

Utah Valley University

From the Selected Works of Susan R. Madsen

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Leadership Philosophies and Styles of Women University Presidents

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Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal Volume 25, Summer 2007

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Preface

Advancing Women in Leadership On-line Journal was launched in 1997 with the intent of publishing manuscripts that report, synthesize, review, or analyze scholarly inquiry that focuses on women's issues. The intent of this journal is to encourage and support the proliferation of women in positions of leadership in all aspects of professional and corporate America. In the encouragement of advancing women in leadership, we present the following manuscripts. They are:

Leadership Styles and Philosophies of Women University Presidents by Susan R. Madsen

Diversity Leadership in Higher Education by Lisa Marie Portugal

The M.I.C.E. Process: A Remedy for Women Faculty Experiencing Quadruple Jeopardy by Marie Byrd-Blake

Women Leaders' Perspectives and Experiences of Leadership Development by Nicole Stelter-Flett

Gender Considerations in the Study of Science and Technology in Anglophone Cameroon by Pius T. Tanga

Women's Political Leadership in the Middle East by Tamara Waggener and Mitzi Mahoney

An Analysis of Homologous Reproduction in Interscholastic Athletics by Warren Whisenant, John Vincent, Paul Pedersen, and Ryan Zapalac

High Status Turkish Women Administrators in Higher Education by Nuray Senemoglu

Current Status of Women in the Information Technology Field by Denise D. Eggersman

Our intent is that this journal is viewed as a professional publication site for scholarly inquiry and perspectives that promote gender equity and advance women in leadership. It is our hope that you find this issue of Advancing Women in Leadership thought provoking, enjoyable, and that you look forward to subsequent issues. Suggestions for improvement, encouragement, and submission for upcoming issues are welcomed and appreciated. Genevieve Brown, Ed.D. & Beverly J. Irby, Ed.D.
Editors

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Leadership Styles and Philosophies of Women University Presidents

Susan R. Madsen

Abstract

Although progress has been made, it remains clear that women are still underrepresented in administrative positions in all types of higher educational institutions throughout the world. While the issue is often now addressed in the literature, there are still few articles reporting research findings on the experiences and perceptions of university presidents, particularly women. Ten women university presidents were interviewed using the phenomenological research methodology. This paper reports the results of this research related to the presidents' perceptions of their own leadership styles and philosophies.

Leadership Styles and Philosophies of Women University Presidents

Although progress has been made, it remains clear that women are still underrepresented in administrative positions in all types of higher educational institutions throughout the world. Berryman-Fink, Lemaster, and Nelson (2003) reported that only 15% of chief academic officers in the post-secondary academy were women, with 70% of these positions being held in colleges with less than 1,000 students. They explained that of the women college and university presidents in the United States (who make up 19.3% of the total), 70% of them "head schools with 3,000 or fewer students, religious or women's colleges, or two-year institutions" (p. 60). Some have speculated (while others have reported research findings) about reasons for the continued underrepresentation of women in administration. These include the challenge of obtaining effective mentoring, strategic committee assignments, and work experiences; lack of leadership opportunities and experiences; devalued mental models (from women and men); lack of self-confidence, isolation, deep-seated traditions, overall discrimination; and other cultural, attitudinal, political, and structural constraints (Berryman-Fink, et al., 2003;

Bickel, et al., 2002; Collins, Christler, & Quina, 1998; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995). Researchers (Bickel, et al., 2002) continue to report challenges for women in leadership positions that men often do not confront.

Since the 1970s, significant efforts have been made to increase women's participation in higher education administration (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, as cited in Berryman-Fink, et al., 2003). The Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) opened its office in 1972 (Astin & Leland, 1991). It had initial funding for a two-year project and still continues to serve the higher education community by focusing efforts and programs on leadership development for current and future women administrators. In 1973, the American Council of Education (ACE) opened its office of Women in Higher Education, and it has offered leadership development support and programs for many years (Astin & Leland, 1991). In addition to national organizations and agencies, numerous local programs, such as the University of Cincinnati's Women's Leadership Program (WLP), have been funded and designed. The WLP was a four-year initiative that attempted to "redress the limitations of the glass ceiling" (Berryman-Fink, et al., 2003, p. 6). Even with these leadership development advancements, Glazer-Raymo (1999) (as cited in Berryman-Fink, et al., 2003) makes it very clear, however, that women's equality in higher education is still a myth.

Even with these ongoing concerns, literature reporting research on high-level women leaders in any type of organization is scarce (Thompson & Marley, 1999). Further, according to Olsson and Pringle (2004), "much of the women in management literature has focused on the 'glass half empty', the perceptions and experiences of women who may be constructed as victims of organizational structure and culture that privilege masculine characteristics" (p. 31). They explained that the literature is missing "studies of women who have succeeded and may feel comfortable participating in such a culture" (p. 32).

The purpose of this paper is to do just that. It will report the findings of a research project that studied women who have succeeded and feel comfortable in cultures that are often male-dominated. It is designed to hear the voices of women who lead in higher education and to make their perspectives and experiences more visible. More specifically the focus of this paper is to disseminate the findings related to a phenomenological research study exploring the leadership styles and philosophies of women university presidents.

