

Spring 2018

The Formation and Promulgation of Institutional Ethos by New University Presidents

Charles F. Ziglar
Georgia Southern University

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THE FORMATION AND PROMULGATION OF
INSTITUTIONAL ETHOS

BY NEW UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

by

CHARLES F. ZIGLAR

(Under the Direction of Dr. Daniel Calhoun)

ABSTRACT

New university presidents face many challenges when leading an institution, and it seems a daunting professional effort to prepare for the contextual problems they will face (Alexander, 2014; Siegel, 2011). Recent episodes dealing with presidential tensions at universities illustrate the difficult issues new presidents face when entering an institution. Birnbaum (1992) stated that new university presidents are most effective when they seek to offer an interpretation of institutional life using language, symbolism, and ritual. Research by Trachtenberg, Kauvar, and Bogue (2013) and Vyas (2013) noted that understanding the ethos of an institution is essential for effective presidential leadership. This research explores how new university presidents who have served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidencies make meaning of institutional ethos and apply what they learn to frame the institution for the purpose of effective leadership. Van Manen's hermeneutical phenomenological approach to quantitative research was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. Interviews with 4 new university presidents served as the data source for this study. This study found that the presidents, while operating within the unique context of the institution which they preside, attended to the concepts of organizational identity, organizational culture, and organization image when seeking to formulate and promulgate an institution's ethos. Based on the findings of

the study, implications for search committees, new university presidents, search firms, and campus communities are presented since each of these groups is potentially impacted. Finally, recommendations for further research are provided for individuals who are interested in further exploring matters related to institutional ethos and new university presidents.

INDEX WORDS: Higher education, University president, New university president, Institutional ethos, Organizational identity, Organizational culture, Organizational image, and Presidential leadership.

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CHARLES F. ZIGLAR

B.A., Samford University, 1985

M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988

Ph.D., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

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CHARLES F. ZIGLAR

Major Professor: Daniel Calhoun
Committee: Pamela Wells
Thomas Koballa

Electronic Version Approved:
May 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank those who contributed to this study. Dr. Daniel Calhoun served as my dissertation chair and made significant contributions to this work. I am appreciative of his guidance and his timeliness throughout this process. Dr. Thomas Koballa took time away from his busy schedule as Dean of the College of Education to serve as a committee member. His careful reading of my prospectus and comments made during the defense helped to clarify the research question and focus the methodology. Dr. Pamela Wells served as the methodologist for this study and provided valuable insights and encouragement for this novice researcher. Her support provided the confidence I needed to complete this task. Dr. Devon Jensen and Dr. Amelia Davis served as initial members of my committee. I appreciate their help during the pre-prospectus phase of this study.

I entered this program not knowing anyone in my doctoral cohort. I leave this program having made seven life-long friends and professional colleagues. Their unique lived experiences have given me a deeper appreciation of life and a profound respect for women in higher education. Their encouragement during the dissertation phase of this program helped to push me across the finish line, long after they completed the journey. I look forward to the years ahead as we seek to apply what we have learned as leaders in higher education institutions.

Finally, I am thankful for my wife, Carrie, who offered unwavering support for me during this journey. We faced many life challenges during this process. She somehow managed the stress associated with having a husband pursue a second doctoral degree. This work is as much hers as it is mine.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Presidential transitions have a major impact on colleges and universities (Sanaghan, 2007). Eckel and Kezar (2011) noted that a university president is expected to be a leader who can navigate the complex higher education reality of academics, politics, mediation, and finances. In particular, new university presidents face many challenges with leading an institution, and it seems a daunting professional effort to prepare for the contextual problems they will face (Alexander, 2014; Siegel, 2011). This complex reality is heightened even more for this population as presidents are under pressure to bring about immediate positive change while seeking to understand the institutions they have been chosen to lead. This challenge, according to Smerek (2011), involves trying to be the president while at the same time learning how to be the president. Birnbaum (1992) stated that new university presidents are most effective when they seek to offer an interpretation of institutional life using language, symbolism, and ritual. Trachtenberg, Kauvar, and Bogue (2013) noted that when new university presidents arrive on their campuses they are welcomed by a multitude of constituencies, each with a legitimate claim to be heard on issues such as institutional purpose, policy, and performance. A university president shares information with constituent groups both inside and outside the organization, frames the information that is shared, and interprets the mission of the institution (Garza Mitchell, 2012). In other words, a new university president is responsible for conveying the institutional ethos.

Recent episodes dealing with presidential tensions at universities illustrate the difficult issues new presidents face when entering an institution. The University of Iowa's search for a new president made news when it was discovered that members of the Iowa Board of Regents

who were not on the presidential search committee were involved in the recruitment of a former IBM executive (Kelderman, 2015a). Faculty members complained that the candidate, J. Bruce Harreld, did not have the higher education leadership experience needed to direct a top research university (McIntire, 2015). A standout moment of the search process occurred on the first day of Harreld's presidency when a local clothing shop carried t-shirts with a logo resembling the Starbuck's logo that read "Univ Iowa Inc. A corporate take on a liberal arts college" (Kelderman, 2015b). In a different case, the resignation of R. Bowen Loftin as chancellor of the University of Missouri at Columbia appeared to come about as a result of student protests. Behind the scenes, however, was a coup led by nine deans who were working to force the resignation of Loftin as a result of his inability to create an environment where shared leadership was valued and where threats to fire employees, specifically deans, were common (Stripling, 2015b). In a third case, a Kent State faculty member attended an emergency meeting where the Committee on Administrative Officers was interviewing a candidate for the presidency, Beverly J. Warren. During the interview, activity was heard outside the meeting room. The adjacent room was being prepared for the announcement of the next university president—Beverly J. Warren. Committee members were never given the names of the finalists nor asked for input (Stripling, 2015a). These three incidents are just a sample of the national presence surrounding the hiring and leadership of new university presidents. New university presidents can arrive on campus and find themselves in situations that are less than ideal. How they handle these situations will affect their ability to provide leadership both in the short term and the long term. Understanding the institutional ethos is vital to a new university president's success.

Institutional ethos relates directly to leadership because it represents the symbols, rituals, and character of the institution. As new university presidents arrive on the campuses they will

lead, it is important for them to grasp a sense of the institutional ethos quickly in order to understand how the decisions they make align with the rituals, traditions, and symbols that are important to the institution (Siegel, 2011). In terms of educational academic inquiry, it is important to understand how a new university president assesses institutional ethos and uses that information to promulgate an institutional ethos that will frame the institution. This understanding is important because it informs the decision-making process of new university presidents as they establish agendas for change. If university presidents are to be successful in leading their institutions, they must pay particular attention to the institutional ethos.

Background of the Study

Institutional ethos can be difficult to discern, and the lack of clarity related to a definition of the concept makes difficult to identify in the literature related to higher education (Harris, 2013). For instance, Bolman and Deal (1997) identified four frames that successful leaders can use in the decision-making process. The structural frame focuses on rules and structures within the organization. The human resource frame takes into account people and their needs within the organization. The political frame examines the process within an organization by which resources, power, and influence are distributed. The symbolic frame examines the culture, myths, and rituals of the organization. Using these four frames in the decision-making process allows a leader to understand how a decision will affect various constituencies and how others will view most decisions. In a study that examined how university presidents utilized these frames, Monahan and Shah (2011) surveyed 254 presidents at Masters I institutions using the 1990 Bolman and Deal Leadership Orientation (Self) instrument to measure these four frames. They found that of 254 presidents surveyed, they employed a total of 600 frames. The frequency with which the frames were employed were human resources (30.7%), structural (22.5%), political

(22.5%) and symbolic (18.8%). The researchers also found that a large percentage of university presidents (44%) employed all four frames. The least used frame, the symbolic frame, relates directly to institutional ethos because of the symbolic nature of institutional ethos. The infrequent use of this frame in the decision-making process of university presidents warrants further investigation.

In a study that sought to understand organizational change, leadership, and modes of persuasion, Vyas (2013) explored how a transformational leader in a position of creating change could attend to the elements of ethos, logos and pathos experienced by the incumbents of change. Organizations are composed of thinking, feeling, and questioning individuals who hold values and beliefs. It is important, then, for leaders to attend to these areas when leading others in the process of change. Ethos relates to the character and value of a person, group of people, or culture and connotes the idea of custom. Pathos refers to the passions of individuals that excite feelings and emotions. Logos symbolizes word, thought, or speech and is centered on human reasoning and rational thought (Bauer, Arndt, & Gingrich, 1957). Vyas noted the importance of understanding and taking into account the ethos of a person or group of people in order for change to be embraced. Eckel and Kezar (2011) noted that presidents play an important symbolic role as they articulate the values and image of the institution. Puusa, Kuittinen, and Kuusela (2013) stated that a shared identity is a precondition for organized collective action and defined organizational identity as “a social and symbolic construction whose purpose is to give meaning to an experience” (p. 166). Understanding the institutional ethos is vitally important if a president is going to be successful in leading an institution and in coping with the complexities of the day-to-day realities in a university.

If Birnbaum (1992) was correct that new university presidents are most effective when they seek to offer an interpretation of institutional life using language, symbolism, and ritual, then it is puzzling that so few presidents employ the symbolic frame of reference when making decisions. Since the symbolic frame is associated with an understanding of the institutional ethos, it is perhaps the last frame employed due to the time it takes to acquire an adequate understanding of the ethos of an institution. This poses a dilemma for new university presidents who step into institutions without a developed understanding of the institutional culture. New university presidents could benefit from an assessment of the ethos of an institution that would allow them to employ the symbolic frame in leadership decisions that take place early in their tenures. As a result of this close relationship between the symbolic frame of reference and institutional ethos, the intent of this research is to begin to build a deeper understanding of how new university presidents seek to understand institutional ethos.

According to Eckel and Kezar (2011), the symbolic work of leading can be a time-consuming and tiresome activity for a university president. Presidents are constantly projecting the campus ethos to various constituent groups. Since the organizational and environmental contexts of institutions vary, effective presidents must modify their actions in a way that allows them to make sense of and be effective in the specific campus context in which they serve. Additional research by Trachtenberg, Kauvar, and Bogue (2013) and Vyas (2013) reinforced this notion that understanding the ethos of the institution and is essential for effective presidential leadership. Investigating the process by which new university presidents learn the institutional ethos and then project it will aid in understanding how new university presidents lead. Fumasoli and Stensaker (2013) noted that research in higher education has neglected the complexity of the university as an organization that possesses its own structures, cultures, and practices. In a study

on the formation of entrepreneurial universities, Clark (2004) stated that universities are formed through structural and cultural factors. The cultural factors of an institution make it difficult for system-based policies to have a positive effect on all institutions because system-based policies treat all institutions as having the same character, dynamics, and needs. Clark's research highlighted the importance of understanding the organization of an institution as it relates to culture and character, especially during times of organizational change.

MacDonald (2013) argued that university leaders articulate the identities of institutions during moments of organization change. External and internal events force senior administrators to re-evaluate the institution's vision, mission, and values. The hiring of a new president brings a new leader with a new vision, but in most cases existing members of the institution do not expect a new vision to challenge the institution's core identity. MacDonald noted that new leaders often develop an overly simplistic understanding of the values and meaning that members of the university community hold. This can create leadership issues for a new president.

Problem Statement

In the midst of institutional change, the most critical ingredient is leadership (Monahan & Shah, 2011). Research has indicated that understanding the ethos of an institution is important for effective presidential leadership (Birnbaum, 1992; Puusa Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013; Smerek, 2011; Vyas, 2013). Leaders must attend to both the cognitive and affective realms of individuals and groups involved in change (Eckel & Kezar, 2011; Vyas, 2013). Bolman and Deal (1997) identified the need for leaders to attend to symbolic issues when making decisions. Monahan and Shah (2011) found that the frame of reference applied the least by university presidents in the decision-making process was the symbolic frame.

Despite what researchers have discovered about the importance of institutional ethos and its relationship to presidential decision-making, a gap exists in understanding the relationship between new university presidents and their understanding of institution ethos. It is unclear how much new university presidents value the existing institutional ethos and how an understanding of that ethos factors into their decision-making processes. It is also unclear how new presidents make an initial evaluation of institutional ethos. As the issue of derailed presidencies continues to plague universities and adversely affect higher education leadership (Trachtenberg, Kauvar, & Bogue, 2013), a deeper understanding of the relationship between new university presidents and the institutional ethos of the universities they serve is needed.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover how new university presidents who served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidencies made meaning of institutional ethos and applied their understanding of institutional ethos to frame the institution for the purpose of effective leadership.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: How do new university presidents make meaning of institutional ethos and promulgate that ethos to their stakeholders? Inherent in this question is the recognition that the structures of universities lend themselves to the development of a multitude of cultures. Faculty, staff, individual colleges and schools, and students all possess a unique ethos (Kuh, 1993b, Kuh & Whitt, 1988). This study sought to discover how a new university president, after encountering the ethos of these individual cultures, conveyed an institutional ethos that set the direction for institutional change. Three sub-questions accompanied the main research question: (1) Prior to assuming their current role, what

experiences shaped a new university president's foundational understanding of the concept of institutional ethos? (2) What are the experiences of new university presidents that shaped their understanding of the institutional ethos at their current institutions? (3) In what ways do new university presidents promote the concept of institutional ethos to their various stakeholders?

Methodology

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) defined qualitative research as “social science research that is aimed at investigating the way in which people make sense of their ideas and experiences” (p. 11). Phenomenological research seeks to describe the lived experience of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Van Manen (1990) stated that research, from a phenomenological point of view, always questions the way in which persons experience the world—an intentional act that seeks to understand things essential to human experience. Van Manen (2007) described phenomenology as “a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence” (p. 11). The reflection must be thoughtful and free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional contaminants. Because phenomenology is oriented to the practice of living, it concerns itself with the relationship of being and acting.

Husserl's approach to phenomenology sought to understand a phenomenon in its pure essence, which requires a stripping away of all preconceptions of the researcher (Converse, 2012). This idea, known as philosophical reduction, is key to Husserl's phenomenology, often referred to as descriptive or transcendental phenomenology. Heidegger questioned the ability to remove all preconceptions of a phenomenon before seeking to understand its essence because he did not believe meaning and being could be separated. He believed that the meaning of being was the aim of phenomenology and that it was best achieved through a circular process where understanding of a phenomenon was achieved when a researcher steps into the process of

interpretation (hermeneutics) with an understanding that the researcher is part of a historical, social and political world. Each part of an experience is interpreted and compared to the whole. Heidegger believed this circular process of examination of a phenomenon provided the best understanding of a phenomenon.

Van Manen (1990) described hermeneutic phenomenological research as a dynamic interplay between six research activities: (1) turning to a phenomenon which interests the researcher and commits the researcher to the world, (2) investigating experience as it is lived rather than how it is conceptualized, (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting, (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon, and (6) balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole. Because the historical, social, and cultural context of every higher education institution is unique, hermeneutic phenomenology was used to examine how new university presidents form an understanding of an institution's ethos and promulgate that understanding in leading the institution.

Significance of the Study

This study is valuable in several ways. First, this study is valuable for new university presidents as they acclimate to new institutions. Understanding how other presidents approached this task of learning about the new institutions they lead can inform new presidents on how best to assess the ethos of a new institution. This study is also significant for presidential search committees as they participate in the search process. Since the earliest relationships formed by the new president will be with search committee members, an awareness of the importance of how new presidents approach the issue of institutional ethos could help shape questions that future committee members pose to presidential candidates. It could also shape the process of

presidential transitions, putting in place an intentional plan to help new university presidents learn the ethos of the institutions they have been chosen to lead. This study is important for search firms, boards of trustees, and boards of regents who have a stake in ensuring the success of a new president. Any effort by these groups to assist a new president in understanding the new context of leadership within that institution can only improve the ability of a new president to relate to a new campus constituency and develop leadership goals that give voice to the ethos of the institution. This study is perhaps most important for campus communities that are significantly impacted by the change in presidential leadership. New university presidents who take time to understand the ethos of the institution and seek understanding from all the various constituent groups on campus are more likely to gain favor with faculty, staff, and students, resulting in an increased level of confidence and trust in the new president in terms of leadership.

Definition of Terms

The meaning of words is tied to their usage. This study contains two terms that are common in higher education that need to be defined for the context of this study. This will ensure that a common understanding of these terms will guide this study and provide uniformity of usage.

Institutional Ethos

Kezar (2007) stated, “In many ways, defining an institution’s ethos is like trying to illustrate a scent: people can sense it but struggle to give a clear picture of its qualities” (p. 13). For the purpose of this study, institutional ethos refers to “an underlying attitude that describes how faculty and students feel about themselves; this attitude is comprised of the moral and aesthetic aspects of culture that reflect and set the tone, character, and quality of institutional life” (Kuh and Whitt, 1988, p. 47). Whitt noted that a campus’s ethos “provides clues about the

institution's moral character and imposes a coherence on collective experience by reconciling individual and group roles with the institution's aspirations and public image" (Kuh, 1993b, p.24). I chose to use the term "institutional ethos" instead of "campus ethos" for two reasons. First, the structure of institutions of higher education is such that they allow for sub-cultures to develop, each with its own ethos (Kuh, 1993b). Second, the term "campus ethos" appears to denote an ethos that evolves on the campus itself at the exclusion of external constituencies. Local community leaders, alumni, centralized boards, and government officials play an ever-increasing role in the life of institutions of higher education. Their characterizations of the ethos of the institution are important and in many cases vital to the long-term well-being of the institution. As a researcher, it was important to listen to new university presidents discuss institutional ethos and what role external constituencies played in its formulation as compared to internal constituencies.

New University President

The findings of this study were based on interviews with new university presidents. A new university president, for the purpose of this study, referred to an individual who served at least one year but no more than three years as president of an institution at which the individual had no prior service. The time frame of one to three years was chosen for the following reasons. The study focused on how new university presidents make meaning of institutional ethos within the first year, thus requiring presidents to have served at least one year. For these presidents to recall their experiences in a reliable fashion, a limitation of three years of service was established as a reasonable time for these presidents to be able to recall their experiences with accuracy.

Due to the nature of higher education, it was possible that the presidents interviewed for this study gained some impression of the institutions they were chosen to serve based on

acquaintances from professional meetings, professional organizations, or other working relationships. As these new university presidents shared how they formed their initial impression of the institutional ethos, attention was given to any statements that indicated prior knowledge of the institution, how that knowledge was obtained, and how that knowledge contributed to the initial assessment of ethos. This investigation sought to understand how the initial impression of institutional ethos changed within the first year as these presidents participated in this learning experience.

Chapter Summary and Outline of the Study

An argument was made for the investigation of the process by which new university presidents assess the institutional ethos of the institutions they lead. New university presidents are most effective when they seek to offer an interpretation of institutional life using language, symbolism, and ritual (Birnbaum, 1992). An investigation of the process by which this is accomplished could help understand how new university presidents assess the institutions they lead.

Chapter two includes an extensive review of the literature that pertains to three areas of importance: organizational identity as it relates to institutions of higher education, the issue of institutional ethos and how it relates to presidential leadership, and issues related to new university presidents. A review of literature in these three areas provides an understanding of how new university presidents make meaning of an institution's ethos and promulgate that ethos for the purpose of effective leadership. Chapter three details the methodological approach for this study. Hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen as the appropriate methodology to investigate how new university presidents make meaning of institutional ethos. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as conceptualized by Max van Manen (1990), was examined and related to this

study of institutional ethos. Chapter four reports the research findings of the study using the methodology presented in chapter three. Chapter five presents an interpretation and summary of the findings presented in chapter four aligned with the primary research question and sub-questions. Next, implications of this study for new university presidents, search committees and search firms, boards of trustees and regents, and campus communities are presented. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand how new university presidents who have served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidency made meaning of institutional ethos and applied what they learned to frame the institution for the purpose of effective leadership. This study sought to understand the uniqueness of each experience by which new university presidents made meaning of institutional ethos and promulgated that ethos to their stakeholders. This literature review focuses on three areas that relate to how new university presidents make meaning of institutional ethos. It begins with an overview of organizational identity. Because the identity of an institution shapes the ethos of the institution, understanding the identity of the institution is vital for the formulation of an institutional ethos. Next, literature dealing with institutional ethos is reviewed. Because the term ethos has many different meanings, it is important to understand how the term ethos functions in the context of higher education institutions. The review on literature pertaining to institutional ethos is accompanied by three case studies where issues related to the institution's ethos produced conflict and ultimately led to the resignation of each of these presidents. The review concludes with an examination of the literature on new university presidents that focuses on two distinct areas, presidential transitions and institutional change.

Organizational Identity

Every organization needs an answer to the question, "Who are we?" (Gonzales-Miranda, Gentilin, & Ocampo-Salazar, 2014). Organizational identity provides a guide for the members of an organization as to how they should act (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010). For

institutions of higher education, organizational identity influences important activities such as strategic decision-making (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) and organizational change (Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007). Albert and Whetten (1985), in their foundational work on organizational identity, defined organizational identity as the characteristics of an organization that are central, distinctive, and enduring. They treated these criteria as necessary and sufficient for defining identity as a scientific concept. Whetten (2006) elaborated on the initial work and identified three components to organizational identity. The ideational component links organizational identity with the shared beliefs of members of the organization that relate to the question “Who are we as an organization?” The definitional component characterizes that which is central, enduring, and distinctive to the organization. The phenomenological component focuses on discourse related to identity that arises when there are profound organizational experiences where new, controversial, or consequential choices are being made. Whetten explained this component by stating, “too often what organizations claim to be when nothing is on the line is not how they act when everything is on the line” (p. 227)

In a recent work on organizational identity, Gonzales-Miranda et al. (2014) noted that the many definitions of organizational identity have created what they called a “contradictory situation where it seems that everything is identity and, at the same time, nothing is identity.” In a study that reviewed 5509 papers published in 10 of the leading journals worldwide in the organizational field between 2000 and 2011, the authors identified three paradigms or conceptions of organizational identity that emerged from these studies. The first is an essentialist paradigm of social actors in which fixed features of the organization are identified based on what is central, distinctive, and enduring. In this paradigm, the organization is viewed as a unified social actor. The second paradigm, the social constructionist paradigm, views organizational

identity as a collective and sustained interpretation of “who we are” within the organization. This interpretation is used as a framework to help organize and lead the organization. It is a negotiated perspective that is in constant flux and open to political influence. This collective view of the organization is used as a guide that sets standards of behavior and expectations for the organization. The third paradigm, the linguistic-discursive paradigm, focuses on the role that language plays in organizational identity. This paradigm focuses on the continuous process of identity construction that takes place when both the narrator (institution) and the public formulate and edit the elements of organizational identity.

The work of Gonzales-Maranda et al. (2014) provides three paradigms that contains within them the major issues of organizational identity as it relates to a higher education institution. These paradigms will be used to frame the review of literature related to organizational identity. The essentialist paradigm provides the opportunity to examine what is meant by central and distinctive. As He & Brown (2013) noted, Albert and Whetten did not indicate the criteria for specifying what these terms denote. Seeking clarification of these terms will aid in understanding the meaning of organizational identity. The social constructionist paradigm sees identity as a social and symbolic construction that gives meaning to the experiences located within a higher education institution (Puusa et al., 2013). An important issue related to identity in the social constructivist paradigm is the degree to which an institution’s culture can be shaped (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013). Albert and Whetten’s concept of identity as enduring has been challenged under this paradigm. This issue is important for new university presidents as they may seek to make changes that impact the culture and identity of the institution. Examining whether organizational identity and organizational culture is enduring or dynamic aids in understanding how organizational identity and culture function

during times of change such as the arrival of a new university president. Finally, the linguistic-discursive paradigm provides an opportunity to examine how an organization scripts the language it uses in communication with external audiences (Toma, Dubrow, & Hartley, 2005). An investigation of these issues aids in understanding the issues related to institutional image. The structure of this section is heuristic and follows the view of Corley, Harquail, Pratt, Glynn, Fiol, and Hatch (2006) that there is no one best approach to the study of organizational identity and that a pluralistic approach encourages clarity and transparency in the articulation of definitions and theoretical suppositions.

The Essentialist Paradigm of Social Actors

The essentialist paradigm views organizational identity as being intrinsically linked to organizational culture (Stensaker, 2015). Also referred to as a functionalist paradigm (He & Brown, 2013), the identity of an organization is viewed as an expression of its culture and is not easily influenced. This approach focuses on continuity and uses the identity of an organization as a filter through which information is passed to determine its importance or relevance (Stensaker, 2015). The locus of organizational identity lies not with the individual members but instead with the institutional claims of the organization (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010). The essentialist paradigm of social actors functions within a positivist epistemology (Corley et. al., 2006) and views the organization as a social actor with legal status (Whetten, 2006). In order to understand the essentialist paradigm, that which is central and distinctive to the organization must be determined.

Central. The concept of central can be applied to the higher education system at an environment level (Fumasoli & Huisman, 2013) or to what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) referred to as organizational field—a recognized area of institutional life that provides similar services or

products. Higher education institutions share an organization field as providers of education. Because of external monitoring agencies and accrediting organizations, many of these institutions share similar structures. To be viable in the arena, there is a certain need for assimilation. This need for assimilation has resulted isomorphism, the tendency of institutions to conform to a set of standards which results in the institutions taking on similar characteristics. Fumasoli and Huisman (2013) identified the tension within institutions that relates to differentiation verses compliance. As institutions seek legitimacy, they become subject to pressures of isomorphism which leads to institutions becoming similar as they act within boundary conditions that provide legitimacy.

Centrality, at an organizational level, has been conceptualized in three ways: centrality as depth, centrality as shared, and centrality as structural (Corley et al., 2006). Those characteristics of an institution that are central are deeply rooted and may not be obvious or easily articulated because they are a part of individuals' beliefs about the organization. The organization would be fundamentally different without these attributes. They are shared in the sense that most members of the organization hold these beliefs. These common beliefs provide the stability that an institution needs to function on a day-to-day basis. They are structural in that they are at the center of a shared organization members' causal map much like a node on which other characteristics depend. Organizational identity, in the essentialist paradigm, creates order and stability (Czarniawska, 1997, Stensaker, 2015). Without perceived central or core features, it would be difficult to develop a concept of organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013).

Albert and Whetten (1985) noted that it is impossible to define that which is central in a way that would produce a definitive set of measurable properties due to the differences in organization, purpose, and theoretical viewpoint of organizations. The complexity of

organizations makes it difficult to create a simple statement of identity and often require organizations to have dual or multiple identity statements (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). The challenges surrounding the concept of central as related to research into organizational identity has led to more attention on the concepts of distinctiveness and temporal continuity.

