy says, "Well, what are you studying?" I say, "Philosophy," and he says, "Well, I have a psychology course that you could teach. It starts with P – here's the book."

So I was teaching baby psychology and I had no business teaching that course. I knew from nothing. I had one course ... social psychology once, a long time ago. That was my introduction and only psychology course. I didn't know anything. I taught psychology anyway. I actually had a good time teaching and I realized I liked it and I thought, "Okay, I can do this, but boy, I'm not ever gonna' teach this again. I'm gonna' teach something that I actually know."

Sydney's next job was at Dexter State University (DSU), where she was hired to teach courses such as logic and the history of science. Working at Dexter State was her introduction to public higher education and "it was really a revelation."

Here are all these first-generation kids, most of whom speak Portuguese or something, and they plunk down this college in the middle of a cornfield and everybody gets to go and ... they were not me ... they were a whole different bunch ... social background and class and immigrant status and this, that, and the other thing, and I had a really good time.

Teaching at DSU was rewarding to Sydney as she facilitated students' learning and witnessed their success.



It was great to sorta see people's aspirations get raised and kids coming and succeed[ing] ... kids from that cohort that I taught who've turned in to lawyers and college deans and ... philosophers and everything ... kids who never thought they were gonna do anything or go anywhere.

What worked was being very clear ... helping them overcome fears. I found in a lot of different cases, overcoming their being afraid and giving them ... the tools that they really needed to succeed ... how to be successful and besides, I was very enthusiastic and young and crazy and I didn't know any better, so they were gonna' succeed, by God! And they mostly did.

Sydney was pleasantly surprised with her public education experience, especially given

“the New England mental set about higher education” she was accustomed to.

Those state colleges, you know – uck – nobody ever goes there, can possibly go anywhere else ... that's really the New England mental set about higher education. You go to a private school even if it's a dump, 'cause it's better than a state school. Well, a lot of hooey! But who knew? I didn't know, but ... I'm still doin' public higher ed.

After working at Dexter State, Sydney went to England and taught philosophy for one year.

Her aspirations for a college or university presidency didn't develop until she was “old ... you know, forty, anyway.” Being asked to serve as the assistant to the president at Dexter State University was a turning point that eventually led to presidential aspirations.

You talk about turning points, one of the things that happened was, I was about forty I guess, I was a full professor, had tenure, I was department chair, and union president and God knows what all and the president asked me to be his assistant 'cause his assistant was goin' back to California. And I said, “Oh, what an interesting idea.” And I did it about an overnight and I said, “Okay, I'll do it,” and it was really a life changing experience.

Sydney gladly embraced the unexpected benefits of being part of the president's office.

For one thing, all of a sudden I had a work family instead of being all ... even in an academic department ... you're really sort of all by yourself .... You're, you're meeting your students and you're doing your classes and you're doing your research and it's all kind of by yourself.

But working ... in the president's office, I had people that cared if I showed up every day, and projects that we were doing together and an overview from ... the top of the institution that I hadn't had before. And I had a blast! Oh boy, I had fun.

Sydney realized the challenge of simultaneously teaching and doing administrative work during the first year she was assistant to the president. She taught a philosophy of science course in the spring semester at the same time she was "doing ... a full-time, 9-to-5 type administrative job" and "writing a big paper for a publication."

I thought I was gonna die. And so I figured, I'm never gonna do this again .... I'm gonna do one thing. I found being an academic and a scholar and a teacher demanded a lot of time – *a lot* of time – and a lot of contemplation and a lot of preparation for you know, doing lectures and reading student papers and doing my own research and everything. It was really a full-time and then some job, but it was a job that I could do in various places, like some in my office at school, some at home, some in the library ... and I found it didn't combine well with being an administrator, so, I figured, "Okay, I'd be an administrator."

Through this experience, Sydney realized how difficult it was for her to balance teaching and working full-time as an administrator. She didn't "find it easy to do two very, such very different things," so she decided she would be an administrator. "I enjoyed [teaching] ... and I enjoyed the students, and I ... had good relationships with them and it was fun and ... somebody else can do it now. You know, fifteen years, you know, that was enough."

After working for the president at Dexter State University for approximately three years, he sent her to the American Council on Education Fellowship Program, where she was an ACE Fellow at Bellingham University in Rhode Island for one year. “I had been at Dexter State ... a ... public institution in Massachusetts, and so I went to Bellingham ... to see what the other half of the education sector looks like, those people that have money.” She enjoyed the program, where “they really kind of drilled it into your head that you could be a college president.” Their directive was “Prepare and this is your career path now and get busy.” Sydney’s response was, “Okay.”

After fulfilling her responsibilities at Bellingham University, Sydney worked for three years as the academic dean in the college of arts and sciences at Middleton University in Colorado. Following her time in Colorado, she returned to the east coast and was the chief academic officer at Oak State College in New Hampshire for seven years. One of those seven years was spent as interim president.

The combination of her academic credentials, the ACE Fellowship, and time spent working in the president’s office, prepared Sydney for her future professional roles and her ultimate career journey. She had the “legitimate qualification to go and be an academic dean” and then “to ... go up ... the academic career ladder that way.” In Sydney’s opinion, “it worked ... out perfect.”

Sydney’s career journey made sense to her only when she looked at it in retrospect.

It [career journey] only makes sense looking backwards. You know, I didn’t know what the hell I was doing half the time ... but ... looking backwards, it all makes perfect sense ... looking back, it looks like a perfectly logical progression.

She recognized that she “got to be in good places ... and working with interesting people, not all of whom were particularly sane or particularly pleasant, or whatever, but I learned a lot from everybody along the way” – both of which she attributed to “plain dumb luck.” Her confidence and belief that she “made pretty good choices along the way” also impacted her career journey in positive ways.

### *Meeting Dr. Sydney Cohen*

State University at Carlisle was beautiful in the fall. The day I visited campus, the leaves had just started to change colors and the air was cool and crisp. The campus was full of life as students scurried between buildings, sat comfortably on the front steps of the library, walked hand-in-hand, and chatted among themselves in small groups.

President Cohen’s office building was easy to find due to effective campus signage. The large lawn in front of the stately, red brick building was semi-covered with fallen leaves and green grass was still visible in some spots. Because the sidewalk leading to the steps of the building was wide enough for several people, I passed and greeted a handful of students walking in the opposite direction. Even the students with cell phones to their ears were welcoming to me in their own unique way.

President Cohen’s office was spacious with plenty of natural light that streamed through a large bay window. The décor was simple and professional. President Cohen welcomed me in and encouraged me to sit across from her at the table not far from her desk. Her unforgettable smile and inviting demeanor, as well as her animated stories and rich descriptions, kept me fully engaged for the next two hours.

### *The Presidency*

With a history of over one hundred and forty years, State University at Carlisle was a selective, public liberal arts college located in the Northeast. The state-supported institution offered bachelor’s degrees to a student population of 2,000. At the time of the interview, Dr. Sydney Cohen had been president of State University for twelve years. Every day of the presidency was different and a typical day simply didn’t exist.

A typical day – what a joke! Oh, I think there’s no such thing as a typical day. It is whatever it is ... some days I’m in the office doing emails and paperwork and having appointments and other days, I’m out running around to meetings or whatever and ... so

there isn't any typical day, it's just whatever happens! That's one of the attractions of the presidency ... because you never get bored, 'cause there's always something different to do.

The most enjoyable aspects of President Cohen's work involved "bringing about change," empowering employees, and ultimately, serving students.

It's a great place and ... bringing about change and bringing people along so that they have a good time while they're working their tails off and changing is ... what it's all about. If you keep the overview about why it's all happening and what it's all for and ... serving the students and so on ... makes it good.

I make things happen by empowering other people ... I don't do anything ... I just make good teams happen ... and sometimes I nag ... that's the Jewish mother behavior – I just think they do it because otherwise you won't shut up! Sometimes it takes years ... before they figure out that yeah, that really is a good idea to do .... This is kind of teaching on another scale ... in a ... different way all together.

She viewed herself as someone who funneled information to employees.

One of the things I do ... I don't do anything except I funnel information out ... and make sure people get together who need to get together and make sure they have the information they need ... resources if we have any today.

The value of listening, which Dr. Cohen learned as a faculty member, became a useful tool and positively impacted her leadership style.

If you don't talk too much, when you do talk, people pay attention. And so a lot of times I don't say anything ... [I] just listen and ... mirror back to people and ... in fact, it's affected my leadership style a lot, in that a lot of times what I do is I ... encourage other people to say things, do things, whatever – and I get to choose ... they come up with a million ideas and then I pick the ones I want ... but it's theirs, so they got to do it. I don't have to do anything. I just make choices.

A humble leader, she was comfortable getting the mail and answering her own emails.

Her prior assistant tried to change President Cohen's ways.

My previous assistant, who was with me all the time I was here until last summer ... she always said ... "I'm trying to train you to be a president and you're not learning." I would answer the phone myself and get the mail and answer my own emails and everything, but ... I feel more comfortable doing that.

President Cohen's patience was reflected in the length of her tenure at the institution and her dedication to the University community.

I also am ... patient ... I'm still here ... these people that ... [are] here for three years and then they run off somewhere else, mmm – bogus, bad ... I think you gotta be there long enough for them to really get it and to really trust you and to really understand that you're really gonna be there and they can't outweigh you and ... that you actually have an idea or two.

She reflected on the juncture in her career journey when she and the institution crossed paths.

State University at Carlisle turned out to be a great fit ... they were there ready for me and I was ready for them. We met at the time we were supposed to.

She was very happy in her position and had no desires to leave the institution or the area.

I thought I would stay ten [years] if I was lucky, but now I'm just gonna wait 'til they drag me out ... I get calls from headhunters from time to time and I don't want to go anywhere ... I don't want to live anywhere except here.

President Cohen's professional life was always "the most important thing" to her.

With time, she became clearer about that priority.

I think I'm a ... really pretty strange ... in terms of ... that's a choice I made, that the career is ... important, and people can ... come along for the ride .... I don't know how many relationships

I've been through now in my life, but every time it came to a choice point, I'd pick the professional stuff.

I don't think there was really a choice! You know, there was stuff I had to do. And that was what there was first as it were, and not to say that it's [a relationship] not rewarding and good and everything like that, but if there's a choice to be made, that's what has to happen. And I've become more clear about that as I've gotten older.

Unfortunately, not everyone Sydney dated accepted her choices.

I had a partner for about twenty years and ... I thought that was gonna be it for life and then I came here, and turned into the president, and ... that was not what she signed on for ... that was really tough ... I thanked God every day that I had a job, because after she left, it was bad.

It took time and experience for Sydney to find the right combination of her personal life and professional life; however, she eventually "figured it out."

Before I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I was ... trying to have relationships and have a job and do this and that and the other thing. But, in retrospect ... especially since it's happened more than once ... I finally figured it out. Yep ... that's what the value is here. So ... some people would say it's a strange way to live, but that's the way it is.

Her partner at the time, Jane, understood Sydney's professional priorities. "She knows perfectly well that I'm the president first."

Dr. Cohen recognized the origin of her confidence, a "gift" she did not take for granted.

One of the gifts, I gotta go back to my parents, they gave [me] a lot of self confidence ... I was always convinced I could do anything I wanted and that I was gonna be good at it and I was good and that was the way it was ... I've met so many women doing ... leadership training and whatever, who don't have that feeling. And it's very sad.

Sydney's family was most influential in her life, but reflecting on her life experiences also made an impact.

My family ... my parents, my aunt ... all my millions of relatives ... and then, I think the fact that the experiences I've had, I've reflected about and I kinda do it intuitively like I'm supposed to!

Sydney's younger brother, Ben, was no longer her "poor little stupid brother. With time, he became "the much more emotional, outgoing, empathetic, even more verbal one." As adults, the two of them reminisced about their childhoods.

He was up ... [a] couple years ago, and we were rewiring a light, a light in my house. And it was not as straightforward as we needed it to be and so ... we would be standing there on the ladder, looking at it, talking about what we were seeing, what we were doing, we looked at each other and said, "Hmph – who does this remind you of?"

Sydney also benefitted from "a lot of good teachers and mentors" during her life.

People from my jobs ... I'm still friends with ... my first boss out of college ... when I was working in the horrible lab. She's ninety years old and living in Vermont, and now I'm taking care of her. Sort of, from a long way away.

And then there were ... colleagues and department chairs, and deans, and presidents ... the president that called me up and said, "You gotta be my assistant." You know, he was a big mentor – besides, I stole all my jokes from him too ... a lot of people have ... helped and I've been smart enough to pay attention.

Sydney gleaned "about ten million" life lessons between childhood and adulthood. For example, she learned to "pay attention and be grateful." Similarly, she learned to "shut up" and give others the opportunity to speak. As a result of her challenges with math in high school, Sydney realized that "not being perfect ... was



probably a good life lesson too.” While learning to make gingerbread with her mother, she learned to share.

My brother and one of his little friends came in and so the obvious thing to do, she [mother] says, is feed them the gingerbread. Give them glasses of milk. You know, little piggy brat that I was, I would have wanted to eat the whole thing myself! No, not allowed. You make food, you share it.

Learning to share was not the only lesson Sydney learned from her mother. Because of her mother’s emotional instability, Sydney learned how to be aware of people and the importance of paying attention.

If you do the Myers-Briggs and stuff like that, I’m an ENTJ or maybe an INTJ, depending on the day ... which means that ... being aware of people is not my strong suit ... I never would keep a journal – uck, uck, uck – you know ... I don’t reflect in that way, I just kinda assimilate and ... think about what it is or what’s happening and ... make sense of stuff.

A lot of things have happened and ... if I wasn’t paying attention, what good would it be? Mmm. You know, sometimes I feel like ... I’m sort of totally out of it ... not paying attention at all, and yet ... something is picking up a lot of stuff, and ... so I pay attention to that ... it comes from having ... to pay attention when you’re a little kid, probably.

As an adult, Sydney was “still...very happy.” Half jokingly, she attributed that happiness to not understanding what was happening in her life. During her free time, she enjoyed her garden, athletic training, rowing, and reading. “I still read forever.” She still liked Chinese food “and every other kind of ethnic food in the world too.” In addition to cooking, she read cookbooks and was fascinated by the wealth of historical information reflected through multitudes of recipes.

*Within-Case Analysis**A Summary of Answers to the Research Questions*

The text below is a summary of responses to the grand tour questions and sub-questions.

When asked what kind of child she was, Dr. Sydney Cohen described “a good little kid,” “a smart little bunny,” and a little girl who was very eager to grow up. She and her younger brother experienced “a very nice childhood” in a small Massachusetts town during a “time that doesn’t exist anymore.” Sydney excelled in school, loved to read, and demonstrated confidence, leadership, and responsibility throughout her youth, adolescence, and college years.

Sydney’s childhood activities included “escapades” with her brother, playing in the nearby woods, climbing trees, and working on projects in her father’s basement workshop. She and her brother also helped their mother with cooking and household cleaning projects. Sydney enjoyed outdoor activities such as riding “the red wagon” and riding bikes with “little friends in the neighborhood.”

Her childhood career aspirations included “Tom Corbett, Space Cadet ... Superwoman ... [and] the cowboy in the white hat.” Later in her life, Sydney aspired to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry and become a chemist and researcher. She also planned to be a college professor.

As an adult, Sydney’s career journey made sense to her only when she looked at it in retrospect. “It [career journey] only makes sense looking backwards ... I didn’t know what the hell I was doing half the time ... but ...looking backwards, it all makes perfect

sense ... looking back, it looks like a perfectly logical progression.” She attributed her opportunities to “be in good places ... working with interesting people” and opportunities to learn “a lot from everybody along the way” to “plain dumb luck.” Her confidence and belief that she “made pretty good choices along the way” impacted her career journey in positive ways.

The life course experiences that occurred during Sydney’s career included her college and graduate educations and her committed relationships.

### *Lifespan Themes*

Sydney’s life was characterized by the following four themes: (a) she was very eager to grow up, (b) she learned to pay attention to self and others, (c) she was a leader who empowered others, and (d) she was confident with a zest for life. These themes were reflected throughout her life course stages and life course experiences.

#### *Very eager to grow up.*

Sydney Cohen was ready to be a grown up when she was five years old. At this early age, she demonstrated responsibility, leadership, and the desire to be in charge. She enjoyed taking care of her brother and was a responsible big sister. Her role models included her Aunt Eileen, who owned and directed a summer camp, and the technical director of the theatre at Belmont College, another young woman who was in charge. Sydney was thrilled to go to college, a place she envisioned where she would finally become the grown up she aspired to be, and she couldn’t wait to disconnect from her parents. Some of her most rewarding professional positions, such as working in the

theatre and assisting a university president, included opportunities to be responsible for and accountable to others.

*Learned to pay attention to self and others.*

Early in her life, Sydney learned how to be aware of other people, as well as the importance of paying attention to them. As a young girl, those skills enabled Sydney to gauge her mother's unpredictable emotions and comply accordingly. As Sydney progressed through her career path, she paid attention to her internal compass and made many professional decisions based on what felt right.

*A leader who empowered others.*

Sydney demonstrated leadership with her younger brother Ben and she was a leader among the neighborhood kids. At summer camp, the other campers were drawn to Sydney, the camp counselor, and longed to be in her classes. In high school, Sydney felt she was destined to be a leader in something and she realized she had the gift of leading others. As a faculty member, Sydney was an empowering leader in the classroom, especially when teaching in public higher education. As an administrator in higher education, Sydney made things happen by empowering others. She provided information, resources, and guidance to employees who, in turn, were adequately equipped to perform their jobs.

*Confident with a zest for life.*

One of the gifts Sydney's parents gave her and her brother was confidence. That gift helped Sydney believe she could do anything she aspired to do and that she would do it well. She demonstrated confidence throughout all levels of her education – from

elementary school to high school to graduate school. The childhood and adolescence stories she shared illuminated her youthful self-assurance, willingness to take risks, sense of humor, and positive attitude. During the interview, President Cohen's zest for life was apparent. She was enthusiastic, optimistic, and lively. Her extroverted personality was apparent; however, she was also reflective and introspective at times.

*Epiphanies or Turning Point Experiences*

Being asked by the president of Dexter State University to work as his assistant was "really a life changing experience" for Sydney. As such, it was a major epiphany or turning point experience in her life (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129). Through the role of assistant, she realized the benefits and pleasures of working with a committed group of people or "a work family," vs. alone. She also appreciated the comprehensive institutional perspective necessary at the presidential level. Working in the capacity of assistant to the president was the first in a series of professional opportunities that eventually led to her presidency of State University at Carlisle.

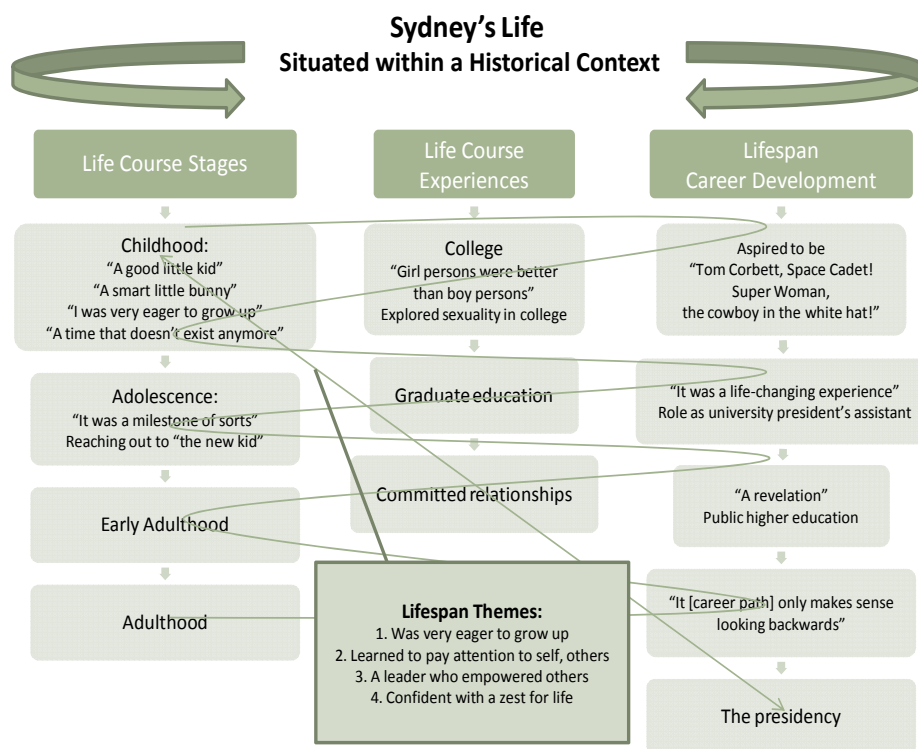
Reaching out to a new girl, Diane, in seventh grade, was "a milestone of sorts" for Sydney. This experience was a cumulative epiphany or representative event (Denzin, 1989, p. 71) because "it was the result of an accumulation of past experiences that culminated in a single moment" (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129). Although Sydney regularly demonstrated her leadership and extroversion at summer camp, introducing and extending herself to Diane in the school environment was the first time she consciously initiated such action.