Leadership Style and Philosophy: Theory and Literature

Leadership style and philosophy are sometimes viewed as generic and vague terms.

Much of the extensive work in this area before 1990 was summarized in Bass (1990), and now there are a multitude of books (particularly trade) published on this topic. Furthermore, thousands of academic, scholarly, and practitioner-oriented articles appeared in a large assortment of publications throughout the past three or four decades. The number intensifies each year. However, the literature currently shares little with regard to leadership style and philosophy of university presidents (particularly women). As most academicians and practitioners will attest, there are substantial differences between higher educational and corporate environments and perspectives. Hence, research investigating the philosophies of styles of women university presidents is needed.

Two leadership theories provide helpful frameworks for constructing meaning from exploring these presidents' leadership styles and philosophies as well as the skills, abilities, and competencies they believe are necessary for effective leadership: 1) emergent leadership theory or leadership emerging from context, and 2) androgyny or the ability to lead in styles acceptable across many subgroups.

Emergent Leadership Theory

Emergent leadership theory is based on the belief that society is changing (Nidiffer, 2001). "Old-style leadership is anachronistic in today's complex, global, information-rich, interconnected culture in which higher education's leaders deal with multiple constituencies" (p. 108). According to Nidiffer (2001), "emergent leadership is more collectivist in nature, assuming a 'relational context' in which leaders share power, information, and decision-making with other group members" (p. 108). These types of leaders are participatory, flexible, ethical, authentic, connective, and team-oriented. They have developed and apply skills such as empowerment, communication, collaboration, and healing. Regardless of their official position, individuals who are perceived by others as influential are often known as emergent leaders. According to Collins, et al. (1998), these emergent leaders often become assigned leaders.

A review of the literature with regard to women's perceptions of effective leadership characteristics is helpful in understanding this type of leadership. Although not specifically noted, it appears that some studies have reported results related to the presence and effectiveness of emergent leadership. First, in Aldoory's (1998) sample of female educators, the most common terms these women used to describe their own leadership included the following: have a vision, build consensus, incorporate heart into leadership, provide direction, motivate others, demonstrate commitment, provide good coaching, and show a human side. Second, Keown & Keown (1982)

found that successful woman executives not only held positive attitudes about themselves and their work environments, but they “used a ‘selling mode’ as their leadership style and ‘expertise’ as their power base” (p. 450). Third, Matz (2002) concluded that women in academe, business, and government preferred the consensual style of leadership, which is characterized by empowering others, enhancing others' sense of self-worth, sharing power, energizing others, and encouraging participation. Finally, Haring-Hidore, Freeman, Phelps, Spann, and Wooten (1990) studied women administrators and found that participants “espoused a participatory, cooperative, and collaborative style of leadership; thus, each indicated a strong preference for involving others in decision-making” (p. 179). These women gathered as much information as possible (through reading, listening, and talking) before making decisions. They did not like conflict or confrontation and tried mediation strategies to reduce it. The participants appeared to care considerably about other people, and they were aware of the effect of decisions on them. According to Haring-Hidore, et al. (1990), “most of these women voiced standards, principles, and underlying moral beliefs about working with people” (p. 179).

Other studies also provide additional insight into these phenomena. The women school leaders in Dunlap and Schmuck's (1995) book used terms such as connectedness, coactivity, shared and expandable power, empowerment, reciprocal talk, emotional energy, pondered mutuality, matured growth, collaborative change, integrity of power, relationships, web of human interaction, enrichment, caring, interdependence, and commitment. Wilson (2004) claimed that women have greater inclusiveness, empathy, connectiveness to others, perspectives of society and community, and other skills (e.g., relational, communication, listening, focus on broader issues, and collaborative). Lamsa and Sintonen (2001) wrote of the importance of ethics to women leaders, and Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) claimed that consistency in values is of critical importance to effective leaders in general. Fennell (2005) studied women principals and found that they were concerned with “creating a positive, open, common language with teachers, students, parents and community members to build positive, collaborative learning communities. They viewed power and knowledge as interchangeable and expandable” (p. 163). They were good listeners, effective communicators, superb negotiators, valued others as individuals, created strong reciprocal relationships, listened carefully to all points of view, and worked with others to develop and share a common vision. Astin and Leland (1991) also discussed the notion of influence versus power for women university presidents. The presidents preferred the term influence to power and believed that it more clearly represented their style and philosophy. Finally, Anderson and Shafer (2005) argued for a broader definition of power which they termed *authentic power*. They stated, “Power rises out of our being, and our willingness to

embrace it gives us the capacity to transform reality" (p. 56). "At its core, deeper power is anchored in the commitment to gain self-knowledge and grow through a continuing journey toward self-acceptance" (p. 63).