Distinctive. Just as higher education institutions seek to define themselves in terms that are central to all institutions, they also attempt to differentiate themselves relative to others (Gioia et al., 2010). Universities are challenged to develop profiles based on a unique organizational identity (Fumasoli, Pinheiro, & Stensaker, 2015). These distinctive aspects of an institution help form unique identities that can be useful both in terms of what people know about their own institution and what they perceive others to know, the construed external image (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

The concepts of central and distinctive are, in essence, two sides of the same coin and are important in the conception of organizational identity (Corley et. al., 2006). Brewer (1991) described this balance as optimal distinctiveness—when levels of distinctiveness and assimilation are equal. Higher education institutions have distinct identities formed through norms, values, and beliefs articulated through symbols, language, narratives, and practices (Toma, Dubrow, & Hartley, 2005). These values and beliefs serve both to assimilate an institution with its peers as well as to distinguish it from those same peers. By no means is every attribute unique (Albert & Whetten, 1985). It is a distinctive set of characteristics that form an organization's identity and set it apart from others. In terms of how individual members of an organization identify with the organization, Dutton et al., (1994) argued that it is not so important as to whether the claims of distinctiveness can be empirically verified as it is that members engage in the process that creates the distinctive identity of the institution. The outcome of such

engagement is often not a statement of organizational identity but an aspirational statement of identity (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2013).

Kodeih and Greenwood (2013) raised the issue of status in relationship to other organizations in the same category. Since status can be a driver of institutional choice, claims of similarity to prestigious institutions can set an institution apart from other competitors. Institutions often find themselves pursuing an identification with peer institutions they see as prestigious while at the same time seeking to distinguish themselves as unique in order to gain a competitive advantage. Their study provided an excellent example of the complexity of organizational identity as institutions seek an identity that is both similar and distinctive at the same time. This concept is important in the investigation of institutional ethos since institutional ethos may include aspects of the institution that are actual and also aspirational.

Multiple identities. Albert and Whetten (1985) recognized the possibility of multiple organizational identities. They posited the idea of hybrid identities and noted two types, ideographic and holographic. Ideographic hybrid identities are held by subgroups but not common to all members of the organization. Holographic hybrid identities describe situations where all members of the organization hold each identity within an organization. The concept of ideographic hybrid identities is important when examining institutions of higher education and their structures that allow everyone to identify at the institutional level but also allow for groups like faculty members to identify with their specific colleges and even to specific disciplines. The concept of multiple identities with an organization is complex and not the focus of this study. It is, however, an important concept for institutional leadership to consider when seeking to promulgate an institutional ethos that is representative of the entire institution. Eckel, Green, Hill, and Mallon (1999) explored the concept of multiple identities and identified the structure of

higher education institutions as the greatest challenge to institutional change. Although there may exist comprehensive policies and processes that are applied to all units, academic departments and administrative units often operate independently of each other. This makes it difficult to enact change at an institutional level as Weick (1982) noted when he described higher education institutions as being “loosely coupled.” Clark (1983) identified academic disciplines as taking precedent over the identity of the institution as a whole because the work of faculty is centered in an academic department. Eckel et al. (1999) concluded that discipline-based departments and programs are where faculty work, making it less important for them to become institutional citizens. In other words, organizational identity from a corporate standpoint makes little sense for some members within a higher education institution. This creates a unique challenge for university presidents who seek to promulgate an institutional ethos that is representative of the entire university.

The Social Constructionist Paradigm

The main contribution of the social constructionist paradigm is the discussion of organizational identity as it relates to the concept of temporal continuity and endurance. The major differences between the essentialist view of identity as enduring and the social constructionist view of identity as dynamic are important for understanding the possibility for organizational change and directly impacts how new university presidents both create and promulgate an institutional ethos.

Identity as Enduring. The issue of temporal continuity is perhaps the most important characteristic of organizational identity that relates to organizational change because of the challenges leveled against it (Gioia et al., 2013). Whetten (2006) stated “if something isn’t a central and enduring feature of an organization, then practically speaking, it isn’t likely to be

invoked as a distinguishing feature, and thus it falls outside the domain specified for this concept” (p. 224). Whetten based this statement on a division of the central, enduring and distinctive (CED) definition of organizational identity into a functional standard (distinctive) and a structural standard (central and enduring). He argued that legitimate identity claims are those that have withstood the test of time and were formed at the time when the organization made itself known as a specific type of social actor. These higher-level identities consist of social forms, social categories, organizing logics, and comparable group memberships and can be compared to inherent individual attributes like gender and ethnicity and are extremely difficult to change. Organization identity operates like a constitution in that it serves as the final arbiter in matters pertaining to the rights and responsibilities of the membership and is the ultimate basis for planning and for justification of all collective actions (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Albert and Whetten (1985) believed that organizations changed when there were major disruptions but that the change took place slowly over a long period.

Identity as Dynamic. In an examination of the relationship between identity and image, Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) argued that the close relationship between these two concepts makes the enduring aspect of identity problematic under conditions of change. Unlike the social actor paradigm that locates organizational identity as property of the organization (Whetten & Mackey, 2002) Gioia et al. (2000) viewed identity as socially constructed and constantly in a state of reconstruction. Even though the same labels are used to describe the elements contained in an organization’s identity, those elements are subject to constant interpretation and reinterpretation by members of the organization. The authors suggested that it is the labels within an organization that are enduring. The meanings given to those labels, however, are constantly in flux. In other words, “the labels are stable, but their meanings are malleable” (Gioia et al., 2013)

A recent development in organizational research has produced the concept of organizational mindfulness, defined as the process by which an organization details emerging threats and creates a plan to act in response to these threats (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). The work of Ray, Baker, and Plowman (2011) argued that organizational mindfulness is employed when leaders create cultures that are rich in thinking and have a capacity for action. They view organizational mindfulness as an enduring property of an organization that is a top-down process. Mindful organizing, on the other hand, is a dynamic, bottom-up process that places thinking and interaction on the front line. As a dynamic process, it is ongoing and requires constant attention. Whereas organizational mindfulness improves strategic outcomes, mindful organizing improves operational outcomes. These two concepts illustrate the tension between organizational identity as enduring versus organizational identity that is dynamic.

Fumasoli, Pinheiro, and Stensaker (2015) acknowledged that a tension could exist between an institutional identity viewed as both dynamic and enduring. They stated that viewing identity as either fixed or fluid is not adequate. Instead, it is possible to view identity as a bridge that connects internal meanings built on norms and values with the external position of the organization that deals with changing environments.

The Linguistic-Discursive Paradigm

In this final section of reviewing the concept of organizational identity, the role of image is examined as it relates to identity. Whereas most scholars agree that image and identity are different concepts, the relationship between the two is important for understanding organizational change (Gioia et al., 2000). The linguistic-discursive paradigm contributes to this discussion of identity in a significant way in its focus on the role that language plays in the

construction of reality, specifically in relationship to the creation of an external image of the institution (Gonzales-Miranda et al., 2014).

Image. Whetten and Mackey (2002) identified three principle definitions of organizational image. The first definition defined organizational image as what insiders think outsiders think about their organization. Dutton et al. (1994) referred to this as a construed external image. Whetten and Mackey's second definition is simply what outsiders think about an organization. Their third definition identified organizational image as what an organization projects to outsiders in an attempt to influence how outsiders view the organization. For Whetten, organizational image is "what organizational agents want their external stakeholders to understand is most central, enduring and distinctive about their organization" (p. 401). In order for the concept of image to function successfully, an organization's image should be based on the organization's identity (Gioia et al., 2000).

For the purpose of this study, image refers to Whetten and Mackey's (2002) third definition that defines organizational image as what organization agents want outsiders to think of their organization, a projected image. Hatch and Schultz (1997) noted such a view implies that image can be intentionally manipulated by insiders for the consumption of outsiders. It is not, then, an attempt to discern the perceptions of outsiders. University presidents spend considerable time relating to outside constituencies, seeking to project a positive image of the institutions they lead. As new university presidents seek to lead their institutions, they attempt to promote the identity of the institution in a way that compels outsiders to identify with and support the institution. It is possible, then, that presidents project an image that is based partially in the identity of the organization and partially in an identity that is aspirational.

Identity and image. Organizational identity focuses on how the members of an organization see the organization whereas outside perceptions of the organization are related to image (Gioia et al., 2010). The external image of an organization can affect the identity of the organization, but identity must remain a concept that is internally defined (Gioia et al., 2013). Albert and Whetten (1985) cautioned against discontinuity between public image and private identity. They warned that the greater the discrepancy between the internal and external views of the organization, the greater the danger that the health of the organization may be affected. They also acknowledged that the image of the institution presented to the public will almost always be more positive and monolithic than the internal identity of the institution. Gioia et al. (2010), in a study of identity formation of a new college within an existing institution, noted that adapting to external forces influenced identity change and that both internal and external images of the organization matter when attempting to change an organization's identity, especially when there are discrepancies. They found that organizational identity formation is a complex process influenced by not only the founders of the organization but also by other insiders and outsiders. Gioia & Thomas (1996), in a study on identity, image and issue interpretation in academia, found that it is unlikely that a change in image can be sustained without an associated change in identity. Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail (1994) noted that an organization's identity is strengthened when its image offers continuity, differentiation, or positive evaluations. Fumasoli, Pinheiro, and Stensaker (2015) acknowledged that in general, organizational identity is more easily managed when both internal and external stakeholders agree on the statement of identity. It must also be promulgated in manner to secure support internally and externally for both stability and change.

Eckel et.al. (1999) noted the paradox that institutional leaders face when attempting to assuage external pressures for change while at the same time not altering the identity of the institution that has made the institution successful. The challenge for leaders is to frame the external demands in a way that make them palatable for members of the internal community. The articulation of external change demands is an important skill for university presidents. These authors suggested that most of the time institutional leaders are thinking about what to do instead of how to do it, thus relegating strategy and process to afterthoughts. As new university presidents assume the mantle of leadership, an understanding of the institutions ethos is important to balance the demands for change from both internal and external constituencies.

The projection of a desired image that is aspirational is a formula that leaders often use to introduce change. (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Because of this connection between identity and image, it appears unlikely that a change in image is possible without a change in identity. Gioia and Thomas determined that the concepts of image and identity are fluid, especially under conditions where strategic change is expected. Under these conditions, the aspirational identity and image are used as a means of interpreting important issues as articulated by organizational leaders. Hatch and Schultz (2004) concluded that increased involvement between external constituencies and higher education institutions were quickly eroding any separation between identity and image.

The question of university identity often arises during a leadership transition when questions of authority surrounding identity statements surface (MacDonald, 2013). Whetten (2006) noted that during times of transition it is difficult to sort out if organizational practices denote identity or if a new leader can make new identity claims based on a new vision. MacDonald (2013) stated that a new leader with vision is desired by an organization but usually

not a leader who attempts to change the organization's identity. Leaders must understand the complexity of organizations and the importance of values and beliefs that the members of the organization hold while at the same time giving voice to external constituencies who have a stake in the success of the institution. This is the challenge faced when promulgating an institutional ethos.

Organizational Identity and Higher Education Institutions

Organizational identity is important in all types of organizations. For the purpose of this study it is important to investigate how organizational identity specifically relates to higher education institutions. This section focuses on the recent literature related to organizational identity and higher education institutions in an attempt to understand how organization identity functions in a university setting and is shaped by leadership.

University identity. Understanding the construct of university identity can be difficult for new presidents (MacDonald, 2013). In a study on university identity development MacDonald observed that universities often articulate their identities during moments of organizational change such as the introduction of new leadership. As a result, MacDonald sought to provide guidance to university leaders as they lead constituents in the procession of answering the question "Who are we?" as an organization. MacDonald examined the theoretical strands of industrial/organizational psychology, human development/social psychology, marketing, and postmodern sociology to identify commonalities by which people identify with their universities. MacDonald defined university identity as "the central and ongoing representations of a university that suggest shared beliefs, values, and its organizational culture, which over time create metaphors for its unique qualities" (p. 154). The question of university identity often arises during times of leadership transition, centering on the question of who makes identity

statements on behalf of the institution. MacDonald identified a dilemma that often arises during a transition to new leadership: do organizational practices determine institutional identity, or can identity claims by a new leader lead the institution to changes in identity based on a new vision? In relationship to industrial/organizational psychology, MacDonald focused on institutional identity in relationship to that which is central, distinctive and continuous either temporally or over time. MacDonald noted that faculty often identify with their academic disciplines and discipline-related accrediting agencies than the university as an institution. Administrators, on the other hand, tend to perceive themselves as representatives of the identity of the institution but can also fall prey to identity disagreements such as those between academic affairs and student affairs. In the examination of human development identity theories, MacDonald noted that academicians often strive for power or superiority by merging personal strivings into university identity statements. University leaders, likewise, may use identity statements to legitimize decisions made for the purpose of bringing about organizational change. Most institutions will experience the need for “equilibration,” the process by which one integrates the foreign with the familiar, resulting in a new schema or in essence a new identity. This concept is important as new presidents lead institutions in a new direction. There must be a balance between the foreign (accommodation) with the familiar (assimilation).

In an examination of marketing theories, MacDonald (2013) noted that with the rare exception of the creation of a new institution, marketing a university is a post facto process that seeks to connect external constituents with an existing university. Such marketing focuses on image and the need for an institution to differentiate itself from others in order to recruit students and donors. MacDonald noted that image, reputation, and identity are tightly connected. Institutions can have multiple images and are often perceived differently by different

constituency groups such as students, faculty, staff, alumni, and local leaders. A final contribution of MacDonald from the examination of postmodern sociological theory urged a movement away from a dualistic understanding of identity (us vs. them) to a view of institutional identity that is more of a dynamic construct. This view allows identity to have historicity and legacy while at the same time be current and personal. MacDonald concluded that universities should not seek to define themselves too narrowly or in a way that is inflexible. Identities are historic and based in the culture of the institution. They are also personal and constantly being constructed by all members of the university community. Finally, MacDonald noted the importance of identity statements and icons in uniting people to address institutional change but warned about the use of language and symbols that exclude and only represent a select few.

Puusa, Kuittinen and Kuusela (2013) examined organizational identity during ongoing change in a polytechnic institution. In interviews with teaching staff and managers, a clear difference emerged in the way in which the two groups identified with the mission and identity of the educational organization. Management invested in the creation of vision and strategy whereas the teaching personnel regarded these concepts as abstract and distant. Of note is the emotional language that management used to describe the change process. The use of the metaphor of the organization as one's "own child," indicated a strong emotional attachment to the process from administrators. Faculty, however, felt like most change projects were left unfinished. The authors found that organizational identity included an emotional dimension that had not been investigated in prior research. In this case, the focus on structure by the faculty and the focus on emotional attachment to the institution by administrators created two different perspectives on organizational change. Understanding how different groups and individuals view

change is important for institutional leaders, especially presidents, who must cast a vision and lead all constituencies toward that vision.

As new university presidents lead institutions in a new direction it is important for these leaders to understand the identity of the institutions they lead and how that identity was formed over time. Dealing with the issue of organizational identity early in the leadership transition period will improve the outcome for successful change (Hatch and Schultz, 2004). The relationship of identity and image are important for change since any significant strategic change needs to be accompanied by a change in the perception of the organization. Organizational change, then, must not only consider institutional identity but also image. An institution's ethos will affect both internal and external constituencies.

Sensemaking. The concept of sensemaking was developed by Weick and popularized in his classic work *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (1969). Weick argued that the process of organizing involves action that is confronted in one's environment and then made sense of retrospectively. Several recent studies have investigated the use of sensemaking as a tool for understanding organizational identity within higher education institutions. Weick (1995) believed that the world is perceived through lived experiences and that actions are known only after they have been completed which means that cognition is slightly behind one's actions. Sensemaking has been reduced to a popular question posed by Weick (1979), "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" (p. 133). Sensegiving attempts to influence how others attribute meaning to an action. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) described it as "the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (p. 442).

Smerek (2009) interviewed 18 college and university presidents in the United States who had served less than five years and had not held a prior presidency. An open-ended semi-structured format was used in the interview process. Document analysis was used to examine speeches and other remarks recorded in writings or on websites. Using grounded theory, Smerek coded the transcripts and documents. The research focused on how new executives balance being in charge with being an organizational novice. Smerek's findings identified several themes (2011). First, these new presidents often spoke in broad terms that provided safe harbors. Strategic ambiguity was used to commit to the means without committing to the ends. Second, new presidents dealt with the tension between leading and learning, or as Smerek stated, "knowing you don't know". Presidents who identified themselves as having a strong sense of the organization before arriving faced more resistance. Presidents who were less certain and treaded cautiously faced less resistance. Third, most presidents reduced their uncertainty through social interactions. Most presidents identified individuals on campus who could provide accurate information about the institution, individuals who could be trusted. In some cases, these individuals were identified by the consultants who ran the presidential search. Because presidents cannot wait forever to act, Smerek found that new presidents formed social interactions that could produce reliable information. Finally, presidents sought to reduce equivocality through priority setting. Many presidents used the strategic planning process as a means of collectively determining the priorities of the institution. The process also bought time for presidents to continue their own fact-finding missions and begin to make their own evaluations of the institutions they led.

Of note for this study is Smerek's (2009) discovery that most new presidents spoke in terms of priorities and not goals or vision. Setting priorities focuses on ordering the current

activities of the organization by level of importance whereas goals articulate the aspirations of the institution. Smerek questioned why outsiders were chosen so often for leadership positions. His research findings led him to conclude that outsiders were able to reject common understandings that existed on campuses and create a new vision of reality for the institution. A significant finding of this study was the identification of a common mentality that seemed to exist between the 18 presidents interviewed, suggesting that they created a macro logic of institutional theory from seminars, books, and mentors, and that this macro logic heavily influenced the micro logic associated with sensemaking. In other words, most of these presidents entered their new institutions with a broad plan on how to approach the task of leading a new institution.

Smerek (2013) sought to understand the context in which new university presidents were hired, how they “learned the ropes” of their new position, what they found surprising or puzzling, and the barriers that existed to sensemaking. He also sought responses to the idea that a new presidency is like a big puzzle. Using grounded theory to analyze the interviews as well as other documents pertaining to these new presidents, Smerek discovered that new presidents employed ethnographic methods in their attempts to understand the organizations they led. New presidents seemed to be aware that the knowledge they sought was contextual. Only by immersing themselves in the culture could they understand the knowledge gained. Discovering the story involved understanding the cultural context in which the story was unfolding. Smerek also came to understand that “learning the ropes” meant relying on other administrative team members as well as other constituents to provide understanding and meaning in order to begin moving forward in a way that was productive. These presidents demonstrated a need to rationalize their commitment to the institution either as seeing themselves as the antithesis of

their predecessors or by embracing the conditions on which they were hired. An important finding of this study was the discovery by Smerek (2013) that with university presidents there was a strong pattern of cognition before action—the antithesis of the basic tenet of sensemaking that postulates that action precedes cognition or that people can only know what they think by saying it. This does not appear to be the case with presidential leaders in higher education. Most presidents interviewed by Smerek indicated a need to be cautious about what was said in public due to the propensity of constituents to hang on every word spoken by the president. It appears, then, the concept of sensemaking does not provide a full understanding of how university presidents establish themselves as leaders.

Organizational Culture

Organizational identity is rooted in a culture (Schein, 2010). Tierney (1988) stated that the least understood aspect of organizational change in higher education is organizational culture. He defined organizational culture as webs of significance that exists in organizations. Pettigrew (1979) believed that organizational members used the culture of the organization to interpret the dynamics of their workplace. Schein (2010) defined organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 18). Schein stated that the ability to integrate change into institutions of higher education in a way that is sustainable depends on understanding the organization’s way of doing things—its culture. The most fundamental characteristic of culture is that it is learned. Kuh and Whitt (1988) noted that institutional culture is unique to context and provides a frame of reference by which events and actions on and off campus are interpreted. They referred to culture

as the invisible glue that holds institutions together. Hatch and Shultz (1997) argued that culture is not a variable to be measured but instead is a context within which organizational identity is formed and interpreted. They defined institutional culture as “persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a framework of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus. Eckel et al. (1999) noted culture both acts on and is acted upon in a change process. This creates a paradoxical situation during change whereby an institution must change its culture in a way that is congruent with its culture. Eckel, Green, and Hill (2001) noted that the uniqueness of institutional culture makes it impossible for successful change strategies to be imported.

Albert and Whetten (1985) identified distinctiveness as an important aspect of organizational identity. Based on the definitions of organizational culture, it appears that the distinctiveness of an organization is most evident in its culture. The definition of Schein (2010) referenced both external adaptation (image) and internal integration (identity). These statements create a connection between the concepts of organizational identity and organizational culture. It is important to address the relationship between these terms.

Organizational culture and organizational identity. Although organizational identity and organizational culture are distinct constructs, they are closely related (Corley et al., 2006). Hatch and Schultz (1997) examined the relationship between organizational culture, identity and image and concluded that culture, identity, and image form three related parts of a system of meaning that defines an organization to its constituencies. Organizational identity is grounded in local meanings and symbols and embedded within the culture of the organization. The organizational culture is the internal symbolic context for the development of organizational

identity. It is also where formulations are made that are intended to influence organizational image. If the culture-image-identity system is self-contained within the organization, then these three concepts will be similar. It is when external constituencies are involved with the organization that external influences can affect organizational culture and thus affect both identity and image. Hatch and Schultz stated that organizational culture is not a variable to be manipulated, but instead forms the context by which organizational identity is established.

Institutional identity and image both influence each other and are difficult to separate when seeking to understand an institution's ethos. Tierney (1988) and Schein (2010) believed that leaders in higher education have been affected negatively by a lack of understanding of organizational culture as they sought to address the rapid changes in higher education. Understanding the levels of organizational culture and how they influence an institution is important for leaders who seek promulgate an institutional ethos to guide change.

Levels of organizational culture. Schein (2010) attributed confusion over the definition of culture to a lack of understanding of the levels at which culture manifests itself. The levels range from the tangible overt manifestations to basic assumptions that are embedded and unconscious. Between the overt and covert layers are beliefs, values, norms, and rules of behavior. Schein referred to these three levels as artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.

Schein (2010) identified artifacts as the visible products of an organization such as language, technology, and physical environment. It would include logos, a published list of values, and observable rituals and behaviors. Schein noted that although artifacts are easily observed, they are difficult to interpret by outsiders because the hidden symbolic nature of an artifact. It is difficult to draw assumptions from artifacts due to the interpreter's projection of his

or her own feelings and experiences on these items. Hatch and Schultz (1997) argued that although artifacts are formed within a specific cultural heritage, when they are used to project an image to outsiders it is the context of the interpreters that is used to interpret these symbols.

Schein (2010) stated that only the beliefs and values that are shared by the group become shared assumptions. Certain beliefs and values of a group may not lend themselves to scientific testing but are accepted by consensus. Values such as honesty and integrity are examples of espoused values that do not lend themselves to an empirical test but may be affirmed by consensus by those in the organization. These espoused beliefs and values serve as the guiding norms of the group and are used in important situations to give guidance. They serve as an organizational philosophy that is taught to new members and demonstrated in daily actions.

Schein described basic underlying assumptions as a belief or value that is taken for granted and not questioned. Instead of being the preferred solution to a problem, it is embraced as the reality in every situation. Because these basic assumptions are taken for granted, there is little if any variation within the organization and become non-confrontable and non-debatable. Basic underlying assumptions within a culture are very difficult to challenge and even harder to change. Clark (2004), in describing organizational culture, noted that the symbolic side of organizational culture is “always ephemeral, often wispy to the touch” (p. 17). Any challenge to a basic assumption usually results in anxiety and defensiveness. Culture, at this level, provides an organization the stability it needs by providing a basic sense of identity. Schein stated, “Cultures tell their members who they are, how to behave toward each other, and how to feel good about themselves. Recognizing these critical functions makes us aware why ‘changing’ culture is so anxiety provoking” (p. 29). Schein (2010) concluded that essence of a culture is found in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions. Once these assumptions are understood, it

is easier to understand how those assumptions manifest themselves in artifacts, shared values, norms, and rules of behavior.

Organizational Culture and Higher Education

In their discussion of organizational culture, identity, and image, Hatch and Schultz (1997) stated that these three concepts form “a system of meaning and sense-making that defines an organization to its various constituencies” (p .357). They argued that expressions of organizational identity use cultural artifacts to present an image that will be interpreted by others. If internal-external boundaries are not rigid, then the culture of the organizational is open to external influence that makes organizational image and identity interdependent. Hatch and Schultz concluded that “top management is as much a symbol of corporate identity as any other device top managers use to influence what employees and other constituencies perceive, feel and think about the organization” (p.363). They challenged top management to think across these three issues of identity, image, and culture.

In an important work on institutional culture, Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) referred to an institution’s culture as its norms, values, and beliefs. The authors stated that an institution’s culture helps identify the institution in terms of brand equity and is used to strengthen external relations as well as internal relations. By using culture as a means of institutional identification, culture move beyond something that the institution merely has to something the institution can use as a symbol that creates differentiation and allows external audiences to identify with the particular institution. Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley noted that institutional culture conveys a sense of identity, facilitates commitment, provides stability, and aids in making sense of events. Institutional identity, culture, and brand equity (image) are mutually reinforcing. For these authors, the importance of an institution’s culture is how it can be used, not merely that it exists.

It appears that Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley view culture as an important aspect of an institution's ethos.

Craig (2004) identified academic institutions as being different from other enterprises because they tend to be value-rational organizations. The various disciplines on the campus of an institution create various ideologies filled with symbolism. As a result, a wide variety of sub-cultures are created and can cause issues when these subcultures challenge the larger institutional culture. Dill (1982) noted that the orientation of higher education to discipline-based structures could contribute to the decline of an overall academic culture and a loss of a unified identity. This is based on the nature of academic organizations that house an academic community that is symbolic in nature, focusing on history and tradition. The organizing part of the institution, which Dill referred to as the academic management, focuses on processes such as goal setting, evaluation, and cost analysis. Successful institutions are able to manage meaning and social integration at the academic management level. Clark (2004) noted that the most successful campus cultures are those that are able to promote cooperation and a sense of shared identity while recognizing individual achievement. Dill (1982) argued that university leadership should focus on strengthening academic culture and the important symbols that encompass it.

Stensaker, Välimaa, and Sarrico (2012) identified the controversial issue that culture can be during times of reform. Those who seek to change the direction of an institution will see the organizational culture as an impediment to change. On the other hand, those who oppose change will view organizational culture as a stabilizing force grounded in values and norms. Culture, then, acts as a dependent variable for those who are seeking reform but as an independent variable by those who oppose reform. Freed (1997) noted that a change in the pattern of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide behavior is essential for organizational

change to happen. Schein (1992) argued that leaders are the ones who create and change cultures. Managers and administrators live with those changes. Freed (1997) stated that any successful change to the culture must begin with an identification of the gaps between the current culture and the desired future culture. Only then can a determination be made as to what changes can achieve this new desired state.