Sydney's introduction to public higher education "was really a revelation" for her, especially given the New England mental mind set about higher education she was accustomed to. "You go to a private school even if it's a dump, 'cause it's better than a state school. Well, a lot of hooey! But, who knew? I didn't know, but ... I'm still doin' public higher ed." Recognizing the value of public higher education and the impact both she and it could make on students was a major turning point experience in Sydney's life. Much of her career was spent working in public institutions of higher education, where she continued to watch students' dreams and aspirations become successful realities.

During her relationship with her high school boyfriend, who she also dated briefly while in college, Sydney came to the conclusion that "girl persons were better than boy persons." Reaching that conclusion qualified as two types of epiphanies. It was a cumulative epiphany because "it was the result of an accumulation of past experiences that culminated in a single moment" (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129). Sydney's experiences with both genders led to her decision. It was also a major turning point experience because of the lifelong impact the conclusion had on her lifestyle. Ultimately, Sydney chose lesbianism as her sexual orientation.

As a high school student, Sydney believed she was "destined to be somebody who was gonna be a leader in something." Rather than calling that belief an epiphany, she explained "it was just the way it was."

I sort of knew I had ... the gift of having people want to be there and do things that I was doing and ... lead and everything like that, so that was ... good. But I wouldn't exactly call that an epiphany, it was just the way it was.



*Figure 3.* The conceptual model that represents Sydney's life from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which her lifespan career development evolved.

Theresa

*Organizing and Playing Mass*

There were days when Theresa liked playing Mass even more than she liked playing school, and today was one of those days. Mother gave permission to set up a make-believe Catholic Church in the living room, which was much more spacious than the usual spot – the bedroom Theresa shared with her sisters. Theresa drew the layout of the room on a page in her favorite school tablet and couldn't wait to get the church and the Mass organized.

The altar was the living room coffee table with an old white lace table cloth draped over it. Theresa placed her miniature statues of Mother Mary and several saints on the altar, along with her rose-colored rosary and the little white Bible she received for her First Holy Communion. The pews consisted of her father's favorite lounge chair, the couch, and several folding chairs strategically placed throughout the living room. Tap water in a floral tea cup that rested on the bookshelf near the living room entrance served as imaginary Holy Water. Because Theresa was the acting priest, she wore her long, terry cloth bath robe.

She saved some grape juice from breakfast and poured it in a clear wine glass from the kitchen cabinet. On the way home from school the day before, she bought two packages of NECCO wafers. NECCOs worked perfectly as pretend communion wafers – and they tasted good too.

*Theresa's Childhood: "We always felt loved ... I felt very secure ... and nurtured"*

Theresa Martin was born in Alaska in 1955. She was the second oldest and "the oldest girl in the string of...eight kids" who were "all very close." By the time she was three years old, the Martins had lived in four different states – Texas, Florida, Illinois, and California – because her father was an officer in the United States Air Force. From age three until age fifteen, she and her family considered southern California their home. In the middle of her sophomore year of high school, they made their final move to the Midwest.

As a young girl, Theresa was interested in learning, she earned "good grades" in school, and she was "an organizer." She learned to ride a bicycle by the time she was



four years old. Her favorite activity as a child was “just playing,” but she also loved to read. All of her siblings were “very avid readers.”

My mother [was] looking for us on Saturday mornings to clean – on Saturday we cleaned – and we’d clean the house and I was under my covers reading a book. So, I loved to read. We ... I read a lot of those series books like [the] Bobsey Twins ... the Hardy Boys, and things like that.

Because she was the oldest girl, her mother relied on her to help care for the younger children. “I can remember ... at a very young age ... holding whoever the newest baby was in my arms and feeding her ... I remember ... helping my mother.” Theresa and Joanie, her sister who was the second oldest girl in the family, “were asked to help organize the younger children.” The child care they provided ranged from “helping with homework” to “getting the kids ready for bed.”

The Martin children were “all very active and busy, but not active in the sense of ... people being active today.” Their circle of friends included each other, “as well as other kids on the block.” They “made up” games like “cops and robbers” and organized themselves “[on] bicycles ... kinda like tag ... catching robbers.” There were few formally organized sports at that time – particularly for girls.

Theresa did not fear much during her childhood, although she was afraid of falling off the highway in California.

I do remember being in the mountains and being ... we’d drive up California mountains – they’re not Colorado mountains, but they’re hills – in San Bernardino, we’d drive up and I can remember going around curves and I would be afraid that we would fall off of the highway.

While growing up, Theresa “always wanted to be a teacher” and believed she

would be a teacher. The women who taught her during grade school and high school made an impact on her life and she considered them role models.

My teachers ... and I can't think of any one in particular ... I think those people were really important to me ... I have a little book at home that I found just, a bunch of stuff my mother sent me when she was moving out of our big old house and ... it had all my teachers from first grade through tenth grade when we moved in California, so it must have been something I had to ... and there were different handwritings and different inks or pencil so at, every year I would write my teacher's name and then I would what I liked about her, they were all hers.

From an early age, Theresa "liked being known by the teachers."

I liked being known by the teachers ... as a young girl ... it always worked for me being known by the teachers ... you're talking having fifty-two kids in a second grade classroom ... so I liked being known by the teachers .... That was important to me.

Being known by the teachers was important to Theresa because she liked the recognition and attention. She liked school and wanted to be acknowledged for doing well. In addition, she "probably wanted to be known by whoever was in charge." Although she didn't have any favorite teachers, she "really liked" her reading and history teachers from high school.

In addition to wanting to be a teacher, Theresa wanted to be a nun.

I really liked the sisters who taught me in high school and I think if you were a Catholic girl growing up in the 50s and you went to Catholic school ... because most of the people who taught you, although not all of them, were nuns, that you couldn't help but to believe that maybe if you liked school and you liked them, and so ... when I was in high school and in grade school ... I thought I also, in addition to wanting to be a teacher, I wanted to be a nun.

### *Family*

While growing up, Theresa "felt very secure ... and nurtured."

The one gift ... my parents gave to me and ... to all of us, is that we ... always felt loved ... a very stable ... there was never ... a sense of deprivation ... you might not get what you wanted for Christmas or something like that, but there ... was never a sense of deprivation in terms of ... attention.

Now some of that some of that was probably being the oldest girl too ... when you're the oldest ... by the virtue often times of the responsibility ... I'm conscious of that ... but I haven't spent a lot of time ... analyzing it ... I never was abused or ... it's not like you didn't have to feel, but I never hurt much. I was never pushed aside and ... as a child, I felt very secure ... and nurtured.

I mean we were always ... given what we were needed ... there was never lack of food on the table, there was never a lack of things to do, there was never people not, there were never *not* people to be there.

Theresa's parents didn't overtly say "I love you" to their children and hugging was not commonplace in her family. Even so, Theresa and her siblings "always felt loved."

Theresa's mother and father "were parents like most other parents" and her home "was like any other home." She and her siblings grew up on air force bases, where they felt "relatively protected" from city life. Mr. and Mrs. Martin were the "primary" adult family members in their children's lives because no aunts, uncles, grandparents, or other relatives ever lived close by. "It was just us, because we lived away ... so while we were in California ... we were basically our own family. We didn't have a lot of extended family around."

She and her siblings were "afraid" when their parents were upset with each other and argued. The children pondered and discussed among themselves the possibility of their parents getting a divorce; however, they didn't believe it would ever happen.

When we were teenagers ... we would talk about what they were fighting about ... all three of us ... we had this big double,

oversized double bed, it was probably a queen sized bed before its time, that all three, we all three slept, my sisters, we all three slept in same bed, so we would talk.

I think we would lay in bed and we sometimes would hear my mother and father arguing and we were afraid ... maybe afraid of what was going to happen. So we would talk sometimes about, "I wonder if they're gonna get a divorce?" but we never really believed it.

Theresa considered her parents role models because of who they encouraged her and her siblings to be. She believed her mother and father's parenting styles were consequences of "who they were."

It was ... unconscious ... they knew their role as parents was taking care of us ... in the traditional sense of that word ... I think that was probably who they were.

As a young girl, she wasn't particularly close to one parent or the other; however, she did feel closer to her father at one point in her youth. As she grew older and experienced different phases of her life, she was close to each parent "in different ways."

My mother had bought me some kind of a raincoat and hat. My hat flew out of a bus on the way home ... and my father and my brother and I, cause I was so upset, because it was my favorite thing ... we went out and we found it ... like an hour and a half later after my dad was home from work and ... so I think ... it would, my closest to either one of my parents probably depended on who they were for me at that, at those moments, but I never felt distance from either one of them ... particularly.

Theresa would sometimes "fight" with her mother about "not wanting to have to take care of the younger kids." In high school, for example, Theresa wanted to stay after school to work on the yearbook, but her mother wanted her at home to help with the children. On occasion as a young adult, Theresa fought with her father about what she wanted to do in the future.

Catholicism and the Catholic Church were part of Theresa's life from the day she was born. Like all of her siblings and her parents, she was baptized Catholic. The Church was always "a big piece" of their personal lives, but it wasn't a big part of their social lives. "It was important ... on Sunday morning ... [to] go to church and ... believing in God and Jesus and the saints ... all of that was important." There was always a crucifix in Theresa's parents' bedroom, but there weren't a lot of other Catholic or religious symbols in their home. The family prayed before and after meals.

During lent or advent ... I know for a period of time, now we didn't do this consistently, but we would pray the rosary at night together, but that didn't last real long, but I can remember doing it ... so slouching all over chairs ... faith was very important.

Because of the mild weather in southern California, the family frequently enjoyed walking to church together when they lived on the west coast. Their contributions to the parish were twofold. Theresa and her siblings taught Saturday and Sunday school to the children who didn't attend Catholic school and Mrs. Martin was involved with a number of volunteer groups such as the altar society.

A significant experience in Theresa's childhood was when she committed what she considered her "first real sin." The incident occurred on the way home from school with her sister, Joanie.

And so I remember one time on the way home, Joanie dropped all of her books and I just would not go back and help her. And I remember believing it was the first later, that that was the first real sin ... so it was the first time I really said I wasn't gonna help somebody ... because I was freezing.

Theresa's realization of her "first real sin" occurred as a result of consciously reflecting on the incident after it happened.

It wasn't that I said right then that was a sin .... That was one of the first conscious moments that I had ... to truly reflect on my own what I believed I had done ... It was a moment of consciousness that we had from childhood on, memorized the definition of sin and then you'd memorize a list of things like lying and cheating and stealing and killing and adultery and stuff you didn't even know what it was. And then, "Oh, maybe this is really what sin is," you see, so that's what I mean by epiphany – it was a ... moment where I thought, "I really know what this means, I just haven't ... memorized it."

Mrs. Martin was a devout Catholic who attended Mass daily. Theresa's father did not attend daily Mass because he worked outside the home, but "he always carried a rosary in his pocket." His Catholic faith was important to him; however, he expressed that importance differently than her mother. "He didn't express it by ... volunteering in the church in the same way, like my mother."

Mrs. Martin worked at home raising her children. Theresa and her siblings "all had chores" for which they were responsible. The children traded chores according to the system their mother had in place "by virtue of having eight children."

There was a ... division of labor in our family where my ... brother would do things like mow the yard, take out the trash, things like that, where my sister and I were home doing things like cleaning up the house or picking up the toys for the younger kids or taking care of younger kids.

None of the Martin children ever had to do the dishes because their mother called that her "quiet time."

While growing up, Theresa spent a lot of time with her sister, Joanie, who was seventeen months younger than her. The sisters were "organizers" who found a number of ways to put their organizational skills to use. They organized a variety of activities for

their siblings and “other kids on the block” as a way to provide childcare. Playing Mass, school, and outdoor games such as “cops and robbers” were commonplace.

My sister and I used to play school ... not only my own brothers and sisters, but ... the other kids on the block, and it was a way of babysitting ... but it was also a way that ... we were organizers ... we would have lessons and ... this whole elaborate scheme of things ... what we did during ... the first part of the day, we reinvented in the ... late afternoon.

Holidays at the Martin house “were all sort of the same general genre,” but even they were enhanced by the girls’ organizational talents. Because Theresa’s family was Catholic, holidays typically included Mass in the morning, followed by a big breakfast at home – but not in dress clothes.

We never stayed in our good clothes ... we would get dressed up and I remember my brothers saying they had to wear their hard shoes ... instead of tennis shoes. And we’d go to church and we’d come home and we would all change.

Christmas was a festive and fairly organized celebration.

Christmas was always ... we were kind of a little organized about it ... we would get up ... real early in the morning and my father would have these huge movie cameras with huge lights shining in our eyes ... we’d get up and ... we’d get our stockings. They would be filled with little things and then we would go to Mass and come home and have breakfast and then we would, one at a time, open gifts. So, I would open one, and my brother would open one ... so everybody could see what everybody else got.

We’d always have a meal like probably like mid-afternoon, you know, that and my parents would buy cold duck and we could all toast a little bit and then we would ... play cards, my sisters and I would just play cards ... that’s what we do probably between whatever all the activities were in the morning and by the time we had dinner, we would set the table very elaborately and we’d make place cards with little menus for people so ... we would do ... little things like that.

Christmas shopping for the Martin children was done by their mother on Christmas Eve.

“We would tell each other what we ... were getting for Christmas ... and we weren’t supposed to tell. Then we’d find out we all had gotten each other umbrellas or something like that.”

### *Education*

Even though Theresa’s parents did not attend college, they valued education and made it “a real priority” in their child rearing. Mr. and Mrs. Martin encouraged their children to do their best in school and were pleased when they earned As. Theresa realized “C was about the worst grade you could get” in her family.

We were very proud of bringing ... As home, grades home, As, Bs.  
My dad and mom would look at our report cards ... hoping to get  
an A next time. They would look at the B’s, tell us to get A’s next  
time or ask us to tell them how we could do better.

The Martin children “were only allowed to watch TV on Friday and Saturday night” and watching television on school nights was not permitted. To their advantage, when they were growing up, “there wasn’t much on television that might appeal to a child” anyway.

Theresa had “an awakening ... of some kind” between first grade and fourth or fifth grade. During that span of time, she “divided” her best friends between boys and girls.

I had my best friends from first grade and then, it’s so funny  
because by the time I got to fourth or fifth grade – I can’t  
remember now – I divided them between boys and girls.

Theresa attended first through eighth grade at St. John’s School in Valley View, California, where her experience was co-ed until ninth grade. After completing the



eighth grade, the girls stayed at St. John's for high school, but the boys left and attended Notre Dame Prep.

Although Theresa always had friends, "like the friends who rode the bus," high school was an alienating experience for her.

The experience of high school though was ... somewhat alienating. I don't know that I ever felt ... with the in crowd, which ... I found alienating. I don't think I ever felt like I had real, a real good friend in high school like they all ... I went to prom and stuff like that. I always had some fun in high school, but I never felt part of that crowd ... so there was a certain alienation socially ... that was probably complicated.

Because of her father's job with the air force, it was not uncommon for Theresa to have friends who were also children of parents in the armed services. Unfortunately, "the ground was always shifting," so her friends' families would eventually relocate at some point in the friendship.

One particular friend in high school, Carol ... Williams ... and she was my best friend when ... I was a junior and then half of my senior year at Trinity, but then her dad was a marine and then we moved away ... so we dealt with that a lot .... The ground was always shifting ... so you didn't have the same friends all the way through .... But I could probably name eight friends that I had in eighth grade that like Christy ... was my friend ... and she moved away ... so I always had a friend or a couple of friends.

School was not difficult for Theresa; however, she "worked at it." She "never did well in art and music" and she struggled with high school science. In spite of her poor performance in science, her parents were supportive of her efforts. Theresa was "very conscious" of this support.

I didn't do particularly well in science in high school ... I think some of that was the transition from moving schools ... sophomore year ... I ... had to take biology there [California] and I had to take biology here [in the Midwest], but I was a semester behind ... and

I can remember that that made me frustrated, but ... my parents said, “Well, just do the best you can.” I was very conscious that my folks had said that was okay, that I just needed to do the best I could rather than strain ... it was a very supportive moment.

At the dinner table, Theresa’s father would ask his children questions about school such as, “What did you learn today?” Attending college was an unspoken expectation in the family. Application to college was made during high school and attending college was unquestionably, the next step.

### *Loss of a Brother*

Theresa’s older brother died of cancer when he was just seventeen years old. Her childhood was analogous to “gently rocking on the river,” particularly within the context of her brother’s death.

There wasn’t anything ... that was a terrible thought or a terrible, I mean, my brother’s death was awful, but ... it wasn’t like when I was three years old and five years old and ten years old that I was traumatized and, and we were prepared for it. He’d been sick for a long time, so ... it wasn’t like he died in a car wreck suddenly or died in Vietnam, God forbid ... so there was something gentle about it.

Her brother’s death was the first time she experienced the loss of an immediate family member and the grief that accompanied such a loss. The trauma Theresa and her family experienced within a five-month span of time felt like “sort of a moving sidewalk.”

My youngest brother was born February 2, my brother was diagnosed with cancer February 12, my mother’s mother died of a heart attack in a Howard Johnson’s in April, and my brother died in June.

It was all that quick, so within a space of what, February to June – five months – there was a whole lot of trauma. Trauma – a whole lot of, I think we were thrown in to what I often have described as sort of a moving sidewalk. I mean you just put one foot in front of

the other and you ... you didn't know where you were going, but you were being carried, you know, um and then we moved [to the Midwest] in ... January. That's a lot of change and a lot of trauma.

Similar to the moving sidewalk and the sense of "being carried," this time of trauma also represented a state of unconsciousness to Theresa.

I was sort of flipped into an unconsciousness because I think ... both my sister and I, who were the oldest then, and we had done a lot of care giving anyway, I think we were doing a lot of care giving then.

The move to the Midwest after the death of their older brother, as well as the wintry conditions there that January, led Theresa and Joanie to the conclusion that their parents took them to their new home to die.

My brother ... who was two years older than me, died when he was ... seventeen ... about six months before we moved [to the Midwest] ... we had never lived in cold ... foggy rain in southern California was about the most cold we ever had ... My parents were born and raised in Chicago, so they knew what it was like .... We moved [to the Midwest] in mid-January. My mother had scrambled around ... to get us coats and stuff like that. And my sister and I were in high school, so we had to ride the bus [there] ... so we had to each go to the corner and wait for the bus and we would talk about how my parents brought us here to die, my parents brought us here to die. But I think some of that was fact that my brother had died of cancer.

*Theresa's Career Path: "A different kind of call ... it's a ministry"*

During her junior year of high school, Theresa investigated the possibility of becoming a nun and explored the order of Catholic nuns known as Sisters of the Trinity. After finishing high school, she completed the incorporation process and made her final vows as a Sister of the Trinity. She then attended Serenity College, which was owned and operated by the Sisters of the Trinity. She lived on campus.

Theresa started college in 1966 and experienced “fairly institutionalized” living at Serenity College. During that time, the United States was in the midst of the Vietnam War. In addition, there were other changes that affected her personally – “changes in the church ... Vatican II ... and ... the civil rights movement.” She was “a product of that ... kind of authority” present in society and in the Catholic Church. During that time, she “came into a sense of [her] own personhood” and developed a “consciousness of respect, being respectful of authority, but not wanting to be a child towards it.”

After Theresa earned a degree in math and secondary education at Serenity College, she taught high school math at Trinity High School for four years. She was then asked to work in administration for the Sisters of the Trinity – an experience that changed Theresa’s “whole sense of direction.”

Being asked to be in administration for the Sisters of the Trinity was a significant moment and a relatively unexpected moment, but ... I think that made the difference between me going on in theology and therefore, getting a Ph.D. ultimately after a number of years.

Because I think I had set my sights at that time ... of what actually principal of the high school I was in had asked me to study to be a principal, because I think she saw me as her successor. She was older. And so I think that was a, that changed ... my purview. In other words, you know, you’re going along and you’re a math teacher and you, and you’re in a high school and you say, “Well, the leadership position here is the principal,” and somebody’s asking you, “Will you take some of that on?” “Will you go to school to study that?” Indeed, the last year I was there I ... took two classes in educational administration that summer and then I was asked to be administration within Sisters of the Trinity and they said, “If you’re gonna do this, you need to do a masters in theology.”

So that changed my whole sense of direction ... and then I think that period while I was in administration for the Sisters, I think I ...

got more and more in touch with how much I really enjoyed theology ... and that's what led me to study for a Ph.D.

Theresa followed the Sisters' advice and earned a masters degree in theology at Emerald University, a Jesuit, Catholic university located in the Midwest. For the next five years, she worked in administration for the Sisters.

Theresa's desire to continue her education in theology and ethics led her to graduate school on the east coast. A respected ethicist with whom she was familiar was teaching at Brunswick College at the time, so Theresa earned her Ph.D. there and then returned to the Midwest.

Upon Theresa's return, her teaching career continued; however, it shifted from the high school level to the university level. For ten years, Theresa taught theology at Beacon University, a private, Jesuit university of approximately 8,000 students located in the Midwest. Her teaching ability was well-received and she was content with her responsibilities as a faculty member, but her "desire ... to help organize" eventually resurfaced.