Androgyny Leadership Theory

Androgyny leadership theory appears to have similar characteristics to the emergent leadership theory. It predicts that the most effective leader will be someone who is highly instrumental (a stereotypical male quality) and expressive (a stereotypical female quality) (Korabik, 1990). Individuals who utilize this style typically have greater flexibility and a broader repertoire of behaviors than individuals who use only those skills and techniques traditionally aligned with a particular gender (feminine or masculine). Hence, women and men who are androgynous have access to "both transitionally feminine qualities and also masculine task-oriented ones" (p. 288). In fact, Park (1997) stated that "androgynous leadership style can be the most appropriate for achieving high performance in many organizations" (p. 166). Park outlined three premises for androgynous leaders: 1) they will have wider range of possible reactions for any situation; 2) they will have the "capacity to access a situation and to determine the most appropriate response" (p. 168); and 3) they will have "greater success in their encounters with the world than other leaders" (p. 168). Of course this would depend on the subordinate's willingness to accept a leader who combines the qualities of the traditionally task-oriented and relations-oriented gender divisions.

The literature already discussed also addresses many elements of an androgynous leader. Leonard (1981) studied the communication styles of university administrators and discovered there was little difference between men and women administrators. She stated, "The results suggested that the university climate may in fact encourage more androgynous managers" (p. RL). Both men and women discussed the importance of both task and people orientation for effective administration. Waring (2003) interviewed African-American women presidents, and most said they use the androgynous leadership style (both task dimensions and relationship dimensions); however, the vast majority spoke of the relationship aspect being most important for effective leadership. These presidents had adopted a variety of androgynous attributes or skills: relationship-orientation, people-orientation, skill-based, decisiveness, willingness to take responsibility for action, quickness of decision-making, engendering trust, communication, delegation of authority, responsibility, and reflective qualities. With regard to reflective qualities, Wingard (2005) noted that leadership theories "abound with the notion of self-reflection as a fundamental requirement for effective leadership" (p. 170). In her literature review, Wells (1998)

discussed the findings of a study by Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) that focused on the leadership behaviors of community college presidents. The high-achieving women and men in this study exhibited strong characteristics and scores in all leadership dimensions (vision, influence, people, values, and motivation). However, women demonstrated “stronger behaviors in vision (taking appropriate risks to bring about change), in influence (able to cause followers to solve problems to work together), in people (demonstrating respect and care for individual differences), and in values (building openness and trust through personal and professional behavior” (Wells, 1998, p. 35). These are clearly androgynous characteristics since some focus on traditional “masculine” traits and others on traditional “feminine” traits.

Both androgyny and emergent leadership theory speak of flexibility and adaptability, changing leadership style based on different situations. This is highly emphasized in situational leadership theory. Ahn, Adamson, and Dornbusch (2004) stated that leadership is “a network of relationships, a polyvalent phenomenon that can only be defined in the context of the leader's relationship with his specific constituency” (p. 123). A variety of studies (e.g., those cited in Coughlin, Wingard, & Hollihan, 2005; Wilson, 2004) have found that this responsiveness to context is a key to successful leadership. Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996) (as cited in Ahn, et al., 2004) studied 160 CEOs around the world to “determine the attitudes, activities, and behaviors that shaped their respective leadership approaches” (p. 114). CEOs in successful companies, rather than employing a single leadership approach, adapted to specific strategic situations. “It was their responsiveness to company culture and their ability to refine and adapt it to new strategic needs that was one of the critical elements of their success” (Ahn, et al., 2004, p. 114)

Research Methods

According to Wells (1998), the literature supports the premise that qualitative research methodologies are the most appropriate way to explore women's issues and concerns. She explained that quantitative methods that consider individuals as detached “research objects” are not as useful for women's studies as are “qualitative methods , which do not break living connections” (Wells, 1998, p. 36). The research presented here considers only the voices of women leaders. Aldoory (1998) claimed that “this method of feminist scholarship allows women's experiences to speak for themselves” (p. 74). This study consisted of the qualitative methods of interviewing and was designed using the phenomenological research approach (Wolcott, 2001). Van Manen (2001), one of the main phenomenological methodology authors, stated that “phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (p. 9). He reflected, “The insight into the

essence of an incident involves a progress of reflection, deconstructing assumptions and conceptualizations, of clarifying, interpreting, and of finally making meaning of the lived experiences" (p. 24). This approach was found to be very applicable with regard to exploring the experiences and perceptions of women university presidents in understanding their leadership styles and philosophies. As Gergen (2005) stated, "Leadership is a journey that starts from within" (p. xx). Phenomenology draws upon individual leadership journeys and internal perceptions which are particularly applicable in this exploratory project.

Phenomenologists recommend a sample size of up to ten individuals for the in-depth interviews (Creswell, 1998). With regard to the sample size, in 1998 Merriam (as cited in Nah, 2003) explained that in research "the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but rather the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 77). To obtain agreement to participate from 10 current (or recently retired in one case) university presidents, 25 women were contacted via email messages, given details of the research study, and invited to be participants. They were asked for a two-hour block of time to meet with me in their university offices. Twelve accepted the invitation, and interviews were scheduled with the 10 who were available during the spring of 2005. Eight of the ten served as presidents or chancellors of strong, well-known research institutions or university systems, while two were presidents of well-known teaching-focused comprehensive institutions with strong scholarship expectations. Nine of the ten served in public institutions with only one being from a private one. Eight were Caucasian and two were African-American women. Four of these women were in their fifties and six in their sixties.