Clark's (2004) reference to culture as being "ephemeral, often wispy to the touch" (p. 17) is a reminder of how difficult it can be to understand an institution's culture and the various components of it. Culture itself cannot explain an institution. The issues of identity and image are also important and, along with culture, present a more rounded view of an institution. Identity, image, and culture make significant contributions to the formation of an institution's ethos. There appears to be a significant gap in the literature that assesses how new university presidents understand institutional culture or how they approach it when leading institutions in the process of change.

Institutional Ethos

Ethos is a nebulous term used by organizational theorists, educators, and theologians to refer to a range of values and beliefs that define the atmosphere of an organization (Donnelly, 1999). Kezar (2007) stated, "In many ways, defining an institution's ethos is like trying to illustrate a scent: people can sense it but struggle to give a clear picture of its qualities" (p. 13). This section of the literature review will seek to define ethos, institutional ethos, and will review the literature pertaining to ethos and higher education institutions.

Definition of Ethos

Kuh (1993), in an important study on the role of ethos and student learning, defined ethos as "a belief system widely shared by faculty, students, administrators, and others. It is shaped by

a core of educational values manifested in the institution's mission and philosophy." In addressing the implications of an institution's ethos, Kuh noted that every college has a unique ethos that is determined by the type of institution, educational mission, location, student and faculty cultures, and sources of support. Ethos, then, is contextual in nature. Kezar (2007) identified ethos as the fundamental character of spirit of a culture that emotionally connects individuals to the group's values and ideology. It can be conceptualized as "the life-giving source of an institution that touches the heart and engages the mind" (p. 14). A group's ethos establishes deep bonds among its membership that enhances group performance. Vyas (2013) identified ethos as "the disposition, character, or fundamental values peculiar to a specific person, people, culture, or movement" (p. 13). The challenge to the values and identity of a group, according to Vyas, is a challenge to its ethos. Heath (1981) noted that each college has its own character, identity, and climate as well as its own organizational pattern and attributes that make it unique. The ethos of a college is based on the perceptions of faculty and students of the institution's character. Heath argued that colleges that are most likely to survive have a mature character that balances the qualities of self-awareness, empathic responsiveness, internal coherence, resilience, and autonomous distinctiveness.

Many studies that address the concept of ethos do not define the term. In a study of international branch campuses, Wood (2011) explored the attempt of institutions to replicate both the curriculum and culture of the main campuses. After using the terms institutional culture and institutional ethos without definition, Wood used the phrase "institutional culture or ethos" (p. 30) then continued to use both terms interchangeably throughout the study. Nelson (2000) identified ethos simply as the principles and mission of the institution.

Donnelly (1999) noted that ethos could be viewed as either a positivist or anti-positivist concept. From a positivist perspective, ethos simply prescribes social reality and stands as an objective phenomenon that is independent of those within the organization. An anti-positivist perspective sees ethos as emerging from the process of social interaction in which ethos is not independent of the organization but instead bound up within it. For Donnelly, ethos is a product of social interchanges and will constantly be produced and reproduced. Kezar (2007) referred to this as the process of co-creation by which members of the institution perpetuate the ethos.

Definition of Institutional Ethos

Harris (2013) noted that ethos has become so broadly defined that it has ceased to have any clear meaning. To differentiate between the Aristotelian understanding of ethos as the presentation of a person's character, Harris argued for the creation of institutional ethos as a subcategory of ethos. Harris defined institutional ethos as "a symbiotic process by which one's membership plays a part in one's personal ethos, while the reputations of each member of any given organization contribute to that organization's overall ethos in the world." Institutional ethos involves a give-and-take relationship between the individual member and the institution that shapes both the reputation of the organization and the individual member. Harris noted that institutional ethos is dependent upon the reliability and trustworthiness of an institution and its members. Lusthaus, Carden, Adrien, Anderson and Montalvan (2002) found that as social groups form over time, they share experiences that produce cultural values, norms, religious beliefs and taboos that develop into an unwritten code grouped together in the broad category of institutional ethos. The cultural considerations are powerful in helping create enforcement mechanisms for established rules.

Voronov and Weber (2016), in their study on emotional competence and institutional actorhood, noted that ethos has two essential components. The first component is emotional and relates to emotional energy it provides members of an institution. The second component is the moral justification it provides for the investment of that emotional energy. Voronov and Weber viewed ethos as a disciplinary dimension of the institution because it allows individuals to derive meaning from their association with the institution and the principles and values practiced. The ethos of the institution is the aspirational representation of what it means to be a member of the institutional order and live within its values and ideals. Voronov and Weber stated that ethos is central to understanding lived experiences and the emotional dynamics of institutions and operates at a preconscious level in an unobtrusive manner. The result is that most members are not aware of how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are shaped by the ethos of the institution.

For the purpose of this study, institutional ethos refers to “an underlying attitude that describes how faculty and students feel about themselves; this attitude is comprised of the moral and aesthetic aspects of culture that reflect and set the tone, character, and quality of institutional life (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 47). This term was chosen because it emphasizes the way in which institution ethos operates behind the scenes as an “underlying attitude” but also connects it to the institution’s culture while at the same time differentiating it from culture. An institution’s ethos contains aspects of an institution’s identity, culture, and image. Without an understanding of an institution’s identity, culture, and image, it will be impossible to ascertain its ethos.

Institutional Ethos and Higher Education Institutions

Institutional ethos plays an important role on a university campus. The following studies shed light on how institutional ethos functions in higher education institutions and how it is

shaped by various groups. Understanding the practical aspects of institutional ethos are important for understanding the role institutional ethos plays for leadership, especially new university presidents.

Kuh (1993a) identified three clusters of properties that shaped the character of a college: the institution's mission, the institution's philosophy, and the institutional culture. In a study of ethos, Kuh (1993b) identified ethos as "a belief system widely shared by faculty, students, administrators, and others." This system is shaped by core educational values that are manifested in the mission and philosophy of the institution. Kuh and Whitt (1988) noted that campus ethos provides clues about the institution's moral character and imposes a coherence on collective experience by reconciling individual and group roles with the institution's aspirations and public image. Wilcox and Ebbs (1992) observed that institutions with a strong positive ethos were led by individuals who were able to articulate the shared values of the community in a way that shows respect for others and a sense of fairness.

Kezar (2007), in a study on campus ethos and student engagement, argued that ethos does not develop on its own and requires that educators tend to an institution's ethos in a way that both policies and practices align with it. Kezar, drawing on data from a study on student engagement entitled Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP), identified several strategies used by campuses that had a healthy campus ethos. First, these institutions shared an understanding of the ethos that was grounded in institutional practices and reinforced by leadership. Second, the ethos was co-created. Members of the various groups on campus helped perpetuate the ethos thus contributing to the larger identity of the institution. Third, new members of the campus were introduced to the campus ethos by anticipatory socialization. New students, faculty, and staff receive mailings, promotional materials, and were engaged in

conversations that helped them understand how the institution's ethos guided how everyone at the institution both works and related to each other. Fourth, listening to constituents for the purpose of both assessing and attending to the needs of community members was a priority. These institutions wanted to know if they were living up to the institution's ethos. Finally, building relationships was a priority. These involved relationships within groups such as faculty and students but also relationships between these groups. Kezar concluded that every campus has an ethos, but not every campus attends to their ethos. Institutional ethos, when used to align practices, can be effective in aligning the institutional practices with institutional values.

In a study that examined the role of university ethos in the development of managers in business schools, Lozano (2012) stressed the need for the institutional ethos to connect with the management theory being taught in business schools. Lozano defined institutional ethos as "the culture (language, image, instruments, practices, etc.) that an organization transmits to society and to the members of the organization; and which influences the expectations of the organization" (p. 221). Lozano stated that the policies, culture, processes and symbols of the institution must support instruction in knowledge, techniques and values. Lozano found that students were quick to identify when lessons taught in class did not align with practices of the institution.

Donnelly (1999), in an examination of ethos in primary schools in Ireland, investigated an officially prescribed school ethos and an ethos that emerged from actual social interaction. He made a clear distinction between the actual ethos of a school displayed in social interactions and the attempt to create or articulate a 'good' ethos for the sake of improvement. Donnelly noted that the ethos of an institution or school could be aspirational and express the goals or aims of the institution to influence the members of an organization and how they socially interact with each

other. In-depth interviews and participant observation were supplemented by non-participation observation of governing body meetings. The data indicated that ethos was not a static phenomenon but instead a process that contained contradictions and inconsistencies. In the more established school, this process moved slowly. In the new integrated school, the lack of well-established routines allowed the process of ethos to embrace change and modification. In both schools the aspirational ethos set out by school leaders was far removed from the lived reality and was undermined and distorted by the actions and attitudes of members of the school.

Donnelly concluded that ethos is a negotiated process. The aspirational ethos of leaders is one dimension of ethos. There is also the ethos of outward attachment manifested in organizational structures, documents, and individual behaviors. The ethos of inward attachment is manifested in the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of individuals. These genuine feelings can be hidden if they contradict the established outward ethos.

There appears to be a significant gap in the literature that examines institutional ethos in higher education, especially as it relates to presidential leadership. It is important to view how institutional ethos functions in relationship to presidential leadership. In order to examine the importance of institutional ethos, three case studies of recent presidential crises are examined. Publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* report almost weekly of presidents who are resigning from the institutions they serve due to conflict. These three incidents were chosen based on how the concept of institutional ethos played a role in the conflict that arose between the institutional members and these three presidents.

Case Studies on Institutional Ethos and University Presidents

The three case studies that follow all contain two common issues identified by Trachtenberg, Kauvar, and Bogue (2013): difficulty in reading organizational culture and

developing a misunderstanding of the institutional context. These studies aid in highlighting the need for new university presidents to understand institutional ethos and how it is promulgated.

Case Study #1: Scott L. Scarborough

Scott L. Scarborough became the 16th president of The University of Akron on July 1, 2014. He resigned May 31, 2016. Scarborough, in an interview (Scott, 2015), noted that communication and transparency were vital components to the implementation of significant change. He made several noteworthy statements that spoke of full transparency, building consensus, and rapid change. Scarborough stated:

If you purposely choose to take longer than necessary to solve a problem—especially at a university, universities are smart places—they’ll figure out there is a phase two coming and that the other shoe is going to drop. What you find is you adversely affect morale for a much longer period of time and you never turn the corner. There’s never a bad time to make the right decision. (Scott, 2015)

By the end of the first year, Scarborough had garnered attention. He attempted to offer low-cost general education courses, tried to institute a \$50-per-credit-hour upper course fee, and rebrand the institution as “Ohio’s Polytechnic University.” He also eliminated 161 employees (Farkas, 2015). Issues along the way contributed to tensions on campus. In a presentation to the university on October 20, 2015, Scarborough gave an hour-and-a-half speech to explain how the University of Akron would become a national university with an international reach (Harper, 2015). At one point in the speech Scarborough said that the university would invest in the main campus, only to later elaborate on the need to offer more programming to adults and expand the four satellite campuses, saying, “Our ability to serve them physically through the satellite campuses and virtually is where the new opportunity is” (Harper, 2015).

Scarborough entered discussions with ITT Educational Services, a for-profit technical school operator, to determine if a partnership could be established. ITT operated approximately 130 locations in 38 states and had generated bad press for pushing students into high-cost private loans (Kueppers, 2016). Little information was provided about the talks with ITT as the university declined comment. This lack of transparency added to the growing skepticism over Scarborough's presidency (Wexler, 2016). ITT has since closed all operations.

Scarborough gave a speech to the Cleveland City Club in May 2015 in which he shared his plans for Akron to focus on career programs for students. He also shared his idea about branding Akron as "Ohio's Polytechnic University". These statements led to Scarborough being perceived as someone who was interested in career training and not in a broader education (Basken, 2016).

The American Association of University Professors at Akron surveyed its members in the spring of 2016. About 75 percent of the membership (465 members) responded to an online survey. It indicated that 89 percent of the faculty were not confident that the president was leading the university in a positive direction (Farkas, 2016). In a meeting with the faculty senate on May 19, 2016, faculty members expressed their appreciation that the president agreed to meet, but they found his responses to be the same responses he had given in the past to the issues of rebranding, layoffs, declining enrollment, declining donations, and reduction of information technology services.

Scarborough's resignation on May 31, 2016 was abrupt. He and the trustees of the University of Akron agreed on his departure effective immediately. His resignation came less than two years after he had taken office. Just two weeks earlier Scarborough met with faculty to address their concerns (Basken, 2016).

Case Study #2: Eileen Ely

Green River Community College (GRCC) selected Dr. Eileen Ely as its new president in May 2010 to replace the former president who served 26 years in that position. Issues at GRCC began to arise shortly after the arrival of Ely. Early in 2012, individual meetings took place between faculty and Dr. Ely to share concerns. Numerous long-time employees were fired or quit during this period. Some were led off campus by security. Those who were fired, resigned, or chose to leave exceeded 250. In May 2013, ninety-two percent of full-time faculty voted “no confidence” in Dr. Ely. Upon delivering their vote to the Board of Trustees meeting, they were scolded by the board chair and told that Dr. Ely had their full support. Dr. Ely shared her belief that any evaluation of her performance should not include faculty input (O’Hagan, 2013)

Faculty continued to raise issues with the administration such as a decision to bypass them on control of course prerequisites (Mytelka, 2013). Administrators did not want instructors to use placement exams to determine whether a student was ready for a particular class. They also wanted more control over the books instructors used for courses.

In November of 2013, faculty members petitioned the Board of Trustees to use an increase in state funding for faculty raises, citing the lack of a cost-of-living raise since 2008. A spokesperson for the administration indicated that the board wanted any pay increases to be a part of the union bargaining process. The administration rejected the faculty’s request to use the restoration funds from the state for adjunct salaries (Long, 2013).

Faculty contracts expired June 1, 2014. In September 2014, faculty questioned why contracts had not been issued, as had been the past practice. Blaming a computer glitch, faculty were presented contracts on “Opening Day” as they entered the dining hall and were asked to

sign the contracts on the spot. As a result of the contract issues, faculty made the decision not to accept overloads in classes (Nishi, 2014).

In December 2014, many faculty members learned from the student newspaper that the college had officially changed its name by removing “community” from Green River Community College. Inquiries were made to the administration, and several days later President Ely confirmed the name change in a campus email (Coyle, 2015). Allison Friedly, communications coordinator for GRCC, indicated this was a trend among community colleges who were now offering four-year degrees. She stated, “It’s the name. It doesn’t change the mission” (Coyle, 2015, p. 1).

Dr. Ely’s contract was extended in February 2015, and in April 2015, the faculty received its first communication from the vice-president of instruction directing the faculty to attend in-service day workshops and threatening to discipline those who did not attend with letters in their personnel files. Also in April, Dr. Ely circulated a letter through human resources that outlined her intent to eliminate four programs (Ely and Lewis, 2015). Citing that the college cannot be everything to everyone, funding cuts, low enrollments, and high program costs as reasons for the eliminations. A second vote of no confidence in Dr. Ely was presented to the Board of Trustees in May 2015. The letter also asked for restoration of programs targeted for elimination, serious contract negotiations with an agreement before the conclusion of the spring quarter, and faculty inclusion in the Instructional Council and any decisions regarding instruction. The dispute at Green River College continued into the summer as faculty and administration deadlocked over potential cuts (Long, April 22, 2016).

Communication did not improve during the fall. The faculty voted no confidence in the college’s Board of Trustees and sent a copy to Governor Jay Inslee. They also presented a copy

to the Board of Trustees at their November 18, 2015 meeting (Sanders, November 19, 2015). This was the third no-confidence vote in the school's leadership (Long, November 19, 2015).

On February 4, 2016 the faculty contract, which was negotiated for almost two years, was approved. The situation at Green River College continued a downward spiral in April when students, faculty, and staff walked out of their classrooms and offices to march through campus and demand the resignation of President Ely. They accused Board of Trustees of stifling dissent by holding the most recent board meeting in a room that was too small to accommodate all the people who wanted to attend (Long, April 22, 2016).

On June 16, 2016, Dr. Eileen Ely, president of Green River College, resigned effective immediately (Pettit, 2016). She had faced three no-confidence votes by the faculty in three years. The Board of Trustees unanimously accepted her resignation. Shirley Bean, vice president for business administration, and Marshall Sampson, vice president for human resources and legal affairs, were appointed acting presidents. The university held several town hall meetings to discuss plans to move forward.

Case Study #3: Simon Newman

On Monday, December 8, 2014 Mount St. Mary's University, the second-oldest Catholic university in the United States, announced that Simon Newman, a Los Angeles private equity businessman with strategic planning expertise and also a devout Catholic, would be its next president. (Bowie, 2014). In referencing the size of Mount St. Mary's in an interview, Newman stated, "It's actually quite big. It's a hundred-million plus dollar business with 500 or 600 employees" (Seltzer, 2015). The choice of Newman may have seemed odd to many within academia, but the job listing for the presidency of Mount Saint Mary's University called for

entrepreneurial experience, fundraising skills, and someone with a financial background (Wieder, 2015).

Newman spent the summer working on buy-in from campus constituencies, holding small group meetings with members of both faculty and staff (McIntire, 2015). In a December 2, 2015 meeting with the editorial board of the Frederick News-Post, Newman shared his vision for Mount St. Mary's University, and the word "growth" appeared to be the main focus (Bauer-Wolf, 2015). Newman cited a need for quick adaptation of Mount St. Mary's to a rapidly changing world and acknowledged that change could create a sense of fear in faculty. Only later, in a report in *The Wall Street Journal*, was it reported that Newman sought to trim retirement and health-care benefits as well as focus academic offerings on more marketable majors (Korn, 2016).

As 2016 began, Newman found himself in the crosshair of controversy. The school newspaper, *The Mountain Echo*, reported the story, citing an email exchange that revealed Newman's plan to dismiss 20-25 students by September 25, 2015, the last day to drop for the fall term without penalty, ensuring that these students would not count in the retention numbers the following year (Schisler & Golden, 2016). President Newman had expressed a concern for retention numbers at Mount St. Mary's, and in a conversation with a small group of faculty on September 21, 2016 Gregory W. Murry, assistant professor of history, stated that the president said, "This is hard for you because you think of the students as cuddly bunnies, but you can't. You just have to drown the bunnies . . . put a Glock to their heads" (Schisler & Golden, 2016). The president had all first-year students complete a survey during orientation, a survey that attempted to identify students who would not be a good fit for Mount St. Mary's University. Provost David Rehm questioned the use of the survey for the purpose of dismissing students.

In a January 19, 2016 interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Newman indicated that the survey was intended to identify students who were struggling early, then provide these students needed services such as counseling and tutoring (Mangen, 2016). As for the quote attributed to him, Newman claimed that his comments were taken out of context. In a *Washington Post* editorial dated January 20, 2016, Newman defended his concern for retention issues at Mount St. Mary's University. Newman cited the institution's obligation to help identify the warning signs in the first semester of students for whom the institution is not the right fit (Newman, 2016).

On Friday, February 5, 2016, Newman sent an email to faculty members indicating that he had requested the resignation of the provost, David Rehm, and that Rehm had given his resignation effective immediately (Jaschik, February 8, 2016). Newman, in the email, indicated that it was common practice for a new president to make changes in the senior leadership team. Faculty members did not disagree that new presidents make leadership changes. They did, however, note that is typically does not take place in a single day. Faculty members took the firing of the provost as a sign that no one should oppose the president's plan.

Tensions heightened at Mount St. Mary's University when the president fired two faculty members on Monday, February 8, 2016, without notice or review (Jaschik, February 9, 2016). Thane M. Naberhaus, tenured professor in the department of philosophy, was accused of disloyalty. In his dismissal letter, he was told he was "designated persona non grata" and banned from the campus. The other faculty member who was dismissed was Ed Egan, the faculty advisor to *The Mountain Echo*, the student newspaper who broke the story of the retention strategies of the president and the quote comparing certain students to bunnies who needed to be drowned. Egan declined to comment about his firing. In the week before the firings, 12 faculty

members created a campus chapter of the American Association of University Professor (AAUP).

On Friday, February 12, 2016, the faculty of Mount St. Mary's University voted 87-3 to ask for the resignation of its president, Simon Newman (Svrluga, 2016). The letter to the president contained this comment, "In the spirit of charity, in the interests of the well-being of our students, and faithful to the call of our mission, we the faculty of Mount St. Mary's issue the following statement to our president." The two professors terminated a week earlier were offered reinstatement in an announcement made shortly before the vote.

Newman was accused of weakening the college's religious heritage. A former administrator said that he overheard the president ask, "Why are there so many crucifixes?" (Jaschik, 2016, February 12). A current faculty member reported hearing Newman state in several discussions that "Catholic doesn't sell" while others at the university reported that Newman had said, "liberal arts doesn't sell." On February 29, 2016, Simon Newman resigned as President of Mount St. Mary's University effective immediately, citing that it was the "right course of action for the Mount at this time" and that his leadership had become "too great of a distraction to our mission of educating students" (Prudente, 2016).

Analysis

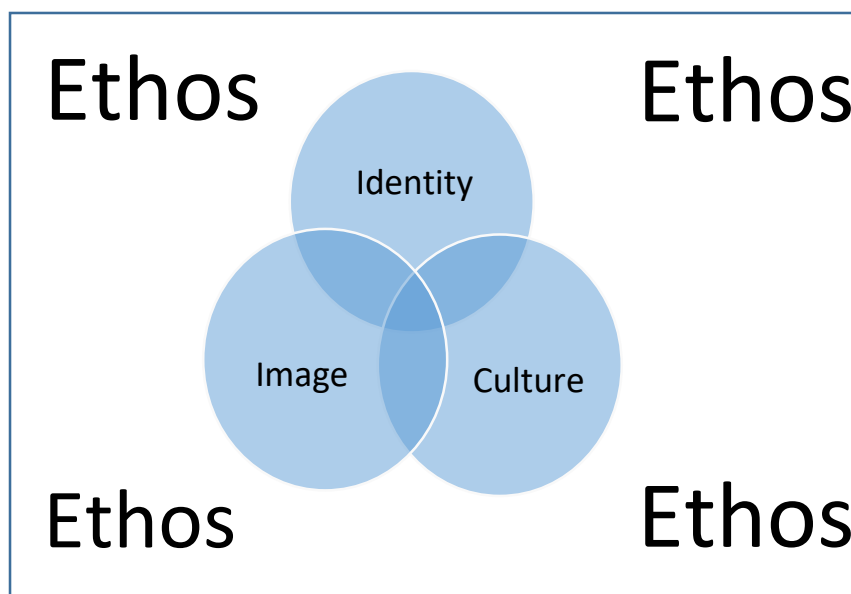
In each of the case studies, the issues of identity, image, and culture played important roles in the tensions that existed between these presidents and the institutions that they led. Issues surrounding the identity and image of these institutions as projected by these presidents stirred conflict within both internal and external constituencies, even other regional institutions. Institutional culture affected the way in which members of the institution reacted to these presidents' violation of established boundaries between faculty and administration, especially in

the case of curriculum and instruction. As these new university presidents sought to shape both the internal and external constituencies and move them towards a new understanding of the institution, they demonstrated little if any understanding of the existing institutional ethos.

The concepts of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational culture appear to represent three fundamental aspects of institutional ethos most often appearing in the literature. Hatch and Schultz (1997) argued that these three concepts are “symbolic value-based constructions that are becoming increasingly intertwined” (p. 364). They called for a new interdisciplinary field of study that would examine these three concepts beyond the rigid boundary restrictions that existed. Figure 1 is a representation of the relationship between organizational identity, image, and culture. The issues of identity, image, and culture are interrelated and live within the atmosphere of institutional ethos.

Figure 2.1

Relationship of Identity, Image and Culture to Ethos



These presidents could have benefitted by participating in a process by which they sought to understand better the institutional culture, institutional identity, and external image of the institution. Understanding the issues surrounding new presidential leadership is important. New university presidents face many challenges. An examination of the literature related to new university presidents sheds light on these issues and how they relate to the promulgation of an institutional ethos. The following section reviews literature related to new presidential leadership and focuses on the areas of presidential transition and institutional change.

New Presidential Leadership

Smerek (2013) identified three major sources of research on university presidents. The first was based on the Institutional Leadership Project, research conducted by Birnbaum and colleagues that examined leadership at 32 colleges and universities between 1986 and 1991. The second source was memoirs of college presidents. The third source was individual studies conducted for doctoral dissertations. Smerek noted a deficiency in the literature that examines newcomer college presidents. This section of the literature review will focus on recent literature pertaining to new university presidents in an attempt to understand the various issues that affect how new university presidents orient themselves to a new institution. While the literature is scant, several researchers have made recent contributions to this important area of investigation. This section of the literature is divided into two sections: transition issues with new presidential leadership and new university presidents and institutional change. These two categories follow the challenge of new university presidents identified by Smerek as the struggle between learning about a new institution and leading a new institution.

Transition Issues with New Presidential Leadership

Although the focus of this review is not on the presidential search process, it is important to understand how the search process that can affect presidential transitions. Sanderson (2014) conducted an ethnographic study of search committees at two comprehensive community colleges, interviewing the sitting presidents, board members, staff, faculty members, and two individuals from executive search firms. The study found evidence that the presidential search process was susceptible to flaws and even deliberate corruption by participants who pushed narrow agendas. In an attempt to find a consensus candidate, a single objection could derail any qualified candidate. Sanderson noted that the process of elimination based on negative evaluation created a scenario by which the least objectionable candidates survived. Sanderson's work is important for understanding presidential transitions. Flaws in the search process can result in a new president arriving unaware of the skepticism that many constituents hold as a result of a process they deemed as being unfair, tainted, or even horribly corrupt. Failure to understand the issues involved in the search process could result in a president who enters a new institution unaware of critical issues that need to be addressed before any movement toward positive change could be realized. Being aware of any tensions created during the search process is important for new presidents as they enter the transition process and seek to develop an understanding of institutional ethos.