I really ... did not aspire to do anything else really ... I thoroughly enjoyed [teaching] and was very ... if I do say so myself - well acclaimed for my, as it were, teaching and enjoyed it. Although ... I did have a desire again to help organize the department or organize things. So that's probably a theme in my life from childhood. And so I found myself taking on committee work or ... whatever.

Theresa's participation in committees and her involvement in the theology department was not happenstance. She intentionally put herself "in positions to say 'I'll organize that' or 'I'll take care of that,'" knowing she "would also get a certain amount of recognition." Her contributions paid off, as she was eventually asked to chair the

theology department. This was the last professional position she held before accepting the presidency at Serenity College.

While working as the theology department chairperson at Beacon University, Theresa was asked to serve on the board of directors for Serenity College. Because she was a Sister of the Trinity who worked in higher education, she was especially qualified for the role on the board. When the president of Serenity College resigned, an interim president was hired, a search committee for a new president was formed, and Theresa was asked to serve on the search committee. At that point in her life, she didn't necessarily aspire to being president; however, she entertained the idea of teaching at the College.

There was a piece of me I suppose that, I remember coming when I was on the search committee, I would come and I would ... drive around the grounds of the College and ... I don't know that I consciously thought, "I wonder if I really want to be president here" as much as I thought, "I would like to be here ... working." But at the time, there were no full-time theology positions.

The way Theresa became president of Serenity College was "unusual" and unlike most search processes.

I was on the search committee ... so we were sitting upstairs here in the room. I was sitting with several board members, five or six of us on the search committee. And we were trying to decide what to do. And I left the room to use the restroom and when I came back they said, "We want you to do this." And I said, "Well I haven't even thought of it." And, but I said I would think about it.

Theresa accepted the position of president. Because of her history with the institution, she "really did understand ... where the College was at the time."

Theresa's career path was "a different kind of call." Unlike a more traditional career path, the journey within religious life was "a ministry."

When you're in a religious community or you have a vocation to religious life ... I think it is rare – although I haven't talked to other sisters about this – I think it's rare to think about career path because...it's a different kind of call .... So it's a ministry that ... you certainly bring whatever your childhood and ... all that formation to ... but there *is* something too, about where you're not choosing it as much as it's choosing you or it's both ... and I don't mean to say that people tell me what to do. That's not the way we do it anymore at all. It's more that you're open to the possibilities around you in a different way than you might be if you were ... setting out to get your education so as to become [something] next.

Theresa did not plan a career path for herself based on a desired outcome or a particular goal. "I'm not sure you do that in religious life quite so much." Some aspects of Theresa's career, however, were intentional and reflected conscious decisions.

It would be unfair to say that it all was just happenstance ... I certainly ... think I'm self-conscious enough to know like that when I was in the theology department, I did put myself in positions to say, "I'll organize that" or "I'll take care of that" knowing that I would also get a certain amount of recognition.

Theresa's experience was not one of "living in a world of careerism" as much as it was feeling a sense of ownership in her work. For instance, because the Sisters of the Trinity owned Trinity High School, the Catholic high school where she taught, and because she was a member of the order, she felt a sense of ownership. As owner, "you do everything," so tasks ranged from "sweeping up after the pep rally ... [to] teaching classes."

Throughout her career, Theresa never had a male boss. When she taught math at Trinity High School after graduating from college, the school principal was a nun. While

working for the Sisters of the Trinity, her supervisors were women. Although the priest who hired her to teach at Beacon University was also the department chair, Theresa was not accountable to him in a direct report capacity. Like most faculty members, she maintained her autonomy and independence. “When you’re on faculty, you don’t really have a boss.” Not ever having a male boss “made a difference in terms of confidence” for Theresa, particularly because the women she worked for “understood themselves ... as mentors.”

Theresa’s role models throughout her life included her parents, teachers, and fellow Sisters of the Trinity. “There [are] a lot of our Sisters ... [for whom] I have tremendous respect and had a lot to do ... with forming who I am today ... lots of folks along the way.” One Sister who impacted Theresa’s development was Sister Ruth Elaine Ryan, who was president of the Sisters of the Trinity early in Theresa’s career. A proponent of higher education, she talked with all the Sisters who were under the age of forty and suggested they design educational paths for themselves. Sister Ruth Elaine Ryan strongly encouraged the young Sisters to further their education.

Another influential Sister was Sister Patricia Lang, a respected leader in the religious community.

Professionally, this Sister Patricia Lang ... who happens to be on the board of the College now ... I first knew her when she was assistant principal at the high school, Trinity High. But ... she didn’t figure for me at that time, but when she became the president of our religious community, I was really impressed with how respected and ... she’s truly somebody who has been in leadership in our community ... and then she went on to do other things, now she’s semi-retired ... she’s truly somebody that I don’t know that there’s any one of us that doesn’t respect her ... and she was always interesting to me from that perspective.



The chairperson of the theology department at Beacon University who hired Theresa for a faculty position was also a role model for her. She “had a lot of affection for him” and he had the same for her.

The chair of the department who hired me at Beacon ... I had a lot of affection for him ... and he for me. He always said he picked me up – he’s a kind of a jokester – always picked me up off the street and gave me a job.

A significant life course experience that occurred in the midst of Theresa’s career path was the death of her father. At the time of his death, she was on sabbatical from Beacon University. Her father died while on the phone with her.

The significance of his death for me – he died talking to me on the phone, so it was very profound .... He had a heart attack. But, and my sisters and brothers always say, “Well, what were you talking about?” Like I killed him or something.

The significance of that is I think I realized at that moment, although ... I don’t know if, I think I had the realization, I haven’t done as much with it, is that you only have so much time to live ... and what do you really want to do with that?

And I think, I don’t know that it made such difference in my career choices or any of that, but I think I became even more reflective after that. Like wanting to be more conscious of who I was and what I was doing ... so I’m more attentive to people ... than just stuff like reading, teaching ... so those ... kinds of moments.

### *Meeting Dr. Theresa Martin*

It was early December and the city’s first snowfall was well underway. The snowflakes were large and plentiful enough to momentarily block my vision between broad sweeps of my car’s windshield wipers as I drove through the Serenity College campus. Perhaps because of the snow and the early evening hour, there was an abundance of vacant parking spots near the building where I was to meet President Martin.

The snow that fell close to the parking lot lights seemed to glow and sparkle as it passed by the towering bulbs and gracefully floated to the ground. The tranquil setting was the ideal backdrop for my thoughts as I walked toward campus – memories of my

Catholic upbringing, a mental note that President Martin was also a nun, and appreciation for the stillness of the night. I made my way to the building's side door, leaving a path of footprints that lasted only a few minutes before it was covered with snow. President Martin was right where her secretary said she would be – waiting for me in the hallway, outside the room where we would talk about her life as little girl and her life as president of Serenity College.

### *The Presidency*

Serenity College, a private Catholic college, was founded in the early 1900s by the Sisters of the Trinity. Located in the Midwest, Serenity was an all women's college with a student body of approximately 1,000. Serenity offered associate, bachelors, and master's degrees that encompassed professional preparation and the liberal arts. At the time of the interview, Dr. Theresa Martin had been president for nine years.

For President Martin, “every day is different in terms of exactly what you are responding to.” Her typical day included meetings with individuals or groups and phone conversations with donors, business people, or board members. When the interview was conducted, Serenity College was in the midst of a capital campaign. Because of the campaign, Theresa spent part of each day fundraising through external relations. In addition, sections of the campus were under construction, so she started her morning by walking around the construction sites before the workmen arrived. Within the College community, she spent a lot of her time “making sure people are talking to each other.”

Theresa characterized her management style as managing “by walking around.”

I don't necessarily manage from my office. I'm very visible on campus. People know me and call me by name. Students know that I'm accessible. I often find people walking in the hall and then a tour with prospective students and perhaps their parents and ... all the presidential ambassadors ... tour students through, know to stop and introduce me.

Dr. Martin's goal as president included the focus on students and effectively serving them.

My goal as president ... it's ... the responsibility of working with the senior leadership team to make sure that all of the functions of the College are not only integral to one another, but they're all serving the students ... I often say there's no other reason for us to be here – except the students ... I want them to know that we're here for them.

President Martin attributed the security of her own childhood to her perspective of serving students.

And I suppose when I talk about the security of my own childhood ... I want people to feel, the people we're entrusted with ... in our educational institutions, to feel that kind of security ... we can't make anybody feel anything, but I think our way of approaching them, our way of raising them ... with our rules and with our environments ... can help people feel secure and at Serenity College, we ... deal with woman who ... are on every scale of vulnerability ... some ... are very secure, and some ... are extremely vulnerable socioeconomically and academically ... the more we can help people feel secure ... if there's any lesson from my childhood, I suppose it would be that.

Theresa's leadership style included being direct and open, building a team, and working with people who were smarter or quicker than she was.

I've ... always been relatively open and direct ... and that's why I'm always surprised when people take some of the things I say as seriously ... if that's the next thing we're gonna do ... it's very important to me to build a team that is respectful of one another ... and that I can respect ... it's very important to me that people are smarter than I am ... or quicker than I am, although that's difficult – not the smarter, but the quicker ... I'm a quick thinker ... but I need people to come back at me and say "You know ... that might be a quick fix, but it might not be the *best* fix," or "That might be a fix, but not the best fix."

Affirming others was not a natural behavior for President Martin, although valuing people was a characteristic that evolved throughout her adulthood.

I forget affirm people, because I'm on to the next task or next thing ... but I really, truly value the contributions that people make, but ... it's not natural to me to say out of the way or "You did a good job" ... and I don't like to work with people who obviously need a lot of that ... I've probably always been, not slow to affirm people – that's not what it is – I ... truly forget to. I assume people feel internal affirmation and confirmation.

Theresa's secure, nurturing, and love-filled childhood contributed to this assumption she had of others.

So it's not that I'm withholding affirmation, as much as I don't that it's necessary. Because if I've always been loved, you should be too!

After several years in the presidency and a "gradual dawning," Dr. Martin was finally able to "formulate or articulate" two answers to the question she was often asked – "What were the hardest things about becoming president?" One response focused on the culture of organizations and another was more personal.

One is ... I didn't realize how there really was a culture to organizations ... And that was a surprise to me, that there could be pockets of an organization that were dysfunctional because the culture among the people was dysfunctional. Not because, and that that had an effect on what they were doing. In other words, that's what prevented either change or made systems not be able to be fixed ... systems, between people.

But how much of ... what we do in an organization is really dependent on the relationships with people. And I don't mean the, "Hi, how are you? How's your health?" or "How's your mother?" or ... blah, blah, blah ... I mean truly the respect for ... attentiveness ... in a serious kind of way people ask each other ... that was one realization.

The second, more personal, answer Theresa identified focused on others' perceptions of her.

I never ... had ... myself taken so seriously. So what I said in the hallway was taken like it was the next pronouncement ... I was shocked at that ... although I have learned not to say what I think in every hallway ... because ... I'm an extrovert, I tend to think out loud or process out loud, an extrovert probably in the Myers-Briggs sense. I'm not cautious about suggesting ideas and stuff like that ... and I was surprised at how seriously ... what I said was Gospel before I knew it was ... I might have just been spinning an idea...but that's not my last thought.

President Martin's professional life took precedence over her personal life.

My ministry or my work ... has been central and it's from that, that my ... prayer life flows, as well as my friendships ... not that I've always worked with the people that are the closest friends to me, but I think ... it's important that they understand my work.

Because many Sisters worked at Serenity College, Theresa's role as president and her involvement with the Sisters of the Trinity blended well. Still, most of her attention was focused on her professional life.

I'm probably not as attentive ... to my own personal relationships and my personal life as ... I should be ... I'm more attentive and ... that would be more like my dad ... in terms of ... I work a lot ... I think it would be too strong to say I'm a workaholic.

Similarly, President Martin was not attentive to her hobbies or non-work activities.

I don't think I'm as attentive to those kinds of things [hobbies] ... there [are] things I like to do, like I love to read ... I love to just sit in the back yard and do nothing ... I could say I like to garden, but do I ever do it? No.

I suspect I'll be one of those people that retirement will be very hard. It won't be ... an easy transition for me to make. I'll have to think about that in about another ten years and figure [it] out.

As an adult, Theresa had one or two very close friends. “But then the rest of the world ... they’re acquaintances, they’re donors, they’re board members.”

### *Within-Case Analysis*

#### *A Summary of Answers to the Research Questions*

The text below is a summary of responses to the grand tour questions and sub-questions.

Dr. Theresa Martin had fond memories of her childhood. She and her seven siblings “always felt loved” and as a young girl, Theresa felt “very secure ... and nurtured.” The second oldest child and the oldest girl in the family, Theresa assisted her mother with the childcare of her younger siblings on a regular basis. Her love of organizing was channeled toward childhood activities such as playing Mass, school, and outdoor games such as “cops and robbers” with her siblings and other kids on the block.

Theresa’s interest in learning was reflected in her high grades, her academic excellence, and her love of reading. From an early age, Theresa identified her career aspirations to teach and become a nun. “I always wanted to be a teacher and ... believed I would be a teacher ... in addition, I wanted to be a nun.”

The majority of Theresa’s childhood was spent in southern California before her family relocated to the Midwest. Her father was an officer in the Air Force and her mother did not work outside the home. Catholicism and the Catholic Church were central to Theresa’s life, as each family member was baptized Catholic and practiced the Catholic faith. Although neither her father nor her mother attended college, education

was a value and priority in the Martin household. Attending college was an unspoken expectation for Theresa and her siblings.

Theresa's childhood career aspirations became reality with time. After finishing high school, she completed the incorporation process and made her final vows as a Sister of the Trinity. Prior to her administrative work as department chair and president, the majority of Theresa's career was spent teaching at the high school and college levels. Because of her affiliation with the Sisters of the Trinity, she described her career path as "a different kind of call" or "a ministry." Theresa experienced a sense of ownership of her work rather than a "world of careerism."

The life course experiences that characterized Theresa's career path included the death of her older brother, her college and graduate educations, her involvement with and membership in the Sisters of the Trinity, and the death of her father.

### *Lifespan Themes*

Theresa's life was characterized by the following five themes: (a) the desire and ability to organize, (b) her life was intertwined with Catholicism and the Catholic Church, (c) education was central to her life, (d) the security of her childhood was a foundation for her life, and (e) reading was a lifelong love and activity. These themes were reflected throughout her life course stages and life course experiences.

#### *The desire and ability to organize.*

Theresa's desire and ability to organize was a theme in her childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. As a young girl, she helped organize childcare for her mother. She identified herself and her sister Joanie as "organizers" and together, they

organized games, activities, and family events. While working as a faculty member who taught theology at Beacon University, her desire to organize resurfaced. Theresa channeled that desire toward committee work and involvement in the theology department. Eventually, she was asked to chair the department. Her role as president of Serenity College provided her with countless opportunities to organize.

*Her life was intertwined with Catholicism and the Catholic Church.*

Catholicism and the Catholic Church were present throughout the entirety of Theresa's life. Like her parents and all of her siblings, she was baptized and raised Catholic. In addition to playing school and outdoor games, Theresa and her siblings played Mass. The Martin family regularly prayed together, attended Mass together, and celebrated religious holidays through the Church. Theresa's early career aspirations of becoming a teacher and a nun originated at the Catholic school she attended as a young girl. The Sisters of the Trinity influenced her decision to become a nun, her college education, her professional positions, her pursuit of two graduate degrees in theology, and ultimately, her presidency of Serenity College.

*Education was central to her life.*

Education was a value and a priority in the Martin household. Theresa's parents encouraged their children to do their best in school and academics were often the topics of dinnertime conversations. Playing school was a common activity among Theresa and her siblings. Although neither of Theresa's parents attended college, the Martin children were expected to earn a college degree. Five of the eight children became educators in their adult lives.



Theresa excelled in school, enjoyed school, and liked her teachers and the recognition they gave her. Teachers were among her childhood role models and eventually, Theresa became a teacher herself. She worked for educational institutions throughout her career path and held the positions of high school teacher, college professor, college administrator, and college president.

*The security of her childhood was a foundation for her life.*

Theresa had fond memories of a secure, love-filled, and nurtured childhood. Despite the size of their family, none of the Martin children felt deprived of attention or basic needs. “We were always ... given what we ... needed” and “always felt loved.” Theresa described that security as “the one gift” her parents gave her and her siblings. That gift was a solid foundation for Theresa’s youth and adulthood. She attributed her philosophy of serving students to her secure childhood.

*Reading was a lifelong love and activity.*

As a young girl, Theresa loved to read. When it was time for her and her siblings to clean the house on Saturday mornings, she was often found under her bed covers reading a book. All of her siblings were avid readers. Although reading was still a favorite activity as an adult, Theresa did not spend much time reading for leisure.

*Epiphanies or Turning Point Experiences*

Theresa referred to a number of life experiences as “moments of consciousness” or realizations. Theresa’s “first real sin” qualified as a “relived, retrospectively meaningful epiphany” (Denzin, 1989a, p. 130). She did not realize the significance of the

experience in the moment; however, reflecting on the situation and her behavior gave meaning to the incident and led Theresa to her conclusion that she sinned.

And so I remember one time on the way home, Joanie dropped all of her books and I just would not go back and help her. And I remember believing it was the first later, that that was the first real sin ... so it was the first time I really said I wasn't gonna help somebody ... because I was freezing.

It wasn't that I said right then that was a sin .... That was one of the first conscious moments that I had ... to truly reflect on my own what I believed I had done ... It was a moment of consciousness that we had from childhood on, memorized the definition of sin and then you'd memorize a list of things like lying and cheating and stealing and killing and adultery and stuff you didn't even know what it was. And then, "Oh, maybe this is really what sin is," you see, so that's what I mean by epiphany – it was a ... moment where I thought, "I really know what this means, I just haven't ... memorized it."

In a "very supportive moment," Theresa recognized her parents' support of her as she struggled with high school science. Her mother and father encouraged her to do her best "rather than strain." Although Theresa did not identify that moment of consciousness as an epiphany, it qualified as a minor or illuminative epiphany (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129) that represented a shift in her parents' expectations. Rather than demanding Theresa to earn an A or B in high school science, they were satisfied with her best efforts.

I didn't do particularly well in science in high school ... I think some of that was the transition from moving schools ... sophomore year ... I ... had to take biology there [California] and I had to take biology here [in the Midwest], but I was a semester behind ... and I can remember that that made me frustrated, but ... my parents said, "Well, just do the best you can." I was very conscious that my folks had said that was okay, that I just needed to do the best I could rather than strain ... it was a very supportive moment.

I don't know that it was an epiphany, but ... I was very conscious that my folks had said that was okay, that I just needed to do the best I could rather than strain ... those are moments of consciousness.

When Theresa was in fourth or fifth grade, she divided her friends according to gender. She believed "an awakening ... of some kind" led to this behavior.

I had my best friends from first grade and then, it's so funny because by the time I got to fourth or fifth grade – I can't remember now – I divided them between boys and girls.

This experience qualified as a minor epiphany (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129) that illuminated a change in Theresa's perception.

Theresa's family moved from California to the Midwest six months after her older brother died of cancer. The drastic differences between the warm weather of California and the bitter cold of Midwest winters were innocently misinterpreted by Theresa and Joanie as they related them to death. "My parents brought us here to die, my parents brought us here to die." This experience was a cumulative epiphany because it was "the result of an accumulation of past experiences that culminated in a single moment" (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129). Past experiences included Theresa's brother's illness, the transition of moving to the Midwest, and trips to the bus stop.

Theresa's college education was a major turning point experience (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129) in her life because of the significant personal development she experienced. During that time [in college], she "came into a sense of [her] own personhood" and developed a "consciousness of respect, being respectful of authority, but not wanting to be a child towards it [authority]."

The death of Theresa's father was a relived or retrospectively meaningful epiphany, an experience that led her to reexamine her life and how she lived it (Denzin, 1989a, p. 130). It is likely that Theresa considered the significance and meaning of her father's death many times, long after the day he died.

The significance of his death for me – he died talking to me on the phone, so it was very profound .... He had a heart attack .... The significance of that is I think I realized at that moment, although ... I don't know if, I think I had the realization, I haven't done as much with it, is that you only have so much time to live ... and what do you really want to do with that?

I don't know that it made such [a] difference in my career choices or any of that, but I think I became even more reflective after that. Like wanting to be more conscious of who I was and what I was doing ... so I'm more attentive to people ... than just stuff like reading, teaching.