Interview items were open-ended probing questions based on the research methodology described, an extensive review of the literature, and the review of other instruments measuring similar constructs for different populations. Questions were reviewed prior to the interviews by two experienced leadership researchers. Slight adjustments to the instrument were made based on their feedback. Items were designed to extract all types of related information, and some follow-up questions were asked encouraging the presidents to search for deeper answers and richer descriptions.

The audiotaped interviews, held in the president's office in most cases, lasted approximately two to three hours each. Each interview was transcribed and emailed to the president for review. Next, a textual analysis of the responses to each item was performed. According to Aldoorj (1998), inductive research, such as this, derives key issues from the findings that, in turn, might lead to a deeper and broader

perspective and understanding of the experience or issue at hand. "Although the findings cannot be generalized, the level of detail obtained from descriptive, personal experiences" is invaluable and, in the case of the current study, should help fill gaps in the area of high-level female leadership in institutions of higher education (p. 79). The analysis focused on understanding various perspectives as well as exploring similarities and differences between the presidents. The analysis followed the protocol of various phenomenological studies in utilizing theme generation, categorization, rereading and reviewing, identification of key ideas and phrases, and grouping techniques. The presidents were also asked via email or phone to review the themes, analysis, and results and provide any additional perspective and insight. Because of the large amount of data collected, only three of these themes (leadership styles, skills and abilities, and philosophy) are discussed in this paper.

Research Findings and Analysis

With regard to leadership style, skills and abilities, and philosophy, the women university presidents were asked the following four questions:

- If I were to ask your university administrators and staff to describe your leadership style, what would they say?
- What is your personal leadership style?
- What do you believe are the skills and abilities necessary for successful academic leadership?
- What is your philosophy of leadership?

Leadership Style and Skills

After reading and re-reading the presidents' responses to the first two style-related questions, descriptive words were extracted and compiled into Table 1. The results showed that these women demonstrated emergent and androgynous styles of leadership as described in the previous theoretical framework/literature review section of this paper. This was to be expected as Korabik (1990), Leonard (1981), Waring (2003), and others have reported that successful women leaders in male-dominated organizations/arenas (and it remains true that leadership in higher education remains male-dominated) tend to use a combination of female and male-dominated leadership traits. One president provided a good example of this type of leadership in a description about her own leadership style:

I have a deep understanding of the issues; I can engage an individual in any position and come away knowing whether he or she is trying to do the right things or if they are not. They would say that I have a fine detailed knowledge and that it can be a

little “off putting” at times, but it's typically coupled with this soft style, lots of delegation and communication. I do more of this at 30,000 feet rather than at ground zero, but I can go to ground zero whenever I need to.

The descriptive words display this combination of task-oriented and relationship-oriented attributes.

Table 1

Descriptive words about leadership styles

She is...	She...
A consensus-builder	Communicates well
A risk-taker	Delegates
A strong communicator	Develops others
An analyzer	Does not micromanage
Appropriate	Engages others
Business-minded	Gives credit to others for successes
Committed	Has a deep understanding of the issues
Confident	Has a strong personality
Collaborative	Has detailed

	knowledge
Cooperative	Has high standards
Decisive	Has strength
Demanding of self	Hires the best people
Demanding of others	Involves others in decision-making
Focused	Listens well
Inclusive	Uses loose leadership
Inclusive	Uses soft leadership
Engaging	
Ethical	
Facilitative	
Fair	
Honest	
Nice	
Not afraid	
Open to criticism	
Open to learning from mistakes	

Perceptive

People-oriented

Plain spoken

Productive

Results-focused

Supportive

Team-oriented

Service-oriented

Visionary

It was also clear that the presidents also believed that situational leadership is not only helpful but outright necessary in higher educational administration today. With the various stakeholder contingencies, the wide variety of governance bodies or structures (e.g., legislature, students, faculty, local government, and state educational administration), and current challenges in higher education, a president must be able to use a variety of leadership techniques or styles dependent upon the need and appropriateness of the context. In fact, one president told me that asking her about her leadership style was a stupid question. She explained,

If you have a specific leadership style then you're in big trouble! It has got to grow out of the needs of the times. If the house is on fire, you'd better be very directive. If you are going to revise the promotion and tenure guidelines, you had better be very participatory. If you have a style and somebody can say, "You're always going to do this"; you're going to be a disaster because you don't have enough sense to read the situation and know what's required.

Another president admitted that early in her career she preferred one main leadership style. However, through various challenges and experiences she learned to modify her style "based on the folks that I am working with, what their needs are, and what

it takes in a particular given situation.” Finally, one woman explained, “I believe finding commonalities is much more important as the leadership style at a time when globalization is creating all kinds of authentic kinds of interdependencies.”