In an examination of the presidential transition process, Alexander (2014) found that despite their participation in seminars and institutes for new presidents, areas of vulnerability existed that could not be addressed in these venues. Alexander identified neglected areas of focus as the inability to manage time, the use of dysfunctional leadership styles, the failure to exercise personal control, and the failure to communicate effectively with faculty, which includes the

failure of many presidents to respect the governance role of faculty. Alexander identified three areas of concern on which new presidents should focus: style, emotional intelligence, and power. Alexander called attention to the need for new presidents to pay attention to style, especially in the way in which a new president adapts one's style to the institution being served. Alexander also identified as important the need for new presidents to manage emotions and focus on key emotional competencies such as self-confidence, self-control, social skills, and empathy. Being attune to the emotions of others is essential for presidents to lead effectively. Finally, Alexander identified the need to share power as being vital to the success of a new president. The structure of higher education institutions will require a new president to work with important constituent groups in the decision-making process. Alexander noted, like Fleming (2012), that the faculty is an important constituent group with whom a strong relationship must be formed. This relationship will involve sharing power, and new presidents must seek to understand both the formal and informal ways that faculty form an opinion of the president. Understanding these issues is important as new university presidents build meaningful relationships with various constituent groups and engage in conversations that shape their understanding of institutional ethos.

McNair, Duree, and Ebbers (2011) examined the gaps that presidents identified in preparation for their community college presidencies and organized their findings according to the leadership competencies developed by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC): organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. Although presidents rated these competencies as important, they indicated that the preparation in these areas was lacking. McNair, Duree, and Ebbers examined the backgrounds and career pathways of community

college presidents. They employed a 40-item survey along with an open-ended question, “What do you wish you had done differently to prepare for community college leadership, knowing what you know now?” The results of the 40-item survey indicated that the AACC competencies were excellent indicators of the skills needed for community college presidents. Gaining those skills, however, was the issue that faced these presidents. The competencies of organizational strategy, resource management, communication, and collaboration received the highest ratings. These presidents, however, ranked themselves lower in these areas with regard to preparation indicating a gap between how prepared they were and how prepared they felt they needed to be. In coding responses to the open-ended question, all six leadership competencies were represented with resource management receiving the most responses (103) and collaboration (46) receiving the second most responses. Responses that were not related to the competency domains included preparation (97 responses in the three sub-categories of professional development, on-the-job training, and mentoring), and timing and organizational fit (33). Thirty-seven respondents indicated they felt well prepared to serve as president. The authors suggested that college presidents use these competencies as a framework for building a leadership team since few presidents possess high levels of all six competencies. Many respondents indicated that it would have been helpful to have attended one or more of the various presidential leadership institutes before becoming president. Matching these AACC competencies with areas of training could produce more prepared candidates for presidential leadership. The authors identified three areas that could aid in addressing the issue of preparation for presidential leadership: mentoring, professional development, and doctoral studies. Although this research focused on community college presidencies, the competencies identified appear to be basic and similar to competencies needed by a college president at any level. The research of McNair, Duree, and Ebbers indicates

a need for new presidents to be self-aware of their leadership skills and to be able to identify the areas where growth is needed. The authors also confirmed the need for future presidents to begin a readiness process before accepting their first presidency. This study indicates that most new university presidents deal with feelings of unpreparedness when arriving to the campuses they will lead. In relating this study to the issue of institutional ethos, it is important that new university presidents be granted time to learn a new institution that is unfamiliar. This is not the case with skills related to resource management and communication. Time spent in deficit areas, however, may take time away from conversations with constituent groups.

In another study that focused on the issue of presidential leadership preparation, Tunheim and McLean (2014) focused on the lived experiences of 10 Lutheran college presidents who left the presidency of the institutions they served. Among their findings, Tunheim and McLean discovered that most presidents did not feel adequately prepared for the position of president, and most struggled to understand the institutional cultures to which they were entering. Using a hermeneutic phenomenology, Tunheim and McLean asked the question, “What is this experience like?” Nine of the ten former presidents spoke of the importance of preparation for being president of an institution. They used words like “dumb” and “unprepared” to describe their own experiences. Most presidents expressed a sense of being overwhelmed with the vast leadership roles expected from the president related to fundraising, strategic planning, enrollment, financial aid, and academic leadership. Some of these presidents had difficulty maintaining an identity that was separate from the role of president. Several presidents addressed the issue of institutional fit. This study suggests that feelings of inadequacy may affect how new university presidents perform in the first year as they deal with feelings of being overwhelmed and underprepared. In the interviews conducted for this study, attention was given to indications that these new

university presidents were affected by feelings of being unprepared and overwhelmed by the enormity of the responsibilities of being president. Such feelings make it difficult for a new president to focus on understanding the institutional ethos as they give time and attention to skill areas where they feel deficient, especially areas such as budgeting and resource management.

Presidencies are often derailed due to ethical issues (Trachtenberg, Kauvar, & Bogue, 2013). Individual character is essential for leadership effectiveness. In his examination of university presidencies, Fleming (2012) noted the recent issues related to presidents dealing with inappropriate behavior and moral misconduct. Despite these problems, few institutions have codes of ethics for their presidents. Fleming identified eight tenets that comprise a code of conduct for college and university presidents, an ethical code that is not exhaustive but serves as a guide for institutions. Fleming believes that the relationship between a president and the faculty of an institution is pivotal for institutional success and that a president's legitimacy is dependent on this relationship. These tenets are: 1) the establishment of presidential boundaries, 2) the establishment of open communication and social engagement in the community, 3) the establishment of the notion of cooperation and teamwork as well as open-mindedness and unbiased dialogue, 4) an understanding of how the academy functions within a variety of conceptual frames, 5) the ability to hold a moral and ethical position that keeps one from participating in inappropriate actions, 6) the ability to acquire resources for the institution, 7) the willingness to acknowledge and adhere to traditional norms of the academy, and 8) the ability to cultivate an inclusive decision-making process that involves the appropriate constituencies (Fleming, 2012). These tenets could serve as a strategic starting place for institutions and new university presidents as they seek to develop a close working relationship. The important issues of identity, image and culture permeate these tenets. Agreement on an ethical code of conduct for

the presidency could serve as the framework for the understanding of an institution's ethos and could aid in fostering open communication.

The importance of new university presidents developing an entrance plan was the focus of the work of Garza Mitchell and Maldonado (2015). This study serves as a bridge between transition issues and the movement toward institutional change. New presidents must lead an institution while at the same time plan for systematic change that will allow the institution to grow. Garza Mitchell and Maldonado distinguished between first order change—that which occurs at the surface level of an organization, and second order change—that which is transformational and impacts the institution's behaviors and processes. A challenge that new presidents often face is the need to learn a new culture while feeling pressure from a constituency group or groups to change that very culture. How new presidents frame information and share it within the institution is important, especially when introducing change. Garza Mitchell and Maldonado noted that new leaders hired from outside the institution have the benefit of viewing the institution from the perspective of an outsider. This means, however, that it is important to assess the culture and climate of the institution in order to gauge the potential for change. Because institutional change is a process that requires the involvement of others, Garza Mitchell and Maldonado urged new leaders to reconcile their own expectations with those of the various constituencies of the institution. The authors offer a four-phase process for developing an entrance plan that include determining primacy of purpose, determining organizational alignment, aligning organization architecture, and establishing goals and metrics. Continuous assessment is needed for this process to be successful. Although Garza Mitchell and Maldonado set the context of this work within community colleges, the principles addressed appear to apply to new presidents regardless of institution type. Their identification of the need for an assessment

of the institution's climate and culture supports the need for this proposed study and the examination of how new university presidents experience this process.

New University Presidents and Institutional Change

The relationship between new university presidents and institutional change is important to this study because the attempt at articulating the ethos of the institution is an attempt to reorient the organization in a cognitive way (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994). In reviewing the past twenty-five years of research on organization studies in higher education, Fumasoli and Stensaker (2013) found that research into the complexity of university structures, cultures, and practices has been neglected in favor of studies that deal with external issues of policy. Recent research has focused on the internal organization of educational institutions and how the leadership influences change. This section of the literature review examines those studies. Although this study focuses on institutional ethos and is not a study on the process of institutional change, it is important to understand the intersection of institutional change and new university presidents. The identification and promulgation of an institutional ethos has, as its end, institutional change and could be viewed as a first step in the change process.

In a study examining the relationship between organizational change, leadership, and organizational commitment in a university in Malaysia, Nordin (2012) found that a significant relationship existed between organizational commitment and leadership behavior on organizational readiness for change. Nordin measured organizational commitment using three different constructs: affective commitment based on emotional attachment to the organization, continuance commitment based on the cost that employees associated with leaving the organization, and normative commitment based on a feeling of obligation to remain with the organization. A positive and moderate linear relationship was found between affective

commitment and organizational readiness for change. In terms of leadership commitment, both transformational leadership and transactional leadership correlated moderately with organizational readiness for change. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchange process between leaders and subordinates and the reward exchanges for performance while transformational leadership seeks to motivate followers to identify with the leaders' vision and make sacrifices for the mission and vision of the organization as a whole. Nordin also found that high levels of organizational commitment benefitted transactional leadership behavior and could have significant potential as a change management strategy to implement successful change. This study suggests that university presidents who are making campus assessments should pay attention to the affective commitment of employees since a high level of affective commitment correlates highly with readiness for change. The emotional connection of employees of the institution is important to understand before strategies that involve significant change are undertaken. It is important that university presidents understand this passion and communicate with passion when addressing change.

The relationship between new university presidents and change is important because the attempt at understanding and promulgating the ethos of the institution is an attempt to reorient the organization in a cognitive way. In an important work that addressed change in academia as it relates to organizational identity, ethos, and leadership, Gioia et al. (1994) stated that strategic change in an organization depends on two factors: (1) the ability of organizational members to accept a shift in direction, vision, and values, and (2) the ability of stakeholders to accept the new conceptualization. Their ethnographic study examined a strategic planning task force from the perspective of one of the authors who was a member and therefore a participant-observer. The other authors assumed the role of outsiders. Using field notes, tapes and transcripts of the

meetings, interviews with other committee members, document analysis, and the participant-observer's self-debriefing tapes, the authors found that a cognitive reinstitutionalization process took place by which the dominant belief structure of the organization was accepted. This occurred using symbols and was viewed as a precursor to change implementation. Symbols facilitated change because they both revealed and concealed important change features. Existing symbols held historical meaning for some. Others imbued these same symbols with new meanings. The use of a structural component such as a strategic planning task force can be effective to give legitimacy to change by seeking to institutionalize it. It also has the advantage of adding time to the change process so that new leadership can make sense of the institution before introducing second-order change that is structural in nature. In an earlier work, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) noted that change the change efforts of institutional leadership were "likely to turn on launching the change process effectively which implies that university CEOs should attend closely to developing a symbolic framework that can capture the necessity for, and nature of, an intended strategic change." Gioia et al. (1994), in addressing strategic change efforts in academia, stated that change rested on the ability of the stakeholders to accept a new conceptualization of the organization. These studies lend validity to the importance of understanding the ethos of an institution and demonstrate the need for new university presidents to promulgate an institutional ethos as the starting point for change.

Chapter Summary

This literature review addressed three important areas that inform the understanding of institutional ethos: organizational identity, institutional ethos, and presidential leadership as it relates to both transition issues and institutional change. The review of the literature related to organizational identity highlighted the importance of the institution's identity as expressed in the

aspects of the institution that are central, enduring and distinctive. The literature indicates a need for new university presidents to attend to the institution's understanding of its own identity. This understanding can vary by constituent group. The issue of image, defined as what organization agents want outsiders to think of their organization, is also significant for new university presidents. The projected image of the institution is most effective when it bears close resemblance to the identity of the institution. Whereas some projections of the institution's image may be aspirational, a projected image that is highly aspirational may conflict with the day-to-day experiences of members of the institution and create the potential for conflict. The culture of an organization is important because the identity of an organization is rooted in its culture. These shared beliefs and values that define a culture provide the context by which decisions are made and organizational members act. The concept of institutional ethos is important for higher education institutions because it has the power to shape behavior both on and off campus. Conflicts can arise when the promulgation of the institution's ethos by a university president conflicts with the understanding of the institutional ethos by its members or external constituent groups. The review of literature pertaining to new presidential leadership demonstrated a need to give appropriate attention to issues related to both the transition process and the process of institutional change. New university presidents must balance the need to learn about the institution and the need to provide essential leadership to the institution.

Chapter Three examines a research paradigm and research method appropriate for the investigation of how new university presidents make meaning of institutional ethos and promulgate that ethos to stakeholders. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides an appropriate model for the examination of this important phenomenon. The work of Max van Manen serves as a guide for the investigation of institutional ethos by new university presidents.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter examines the research paradigm and the research method for this study. It begins by restating the purpose of the study and the research question as previously introduced in Chapter 1. Then, it provides the research paradigm and the research method for this study along with the research question and research design. Next, it presents the perspective of the researcher, the participant recruitment plan, the data collection method, and the model for data analysis. Finally, the ethical considerations related to this study are discussed.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

Despite what researchers have discovered about the importance of institutional ethos and its relationship to presidential decision-making, a gap exists in understanding the relationship between new university presidents and their understanding of institution ethos. It is unclear how much new university presidents make meaning of the existing institutional ethos and how an understanding of that ethos factors into ways in which they convey that ethos to their constituents. As the issue of derailed presidencies continues to plague universities and adversely affect higher education leadership (Trachtenberg, Kauvar, & Bogue, 2013), a deeper understanding of the relationship between new university presidents and the institutional ethos of the universities they serve is needed.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how new university presidents who served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidency made meaning of institutional ethos and applied what they learned to frame the institution for effective leadership. This study explored the experiences of new university presidents in order to

understand how they assessed institutional ethos and then conveyed that ethos to various constituent groups.

The following research question guided this study: How do new university presidents make meaning of institutional ethos and promulgate that ethos to their stakeholders? Inherent in this question is the recognition that the structures of universities lend themselves to the development of a multitude of cultures. Faculty, staff, individual colleges and schools, and students all possess a unique ethos (Kuh, 1993b, Kuh & Whitt, 1998). Three sub-questions accompanied the main research question: (1) Prior to assuming their current role, what experiences shaped a new university president's foundational understanding of the concept of institutional ethos? (2) What are the experiences of new university presidents that shaped their understanding of the institution ethos at their current institutions? (3) In what ways did new university presidents promote the concept of institutional ethos to their various stakeholders?

Positionality of the Researcher

Interest in this research question comes from 20 years of working in higher education as both a professor and administrator. During those 20 years, I have worked in seven different institutions and have encountered eight different presidents. Van Manen (1990) stated, "To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being" (p. 43). For van Manen, the meaning of research is to return repeatedly to the things themselves until that which is questioned begins to reveal something of its essential nature. It is through my personal observations of presidents, specifically four presidents who were new to the institutions they served, that this question of how new university presidents assessed the institution's ethos before embarking on an agenda of change came to mind. I have witnessed presidents who spent time getting to know the new institution they served. They engaged various

constituent groups in conversation, seeking to understand the culture and values that guided the institution. I have also witnessed presidents who arrived with a pre-determined plan for institutional change and who made no attempt to understand the institutions they were about to lead. Other presidents went through the motions of meeting and listening to various constituent groups, only to ignore what was said and instead chart a path that demonstrated no understanding of the institution's ethos.

I am aware that my past experiences with university presidents will affect how I approach this study. I am also aware that these experiences as well as those I encountered in my research will give shape to the research that is co-produced. To address these issues, it is important to identify my positionality as a researcher in terms of ontology and epistemology.

Ontology

Ontology, in its most basic understanding, is the study of being (Crotty, 1998). It is concerned with how one views the nature of reality (Creswell, 2007). Schwandt (2007) defined ontology as relating to the worldviews and assumptions that guide researchers in their quest for and understanding of new knowledge. In terms of ontology, I am a constructivist who believes that knowledge is constructed through lived experiences and interactions with others in society and that multiple realities exist that are unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world in different ways (Hatch, 2002). Constructivists do not begin with a theory. Instead, they seek to find patterns of meaning or generate theory inductively through the research process (Criswell, 2003). Constructivists approach the research process with the goal of seeking to understand how meanings are constructed and then presented through language and action (Criswell, 2007). As a result examining the lived experiences of others, the researcher is a participant in the research process and is responsible for ensuring that the knowledge produced in

the research process reflects the reality of the subject (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Reality is mentally constructed, a product of one's own creation, and therefore subjective (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Epistemology

Creswell (2007) viewed epistemology as an attempt to understand the relationship between the researcher and that being researched as it relates to knowledge. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that investigates knowledge and how knowledge is obtained (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In terms of epistemology, I am a constructionist who sees reality as socially constructed based on interactions with others within the contexts of those interactions (Crotty, 1998). Meaning is not discovered but is constructed. As it relates to research, knowledge generated through research comes into existence from the relationship between the researcher, the subject of the research, and the situation in which the research takes place (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In constructionism, there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered (Crotty, 1998). Instead, realities are co-constructed in a collaboration of the researcher and the subject (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Researchers, from a constructionist perspective, are not distant and objective. Instead, the researcher and the subject co-construct a reality that is subjective (Hatch, 2002).

Orientation to Research

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) defined qualitative research as “social science research that is aimed at investigating the way in which people make sense of their ideas and experiences” (p.11). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted that qualitative research is a situated activity in which the observer is located in the world and seeks to make the world visible through a set of interpretative practices. Eisner (1991) delineated six features of a qualitative study. First, it

focuses on activity that takes place in the field, studying situations and objects. Second, it views the researcher as an instrument who engages the situation in a subjective way in an attempt to make sense of it. Third, there is an interpretative character to the study as the researcher seeks to make meaning out of observations and interactions using thick description. Fourth, the researcher uses expressive language and the presence of voice in the text. Fifth, the researcher pays attention to particulars, giving sensitivity to the aesthetic features of experiences. Sixth, the research produced is coherent, insightful, and has instrumental utility. This study uses these characteristics to guide the investigation of how new university presidents seek to form an understanding of the institutional ethos of the universities they lead.

The choice of a qualitative methodology over a quantitative or mixed methodology relates to the nature of the study. This study focuses on the lived experiences of new university presidents as they seek to understand the institutional ethos of the institutions they lead. A quantitative study would not allow for the exploration of the contextual factors that relate both to the institutions and to the individual presidents. Because each institution has its own unique history, it would be impossible to understand the approach taken by each president without exploring each institution's ethos. Likewise, because of the unique path of each new president, it would be impossible to gain the perspective of each new president through a survey. It is only by hearing the stories of these presidents that their particular lived experiences related to institutional ethos can be understood.

Philosophical Paradigm

It is important to understand the philosophical paradigm that both guides the researcher and locates the study. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) presented six paradigms they believe qualitative researchers adopt the most. They are critical social theory, pragmatism,

phenomenology, post-modernism and post-structuralism, constructionism, and constructivism. Crotty (1998) refers to these paradigms as research methodologies. The paradigm chosen for this study is phenomenology because it both accurately reflects the position of the researcher and is appropriate for the examination of the research question. The following examination of phenomenology will address the important issues related to ontology, epistemology and research perspective.

Phenomenology

Phenomenological research seeks to describe the lived experience of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Van Manen (1990) stated that research, from a phenomenological point of view, always questions the way in which persons experience the world—an intentional act that seeks to understand things essential to human experience. Van Manen (2007) described phenomenology as “a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence” (p. 11). The reflection must be thoughtful and free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional contaminants. Because phenomenology is oriented to the practice of living, it concerns itself with the relationship of being and acting.

Phenomenology is a broad term that encompasses both a philosophical movement and a group of research approaches (Kafle, 2011). Moran (2002) noted that phenomenology claimed to be a radical way of doing philosophy and described it as a practice instead of a system. It is an attempt to describe phenomena as they appear to consciousness without all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance. The word phenomenon comes from the Greek *phaenesthai*, to flare up, to show itself, to appear (Moustakes, 1994).

Both Husserl and Heidegger rejected an epistemology that viewed knowledge as a mental representation of what existed outside the mind (Converse, 2012). Phenomenology, then,

describes things as they appear to consciousness. Van Manen (2007) described phenomenology as “a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence—sober, in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications” (p. 11). In order to understand the development of phenomenology, it is important to examine phenomenology as presented by Husserl and Heidegger.

Edmund Husserl. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), credited as the founder of phenomenology, sought to promote an approach to reality that sought to understand things as they appear through an unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to consciousness (Moran, 2002). Husserl was influenced by Brentano, a 19th century psychologist whose principle of intentionality stated that every mental act is related to an object and has meaning. Husserl developed the concept of phenomenological reduction by which the lifeworld is understood as what individuals experience pre-reflectively. A phenomenon should be experienced in its primeval form as free as possible from its cultural context and before it can be reflected on (Dowling, 2007). The Greek word *epoche* (suspension) describes the first step in the process by which one refrains from any judgment or from the common way of perceiving things by disclosing one’s presuppositions and bracketing them in order to remove them from the phenomenon being studied. Only then can phenomenological reduction be achieved (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl’s epistemology is empirical and is based on a realistic ontology. Husserl’s form of phenomenology is known both as transcendental phenomenology and as descriptive phenomenology (Converse, 2012)

Martin Heidegger. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a colleague of Husserl. Heidegger departed from Husserl’s attempt at capturing the pure essence of a phenomenon,

arguing that human existence took place in time (Moran, 2002). Consciousness, then, is not separate from the world of human existence. Heidegger focused on the meaning of being and believed that what was uncovered in phenomenology was not the essence of the phenomenon but the being of the phenomenon (Dowling, 2007). Heidegger stated that understanding the nature of being was a never-ending circular process. This hermeneutic circle begins with the researcher understanding any preconceptions held of the phenomenon. Instead of bracketing these preconceptions, the researcher uses them to aid in understanding the phenomenon. The researcher then moves back and forth between parts of the experience to the whole of the experience, continuing the movement back and forth in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Lavery, 2003). Heidegger believed that all understanding is an interpretation from a particular perspective. The goal for Heidegger was to understand the phenomenon in relationship to the researcher (Dowling, 2007). Before entering the hermeneutic circle, the researcher must understand all preconceptions and presuppositions of the object of study. He believed that there was no difference between a person and that person's experience. For Heidegger, bracketing was impossible since it was impossible to stand outside experience (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Instead, the researcher is a part of the historical, social, and political world of the object of study and brings such perspectives into the hermeneutic circle. Heidegger's form of phenomenology is known as hermeneutic phenomenology.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

This study uses hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate how new university presidents seek to make meaning of the institutional ethos of the new institutions they lead and how they promulgate that ethos to their stakeholders. The work of van Manen (1990) serves as a guide. Van Manen described hermeneutic phenomenology as "a human science which studies

persons” (van Manen, 1990, p. 6). Van Manen prefers the term “person” over “individual” because he views “individual” as a biological term used to classify while “person” emphasizes uniqueness. He noted that hermeneutic phenomenological research is a writing activity that gives special attention to the trivial details of our lives and makes us aware of the significance of things we take for granted. By studying the essence of a phenomenon and expressing it in language, the researcher is able to draw attention to significance of a lived experience. Van Manen stated that doing hermeneutic phenomenology was an attempt to accomplish the impossible—to give a full description of an aspect of the lifeworld while remaining aware that lived life is always more complex than any description of it. Hermeneutic phenomenology, for van Manen, has a pedagogic purpose related to progress. He stated, “It is the progress of humanizing human life and humanizing human institutions to help human beings to become increasingly thoughtful and thus better prepared to act tactfully in situations” (p. 21). Van Manen later referred to this as a phenomenology of practice (van Manen, 2007).

Van Manen (1990) described hermeneutic phenomenological research as a dynamic interplay between six research activities: (1) turning to a phenomenon which interests the researcher and commits the researcher to the world, (2) investigating experience as it is lived rather than how it is conceptualized, (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting, (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon, and (6) balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole.

Method

Crotty (1998) defined research methods as “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis” (p. 3). In terms of

interviewing, Crotty emphasized the importance of giving detailed information as to how the interviews will be designed, how they will be carried out, how the data will be identified, and how the data will be interpreted. This section details the research design, the means of participant recruitment, the collection of data, the means by which the data were analyzed, and the way in which the data were reported. It concludes by addressing ethical considerations related to this study.

Research Design

Phenomenological researchers most commonly rely on interviewing to collect data, and these interviews are typically unstructured with an unforced flow of questions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Van Manen (1990) noted that in hermeneutic phenomenological human science, the interview serves two specific purposes. First, it is used to explore and gather narrative material that is experiential in nature and serves to provide a deeper understanding of a human phenomenon. Second, it may be used to develop a conversational relationship with an interviewee about the meaning of an experience. It is important to note that experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions, captured in oral or written discourse, are not identical with the lived experience itself (van Manen, 1990). Recollections of experiences are transformations of those experiences. Van Manen stated, “The meanings that we bring to the surface from the depths of life’s oceans have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence” (p. 54).

The interviews conducted for this study followed a semi-structured format. Because phenomenology asks the simple question of what it is like to have a certain experience (van Manen, 1990), three main questions with sub-questions were used for this study in hopes that these questions would generate follow-up questions.

Q1: Talk about your own previous experiences that helped shape your foundational understanding of institutional ethos.

Q1a: As a student

Q1b: As a faculty member

Q1c: As an administrator

Q2: Describe the experiences that helped you understand the institutional ethos at your new institution.

Q2a: Experiences with students

Q2b: Experiences with faculty

Q2c: Experiences with staff

Q2d: Experiences with external constituents

Q3: Talk about how your understanding of the institution's ethos informs how you speak about the institution with various constituent groups.

Q3a: On campus groups such as students, faculty, and staff

Q3b: External groups such as community organizations, political leaders, and governmental boards and agencies

Each president was provided the definition of institutional ethos by Kuh and Whitt (1998) before the interview and was reminded of that definition at the beginning of each interview. Each president was given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions about the definition.

Participant Recruitment and Sampling

Participants eligible for this study were new university presidents who were serving as president of a university where they have not previously served. These presidents must have served at least one year but no more than three years. This decision was based on the work of

Birnbaum (1992) who, in his foundational study of university presidents, defined a new president as having served three years or less. Convenience sampling was used to ensure that these institutions were within a distance of 400 miles from my home, allowing me to travel by car to conduct the interviews face-to-face. Using the web sites of the Board of Regents in Georgia and Tennessee, the Board of Trustees for the University of Alabama System, the Board of Governors in Florida and North Carolina, the South Carolina Commission in Higher Education, and the Council of Independent Colleges, I identified all four-year institutions and determined which institutions had new presidents. I used university websites to determine which presidents had served at least one year and no more than three years. Two-year institutions were omitted because most two-year institutions are commuter schools and do not have residential students thus creating a different type of institutional ethos than residential four-year institutions. Individual websites of the institutions were used to confirm this was their first presidency and was at an institution where they had not previously served. Thirty presidents fit the qualifications for an interview. Email invitations were sent to the entire list, both to the president and to the administrative assistant to the president. Once the responses were gathered, four presidents agreed to interviews and one president responded after the data collection period had ended. I emailed the office of each of these four presidents and requested a 60 minute face-to-face interview. The interviews were then scheduled and conducted in the office of each president. Face-to-face interviews were chosen so that I could meet these presidents personally, engage them in polite conversation before and after the formal interview, and observe their body language as they responded to questions.