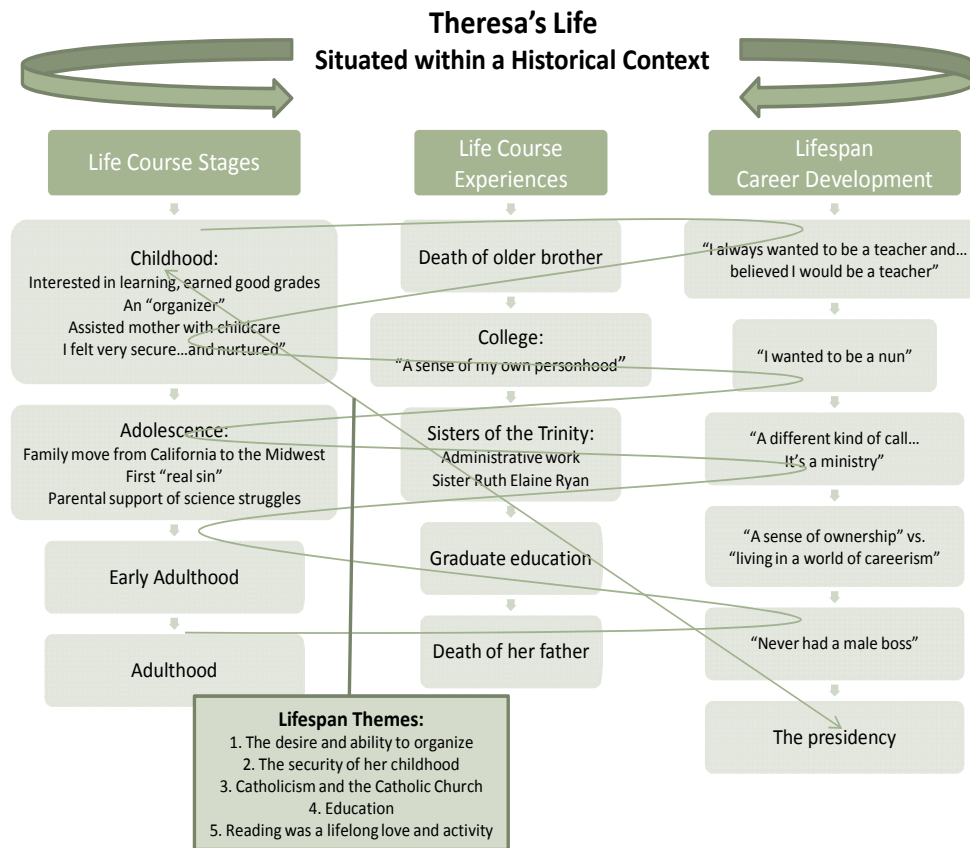
Being asked to work in administration for Sisters of the Trinity was a major epiphany or “major turning point experience” (Denzin, 1989b, p. 129) in Theresa's life. The experience impacted her education, her vocation, and her career path. Sister Ruth Elaine Ryan, a Sister of the Trinity who encouraged young Sisters to pursue higher education, played a significant role in Theresa's major epiphany.

Being asked to be in administration for the Sisters of the Trinity was a significant moment and a relatively unexpected moment, but ... I think that made the difference between me going on in theology and therefore, getting a Ph.D. ultimately after a number of years.

Because it took Theresa two or three years to “formulate or articulate” responses to the question “What were the hardest things about becoming president,” she experienced a cumulative epiphany. The “gradual dawning” that led to the identification of her answers was characteristic of a cumulative epiphany – “the result of an

accumulation of past experiences that culminated in a single moment” (Denzin, 1989a, p. 129).

Theresa’s powerful descriptions of the impact of her older brother’s death revealed her perspectives on the experience. Because her brother was ill for a while, there was a gentleness surrounding his death. Theresa used the analogy “gently rocking on the river” to describe that time of loss. At the same time, the family experienced extensive trauma and change, which felt like “sort of a moving sidewalk” to Theresa. During that difficult time, Theresa and Joanie assisted their mother with childcare more than ever, an experience Theresa referred to as being “sort of flipped into an unconsciousness.””



*Figure 4.* The conceptual model that represents Theresa's life from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which her lifespan career development evolved.

Rachel

*Broadway Bound: A Favorite Saturday Adventure*

The subway ride to Manhattan on this particular Saturday seemed as if it would never end. Although Rachel and her three girlfriends made this same trip many times before and practically had the route memorized, today's venture was special. The girls couldn't arrive on Broadway soon enough to see the Saturday matinee, an opportunity they took as frequently as possible.

As the 34<sup>th</sup> Street stop was announced over the subway loud speaker, they looked at each other with excitement. The subway came to its usual screeching halt and the teens held on to one another and the car's straps. Rachel led the way as they stepped off the subway and headed toward Times Square. They took their place in line and huddled together as each girl searched for ticket money in her purse.

Spending three or four dollars for discount tickets to a Broadway matinee – even if the seats weren't the best – was worth every penny to the girls. This week, however, everyone's tickets were for good seats with no obstructions blocking the view of the stage. No one was behind a pole and no one was in the balcony. Rachel sat in the middle of her friends, a great spot for checking in with everyone periodically during the show. After fifteen minutes of waiting and chattering about their anticipation of the pending production, the lights dimmed and the curtain began to rise. Rachel's heart raced as the orchestra began to play and *Sweet Charity* officially started. Indeed, it was an extra special Saturday.

*Rachel's Childhood: "All this love and all this support"*

Rachel was a happy little girl whose "stable, safe childhood" was full of "really special times [and] ... really simple times" with family. The younger of two children in the household, she and her brother Tony, who was six and a half years older than her, were raised in a borough of New York City. Rachel's parents were both raised in New York City, one a first-generation Italian Catholic, the other Jewish. Her family members enjoyed one another in the comforts of home and did not need a trip to Disney World in order to have fun together.

Rachel and Tony received loving, empowering, and encouraging messages from their parents while growing up.

When I ... go back and look at moving pictures my dad took ... I just look like this little happy kid and I am – period. I mean, that's what it was like. And I think it comes from just having a very stable, safe childhood.

I find it really hard to remember things other than when I think back, I just remember all this love and all this support ... [I was] really raised to think that anything I can put my head to, I could do ... You know, all fathers at some point say “You only got a 99. Where’s the other point?” ... But there's a way to say it lovingly and there’s a way to say ... it ... where you’re insinuating lack of intelligence or something or love. And it just ... wasn’t in our household and my parents had a really easy time of both their children.

The expectation to do “the best you could” was also clearly communicated by Rachel’s parents.

If you tried to do the best you could, that ... was what was expected and ... your parents would love you no matter what you were. There was never a shred of doubt about it. The only thing they would tell me is I had to do my best.

Education was a value and priority in Rachel’s family and the expectation to excel academically was ingrained in her childhood. This expectation, as well as parental support for it, was reflected in the clearly defined roles of all family members. Her father was “a fairly patriarchal first-generation American ... [with] a fairly traditional view of women.” He believed his job was to bring home money, his wife’s job was “to take care of the house,” and his children were responsible for doing well in school. As a result, Rachel’s “job” was to excel academically, not to “work around the house.” Fortunately, she was “a great student.” To Rachel and Tony, fulfilling their familial responsibilities was enjoyable and gratifying. “That was our job. We came home and we were to do our



schoolwork and fortunately, we loved doing our schoolwork and excelled in it, so you got a lot of satisfaction out of it.”

The family’s focus on education was also demonstrated during their annual vacations. In preparation for pre-interstate driving trips that were sometimes three to four weeks long, her parents obtained from teachers the schoolwork their children would miss. Rachel and Tony were expected to complete all their homework while en route to the vacation spot so they could play when the family arrived at their destination.

Epiphanies or turning points were not part of Rachel’s childhood.

I didn’t wake up one day and say “Wow, I’m a smart kid,” or “Wow, I’m an ugly kid” ... this is just the way we were brought up – to work hard, do really well in school, [and] move into whatever our intellect wanted us to move into.

Rachel and her brother had a healthy relationship while growing up. Despite “the normal ups and downs,” the two of them were “really close” growing up – and that was literally true as well.

The interesting thing that ... is probably different from most girls’ experiences, we shared a bedroom ‘til he left for graduate school ... because we just lived in a two-bedroom apartment. It was a very nice apartment, but New York’s an expensive place to be and dad, we were very lower middle-class ... so we were really close!

[I] ... got locked out of the room a lot when his friends visited and was pretty glad when he finally got up and went to graduate school away from home.

Tony was “very smart and very outgoing and charming.” He was a positive role model for Rachel and she was motivated by his accomplishments and success. “As a little sister ... I just wanted to do as well as he did. I’ve always felt that I should do at least as well as he did.” Their parents “never played ... [them] off against each other, and ... it

was a fairly healthy ... rivalry or challenge.” Rachel experienced “a spirited competitiveness” with Tony instead of “a fear of not doing well or not measuring up” to him. She believed her father was easier on her since she was the younger child. “My father gave me much more rope to hang myself with than he ever gave my brother.”

The siblings attended the same public school and Rachel was often reminded of the impression Tony left on her teachers. “We went to the same school – public school – where ... I get into second grade and the teacher would say ‘Oh, you’re Tony’s little sister! He is so good!’”

Much of Rachel’s childhood was shared with her friend, Bridget. The two girls were in school together from kindergarten through high school and “got friendly somewhere around fifth grade.” As a young girl, Rachel demonstrated academic achievement and leadership among her peers. Bridget was her companion in “lots of outside activities” and leadership activities during high school. Although she and Bridget were self-proclaimed “eggheads,” their companionship and shared experiences reinforced that their behavior was good.

You know, we really were not the popular kids. We had lots of friends, but you know “popular” connotes being with a, doing a lot more dating and being with a little faster crowd ... We were much more egghead than that, but we didn't think that was bad ... [and] in a graduating class of 1250, there’s a lot of eggheads. There’s like 40 of them, so ... within your eggheadedness you had lots of people you could be friendly with.

Similar to Rachel, Bridget had older brothers who excelled academically. Rachel appreciated the high standards of Bridget’s family as another means of reinforcing academic excellence. “She was also from a family with older brothers and ... [a] very

competitive family, very, very bright people ... I think it was helpful also to just see another family and ... their standards were like our standards.” Like their brothers, the girls did exceptionally well in high school. Bridget graduated second in their senior class and Rachel graduated ninth.

Both girls attempted to follow in their brothers’ footsteps, particularly in academics and school-related activities. That drive led to sharing the co-editorship of the high school yearbook.

When I got to high school, my brother had been editor of the yearbook and my best (and this is a big New York City high school ... we had 5500 kids in our high school, 1250 in our graduating class) ... and my closest friend ... [Bridget] her brother had been editor of the yearbook in his year and so we said, “Well,” you know, “Dammit if they can be editor of the yearbook, so can we!” And so we were co-editors of our yearbook.

Rachel’s parents expected their children to attend college. “There was never any question. There was never a choice. ‘Of course you’re going to college.’” Rachel’s mother and father both attended college, “which was unusual at that point” in time. Most of her aunts and uncles also attended.

Both Italian and Jewish people have a lot of value in education and that’s what my parents were, so ... all of my fathers’ siblings went to college and my mother’s brother went to college too.

Rachel took college courses during high school, “which was very unusual then.” As she prepared for college, her father encouraged her to “Stay home and go to Brooklyn College ‘cause it was close by.” Rachel’s mother talked her husband into allowing her daughter to go to Lake University, which was not close to home. Rachel knew her

maternal grandfather had prevented her mother from going to a college far from home.

She [Rachel's mother] "wanted to go away and her father wouldn't let her."

The day that they moved me in ... I can remember just the picture of ... mom and ... of me coming out the door of the residence hall, you know after you move in, and her just looking at me and saying "This is such a great opportunity. I so wish I could've done that." So, anyway. I got to do it.

Rachel earned her undergraduate degree in genetics and biology at Lake University, a private, Ivy League institution located in Richland, New York. Fortunately, Lake University's tuition costs at that time were the same as tuition charged by public, state institutions. "That was the only way [my parents] could have possibly afforded for me to go away to school of that calibre." During her senior year in college, she took some hospital administration courses at Lake's business school. "And that's what I figured I was going to do – until I fell in love."

*Rachel's Career Path: "A patchwork quilt and a chameleon"*

Throughout her childhood, adolescence, and even during her college experience, Rachel didn't aspire to particular jobs or careers. She clearly identified jobs or career preparation in which she had little to no interest – being a teacher, a veterinarian, or a researcher, and she "never wanted to go to medical school." She did, however, identify herself as "a scientist at heart" with a desire "to go and love biology." Rachel suspected her parents always thought [she would] ... be a teacher."

Rachel's career was analogous with "a patchwork quilt." During her career journey, she did a "constellation of things" through the process of "good bumbling." "I just bumble around and hit the right thing." She was not a planner, so she "was just bouncing

around, trying to be ... flexible.” Because she moved a number of times during her career path, there were “a lot of boxes, a lot of cars.” She had “a great time” everywhere she went.

Metaphorically, Rachel was a chameleon, continually adapting to change. “My marriage moved me and I had to figure out how and what to do depending on where I lived ... it is pulling out the right talents for what’s available and trying to fit in to, when you need a job, to fit in to what is there.” She recognized the challenges she and other women with careers faced, including the expectation “to figure out how to make it [the career] work.”

Women’s career paths differ from men’s, I believe ... they have to figure out how to always survive ... and how to fit in and make their own way. And women do that – they ... stop out for kids ... they move ‘cause their husbands’ job moves them somewhere, and they’ve got to figure out how to make it work.

In addition to her college and graduate school educations, Rachel’s career path was marked by two other life course experiences – her first and second marriages. She fell in love while in college and soon thereafter, married her first husband, Jeff.

I fell in love and ... then, much to my mother’s horror, I announced in about April of my senior year, I was getting married ... and she was crushed, because I gave up a full scholarship to the University of Michigan for their college of public health for a master’s. And she couldn’t believe that here I had gone a) out of town to Lake University ... and b) had done so well, and c) was throwing it away to get married ... but I did it anyway ... and ... we moved to the east coast.

During her marriage to Jeff, her professional life was limited by the location of his career choices. Not long after arriving on the east coast as a newlywed, Rachel

applied for a management trainee program at a small bank. This was her first experience as a college graduate among a group of people who were not college-educated.

They made me take a spelling and a math test – timed spelling and math test! And ... I think I got 100% on both of them and they wouldn't hire me. 1972 – Nobody's talking affirmative action, nobody's talking anything and they wouldn't hire me. And they said that the reason they wouldn't hire me was because I was a college graduate and how would I feel making so much less money than people who, whose payroll checks I was cashing, who hadn't gone to college, and who were earning more than I was. So I said "I don't care. I want a job, and I'll be a teller, I don't care, I just want a job." They said no.

After this experience, Rachel was hired as an accounts receivable clerk at a small electronics company, where she was again in the minority because of her college education and gender.

I typed invoices all day, before ... word processors. So you know, with multiple carbon paper and I ... was the only college-educated woman in the place and there was this great caste system where the secretary to the president was really important, didn't matter, she didn't know anything.

It did not take long for Rachel's boredom and desire for change to surface in her clerk job.

About every three months ... I'd go into the comptroller of the company and I'd say, "I'm leaving. This is boring. I don't want to do this anymore." And he would say, "We'll teach you cost accounting." And then I'd go in three months later and he'd say, "We'll teach you payroll."

After a year and a half in the position, she applied to graduate school.

And by the middle of my second year, I'd applied for a master's program ... but I knew virtually everything that was going on in the accounting department ... we maybe billed ten million a year. In those days, I guess that was big. And of course, little did I know,

how much value there was to the pain of two years of typing invoices.

I applied to MIT, 'cause that's where my brother had gone ... and I applied back to Lake 'cause my husband really wanted to be on the faculty somewhere. And I got in both places and we went back to Lake. He got a temporary, a one-year faculty position and we went back there and I got my master's.

I started out in the business school with a concentration in hospital administration, which is a master's of professional studies, and shortly after I got there, I realized that was really stupid because if you're gonna do it, you might as well get an MBA, 'cause nobody knows what an MPS is.

While working on her master's degree at Lake University in Richland, New York, Rachel got a job as marketing manager of a private data provision company. The United States president at the time, Jimmy Carter, "had just signed ... the executive order that made corporations that received federal funds ... do affirmative action analysis." The data provision company had "a revolutionary idea" to access census bureau data via Lake University's computing services. The company then sold that data so other organizations could ensure their workforce mirrored the labor force. This job was extremely valuable in Rachel's career path.

We were selling to McDonald's, data to do their affirmative action program for every location in the United States. We were selling to ... General Motors ... to AT&T. And that was my product – all the data for affirmative action and equal employment stuff.

And it got me, I testified in court for – always for management – as an expert witness on the demography of the labor force when, when General Motors, I was a witness for General Motors, in a large labor suit ... in Indianapolis ... I did seminars all over the country on work force data, and how to use it in your affirmative action program. Nobody knew how to do this. And ... we created a market. We were the...only company doing it, and at age ... 24, I was going into the vice-president for personnel at GM, Chrysler,

Bell, Westinghouse, Bank of America, all over the country – As the expert in this stuff.

So here I am, on the road half-time, running around to Fortune 500 companies as the expert and what it would teach me, it taught me how not to throw up after I gave presentations from the stress, it taught me how to stand on my feet, how to speak persuasively, be comfortable that I manage a body of knowledge ... go in front of people who were 90% white ... guys ... of great power in the industrial world, and ... never let them see me sweat.

This job was also challenging for Rachel because of the extensive travel and the lack of support she received at home.

My first husband ... was not very helpful around the house ... and it was ... way too much to be gone all the time in a very high-powered role and come home and just have the whole house and everything ... to manage the household sitting there. It just got really hard.

For a short time after this, Rachel worked for a consulting firm. Because that position also required travel, it was short-lived. A job at Lake University's business school was her next career step, although it wasn't a job she liked. Rachel recognized the career limitations of her environment and attempted to make the best of the situation.

Well, here I am in Richland, New York and my husband doesn't want to go anywhere, and I'd missed the opportunity to ... look for the job of my dreams – not that I knew what it was – because when I graduated, I couldn't go anywhere. I had to stay in Richland. So ... I better make do with what I've got, my personal life forced me to stay in Richland.

She found it very difficult to “find a job within the constraints of Richland.” Even so, Rachel realized she would have sought opportunities elsewhere if she was married or not.

In many ways it was the ... environment of being in Richland and wanting, and having missed the ... opportunity to take my MBA and run with it, that led me to be so frustrated, and I would have been frustrated had I been married to my first husband or not, I



would have, sooner or later, I would have said, “Enough is enough with this.”

After a year of working at Lake’s business school, Rachel accepted the position of director of administrative operations at one of the University’s colleges. This position was significant because it was Rachel’s introduction into higher education administration.

Rachel met her second husband, Sam, at a two-week professional development institute where “two weeks ... [was] long enough to fall in love.” Because they lived in different states nearly 500 miles apart, their relationship was long-distance for about a year and a half.

During her marriage to Sam, Rachel’s professional life determined her geography and her professional and personal lives were intertwined. In many ways, Rachel’s marriage to Sam was the opposite of her marriage to Jeff. With Sam, Rachel’s career was not always a consequence of where his jobs were; instead, he “followed” her for several jobs and she “followed” him for a while.

Because she was “smitten,” she left New York and took a job at Birch State, a Midwest university seventy miles from where Sam was employed; they lived in-between. Nine months after Rachel started working at Birch State University, Sam got a job with a public college system located in the eastern United States. After the couple relocated to the east, Rachel was employed as assistant director of a university hospital, where she got to use her “hospital stuff.”

Rachel was very unhappy with her job at the University of Windham Health Center and soon pursued other opportunities. As a result, she was hired by the president of nearby Elm University as his special assistant. While serving in this capacity, she

started her doctoral program at the University of Windham. Several years later after relocating and working as treasurer at a small college in the Northeast, she completed her doctorate with the support of Sam and her boss at the time. Eventually bored in the treasurer position, she left for Lambert University in Virginia, where she held the position of chief financial officer and vice president for business affairs for eight years. Her doctorate and her background in finance served her well.

I believe ... the reason I got interviewed for Lambert was because I had a doctorate and was a woman, which, because having an MBA is no big deal anymore ... but Lambert is very conscious of ... quality and credentials ... it's a top 50 liberal, national liberal arts institution, it's a, just a fine place ... and I think it just made me stand out from the crowd. And the administration was all men and they needed a woman in something so ... I was a very unusual case to be in the finance area and have a doctorate – And be a female. I wouldn't have gotten it [the job] without a doctorate.

After eight years at Lambert, Rachel was “probably two years bored” and ready for another change.

How many years do you do the same ... how many years do you go to the board and present the budget?

I just know that ... if I'm not constantly confronted with interesting new things, then I get bored ... so I just needed to do something new, I need a change of scenery, every place you go that's new, you have a chance to reinvent yourself and you can leave your barnacles behind you and build some new ones, and it's just a very invigorating thing.

Rachel's next job was at Meadows College, where she was an attractive presidential candidate due to her background and experience in finance.

A matter of fact, that's why I was an attractive candidate. My background is as the CFO. You know, I didn't come up through the academic ranks. I've got my doctorate and I teach ... but

basically, I am a career administrator – who does facilities ... personnel, and finances.

I am substantially different from the previous president and maybe that's what attracted them ... but ... Meadows really needed someone who could understand math. As well as bring in the ... credential, the doctorate, and so forth.

### *Supporters and Boosters*

A number of individuals were supporters and “boosters” throughout Rachel's life.

I have a series of people who have always rooted for me, starting with my parents and my brother and my girlfriend and ... whoever, my husband – at least one of them ... and ... my boosters don't ever show any lack of faith in me.

Throughout her career, Rachel benefited from the advice and guidance of individuals she called “advisors.” “I've been lucky to have advisors ... 'cause ... I'm not a planner, I just bumble around and hit the right thing.” The series of people who rooted for Rachel span her lifetime; yet no one person has been most influential. “There's no one – Yeah, relationships are a matter of, of time and place ... for me, anyway.”