These findings support other research (although most centered on populations from different contexts) that spoke of effective styles of high level leaders as being androgynous (Korabik, 1990; Park, 1997) and emergent (Collins, et al., 1998; Nidiffer, 2001). It supports the literature that focuses on successful women's styles and preferences as being consensus-oriented, committed, positive, empowering, participatory, collaborative, interactive, and so forth (e.g., Aldoory, 1998; Coughlin, et al., 2005; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Haring-Hidore, et al., 1990; Matz, 2002; Wilson, 2004).

Throughout the interviews the women also shared their thoughts regarding skills and abilities necessary for successful academic leadership. Although most of the responses were found in answers to the four questions outlined at the first of this section, the president s also mentioned some skills and abilities through various segments of the interview while speaking of themselves or others they admire. For example when a president would speak of a leader-mentor they admired, I would ask them what skills and abilities these individuals had that made them successful in leading. All of these responses were extracted from the interview text and compiled (see Table 2). This list includes responses made by any (not necessarily all) of the women, but further analysis found that almost all (skills, abilities, and competencies in this table) were mentioned by a majority of the women.

Table 2

Skills, abilities, and competencies necessary for successful academic leadership listed alphabetically

Ability to focus	Flexible	Participatory
Ability to motivate	Followership	People skills
Accountability	Fortitude	Personal values
Adaptability	Giving feedback	Priority management
	Grounded	

Ambassadorship	optimism	Problem solving
Analysis	Handling anxiety and frustration	Productivity
Authenticity	Handling disappointments	Public speaking
Business	Handling fear	Relationships
Candor	Hiring and placement	Representation
Centered/focused	Humility	Role modelship
Character	Humor	Selection
Collaboration	Ignoring non-helpful feedback	Service
Communication	Inspiring and motivating others	Sincerity
Compassion	Integrity	Strategic
Competent	Intellectual vigor	Strategic thinking
Confidence	Judge organizational fit	Strength of character
Connective	Leading change	Strength of commitment
Consensus-building	Leading with integrity	Supportive
Cooperation	Learning from mistakes	Teaching
Courage	Legislature	Team-oriented
Critical thinking		Teambuilding
Delegation		Thick skin
Diversity commitment		Trusting your judgment

Dream	Life-long learning	Understand self
Empathy	Listening to others	Viewing barriers as opportunities
Empowerment	Listening to self	Visionary
Endurance	Mentoring	Work ethic
Ethical decision-making	Moral standards	Work experience
Facilitative	Multitasking	
Financial	Negotiation	
	Networking	
	Openness	

Philosophy

All of the women responded to a question regarding their leadership philosophies. Related perspectives were also extracted from statements made throughout the full interviews. Their applicable responses were analyzed and six primary themes emerged: 1) hiring the right people; 2) power and empowerment; 3) ethics, honesty, and openness; 4) developing and supporting others; 5) collaboration and teamwork; and 6) creating a vision and making a difference.

Hiring the right people. All ten presidents explained (some briefly, some at length) that hiring the right people was central to successful leadership in higher education. When asked about their leadership philosophies, over half of the participants mentioned that getting the “right people on the bus” (two referred to Jim Collins ' book *Good to Great* , 2001) was foundational in any higher educational strategies, improvements, changes, and overall leadership efforts. One president stated,

There is no question in my mind that the most important thing you need to do when you get to a position of leadership is to be hardnosed about hiring really good people.

You can't be soft hearted and hire someone because they are a nice person. You have to hire very competent people to surround yourself with, very bright individuals who will speak their minds to you, and people you can truly respect. You must respect the people who work for you. Everyday you need to think, "Boy, I'm lucky that these wonderful people are working for me." That's what I tried to do in every situation.

Another president explained, "I believe that it is important to hire good people to work for me, and know when people need to leave."

Interestingly, the issue of hiring and firing is not directly addressed in much of the post-secondary literature on effective leadership. The current focus is on the development of managers and leaders (McCaffery, 2004; Rubin, 2004). Outside of the educational arena, hiring the right people and firing the wrong people are topics of more open discussion and debate (Collins, 2001). Unfortunately, higher education often focuses on how and when to move ineffective people to positions that will not have such devastating negative consequences on the institution. Over half of the women in this study openly shared examples of firing people for a number of reasons including ethical improprieties, lack of "fit" with new strategies and focus, incompetence, and their lack of ability to motivate others and to move efforts toward bottom-line results. It is clear that more needs to be written on the courage to fire in higher education.

Power and empowerment. All ten presidents shared their philosophies of empowering others. After ensuring that the best people were working for them, the presidents believed that giving these individuals the power to do their jobs and make their own decisions was a strategy that proved to be effective for them throughout their administrative careers. One president explained, "It is important to understand that the more you share power the more you have. It is wonderful when others make you look good!" A second explained that she did not enjoy micromanaging others in executive leadership positions:

We have a provost who is much more of a traditional academic than I am. I think faculty wonder how we worked together. The fact is that we work together extremely well because I am not in the middle of his business all the time, yet he knows what he has to deliver.