It is important to address the issue of sample size. Finaly (2011) noted that for qualitative researchers, particularly phenomenologists, more is not necessarily better. The aim of the

research and the phenomenological method adopted should determine the sample size. This study did not attempt to construct theory. Such a study, using grounded theory, would concern itself with the issue of saturation. Instead, this study attempted to present the lived experiences of new university presidents as they attempted to understand institutional ethos. Even if common themes were identified, it would have been a mistake to assume that they developed in a common social world (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Frequencies are not the focus of most qualitative research because the concern of qualitative research is with meaning and not making generalized hypothesis statements (Mason, 2010). Because the question of “how many” is constantly raised with regards to qualitative interviews, Baker, Edwards, and Doidge (2012) reported the responses of 14 expert voices in the social sciences and five early career researchers. Of note was the response of Denzin, who stated that each instance of a phenomenon is located within a specific set of cultural understandings. From this perspective, Denzin’s response to the question of how many interviews is necessary was ‘one.’

I have chosen to interview four presidents for this study. This study is a dissertation for a Doctor of Education degree in which a practical issue in leadership is examined. Each interview is presented in narrative form. In order to provide a textual representation that is both rich and deep the methodologist for this study and I determined that four interviews were sufficient for presenting the lived experiences of university presidents who sought to understand institutional ethos at the new institutions they served.

Data Collection

Data were collected via face-to-face interviews with university presidents using the questions previously stated in the section detailing the research design. Each interview began with the signing of a consent form located in Appendix C. Each participant was reminded that

they could withdraw consent at any time. Each interview began by reviewing the definition of institutional ethos, “an underlying attitude that describes how faculty and students feel about themselves; this attitude is comprised of the moral and aesthetic aspects of culture that reflect and set the tone, character, and quality of institutional life” (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 47). I sat directly across from each interviewee. I recorded the interviews using a digital voice recorder and took notes during the interviews that included the use of non-verbal language. I asked each interview question, then asked follow-up questions based on the responses of each interviewee. Once the interview questions were asked, I asked questions of clarification if needed. I ended each interview by thanking the participant and reminding the participant of the option of withdrawing participation at any time. Once I exited the interview, I reflected on the interview and recorded field notes within one hour. This type of retrospective reflection allows the researcher to record perceptions of the event as well as reflections of what could have been different in terms of the interview process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). I transcribed each interview verbatim and analyzed each interview. Van Manen (1990) stated that the phenomenological method focuses on the art of being sensitive to the subtle undertones of language. In order to convey the phenomenological experience being studied, the researcher must be a true listener. Van Manen urged the researcher to pay attention to literal silence. The researcher must remain silent during interviews instead of seeking to fill the silence. Silence often creates space for a more reflective response. In the transposition of these interviews, I noted periods of silence as well as observed body language that aided in understanding the comments of these presidents.

After each interview was conducted and transcribed, a document search was undertaken to identify instances where each president made use of institutional ethos in communicating with

constituent group(s). Such documents consisted of written articles for publications such as university magazines, written speeches, videos of addresses, and interviews. These documents were found by searching university websites and conducting Google searches of the names of these presidents. These documents were analyzed and compared to the interviews in order to identify consistencies or inconsistencies between the interviews and public statements. This material was incorporated into the co-constructed narratives of these presidents but without reference to the source in order to protect the confidentiality of these presidents

Data Analysis

Van Manen (1990) stated that the insight into the essence of a phenomenon requires one to reflect, clarify, and make explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience. Meaning is multi-dimensional, multi-layered, and communicated textually. This requires that a text be approached as meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes. Formulating a thematic understanding of a text is not bound by rules but instead is “a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (p. 79). The use of themes is a heuristic device that gives control and order to research and writing. Van Manen described a theme as the experience of focus, meaning, and point that is at best a simplification of the idea expressed. Themes are not objects or things but instead are intransitive and simply a form for capturing the phenomenon that is being studied. They are a result of insightful invention, discovery, and disclosure.

Three approaches to constructing thematic aspects of a phenomenon are (1) the holistic or sententious approach by which one reads the text as a whole, seeking to understanding the main significance of the text, (2) the selective or highlighting approach by which the text is read or recording is listened to several times in order to identify the statements that seem essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described, and (3) the detailed or line-by-

line approach where every line of text or every sentence is examined to see if it reveals something about the phenomenon or experience (van Manen, 1990). This study employed the second approach, identifying statements within the text that appeared essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described.

There is a distinction between incidental and essential themes. Van Manen (1990) noted that not all meanings encountered during a phenomenological study are unique to the experience being studied. Van Manen stated, “Our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (p. 107). The use of free imaginative variation helps determine whether a theme is essential or incidental. This is accomplished by asking these questions, “Is this phenomenon still the same if we imaginatively change or delete this theme from the phenomenon?” “Does the phenomenon without this theme lose its fundamental meaning?” These questions were used to analyze the data in order to identify the essential themes, thus seeking to keep the focus on the study on the phenomenon expressed in the research question. I coded the interviews by seeking to identify statements within the text that appeared essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described (van Manen, 1990).

Reporting the Data

The data analysis of each interview was presented in narrative form in an attempt to bring meaning and understanding to the lived experience of each president as he/she described how they sought to understand the institution’s ethos in their first year as president. Van Manen (1990) believes that in hermeneutical phenomenological work writing is closely fused with the research activity itself. It is the process of externalizing that which is internal, an attempt to make some aspect of the lived world understandable. It is not just a textual representation of the

research—it is the very essence of research (Barthes, 1986). Van Manen uses silence as a means of communicating the way in which hermeneutic phenomenological writing takes place. Because quality is more important than quantity, Van Manen urges the researcher to refrain from the sin of overwriting and instead focus on letting silence speak. He also notes the importance of epistemological silence, which he describes as a silence that allows for reflectivity and an attunement to lived experience that does not rush the writing process but instead allows for ample time for the writing to take shape and produce the best possible accounting of the phenomenon. Van Manen also calls for the researcher to pay attention to ontological silence, the silence that is realized when an important insight is gained or when meaningful discourse is experienced.

Phenomenological writing is phenomenological description of things that constitute the nature and essence of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Every description is only an example that points to the thing that the researcher attempts to describe. Van Manen stated, “A phenomenological description describes the original of which the description is only an example.” For Van Manen, writing is method. Because phenomenology has been described as a method without techniques, the act of writing requires the researcher to be involved in “the complex process of rewriting (re-thinking, re-flecting, re-cognizing)” (p 131).

The presentation of the research follows what Van Manen (1990) described as the four conditions for research/writing: a text must be oriented, strong, rich, and deep. Orientation refers to the need for a text to address an issue in need of understanding. This is important for phenomenology. Phenomenology is oriented toward the world in a pedagogic way. The strength of a text is important. A strong text seeks to provide understanding to a problem—an answer to a question that has been posed. A text must be rich in that it represents the experience of a

phenomenon in a way that captures that which is particular and unique. Finally, a text is deep when it exposes that which is beyond the ordinary. It is the search for a profound understanding of a phenomenon. By paying attention to these four conditions, the phenomenological researcher will resist presenting a summary of findings and instead present what an experience teaches. For Van Manen, the pedagogic voice must be heard.

The narrative presentation of these interviews followed the format of the interview questions addressed to each president. Periods of silence are textually noted as well as bodily expressions that aided in providing a text that is both rich and deep. The presentation of the research is oriented towards the research question. Ancillary issues that arose in the interviews are not reported. The presentation of the research in the form of co-constructed narratives allows the uniqueness of each individual interview to be reported. Because these interviews reflect the co-construction of research, the voice of the interviewer is heard through the construction of the narratives. Documents that were used for the purpose of triangulation are referenced in the narratives to add depth and richness to the narratives.

Qualitative researchers have differing opinions on the use of verbatim quotations when reporting narrative research (Corden & Sainsbury, 2016). Corden and Sainsbury noted that some researchers expressed a preference to using verbatim quotations to aid in illustrating how something affected a person's life or to provide a deeper understanding of a view or feeling. They also stated the concerns other researchers have raised who believe the use of quotations raises as many problems as it answers such as problems in the selection of the material quoted and a risk of skewing the reader's perspective. Readers might give more weight to themes that are illustrated with quotes and give less importance to themes not supported with quotes. Similarly, as Corden and Sainsbury (2006) noted:

Attaching a number of descriptors to people's words could also make it harder to ensure anonymity, and care was needed. In research conducted in identified locations, an attribution by gender and a fairly general job title, when combined with the speech pattern or view expressed in the quotation, might identify the speaker to readers. (p. 21)

With these thoughts in mind, the research presented in this study limits quotations to a select small number of words or phrases in order to protect the anonymity of the university presidents with the reader.

Ethical Considerations

Van Manen (1990) identified four areas in which phenomenological ethical research must be concerned. First, the research may have certain effects on the people who participate in the research. Second, there may be possible effects on the institutions where the research is conducted. Third, the research methods may have a prolonged effect on the subjects involved in the study. Finally, phenomenological research may have a transformative effect on the researcher.

Audio recordings of the interviews were kept on the digital voice recorder used to record the interviews. This recorder was kept in a locked cabinet located at my residence. Once the interviews were transcribed, the transcriptions were stored on a flash drive, not on a computer, and placed in the same locked cabinet. At no point were the transcripts kept on the drive of a personal computer.

Ethical considerations were addressed in the following ways. In terms of the effect of the research on participants, each participant was given assurances of confidentiality. The participants in the study were differentiated by the use of pseudonyms. Each president who participated in an interview was provided with this assurance as well as with the opportunity to

cease participation at any point in the research process. I was aware of the hesitancy of presidents to participate in research and took every step possible to provide confidentiality. Second, there were no attempts to describe institutions based on any defining characteristics such as size and location. Greek letters were used as identifiers to differentiate institutions to provide anonymity. Third, the researcher took caution to conduct the interviews in a manner that did not intimidate or challenge the participants. The researcher did not challenge the methods by which these presidents assessed institutional ethos and did not offer comments or analysis of responses during the interviews. The researcher engaged the interviewees only with questions and refrained from commenting on the substance of the responses. Because the purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of new university presidents who seek to understand the institutional ethos of the institutions they lead, there was no attempt to pass judgment on how this process is approached by these presidents. The study focused on the phenomenon, not the individuals. The researcher anticipated that this study would alter the way in which this phenomenon was understood by the researcher. It was the desire of this researcher that this study fulfill the pedagogic function of a hermeneutical phenomenological study by providing insight into how new university presidents conceptualize institutional ethos.

Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) proposed four criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Of importance for this hermeneutic phenomenological study are the issues of credibility, dependability, and confirmability. I will briefly address each of these issues.

Credibility relates to the congruency of the findings with reality (Merriam, 1998). It rests on the idea that the results of a study should be convincing and therefore believable (Savin-

Baden & Howell, 2013). Interviews are the most common way in which data are gathered in qualitative studies. One disadvantage of interviews is that the information provided is filtered by the interviewer (Creswell, 2012). In order to address this issue, the narrative of each interview attempted to remain true to the transcript of each interview while at the same time recognizing that objectivity can never be captured. Research is a co-creation of the interviewer and interviewee. Things are known only through their representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A concern for beginning researchers is the issue of familiarity with the research topic (Creswell, 1998). My experiences in higher education over the past twenty years and my curiosity with presidential leadership during those years led me to this research topic. Whereas I do not consider myself an expert on college and university presidents, my personal experiences coupled with my understanding of the literature related to the topic should assuage concerns related to an adequate understanding of the topic.

Triangulation of data was used as a validation strategy. Triangulation of data involves using research from at least two different points (Flick, 2004). In order to add validity to the interviews, a document search was conducted to identify sources where the presidents interviewed spoke or wrote about issues related to institution ethos. Such documents included published documents and videos such as speeches and interviews. Comparing the responses from the interviews with these documents aided in identifying determining the validity of the interviews. Due to the sensitive nature of interviews with university presidents and in an effort to protect the identities of participants, only broad references to documents were made in the reporting of the findings. These documents were not included in the list of references.

Finally, field notes that recorded retrospective reflections after each interview were used to capture initial impressions of the interview and note any comments made by these presidents

after the formal interview concluded. These initial reflections and the transcribed interviews provided the opportunity to compare two sets of data in the process of analysis. The reflective notes provided a prism by which the interviews could be understood.

Dependability, in qualitative research, is closely tied to credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address dependability, the study was detailed in a way that would allow a future researcher to repeat the work (Shenton, 2004). The design of this study is delineated in a manner that would allow others to duplicate it. Dependability, for a hermeneutic phenomenological study, applies to the method by which the study is conducted and not to the ability to duplicate the actual results.

Finally, member checking was used to address confirmability. Member checking is a strategy in which the participants are given the opportunity to review the research and give feedback in terms of whether or not the findings presented are accurate (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Each president received the transcription of the interview to review and confirm that the transcript accurately represented the information shared in the interview. This allowed for each president to offer any corrections where misstatements occurred. No corrections were offered. The narrative interpretation of each interview was shared with each president so that each president could benefit from the research conducted.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative study was an examination of four new university presidents who were new to the institutions they served, how they made meaning of the institutional ethos of the institutions they led during the first year of their presidencies, and how they promoted that ethos to stakeholders. Convenience sampling was used to identify presidents who served in higher education institutions in the southeastern states of North Carolina, South Carolina,

Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky. I did not seek to replicate the work of Vyas (2013) who examined the ethos, pathos, and logos. Instead, this research is limited to exploring the lived experiences of these presidents as they sought to understand the symbols, culture, and rituals of an institution for the purpose of promulgating an institutional ethos. This study occasionally referred to issues of organizational change, but the focus of this study was not on how these presidents implemented a change agenda. I did not seek to determine the success or failure of implementing change based on any understanding of the institutional ethos nor were the methods by which these presidents explored this issue at their institutions judged.

I made the assumption that new university presidents who had arisen from within the academy would have given thought to the issue of institutional ethos and would have taken steps to investigate it at their new institutions. There was also the assumption that these presidents viewed obtaining an understanding of institutional ethos as essential for successful tenures as president and that they acknowledged the value of understanding the institutional ethos and creating a shared vision based on the history, culture, and symbols important to the institution.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study used hermeneutic phenomenology to understand how new university presidents make meaning of the institutional ethos of the institutions they lead and how they promulgate that ethos to stakeholders. The study interviewed four presidents located with the southeastern states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky who served institutions accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Each president was a first-time president who has served at least one year and no more than three years at a new institution. The data collection method was recorded interviews where notes were taken. The data were analyzed by identifying statements within the

text that appeared essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described. The hermeneutic circle was used to move back and forth between parts of the data to the whole in order to gain the best understanding of the experience. The data were reported in narrative form using the guides of hermeneutic phenomenological writing that pays special attention to ensure that the representation of the data is strong, rich, and deep.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover how new university presidents who have served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidency made meaning of institutional ethos and applied what they learned to frame the institution for effective leadership. This study explored the experiences of new university presidents in order to understand how they assessed institutional ethos and then conveyed that ethos to various constituent groups.

The following research question guided this study: How does a new university president make meaning of institutional ethos and promulgate that ethos to their stakeholders? Three sub-questions accompanied the main research question: (1) Prior to assuming their current role, what experiences shaped a new university president's foundational understanding of the concept of institutional ethos? (2) What are the experiences of new university presidents that shaped their understanding of the institution ethos at their current institutions? (3) In what ways did new university presidents promote the concept of institutional ethos to their various stakeholders?

This chapter contains four narratives, each representing a single interview. To ensure confidentiality, the presidents and their institutions are referenced as Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Gamma. These narratives contain no geographic or demographic references to the institutions where these presidents served or where they formerly served. For the purpose of triangulation, these interviews were supplemented materials from published documents and videos such as speeches and interviews. These documents are referenced in the narratives but not included in the reference works for this dissertation in order to protect the anonymity of these presidents.

The co-constructed narrative presentation of each president's response to questions concerning institutional ethos allows each president's experience to stand on its own. The uniqueness of each situation demands each of these voices be heard within the context of their respective institutions. Each interview contains three sections representing the three sub-questions asked of each president. An analysis of each interview highlights the emergence of the issues of organizational identity, organizational culture, and organizational image as they relate to the concept of institutional ethos. The conclusion drawn from the literature review in chapter two was that these three concepts are important to the make-up of institutional ethos.

The following table provides the basic characteristics of the four presidents who were interviewed for this study:

Table 4.1

General Characteristics of Presidents

President	Institution Type	Gender	Years of Service	Approximate Size
Alpha	4 Year/Private	Male	2	4,000
Beta	4 Year/Public	Male	2	6,000
Gamma	4 Year/Public	Male	2	9,000
Delta	4 Year/Private	Male	2	6,000

President Alpha

President Alpha greeted me with a welcoming voice. We sat in white leather chairs around a circular coffee table. He excused himself for a moment to send an email that he had promised from his previous meeting. The rectangular room looked like many presidential offices I had visited. A seating area with four chairs and a coffee table occupied the front of the room while a large desk occupied the back part of the room... There were few indicators of the president's identity in the room. It looked as if he had just moved in or perhaps was about to

move out. His desk showed evidence of work, but was not overly cluttered. Within a couple of moments, President Alpha joined me at the coffee table and the conversation began. Here is his story.

Formation of an Understanding of Institutional Ethos

I'm not sure I understood anything about an institution's ethos when I began college as a student. I did have expectations as to what my college experience would afford me. I expected to find a place where I could experience independence with respect to intellectual inquiry. I was looking for candidness, openness, and freedom—especially freedom from the burdens of not knowing. I was the first in my family to go to college. That experience has been helpful here at Alpha University where 35% of our students are in that same category. I can put myself in their shoes. I understand what it is like coming into an undiscovered world, a world you don't know. The worse thing about that is you don't know what you don't know. It's easy to lose opportunities that you don't know are there. I'm determined not to let that happen to our students.

I had broad experience in the business world before entering higher education as a profession, so I understand the importance of ethos in an institution. Looking back on my progression from an undergraduate to a graduate student, I learned that there was more to the ethos of an organization than meets the eye, more than ideas like finding yourself or academic freedom. In the business world, outputs are important. They should be important in education as well, and that output relates to the ethos of an institution. If a faculty member conforms to the ethos of the place, and if that place works to take what is within the faculty and bring it out for the good of the students, then the organizational ethos will be strong. Some institutions are body farms that pursue enrollment growth because they are state supported and those who control the

purse strings demand enrollment growth. For-profit institutions are in it for the money, so they are pretty much the same—just a mill. More students equal more profit.

As a dean at several public institutions, I had to see the business proposition. Let me draw it out for you on this piece of paper. It's $R-C=P$. Revenue minus costs equals profit. For-profits focus on profit. Faculty focus on costs. I've heard faculty say, "You're stealing my money because I'm not getting paid what I deserve." As a dean, I focused on revenue and sought to determine what services and experiences students needed to be successful in order for the educational process to work. That's how I framed things. I wanted to produce students who were business ready, so I spent hours working with faculty to adjust the curriculum to produce students who were ready to enter the global marketplace and find employment. I did that at two different institutions in two different ways. At the second institution, I went straight to the students and told them what we were going to do to make them successful. We created a Fellow's program, high quality internships with global businesses, and student support where they needed it. We were able to make progress because I focused on revenue, not profits. We generated quality students, and that profited both the students and the institution.

Formulation of an Institutional Ethos

Now, as president. (President Alpha took a long, reflective pause to gather his thoughts and address his current situation). If the organization is going to work, you have to do what I did as dean. You have to frame the institution. I use that term "frame," but it's really more than that. It's sort of like a sticky fluid that holds everything together. I remind our campus all the time that we are the shepherds of these children and are responsible for helping them identify their gifts and talents, prepare for a career, and become responsible global citizens. Let me state it this way. As president I am focused on creating the reality that I thought I was going to experience as an

undergraduate. I'm here to execute what I was looking for way back then. So, I guess I would have to say that it is personal for me. My focus is on the student. The ethos of this institution must be student-centered. It's about educating the student.

It's difficult to have a coherent ethos when the institution develops in an uneven manner. I go back to the idea of a sticky substance—ethos—that pulls it all together. But, even if the institution has a coherent ethos, people have to swallow it. That's the challenge. How does a president get the people to “drink the Kool-Aid?” How do you get them to drink it, swallow it, and accept that there is a frame that we have that establishes the appropriate relationships that we should have with all the various constituencies we represent and support? I'm serving an institution that does not have a fully coherent ethos, yet it is not unlike the other institutions where I've served. So, I'm familiar with the issue here and am trying to make progress.

As for the students, I can't claim to understand them fully. I grew up a baby boomer. Our students are a mix of millennials and Generation Z, so I've had to take some time to figure them out. Even though my son is a millennial, I don't know if I'll ever be able to figure out millennials. I can draw from my own experience of being a first-generation student. That's 35% of our student body, so I can relate to them in that manner. Just like me, they come to an undiscovered world, and they don't know what they don't know. I don't want them to lose opportunities. I'm dedicated to seeing this doesn't happen.

I talked about how ethos develops unevenly. Our students have gaps, but the gaps are all over the place. The College Student Inventory by Noel Levitz is conducted on this campus every year. They've never done anything except collect the information. Now, I'm adamant that we do something with it. We're identifying the gaps and beginning to addressing them. Some of our students come from circumstances where they are hungry. Sixty-one percent of our students

come from families who have incomes of \$48,000 or less. Their families don't have much, so the basic need is food. We're addressing that because we understand Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If you're hungry, it's hard to think academically. We understand their academic gaps and are beginning to address those gaps as well.

The student ethos will be strengthened because we are focused on three roles that I see in engagement in terms of the end product we want to produce. I refer to them as judgment, know-how, and fit. Judgment deals with information and knowing the difference between judgment and opinion. This relates to creative problem solving. You can't be a problem solver if you can't differentiate between judgment based on the facts and opinion based on hearsay. We have the people in place to do this, and we need to be very good at this. Know-how relates to skill. Students need one foot in the classroom and one foot on the street. We need partners to help us create internship opportunities that allow students relate learning to the global world. The third piece, fit, involves your ability to communicate effectively. It involves your ability to be a team player. It involves your level of grit and your ability to have a global perspective. This is the meaning of fit in the business world. There's a concreteness to it. These three elements of engagement require a need for advocates, a need for coaches, a need for advisors, and the establishment of relationships between the students, faculty, and alumni. This will help us create a healthy ethos.

As for the institution, it isn't unlike other institutions. It's filled with silos that disrupt the creation of a coherent ethos. Within these silos there are people who think they are talking to others outside the silo, but what they hear is the echo of their own voices. I describe these silos as damnable because they are a barrier to learning and progress. They function much like the analogy of Plato's cave. What they think is real is only an illusion. Occasionally, someone gets

outside the cave and sees reality for what it is. But, when they return to the cave, no one believes them. This is what I discovered here. I think I've made it clear.

Some of our external constituencies operate in a cocoon as well. Take for instance what happens here in May. Within a four day period, we have a Board of Trustees meeting, alumni gatherings, and graduation activities. It starts on a Thursday and ends on a Monday with a luncheon at the President's home. No one thinks of how each of these events affects the other. The thinking behind these events is siloed. But, no one seems to mind. Who's the person who is common to all these events and participates in every one of them? The President. When you are siloed, you only think about yourself. You don't realize your selfish focus affects others. It all falls on the President. The President shoulders the ethos. The President is the sticky substance that hold is all together. That is not a sustainable model of institutional ethos. Believe me, it is draining.

Promulgation of an Institutional Ethos

I think you said it earlier that I speak from a personal perspective. That's true. What I share with our people is something that I'm pledged to and something I think everyone here should pledge to--that I am a steward of other people's children. My role is to help students find and understand their talents and gifts and how they can use those talents and gifts in making a difference in the world. I constantly repeat that when I speak because that helps define the ethos. It is in the institution's relationship with the students. The second thing I say is that I am merely a link in the chain. This institution has been here 150 years, and I am only a link that connects it to the next 150 years. I am not the chain. I have to commit myself to do the things that need to be done because I'm only a link in the chain. This institution provides a service to its students that makes it worthy of being here.

When I speak to students, I personalize it by saying that we are an institution that takes students and converts them to learners, independent learners. We want to lift students up so that they can be an important influence in society. When I speak to faculty, I remind them that teaching is a calling. We are called to teach, just like someone is called to be a nurse or a doctor. You're not called to work in the fast food industry. As a part of your calling to teach you have to get up every morning with the intention of doing something to help somebody else.

I made a presentation on campus my first year here at Alpha University. It talked about how we can mobilize our resources to serve students. I talked about innovation and entrepreneurship, design and systematic thinking, environmental sustainability, cultural dynamics and inclusion, and the importance of Arts and Humanities and well as Science and Technology. Much of what I've said to you today I talked about in this presentation. We need to strengthen the learning organization because it will give us the outcomes we need. Because of our identity, we must focus on the outcomes. We aren't in a position to control the inputs. We can control outcomes.

I made another presentation a year later in the same forum. I showed how our graduation rates were lagging as well as our retention rates. We also have low admission rates. These are key challenges. Our costs are higher compared to institutions around us. We're going to address these issues. I shared with them the same competencies I shared with you earlier concerning judgment, organizational fit, and know-how and how these competencies add up to performance, reliability and trust for employers. Based on where we are, we are going to pursue students with passion, curiosity, and energy and initiative. We're going to provide students with an assessment of where they are academically. Then, we are going to advise them on what they need to do to develop the academic tools needed for success. We're going to provide early intervention when

they struggle. We're going to provide competency-based education so that they can stack credentials and be ready for the workforce when they graduate. I challenged the alumni to help us at every step of the way. It was a challenging presentation, but I think it was necessary to send a signal that I am serious about student success.

So this is the ethos I want us to portray. I speak about it continuously. Is it the actual ethos that resides within the institution? I would say "kinda". I use kinda with an "a" because the lens through which people see the institution is colored with their degree of experience with it. I think many of the students have it, and many of the faculty have it, but not most. I don't say this as a put-down to our institution. After all, I'm here to lead it. We are simply not there yet. My son went to an Ivy League school for his undergraduate degree. There is an ethos there that is undeniable. They are able to select students who fit their institution's ethos, so those students have a large part of the ethos of the place when they arrive. My graduate studies were at an institution with the same kind of situation. There was a defined ethos there. When you move away from institutions like that, the ethos gets frayed. Certain institutions have the ability to create a line of people who want to get in. So, it is easy for these institutions to promulgate the ethos. It's all about selectivity bias. If you can create a line, it is easier to manage your brand. Of course, there will be times of disruption because that's the nature of education. Protestors can show up suddenly on your campus even though your campus had no involvement in the issue they are protesting.