Sam was supportive of Rachel and her abilities from the day they met. “When he met me, he always knew I could do whatever I put my head to, which of course is what my parents always said.” In addition, he helped Rachel recognize her many strengths and abilities.

My husband ... has been like a mirror ... when I look at him, I ... see reflected back the person I'd like to be. He sees more in me than I do some days ... looking back, he always saw leadership in ... who I was, but I saw management ... and there's a difference. I mean, there's a lot of risk taking with being the one who's out front ... he saw me as a risk taker, which is something I had not really seen before ... he just reflected for me what he, the qualities that he saw in me that I'd never really stopped to think about ... my communication skills, my ability to take very, very

complicated financial matters and explain them to people who, who glaze over when you start talking about money ... the quality of ... my friendships and how I relate to my dear friends.

At one point in his career, Sam was also a college president, so he understood Rachel's profession. Sam "knows this business and he knows what you have to do to excel in it and he has great tolerance for my hours, because he's lived them." Sam was a strong supporter of her presidency from the early days of their relationship. "My husband said it to me. He said, "You'd make a great president. I knew that since I met you."

He knew from the day he met me how ... shackled I felt having to live in Richland and be at Lake University and that ... I love Lake dearly, but the only way to move up was to wait for people to retire and die 'cause people ... and ... I didn't have the patience for that ... he knows it's important to give me my ... freedom.

Sam was also a "sensor" for Rachel, helping her maintain balance in her life. "[He] knows when you've had too much and tells you, 'You've gotta take a break or something' ... it's really hard for me to imagine how one does this job without somebody who...can hear you in a non-judgmental way." Sam was also a "partner" in Rachel's presidency.

[He is] a partner in this whole deal .... He goes, does a lot of trips with me ... everyone in the community here knows him. They know him because of my job. But he's out there all the time looking at opportunities for Meadows.

Both Rachel and Sam were very comfortable with change, a characteristic Rachel attributed to their childhoods. "Both my husband and I are like this and ... he had a similar childhood, youngest child, much loved, and ... we just don't feel threatened about

things that are new.” The couple celebrated their twentieth wedding anniversary the month after this interview was conducted.

One “booster” in particular made a lasting impression on Rachel – an eighty year old woman named Ruth who was Rachel’s “mother substitute ... for years.” She and Sam grew fond of Ruth, their “very dear friend,” during the eight years they lived in Virginia. Ruth remained a booster even after Rachel left Lambert University and took the president position at Meadows.

When I got here ... I was literally paralyzed for about two weeks – mentally – when I, I learned something about our finances that the Board didn’t even know ... it was in ... the audit that summer. And it was much worse than I thought.

I called Ruth, and I’m standing at the window here with my cell phone, with tears running down my face saying, “I can’t believe it. I sold my house in Virginia, we bought a house here, all my stuff’s in storage, I’m moving my husband, and this place isn’t gonna be here next year.”

And she just said, “Well Rachel, if anyone can do it, you can do it, for heaven’s sakes. So get on with it.” “Yes ma’am.”

Additional supporters who were influential and “made an enormous difference” in Rachel’s professional life included two male colleagues. One individual was Frank Collins, the comptroller of Lake University, where Rachel graduated from college, earned her masters degree, and eventually worked. Frank was “a wonderful man [who] felt that there weren’t enough women and minorities moving up through Lake University.” He shared his wisdom with Rachel and a number of other professionals.

I’m gonna teach you the bigger part of what it is you’re doing for a living, so that you’re not just worrying about your little college. I want you to understand how that fits into the university and the world.

Because of Frank's influence, members of the group he took under his wing – including Rachel – became successful in higher education and related fields all over the country.

Another professional who made an impact on Rachel's career path was Jack Denton. An active member of NACUBO, the national association for college and university business officers, he introduced Rachel to the organization and suggested she get involved. "He opened my eyes to the fact that there was a professional organization ... that there were other people doing what I was doing." Rachel took Jack's advice and her involvement in NACUBO led to a variety of opportunities, including a professional network. In addition to introducing her to NACUBO, Jack was a resource and reference for Rachel.

[He was] someone I could bounce ideas off of ... [he's] been a reference for me virtually everywhere I've gone ... and I just knew he was always rooting for me ... but more importantly, he helped you understand how you were part of a whole institution and why what you did in your particular college had an impact ... and ... I'm an ambitious person, which I don't think of as a negative, and so it started me thinking about career paths within the university.

Rachel's relationship with Jack Denton was the catalyst for her consideration of "career paths within the university," although she did not consider the pursuit of a college or university presidency. "I have never thought of that [pursuing a college or university presidency]."

In an unorthodox way, Rachel's first husband was also a supporter who influenced her.

[He] told me there was no way I should go for a Ph.D. because I probably wasn't creative enough to get it .... So, he was an inspiration. Well it just sat in my head ... actually what he said

was, “You have as much creativity as an apple.” I guess ... you could say that he had some impact on me.

In her role as president of Meadows College, Rachel was “totally unleashed” and permitted to be quite creative. She acknowledged that Jeff did not witness the full extent of her creativity. “Actually there is some creativity in there that he never saw.”

Despite the ups and downs Rachel and Tony experienced as children and adolescents, Tony continued to support his younger sister in adulthood.

We are just fabulous friends now but ... you go through a point where I’m sure I was a pain in the neck to him and I wanted him out of my face too ... but we’re pretty close ... we talk on the phone, probably two or three times a week.

### *Meeting Dr. Rachel Roberts*

I met Dr. Rachel Roberts, President of Meadows College, on an extremely hot and humid summer day in August. My thoughts about the uncomfortable weather conditions quickly shifted to the task at hand – my interview with her – once I entered the Meadows College administration building and saw the sign for the president’s office.

As I entered the suite, I was greeted by President Roberts’s administrative assistant, Helen, whose demeanor was professional and hospitable. Not long after I sat down, President Roberts came out of her office and greeted me with a spirited hello and a short conversation that captured her intelligence, enthusiasm, and sense of humor. In that moment, I knew my interview with this dynamic female college president would be a memorable one.

### *The Presidency*

Dr. Rachel Roberts was the 23<sup>rd</sup> president of Meadows College and at the time of the interview, she had held the position for two years. Meadows College was one of the oldest women’s colleges in the country with a total student population of nearly 900.

Located in the Midwest, Meadows was a private, liberal arts institution that offered bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, and continuing education opportunities. A typical day for President Roberts was “trying to smash ten feathers, ten pounds of feathers, into a

five pound bag.” Although every day was different, a normal day included interaction with her senior staff and people outside the institution, and if she was lucky, “some interaction with students in between.” In short, an average day was “crazy.”

Dr. Roberts described her presidency as “a great job” and “a great fit.” One of the many reasons she liked the role of president was the diversity of tasks in the job.

I ... can never stand in the same thing twice ... it's really fun, because ... being president gets you to a point in your career where you are not sitting doing the details ... so everything is different, and that plays to what I like to do, so it's fine. The thing you have to understand about me is that when I turn, when I'm done with something, I just move on to the next thing. I have very little regret or remorse. I just say “Okay, well, that's over. Now where are we going?”

The first two years of her presidency provided ample opportunities for Rachel to perform a variety of tasks. Shortly after assuming the role of president, she assessed the financial status of the College and initiated a strategic planning process. During the seven months that followed, she led the effort among members of the board, alums, and community members to “refashion” what a successful Meadows College could be. In her Interim Report on Strategic Planning, she reminded the College community that the institution “was at a crossroads in her history” and outlined how to maximize that place in time.

We would seize on this moment to think strategically about how to go forward. We would pay homage to our past and hold firm to cherished traditions. We would work together and capitalize on the abundant opportunities that lay before us. We would achieve financial stability, provide a quality educational experience for our students and be good to the people who work here. To do any less was to condemn the college to no future. And let me tell you, we have more imagination than that!



At the time of the interview, the strategic plan was successfully “rolling ahead” and President Roberts was very satisfied with the institution’s progress.

We’ve had tremendous success here ... in the last two years and so it’s very satisfying ... if you ... [asked] “what do you love the best,” there’s an incredible satisfaction out of turning an institution around.

Rachel described the most challenging part of the presidency as “being at risk all the time” and projecting confidence about the institution, particularly when talking with potential donors.

The projection of confidence is critical when you’re talking with alums and corporate donors, because nobody wants to give to a black hole. What they want to give to is an institution that’s winning.

Dr. Roberts recognized her struggle to maintain a balance between the presidency and her personal life. “The hardest thing in the whole job is balance ... knowing when you’ve had enough. And I don’t know how to find it ... I could let it overtake me ... [the job] is too consuming without a personal life.” Being involved members of the community was a double-edged sword for Rachel and her husband.

Whenever it’s fun, it’s always business at the same time ... a good side and a bad side to that. The good side is that you develop incredible relationships with wonderful people ... one of the reasons we’re so happy here is because we are part of the fabric of the community and we’ve only been here two years. And the bad part is that you really never have private time ... and ... that’s that balance issue .... I’m always doing two things at once.

President Roberts valued and enjoyed opportunities to spend time with students before and after they graduated from Meadows College.

I love being with our students. I don’t have any children of my own. I have two stepsons ... and I’m really not sure I would be a very good nurturer anyway ... but I have loved being with the

students and having them care what ... I think about what they're doing.

And after now having two classes graduated ... I see them when I go out on alumni visits, that is really fine because ... I can see how they've loved the institution and how they're starting to grow into their own careers and that's great fun.

Three fourths of the student body was studying performing arts, design, and fashion. The performing arts in particular were aligned with Rachel's love of the theatre – another reason she considered Meadows College “a great place for me to be.”

The expectation to “do your best” was infiltrated in Rachel's professional life.

I expect it [the best] of everyone around me. I expect it of every one of my staff ... there are some people who expect the worst and then want to be proved wrong. And there are other people who expect the best and are ... personally disappointed when they're let down. And I would be in the second category.

In addition to doing their best, Rachel expected her senior staff to “run the institution.”

They know that when I'm not here, and even frankly when I am here, their jobs are to run the institution. And I delegate a lot of work to them, they're expected to take their professional expertise ... and experience and apply it to what their areas of the college are and most of the time, solve the problem before I ever hear about it.

Rachel acknowledged her desire for members of the Meadows College community to like her. “Remember, I'm the youngest child. I want everyone to like me.” At the same time, she was committed to her job as president and ultimately, that was more important to her than the approval of others.

I believe they all know that they can like me ... but I'm still gonna do what I have to do for the institution and ... I always worry when I start a new job, that I'm perceived as more of a lightweight because I am ... outgoing and all of that.

But shortly after I got here, it was clear that I meant business and that's very important for me to establish really early on in anything I do 'cause ... you can like me or you can hate me, but just don't ignore me ... and they could like me or not like me – I prefer they like me – but ... it didn't matter ... I was always here to do the Meadows job ... and I think they liked the fact that at least I dignify their intelligence by telling them the truth ... there's nothing else they can expect of me ... that's what my job is.

President Roberts described herself as “un-reflective” with “no self-knowledge;” however, a number of statements she made during the interview suggested self-understanding and insight. For example, Rachel was well aware of her extroverted personality.

I'm definitely an extrovert. I get all my energy from being around people. If you can't tell, I wilt when I sit by myself!

My husband says to me, “You are so much better when you give an extemporaneous speech than when you have a script.” And he's right about that in all of its facets.

Her extroversion was reflected in her preference for decision-making.

It's instinct informed by experience, but ... I don't sit and plot which move I'm gonna make when. I don't have the patience or the time.

Rachel also recognized her tendency to easily get bored, her affinity for change, her ambition, and her optimism.

I'm optimistic, I look forward, I don't get dragged down in what used to be ... and I get angry like once a year and nobody ever sees it, 'cause it's not pretty.

Quality relationships were important to Dr. Roberts. Even though she had lots of girlfriends “in all the thousand places she lived,” she was a “focused friend.” Bridget was the only friend from high school with whom she kept in touch. “You know, I've

only got one person from all those years I stay in touch with. And there are other people she may know that I ask about ... I only have two people from college I stay close to.”

If you’re a person like me who ... for whom networking is really important, the quality of the relationship has a lot, is more important than how many you have, because you can’t do a good job when you have too many ... I’m always looking for connections of who knows whom and ... how to leverage who I know ... but those can’t be all casual relationships, because then nobody really helps you out through them.

### *Within-Case Analysis*

#### *A Summary of Answers to the Research Questions*

The text below is a summary of responses to the grand tour questions and sub-questions.

When President Roberts described her childhood, she smiled and laughed often. She described a happy little girl who was loved, supported, and raised to believe she could do anything she “put her head to.” She attributed her safe and stable childhood to her parents and recalled very special and simple times with family. Her father worked outside the home and her mother was responsible for taking care of the household. Her family was “very lower middle-class” and lived in a two-bedroom apartment in a borough of New York City. The family enjoyed annual vacations.

Rachel and her older brother received loving, empowering, and encouraging messages from their parents, including the expectation to always do their best. Education was a value and priority in Rachel’s home. Both she and her brother were expected to excel academically and to attend college.

Despite their age difference, Rachel and her brother shared a close relationship while growing up. Rachel spent much of her youth with a childhood friend she met in kindergarten. As self-proclaimed “eggheads,” both girls demonstrated academic excellence and leadership skills in high school. Rachel also enjoyed attending Broadway productions in New York City with her girlfriends.

When asked about her childhood career aspirations, Dr. Roberts shared that as a young girl, she identified herself as “a scientist at heart” with a desire “to go and love biology.” She suspected her parents thought she would be a teacher; however, she had no interest in teaching.

Rachel used the analogy of a patchwork quilt to describe her career and explained how she experienced “a constellation of things” through the process of “bumbling” and bouncing around. She used the metaphor of a chameleon to describe her role of continually adapting to change throughout her career path.

The life course experiences that characterized Rachel’s career path included her college education, first marriage, graduate educations, and second marriage.

### *Lifespan Themes*

Rachel’s life was characterized by the following five themes: (a) a very stable, safe childhood, (b) the expectation to do your best, (c) an extrovert personality, (d) a personal preference to embrace change, and (e) a lifelong series of supporters and boosters. These themes were reflected throughout her life course stages and life course experiences.

*A very stable, safe childhood.*

When asked to talk about her childhood, Rachel laughed and asked, “I agreed to talk about this?” The information she then shared provided a glimpse into a childhood she remembered fondly. Rachel recalled “a very stable, safe childhood” and attributed much of her identity and success to the stability and security she experienced as a young girl.

*The expectation to do your best.*

The expectation to “do your best” was a theme throughout Rachel’s life. It was a message she heard from her parents during childhood, it was message she told herself, and it was a message she communicated to those around her. The expectation to “do your best” was infiltrated in Rachel’s professional life, as she expected the best from her colleagues, co-workers, and subordinates. The participants of Madsen’s (2007) study also demonstrated high expectations for themselves. Like Rachel, the presidents in Madsen’s study “seemed to thrive on the expectations of others regarding rigor and excellence” (Madsen, p. 52).

*An extrovert personality.*

Rachel’s extrovert personality played a significant role in her life. She was an outgoing girl who demonstrated leadership among her peers in high school. As a young professional, she held positions that required skills in public speaking, consulting, and managing. Her preference for extroversion was reflected during the interview when she described her personality, her work style, and the value she placed on networking.

*A personal preference to embrace change.*

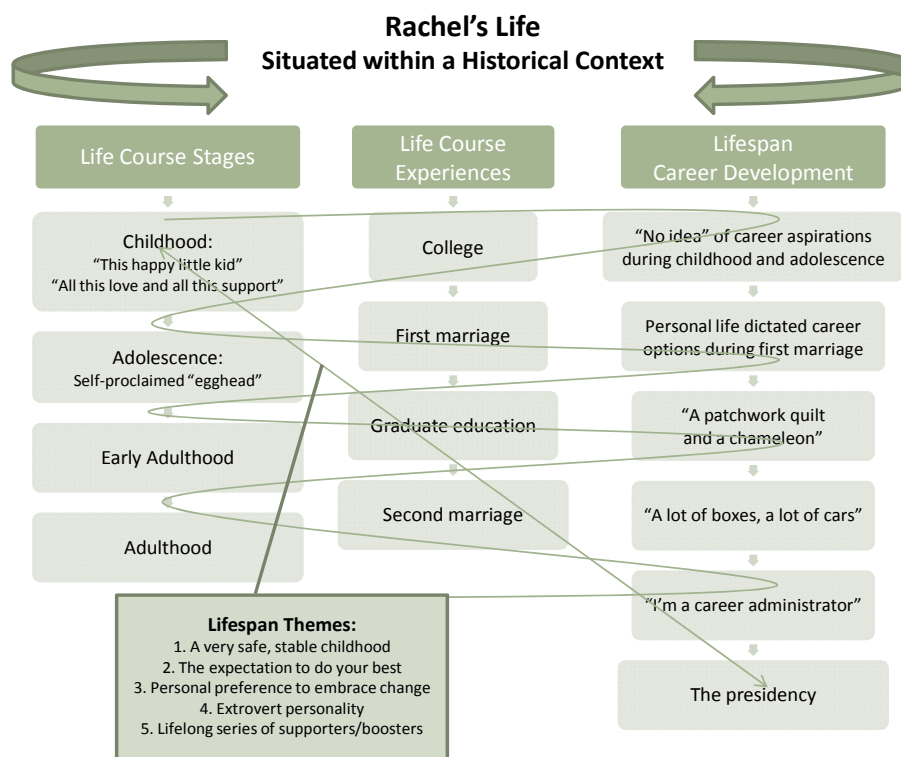
Rachel's tendency to easily become bored and her desire for change were often catalysts for job changes along her career path. She was a quick learner who successfully mastered the tasks of her job and then sought additional responsibilities. If new responsibilities were not available in the job she held, she looked for them in positions elsewhere.

*A lifelong series of supporters and boosters.*

Rachel spoke extensively about her lifelong "boosters" and the impact they made on her journey. Family members rooted for Rachel throughout the duration of her life, while professional supporters were present at particular junctures of her career path. She recognized her boosters' unwavering faith in her.

*Epiphanies or Turning Point Experiences*

Rachel had no childhood epiphanies and "no epiphanies" later in her adolescence or adulthood. Although she did not identify it as an epiphany or turning point, the relationship with Jack Denton was the catalyst for Rachel's consideration of "career paths within the university." Her job as director of administrative operations at one of Lake University's colleges was her first administrative position in college and university administration.



*Figure 5.* The conceptual model that represents Rachel's life from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which her lifespan career development evolved.



## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### Cross-Case Analysis

The second stage of analysis of this study was the cross-case analysis. “A qualitative, inductive, multicase study seeks to build abstractions across cases ... [and] can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases” (Merriam, 1998, p. 195). The cross-case analysis revealed notable commonalities shared by all five participants. Those commonalities are presented below as themes. In addition, commonalities among two, three, or four of the participants also emerged from the data and are presented below as *presidential points*. Summaries of the participants’ life course experiences and epiphanies or turning point experiences follow.

### *Themes*

Each of the female presidents I interviewed excelled academically, spoke of the characteristics of the era during which she grew up, explained her parents’ expectations for her to attend college, demonstrated and/or acknowledged being confident and ambitious, and received encouragement for administrative positions that eventually led to the presidency.

### *Academic Excellence*

I was good at school. So, if you decide you’re good at school, you might as well keep going to school, which is what I did (Claire).

All five participants achieved academic excellence at every level of their education. As children, they excelled in elementary school. As adolescents and young

adults, they excelled in middle school and high school. All participants earned a baccalaureate degree, a master's degree, and a doctoral degree. The participants recognized their academic abilities, as well as the enjoyment and fulfillment they experienced from using them. In her study of ten female university presidents, Susan Madsen (2007) also identified a theme related to school and learning. "All ten presidents said they enjoyed school, and most of them described themselves as model students" (Madsen, p. 35).

#### *Characteristics of the Childhood Era*

We grew up in the suburbs and ... it was another time ... they say it's a time that doesn't exist anymore (Sydney).

All participants identified characteristics of the era(s) during which they grew up – the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s – and contrasted them with characteristics of the present. The most notable differences were related to how and where childhood play occurred. With the exception of occasional lessons for skills such as playing the piano, ballet, dancing, and playing the bugle, the participants' childhood activities were unstructured and unscheduled. Make-believe activities included playing school, playing Mass, and playing with dolls and paper dolls. Outdoor activities with siblings and/or neighborhood friends were common among the participants. Activities included riding bikes, playing in the "woods," baseball, climbing trees, playing jacks, "hanging out," and playing fort.

Participants' family vacations by car were taken either before the interstate system was developed and/or as it was being built. During the fifties, television was a new addition to most American homes, but viewing by the participants was very limited or nonexistent.

The participants' descriptions of their childhood eras were consistent with the historical contexts presented in Chapter 2.

*Parents' Expectations about College*

There was never any question. There was never a choice. "Of course you're going to college" (Rachel quoting her parents).