Another president claimed,

It is essential in higher education that you share your leadership. I think the more you give power away, the more power you actually have. To me empowering others is probably the most important thing you can do. However, you must expect less than

perfect when you do this. So many of us think we can do it better ourselves , and maybe that is true. But, at least in some areas, you have to accept less than perfect if you want to engage people who will stay with you.

To illustrate her point, one president said that she did not do anything around her campus. She stated that

The real work on this campus is done all around me. I don't teach the classes, I don't mow the grass, I don't clean the toilets, I don't serve the food, and I don't do the counseling. Other people do it, and they have to want to do it. I have found it works best to have people working on projects they want to work on. So, what I do is I encourage them and empower them. Sometimes I choose among the things they want to do and decide which I think will help the campus move forward in the long run. If someone comes to me with a great idea , I say, "That's a good idea. Go do it!"

This notion of empowerment and sharing power for effective educational leadership is supported widely in the literature (Anderson & Shafer, 2005; Astin & Leland, 1991; Fennel, 2005; Haring-Hidore, et al., 1990; Matz, 2002).

Eight of the ten presidents also mentioned the term "power ." Most admitted that even if a president believes in empowerment, she still needs to be comfortable with power. In fact, one president purported that one must actually like and enjoy power at some level to be effective in high-level leadership positions, especially as women. Interestingly, it appears the word "power" was often used to refer to decision-making and accountability. For example, one president stated, "I also believe that if the buck stops with me, I'm going to make the final decision. I have to be very comfortable with that decision. I make sure people understand that well."

Ethics, honesty, and openness. In all of the interviews , the presidents discussed their commitment to ethics and honesty in their personal and professional lives. One woman proclaimed that presidents should be "models of integrity." Another president stated, "It is so important to tell the truth. This is actually more than being ethical. Someone can be ethical and not be particularly good at telling the truth. Sometimes it's not easy to always tell the truth." A third explained that her philosophy of leadership includes a "commitment to fair and scrupulously honest interactions on every level." A fourth stated,

My staff would say I am ethical and honest. I really pride myself on being honest. I don't lie. I just simply tell the truth. I'm honest in a way that is nice when sometimes I probably need to be honest in a way that is tough or harder on people.

A fifth president spoke about ethics, honesty, and integrity being part of a personal “core” that can be developed through hard work.

I think that leadership cuts so totally to an individual's character and personality. We should try to identify one's character and who they really are instead of their leadership style or philosophy. I think a lot of candidates in colleges get in trouble with bad matches because the candidate goes in and tries to be who they think the university wants, and universities let them get away with that. My best advice to a candidate is to go in and be as much as “who you are” as you possibly can. After this interview today I would hope when you leave you will know who I am in a way that you wouldn't if I just answered some well-defined questions in a very detailed and deliberate manner. These kinds of questions and responses will not tell you how I am or what my character is all about. Universities hire leaders for the crises. In a crisis we all go immediately into that core of who we are and what our values are. We can't help it. It is just a human thing that happens. In a crisis you've got to be sure a leader has enough substance in his or her core. If the core is weak, you are not going to have a leader. If that core is not one that is whole and can move with very deliberate actions, you're going to be in trouble.

When I confronted some unethical situations at one institution, somebody said, “Why did you stand up? Didn't you know it would get you in trouble?” I said, “It never occurred to me *not* to stand up. I didn't think about options. It was a crisis, and I went immediately to my core. My core knew there were things that were wrong. There were things that had to be done, and as a president you're the one who has to do them.” The core kicks in when it's tough. When an individual doesn't have a core filled with ethics and character then the institution is in trouble. You have to develop that core if you want people to have confidence in you. You need to know who you are before you can be authentic; authenticity is the most apparent thing when you meet a person.

The topics of ethics and honesty in leadership are mentioned in some of the post-secondary literature, but actual in-depth scholarly research and writing in this area is sparse. Interestingly, because of recent scandals in corporate America, articles and books on ethical leadership in business are becoming commonplace. Many of the women in this study shared stories about being in situations that required an ethical stand (some at the expense of their past positions). They spoke of working with individuals who were clearly unethical and the choices they had to make because of that. So, why is it that we sometimes protect unethical leaders in higher education? And, why is it that we do not speak or write more openly (as is being done in business) about the issues?

With regard to openness, five of the ten presidents prided themselves on their willingness to be candid and plain spoken. They explained that this is important for them in development and maintaining trust and respect from those on their campuses, communities, legislatures, and other stakeholder contingencies. Although difficult at times, these presidents also spoke about a willingness to hear criticism and to act on it when and where appropriate. Eight of the ten spoke specifically about acknowledging and understanding their mistakes and failures while seeking diligently to learn from them to become more effective in their positions and relationships. The importance of self-growth and development was also mentioned by the majority of the presidents.