You have to engage students early on in the development of the institution's ethos. We're having an event on campus that will involve the entire freshman class. All we require is that they participate. It is an event that will convey to them the importance of a shared experience. It might not be what they want, but it will give them an opportunity to experience what they can be. I

think it holds the possibility of being a transformational event. Remember, you don't know what you don't know. If we truly care about their success, we will require our students to participate in activities that establish relationships of understanding and caring. That is how you introduce students to the institution's ethos.

How much time do I spend on matters related to ethos? It's a high priority for me as I lead the institution. Unfortunately, I have to spend too much time on it. I would say 30% to 40% of my time is spent on cultural issues in any given week. But, it is necessary. I do a lot of culture shaping here. Vision is important. An institution doesn't go anywhere without a vision, but culture shaping is important in order to break down these damnable silos and get people to relate better. I've articulated the vision here as a journey. I've shared the first to steps in the journey, but I haven't shared the third and final step. I've been here three years now, and I'm still trying to lay out the vision. Some have it, some don't. It takes time. The problem is, the tenure of the president has been shrinking in higher education. So, I could finish my third year, and the Board of Trustees could say, "It's been real. Goodbye." Then, the institution is like the record on a turntable that has a scratch. They think they are moving forward, but they are repeating the same part of the song over and over. In order to get where we need to be in terms of ethos, the culture has to change. Everyone has to be working toward the same end. Otherwise, any old thing will happen. I'm committed not to get any old thing happening.

The hour passed, and the interview ended. I gathered my belongings and thanked President Alpha for the interview and for his contribution to my research. As I walked to my car, I reflected on my hour with President Alpha. I was impressed with the intense level of engagement during the interview. Each question was taken seriously, and each question was pondered deeply before answering. President Alpha's commitment to student success was

evident throughout the interview, and at times I could sense that the president was carefully balanced on the precipice between hope and despair. A deep commitment to the institution was without question, but it was evident that this would be a long journey.

Analysis

Organizational Identity

President Alpha addressed the issue of organizational identity, citing the need for institutions to focus on student success. President Alpha talked about identity in terms of the output of the institution. Whether or not an institution is able to produce the desired output, according to President Alpha, depends on how much institutional employees “conform to the place.” President Alpha also spoke about the importance of building the frame of the institution around student success and the president’s role in “creating the reality” of what the institution is all about. Student success was central to President Alpha’s understanding of the identity of Alpha University.

Organizational Culture

President Alpha addressed the issue of silos as a cultural issue at Alpha University that disrupted the establishment of an institutional ethos. The isolation created by silos gave individuals within those silos the false impression that what was being said within those silos was being heard outside of them. President Alpha described silos as “damnable . . . a barrier to learning and progress” and described the faculty, trustee board, and alumni as operating in silos. President Alpha’s lengthy example of how a lack of coordination results in several activities being stacked on top of each other each year demonstrated how silos can prevent the development of a coherent institutional ethos. As a result, President Alpha appeared to be the one in charge of shouldering the institution’s ethos with little or no help from internal or external

constituent groups. President Alpha recognized that his commitment to change the identity of the institution to a student-focused institution that produces quality outputs in terms of well-prepared students was dependent on changing the organization's culture. When asked how much time the president spent on matters related to ethos, the president acknowledged it was a high priority. Then, President Alpha pivoted to discuss the importance of culture shaping and estimated that 30-40% of the time in any given week was spent on dealing with cultural issues. President Alpha stated that changing the culture to one that was student-focused was paramount. Any attempt to cast a coherent vision for the institution was dependent on reframing the culture. When Dr. Alpha discussed issues of culture, it was clear that this was the greatest challenge at Alpha University and that the development of an institutional ethos could only be achieved once the culture was reframed.

Organizational Image

President Alpha focused more on the identity of the institution and the need of the institution to be student-centered and "creating the reality that I thought I was going into as an undergraduate." When asked if the ethos of the institution was congruent with its image, President Alpha use the word 'kinda' and stated, "The lens though which people see the institution is actually colored with their degree of experience with it and how that experience affects them." The conversation then turned back to the identity of the institution President Alpha was trying to create. The president acknowledged that some got it but not most. It was clear that the focus on creating a clear identity was the president's biggest concern and that the promulgation of that identity was challenging at the present time. President Alpha wanted the identity of the institution to be congruent with the image projected. There did not seem to be any sense that President Alpha was interested in creating an aspirational image that did not match the

reality of the institution. There was no desire to create a façade. President Alpha demonstrated clarity of thought and a laser focus on the identity of the institution throughout the interview and intimated that without a clear identity the institution cannot project a coherent and consistent image.

President Beta

President Beta welcomed me into his office. We sat down in chairs around a circular coffee table. The office was rectangular, located on the first floor of one of the oldest buildings on campus. An executive desk was located at one end, and the coffee table at the other. After an exchange of pleasantries, it was clear to me that President Beta was eager to begin the interview. Here is his story.

Formation of an Understanding of Institutional Ethos

I've been at eight institutions, so I've had many different experiences. Each one was unique, so I entered each one with the goal of learning about the place. It was different as a student and as a faculty member. As a student, I spent time watching and observing what was happening on campus, not really able to relate that to the idea of an institution's ethos. As a department chair and dean, the ethos of the unit was prominent and was faculty driven. Sometimes that ethos was consistent with the institutional ethos and sometimes it was not.

As an administrator, I spent a significant amount of time listening to people. At one institution where I served as a dean, I spoke to every faculty member in the first six months. There were roughly 180 faculty members. They didn't think I could do it, but I did. It was valuable in many ways, but most importantly it allowed me to learn that this new institution was very different from the one I just left. The former institution had a stronger sense of ethos, and the relationships were more personal. The new institution was unionized. That made a huge

difference. During the summer, my staff and I were the only ones in the building. Faculty were never there. If they taught, they came in and taught, then left immediately. Spending as little time as possible on campus was a point of pride for them.

I'm always amazed at presidents who show up with a plan and say, "This is the plan that will work here." Frankly, I'm just mystified by that notion. I don't understand how you can have a solution to a problem you haven't yet discovered. All the institutions I've served have been different in some meaningful way. I had to learn each one before thinking about making changes. I've had conversations with other presidents at various workshops, and we talk about the things we do. We are often doing similar things, but the context is always different. The results are different. What works for one person doesn't always work for another person because of the unique context of each institution. I thought the interactions at these conferences for presidents would be more helpful, but they have been less helpful than I thought. The same goes for mentors. I've worked with a few presidents, but none of them really fell into a mentor role for me. I talk to my doctoral advisor more than anyone else. He was a dean at some point, so he has some concept about university administration. Again, it gets back to the issue of different institutions and different contexts.

The first six months here at Beta were spent going out and doing a lot of listening. I wasn't sure what I was going to find here, but I knew it wasn't going to be what I had seen before at other institutions. I had to take some time to figure it out before I jumped in and started making changes. It doesn't take long to get a sense of the place, the institution's ethos. After all the listening, I was able to differentiate between the voice of a couple individuals and the common voice that was more representative of the institution. There is a huge difference

between the largest institution where I served and this institution. I've seen a little bit of everything over the years. This was unique.

Formulation of an Institutional Ethos

In seeking to understand the institutional ethos here at Beta University, I spent time with each group that contributed to the ethos. In terms of the student body, I spent time out among them and did a lot of listening and observing, watching their interactions on campus and going to student events. From that experience, I started to gain a sense of the traditions of the institution. The students felt comfortable talking to me, so it was relatively easy. The process with interacting with faculty and staff was much more methodical. We had a carefully planned process whereby we met with each department, each faculty department and each staff department. Depending on size, we sometimes met with divisions. Our aim was to keep the groups small enough to have a discussion but not too small so that we were speaking with too few individuals. We wanted everyone to be comfortable in the setting. I asked general questions related to the strengths and weaknesses of the institution and question about what makes this place special. There were four or five basic questions we asked each group. Then, I sat back and listened to the responses. After meeting with a number of groups, the same themes began to emerge that related to the institution as a whole. I could also identify issues unique to a certain part of the institution. We did this with everyone, but we probably could have stopped half-way through and ended up with the same results. At some point we reached saturation, but it was important to let everyone's voice be heard. We did the same with the alumni and community. We did a lot of surveys, and we received the same feedback. Parts of the culture here at Beta University were different than other places that I had served in pretty significant ways.

For the most part, the views of the campus constituency and the external constituencies were the same. I was surprised to some measure that the answer to the question, “What’s the best part of the institution?” was the faculty. That didn’t come from just the faculty. It came from every group. You would expect that response from the faculty, but I wasn’t expecting to hear that from the community. There was congruence between the way the faculty saw themselves and the way the students, alumni, and the community saw them. Words like ‘caring’ and ‘engaged’ were used to describe faculty. That was very different from other places I’ve been. At all those other places, that is exactly how the faculty would have viewed themselves. But, I’m not sure it is not how other groups would have viewed them. Beta University has been around for roughly 130 years. It went co-ed roughly 50 years ago. I found consistency in the understanding of the institution’s ethos from students who graduated in the 1940’s and those who graduate in 2010. We give the National Survey for Student Engagement to our students. I was able to look at the results of that survey, and it confirmed what the various groups told me in our meetings. There was an amazing amount of consistency between what the survey said and what I was seeing and hearing. It was nice to have an assessment piece to confirm what I was hearing.

Like every institution, there are issues that need to be addressed. I’ve mainly talked about the positives because there are so many positive at Beta University. Our biggest challenge is the existence of silos. Every institution deals with silos to some degree, but here at Beta we are super-siloed to the point that collaboration was almost non-existent. Issues that affected multiple units on our campus were made by one person in an office without any collaboration with those the decision affected. It wasn’t mean-spirited. It is just the way the institution developed and functioned. It was a top-down approach instituted by a former long-term president who oversaw every detail of the institution. There wasn’t much collaboration across units. In many instances,

decisions weren't being made because people were waiting for me to weigh in on the decision. That part of culture wasn't helping us move forward. I'm working to change that so that the way we make decisions is more in line with the desired ethos of the institution. And, when the opportunity presents itself to bring in new people, we make sure we hire people who are a better fit with what where we're going as opposed to where we've been. In a recent graduation speech I challenged the graduates to use their resources and build their resources. Employees are valuable resources. We want to add individuals who are valuable to the institution, and we want to grow and build the resources we have that will result in an increase in support.

Promulgation of the Institutional Ethos

We went through a year-long process to develop a strategic plan. Given the culture and history of the institution, it took longer here than at other institutions I've served. The faculty and staff here at Beta University had never been meaningfully engaged in strategic planning before, so we had to take our time. Once the plan was in place, I felt we could go forward in terms of promulgating the ethos and making some changes. One issue that stands out is our history for being known as a teacher's college. While that has always been true, we have many outstanding programs. For instance, we have one of the best chemistry undergraduate experiences in the country. We need to promote that along with our other programs in the sciences. That will take some time, but it's a part of the ethos that needs to change.

Our students learn about the institution and its ethos through couple of classes in the general education curriculum. One is a freshman orientation class that most universities have. We use it to teach them about the history and ethos of Beta University. We also have another course that is unique to our institution. It focuses on critical thinking skills and problem solving

skills that relate to the human experience. That class has been particularly helpful for students and for the institution. We're trying to figure out how this class fits with transfer students.

I have an elevator speech or a five-minute speech that I give quite often. I talk about what makes this place special, and that speech came from my conversations with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members. The alumni love to hear those stories, especially the recent stories that align with their experiences from the past. Our faculty and staff have made this place special. It's not about me. I just get to deliver the message of how special Beta University is in higher education. In that elevator speech, I talk about student support from both inside and outside the classroom. There is a special relationship between students and faculty at this place. I like to share specific stories from alumni about how particular faculty members changed their lives. Student and faculty form life-long friendships. Our commencement speaker for the winter graduation was slated to be a faculty member. He chose to miss the chance to give the address in order to attend the wedding of one of our graduates. Those are the kind of relationships that form here at Beta University. I also talk about our active and engaged student body. Most of our students are Pell Grant eligible. They work one or two jobs, yet they are still involved in campus activities and engage in leadership opportunities. We have around 10% of the entire student body participate in a day of service on MLK day. That doesn't happen everywhere. I talk about preparation for the workforce. Our students do internships, and they consistently tell us that those experiences helped prepared them for their careers. I talk about the academic challenge of Beta University. You won't see many students graduating with a 4.0 GPA. It's tough love from the faculty, but our students appreciate it and are better because of it. Our students have excellent critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and both oral and written communication skills. After arriving here, I found out that an institution where I formally served had visited Beta

University and used it as a model for the construction of quality enhancement plan. That's the elevator speech in a nutshell.

From the points of my elevator speech, it is easy to see that the ethos at Beta University is focused on the students. At other places where I served you could find pockets of that, but it wasn't consistent across the institution. There were always areas where students didn't feel connected or supported. They wouldn't interact with faculty outside the classroom. They didn't involve themselves in student research. Our undergraduate student research program at Beta is pretty amazing.

One of my favorite stories that I like to share has to do with a Hall of Fame ceremony I attended in athletics. One of our soccer players talked about the most meaningful person here at Beta University during his time as a student. It was the custodian of the coliseum who talked to him about what was going on in his life and making sure he was doing well. Her job was as a custodian, not a counselor or student support person. It didn't matter. She cared about the students and took an interest in them. Everybody here at Beta University buys into that. It's genuine, and it's a great story to tell. There's a consistent ethos of caring across this campus as seen in the expression of care and concern of this custodian.

This institution isn't as large as others I've served. I do think that size is a factor. It's much easier to create an institutional ethos at an institution this size than at the largest research university in the state. We're focusing on collaboration, a sense of ownership, and feeling valued. Those are a few things that were missing here. Top-down leadership had left faculty and staff out of the loop. We're slowly seeing changes as we give faculty conference and staff conference ownership of certain initiatives. That has increased faculty and staff engagement and has started to change the culture. These types of changes to the ethos take time.

When I'm out there touting the university, I feel good that I can honestly speak about the ethos of the institution in a way that is accurate. It also allows me to pivot to say, "Here's who we are and where we are. Here are the things that we need to move us forward." I'm able to talk about our aspirational goals which are mostly related to student support and facilities as well as other things that are outlined in our strategic plan. I addressed many of these needs in my opening address to faculty and staff this past year, and I reminded them that the core mission of the institution is educating students. We need to focus on students, but we also need to be committed to the people on the front line at the university. Everyone matters. It's not an either or—it's a both and.

University presidents are known for being impatient at times. From what I've witnessed watching other presidents as well as myself in this job, I think it is that they are patiently aggressive, always pushing for things to improve. I am aware, however, that not everything changes overnight. Some things can be addressed immediately while other things take time. For example, people at Beta University will not openly complain. There is a tremendous fear here of retribution. People will only lodge anonymous complaints or concerns. I've gone back to see what happened in the past, and I cannot find any evidence that someone was retaliated against for issuing a complaint. It's irrational, but it's part of the culture. I'd prefer that individuals raise issues with me or the provost or the dean or whoever they have an issue with and talk it through. That's not going to happen here. So, people submit complaints anonymously. When I talk to the faculty and staff committees, no one ever asks a question. They will submit anonymous questions in advance. That is actually helpful because it allows me to research the issue and sometimes bring an immediate solution or suggestion for a solution. So, here's a place where we have to go slow. I hope that over time people will feel comfortable addressing issues directly

with me and with others, but we aren't there yet. It would be foolish to try and push for change in this area. It would only make things worse. In that graduation speech I referenced earlier, I challenged the student to understand that real change takes time. Focusing on short-term effects can distract us from the hard work that is needed for long-term change. Real lasting change takes time.

As I promote the university, I always talk about the diversity of Beta University. There are some who are concerned about our demographics. They feel that we've made a strategic decision to focus on minority populations and ignore white kids. That isn't the case. We recruit the best students we can recruit. We don't pay attention to their race or ethnicity in recruitment. What has happened is that the demographics of college-bound students has changed considerably. The natural result of this is that our student population is more diverse than in years past. This isn't so much a threat to the ethos of the institution. It is simply a small change to the identity of the institution, and I think it is a positive one. I've pushed the diversity agenda, but what has happened in terms of our student body predates me. It's more of a trend if anything. We're in a growing area next to a major metropolitan area that is also growing. We have to recruit where the students are. You'd be foolish not to do that.

The hour had passed and it was time to end the interview. I thanked Dr. Beta of Beta University for his time and exited the office. As I sat in my car processing the previous hour, I was amazed at the ground we covered in such a short amount of time. Dr. Beta shared freely from his experiences. I perceived that he truly wanted Beta University to be a place of collaboration where students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community worked together for the good of the students. His quest to understand the context in which he served as president came across as genuine. I left thinking this would be an exciting place to work and learn.

Analysis

Organizational Identity

The conversation with President Beta began with a lengthy explanation of the various institutions President Beta served and the distinctiveness of the identity of each institution. As the conversation progressed, President Beta discussed how alumni described the importance of the faculty/student relationship at Beta University, noting that “if I talk to the alums from the 1940’s or I talk to one from 2010 it’s consistent.” President Beta also noted that the community highlighted the important relationship between faculty and students. This enduring part of the identity of the institution was important for President Beta because it served as a distinctive that was an important part of the president’s standard speech that he described as the elevator speech. President Beta also noted how the identity of the institution as a place of preparation for educators was overshadowing successful programs such as chemistry that were innovative and “one of the best undergraduate experiences you can find in the country right now.” What had long been a distinctive was threatening the ability of the institution to draw attention to other programs that were outstanding in their own right. The biggest issue related to identity dealt with diversity. The increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the institution was raised by some individuals who felt the growing diversity was a threat to the identity of the institution and that the institution was ignoring the average white student. President Beta acknowledged that diversity was part of the administration’s agenda, but that the increased racial diversity pre-dated the current administration. President Beta explained that the qualified applicant pool was more racially diverse than ever before and this contributed to the increase in diversity on campus. These issues raised by President Beta highlight the importance of identity and how identity relates to the ethos of the institution.

Organizational Culture

President Beta referenced the different cultures of the previous institutions that were served. Understanding the cultural context of Beta University was clearly a goal of President Beta when arriving on campus. President Beta, early in the interview, acknowledged the presence of sub-cultures on university campuses that develop due to the unique structure of higher education institutions. President Beta referenced the need to hear the “traditions and culture of the institution” as articulated by various constituent groups. As a result of listening sessions with alumni, community groups, faculty and staff, President Beta acknowledged, “Parts of the culture here were different than other places that I had been in pretty significant ways.” Like President Alpha, President Beta referenced the existence of silos at Beta University but also acknowledged that they existed at almost every university. What was unique at Beta University, according to the president, was “we were kind of super-siloed to the point that collaboration was almost non-existent.” The result was “a culture that wasn’t help us move forward.” It was during this discussion that President Beta indicated that opportunities had arisen to replace personnel at the institution and that every effort was being made to replace these individuals with individuals “who fit where we’re going as opposed to where we’ve been.” Culture at Beta University was a hindrance to the development of a consistent ethos. The president was making every effort to affect culture in a way that would help created a coherent ethos. President Beta was also aware of areas where the culture could not be affected quickly and gave a self description of being “patiently aggressive” but also knowing when certain things will not happen quickly. Individuals only lodge complaints anonymously at Beta University. The only questions the president receives at from faculty and staff forums are submitted anonymously before the meeting. President Beta recognized quickly that this part of the culture would only change

slowly and decided to leave the current process of anonymous complaints and questions in place until a level of trust existed that would allow for change in this process.

Organizational Image

President Beta noted that the image of the institution and the reality of the institution demonstrated a high level of congruence. As an example, President Beta stated that any faculty member, when asked what the best part of an institution is, will always say it's the faculty. At Beta University, the faculty/student relationship was expressed both on campus and in the community as being the best part of Beta University. To the president's surprise, everyone confirmed that the faculty/student relationship at Beta made it unique from other institutions. The image of the institution in this case matched reality. As President Beta stated, 'I think there was lots of evidence that this wasn't just the thing everybody says.' President Beta noted that the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) supported the claim as well. Showing an awareness that university presidents can exaggerate the claims of the institutions they serve, President Beta stated, 'It's not just me as a president. I'm supposed to say these things are great. But, based on the survey we're significantly better than other institutions in these ways.' President Beta talked about using specific examples of faculty involvement when speaking to constituent groups, stories that have been told to the president from many different individuals. The president also said that the alumni want to be sure 'the story I tell about it (Beta University) is consistent with the story they feel is Beta University's story.' This strong sense of the need for congruence between the identity of the institution and the image projected of the institution was evident in the words of President Beta. President Beta indicated that the elevator speech was about the identity of the institution and 'who we are.' The aspirational aspects of the institution

are shared with constituents as an indication of what is needed to move the institution forward. These aspirational aspects of the institution are detailed in the strategic plan.

President Gamma

I arrived in the Office of the President at Gamma University and was greeted by the executive assistant. President Gamma was running a few minutes behind schedule, so I sat in a waiting area and waited for President Gamma to arrive in his office. The office was located in one of the older buildings on campus. It almost reminded me of an old high school building. President Gamma walked in, greeted me, and excused himself to attend to an issue before we began our interview. A maintenance crew was making modifications to his office door. When President Gamma was ready, we walked across the hall to the board room and sat at one end of a very long table. Photos of the Board of Trustees adorned the wall. He apologized for the late start, but seemed excited to engage in conversation. Here's President Gamma's story:

Formation of an Understanding of Institutional Ethos

I've had the advantage of working at a lot of different institutions over the years. I attended large state institutions for my undergraduate and graduate degrees. As a professor and administrator, I think I've lost count of all the places I've been. I think this would be my seventh stop, my first as a president. Of course, all of those schools were different. I've been in large state research institutions, some comprehensives, pure teaching institutions, and an excellent private school. I've seen the different cultures at those schools.

As a faculty member, the view is very different. Most faculty members think of themselves as independent contractors. If you put the definitions in front of them, they would probably say that they were technically employees but still viewed their jobs as independent contractors. This means they focus less on culture than administrators. Administrators work on

plying the culture. My background is in business, so I've always been focused on the importance of professional schools. I understand the values of general education, the arts and sciences, and all that. It's very important for an institution.

Formulation of an Institutional Ethos

My interview with the presidential search committee was helpful in understanding the institutional ethos at Gamma University. What they shared with me about the institution was pretty accurate. The committee was candid with me about what they needed. I'm sort of an odd presidential candidate since my background is in business and my discipline is located within a professional school. You usually have two strikes against you. Arts and Sciences normally dominate these committees, so professional school candidates are eliminated right way. This committee was different. The school had fiscal challenges, so someone like me, an accountant, fit the profile. After the interview, I felt that I was a perfect match for Gamma University.

There's been virtually no change here for the past 50 years. No one has thought about new programs or getting rid of programs that no longer serve the needs of students. No one has thought about innovative ways to serve the students. Having a business background, I'm all about innovation. There was a need to build a strong partnership between the university and the region. I went on an eleven-county tour to meet with each chamber of commerce to talk about what we offered here at Gamma University that could help them succeed. I met with the politicians to let them know we were their regional state university and that we existed to serve their needs. Everyone was very receptive.

This institution has been primarily a teaching school, so the ethos should be student focused. It must be on the students. I'm focusing on student success and student engagement, and I'm pushing the idea of regional stewardship. That's the one thing that I think changes the ethos

between the flagship/research schools and regional comprehensive teaching schools. We're a regional state university. I believe our mission is the most important. We're taking first generation students and we're bringing them to an opportunity level they otherwise would never have. We impact the lives of students and their families in an important way. Research institutions can find cures for cancer. That's great. But, as far as impacting lives, I truly believe the regional state universities do the best job.

I knew I could never be successful here if I didn't understand the culture of the school and of the town. I think the history of the place is very important as well. I did a wealth of reading on the history of the university to get a sense of the key historical figures. I studied what the former presidents did, and I sought to get a sense of the ethos of the community. And, I didn't come in like a bull in a china closet. I've seen presidents do that, walk in and say, "We're changing everything and I don't give a damn about the history. I don't give a damn about the culture. I don't give a damn about who's here. All I know is that we are changing, changing, changing." That's usually a blatant failure. You need to know what the school is about before you enact significant change. I told the president's cabinet that I would give them a year to show me how well they could do their jobs. I didn't clean house. The institution was receptive to that, both administrators and faculty, and I think that the community appreciated it. There is a level of pride in the institution that exists in the community. That has to be respected when you're the leader. You have to consider what is already there and that it is valuable to people. So, I've tried to discover where we are and what we need to do to improve. I think I've been pretty successful because I've engaged the campus. I have a vision, and I've expressed what I'm looking for, where we're going, and how we're going to get there. We did that through strategic planning, so now we have a road map of where we're going. I've tried to be considerate of the campus and

community culture along the way. We had an issue here recently regarding diversity where the community didn't understand what was happening on campus. Someone in leadership failed to alert me to the issue. It could have been handled better internally. I didn't know about it until it was too late. I was able to explain the university's position, but I had to do it in a reactive way, not a proactive way. This person didn't understand the culture of the community. Most of this could have been avoided. I think we learned an important lesson from that incident.

When I arrived here, it didn't take long to see in person what I had read about in my research. Athletics is important to this institution—very important. The organization of trustee committees made that clear. A huge investment in the football stadium caused issues on campus years ago. My wife and I decided early on that we wanted to be the president and first lady of all groups on campus. The marching band was practicing on concrete. Band members had all kinds of injuries as a result of marching on concrete. Our band is outstanding and well known throughout our state. We decided to propose a practice facility for them. It is AstroTurf, lighted, and has a nice building. The Board approved it, and it will be dedicated this fall. It was a smart move because it shows we are rewarding excellence, not just excellence in athletics. We went to the art department and asked them to display student art in the president's home. There is also faculty art there. We swap it out every six months. The art department told me no one had paid any attention to them for 60 years. We've renovated academic space. We reorganized the academic structure. It went over well.

So, by looking at the ethos, culture, and the past history, it enabled me to know I had to bring everyone along together and make sure academics felt like an equal partner in the university. That happened because I took time to understand what had happened here in the past, the culture, and the ethos. I'm very pleased at the progress we've made.

I discovered that the university had been weak in marketing and public relations. Our business school is AACSB accredited. Only five percent of the world's business schools have that accreditation yet we never told anyone. We started telling that story and people responded. Business schools are known for being cash cows for universities. They are usually the largest and the best administered units. Their success allows you to have music programs and arts programs. It lets you do all sorts of things others. The business school here is the smallest of the schools. I said, "What's the deal?" I knew Gamma began as a normal school and that education was important, but I said, "Why in the hell is the business school so small?" It's a great business school. The faculty are productive. They're good teachers and put out a great product. There was a mystery as to why the business school was excellent but yet the smallest. We have a 100% placement of our applied and manufacturing engineering students. They all get jobs. Why haven't we told that story? Don't you think parents would want to know that? We have a center that focuses on manufacturing support. It's an economic development tool that does great research. We're now promoting that. I think we were sales and marketing deficient. These are the things we need to promote.