All participants acknowledged their parents' expectations that they attend college and/or do their best academically. Regardless of if participants' parents attended and/or graduated from college, they all communicated the expectation that their children do so. This finding is consistent with Madsen's (2007) findings related to parental influence during adolescence and parents' encouragement to pursue a college education (p. 71). Wojtalik's study (2006) also revealed the significant impact of parents' expectations communicated during participants' childhood years, including the expectation to pursue higher education.

*Confident and Ambitious*

I don't think I ever thought there was anything I couldn't do ... [I] felt pretty driven, pretty ambitious (Olivia).

All five participants described themselves as confident or ambitious young girls and/or adult women. All ten participants in Madsen's study (2007) also "described themselves as confident (or as having high self-esteem) with regard to many situations and environments" (p. 32).

Despite social standards that discouraged young girls from identifying themselves as ambitious, the participants were still driven with ambition.

For most female undergraduates in these postwar decades, it was not easy to admit personal ambition privately, let alone express it openly. The idea of stating that one would become a writer, a doctor, or a professor would have sounded absurd .... From all sides came pressure for the American college girl to prove herself as a wife and mother (Solomon, 1985, p. 194).

Although a few participants could not identify the origins of their ambition, others named family members such as parents and grandmothers as the sources of their ambition.

These were very bright students, determined, persistent in study and work habits, undeterred by setbacks, and impervious to conventional expectations ... a combination of factors explained the aspirations of some women competing for the highly valued places. Personal traits as well as familial and environmental influences shaped their ambitions .... Often family support strengthened these nonconformists. A father or mother, or both, proved the most critical influence, although a grandparent or sibling might be important as well (Solomon, 1985, p. 196).

#### *Encouragement along the Career Path*

The president of the college ... asked me to come to lunch one day, and he ... said, "Well not now, but someday you'll be a good administrator .... You're clear, you're well-organized, you're articulate." He named all these virtues ... and from that time on I thought, "Oh! Well" (Olivia).

All five participants considered administrative work and/or a presidency after receiving encouragement from others. While working as college faculty members, four of the participants were encouraged by other professionals to pursue administrative roles.

Ultimately, the administrative positions led to the presidency. One participant held a number of positions in business prior to considering her first administrative position and later in her career, received support and encouragement for the presidency from her second husband.

### *Family Characteristics*

Listed below are the family characteristics shared by all five participants.

#### *Mother Stayed Home*

All five participants had mothers who did not work outside the home. One participant's mother started working outside the home when the participant started high school. This arrangement was consistent with the historical contexts of the participants' childhoods and the progressive increase in the number of mothers who worked outside the home from the 1960s on.

#### *Two-Parent Households*

All five participants were raised by two parents – a mother and a father. No participant was raised by a single parent and no participants' parents were divorced or separated.

#### *Siblings and Birth Order*

All five participants had at least one sibling. Four participants were from families of two children and one participant had seven siblings. Two of the participants were first-born and two were the youngest in the family. One participant was the second oldest child and the oldest girl in the family.

### *Presidential Points*

The following similarities among two, three, or four of the participants are also worth noting.

#### *A Love of Reading*

Four of the five participants described their love of reading as a child and/or young girl. The same four participants enjoyed reading as adults; however, reading for leisure was rare due to the demands of the presidency. This finding is consistent with Madsen's (2007) study, as "the presidents specifically mentioned an intense love of reading" (p. 35).

#### *Growth and Development in College*

Four of the five participants described their college experience as a time of considerable personal growth and development. The college years were "significant times" for all ten university presidents in Madsen's (2007, p. 90) study. As college students, the participants "took critical steps forward in learning to know and understand themselves" (Madsen, p. 90).

#### *Teaching*

Four of the five participants taught at the college level for a number of years before transitioning to administrative work. Nine of the ten presidents in Madsen's (2007) study "taught in the college classroom as professors or instructors at one time ... before becoming administrators" (p. 137).

#### *Career Path*

Four of the five participants followed a traditional career path to the presidency. After teaching for a number of years, each of the four women held the position of department chair. Three of the four participants then held an administrative leadership position in academic affairs (e.g. associate dean, academic dean, chief academic officer). One of the three participants also served as an interim president.

The participant who followed a non-traditional career path to the presidency described herself as “a career administrator who does facilities ... personnel, and finances.” Although she earned her doctorate and taught at the college level, she recognized she “didn’t come up through the academic ranks.” Prior to her presidency, she held a number of positions in business and higher education administration.

### *Religion*

Four of the five participants referenced religion in some capacity when describing their youth. One participant was raised Baptist, one was raised Catholic, and one was raised Jewish and attended Hebrew School. One participant mentioned a Jewish parent, but made no reference to a Jewish upbringing.

### *Parents’ College Experiences*

Three of the participants had parents who never attended college or attended for just one year.

### *Women’s Colleges*

Three of the participants earned their bachelor’s degrees at women’s colleges.

### *Extroversion and Introversion*

Three of the participants described themselves as extroverts. One of those participants explained that she was both an introvert and an extrovert. Two participants described themselves as very shy children.

### *Marriage*

Three of the participants were married at one point in their lives. Two of those three participants divorced and one of those two remarried. One of the three participants remained married to her husband, who she met in graduate school.

### *Luck*

Three participants attributed one or more aspects of their professional success to luck. One participant explained how she was “lucky to have advisors” who gave her advice and guidance throughout her career, particularly because she was not a planner. Another participant believed “plain dumb luck” led her to “good places” of employment, where she worked with interesting people and learned along the way. One participant referenced being lucky five times during her interview. She described the “very empowering” suggestions and encouragement from others as “some very lucky breaks” during her career path. She believed she was “very lucky” to meet her husband in graduate school, particularly because he was supportive of her life vision. As a result of her partner’s support, she experienced “a very lucky balance” between her personal life and her professional life. Finally, when she described her career path, she explained how she was “very lucky at having good opportunities put themselves in my path.”

In her book, *Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women’s Changing Lives* (2004), Anna Fels explained how accomplished women “had enormous difficulty acknowledging



that they created or enjoyed their public successes” (p. 25). “In retelling their stories ... women of accomplishment used two, well-worn narrative devices. One was the story in which the successful woman starts as a young innocent and is waylaid by circumstances and somehow bamboozled into her present, utterly surprisingly success” (Fels, p. 25). Attributing elements of success to luck – as the participants in this study did – is an example of the first narrative device Fels described. Rather than acknowledging active roles in their success, the participants gave credit to luck that was out of their control.

#### *Children or Step-Children*

Two participants gave birth to children and one had step-children. In all three instances, the number of children or step-children was two.

#### *Mother-Daughter Relationships*

Two participants described challenging relationships with their mothers.

#### *Followed a Spouse*

The career opportunities of two participants resulted from temporarily following a spouse for his career. Both participants were eventually divorced from their spouses. One of the two participants remarried and the other remained single.

#### *Life Course Experiences*

According to Denzin (1989, p. 56), life course experiences include education, marriage, divorce, death of a loved one, etc. All five participants experienced college and graduate educations. Three participants experienced marriage; of those three, two experienced divorce. Of the two who experienced divorce, one remarried. Two participants never married. One of the two had committed relationships during her life

and the other participant was a nun. Two participants gave birth to children and one participant had step-children. One participant experienced two deaths of loved ones – her older brother and her father.

*Epiphanies or Turning Point Experiences*

Denzin (1989, p. 71) defined four forms of the epiphany:

1. The major event, which touches every fabric of a person's life (the major epiphany);
2. The cumulative or representative event, which signifies eruptions or reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time (the cumulative epiphany);
3. The minor epiphany, which symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person's life (the illuminative or minor epiphany); and
4. Those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience (the relived, retrospectively meaningful epiphany).

This study revealed a total of 26 epiphanies or turning point experiences among four of the five participants. One participant had no epiphanies or turning point experiences.

The major epiphany or turning point experience was most common among the participants and totaled 11. Eight minor or illuminative epiphanies occurred among the participants. Five cumulative or representative epiphanies occurred among the women in this study. Four relived, retrospectively meaningful epiphanies were experienced among the participants.

Each of the four participants experienced at least two major epiphanies and three participants experienced three major epiphanies each. Two of the four participants experienced at least one epiphany of each of the four types.

### Discussion

By virtue of their birthdates in the 1940s and 1950s, the participants in this study were children of the post-war, baby boom generation. In many ways, their childhood years were typical childhood years of the era – simple, unstructured, and abundant in time spent with parents, siblings, schoolmates, and neighborhood playmates. While adults grappled with issues such as the role of women in the workplace, suburbanization, commercialism, civil rights, consumerism, and seemingly inevitable changes to the American family and household, their children enjoyed climbing trees, reading, playing school, cops and robbers, baseball, jacks, and paper dolls.

Although their childhoods may have been typical of an era, the young girls represented in this study were far from typical. They were intelligent, ambitious, and confident girls who maximized their abilities and passions despite social norms that suggested otherwise. At a time when few women attended graduate school, they were among a relatively small population of female peers who not only earned college degrees, but master's and doctoral degrees as well. As adults, they pioneered the balance of career with marriage, childcare, and relationships. They persisted in spite of personal and professional challenges such as shyness, divorce, deaths of loved ones, sexual identity, gender discrimination, and affirmative action. Their personal qualities and abilities, life

course experiences, supporters, and role models impacted their career paths that ultimately led to the prestigious role of college or university president.

The shy bookworm, happy egghead, smart little bunny, helpful organizer, and tall, timid girl with glasses grew up to be accomplished presidents of selective baccalaureate colleges and universities. They transitioned from paper dolls to the presidency with grace and courage – and they were far from typical.

### *Impacts of the Historical Backdrop*

The five participants were impacted by the cultural, ideological, and historical contexts (Denzin, 1989, p. 73) of their lives. Especially as children and young women, the participants were directly and indirectly affected by social norms and expectations for females. For example, several participants mentioned the absence of girls' sports when they were growing up. Although they played informal, outdoor games such as baseball with siblings and neighbors, organized athletics for girls did not exist. Title IX was enacted in 1972, when the participants were teenagers and young adults.

With the exception of occasional lessons for skills such as playing the piano, ballet, dancing, and playing the bugle, the participants' childhood activities were unstructured and unscheduled. During the past fifty years, daily blocks of unstructured, unscheduled free time in children's lives have progressively been replaced with recurring sequences of scheduled lessons, practices, events, and programs. Additionally, the infiltration of technology that began in the 1990s dramatically altered how and where children spent their time.

Several participants commented on their discomfort with identifying themselves as ambitious or talking openly about their talents and abilities. History showed this discomfort was common among young girls who grew up in the forties and fifties. For instance, Olivia expressed concern about others' perceptions of her "life of the mind" and contemplated its potentially adverse affect on her femininity. "Many girls considered intellectualism and popularity mutually exclusive. As one girl recalled years later, 'When I was in eighth grade I lived in trepidation lest I be cited as a class bookworm'" (Mintz, 2004, p. 284).

Women of the post-war era were expected to marry and have a family. If a woman went to college, she was expected to marry and raise a family after graduating. If a woman worked, she was expected to work part-time rather than full-time. Blending the responsibilities of family, marriage, and education or career was a new and controversial concept. Within the context of such expectations, no wonder "it wasn't nice for girls to be ambitious" (Claire) or to discuss skills and abilities that could be useful outside the realm of traditional female duties.

Each participant described the positive impact of the love, support, and encouragement she received from one or both parents. With the exception of Claire's mother, who encouraged her to "marry a man with ambition," the participants' parents encouraged their daughters to pursue their interests – even if those interests were outside traditional roles for women. Despite their generation's traditional view of women, the participants' parents were cognizant of potential societal changes for the female gender. With the best interests of their children in mind, they expected their daughters to earn

college degrees and refrained from encouraging the traditional path of marriage and family; instead, the participants' were equipped with self-assurance and parental support to pursue their interests. The participants' confidence was positively impacted by encouragement from their parents and their own personal ambition.

She [the girl] learned early in life to take herself seriously. For ambitious women in all walks of life, education from primary school to high school to college and post-college became a continuous process. Such women appeared less worried about marrying and thus, unlike most of their peers, foreshadowed later trends (Solomon, 1985, pp. 197-98).

Several participants' girlhood perceptions of female subordination and gender inequity significantly influenced their lives. For example, even though Claire expected to be a mother some day, she chose not to emulate one particular aspect of her mother's life – her financial dependency. According to Mintz (2004), "Many girls dreaded becoming like their own mothers, whose lives they associated with subordination to their husbands, drudgery, and isolation. As one wrote, 'the emptiness of her life [mother] appalls me; helplessness and dependence on my father frightens me'" (pp. 284-85). Another participant described her high school and college boyfriend as "a sexist pig" and consequently, decided that "girl persons are better than boy persons." "The postwar girl culture ... instilled a conviction in many girls that they were fully equal to, if not superior to, boys ... [and] increasingly critical of male-chauvinist attitudes and conduct" (Mintz, pp. 284-85).

Like other young girls of their generation, the participants in this study had few role models outside the traditional roles for women. During the forties, fifties, and sixties, few women simultaneously balanced responsibilities of family and career; few women attended graduate school; and few women pursued professional interests outside the home. For women who wanted to work, the careers available to them were limited. “Most [women] were employed in those fields regarded as traditional for females: teaching, nursing, social work, and low-level management” (Solomon, 1985, p. 196). Fortunately, the participants’ academic abilities and interests served them well and led to successful administrative careers beyond the traditional role of teaching.

As the participants experienced college, graduate school, and the early years of their careers, they witnessed significant social unrest, protest, change, and activism in the United States. Each participant was directly affected by the transformation of the American landscape. For example, Claire was a strong and vocal proponent of the women’s movement, which started when she was in college. The women’s movement “gave ... a kind of language for, in some ways, how I’d always tended, but it gave language for it and ... was really ... very, very influential and has been all my life.” Sydney explored her sexuality, decided she was a lesbian, and suffered unfortunate societal ramifications of that decision long before homosexuality was openly discussed or accepted.

It was still very confusing and it was certainly not anything like it is today on college campuses where ... girls are walkin’ around holding hands and ... this is okay. Then it was *not* okay, and it was bad, in fact, and if they caught you bein’ you know, a lesbian, they would take harsh measures.

Maybe they would throw you out, although when ... my then current friend and I were discovered, they didn't throw us out. They made me move to another residence hall, we were not allowed to see each other again and we had to go and have counseling.

When Theresa started college in the sixties, events such as the Vietnam War, "changes in the church ... Vatican II ... and ... the civil rights movement" affected her personally. She recognized she was "a product of that ... kind of authority" present in society and in the Catholic Church. As a result, she "came into a sense of [her] own personhood" and developed a "consciousness of respect, being respectful of authority, but not wanting to be a child towards it."

Olivia experienced both blatant and subtle gender politics at the institutions where she held her first two teaching positions. At both colleges, she maximized opportunities to advocate for women and actively participate in male-dominated forums.

The first place was great in that my consciousness was raised and I got together with other women and we started the faculty for women's concerns ... and ... were just very politically active and that was a very important developmental stage for me, because I'd gone to a women's college and just before the second wave of feminism kind of really sprang forth .... And so I had never really appreciated or experienced discrimination, certainly not harassment, until I went out ... into the ... male-dominated academic environment. And there ... I wasn't harassed, although I came close a couple of times.

The gender politics were more subtle at Olivia's second place of employment. "Faculty meetings were never comfortable for women ... for ... speaking up ... they were dominated by male faculty." Despite the male dominance among the faculty, Olivia spoke out and actively participated in discussions and meetings.



Rachel was integral to the success of one of the first affirmative action initiatives of its kind. Early in her career, she got a job as marketing manager of a private data provision company. The United States president at the time, Jimmy Carter, “had just signed ... the executive order that made corporations that received federal funds ... do affirmative action analysis.” The data provision company had “a revolutionary idea” to access census bureau data via a nearby university’s computing services. The company then sold that data so other organizations could ensure their workforce mirrored the labor force. Rachel was a key sales person.

We were selling to McDonald’s, data to do their affirmative action program for every location in the United States. We were selling to ... General Motors ... to AT&T. And that was my product – all the data for affirmative action and equal employment stuff.

And it got me, I testified in court for – always for management – as an expert witness on the demography of the labor force when, when General Motors, I was a witness for General Motors, in a large labor suit ... in Indianapolis ... I did seminars all over the country on work force data, and how to use it in your affirmative action program. Nobody knew how to do this. And ... we created a market. We were the ... only company doing it, and at age ... 24, I was going into the vice-president for personnel at GM, Chrysler, Bell, Westinghouse, Bank of America, all over the country – As the expert in this stuff.

So here I am, on the road half-time, running around to Fortune 500 companies as the expert and what it would teach me, it taught me how not to throw up after I gave presentations from the stress, it taught me how to stand on my feet, how to speak persuasively, be comfortable that I manage a body of knowledge ... go in front of people who were 90% white ... guys ... of great power in the industrial world, and ... never let them see me sweat.

### *Career Development Theory*

#### *Childhood Career Aspirations*

Gottfredson (1981) theorized a series of processes through which individual occupational aspirations evolve from as early as age three through adolescence. According to Gottfredson, a sequence of occupation elimination occurs during the individual's process of assessing job-self compatibility. For instance, occupations perceived inappropriate for one's gender are the first to be eliminated by the individual (Gottfredson, p. 549). During the childhood and adolescent years of the participants, acceptable occupations for women were limited to the roles of teacher, nurse, librarian, and homemaker/mother. As a result, the participants had few career choices to begin with and the majority of choices were inappropriate for their gender.

Several participants identified career aspirations that could be considered fantasy stage occupational choices as defined by Ginzberg (1952) in Wahl and Blackhurst (2000). Sydney wanted to be "Tom Corbett – Space Cadet, Super Woman, [or] the cowboy in the white hat." As stated in the historical section of this study (Chapter 2), the country's obsession with space travel in the 1950s spilled into youth and prompted children's space interests in characters such as Tom Corbett, Space Cadet (Cross, 1997, p. 163). When Olivia was a child, she wanted to be a ballet dancer.

Ginzberg described tentative stage occupational choices as those "aspirations ... due almost solely to interests, with little attention to ability or other realistic constraints" (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000, p. 368). Reflective of her interest in and love of reading, Claire wanted to be a librarian when she was a little girl. She changed her mind when she

learned librarians “didn’t get to read all the time.” At one point, Olivia wanted to be a biochemist because she “did a project in tenth grade biology on biochemistry and that sounded interesting.”

In 1964, Havighurst “theorized that two developmental tasks related to career development take place in childhood and adolescence: identifying with a worker (ages 5-10) and developing habits of industry (ages 10-15)” (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000, p. 367-68). Two participants identified with particular workers as children. Sydney identified with her mother’s sister, Eileen. Aunt Eileen was Sydney’s “major role model” because “she was independent and ... in control ... of a summer camp.” Olivia identified with her second grade teacher, Miss Currie, who made her feel more comfortable and challenged at school. Theresa also identified with teachers at school, most of whom were also nuns. All five participants excelled in school and were interested in learning as young girls. Because of the participants’ eventual careers in education, their academic abilities (e.g. reading, writing, learning) could be identified as habits of industry.

### *Women’s Career Development*

As stated earlier in this study, no one particular theory of women’s career development is considered premier. Researchers have recognized, however, that women’s career development is different enough from men’s to warrant a theory or theories developed specifically for women.

Phases of development for women do not have the linear and predictable quality that male life patterns suggest, nor is the process of evaluating life choices as straightforward or singularly focused on work and career. Historical, social,

political, and intrapsychic forces contribute to some very different life patterns for women and challenge implicit contentions that women go through the same phases and pace of development as men .... Women face a different set of opportunities and a more compounded set of problems than those seen by most men. Theories of men's careers do not fit women's lives and development concerns, and women's careers are no longer novelties that can be ignored (Gallos, 1989, pp. 118-127).

The origin of career theory and its focus on the male gender is additional justification for career development theories designed specifically for women.

From a feminist perspective we need then to re-vision career theory because it is rooted in male values and based on disguised male psychology; it neglects or devalues the feminine. New theories of career must give equal value to male and female aspects of being. This is necessary to accord women equality in all areas of life and to develop the potential of the female principle in society, including its significance as an aspect of men's identity. We therefore need to take models of women's psychology to the heart of career theory (Marshall, 2001, p. 282).

The individuality of each woman in this study, as well as the unique career path of each, supports the need for a career development theory that accommodates all dimensions of women's lives. The combination of life course stages, life course experiences, personal skills and abilities, professional opportunities, epiphanies, and turning point experiences resulted in a different career path for each participant in this study. Further, the significance of the historical context and social structures of the

participants' lives cannot be ignored when considering their developmental patterns and career development. To accurately depict the career development of each participant, a theory must consider and incorporate all of the aforementioned elements (e.g. epiphanies, life course stages, historical context, etc.).

Women's distinctive developmental voice and needs point to fundamentally different career perspectives, choices, priorities, and patterns for women that need to be understood and appreciated – differences that are only further expanded when cultural expectations, shifting social norms, employment opportunities, marital practices, childbirth and rearing, organizational policies, and institutional practices are added to the picture (Gallos, 2001, p. 127).