Developing and supporting others. Another strong theme that emerged from the university president interviews is their leadership philosophies related to their interest, motivation, and passion to assist others in personal and professional development. The presidents used a number of terms (e.g., coaching, mentoring, assisting, developing, teaching) to refer to developing others. One president reflected,

I have mentored a lot of young graduate students who've followed me through , and who have become very successful. I've picked them out, in a sense, like I was picked out because they are bright, they are hard working, and they are wonderful people. I love to develop people. I've created opportunities for faculty to have administrative experience s, so they can discover if they enjoy this kind of challenge.

Another president explained,

I help develop people; the stronger they are the stronger we are. I want the best people that I can find for a position. I don't want to micromanage them, and I want them to take hold of their areas. We talk about the expectations related to what they want to accomplish and monitor whether we are making progress in those areas. If not, we decide what we have to change or discuss other options or opportunities. I have pretty high expectations for folks, and I like to let them find their own best way (as I like to do). In the end we focus on results, and I give them the credit.

One university president discussed some specific types of developmental strategies she utilizes to develop some of her administrators and staff:

I don't get angry if something goes wrong. Failure is okay. You can never make me yell at you because you did something bad, stupid, or wrong. I just say, "Oh, it didn't work. How come? What can you do better?" I have an open door policy. People come to my office, send me email, or call me on the phone. I want them to feel comfortable

with me. I believe in developing others. That is the only way to be more successful as a leader.

The presidents also spoke about the importance of supporting others around them. They believed that this support is central to the success of the leadership team and the campus as a whole. A part of showing and displaying support is to respect and believe in colleagues. A few of the presidents mentioned that one way to respect and support their subordinates was to be on time and prepared for meetings. One president explained, "I try to be very supportive of those who report to me and help them. Sometimes I have to ask them to do difficult things. In these cases I ensure I provide them with enough encouragement and support to help them succeed." Another president said her deans would say that she will support their final decisions. "They did not believe I would do this at first, and they had to find out for themselves." She explained that they tried her out on a few issues and, according to this president, "Now they believe me."

These findings support prior literature in the post-secondary and business arenas. Emergent and androgynous women leaders are said to be interested in the development of those who work for them (Bass, 1990; Nidiffer, 2001). Other higher educational and business literature also discussed the desires and concern of women leaders to assist in the development of those around them (Aldoory, 1998; Waring, 2003; Wells, 1998).

Collaboration and teamwork. Collaboration and teamwork was a central theme that emerged from analyzing the president s' leadership philosophy responses. Related descriptive words or phrases used by the presidents included the following list: team-oriented, building consensus, respecting people around you, facilitative leadership, involving others in decision- making, participatory management, listening to others, team of interchangeable parts, and partnership between leaders and followers. One president had people say to her, "If I was chancellor or president , I could make things happen in a second." However, she has learned that the top leader really cannot do anything. "You can only get teams of people together, very good people together ; and they are the ones who will make things happen." Another president stated, "They can tell me when they think I'm wrong. If they want me to be a good leader, they'll tell me. If I'm heading over a cliff , and my administrative team doesn't say ' Watch out , it's their fault too."

Another president stated,

My team would say that I like a team of interchangeable parts where we all know the

whole organization and the baton can be seamlessly passed from one person to another. Someone may have special responsibilities , but we are all trying to create the same organizational capacity behind the vision we have created. We do it in different ways, but I believe in cooperation, delegation, soft leadership, and loose leadership.

Another president explained,

I believe that leadership is a partnership between the leader and his or her followers where together you discover the best of all of you. This is how you can move the institution forward to its benefit. Any benefit that accrues to you has got to be a side effect; it can not be the goal. It is not about you. It really is true that if you want to be the sole source of inspiration, the sole source of good ideas, and the sole source of decisiveness, a university is not the place to be a leader. Everybody is smarter than you are; everybody knows a heck of a lot more about a lot of things than you do. They all have dreams and aspirations that are grounded in expertise, assertiveness, and achievement. The best thing you can do is to catch that wave, ride it, and be part of it. You have been successful if your administrators, faculty, and staff believe you have helped them achieve their goals.

Six of the presidents specifically spoke about the importance of listening to the people around them. One stated, "You have to hear the people, and you can only do that if you are quiet enough to hear what they are saying." The presidents explained that they hire the best people so they can make better choices and decision as a leadership team. Every member of the team makes distinctive contributions and embodies unique skills and perspectives. However, if they are not heard and trusted, there is no reason to be hiring the best and brightest.

These results also support the previously published literature. In fact most of the literature cited in the literature review section of this paper states the importance of teamwork and collaboration to women leadership in business and education settings (Aldoory, 1998; Astin & Leland, 1991; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Fennel, 2005; Haring-Hidore, et al., 1990; Matz, 2002; Waring, 2003; Wells, 1998; Wilson, 2004).