Promulgation of the Institutional Ethos

I don't think there is a big difference between what I say to those off campus and those on the campus. There is a symmetry to the message. I speak about regional stewardship being the key to the success of our institution and the region. If we serve the region, the region will be successful and the university will be successful. We have to build a great partnership with our external constituents. I've sold that idea on campus. They had never heard the term "regional stewardship" before I arrived. Now they hear it often, and they understand how it benefits the

university as well as the region. I have a strong economic background, so I was more of a salesperson when I was out in the counties speaking to external constituents.

In my inaugural address I talked about transformation as it relates to students, our region, and our university. If we transform our university to being a learning-centered institution that focuses on academic excellence and student success, then we will transform our students into educated, ethical professionals that will then go out and transform our region. At the heart of transformation is engagement. Each person here at Gamma University must be committed to the mission of this institution if it is going to be successful in the transformation of students' lives.

There's excitement here. I arrived just as we were competing for a national championship in FCS football. We played in the NCAA basketball tournament last year. Those events bring recognition to the institution. We need to build on that, and we are. We're building a new student fitness and wellness center. We're renovating old dorms and turning them into apartment style housing. The students know I am supporting them, and they are excited. The student profile has improved dramatically over the past five years. Retention has increased eight percent in the past two years. We've implemented an academic support strategy that we had used in athletics. It was so successful in athletics that we're using it campus-wide now. The GPA for our athletes is over a 3.0. We're focused on better customer service on campus. Our students need support because many are first generation students. We have a laundry list of things we want to do, but we're off to a good start. We're investing in our students, and they appreciate it.

The faculty are on board. We reorganized the academic side from four colleges to six schools. The organization was a mess, so we put in place a model that made more sense, and I think the faculty are pretty excited. Now, there's still a group that see we're building a new baseball facility and think that athletics is still getting all the money. We're trying to balance it

out and show we're making progress across the board. The faculty senate has been supportive. The faculty senate chairs have been receptive to new ideas and new approaches. We've had to work on enforcing academic standards. We had a few issues with tenure and promotion. Names were sent to me that did not meet the stated criteria. I came to the conclusion that we were not enforcing our own academic standards, so I had to challenge the deans to pay attention to their own standards. "He's a hell of a nice guy" is not in the standards. There's a lot people out there were fit that description, but they're not eligible for full professor. When it looks like you're tinkering with the academic standards, you're going to get some pushback. In this case, I was just enforcing the standards. Those names should have never made it to my desk. We're working to resolve these issues, and I think people understand what I'm trying to accomplish.

We're a regional state institution that needs to develop regional stewardship with the counties we serve. We place the focus on students and their success. We seek to promote all areas of the university without favor. I'm not trying to make this place a research institution. That's not where we are in our stage of development. We can do a little more research, but we need to focus on our mission. I'm keeping my fingers crossed because one thing I've learned from all my friends who have been presidents at other places is that it can turn around on you quickly.

We have a good Board of Trustees. In a recent retreat, the consultant who led it challenged them to step away from issues related to the day-to-day operations and offer more support on policy, strategy, and budget. It's a good board. I think we're headed in the right direction and we have a good strategic plan. They are beginning to see there is more to this institution than athletics.

Our time ended. Even though we were off schedule, President Gamma afforded me the entire hour. The president was confident in the assessment of the institution and felt good about its direction. As I left the meeting and reflected on our conversation, my initial impression was that President Gamma had sought to understand the ethos of the institution and the community while the strategic plan was being formulated. Previous experiences as well as the experiences of friends had allowed the president to learn invaluable lessons from others. President Gamma seemed aware of the pitfalls, yet they did not create a hesitancy to lead. I sensed that President Gamma was a strong leader who was thoughtful, inquisitive, and determined to move the institution and the region forward.

Analysis

Organizational Identity

President Gamma, much like President Beta, began the interview by discussing previous experiences in higher education and how they differed by institution type. President Gamma made a distinction between public and private institutions as well as state universities and research institutions. President Gamma was aware of the identity of Gamma University and its position within the state, and the importance of that identity was embraced and articulated by the president both internally and externally. President Gamma articulated a process by which the history of the institution and the town were researched in order to gain a deeper understanding of both. This desire to understanding the identity of the institution in the historical context of the institution and town demonstrates the importance of the part of organizational identity that is central and enduring. In discussing a situation where President Gamma had to make a difficult decision regarding faculty, President Gamma noted that the decision was based on the policies in

place. The decision made was in line with the policies of the institution and sought to strengthen the identity of the institution by following its stated policies and procedures.

Organizational Culture

President Gamma, in describing the various institutions served, spoke in terms of the culture of those schools and also referenced culture when discussing faculty and administration. President Gamma made reference to understanding the culture of the institution and the town in which it is located before making any changes and questioned presidents who entered institutions and began making changes before understanding the culture and history of the place. President Gamma talked at length about an incident that took place on campus that created a stir in the community, an incident that could have been avoided if an administrator had understood the culture and ethos of the community. One aspect of the culture that President Gamma quickly understood was the importance of athletics, especially football. As a result of understanding that aspect of the culture and pushback against it from other parts of campus, President Gamma was able to make strategic decisions that showed support for all constituencies on campus including athletics. President Gamma referred to this as a “balancing act” that attempted to create a culture of fairness on campus. President Gamma toured each county in the region in order to get a sense of the needs of the region but also to get a sense of the culture of the area. President Gamma expressed an understanding of the internal culture of the institution, the external culture of the region, and the similarities and differences between the two.

Organizational Image

President Gamma addressed the issue of image in his explanation of the need for the institution to build a strong partnership with the region. As a result of an eleven-county tour, President Gamma pledged to the leaders of these counties and the politicians that Gamma

University was there to help make the region stronger and better. “We’re your regional state university” the president told each audience. This idea of regional stewardship was the message of President Gamma to both internal and external constituents. President Gamma also identified an image problem with Gamma University stating, “One thing we’ve never done well around here is marketing, branding, and PR. We’ve had some wonderful programs here that are as good as any in the nation, and we’ve never told anyone.” President Gamma also noted that a certain program had 100% job placement but that the institution had not promoted it. Centers for manufacturing support and economic development were popular but not promoted to the extent that they should have been. President Gamma concluded the remarks on image by saying, “I think it is a consistent message, but I think I’m more of a sales person externally because I felt like we were sales and marketing deficient. We just never really promoted ourselves.”

President Delta

President Delta welcomed me into his office, and we sat down across from each other at a rectangular table that had two chairs on each side. Behind it was the president’s desk. To the left of the desk was a second door that led to an external office. After exchanging pleasantries and engaging in a brief conversation, our attention turned to the interview questions. Here’s the story of President Delta:

Formation of an Understanding of Institutional Ethos

My understanding of colleges was shaped by several things. The first had to do with where I was raised. There were two private church-related junior colleges in our town. That is where I learned about sports but also about drama. One of the colleges had an outstanding drama department, so the arts played a big role in the town. The second influence was my father. He graduated from a denominationally-related institution, and I grew up making treks back to that

campus to watch football games. Because of those experiences, that is where I wanted to attend college. I really didn't consider any other place. The third influence was my mother who graduated from college when I was in high school. She drove 100 miles a day to do that. Those were my early formative experiences.

When I went to college, I was like most students who didn't know anything about organizational charts or how institutions were structured. My first encounter with institutional politics came when I, along with another student, volunteered to have a biology professor do research on the eastern screech owl. After two weeks we were removed from the study because the provost said only graduate students could participate. That didn't make sense to me at the time. But, I loved college, and most of my associations are positive.

It's important for me to note that institutional turmoil has been the context of my relationship with higher education. I've been associated with schools that were related to a mainline denomination where a large divisive controversy hung like a cloud over my experiences. My first job in academia was related to the controversy. I returned to my alma mater to help establish a divinity school, and I eventually was named the dean. It was a difficult place to be. I compare it to Florence, Italy in the 15th century. There was creativity, commerce, and the flowing of human genius, but you had to deal with the Medici family. I tell everyone my eight second bull ride at my alma mater lasted eight years. When I look back, I still think it is some of the best work I've done. It was a crucible for me. Those challenging experiences, in the midst of much chaos, helped shape me. I had many positive experiences there. I found out that working at your alma mater can change your relationship with it and not in a positive way. Working there was always a dream, but that dream sometimes seemed like a nightmare. People there were loyal

to their idea of what the institution should be, and they were willing to fight for it. The alumni were literally raising money to fight each other. They worshipped their heritage.

Formulation of an Institutional Ethos

I had little knowledge of Delta University when I was contacted to become a part of the search for a new president. I had been on campus one time roughly 15 years earlier. The search process was very helpful to me. I wasn't looking to leave the institution where I was serving as provost. In fact, I had become a bit jaundiced about the presidential search process. It was never lost on me that the person who called you was working for someone else. I had been a part of processes when the institution was portrayed a certain way and I knew in fact that wasn't the case. But, this process was really good. They were very deliberate about the process and the information they shared. I'm the fifth president of Delta University in the 130-year existence. The first two presidents share the last name of the institution. It's not a stretch to say I'm the first outsider. The search materials were excellent and were helpful. I met with them at an airport interview, and two days later they called me and said they wanted to focus on me. I interpreted that to mean I was going to be one of three that visited campus. They said I was the sole candidate and that the process could move rapidly. It did. Less than six weeks later they voted on me to be the fifth president of Gamma University.

I spent time speaking with the former president in preparation for the transition. I had six months before I started, so I had time to prepare. I went to Harvard for a conference for new presidents. That was helpful. I knew I wanted to spend the first year as a transition year. I needed to meet people and get to know the institution. The institution provided lots of data and reports. That freed me up to meet with people and get to know them once I arrived.

I like to do face-to-face meetings, so we had a deliberate strategy where I would meet with both internal and external constituents. I worked with the development office to coordinate these events. My first day at Delta University was July 1. We hit the road in October of that year. We had a thirteen-city tour where I was introduced to various alumni and constituent groups. I held 27 listening sessions with faculty and staff. I met with representative student groups as well, and I had many casual conversations with students. I had students over to the president's home to eat and talk about the institution. We would tailgate in the backyard to accommodate the number of students. I enjoyed getting to know people and hear their stories.

I found that people had a lot of pride in Delta University. The alumni would share stories about how their lives were changed by this place. I heard so many stories—I can't just point to one. But, I can remember the names and places where I heard the stories. They stick with you. Delta has historically been an opportunity school. These people didn't come from wealthy families or have a lot of encouragement. They came here and were given an opportunity, and they took it and became successful because of it. I met people who had a desire to get involved in the institution. They wanted to give back. I should note that I'm headed back out this fall to speak at a series of events across our state and the entire Southeast. I'll share with them more about the strategic plan and where we are headed. We want to increase scholarship opportunities, so I'll be asking for money this time!

The faculty was open and very responsive. My points of reference are the two universities where I previously served. Compared to my previous institutions, the faculty here was overly deferential. I was well-received, so in that regard I count my blessings. I think they are open to a new style of leadership. We just conducted the first employee survey ever at Delta. People overwhelmingly like working here. We need to address some concerns about how we

care for our employees. Our infrastructure needs to catch up with the growth. We are working on those things already, and there's been a great response. I think they will like my participatory style of leadership.

When I went out to meet constituents just three months after beginning as president, people were expecting to hear details from me. What I had learned up to that point shaped what I said. I was on a fact-finding mission, but the constituents expected me to have something to say. I told them the first time that I didn't come to ask for money. I came to listen to them. I would ask for money later. The word I kept hearing over and over was 'opportunity'. I developed my 11 second elevator speech pretty early. Delta is a thriving university community located in a dynamic and changing rural setting within one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States that has connections around the world. When I speak, I talk about each part of that statement. There's an irony to it. I wasn't really looking to leave where I was, but I saw an opportunity and walked through the door. That's what people who attended Delta did. They saw an opportunity and took it. I gave a speech here on campus not long ago where I said up front to everyone that being president of this institution was not on my bucket list, but life is not about checking things off a bucket list. You have to be open to alternate routes, willing to travel to unchartered destinations. You have to embrace mystery.

The Promulgation of Institutional Ethos

Delta has an excellent record of educating students for successful careers. I focus on student opportunities at Delta when I speak. Delta affords individuals an opportunity to make a life. As a faith-based institution, we focus on what it means to be a good person, what is good, what is a good society—you learn about life here. We afford people an opportunity to make a difference. I wrote an article in a university publication this past spring. In that article I said that

we want our students to live good lives, become good people, and add to and not subtract from the common good. We want them to make a life, make a living, and make a difference, and in whatever field or profession they choose, to lead with purpose with a conviction that what they are called to do is beneficial to their neighbor and pleasing to God — not so different from what the reformer Martin Luther desired for his student

When I was out meeting people in that first year, I was often asked what my vision was for Delta. I would say, “If I have a clear vision of where Delta is going, then I had better just come off the mountain with tablets and a glow on my face.” That sort of thing is developed through conversation and observation of what is already happening here. I come here as more of a farmer and not a developer. I truly believe that there is activity in the soil here at Delta, and I don’t come to put my blueprint on that. At the same time, however, I was not hired by the board to perpetuate the status quo. So, we put together several strategic initiatives under four headings. The plan developed out of an organic process that I believe is the most participatory process in the school’s history. We have teams and task forces working on these initiatives and not sitting around waiting to see what the president thinks.

What we are doing is aspirational. That’s what visions and strategic plans are all about. But, I understand that there is a fine line between vision and hallucination. It’s a hallucination if it is disconnected from who we are and what is here. We have ways of measuring what we are attempting to do. Our plan builds on our strengths and addresses some areas of weakness, but it is practical in nature, that that helps people to embrace it. It’s not filled with over-the-top language about Delta being the biggest and the best and all those superlatives that often appear in these sorts of documents.

I would have to say there is some dissonance between the external image and the image on campus. There are some that think of us as that little denominational school in a rural community. We're a level six university with a medical school. We're playing Division I athletics. We educate more students from our state than any other private in our state. There's a small group that sees everything we do through denominational eyes. We've grown past that. We're still a faith-based institution, and we are proud of that. Denominational politics, however, doesn't drive what we do. One of our goals must be to tell our story and push out the concentric circles.

The story is changing, but we haven't lost our soul. We just secured a large private grant to help us address issues related to health care. Our Christian faith is at the heart of that. We believe in service to others. Christian Higher Education 101 reminds us that the university is not the church. We want to make certain that those who work here are committed to the mission of Delta. You don't have to be Christian to work here, but we do want you to share the values of the institution. That's a part of the ethos. We'll make changes when necessary to further the mission and vision of the institution, but we'll do it in a way that is true to the ethos of the institution.

Thinking back on those first days, I had the occasional big gulp moment when I thought about the enormity of task, but other than that it has been a good adjustment. There were no major surprises. Sure, I had a couple of personnel matters that needed attention, but nothing like a ticking time bomb that could crater the institution. I've had no buyer's remorse at all. I can say that in all honesty. The first year was busy and very people intensive. I engaged with a lot of constituents in many different places. I can't see how it would be otherwise unless you were coming into a crisis that needed immediate attention. Delta was far from that. The first year was rewarding, and I think I did as well as I could.

So, how would I describe the ethos at Delta? (President Delta took a long pause to consider the question.) I can use a couple of descriptors, but to bring parallelism to it, I would have to think about it for a while. Entrepreneurial and enterprising are two words that I think best describe Delta. As a private institution, Delta has been able to do those two things well, much better than state schools. Delta has been very strategic, but I'm aware of the old line attributed to Peter Drucker that reminds leaders that culture eats strategy for breakfast. Strategic plans and new initiatives can be developed quickly, but changing the culture which relates to ethos is something that takes a longer period of time. I'm attune to that. Like you said, it is wispy. Trying to get a hold on that is like trying to nail Jell-O to a tree. But, I think it is very important.

As our interview came to a close, I thanked Dr. Delta for the time and his willingness to participate in my research. As I left his office and walked back to my car, I reflected on how the context of Delta within a particular denomination gave this new president an added sense of understanding of the institution before arriving on campus. The ethos of this private denominationally-related institution appeared easier to grasp for this new president who had served at institutions that also operated within the same cultural milieu. I also left with the feeling that this president, having so much inside information about the ethos, began this journey with deep understanding of the ethos of the institution. Still, this president took time to explore the institution and the various constituent groups with a willingness to embrace new discoveries and use them to chart a way forward.

Analysis

Organizational Identity

President Delta begin the interview with a long description of how denominational identity shaped President Delta's view of higher education and framed years of experience.

President Delta demonstrated a strong historical understanding of institutions previously served as well the historical context of the current institution, all of which were influenced by turmoil within the supporting denomination. President Delta described the identity of the institution in terms of the word opportunity. Delta University was a place where individuals came to take advantage of the opportunity to better themselves. That term was used by many individuals the president met within the first year and seemed to identify the aspect of identity that is central to the institution. President Delta also referenced the development of an elevator speech that was used to state the identity of Delta University to various constituents. The elevator speech contained four points, all related to the identity of the institution. Serving as the 5th president within the 130 year history of the institution, understanding the identity of the institution within its historical roots was important to President Delta. President Delta's reluctance to give a clear vision of the direction of the institution without first hearing from the various constituent groups demonstrated the importance of understanding the identity of the institution. The denominational relatedness of the institution had been central through the years. The idea of Delta University as a place of opportunity endured to the present day. President Delta also articulated a need for the identity to change from a rural "little denominational school" to a school located within a short distance of a large metropolitan area that is a level six university with a medical school and Division I athletic programs. This need for an alteration to the identity of Delta University is noteworthy. President Delta also referenced the distinctive aspect of identity by addressing the need to "differentiate ourselves" with the work being done in rural areas, small towns, and underserved populations. President Delta stated the need for the institution to affirm its religious values within a context broader than the denomination that founded it.

Organizational Culture

President Delta made several references to cultural differences between an institution that was once rural but now is within a short distance of a major metropolitan area that is growing rapidly. The major cultural factor on Delta University is its relationship to a mainline denomination and the cultural influences the denomination brings to bear on the institution. Having worked in this cultural milieu, President Delta arrived at Delta University with some understanding of the culture of the institution based on its relationship to the denomination and having served at other institutions with that same relationship. President Delta stated, "I've been through years of institutional turmoil. All that to say some very challenging and difficult experiences helped to shape me. But, they've mostly been positive." President Delta understood that being the fifth president in 130 years of the institutions existence had cultural significance. Delta University was a place that expected presidents to have lengthy tenures. When asked in his first year about a vision for the institution, President Delta deferred, waiting to get a sense of the place. His understanding of culture can be seen in his statement, "I come here more of a farmer and not as a developer. I believe there is activity in the soil." He also acknowledged that Delta University had moved from being patriarchal to being paternalistic. The president noted, "I think the next generation needs a more participatory aspect without losing the prerogatives of the office." President Delta stated the desire to move the institution from being viewed as a little denominational school to an institution that is part of a growing metropolitan area and acknowledged that the influence of the denomination was not what it once was. Organizational culture appeared to be an issue that President Delta confronted daily.

Organizational Image

President Delta addressed the image of Delta University in remarks related to U.S. News rankings in which the president stated, “We’re much further behind on that than I would like to be.” The relocation of the law school from campus to a large urban center near campus was viewed as an important step in improving the image of the institution. The image of the institution as a small, rural, denominationally-related university appeared to be changing to acknowledge that a large metropolitan city was right on the outskirts of the institution. Conversations were taking place on how the institution would leverage its location for future growth. The issue of organizational image appeared to be closely tied to the issue of organizational identity and culture. External constituents appeared to be tied to a past image of the institution that was small, rural and provincial. That view of the institution was rapidly dissolving as a large metropolitan area encroached on this small town. President Delta tacitly acknowledged the need to reframe the institution as it moved forward.

Conclusion

Each of the four presidents interviewed made comments related to the concepts of organizational identity, organizational culture, and organizational image. President Alpha focused on the issue of organizational identity as the crucial issue facing Alpha University. President Alpha also referenced spending time shaping the culture of the institution but made only a few references to the image of the institution. The context of the institution seemed to demand that President Alpha spend significant time on shaping the identity of Alpha University toward a more student-centered institution, something that was sought but not found in President Alpha’s undergraduate experience.

President Beta spent significant time in the first year trying to understand the identity and culture of Beta University. It was during this discovery period that President Beta identified that the image of a strong student/faculty relationship was confirmed both internally and externally as well as through a student engagement survey. Several cultural issues were raised during the interview that were being addressed by the president. There appeared to be a strong agreement in the image of the institution from both internal and external constituents.

President Gamma identified marketing, branding and public relations as a weak area of Gamma University and sought to correct this by visiting every county in the service region of the institution. President Gamma also sought to market the successful programs of the institution to a broader external audience. Understanding the culture and history of the institution was also a priority of President Gamma. The president seemed comfortable with the identity of the institution and the quality of faculty, staff and students. The focus of President Gamma was clearly on raising the image of the institution.

President Delta benefitted from an understanding of the denominational relatedness of Delta University based on prior experiences which aided in comprehending the identity of the institution. President Delta also spent significant time seeking to understand the uniqueness of the institution and understanding its culture. The image of Delta University appeared to be in flux. What was once a small provincial institution had become a large private institution with significant professional programs, one of which was now located in the large metropolitan area that had encroached on the institution.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented four interviews with new university presidents who had served at least one year but no more than three years at their institutions. Questions related to the

formation and promulgation of institutional ethos found in Appendix A were asked of each president. Each interview was presented as a co-created narrative using the transcriptions of the interviews, notes taken during the interviews, and university magazines, written speeches, videos of addresses, and interviews. An analysis was provided to confirm that organization identity, organizational culture, and organizational image were key for understanding institutional ethos could be confirmed.

Chapter five summarizes the findings of the research presented in chapter four and examines how the research relates to the primary research question and sub questions. It then explores the implications of this study for new university presidents, search committees and search firms, boards of trustees and regents, and campus communities. Finally, recommendations for further research are presented.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how new university presidents who have served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidencies made meaning of institutional ethos and applied what they learned to frame the institution for the purpose of effective leadership. This chapter discusses the research findings related to the primary research question and sub-questions, explores the implications of this study for various constituent groups, and provides recommendations for further research.

Discussion of Research Findings

Primary Research Question

The primary research question sought to discover how new university presidents who had served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidencies made meaning of institutional ethos and applied what they learned to frame the institution for the purpose of effective leadership. The responses of each president interviewed affirmed that matters related to institutional ethos were of importance and were addressed by these presidents within their first year of their presidencies. These presidents discussed how they attended to ethos by exploring issues related to identity, image, and culture. The responses of these presidents support the research that demonstrated the importance understanding the ethos of an institution for effective presidential leadership (Birnbaum, 1992; Puusa Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013; Smerek, 2011; Vyas, 2013). The context of each institution and the past experiences of each president influenced the unique way in which the issue of institutional ethos was approached by each

president. This supports the work of Alexander (2014) and Siegel (2011) who highlighted the contextual nature of institutional ethos.

In the case of President Alpha and Alpha University, the focus of the president was institutional identity. Albert and Whetten (1985) stressed the importance of an organization's identity, especially that which is central. President Alpha acknowledged that Alpha University struggled to define the central component of its identity. A strong emphasis of the president on student outcomes was evident throughout the interview. This appeared to be President Alpha's attempt at defining the central component of the institutions identity—educating students. As the president met both with internal and external constituent groups, the president was able to identify the existence of silos that kept the institution from achieving a coherent ethos. A detailed example related to the scheduling of overlapping events served as evidence that the various constituent groups operated in silos. Kezar (2007) noted the importance of attending to an institution's ethos in order to align institutional practices and institutional values. President Alpha indicated that a significant amount of time was spent attending to the culture of Alpha University. Throughout the interview President Alpha gave examples of other institutions where a coherent institutional ethos existed. Then, the president described the lack of an institutional ethos at Alpha University and articulated the need to achieve clarity related to institutional identity and institutional culture so that a coherent institutional ethos could emerge. Instead of promulgating an institutional ethos, President Alpha was trying to state a vision that attended to the issues of identity and culture. This attempt to understand culture is in line with the research of Schein (2010) who stated that the ability to bring about change into higher education institutions depends on understanding how the organization does things—its culture.

President Beta detected a clear institutional ethos at Beta University. A methodical process of engaging students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the community in dialogue resulted in the affirmation that a positive relationship between students and faculty was central to the institution's ethos. President Beta was able to share personal stories that gave evidence of these important relationships. President Beta also identified issues related to the institution's ethos that needed attention. The inability of faculty and staff to make decisions without approval as well as their inability to raise concerns openly were a part of the institution's ethos that needed improvement. President Beta was aware that addressing these concerns would take time and that any attempt to make sudden changes would do more harm than good. President Beta referenced an 'elevator speech' and was able to articulate that speech during the interview in a way that demonstrated a clear effort at forming and articulating the institution's ethos. The identity of a clear institutional ethos at many levels within the institution suggests an alignment of policies, culture, processes and symbols with the instruction of knowledge, techniques and values (Lorzano, 2012).

President Gamma focused on a missing element of the institution's ethos that was important in moving the institution forward. This regional state university needed to connect with its external constituencies in a way that would benefit both the constituencies and the university. President Gamma made use of the term 'regional stewardship' several times during the interview and explained how a renewed relationship between the institution and the counties within the region would serve both groups well. The president noted that this term was new to the university community. Establishing the institution as a regional partner with businesses and community leaders was viewed as essential for the success of the institution. President Gamma indicated that an initial assessment of the institution revealed that the dominant aspect of the

institution's ethos was athletics, particularly football. President Gamma stressed the need for balance and shared several stories that gave evidence that a healthy balance between academics and athletics was being sought by the institution under the leadership of the president. While acknowledging that a more balanced approach was being acknowledged by the campus community, negative feelings still existed toward athletics by some. A recent retreat of the Board of Trustees helped focus the attention of the trustees to all parts of the institution. President Gamma referenced the culture of the region on several occasions and the need to be sensitive not only to the campus culture but also to the culture of the surrounding community and region. President Gamma engaged in a restructuring of the schools within academic affairs in consultation with the faculty that produced a structure that provided better alignment of programs within these schools. Of the four presidents interviewed for this study, President Gamma appeared to have made more changes based on the initial assessment of the institution. The president described his own skills and experiences as a "perfect fit" for Gamma University several times during the interview. It was perhaps because of this perfect fit that the initial assessment of the institution allowed for more deliberate organizational change at Gamma University than at the other three institutions in this study. It is also possible that many of the changes at Gamma University were first order changes—those which occur at the surface level of an organization (Garza Mitchell & Maldonado, 2015). The work of Nordin (2012) would suggest that a high level of affective commitment of the employees of Gamma University contributed to the readiness for change. This issue of organizational change did not fall within the parameters of this study. More research is needed to determine what contributed to the ability of President Gamma to make a significant number of changes as a new president. It appears that

President Gamma found a way to balance learning about the institution while leading the institution (Smerek, 2011).