Aspects of Helen Astin's model of career development (1984), which took into consideration "socialization experiences ... structural opportunities ... and the way in which social forces shape and reshape occupational decisions" (Diamond, 1987, p. 20) for both women and men, can be applied to this study. Astin's sociopsychological model (Diamond, p. 20) is congruent with what Denzin described as the "central locus of stories" – the "cultural, ideological, and historical contexts" – a foundation of the interpretive biographical method used in this research (Denzin, 1989, p. 73).

Two assertions by Sanguiliano (1978) and Spencer (1982) accurately apply to this study. Among other assertions, Sanguiliano (1978) and Spencer (1982) suggested that women tend to delay their career aspirations in lieu of family responsibilities and that women's developmental patterns are more individualized (Zunker, 2006, pp. 297-98). Indeed, family responsibilities, including those related to a spouse, impacted the career

paths of three participants in this study. All five participants experienced individualized development by virtue of their life course stages, life course experiences, personal skills and abilities, professional opportunities, epiphanies, and turning point experiences.

To date, no one theory of women's career development has been endorsed as the premier theory. Further, there is limited research that explores women's lifespan career development from childhood through adulthood as reflected through participant stories and life experiences. By illuminating the lifespan career development of five female presidents of a particular generation, this study provides an interpretive biographical account of women's career development against a certain historical backdrop.

#### *Lifespan Career Development*

The results of this study support the existence of personal characteristics or themes present throughout the lifespan and reflective of life course stages and life course experiences. The lifespan themes identified for each participant in this study were meaningful and pertinent to the individual's life course stages, personal development, and career development.

Donald Super's assertion that "career development is a process that unfolds gradually over the life span" (Zunker, 2006, p. 53) as self-concept and occupation interact and synthesize (Hall, 2002, p. 56) is congruent with this study. All of the participants excelled academically and were aware of their advanced skills within the educational arena; consequently, all were confident in their academic abilities. The participants' self-efficacy for academic endeavors and their interest in educational occupations greatly impacted their lifespan career development.

Super's archway model, which "delineate[d] the changing diversity of life roles experienced by individuals over the life span" (Zunker, 2006, p. 58) could accommodate the traditional and non-traditional roles filled by women today. In addition, the model addressed how "biographical, psychological, and socioeconomic determinants [often central to women's lives] influence career development" (Zunker, p. 58). Particular parts of the archway – two bases, two columns, the arch, and the keystone – represent the aforementioned determinants, how they support one another, and how they interact with one another (Zunker, p. 58).

### *Conceptual Model*

Based on the results of this study, I designed a conceptual model that represents my interpretation of the participants' lives from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which their lifespan career development evolved.

The conceptual model incorporates four realms of a participant's life. The realms include (a) life course stages (Denzin, 1989), (b) life course experiences (Denzin, 1989), (c) lifespan career development, and (d) the historical context of the participant's life. Based on the lives and experiences of the participants, I suggest that the realms continually interact with one another in spiraling process throughout the lifespan.

As noted earlier in this study, life course stages as defined by Denzin (1989, p. 56) include childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, and old age. Life course experiences include education, marriage, death of a loved one, etc. (Denzin, 1989, p. 56). Lifespan career development is aligned with the definition of career applied in this study

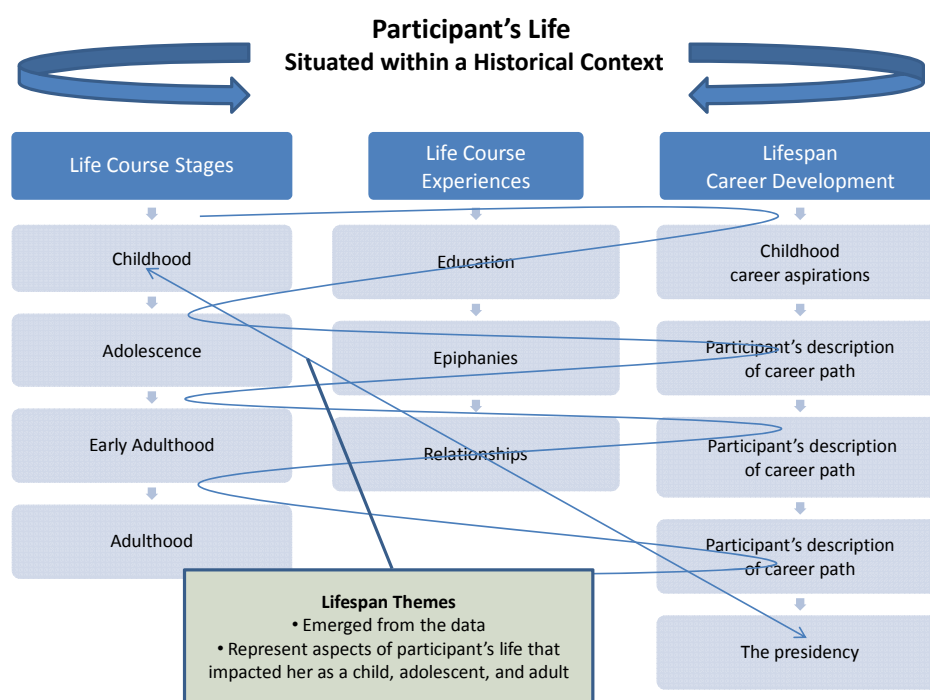
– “the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work related experiences and activities over the span of a person’s life” (Hall, 2002, p. 16). Congruent with interpretive biography methodology and the proven impact of societal structures on individual lives, the model is embedded in a historical context. As suggested by Denzin (1989), it is impossible to separate an individual life from the context in which it was lived and to dismiss the potential impact of the historical backdrop.

Direct quotes of the five presidents are integrated into the model to capture the essence of participants’ experiences. Lifespan themes that emerged from each case are highlighted on the model. The lifespan themes represent aspects of the participants’ lives that impacted them as children, adolescents, and adults.

This study revealed that as the participants moved through their life course stages, they were inevitably influenced by life course experiences – including epiphanies and turning points – that either directly or indirectly affected their lifespan career development. The participants’ life course experiences affected their perceptions, values, self-concepts, behaviors, decisions, and choices.

The model accommodates the individuality of each participant and her experiences and supports the belief that women’s developmental patterns and subsequent career development are unique.





*Figure 6.* Sample conceptual model that represents the researcher's interpretation of the participants' lives from childhood to the presidency, as well as the continual, interactive process through which their lifespan career development evolved.

### Recommendations for Future Research

There is currently a lack of historical data on the formative and developmental years of female presidents who lead American colleges and universities. Knowledge and understanding of childhood experiences recalled by female college and university presidents may provide valuable insights into the origins of their career paths and ultimately, their ascension to the presidency. This study attempts to fill a historical gap by describing five participants' perceptions of their childhood years, as well as their perceptions of life experiences characteristic of their career paths.

Currently, no longitudinal studies of girls who became college or university presidents are represented in the literature. Although longitudinal studies offer valuable insights, it would be nearly impossible to identify young girls who would eventually become college or university presidents unless that was a specific and successfully achieved career goal. The research need and process identified by Diamond (1987), particularly with a large enough sample of women, could increase the likelihood of including female college presidents.

There is a particular need for longitudinal studies, following up an adequate sample of women, including working-class women, from their early years through high school, post-high school education, and as far into their working years as possible. Such research must not be based on the male model but must be relevant to the many unique aspects of women's experience and involve broad enough samples of women to embrace all the pertinent variables – socioeconomic,

demographic, educational, environmental, biological, and psychological

(Diamond, p. 25).

Retrospective studies with the next generation of female college and university presidents could provide insights into their childhood years and the life experiences that characterized their career paths. Especially in light of the societal changes of the past fifty years, studies of female presidents who were born after the post-war, baby boom generation are needed. As with this study, the presidents' stories would derive "from larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts [that] ... provide the languages, emotions, ideologies, taken-for-granted understandings, and shared experiences from which the stories flow" (Denzin, 1989, p. 73).

The information gathered from this study may be of interest to women and girls aspiring to careers in higher education administration. Learning about the lives of the study's participants may inspire other women preparing for leadership roles on college and university campuses – especially the presidency.

This retrospective study contributes to the body of research focused on childhood career development and the study's findings may be of interest to career development researchers who study children in particular. "The importance of career-related decisions made during the elementary school age period has been supported both by studies of children and by retrospective studies of adults" (Auger et. al, 2005, p. 322). Career counselors who work with children, particularly girls, could also benefit from the study's findings. Similarly, results of this study could be integrated into career education

programs for children. Parents interested in the career development of their children may find the study's findings useful as well.

To date, no one theory of women's career development has been endorsed as the premier theory. Further, there is limited research that explores women's lifespan career development from childhood through adulthood as reflected through participant stories and life experiences. By illuminating the lifespan career development of five female presidents of a particular generation, this study provides an interpretive biographical account of women's career development against a certain historical backdrop.

Institutions of higher education can benefit from the study as they select leaders to guide them through the twenty-first century. Knowledge of applicants' lifespan career journeys, past and present career aspirations, and professional development – the kinds of information provided about this study's participants – can provide valuable insights during the interview and selection processes.

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## Conclusion

In her book titled *How Jane Won*, author Dr. Sylvia Rimm (2001) presented over fifty childhood and adolescence stories shared by successful women from various professions and walks of life. She explained how the concept for her book stemmed from personal curiosity about the childhoods of successful women and asking the question “What made them succeed?” In *How Jane Won*, “successful women told in their own words how their apparently ordinary girlhoods sowed the seeds for their prominence” (Rimm, p. 1).

During the course of the interviews for *See Jane Win* and *How Jane Won*, many of these women recalled a specific set of experiences that influenced their decisions, changed their behavior, or affected their trajectory. Sometimes a single great disappointment redirected them from their original goal but in a serendipitous way paved the way for better opportunities. Some women described the challenges of gender, racial, or religious prejudices ... These women’s stories bring their hurdles to life (Rimm, p. 3).

Although I learned of *How Jane Won* long after identifying my interest in the childhood years of female leaders in higher education, I shared the author’s curiosity of the formative years of successful women. The experiences and stories shared by this study’s participants illustrated how five female college and university presidents grew from extraordinary girls to extraordinary women leaders in American higher education.

I am deeply grateful to the five female presidents who shared their life stories with me. Because of their participation, I had the opportunity to learn about five

delightful, inspiring, and talented women for whom I have great admiration and respect.

Without their generous contributions, this study would not have been possible.

## **Appendix A:**

### **LETTER OF INVITATION TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

Date

President Carol Smith  
100 Elm Street - ABC University  
Learning, Michigan ZIP CODE

Dear President Smith,

Greetings from Nebraska! I am a doctoral candidate within the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. My academic program (Ph.D.) is in the major area of educational studies with a specialization in educational leadership and higher education. For my dissertation, I am conducting a qualitative research project that may be of interest to you.

As the number of female college and university presidents has increased over time, so has the amount of literature focused on these successful women. Within the literature, however, there is limited attention given specifically to life experiences that occurred during the formative and developmental years. My dissertation research will seek to understand how several female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe their childhood years and the life experiences that characterize their career paths. You are invited to participate in this study because of the position you hold as president of ABC University.

I'd like to tell you a bit about the research process. Participation in this study would use approximately two hours of your time. That time would be spent in two 60-90 minute interviews during which I would ask you a series of questions related to your childhood and comprehensive career path. With your permission, the interviews would be audio taped to ensure accurate representation of your responses throughout the transcription process. Clarification of any kind needed after the interviews would be sought through follow-up interviews and/or phone conversations. Information obtained during the study which could identify you or others would be kept strictly confidential through the use of pseudonyms.

If you are interested in participating in this study, I am willing to travel to your office, or a different location you might prefer, at a time most convenient for you. I hope to collect the data for my study during the summer and early fall of 2005, so I am available to travel to Michigan in the coming months. Finally, in appreciation for your time and information should you decide to participate, you will receive a \$50.00 gift certificate to the fine restaurant of your choice.

Enclosed for your review is an abstract of my research, as well as the informed consent form. I appreciate your consideration of this opportunity to reflect upon and speak candidly about your childhood years and the life experiences characteristic to your career path. I will contact you within the next few weeks to discuss your possible interest in being part of this qualitative study, President Smith. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Regina M. Toman

Cc: Informed Consent Form, Dissertation Abstract

**Appendix B:**

**TELEPHONE SCRIPT  
FOR FOLLOW-UP CALL  
WITH PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

“Hello Dr. Smith. My name is Gina Toman. I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You may remember recently receiving a letter from me. In that letter I shared information with you about the dissertation research I am beginning this summer. In the letter, I also invite you to participate in the study. I’m wondering if you have given that opportunity some thought.”

- ❖ If the individual needs a refresher, review the purpose of the study and her role as a participant. Remind her of confidentiality, the time commitment involved, compensation, and what will be done with the findings of the study (dissertation research).
- ❖ If the individual responds favorably and indicates interest in participating in the study, explain to her the next steps:
  1. Ask if she has any questions about the consent form or the research itself. Respond to any questions or concerns.
  2. If the participant is still interested in participating in the study, talk with her (or someone she designates) about possible interview dates and times. Ask that the consent form please be signed by the president. Remind the president (or designee) that the signed consent form will be obtained during our first meeting, prior to the start of the first interview.
- ❖ If the individual chooses not to participate in the study, thank her for considering the possibility and wish her well.

“It has been a pleasure talking with you, Dr. Smith. I appreciate your time and I look forward to meeting you. If you think of any questions before we talk again, please feel welcome to call me at home or at work. Those phone numbers are listed on the letter I sent you and the consent form, but would you like me to tell you them again?

Thanks again. See you soon.”



## Appendix C:

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Primary Investigator and Interviewer: Regina M. Toman

From Paper Dolls to the Presidency:  
A Collective Case Study of the Childhood Years and Life Experiences of  
Five Female College and University Presidents

#### Grand Tour Questions:

1. How do five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe their childhood years?
2. How do five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe the life experiences that characterize their career paths?

To the participant: Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate your time today and your willingness to share your experiences. As you know, the purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how you, a female college/university president, perceive and describe your childhood years, as well as the life experiences that characterize your career path. You have seen the questions I plan to ask during this interview. As the interview continues, I may ask you additional, different questions that you have not reviewed, in the effort to clarify and/or best understand your responses. Do you have any questions at this point? If you're ready, let's begin the interview.

Question(s)	Observer Comments
<p>1. Please tell me about yourself and your role as president of the university. (icebreaker/opening question)</p> <p><u>Probes</u> Hometown and state Family How long in position Daily routine / "typical day" Best part of job (like) Something to change about job (dislike)</p>	

<p>2. What was growing up like for you? What kind of a child were you?</p> <p><u>Probes</u>          Birth order          Siblings/Parents/Extended family          Home/Neighborhood/City/State          School/education          Teachers          Classmates/playmates/neighbors          Interests, skills, abilities          Fears          Behavioral issues (if any)          Communications with others          Patterns or habits          Favorites (songs, food, color, animals, etc.)          Pets          Clothing</p>	<p>Earliest childhood memories          Most vivid in memory:          experiences, individuals, places</p>
<p>3. How would you describe any turning points or epiphanies that occurred during your childhood?</p> <p><u>Probes</u>          Examples – became more outgoing with the arrival of younger sibling, became self-conscious when someone commented on body's development, afraid of dogs after being bit and hospitalized</p> <p>For each turning point/epiphany:          Time and place of this epiphany          Your thoughts on its origin and rationale for its existence (why)          People in your life at the time          Your thoughts/realization at the time          Impact on your life then, in years to come, and now          More than one turning point? What others?  <i>Repeat for each epiphany/turning point.</i></p>	<p>Transitions – Influences – Life direction</p>

<p>4. How would you describe your childhood aspirations for “what I want to be when I grow up?”</p> <p><u>Probes</u>  Examples – wanted to be a fireman, wanted to be a doctor like my dad, wanted to be a teacher, wanted to be a movie star</p> <p>For each aspiration/dream:  Time and place of this aspiration/dream  Your thoughts on the origin of this dream and rationale for its existence (why)  How long you had this dream/aspiration  Was this aspiration acted out in any way? (i.e. playing school &amp; wanting to be a teacher)  Your thoughts at the time  Impact of the aspiration then, in years to come, and now  More than one aspiration? What others?  <i>Repeat for each aspiration/dream</i></p>	
<p>5. Through an analogy or brief explanation, how would you describe your career path that led to the presidency?</p> <p><u>Probes</u>  Examples: Non-traditional path; never sought or intended; intentional and planned; roller coaster of events and emotions  Metaphor or analogy  Succinct summary that captures lifelong journey or career path</p>	

<p>6. As you reflect on your career path, how would you describe the significant life life-changing experiences – personal or professional – that occurred along the way?</p> <p><u>Probes</u>          Examples – marriage, children, graduate degree, leadership in professional organization, career change</p> <p>For each event:          Time in life when event occurred (age)          Location of event (town, state)          Position (employment) at that time, responsibilities of job/role          Details of experience  <i>Repeat for each event</i></p>	<p>*how has your personal life affected your professional life?</p> <p>*how has your professional life affected your personal life?</p>
<p>7. Is there anything you would like to add that I have not asked you as part of this interview?</p> <p>Examples – revisit any questions I asked, clarify anything previously said, share anything you forgot to say, etc.</p>	

Thank you for your willingness to be part of this study. Know that confidentiality will be honored in all realms of the project. Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity, as well as the identities of other people, places, or locations you identify during the interview will be given pseudonyms. During the study, data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's home. The audio tapes will be erased and destroyed after the data is compiled. Transcripts of the interview will remain in the investigator's locked cabinet for three years, after which time they will also be destroyed. The data (transcripts) will be seen only by the investigator and an external auditor. The information obtained in this study will be used in the investigator's dissertation and may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings; however, all identities and identifying information will remain confidential. Thank you.

## Appendix D:

### Interview Outline

From Paper Dolls to the Presidency:  
A Collective Case Study of the Childhood Years and Life Experiences  
of Five Female College and University Presidents

1. Describe self and role as president of university
  - Hometown and state
  - Family
  - How long in position
  - Daily routine / “Typical day”
  - Best part of job (like)
  - Something to change about job (dislike)
2. Describe career path that led to the presidency
  - Generally speaking – metaphor – analogy
  - Succinct summary that captures lifelong journey
3. Describe significant life experiences (personal or professional) during career path
  - Examples (if needed) – marriage, children, graduate degree, leadership in a professional organization
  - For each event:
    - Time in life when experiences occurred (age)
    - Location of events (town, state)
    - Position (employment) held at that time, general responsibilities
    - Details of experience
4. Describe earliest childhood memory/memories
  - Examples (if needed) – role model teacher in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, winning spelling bee in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, loss of parent, playground incident, favorite pet
  - For each memory:
    - Time in life when occurred (age)
    - Location of memory/memories (town, state)
    - Details of memory/memories
    - Other people involved, others in life at time of memory/memories
    - Impact of memory/memories then, in years to come, and now
5. Describe childhood experiences most vivid in memory
  - Examples (if needed) – role model teacher in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, winning spelling bee in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, loss of parent, playground accident, favorite pet
  - For each experience:
    - Time in life when experience occurred (age)

Location of experience (town, state)  
 Details of experience  
 Other people involved, others in life at time of experience  
 Your thoughts at the time of the experience  
 Impact of experience then, in years to come, and now

6. Describe locations or places most vivid in childhood memory  
 Examples (if needed) – grandfather’s farm, second grade classroom, playground

For each location:

Time in life (age)  
 Location of experience (town, state)  
 Details of location  
 Other people in life at that time  
 Your thoughts at that time  
 Impact of the location then, in years to come, and now

7. Describe individuals most vivid in childhood memory  
 Examples (if needed) – parents, cousins, best friend in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, kindergarten teacher, milk man

For each individual:

Time in life (age)  
 Location of experience (town, state, country)  
 Details of individual  
 Other people in life at that time  
 Your thoughts at that time  
 Impact of the individual then, in years to come, and now

8. Describe childhood aspirations for “what I want to be when I grow up”  
 Examples (if needed) – wanted to be a fireman, wanted to be a doctor like my dad, wanted to be a teacher, wanted to be a movie star

For each aspiration/dream:

Time and place of this aspiration(s)/dream(s)  
 Your thoughts on the origin of dream and rationale for its existence (why)  
 How long it lasted  
 Was this aspiration acted out in any way?  
 (i.e. playing school – wanting to be a teacher)  
 Your thoughts at the time of having aspiration  
 Impact of the aspiration(s) then, in years to come, and now  
 More than one aspiration? What others?  
 (follow with same questions above)

9. Describe turning points or epiphanies that occurred during childhood  
 Examples (if needed) – became more outgoing with arrival of younger sibling,

became self-conscious when someone commented on  
body's development, afraid of dogs after being bit and  
hospitalized

For each epiphany/turning point:

Time in life when experience occurred (age)

Location of experience (town, state)

Details of experience

Other people involved, others in life at time of experience

Your thoughts at the time of the experience

At what point did you realize that this experience was a turning  
point/epiphany?

Why was/is this experience so meaningful and instrumental in your life?

How did this experience change you and your life?

What new insights did you acquire as a result of this experience?

Impact of experience then, in years to come, and now

Are you glad you had this experience?

If you could re-live this experience, would you change it or the outcome?

If not, why not? If so, how?

10. Anything you would like to add not asked in this interview

Examples (if needed) - revisit any questions asked, clarify anything shared, say  
anything you forgot to say, etc.



## **Appendix E:**

### **Pre-Interview Protocol, Participant Copy**

#### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Primary Investigator and Interviewer: Regina M. Toman

From Paper Dolls to the Presidency:  
A Collective Case Study of the Childhood Years and Life Experiences of  
Five Female College and University Presidents

#### Grand Tour or Overarching Research Questions:

1. How do five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe their childhood years?
2. How do five female presidents of American colleges and universities perceive and describe the life experiences that characterize their career paths?

#### Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me about yourself and your role as president of the university/college (opening/icebreaker).
2. What was growing up like for you? / What kind of a child were you?
3. How would you describe any epiphanies, turning points, or crossroads that occurred during your childhood?
4. How would you describe your childhood aspirations for “what I want to be when I grow up?”
5. Through an analogy or brief explanation, how would you describe your career path that led to the presidency?
6. As you reflect on your career path, how would you describe any significant life-changing experiences – personal or professional – that occurred along the way?

Each participant is encouraged to speak candidly and with as much detail as she is comfortable while responding to the interview questions listed above. Additional, different questions may be asked by the researcher (in addition to the interview questions) for the purposes of clarification and/or elaboration.

Each participant is encouraged to provide copies of any artifacts that represent interview responses and the life stories within. Artifacts help tell participants' stories and include (but are not limited to) items such as photographs, speeches, journals, credentials, drawings, or vitae.

Should the need for clarification or elaboration of interview responses arise anytime after the actual interview(s), this follow-up will be completed over the phone or via e-mail. Finally, each participant will have the opportunity to review and edit the interview transcript – as well as the portions of the dissertation that reflect the participant – prior to their completion.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. I am very grateful for your time and the opportunity to learn about you and your life.

*Confidentiality will be honored in all realms of the project. Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity, as well as the identities of other people, places, or locations you identify during the interview will be given pseudonyms. During the study, data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's home. The audio tapes will be erased and destroyed after the data is compiled. Transcripts of the interview will remain in the investigator's locked cabinet for three years, after which time they will also be destroyed. The data (transcripts) will be seen only by the investigator. The information obtained in this study may be referenced in the investigator's dissertation, published in scientific journals, or presented in scientific meetings; however, all identities and identifying information will remain confidential. Thank you.*

**Appendix F:**  
**Institutional Review Board Approval**



RESEARCH COMPLIANCE SERVICES  
Institutional Review Board

November 16, 2004

Ms. Regina M. Toman

IRB#: 2004-11-083 EX

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: **The Life Events That Characterize the Career Path of a Female University President: An Oral History**

Dear Ms. Toman:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. This project has been approved by the Unit Review Committee from your college and sent to the IRB. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study. Your proposal seems to be in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

Date of EX Review: 11/05/04

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 11/16/04. This approval is Valid Until: 11/15/05.

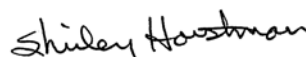
1. Enclosed is the IRB approved Informed Consent form for this project. Please use this form when making copies to distribute to your participants. If it is necessary to create a new informed consent form, please send us your original so that we may approve and stamp it before it is distributed to participants.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board. For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Horstman, IRB Administrator, at 472-9417 or email at [shorstman1@unl.edu](mailto:shorstman1@unl.edu).

Sincerely,

  
Dan R. Hoyt, Chair  
for the IRB

  
Shirley Horstman  
IRB Administrator

cc: Faculty Advisor  
Unit Review Committee

## Appendix G:

### External Audit Attestation

External Audit Attestation  
by Dana L. Miller, Ph.D.

Regina M. Toman requested that I complete an educational audit of her qualitative dissertation titled: From Paper Dolls to the Presidency: A Collective Case Study of the Childhood Years and Life Experiences of Five Female College and University Presidents. The audit was conducted between October 10 and October 30, 2008. The purpose of the audit was to ascertain the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy.

In their book *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the audit "may be the single most important trustworthiness technique available to the naturalist" (p. 283). The educational audit is "based metaphorically on the fiscal audit" (p. 317). The role of the auditor is to carefully examine both the process and product of the inquiry.

In order for an external auditor to complete a dissertation audit, it is imperative that the researcher maintain careful, detailed records throughout the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) delineate two tasks in the audit process:

- 1) the examination of the PROCESS of the inquiry to ensure that study participants are represented fairly in recorded accounts, and
- 2) the examination of the final PRODUCT to ensure accuracy; and in particular that the findings of the study are supported by the data.

To meet the purpose of this audit, numerous materials were carefully reviewed. The materials reviewed for the audit are outlined in the following pages. The goal of this outline is to give readers insight into the volume of materials this researcher submitted for the audit, how she organized those materials, and the kinds of records the researcher kept throughout the research process.

The materials submitted for the audit included:

1) Two plastic file boxes (each 16" in length) labeled "1 of 3 – Info for Participants" and "2 of 3 – Info for Participants". Each file box was full of hanging file folders containing multiple files. All of the file folders were labeled. The boxes included:

- Five file folders labeled P1 (P=Participant) Transcript (27 pages in length), P2 Transcript (57 pages), P3 Transcript (89 pages), P4 Transcript (66 pages), P5 Transcript (51 pages). (Note: Transcripts were 8 1/2 x 11" double-spaced. Total number of pages for the five transcripts=290).

- Five file folders labeled “Biographical Information” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing information about the presidents the researcher studied (e.g., curriculum vitas, profiles taken from the college/university website, business cards).
- Five file folders labeled “About the institution” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing information about the colleges/universities the presidents represented (e.g., brochures, information printed from the website providing information about the institutions and their academic programs).
- Five file folders labeled “Pre-interview Communications” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5) containing copies of the letter sent to presidents requesting their participation in the study, informed consent forms signed and dated by all of the participants, a copy of the abstract of the study that went to participants, and a copy of the interview protocol sent to the presidents prior to the study. In addition, a copy of the “interview outline” was included in P2’s file.
- Five file folders labeled “Post-interview Communications” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5) containing copies of communication that occurred following the interviews (communication from the researcher to the president and communication from the president to the researcher).
- Five file folders labeled “Field Notes” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing primarily maps/directions to the campuses and notes written by the researcher (P5’s file was empty).
- Five file folders labeled “Reflections & Memos” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing the researcher’s memos/notes about “thoughts” after the coding, “theme ideas”, and “recurring ideas” the researcher saw emerging in the interview(s).
- Five file folders labeled “Step 1 Coding” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing multiple drafts of the initial coding process the researcher used, each draft more refined. The transcripts in these files included a) notations by the researcher on her thoughts as she coded the transcripts and b) the short in vivo codes in the margins.
- Five file folders labeled “Step 2 Coding” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing transcripts that were organized by the categories that emerged during the first step of the coding process. The folders also contained lists of initial categories that emerged in the analysis process, subsequent copies that reduced the number of categories, and lists of “final categories” that emerged in step two.
- Five file folders labeled “Step 3 Coding” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), documenting the next phase of the analytic process. The researcher had transferred data from the transcripts to extensive (19-40 pages in length, single-spaced) tables for each participant. The researcher provided a “legend” at the beginning of the tables as a guide. The legend noted

that the tables contained: direct quotes (DQ), the researcher's conclusions (RC), words used by participants but presented with omissions (WP), observations during the interview (O), questions generated by the researcher (*italicized*), words not part of the original transcript [ ], information relevant to text segment ( ), and category number (C#). There were multiple working copies of these tables, with additions and refinements. They contained handwritten comments by the researcher, highlights, check marks and post-it flags.

- Five file folders labeled “Step 4 Coding” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), including tables constructed by the researcher to identify the “themes and sub-themes” for each participant. These tables were also full of notes and highlights by the researcher and post-it flags.
- Five file folders labeled “Process Notes” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing copies of the interview protocol used during the interview and handwritten researcher notes about key data.
- Five file folders labeled “Model Notes and Drafts” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), containing the researcher's handwritten notes and hand drawn models for the “themes” for each of the participants.
- Five file folders labeled “Member Checking” (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5), including a copy of the letter sent to participants requesting they review the drafts of the dissertation sections that pertained to them (some files contained copies of email requests also). P1's file noted that the researcher received “no response” to the request (The president had left the institution she had served during the study and the researcher had been given contact information for her by the institution). It appeared that multiple email requests had gone through to her, with no response, but a hard copy of the draft mailed to her came back marked “insufficient address”). P2's file contained the response from the participant and an edited draft based on the feedback received from the participant (minimal revisions). P3's file included a note from the participant noting the “accuracy” of the draft. P4's file included a note from the participant saying she had “no specific edits”. P5's file indicated that the president did not respond to the request to review the draft of the section. However, earlier in the research process, the researcher had mailed a copy of the interview transcript to the participant asking her to review it because half of the interview tape was “poor quality” and the researcher wanted to make sure she had captured the participant's perspectives accurately. The participant returned the transcript with her editorial comments, indicating she had done her “best” to fill in the inaudible spaces on the transcript.
- Four folders labeled “Publications, Speeches, Etc.” (P2, P3, P4, P5), containing copies of internal and external speeches the participants had made and/or reports they had written. Participant 4 also included the introduction to a book she had written.

2) A black file box labeled “3 of 3 – Misc. files, Audio”. This file box contained the following:

- The Olympus digital recorder the interviews were recorded on
- An RCA digital recorder and batteries
- A Sony microcassette recorder and batteries
- A small cardboard box labeled “tapes of interviews”. Microcassette tapes for interviews with all of the participants were included in the box, and all were labeled (P1 dated 7/18/05, P2 dated 8/2/05 (two tapes), P3 dated 9/22/05 (6 tapes), P4 dated 9/27/05 (3 tapes) and P5 dated 12/7/05 (4 tapes – two labeled “original” and “poor quality”, the other two labeled “re-recorded”). In addition the box contained a baggie with “miscellaneous extra” tapes and a tape labeled “pilot study”, dated 11/04.
- A file folder labeled “Dr. Miller, Auditor”, containing:
  - notes to the auditor about the materials submitted for the audit
  - a copy of the researcher’s resume
  - two copies of the researcher’s “research log” (in tabular form), noting the date, time, and location of the interviews, the participant number, and documenting materials collected including the audio tapes, field notes, documents, photos, and/or artifacts.
  - copies of email correspondence between the researcher and auditor, requesting that an external audit be conducted (dated between 3/5/06 and 3/10/06)
  - a 1 GB jump drive containing documents for each participant (including analysis of categories and themes), a copy of the researcher’s dissertation draft, and models/charts designed for each participant
- A file folder labeled “Dissertation Proposal”, containing:
  - a copy of the agenda for the researcher’s dissertation proposal meeting, dated Friday, April 22, 2005
  - typed notes from that meeting, including “committee members’ suggestions”, notes from “talking with advisor afterwards” and “thoughts after the committee meeting”
  - three copies of the PowerPoint slides the researcher presented during the proposal meeting (6 pages)
  - a copy of a bibliography for the PowerPoint presentation
  - a document that went to committee members to identify potential meeting times for the proposal meeting (dated Spring 2005)
- A document labeled “very early proposal draft” (13 pages) titled “The Life Events that Characterize the Career Paths of Female Presidents of Private Universities in the Eastern U.S.: Narrative Analyses of Four Women’s Stories”



- A draft labeled “original proposal (presented in Spring 2005)” (32 pages) titled “Childhood Experiences and Childhood Career Development: Interpretive Biographies of Four Female Presidents of Private Research Universities”
- A “working copy” of the proposal, dated 5/10/05
- A draft titled “Proposal with new title, methodology, etc. – edits of advisor and committee integrated” (29 pages)
- A file folder labeled “(Name of researcher’s institution) IRB”, containing extensive documentation of the IRB approval process including approval for the pilot study (approved 11/16/04), a certificate documenting that the researcher completed the “Training for the protection of human research subjects” (dated 9/15/04), and various requests for changes in the research protocols (including requests to modify the study to include East Coast presidents in the study and change the number of participants to five). Final approval was granted 10/11/07.
- A file folder labeled “Timeline & Journaling”, containing:
  - “journal notes...(process, progress, feelings)” documenting the researcher’s thoughts about the transcription process, analyzing the data, ordering research books, amounts of time passing with what seemed like limited or slower than desired progress, notes about research methods and reviewing the literature, notes about participants, developing codes and themes, the theoretical framework and writing the dissertation
  - multiple timelines such as “Fall 2004 academic plans”, “July 2007, August 2007” with extensive entries documenting progress made (and sometimes the perceived slower than desired progress and what the researcher identified as an “unrealistic timeline”)
  - multiple dissertation “to do” and “planning” lists
  - research notes on study participants (interesting concepts that were emerging)
- An early document (dated August 2004) that listed the researcher’s feelings about the upcoming dissertation process (organized in two categories: “I’m excited about...” and “My fears...”)
- A file folder labeled “Drafts/Writing (Misc)”, containing drafts of the “summary of themes”, “summaries for each participant” and “drafts of early vignettes”
- A file folder labeled “Participant Models”, containing early handwritten drafts of the “theoretical framework” developed for each participant (tracing the life span, life stages, life experiences, and career paths of the presidents), and “final” models of the framework for each president (created in 2007) (including life course stages, life course experiences, lifespan career development, and lifespan themes)

- A file folder labeled “pilot study”, containing documentation on the pilot study (dated Fall 2004) including a copy of the letter requesting participation in the pilot interview/study, an informed consent form (signed and dated by the participant), a one-page information sheet about the president who participated in the pilot study, and a “thank you” card from the president, thanking the researcher for the gift card she had sent to thank the president for participating in her research
  - A file labeled “documents” that were copies of documents such as thoughts about each participant “after step 1 of (the) coding process”, Appendix D – the dissertation interview outline, and Appendix A – a letter of invitation to prospective participants
  - A file folder labeled “Women in Higher Education Leadership Conference (October ’07)”, containing a copy of the program for the conference, copies of the PowerPoint slides the researcher used in her presentation at the conference, an issue of Women in Higher Education (March 2008) with a post-it note marking an article on the researcher’s dissertation study (on page 22), and a hand-written note about the title change for her dissertation that said “paper dolls replaced vita phrase”
  - A file folder labeled “Declined the Study”, containing correspondence from the presidents who declined participation in the study (both email and mail correspondence, still in canceled/dated envelopes) along with hand-written notes about the participants and their decision to decline the invitation
  - A file folder labeled “Trip to (specific state where one president was located)”, containing trip and tourist materials (e.g., maps, directions, travel itinerary, receipts, business cards, information about local churches)
  - Two large calendars, dated 2006 and 2007, including a note from the researcher that she had made entries on the calendars regarding “dissertation/research progress”
- 3) A copy of the dissertation draft (305 pages), dated December 2008, titled:  
 From Paper Dolls to the Presidency: A Collective Case Study of the Childhood Years and Life Experiences of Five Female College and University Presidents

The audit consisted of the following steps:

- 1) I cataloged and reviewed all materials submitted for the audit, and recorded eight pages of notes as I examined the materials.
- 2) I read chapters one and three of the dissertation proposal, paying particular attention to the sections addressing the purpose of the study, research questions, study design, proposed data collection and analysis methods, verification strategies, the researcher's role in the study, and the interview

protocol. I recorded key procedures in writing for later comparison with the dissertation to ascertain whether or not the researcher's proposed focus and procedures were consistent with the study she conducted.

- 3) I read the introduction and all methodological/procedure sections of the dissertation and much of the final chapters that presented the data, discussed themes and theoretical frameworks, provided synthesis across cases, and conclusions.
- 4) I compared the dissertation proposal that was accepted by the researcher's committee to the dissertation (focusing on the purpose of the study, research questions, and methods) to the dissertation, and recorded my findings in writing.
- 5) I examined the findings of the study along with the data and coding, to ensure that the findings were consistent with the data.
- 6) Using the eight pages of notes I recorded during the audit process, I compiled this audit attestation.

Following the completion of the preceding steps, this auditor submits the following conclusions:

- 1) The focus of the dissertation (i.e., the childhood and life experiences of female college/university presidents) was very consistent with the focus the researcher originally proposed for her study. The purpose statement was the same (with the exception of the addition of two words – “who lead” – and a change from future tense at proposal stage to past tense after the study had been completed.)
- 2) Overall, minimal changes were made in the dissertation from what was originally proposed. It is important to note that one of the key assumptions of qualitative research is that it is an evolving, emerging design, so it is not uncommon to see changes. What is important in the audit process is that the researcher has provided both a rationale for and documentation of those changes.
- 3) The two grand tour questions and five sub-questions “asked of participants” were the same in the proposal and dissertation. There was only a slight change in the topical sub-questions. There were four questions in the proposal and the researcher added a fifth to the dissertation (i.e., What are the implications of this research for career development theory?). The researcher explained that this question was added at her advisor's suggestion. The research tradition (combined collective case study and interpretive biography) remained the same.
- 4) The use of multiple forms of “purposeful sampling” remained consistent from proposal to dissertation (i.e., identifying politically important cases, intensity/information-rich participants, criterion-based sampling). The researcher had to amend her sampling procedures slightly because initially she sent letters to

six female presidents at doctoral/research universities (2000 Carnegie Classification) inviting them to participate in her study and all six declined. She changed her sampling criteria to baccalaureate colleges (liberal arts and general) and invited eight presidents (five employed at Eastern schools and three at Midwestern schools) to participate in her study. Five agreed (two from the East and three from the Midwest). This change was appropriate in order to find a viable sample and in the dissertation the researcher clearly documented the change and her rationale for it.

- 5) The data collection methods that the researcher proposed were consistent with the methods she used in the study, with one exception. The researcher initially proposed conducting two interviews with each participant, but completed one interview with each president. During the audit I did not find documentation that provided a rationale for this change so I contacted the researcher via email and asked her to provide the rationale for this decision. She noted that though she had proposed conducting two interviews with each president, she believed that one interview provided sufficient data. She noted that she purposefully extended the length of the interviews to ensure she collected the rich data she needed at one point in time. This was a more viable approach since two of the interviews were out of state. An additional consideration was time constraints for the presidents she studied. The rationale for this change was satisfactory and the interview transcripts support the researcher's assertion that she had gathered rich data (290 pages). The richness is also evident in the dissertation draft, in the single case descriptions of the participants.
- 6) The researcher proposed using several strategies for verifying the trustworthiness of her study, including clarification of researcher bias, member checks, triangulation (two forms – multiple sources – i.e., participants and multiple methods – i.e., interviews and documents), the use of thick, rich description, and a formal, external audit. The researcher incorporated all of those strategies into her dissertation. Robert Stake (1995), in his book *The Art of Case Study Research*, suggested that member checks are the single most important strategy to examine the trustworthiness of a study because participants have the opportunity to decide whether or not the findings accurately represent their realities. The researcher asked all five participants to review the drafts of the sections she had written about them and comment on the accuracy of the content. Three read the drafts and confirmed their accuracy. One did not respond to the draft of the section, but earlier reviewed the transcript for accuracy, which is another form of member checking. One president did not respond to the researcher's requests to complete the member check process. Stake noted that often participants choose not to respond to the member check request. This researcher received feedback on the accuracy of the data from four of the five participants and made every effort to get feedback from the fifth president. The researcher also used a verification procedure that she did not explicitly note in her dissertation. Some qualitative

scholars suggest that the use of mechanical recording devices during data collection help preserve the accuracy of the data. All of the interviews were audio recorded. In addition, they were transcribed verbatim, including words such as “um” and “uh” and parenthetical notations such as (laughs) and (pause). Verbatim transcription adds to the credibility of the data because it provides the greatest degree of accuracy. In addition, including words (e.g., uh, um) on the transcript that some may believe are extraneous provides the larger context for the interview.

- 7) The data analysis methods the researcher proposed were consistent with the methods she used in the study. The methods were outlined in greater detail in the dissertation (which is common once researchers have had the opportunity to physically work with their data). The materials the researcher supplied for the external audit clearly documented her analysis procedures. The files for each participant, detailing every step of the coding process (and several iterations of coding at various stages of the process) were extensive. The rigor this researcher employed in working with her data was very evident – in fact, extremely impressive. The extensive tables and theoretical models the researcher developed during the analysis process make it very clear that the data included in the dissertation was accurate and credible.

Summary of the external audit:

After careful examination of both the process and product of this researcher's work, I believe that the trustworthiness of the study is apparent. The written product is clearly grounded in the data. The researcher carefully designed her dissertation and employed numerous verification strategies to ensure the credibility of her study. Her participants affirmed that the descriptions she constructed of their lives and experiences were credible to them.

The results of this audit demonstrate that the researcher maintained an excellent audit trail. It was apparent in reviewing the extensive materials submitted for the audit that the researcher was rigorous and systematic in her data collection and record keeping. The materials submitted were detailed, complete, well organized, and easy to follow. Other researchers could follow this researcher's clear audit trail. In addition, the findings of the study were presented with "rich, thick description" to enable readers to determine the applicability of this study to other settings.

Attested to by Dana Miller this 30th day of October, 2008.

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