Creating a vision and making a difference. The sixth and final primary theme that emerged from the president s' responses regarding leadership philosophy was the importance of creating a vision and making a real difference. It was clear that they believed that presidents must recognize the need to look ahead and think globally. Two of the president s mentioned Jim Collins' (2001) book *Good to Great* in terms of creating a vision, building an image, focusing on what the organization does really

well, and building on those strengths. One president explained:

Although we create a vision together, the people want to hear your perspectives. Share with them your vision. I learned that if I didn't speak clearly and forcefully about what I wanted to happen, everybody got nervous including the regents, my staff, and the presidents. They all wanted to know where I stood on things and where we were supposed to be heading. I learned that you have to be clear. You must provide a pathway for people to follow, and you can't be wishy-washy. It was hard for me because every issue is like that. I'm very clear about some issues yet unclear about others. I see the complexity, and sometimes I'm not always quite sure. I've found that you work your way through the issues, and then take a position. That is what helps the people around you. This surprised me. People liked it when I would be decisive and could lay out where we needed to go. I believe effective leaders need to do this. It is also important to recognize that many others help. They tell me about potential unintended consequences of policy change and political feasibility.

The presidents yearned to make a real difference in the lives of students, employees, and community members. They seemed to thrive on making progress in areas they convinced truly mattered to those around them. A number of presidents spoke about the need to leave a place or situation better than they found it. In fact, one said that it is our ethical and professional responsibility to do just that.

These findings also support past research that found that creating and leading with a vision is necessary and central to effective leadership today (Aldoory, 1998; Sharpnack, 2005; Wells, 1998). It also supports the limited research on the desires and motivations of women university leaders. Most of the women in other studies, reports, and essays (Collins, et al., 1998; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001) also speak of their desires to truly make a difference for a variety of constituencies (e.g., students, staff, faculty, and community).

Conclusion

Overall, this research study has rigorously documented the perceived styles and philosophies of a sample of women university presidents. Readers may say there were no surprises in this paper. However, it is important to remember that little research has been previously published on this population (women presidents). Although higher educational development programs have taught many of these philosophies, styles, skills, and abilities for years, this research now provides research-based support for them in a post-secondary setting with a sample of women.

After analyzing the data and reviewing the literature, it is clear that at least two specific areas need more research and discussion within the academic arena. The first revolves around the decisions, actions, and results of university presidents, particularly women, to hire and fire those in administrative positions around them (e.g., vice and associate/assistant vice presidents/chancellors, deans, directors). Literature in the business arena states that this is a central issue in organizational success. Those who have the courage to appropriately and ethically fire in higher education should be studied. I would go so far as to argue that keeping ineffective individuals (after extensive development efforts have failed) in taxpayer supported institutions is an ethical issue. Second, a variety of dimensions related to the ethics and honesty of university presidents and other administrators in post-secondary education should also be studied and discussed. As complexification in post-secondary education continues, ethics and integrity of employers and employees (administration, faculty, and staff) will need to be addressed and effective interventions designed and implemented. Rigorous research will be imperative in these future challenges and efforts.

There are a number of important implications for this research. First, to be successful in post-secondary education it is imperative that women leaders have the ability to move between and among leadership styles. Women must have the flexibility and adaptability to recognize and be aware of the situation, surroundings, and climate and base their leadership approach or strategy on those reflections. This includes having a high degree of self-knowledge (understanding one's own core) to acknowledge and understand one's own strengths and limitations in crisis situations. This is an important topic to address in training and development leadership efforts. Second, these women were both self-reflective and reflective in general. For successful leadership in higher education, women should develop skills and abilities related to the reflection of oneself, others, and situations. These women did this with a rational and logical perspective that aided them in learning from their mistakes, taking criticism and feedback effectively, and listening carefully and considering the perspectives of others even when they may have disagreed. These reflective skills are particularly important in deciding and identifying the most appropriate leadership style or method that would work best in specific situations and settings. These are important skills and competencies to develop for effective, successful, and proactive leadership. Third, the presidents had a passion for higher education and a strong desire to make a difference. I would argue that a woman cannot lead effectively (at least in the long term) unless she cares about (and has a passion for) whatever she is doing. Women interested in leadership should carefully evaluate what they love to do and feel driven toward. The most successful leaders are those who love what they are doing.

After reflecting on these research findings , one thing has become clear. Successful women presidents must have the ability to see themselves within a systems view perspective. This requires a president to see herself as part of the system with its problems and solutions. President s should never say they are not part of the problem. Total blame will never be shunned or pushed onto others if they truly understand they are important elements of a total institutional system. The reflective skills of these presidents enhanced their abilities to see themselves as integral but not irreplaceable in this system. It has helped them understand their realistic portion of the problem and their potential influence for a solution. Their competencies related to shifting leadership styles based on situations and circumstances have helped them lead individuals and efforts within a variety of challenging situations. And, their underlying ethics, integrity, and passions have set institutional tones focused on openness, trust, and a desire for the common good. This ability to see oneself appropriately within a system has helped these women continually set new goals and objectives even in times of success and attention. It has helped them keep hope and see the opportunities in times of scrutiny and challenge. It has helped them stay steady in times of turbulence. And, although none of these women are perfect, it has helped them secure a self-confidence that they have performed with ethics and integrity to the best of their abilities. Spending time with each of them has not only been an honor but has deeply influenced my own personal perspectives and philosophies of leadership.

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