President Delta articulated an identity and ethos of Delta University as demonstrated by an ‘elevator speech’ that was shared during the interview. The president was able to expound on the culture of the institution and community that continued to shape it. The president identified a tension that existed between a doctoral granting institution that was once rural but was now on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area. The contrast between a rural denominationally-related institution and a growing metropolitan area that continued to encroach on the university appeared to be an issue related to the identity and image of the institution. President Delta indicated that this issue was being addressed within university leadership. Visits with alumni in President Delta’s first year indicated that alumni were closely tied to the institution and heavily invested in its future. Delta University was described as a place that gave individuals an opportunity to better themselves. With only five presidents within its 130 years of existence, Delta University was provincial in the way in which it operated. The president articulated the need for the institution to become less insular as it moved forward. President Delta arrived at Delta University with the advantage of having served in the administration at two other institutions that shared the same denominational relationship as Delta University. Although Delta University existed in a different region of the country, similar characteristics of the institutional ethos at these institutions gave President Delta a deeper understanding of the ethos of Delta University before arriving on campus. The helpfulness of the information provided by the search committee during the search process further aided President Delta in understanding the institution. Finally, the rural upbringing of President Delta aided in understanding the historic social setting of Delta and allowed President Delta to speak the language of the people at Delta University. His previous

positions at urban institutions allowed President Delta to understand the tensions between a historically rural institution that was transitioning to an institution on the edge of a rapidly growing urban area.

Sub-Questions

Three sub-questions accompany the main research question: (1) Prior to assuming their current role, what experiences shaped a new university president's foundational understanding of the concept of institutional ethos? (2) What are the experiences of new university presidents that shaped their understanding of the institution ethos at their current institutions? (3) In what ways do new university presidents promote the concept of institutional ethos to their various stakeholders?

Sub-question one. In addressing the first sub-question, the presidents were asked to relate their experiences of understanding an institution's ethos to their times as students, faculty members, and administrators. These presidents made few references to their times as students that related to the concept of institution ethos. President Alpha made it clear that his undergraduate experience did not live up to his expectations of a place that focused on the freedom of open intellectual inquiry. President Alpha's approach to Alpha University appeared to be influenced by his own experiences as a student as he sought to clarify the identity of the institution as a place that educates students and produces outcomes. President Delta related an experience as a student in which he was removed from a research project that was for graduate students only, an experience he later came to understand. Presidents Beta and Delta acknowledged that students are rarely aware of an issue such as institutional ethos and did not comment on their student experiences as they related to institutional ethos. It should be noted

that each of these presidents was at least thirty years removed from their undergraduate experiences.

President Beta articulated the differences between experiences as a faculty member and an administrator. As a faculty member, President Beta shared a close relationship to other faculty members within the department, and the issue of ethos related more to the college than to the institution. President Beta's transition to dean at another institution was influenced by these experiences as a faculty member. President Beta interviewed each faculty member in the college individually before moving forward with any strategic initiatives. President Beta was able to identify a difference between the ethoses of each institution and used that understanding in the way strategic planning was approached. The experience of President Beta as a faculty member was influential in how the issue of institutional ethos was understood as an administrator and as a new university president.

The presidents addressed their understanding of institutional ethos as an administrator. For President Alpha addressing the institution's ethos as a dean meant finding a way to lead the college in fulfilling the institution's mission for the students. President Alpha accomplished this task at two previous institutions using two different methods based on an understanding of each institution's ethos. President Beta's understanding of ethos from the role of an administrator was influenced by having been a faculty member and demonstrated sensitivity to the perceptions of faculty. President Gamma spoke sparingly of the role of administrator in the shaping of an understanding of institutional ethos but did acknowledge that the role of dean did offer excellent preparation for the role of president. President Delta entered the world of academia as the founding associate dean of a school at his undergraduate alma mater. President Delta did not address the issue of not having served as a faculty member before entering an administrative

role. President Delta eventually became the dean of that school and served in that role before accepting a different administrative role at a different institution.

Each president was influenced by previous experiences of institutional ethos. Their experiences as students appeared to have a minimal effect. Only one president addressed experiences as a faculty member. All four presidents addressed their experiences as administrators as being influential on how they understood the institution's ethos. Each of these presidents had served as the dean of a college before becoming a president. Birnbaum (1992) noted that official leadership roles place individuals in positions to affect change. In order to do so, these individuals must attend to the issue of culture since culture and leadership are closely related (Schein, 1985).

Sub-question two. Each president was asked to describe the experiences at the institutions they now led as president that helped them to understand the institution's ethos-- experiences with students, faculty, staff, and external constituents such as community members and alumni. Each president sought to understand how students viewed the institution and what students expected from their institution. President Alpha acknowledged the use of the College Student Inventory on campus each year to understand student needs but also acknowledged the institution had failed to act on the information in the past. President Beta indicated a use of the National Survey of Student Engagement as a tool that validated his experiences listening to students. All presidents took opportunities to meet with students and listen to their concerns with President Beta and President Delta expounding on these conversations at length. Likewise, each president took time to meet with faculty and staff and listen to their impressions of the institution. President Beta detailed the process of listening to faculty and staff. Each president indicated an awareness of the views of constituent groups regarding the institution. President

Alpha indicated that the understanding of the institution by external constituent groups varied depending on the level of involvement of individuals within these groups. President Beta acknowledged a closeness between the local communities to the university and indicated the president was viewed in the community as an important community leader. President Gamma spent considerable time seeking to understand how groups and individuals in the community and region viewed the university. Because President Gamma identified these relationships as essential to the identity of the institution, a significant emphasis was placed on understanding external groups in order to gain an understanding of the identity and culture of the community-at-large as well as the identity and culture of the institution. President Delta sought to understand how alumni viewed the institution and spent considerable time on listening tours throughout the region.

My assumption that new university presidents who had prior experience in higher education institutions would attend to the issue of institution ethos when arriving on campus was confirmed in this study. Each president sought to discover the institution's ethos by engaging with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community groups. The context of each institution and the past experiences of each president led these presidents to discern institutional ethos in their own ways. This conforms to the idea of Albert and Whetten (1985) that an organization's identity must contain a component that makes it distinctive. These presidents seemed to avoid the two common issues that derail presidencies noted by Trachtenberg, Kauvar, & Bogue (2013): difficulty in reading organizational culture and developing a misunderstanding of the institutional context. Each president became involved in social interactions with the various constituency groups and sought to understand the context in which those interactions took place. Birnbaum (1992) stressed the importance of a relationship between the "leader" and the "led".

Sub-question three. In seeking to understand how new university presidents sought to promulgate the institution's ethos to various stakeholders, each president indicated that framing the institution's ethos was important. President Alpha acknowledged that the institution's ethos was not where it needed to be and sought to address the issue by first attending to the issues of identity and culture. President Alpha was in the process of sharing a vision statement with the institution, a statement that contained three parts. In approaching year three of the presidency, President Alpha shared disappointment that it had taken so long to share the vision. The slowness was attributed to silos at the institution that challenged the institution and kept it from articulating a clear identity. President Alpha acknowledged that Alpha University did not have a clearly articulated institutional ethos but understood the importance of an institutional ethos and was seeking to lead the institution in that direction. The actions of these presidents related to framing the institution support the extensive work of Birnbaum (1992) on presidential leadership and a definition of leadership that views leadership as a process by which "one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others" (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 258).

President Beta acknowledged the use of a strategic plan to move the institution forward but also referenced an 'elevator speech' that was used when speaking about the institution. This speech sought to convey the identity of the institution and create an image of the institution that would attract others to it. Whereas the strategic plan was aspirational, the elevator speech addressed the institution as it existed. President Beta claimed a high level of congruence between the message contained in the elevator speech and reality. President Beta also acknowledged that there were few if any differences in the way in which the institution was promoted internally or externally.

President Gamma stressed the concept of regional stewardship both on campus and off campus. This aspect of the institution's identity was important in the development of an institutional ethos. President Gamma also sought to elevate academics to the level of athletics. These two aspects of the institution were important parts of the institution's ethos that President Gamma promoted. The university appeared to be receptive to the leadership of President Gamma as evidenced by the significant changes that had been enacted. A strategic plan was created to guide the institution into the future.

President Delta referenced an elevator speech that was used to articulate the ethos of Delta University. Much like President Beta, the elevator speech was used to state the identity of the institution while the strategic plan sought to state the aspirational aspects of the institution. Because President Delta and Delta University shared the same denominational background, it appeared that President Delta was more at ease in discussing the institution's ethos and arrived on campus with a better understanding of the institution's ethos than the other three presidents interviewed for this study.

None of these four presidents appeared to be affected by the issues associated with a presidential search process that was flawed (Sanderson, 2014). Presidents Beta, Gamma, and Delta gave positive affirmations of the search process. President Alpha did not reference the process in the interview. President Beta indicated that seminars and conferences related to new university president were not valuable. President Beta noted that the unique context of each presidency made the generic advice provided at these events useless. President Delta referenced a leadership institute attended in years past and a seminar for new presidents attended during the transition as being helpful for the transition into presidential leadership. Presidents Alpha and

Gamma did not make reference to any seminars or conferences attended in preparation for a university presidency.

Implications of this Study

The value of this study pertains to the findings of this study and their implications for various groups. This section examines the implications of this study for search committees, new university presidents, search firms, and campus communities. Each of these groups can benefit from the findings of this study.

Search Committees

Sanderson (2014) noted that presidential search committees are often flawed and sometimes corrupted by individuals who push narrow agendas. Objections to candidates from various sub-cultures often results in the selection of a candidate who is least objectionable to all members. It is important for presidential search committees to understand the importance of the institution's ethos and to understand that a new president must reflect the ethos of the entire campus, not select parts of it. It is also important for committees to ask questions of presidential candidates related to how they would go about gaining an understanding of the institution's ethos because such attempts demonstrate a desire to listen to faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. Finally, having presidential candidates share their understanding of the institutional ethos of previous institutions they served could help search committees determine whether or not these candidates demonstrate a fit for the institution. Educating search committees on the matter of institutional ethos would help them understand its importance in the search process. Search firms could provide this information to committees.

New University Presidents

The four narratives contained in this study demonstrated two important understandings these new university presidents attended to before entering a new presidency. First, each new university president was shaped by previous experiences and used those experiences to help frame the new institution. All four presidents noted the influences of their past experiences in academia on how they approached their new roles as president. Each president was at least thirty years removed from his experience as a college student. Only President Alpha noted that his undergraduate experience influenced the way in which he approached his responsibilities as president. All four presidents reflected at length on their administrative experiences. It appears, then, that these administrative experiences were more influential in determining how they understood the concept of institutional ethos. Second, each institution had its own unique identity, culture, and image. Each of the four presidents noted the importance of understanding the context of the institution before making decisions. President Gamma referenced his amazement at presidents who arrived at a new institution with a pre-packaged change agenda. Understanding these important aspects of an institution is helpful in obtaining a sense of the institution's ethos (Birnbaum, 1992). Kuh and Whitt (1988) identified institutional ethos as "an underlying attitude that describes how faculty and students feel about themselves; this attitude is composed of the moral and aesthetic aspects of culture that reflect and set the tone, character, and quality of institutional life" (p. 47). The time spent by new university presidents in hearing how faculty, staff, and students articulate the institution's ethos will help a new president grasp a sense of the institution's identity, culture, and image both in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Each of the four presidents interviewed for this study sought to gain a sense of the institution's

ethos. This gave each president an understanding of their respective institutions and how to proceed in terms of leadership.

This study demonstrated that issues related to institutional ethos are important for new university presidents. Recall that Figure 2.1 illustrated the relationship of identity, image, and culture to ethos. Results of this study indicated that while an understanding of each of those three areas was essential, each president in this study found the need to focus on different components of institutional ethos based upon the unique context of each institution. President Alpha discovered that within the context of Alpha University institutional identity needed to become an area of focus for leadership. President Beta identified cultural issues on campus that negatively affected the decision-making process. President Gamma noted the need for Gamma University to highlight its image as a regional state university. President Delta identified issues related to both image and culture as a once rural institution was now on the edge of a major metropolitan area.

Their responses seem to indicate that there is no single way for new university presidents to successfully navigate the process of understanding institutional ethos. The idea was illustrated by Presidents Beta and Gamma, both of whom expressed puzzlement over new university presidents who arrive at new institutions with pre-planned agendas for change. This finding is significant as it demonstrates the need for new presidents to make an initial assessment of institutional ethos in order to understand how best to lead the institution. These four presidents made an initial assessment of institutional and articulated the findings during the interviews. As a result, each president was moving forward in a manner that addressed the needs of their respective institutions.

Search Firms

Presidents Gamma and Delta referenced the helpfulness of the information about the institutions provided by the search firm during the search process and how the information provided by the search firm helped in the determination of fit between the candidate and the institution. Facts and figures are important pieces of information to convey to prospective presidents, but any information that gives a candidate a sense of the institution's ethos can help both the candidate and the committee discern if the candidate is a fit for the ethos of the institution. Once a president has been selected, the flow of information can continue to help a new president prepare for arrival on campus and can allow the new president to spend time meeting the various constituent groups and listening to their understandings of the ethos of the institution. Beyond providing facts and figures, search firms can facilitate discussions with important constituents before the arrival of the new president. President Delta noted that during the several months before arriving on campus, conversations took place with the retiring president as well as other campus partners. These conversations aided in the adjustment of a new president to a new institution.

Campus Communities

This study confirmed that new university presidents are concerned with the matter of institutional ethos and that their pursuit of an understanding of institutional ethos at their new institutions was shaped by prior experiences, especially experiences in administrative roles. It was as an administrator that institutional ethos arose to a level of importance for these four presidents. Various campus communities can help shape the new president's understanding of institutional ethos by sharing their understandings of campus identity, campus culture, and the image of the campus as viewed both internally and externally. Faculty, staff, students, alumni,

and community groups can influence a new university president who is seeking to foster an institutional ethos that is representative of all groups. President Gamma referenced the ability to differentiate between the view of one individual and the overall view of the campus. This was possible because of the many voices that participated in the conversation with the president. Presidents Alpha and Gamma noted the existence of silos on campus. The sharing of ethos as it pertains to a certain segment of the institution might be helpful to some degree, but these university presidents sought a broader understanding of ethos as it applied to the entire institution. Campus communities that seek to bend the ear of a new president toward narrow causes will do more harm than good. The institutional experiences of these presidents indicated that they were aware of sub-cultures that existed and were quickly able to identify voices that did not represent the entire institution. These presidents expressed an interest in leading institutions as a whole, not in parts. Campus communities that seek to provide new university presidents with overall perceptions of the institution will be more effective in influencing a new university president and aiding that president in the formation and promulgation of an institutional ethos. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community groups should be prepared to engage a new president with regards to the institutional ethos and should take opportunities afforded to them to share their experiences and impressions of the institution whether they be positive or negative.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study found that new university presidents do attend to the formation and promulgation of institutional ethos during their first year of their presidencies. It also found that understandings related to institutional identity, image and culture all play an important part in the formation of institutional ethos. This study adopted the definition of institutional ethos as “an underlying attitude that describes how faculty and students feel about themselves; this attitude is

comprised of the moral and aesthetic aspects of culture that reflect and set the tone, character, and quality of institutional life (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 47). Harris (2013) defined institutional ethos as “a symbiotic process by which one’s membership plays a part in one’s personal ethos, while the reputations of each member of any give organization contribute to that organization’s overall ethos in the world.” Both definitions fail to include the various components of an institution that make up one’s conception of institutional ethos. More research is needed into these components that help create an institution’s ethos. A new definition of institutional ethos that articulates these components within the context of higher education institutions is needed based on the findings of this study that identified identity, culture, and image as important components of an institution’s ethos as expressed by these presidents. University structures and cultures are unique. Whereas the research on organizational identity, organizational culture, organizational image, and institutional ethos has been helpful in understanding universities, more research is needed that focuses on these issues and how they relate to higher education leadership, especially presidential leadership.

University presidents must balance their time between various constituent groups. This study noted that faculty, staff, students, alumni, and local communities are all important in the life of a university. Presidents of public institutions spend time with members of state legislatures, governors, and state governing boards dealing with matters of policy and funding. This study sought to understand how new university presidents formulate an institutional ethos and promulgate that ethos in the first year of their presidencies. A better understanding is needed of how presidents spend their time once they have made an assessment of the institution’s ethos and have created a strategic plan. How do presidents continue to attend to the issue of institutional ethos once they have made an initial assessment?

The interviews conducted in this study shared the lived experiences of four university presidents who had significant experiences within higher education institutions. The results of this study might have been different if any of these new university presidents had backgrounds that did not include experience in higher education. This study demonstrated that these presidents from within academia understood the important role institutional ethos plays in the life of an institution. Research is needed into the experience of new university presidents who do not have prior experience in academia before becoming president of a college or university. It is possible that their understandings of institutional ethos are quite different.

During the course of these interviews institutional size and type was referenced many times. Does the size of an institution matter in the formulation of an institution's ethos? This question is worthy of further research. Institutional type may also affect how institutional ethos is understood. More research is needed to determine if there is a difference between the understandings of institutional ethos at private institutions versus public institutions. Does institutional size matter? Do presidents who serve at large research institutions spend time understanding the ethos of an institution? Or, is the institutional ethos at a large institution a part of its enduring identity? Both qualitative and quantitative studies into these matters would provide a better understanding of how institutional ethos operates within different categories of institutions. Qualitative studies would allow for a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of these presidents. Quantitative studies may allow for greater participation of presidents who are more willing to complete a brief survey than to sit for a formal interview.

The four presidents interviewed for this study were all male. Each president had significant prior experience in higher education. Of the thirty presidents who fit the parameters for this study, only two were female and chose not to participate. This research could have

benefitted from female participation. It is possible that the influences on their perceptions of institution ethos may have been affected by issues related to gender. It is also possible that female presidents may have approached the investigation of institutional ethos in a different manner than their male counterparts. Research is needed to determine if and how male and female presidents attend to institutional ethos. There is also a need to understand how new university presidents who do not have higher education background deal with the issue of institutional ethos.

Reflections on this Study

I feel that it is important to share my personal reflections on this study. I was excited to interview university presidents. My own experiences in higher education created a curiosity about executive leadership, especially that of new university presidents. As I explored other topics for my dissertation, I kept returning to my fascination with the leadership issues that relate to new university presidents. One of my program professors cautioned me about pursuing a dissertation related to university presidents. “They don’t like to talk” she stated on several occasions. “They have nothing to gain” she added in another conversation. The responses (or lack thereof) to my email invitation confirmed her instruction. Presidents are not eager to talk. There is little to gain by discussing matters related to leadership. My favorite response was a simple reply of “No.” Despite the paltry response, I did receive enough responses to conduct this research. I will forever be grateful to these four individuals who said yes. I believe they agreed to the interviews because they understood the importance of institutional ethos and had incorporated an investigation of institutional ethos into their first year plans. The nature of this study created a selection bias that was unintended yet, upon reflection, logical. Presidents who were not familiar with the concept of institutional ethos were less likely to respond as well as

those who were in the midst of experiencing a difficult adjustment to their new institutions for whatever reason.

I interviewed three presidents in their offices. The other interview took place in a board room. Each office had an executive desk, degrees on the wall, books on bookshelves, and a sitting area to entertain guests. I focused on the setting more in my first interview than the other three. I was nervous about the first interview, but once the interview started and President Alpha engaged the questions with great vigor, I gained confidence that the subject matter was pertinent and that these presidents would openly converse on the issue. I was correct. The tone of the first interview was matched by the next three presidents interviewed. Each story was similar in that the process for understanding the institution's ethos involved faculty, staff, students, and community groups. Each story was different in that each institution had its own identity and was distinctive in terms of its culture and history. These one-hour interviews were filled with deep reflections, important illustrations, and an excitement about leadership.

After each interview I jotted down field notes that recorded my retrospective reflections on the interview. These notes along with a document search for documents and videos of interviews and speeches were used for triangulation. I found significant congruence between the interviews, my reflective notes, and documents and videos of these presidents. Each interview followed the interview protocol consisting of three main questions with a set of sub-questions. The presidents did well at keeping to the topic at hand and responding to the questions. I was surprised at the openness of these presidents to discuss matters that were confidential in nature. Whereas my professor was right about university presidents not wanting to talk, I found that those who were willing to talk were eager to share their experiences. I was impressed with the

professionalism of each president interviewed and the high level of engagement of each conversation.

These presidents were most engaged with the questions relating to the institutions they currently served. The first question related to their own formation of the concept of institutional ethos provided the least amount of information although information related to that question was often shared in the context of the two subsequent questions. It was in discussing their understanding of institutional ethos at their current institutions and the promulgation of that ethos that these presidents raised their level of engagement. I left each interview with the feeling that each of these presidents was highly engaged in their leadership roles that their institutions.

Impact Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how new university presidents who have served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidencies made meaning of institutional ethos and applied what they learned to frame the institution for the purpose of effective leadership. The three case studies shared in Chapter 2 demonstrated the need for new university presidents to understand the concept of institutional ethos and its importance for effective institutional leadership. The failed presidencies of these three leaders could be attributed in part to their lack of understanding of the ethos of the institutions they led. The disruption experienced at these institutions by faculty, staff, students, and community members highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of institutional ethos as it relates to new university presidents who seek to lead institutions where they have never served.

This study found that institutional ethos was a concern of these four university presidents. The attention given to institutional ethos by these presidents allowed for a smoother transition into their new roles. Each president sought the input of faculty, staff, students, and community

members as they sought to understand the institution's ethos. This input allowed for the promulgation of an institutional ethos that was inclusive of all groups and accurately reflected the overall ethos of the institution, thus providing the foundation for leading the institution.

New university presidents can benefit by attending to the matter of institutional ethos. The inclusion of both internal and external constituent groups in the process of understanding the institution's ethos allows a new university president to promulgate the institution's ethos in a manner that reflects the understanding of the entire university community, thus forming a shared foundational understanding of the institution essential for leadership. Such an understanding appears to provide a new university president a greater chance of being a successful leader and not the victim of a failed presidency.

Conclusion

This research was a result of my experiences with eight university presidents, four of whom were first-time presidents of institutions where they had not previously served, and my curiosity as to how new university presidents assess the institutions they have been hired to lead. These four interviews validated my assumptions that the concept of institutional ethos is an important concept for new university presidents to understand. The uniqueness of each of the institutions served by these presidents highlights the need for conversations to take place between new presidents and the various constituent groups related to the institution, both internal and external. Each president views a new institution through a lens that contains images of past experiences just as constituent groups related to an institution will view a new president through a lens that contains images of past presidents. The process of understanding an institution's ethos for the purpose of leadership is important. Each of these presidents undertook a process by which the ethos of the institution was explored, and each president sought to convey the institution's

ethos when they spoke about their institutions with constituent groups. Whereas the aim of this study was not to determine any measure of success or failure in the formation and promulgation of institutional ethos, this study demonstrated that these four presidents made a conscious effort to explore an understanding of institutional ethos and use the results to frame their respective institutions for the purpose of effective leadership.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Q1: Talk about your own previous experiences that helped shape your foundational understanding of institutional ethos.

Q1a: As a student

Q1b: As a faculty member

Q1c: As an administrator

Q2: Describe the experiences that helped you understand the institutional ethos at your new institution.

Q2a: Experiences with students

Q2b: Experiences with faculty

Q2c: Experiences with staff

Q2d: Experiences with external constituents

Q3: Talk about how your understanding of the institution's ethos informs how you speak about the institution with various constituent groups.

Q3a: On campus groups such as students, faculty, and staff

Q3b: External groups such as community organizations, political leaders, and governmental boards and agencies

APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO PRESIDENTS

Dear President _____;

My name is Toby Ziglar. I am currently a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. I am researching how new university presidents who have served at least one year and no more than three years in their first presidency make meaning of institutional ethos and promulgate that ethos to their stakeholders. The title of my study is “Institutional Ethos and New University Presidents.” I am looking to interview presidents who are serving as first-time presidents at institutions where they have not previously served. I have identified you as someone who fits my research profile.

I am requesting a 60 minute interview with you to discuss how you assessed your institution’s ethos. Your responses would be anonymous. Neither you nor your institution would be identified in the reporting of research in order to ensure confidentiality.

I have copied your administrative assistant in this email. I will follow-up with your assistant within the next week to determine your willingness to participate and to answer any questions that you might have regarding this dissertation research.

Regards,

Toby Ziglar

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in an interview conducted for dissertation research for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. For this project, I will be conducting one 60 to 90-minute interview with you to examine the investigation of institutional ethos by a new university president.

Interviewer: Charles F. Ziglar
Telephone: 304-320-1598

The purpose of this interview assess how a new university president makes meaning of the ethos of a new institution and promulgates that ethos to stakeholders. This information will be used for dissertation research. All information gathered will be treated confidentially. Neither the name of the president interviewed nor the name of the institution will be disclosed. No identifying information related to the institution will be disclosed such as size or location. The information gathered in the interview will be presented in a narrative form without using any descriptors that would allow identification of the president or institution.

For this research, you will take part in one face-to-face 60 to 90-minute interview. The interview will be recorded on a digital recorder. Those recording will be transcribed and kept on a flash drive. Both the recordings and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet at my residence. At no time will the information be stored on a computer.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 304-320-1598. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your valuable experiences with me. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,
Toby Ziglar

Please sign both copies. Keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

Signature of the Participant

Date

Signature of the Student Researcher

Date

Appendix D

IRB Approval

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-5465		Veazey Hall 3000
		PO Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Ziglar, Charles
Calhoun, Daniel

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Approval Date: 6/5/2017

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research


After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H17408** and titled "**The Formation and Promulgation of Institutional Ethos by New University Presidents.**" it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) according to federal guidelines. In this research project research data will be collected anonymously.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

- B2 Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (I) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (II) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Any alteration in the terms or conditions of your involvement may alter this approval. *Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research, as submitted, is exempt from IRB approval. No further action or IRB oversight is required, as long as the project remains the same. If you alter the project, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB and acquire a new determination of exemption. Because this project was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, this project does not require an expiration date.*

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer